The role of employee magazines as an internal communication tool in international organisations (Case of Automotive Industry in Germany and South Africa)

Miriam Grabuschnig

Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University,
Institute of Information and Communication
Vilniaus universiteto Komunikacijos fakulteto
Informacijos ir komunikacijos institutas
E-mail: miri08@gmx.at

Jurgita Vizgirdaitė

Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University,
Institute of Information and Communication, Doctor
Vilniaus universiteto Komunikacijos fakulteto
Informacijos ir komunikacijos instituto daktarė
E-mail: jurgitaviz@gmail.com

The purpose of this paper is to develop a model for employee magazines depicting organizational culture in international companies working across borders. Employee magazines are part of the internal communication mix. The main objectives of internal communications in general and employee magazines in particular are to inform the employees (rational factors) and help building a community among them (emotional factors). The model presented in the paper includes three levels: the universal factors, which should be part of every employee magazine, the culture-specific level, where the world is divided into six parts and a third country-specific level, which includes the relevant factors in one specific country based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In the paper Germany and South Africa are chosen for the third level. In order to test the usability of the model and make recommendations for one company, the employee magazines of Volkswagen Germany and Volkswagen South Africa are analysed on all three levels.

Keywords: *Employee Magazines, Culture, Organizational Culture, Rational Factors, Emotional Factors.*

Introduction

Strategic internal communication is one of the most neglected areas in general and many companies consider the internal communication and the instrument of employee magazines still as a journalistic function. Only during the last years a professionalization of internal communication has been taking place and large multinational compa-nies as well as SMEs are becoming aware of the importance of communicating with their employees. Internal communication aims to inform employees but also to build a community among them. Globalisation has made this task even more challenging because the internal communication managers of international companies have to make sure to reach all the employees worldwide.

Moreover, they have to keep in mind that every employee is also a communicator. Especially due to the new online technologies employees have a power to distribute information to outside stakeholders fast and easily. Therefore, internal communication became more and more relevant (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

Globalisation is intensifying in all organisations and requires cultural differences to be investigated in corporate communication. In external communication this has been taking place and much research has been done on the impact of culture on the effectiveness of PR and advertisement. However, cultural differences should be discussed in internal communication as well, as companies are increasingly working across borders with employees with different cultural backgrounds (Smith & Mounter, 2005).

Strategic internal communication is not the norm and many companies still consider employee magazines as simply journalism to inform the staff. The aim of internal communication is not only to inform employees, but also to build a community among them, though (Hume & Leonard, 2014).

Research Problem, Aim, Object, Methodology

Employee magazines as an instrument of downward communication have to consist of adequate and reliable information to reach the employees and help forming a community among them. Adequate means that the information is perceived as useful and sufficient by the employees, whereas reliable refers to the trustworthiness of the information and includes the sender (Bartels et al., 2007; Bartels et al., 2010).

However, people from different cultural backgrounds perceive different informa-tion as adequate and reliable. That said, their perception is culture-specific. Various scholars have been doing research on internationalisation and its impact on doing business. Marieke de Mooij (2010) applied Hofstede's cultural dimensions to advertising and described the importance of cultural differences when working across borders with people from different cultures. Other scholars have investigated the relevance of language in international organisations and discussed if English is the most effective language or if the local language needs to be used (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaan-ranta, 2012; Frederiksson et al., 2006).

It is highly acknowledged nowadays that internal communication is an important management function to reach both rational and emotional goals, which are on the one hand to inform and on the other hand to build a strong organisational culture. Although research has been done on cultural differences in external communication and marketing, no author has investigated the impact of culture on internal communication and the factors included in employee magazines in order to reach the goals. No model exists for companies how to use employee magazines as a communication channel in different cultural environments. Thus, it raises the following three *research questions* which refer to three different levels, which will be answered in the paper:

1. What universal factors in employee magazines condition informed employees and build a strong organisational community?
2. How cultural differences impact these factors?
3. How can the identified factors be adapted to the cultures of Germany and South Africa?

The *research object* is the detection of factors included in employee magazines

that generate informed employees and a strong organisational community.

The *aim of the research* is to identify universal and culturally relevant factors included in employee magazines that generate informed employees and build a strong organisational community.

Having defined the object and aim, the specific *goals of the research* are:

1. To identify a universal model consisting of factors that employee magazines should include in order to generate informed employees and to build a strong organisational community.
2. To detect the impact of cultural differences on the model.
3. To integrate a cultural adaptation of the model for Germany and South Africa.

