Chapter 6
The Independency of Corporate Social Responsibility Communication From Cultural Dimensions on Corporate Websites

ABSTRACT

The chapter starts presenting the main elements of the coding scheme, previously introduced, that the author used to analyse the cultural impact on corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication on company websites. It presents the results of a quantitative content analysis of the websites of 352 organisations belonging to different geographical areas and included in the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index (DJSWI) and in the Hang Seng (Mainland and HK) Corporate Sustainability Index (HSMHUS). The findings show that Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and online CSR communication belong to two different levels of analysis: one is innate, intuitive, and diffusive, while the other one is planned, intentional, and rational. Thus, the findings suggest that cultural dimensions are factors that need to be analysed as social aspects, while CSR communication on corporate websites has to be explored as a strategic feature. Finally, the chapter recommends areas for further discussion and research about the relation between traditional culture, culture of the Internet, and CSR, reflecting on the achieved results that largely differ from previous studies related to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and CSR communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The chapter demonstrates that, nowadays, corporate communication and cultural dimensions fit into two different levels. At least, this seems to be true when it comes to analyse large and global companies’ corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication through their websites.

The study contributes to expand the investigation of the impact of country-level dimensions of cultural values on CSR communication. The achieved results point out that managerial decision-making processes (e.g., CSR communication strategies) are largely independent from Hofstede’s cultural dimensions (1991), and that companies’ CSR disclosure in different world regions do not follow the alleged cultural differences. Moreover, the chapter adds insights on the exploration of the “culture of the Internet”, highlighting that the strength of this aspect is overcoming the impact of traditional national cultural dimensions – diluting their undoubted influence - when analysing communication strategies and tactics.

The chapter is structured as follows. The Background section illustrates the coding scheme, previously introduced. Subsequently, the Main Focus of the Chapter section reports the results of this study and their discussion, with a specific focus on the comparison of companies in different world regions. As a result, the section Solutions and Recommendations offers relevant insights. Then, the section The Culture of the Internet provides a brief analysis of this concept as part of the groundwork for explaining the findings. The final section Future Research Directions and Conclusions addresses implications and potential avenues for the future.

BACKGROUND

The Coding Scheme

In order to answer the research questions in the previous chapter and to assess the strength of the features of traditional culture, the author created a coding scheme, briefly introduced before, structured in two phases (Siano & Conte, 2018).

In the first phase, the author conducted a literature review in the field of CSR communication and cultural values (presented in the first part of this
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