Starbucks' Twitter communication: Building international online communities around organisational values

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Abstract

Online communities represent a way to build and maintain close relationships between organisations and various stakeholder groups. Multinational companies can effectively develop and maintain online communities by enacting culture-specific communication which, in turn, increases the likelihood of bonding and the creation of online communities through perceived similarities. The present study makes use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions of individualism/collectivism and indulgence/restraint to assess Starbucks' Twitter communication in the United States of America, Canada, and Southeast Asia. The implications of the findings for practice and theory are discussed.

Introduction

Web 2.0 platforms engendered not only opportunities but also challenges for multinational companies whose communication should be culture-specific (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009, 2012) while adhering to the companies' core values. In the past decade, companies made use of Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram to build online communities that reunite various stakeholder groups around their brand. However, developing online communities proves to be an arduous task and gaining recurrent online users who are willing to contribute content requires consistent messages that revolve around organisational values and are tailored to a specific culture.

The public relations literature is currently in need of more studies that shed light on the best use of online communication to trigger engagement especially cross-culturally. This study draws from literature on online communities and makes use of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011) to ascertain Starbucks' cross-cultural use of public social media communication.

Literature Review

Organisational values

Values represent an indispensable element of an organisation's identity (Klemm, Sanderson, & Luffman, 1991; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Pettigrew, 1979; Sha, 2009; Schein, 2004) and have been studied in connection to the cognitive processes they give rise to (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Burke, 2001; Edwards & Cable; 2009; Huang, Cheng, & Chou, 2005; Khazanchi, Lewis, & Boyer, 2007; Voss, Cable, & Voss, 2000), in relation to organisational culture (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001; Kraatz, Ventresca, & Deng, 2010; Schein, 2004; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987) as well as with a focus on how they emerge in daily performances and practices (Hatch, 2004).

According to the cognitive perspective, organisational values are "articulated, nurtured, and utilized" by senior executives in an attempt "to shape certain types of individual behavior and to achieve desired organizational goals" (Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012, p.60). Specifically, values determine business objectives, strategies, and practices (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; O'Reilly, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991), undergird decision making processes (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012) and foster a convergence with employees' personal values (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Fiedler, 1978; Finegan, 2000; Howard, 1990; Liedtka, 1989; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkin, 1989; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012;

O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Posner, Kouzes, and Schmidt, 2006; Posner & Schmidt, 1993).

On the other hand, values form the nexus of organisational cultures (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Schein, 2004; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987) as they become manifest in employees' patterns of behavior as a result of internalisation, an argument that represents the cultural approach to organisational values. Similar to the cognitive perspective, the cultural approach views organisational values as defined and triggered by top management through a top-down process (Brown & Trevino, 2009), yet stresses the discursive practices through which employees (re)define and (re)frame organisational values through interactions, rites, rituals, and artifacts (Barrett, 2017; Eisenberg & Riley, 2001; Schein, 2004; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987).

Finally, several researchers pointed to the need for a practice perspective (Czarniawska, 1991; Hatch, 2004; Gehman, Trevino, & Garud, 2013) which assumes less focus on already defined values and an emphasis on interactions that lead to value emergence through a bottom-up process (Traphagan, 2017).

Whether conducted from a cognitive, cultural or practice perspective, past studies determined the importance of a set of core values for business success (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Fiedler, 1978; Finegan, 2000; Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Howard, 1990; Liedtka, 1989; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkin, 1989; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Posner, Kouzes, and Schmidt, 2006; Posner & Schmidt, 1993). While the majority of these studies were conducted at an internal level and dealt with employee communication and leadership, (Huang, Cheng, & Chou, 2005; Michailova & Minbaeva, 2012; Posner, Kouzes, and Schmidt, 2006; Posner & Schmidt, 1993; Schein, 2004) to date there is a paucity of research studies (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012; Voss, Cable, & Voss, 2000) that determine how external stakeholder groups perceive, co-create, or (re)define organisational values. The need for more studies that deal with external stakeholder groups becomes even more paramount as a result of the ubiquity of the social media platforms. While the internet empowered employees by enabling them to break down internal hierarchical systems (Weinberger, 2001), the advent of the Web 2.0 led to the erosion of the clearly defined boundaries between internal and external constituents as well as between offline and online communication (Burnap et al., 2015). It triggered ethical dilemmas about what constitutes appropriate employee behavior online (Gossett, 2012) and forced corporations to be more employee-oriented and transparent. While in the past organisational values used to influence employee-consumer interactions in offline settings (Flamholtz & Randle, 2012) today these values are lived, co-created and re-defined by internal and external stakeholder groups through real-time interactions that take place on social media.

