Chapter 5
Extending the Field:
An Empirical Research

ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to present empirical research the author conducted in the fields of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication and cultural dimensions. The chapter evaluates how Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in CSR content varies between companies in the Asian context and other organisations in the world. The research considers three out of Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions: individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. The first part of the empirical research analyses these cultural dimensions and introduces the research questions. Answering these questions allows the author to compare the CSR communication of countries with an Asian background with the CSR communications of other countries. Moreover, the chapter illustrates the pros and cons of applying a content analysis (i.e., the select method) to achieve an in-depth understanding of the cultural influence on CSR contents embedded in corporate websites. Finally, the chapter recommends areas for further discussion and research of the relation between culture and CSR.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of globalisation has created the need for international business ethics development (Carroll, 2004; Christensen, Peirce, Hartman, Hoffman, & Carrier, 2007), thus making cultural difference among nations recognised of critical importance for multinational companies’ corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda (Husted & Allen, 2006; Kolk & van Tulder, 2010).
Over the past years, an increasing amount of comparative research came out seeking to discover the role cultural dimensions play in CSR activities and communication (Gallego-Álvarez & Ortas, 2017; Ki & Shin, 2015; Peng, Dashdeleg, & Chih, 2012; Thanetsunthorn, 2015).

Nonetheless, until now, research literature has dedicated limited attention to culture, which is seen as an antecedent of CSR, in comparison with the significance it has attributed to economic performances and the examination of other corporate issues related to CSR and sustainability (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). Therefore, previous studies did not provide a concrete evidence of the link between culture and CSR (Woo & Jin, 2016). This is primarily due to the fact that results of past literature are contradictory (Franke & Nadler, 2008).

Thus, this chapter presents the bases for conducting a research in the field and for evaluating Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (2011) in CSR content on corporate websites.

The chapter assesses if these dimensions vary between the companies in the Asian context and in other regions of the world, and if they need to be seen as factors that impact exclusively on societies and do not influence strategic issues such as CSR decisions. Filling the gap, this research will reveal that, in this time, corporate communication and cultural dimensions belong to two different levels, at least for what concerns international organisations CSR online communication.

The chapter is structured as follows. The following section briefly examines CSR communication and cultural values as part of the groundwork for setting the research questions. This section identifies the studies related to the author’s research questions and highlights the main limits academics and scholars encounter in applying Hofstede’s model (1991). The subsequent section introduces the method of the study along with the sample selection.

The next chapter will report and discuss the coding scheme, briefly introduced here, and results, focusing particularly on a comparison of companies in different world regions.

BACKGROUND: SETTING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The author applied Hofstede’s cultural research to investigate and assess cultural differences among national areas through its five dimensions (Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). According to previous studies, as chapter one of this book highlighted, Hofstede’s framework is a good starting point
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