In order to reach the aim, a qualitative research is done, which is positivist and includes secondary data. The method used in this paper is an analysis of existing literature on internal communication and the function of employee magazines in the internal communication mix, as well as secondary data from employee magazines published by Volkswagen Germany and South Africa. For the sample four reports are taken, two from Germany and two from South Africa. The analysis is based on the model developed in the theoretical part of the paper.

In the paper the main objectives of internal communication are discussed, in particular the function of employee magazines in the internal communication mix. The second focus of the paper is to examine the impact of culture on the instrument of employee magazines. The investigation of existing theory results in a universal and a culture-specific model consisting of factors that employee magazines have to include to meet the objectives. In the theoretical part of the paper a model is developed for

companies to use as a guideline to analyse their employee magazines and improve them. In the empirical part of the paper the model is tested and specific recommendations are given on the adaptation to culture, in particular German and South African culture in this case. Volkswagen Germany's employee magazine "autogramm" and Volkswagen South Africa's "FanFare" are analysed and compared in this paper. The focus lies on the form and content of the magazines published in Germany where VW is headquartered and in South Africa where it has a large subsidiary.

Internal Communication

International communications are "communications and interactions among employees or members of an organization" (Berger, 2011). According to Deetz (2001) there exist two different ways of describing internal communication. Firstly, internal communication can be defined as a "phenomenon that exists in organizations" (p. 5). Secondly, it can be "a way to describe and explain organizations" (p. 5). The second approach is broader and recognises internal communications as a process of meaning making and therefore implies both formal and informal ways. That said, in every organisation there is a formal and an informal communication network (Berger, 2011). The internal communication managers have to manage the formal network by providing enough and trustful information in order to keep the informal network smaller.

Internal communication has become an important management function and is considered as an essential factor for a good business performance (Yeomans, 2014). Grunig et. al (1992) developed nine principles for doing public relations in the Excellence Theory. One of the principles

is the "symmetrical system of internal communication" (in Yeoman, 2014, p. 75). The authors claim that it is impossible for organisations nowadays to neglect internal communication because the line separating it from external communication has disappeared. Corporate communication has to integrate external and internal communication with little boundaries between the two (McCallister, 1981; Cheney & Christensen, 2011). Especially the rapid development of the social media has contributed to that (Cornelissen, 2014).

Objectives of Internal Communication

Internal communication has both rational and emotional objectives. Firstly, one of the main objectives is to inform employees and share knowledge about things relevant for their jobs, the organisation in general, but also the environment and other aspects in order to increase effectiveness (Burgess, 2005; Klöfer & Nies, 2001). Several researchers stress the importance of internal communication for the overall business performance of organisation and employees' productivity by creating a dialogue between managers and employees. Well-informed employees tend to work more productively (Berger, 2011; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Welch, 2011; Bentele et al., 2008; Kitchen, 1997).

Secondly, internal communication has more emotional objectives. It brings employees closer together by providing one shared identity that all employees can identify with (Berger, 2011; Smidts et al., 2001). The organisational identity differs in every organisation. These differences and special characteristics have to be conveyed through effective communication (Dolphin, 2005). This includes communicating the

goals and objectives, new developments and achievements, the mission and vision and corporate values. Shared values bring clearness and simplicity in the diverse and complicated work life. Communication provides the common understanding of the values and helps creating a sense of belonging, a "we feeling" (Yeomans, 2014; Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Another important facet is to build and increase employee engagement through internal communication. Building engagement can be understood as "unleashing the full energy and talents of people in the work place" (D'Aprix, 2006, p. 227). If employees understand the strategic direction their organisation is heading to, they are more likely to be committed to it. They want to feel informed in order to trust the organisation and involve within it (Lawler, 1989; Yeomans, 2014; De Ridder, 2004). Truss et. al (2006) detected three factors that lead to employee engagement: firstly, employees want to have a possibility to give feedback. Secondly, they want to feel well informed. Lastly, if the managers seem engaged they follow the example (in Yeomans, 2014).

To sum it up, internal communication helps motivating employees, building trust in the management and organisation, engage them and create a corporate identity that is shared by all employees.

Communication channels

As aforementioned internal communication cannot be fully controlled by the communication managers. In every organisation there are both formal and informal ways of internal communication. Office grapevines are relevant for employees to receive corporate information, as well as to share gossip. Formal communication, on the other hand, is organised by the internal commu-

nication department and of importance for this paper. There exist three different levels of formal internal communication. Firstly, face-to-face communication can be used, which targets only a few employees at a time. Group-level communication targets a bigger audience, for instance employees of one unit or department. Here it is mainly important to share functional information and to create well-being and consensus among the members of the group. The organisational-level communications concerns the whole organisation and includes communicating the mission, vision, values etc. Employee magazines belong to the third group (Berger, 2011).