To date, millions of companies have used social media platforms to establish online communities, a concept that is discussed at a later stage in this paper. To trigger online interactions between their internal and external constituents, companies are faced with the colossal challenge of motivating online users to contribute content (Hsu & Lu, 2004; Hsu & Lu, 2007; Jin, Zhou, Lee, & Cheung, 2013; Matei & Bruno, 2015; Ridings et al., 2002). Because online communities are known to exhibit a high turnover through one-time contributions, (Jones, Ravid, & Rafaeli, 2004; Joyce & Kraut, 2006) companies can establish and sustain them through communication that denotes relationship management, the primary function of the public relations practice. Specifically, in addition to revolving around organisational values, online communication that builds rapport can motivate users to get involved and contribute content. However, while social media platforms represent a means that companies can use to engage with their stakeholder groups on a local, national, and global level, they also engender challenges for multinational companies whose communication should be culture-specific (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009; 2012) while revolving around specific

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organisational values. Consequently, building rapport and triggering online communities should be conducted differently for each country in which a company operates by adapting the organisational values cross-culturally. The current study looks at Starbuck's Twitter communication to assess how the company engages its users online while framing its values in a culture-specific way.

Online communities

Triggered by the inherent human tendency to socialise and act in groups (Weinberger, 2001) and formed around a common interest, (Tao, 2011) online communities foster the sense of community Rheingold (2001) argues has been lost in offline interactions. To the extent to which people have access to the internet, they benefit from the erasure of socio-economic marks, and join online communities that can facilitate dialogue and equality (Matei, 2005) while leading to the creation of psychological bonds based on need, affect, and/or obligation (Bateman, Gray, & Butler, 2008).

Globally, to date, there are presently 3.77 billion social media users (Kemp, 2017). For-profit and nonprofit organisations alike have been taking advantage of the Web 2.0 to develop online communities within which conversations would revolve around their products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014) or causes, respectively. In 2015 over 50 million companies worldwide were actively using Facebook, (Chaykowski, 2015). While more recent data are unavailable, it is doubtable that the companies' online present has not significantly soared.

The benefits of online communities are multifarious for both organisations and their stakeholders. First, for organisations online communities represent an opportunity to connect with stakeholder groups on a more personal level (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011) which leads to increased online communication, interactivity, and word-of-mouth. In addition, online communities enable issues monitoring and management, having the potential to save a company's reputation from future crises. On the other hand, online communities are a venue that not only enables stakeholders to bond around a common interest but to also express satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product, thus triggering changes in a company's business practices.

While the benefits of online communities are known, to successfully establish and maintain an online community requires an understanding of the sociology behind the dynamics and the interactions within online communities as well as the ability to enact the communication practices that motivate users to contribute online.

Past studies (Hsu & Lu, 2004; Hsu & Lu.,2007, Koh et al., 2007; Jin, Zhou, Lee, & Cheung, 2012; Matei & Bruno, 2015; Ridings et al., 2002) looked into the possible motivating factors that lead to online contributions and found self-efficacy, usefulness, group norm, and social identity to be high predictors for user participation (Tao, 2011). Additional studies ascertained motivating factors for online contribution by looking into commitment (Bateman, Gray, & Butler, 2008), participation dynamics (Burnap et al., 2015; Faraj & Johnson, 2010), and knowledge sharing (Hwang, Singh, & Argote, 2015). For example, Bateman, Gray, and Butler (2008) found need, affect, and obligation to lead to psychological bonds among community members and, thus to indirectly impact online contribution. Hwang, Singh, and Argote, (2015) determined that online community members share and learn knowledge based on expertise similarity and not necessarily geographical or hierarchical similarities. The degree to which online communities participate and contribute content was further investigated from the lens of participation dynamics and social exchange (Faraj & Johnson, 2010). In a study that analyzed five online communities, Faraj and Johnson (2010) determined that preferential attachment, direct, and indirect reciprocity enabled online communities to sustain themselves through constant contributions and Jin et al. (2013) ascertained that self-efficacy and satisfaction triggered recurrent online contributions and decreased turnover. Finally, studying the interactions in online communities used by employees, Liang et al. (2016) ascertained the positive impact of high levels of

trust, communication, and leadership on knowledge sharing.

The present study argues that self-efficacy and satisfaction can be triggered in online communities through relationship development and management, two primary functions of the public relations practice. The study contends that successful relationships are formed around (organisational) values that are communicated in a culture-specific way. Communicating around organisational values becomes even more paramount on Web 2.0 platforms because of their potential to render corporate conglomerates accessible and personable online.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, long/short term orientation, masculinity/feminity, and indulgence/restraint were previously studied in the public relations field (Haruta & Hallahan, 2003; Rhee, 2002; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009; Wu, Taylor, & Chen, 2001) and with regard to corporate social responsibility (Kim & Kim, 2010), corporate websites (Kang & Mastin, 2009), the big five personality traits (Migliore, 2011), and in relation to their effects on communication patterns and leadership (Merkin, Taras, & Steel, 2014). While at times criticised for their accuracy in reflecting national cultures (McSweeney, 2002), the dimensions represent important, although relative, tools (Williamson, 2002) for establishing and maintaining relationships with multicultural stakeholder groups (Garcia, 2017; Ki & Ye, 2017).

The present study took into account two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, namely individualism/ collectivism and indulgence/restraint to assess Starbuck's online communication in the U.S, Canada and Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia). It was considered that these locations would allow for a proper reflection of the differences between Western and Eastern cultures. The following paragraph provides more detailed information on the two cultural dimensions.

Collective cultures are characterised by close bonds among community members and care for the other person while individualist ones exhibit care predominantly for their next of kin such as direct family members (Hofstede, 2011). According to the Hofstede Center (2017), Indonesia's score on the individualism scale is 14 while Malaysia's is slightly higher and reaches 26. These scores are significantly lower when compared to those of Canada (80) and the U.S. (91), cultures considered high in individualism. The second dimension used in this study was that of indulgence/restraint. Cultures high in indulgence are more prone to enjoyment and display little to no restrictions for gratification (Hofstede's 2011). The Hofstede center (2017) shows that Canada and the U.S. are examples of cultures high in indulgence, both having a score of 68, compared to Malaysia (57) and Indonesia (38).

Starbucks

Starbucks currently operates 24,000 stores in 70 countries and aims for its coffee shops to be "a third place between work and home" (Starbucks, 2017a). According to the company's website, the first Starbucks opened in 1971 in Seattle. Ten years later, Howard Schultz, the company's chairman, decided to transform his stores into places for conversation and get-together and emphasised the coffee experience. Evoking "the romance of the high seas and the seafaring tradition of the early coffee traders" (Starbucks, 2017b, para. 2), Starbucks' core values, as defined in its mission statement, are quality, connection and community building, social responsibility and accountability toward its shareholders (Starbucks, 2017b).

Several studies on Starbucks were conducted in the past and looked into the company's work with NGOs (Argenti, 2004), its influence on the sociocultural environments of the local cafes (Thompson & Arsel, 2004), and the extent to which the company complied with the conditions conducive to the empowerment of marginalised workers (Macdonald, 2007). Researchers also looked into knowledge and entertainment- seeking behaviours in online communities and used Starbucks among other companies that enabled them to ascertain commitment in interactions with firms on social

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media (Tseng, Huang, & Setiawan, 2017). Further, through photography and in-depth interviews, past research shed light on consumers' experiences in Starbucks cafes in Beijing (Venkatraman & Nelson, 2008), while other projects argued for the need to understand Starbucks' success through the lens of "the political economy of coffee production and the persistence of colonial culture" (Smith, 1996, p. 502). Similarly, Starbucks was used to illustrate consumer power through boycotts (Simon, 2011), the challenges of customer dialogue management engendered by the social media (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010), and the adaptation of social marketing campaigns to international business environments (Swarna & Brunning, 2017). While the present study tackles Starbucks' use of social media, it differs in scope by looking into the company's use of online communication across cultures, a topic that has not been assessed before.

Based on the literature review and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, (Hofstede, 2011), this study aimed to ascertain: (1) the recurrent themes that Starbucks used to tweet about its value of "quality" in cultures that are high in indulgence such as the U.S. and Canada versus high in restraint, namely Indonesia and Malaysia, and (2) the recurrent themes that Starbucks used to tweet about the value of "community building" in cultures that are individualistic (the U.S. and Canada) and collective (Indonesia and Malaysia).

Method

This paper employed the case study methodology which was deemed appropriate based on past research that recommended the use of a case study to provide a rich and in-depth insight into new phenomena (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Weick, 1993; Yin, 2013). With regard to the selection of a case, Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), Weick (1993), and Yin (2013) recommended that researchers use a revelatory case and consider its uniqueness. A unique case study allows researchers to study phenomena that could not be studied under different circumstances. Case studies are considered unique when they are "unusually revelatory, extreme examples of

opportunities for unusual research access" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 27). Starbucks was selected for this study because the company currently represents "the world's biggest coffee-shop chain" (Patton, 2014, para.1) which in 2017 enjoyed a revenue of $22.4 billion while operating in 75 countries through roughly 27,300 stores (Taylor, 2017).

Additionally, Starbucks not only serves as a unique example of successful business, but also as a company that greatly values social media communication to reach its consumers (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010). Therefore, Starbucks was considered the most appropriate case for this study due to its immense success in business and social media communication. Finally, Starbucks represented a good case for analysing cross-cultural online communication since its two core values, namely product quality and community building can be coupled with Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions of indulgence/restraint and collectivism/individualism. First, the two values were taken from Starbucks' online mission statement and their definitions are provided below:

Quality

"It has always been, and will always be, about quality. We're passionate about ethically sourcing the finest coffee beans, roasting them with great care, and improving the lives of people who grow them. We care deeply about all of this; our work is never done."

Community building

"[…] we are fully engaged, we connect with, laugh with, and uplift the lives of our customers – even if just for a few moments.[…] It's really about human connection.

When our customers feel this sense of belonging, our stores become a haven, a break from the worries outside, a place where you can meet with friends. It's about enjoyment at the speed of life – sometimes

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slow and savored, sometimes faster. Always full of humanity."

Second, the data were collected from Starbucks' Twitter accounts for Malaysia, Indonesia, Canada, and the U.S. for a period of twelve months, between February 1, 2013 and January 31, 2014. The four countries were selected based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, taking into account the similarities between U.S. and Canada in terms of high individualism and indulgence and between Indonesia and Malaysia, which are considered high in collectivism and restraint. It was considered that a twelve month-period of analysis would provide sufficient data for the purpose of this study. Each of Starbucks's direct tweets was considered a unit of analysis. No retweets or replies that Starbucks made were taken into account. The total sample of analysis initially comprised 2,234 tweets and, later, 19 tweets were removed from the initial sample because they were not in English. The final sample of analysis consisted of 2,215 tweets. The data were collected and saved separately for each of the four Twitter accounts, as follows: Indonesia, n= 839; Malaysia, n= 606; Canada n= 438; the U.S. n= 351.

The tweets were analysed through a thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995). This research methodology was considered the most adequate due to its potential to determine the subtle meanings within the text and to enable the researcher to assess the company's cross-cultural communication based on emergent themes that, if looked at on their own, would not have rendered a comprehensive description (Leininger, 1985, as cited in Aronson, 1995).

The study employed an inductive-deductive approach that required multiple exposures to the text and constant data comparison (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Weick, 1993; Yin, 2013). The sample of analysis (n=2,215) was analysed through open coding, which enabled the "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, the open coding process identified the underlying issues in the data, which led to the development of codes. Second, the codes were analysed and

grouped based on the extent to which they pertained to a specific theme (Allan, 2003). Third, through multiple exposures to the text, the concepts were regrouped to determine higher order communality (Allan, 2003). Multiple exposures to the text continued until no new concepts and themes emerged. Examples of tweets and themes are provided in **Appendix A** to this article.

The constant comparison of data was facilitated by the use of Microsoft Word and Excel, which fostered an "interactive context of […] data analysing" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Constant note taking was used to ascertain the higher order commonalities among emergent concepts. Given the fluidity of this qualitative method of analysis and the need to explore each new situation that arises in the data to determine "systematic statements of plausible relationships" (Strauss & Cobin, 1994, p. 279), it was considered that the use of specific software may hamper the emergence of subtle meanings within the text.

Every 10th post from the entire sample was selected for the purpose of intercoder reliability and an additional coder was therefore given a total of 223 tweets. The intercoder reliability was k=.82, calculated using Cohen's kappa. Given that in social sciences Cohen's kappa estimates are considered of average reliability between .60 and .70 (Wood, 2007) while an estimate of .80 is considered a good value (Stemler,2001 no negotiation related to the coding process took place between coders.

Results and discussion

Quality of coffee

The analysis revealed that Starbucks tweeted about the quality of its products around four main themes: (1) convenience (the convenience of buying a ready-made coffee), (2) enjoyment (of the coffee's rich taste), (3) uniqueness (the uniqueness of the coffee stemming from expertise and ingredients), and (4) the coffee's tradition. **Figure 1** provides information on the rank-ordered recurrent themes that revolved around quality within each of the four Twitter accounts.

Figure 1: Rank-ordered themes about quality in Starbucks' Twitter accounts in the United States of America, Canada, Malaysia, and Indonesia with number 1 representing the most prevalent theme

Starbucks U.S.

1. Enjoyment

2. Uniqueness

3. Tradition

4. Convenience

Starbucks Canada

1. Enjoyment

2. Uniqueness

3. Convenience

4. Tradition

Starbucks Indonesia

1. Enjoyment

2. Uniqueness

3. Convenience

4. Tradition

Starbucks Malaysia

1. Enjoyment

2. Uniqueness

3. Tradition

4. Convenience

The analysis of the company's Twitter account in the U.S. showed that the majority of the tweets analysed framed quality around enjoyment, followed by the uniqueness of the coffee as stemming from ingredients and expertise. Specifically, the uniqueness of the coffee was present in the tweets that depicted Starbucks' products as exotic, rare, and exquisite, while enjoyment emerged in posts that described the coffee as rich, sweet, bold, and complex. Tradition appeared to a lesser degree, followed by the convenience of buying a ready-made coffee. These results show that Starbucks communicates about quality online in accord with the American culture which is high in indulgence as American consumers are more prone to buy products they do not necessarily need, but enjoy. Overall, in Canada, the company communicated online to a lower extent around quality than in the US, yet the rank-order of framing quality around enjoyment and product uniqueness remained the same. Further, the company tweeted predominantly about enjoyment, followed by

uniqueness as stemming from the company's expertise and the coffee's ingredients. According to the Hofstede center (2017), Canada and the U.S. have the same score for indulgence, namely 68. However, the results attest to a lack of consistency in communicating around quality since Starbucks tweeted around it in Canada less than it did in the U.S. Starbucks' tweets in Canada discussed the convenience of buying a ready-made coffee, a strategy that would prove more effective in countries low in indulgence since in these cultural milieux consumers prefer to invest in products that are convenient. Finally, the least employed theme was that of tradition, a result that shows consistency in communicating both in the U.S. and Canada.

In terms of Starbucks' Twitter account in Malaysia, a country whose culture is low in indulgence, the majority of the tweets made reference to enjoyment while the theme of convenience was the least employed. As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, in countries characterised by a low level of

indulgence, the value of quality should mostly be framed around the convenience of a product. The next most employed theme was that of uniqueness, followed by the company's tradition in delivering quality products. In this case, the analysis reveals that Starbucks fails to fully relate to its stakeholders and build relationships online by not communicating around the usefulness and convenience of its products in a culture high in restraint.

Similarly, in Indonesia, Starbucks did not meet the cultural expectations of its online users since the majority of the tweets relating to quality dealt with enjoyment (N=19, 29%). However, it is worth noting that the company framed quality in relation to unique expertise and product ingredients (N=12, 18%). To a lesser degree, quality emerged in terms of convenience and tradition (N=2; 3%). Although quality had a prevalent presence in the enjoyment theme and hence, the online

communication was not culture-specific, the company did attempt to relate the quality of its products to the specifics of the culture (N=4, 6%) when discussing halal food, for example.

Community building

The analysis revealed the emergence of six major themes around which Starbucks communicated about community building: (1) direct address (through random questions such as asking users about their day or coffee preferences), (2) building an offline community (by encouraging users to stop by a Starbucks store to join others), (3) CSR (asking users to give back to the community by joining Starbucks in its CSR-related efforts) , (4) holiday wishes, (5) family related posts, and (6) motivational quotes. Figure 2. provides information on the rank-ordered recurrent themes that revolve around community building within each of the four Twitter accounts.

Figure 2: Rank-ordered themes about community building in Starbucks' Twitter accounts in the United States of America, Canada, Malaysia, and Indonesia with number 1 representing the most prevalent theme.

Starbucks U.S.

1. Direct address

2. CSR

3. Holiday wishes

4. Motivational quotes

Starbucks Indonesia

1. Direct address

2. CSR
3. Motivational quotes
4. Holiday wishes

Starbucks Canada

1. Direct address

2. Motivational quotes

3. Holiday wishes

4. Offline community

Starbucks Malaysia

1. Direct address

2. Holiday wishes
3. Family
4. Motivational quotes

Almost a quarter of Starbucks' tweets in the U.S. denoted community building (N=81, 23%). The company tweeted predominantly about community through direct address, asking its online users random questions about their day, jobs, or coffee preference. This theme was followed by encouraging users to engage in CSR events sponsored by Starbucks and take part in activism (N=20, 5.7%). For example, the company asked its online users to sign a petition meant to address the economic crisis in the U.S. Starbucks communicated less around the holiday season and made use of motivational quotes meant to inspire its users to dream big, stay happy, or enjoy the moment. Based on this analysis, it can be argued that the company meets its stakeholder expectations with regard to communication needs.

As for Starbucks Canada, the majority of the tweets communicated about community building through random questions, many of which denoted the company's efforts to receive feedback on its products and engage its online users in collective decision making. The next mostly employed theme was that of the motivational quotes, followed by holiday wishes. Forming a community around coffee at a Starbucks store appeared to a lesser degree and volunteering for CSR events was the fifth and least employed theme. Similar to Starbucks' Twitter account in the U.S., none of the tweets made reference to family or the next of kin. Consequently, in Canada too, Starbucks' analysis revealed that the company may be missing out on opportunities to build rapport with its users through communication tailored to the specifics of individualistic cultures.

Further, the analysis of Starbucks's Twitter account for Malaysia showed that the overall presence of community building was low, a surprising conclusion for communication strategies enacted in collective cultures. Most of the tweets that denoted community building represented direct forms of address through random questions about the users' daily activities and their coffee preferences. Holiday wishes represented the next most employed theme, followed by family-related tweets in which the company was asking its online users about the time spent with their relatives. These results denote further room for improvement in adapting communication practices to the local culture. More precisely, family related tweets may be insufficient in collective cultures since these are characterised by close care for community members, neighbours, etc. in addition to their concern for the next of kin. (The Hofstede Center, 2017). Motivational quotes represented the least employed theme. It is worth mentioning that in collective cultures motivational and inspirational quotes may be less effective than in individualistic ones. Collective cultures rely heavily on community for advice and, therefore, may be less inspired by external sources. Finally, volunteering through CSR-related activities had the least presence, and building a community offline at Starbucks stores appeared in none of the tweets under study. These results reveal that Starbucks may fail to make effective use of culture-specific communication to build online communities in a culture in which bonding is deeply ingrained.

In Indonesia, the most prevalent theme was that of direct address, followed by CSR. While forms of direct address are effective cross-culturally, CSR may be to a lesser degree in developing countries like Indonesia, where financial constraints prevent individuals from spending resources or volunteering for causes. Next, similar to its use of online communication in Malaysia, Starbucks made use of motivational quotes that, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, are less effective in building relationships in collective cultures. Moreover, holiday wishes represented the fourth most employed theme despite the fact that in collective cultures holidays represent extremely important celebrations for families and local communities. Finally, the family theme appeared in none of the posts, a surprising result for the use of online communication in a culture so high in collectivism.

Conclusion

The advent of the Web 2.0 and the rise of online communities triggered significant changes in the ways organisations communicate and build relationships with their stakeholder groups. Online communities have

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the potential to form close bonds between an organisation's internal and external stakeholder groups and companies need to make use of the appropriate communication tools that would trigger dialogue around their brands and products. Social media platforms blurred the boundaries between employees and external constituencies and, consequently, there is currently an even more acute need for developing online communities that foster conversation and dialogue. Such communities should be developed by communicating around organisational values in a consistent and culture-specific way. This type of communication leads to the creation of online communities through relationship development and management, all of which can be accomplished by perceived similarities.

While previous literature on motivating factors for online contribution stressed satisfaction and self-efficacy as the precursors for online participation, this study argues that a culture-specific communication can trigger relationship development and management, which in turn increases self-efficacy and satisfaction, as these two variables represent the primary ingredients for successful relationships. In addition, the benefits of fostering online communities include issues scanning and management as well as the possibility to assess the degree to which a company's stakeholders identify with the organisational values.

The results of this analysis denote that Starbucks' online communication about quality tends to lacks consistency. While America and Canada both score 68 on the indulgence scale (the Hofstede Center, 2017), Starbucks communicates about quality twice as much in the U.S. than in Canada. Further, the company does not extensively relate to its online users in countries low in indulgence such as Malaysia and Indonesia, where it communicates predominantly about the enjoyment of its products. Most importantly, the company may be missing out on the opportunity to effectively build rapport with its online users in cultures both high (Canada and the U.S.) and low in individualism (Malaysia and Indonesia). Starbucks could relate to its online users cross-culturally by stressing the family value since

family represents an important institution for cultures both high and low in individualism. Additionally, the company could reach out to its online users in cultures low in individualism such as Malaysia and Indonesia by emphasising friendship and community. The fact that Starbucks's online communication in Malaysia and Indonesia does not attract recurrent users or generate increased interactivity is a proof of the changes the company should make in terms of communicating its values online. For example, Starbucks's account in Malaysia entailed about 6,300 tweets over a three-month period and overall generated 448 user comments. Over the same period of time, Starbucks's Twitter in Indonesia comprised almost 17,000 tweets and generated 371 user comments.

This study made use of the case study methodology and its results can be used to improve Starbucks's cross-cultural online communication. Therefore, the study entails the limitation of being organisation-specific. However, the results and their implications can be used by similar companies that operate in the aforementioned countries or countries whose levels of individualism and indulgence are similar to those used in this study. First, companies that operate internationally should investigate how their core values are construed by stakeholders abroad. Surveys and focus groups represent an important step toward shedding light on what constituents understand by specific corporate values along with the cultural connotations and meanings they attribute. Second, Hofstede's cultural dimensions may be used to determine how messages should be constructed online to appeal to a specific international audience. The adaptation of online communication can lead to a convergence of values (the perceived values of a company and the personal values of online users) which, in turn, increases online interactions.

The other limitation of this study is the fact that measuring interactivity was beyond its scope. It is recommended that future studies look into employing statistical analyses to measure the direct impact of online communication strategies on interactivity. Further, future research could assess the use of organisational values to build online

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communities by looking into other cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011), namely: uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/feminity, power distance, and long term/short term orientation. Finally, because the data were analysed through an inductive-deductive approach, the researcher's own cultural background may have played a role in the interpretation of the data and the results (Burr, 2015).

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1. Examples of tweets and themes coded as reflecting the value of community

Theme	Example
Direct address	"You did it! Cheers to all you grads. #2014 "
CSR/activism	"April is Global Month of Service. Together we volunteered over 600,000 hours in 2012. Sign up to volunteer!"
Holiday wishes	"Wishing our dear friends and family in Sabah & Sarawak a Happy Kaamatan & Gawai Harvest Festival! :)"
Motivational quotes	"'Desire, passion, dedication, hard work, good food and a little luck are all you need to succeed in life.' —Alison Dunlap, Olympian"
Offline community	"Coffee with a friend is happiness."
Family	"Take some time for mom."

2. Examples of tweets and themes coded as reflecting the value of quality

Theme	Example
Enjoyment	"Starbucks Tribute Blend is back! Hv a sip & enjoy the full-bodied flavor w/berry & dark cherry notes #coffeeinsights"
Uniqueness	"Passion Tea Raspberry Lemonade. Delight in a cup. It's a summer day in a cup."
Convenience	"Forget to pack a lunch. Pick up any wrap for $5 this week. #yum"
Tradition	"There's something about Ethiopian #coffee that can only be described as generous: In tradition & in flavor."

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