The internal communication mix can also be divided into three groups according to the type of technology used: print channels (e.g. magazines, memos, brochures, newsletters, reports, policy manuals, annual reports, posters), electronic channels (e.g. email, voice mail, intranet, blogs, podcasts, chat rooms, business TV, video conferencing, instant messaging systems, wikis) and face-to-face channels (e.g. speeches, team meetings, focus groups, events and gatherings, management wandering around) (Berger, 2011).

To understand and decide, which channel of the communication mix is suitable and effective in what kind of situation, the media richness theory by Daft and Lengel (1984) is very helpful. The theory ranks media according to the amount of data it conveys. Face-to-face communication, for instance, is richer than emails because it includes gestures, tone of voice etc. Daft and Engel investigated for what types of communication rich or lean media is more suitable. Routine communication, which includes company information, updates and agreements that have been made verbally before, can be sent via lean media such as employee magazines. Other researchers (e.g. Carlson & Zmug, 1999; El-Shinnawy & Markus, 1997; Ngwenyama & Lee, 1997) stress the fact that practitioners cannot only decide which media to use by defining the type of communication, but they also have to consider social and organisational factors (Byrne & LeMay, 2006). Byrne and LeMay (ibid) conclude that international companies can use lean media to communicate overall information, but rather use rich media for local information and more sensitive topics.

Employee magazines

In the 1990s employee magazines were the main task of the internal communication managers. They were often referred to as in-house journalists. Although other channels have gained more importance nowadays, the "classical" employee magazine is still an important instrument to reach the aforementioned objectives (Schick, 2010; Yeomans, 2014). In 2007, 91 per cent of all organisations in the UK had a newsletter or employee magazine (Mahdon & Bevan, 2007, p. 35 in Yeomans, 2014). Instruments of mass communication like employee magazines target at a big number of employees. Generally speaking, they do not offer many possibilities for two-way communication. They are very useful to create knowledge, but mass communication channels do not change attitudes and behaviour easily (Tomczak et al., 2012). Furthermore, they have visual strengths and can therefore activate emotions better than other channels (Piwinger & Zerfaß, 2007). Especially for international companies mass communication is relevant in order to reach employees all over the world and make sure they are all informed (Tomczak et al., 2012).

Byrne & LeMay (2006) have conducted a field study on the perception of quality of and satisfaction in information depending on the channel used, by using the media richness theory as a theoretical framework. For their research, they got the data from a survey of 598 employees. Relevant information for individuals and the close group (e.g. unit) was seen as satisfactory when sent via rich media. Information from the top-management and executive board was perceived as satisfactory through lean media like employee magazines. One possible explanation could be that this information has no immediate affects on the individuals' work. As the information is not urgent, the employees can decide for themselves when to refer to it and because it is written can do that more than once. Intermediate types of communication like e-mails, so-called moderate media, were only preferred for urgent news. When it came to perceived quality of urgent news, the employees preferred lean media. Lean media, as can be seen, is useful for educating employees and informing them and providing background information about urgent and personal news. However, even urgent information can often be regarded as qualitative if given through lean media.

Linjuan Rita Men (2014) did a survey on rich and lean media channels in internal communication to find out about employees' preferences. They preferred to receive information on major events like changes, new decisions and policies through rich, face-to-face channels. However, this contradicts with the research mentioned earlier by Byrne and LeMay (2006) that lean media is preferred as a medium of qualitative corporate information. This discussion is not ended yet.

What is essential for internal communication managers to keep in mind is that a good employee magazine is in line with the corporate values that are lived inside the organisation in reality, communicates these values and can thus support the development of the corporate identity and culture (Breyer-Mayländer, 2009). However, employees do not only want to receive universal information produced in the head office, but they are especially interested in local news. Thus, proximity is a news factor in employee magazines. Proximity includes both that local information is provided but

Table 1. **Rational and Emotional Factors**

Rational factors	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
job related information	departments and their work are presented
company information	updates & agreements
environmental information	business sector
information from executive board	statement from the CEO
Emotional factors	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
shared identity	mission; vision; values; goals & objectives; new developments & achievements
engagement	feedback possibility; role models
visuals	
proximity	local information; local people talk

also that local people get a chance to speak (Smith & Mounter, 2005).

Furthermore, what is important to stress for this particular research is that automobile companies rely on print channels more than companies from other sectors due to the fact that many employees do not work in an office and do not have access to computers (Smith & Mounter, 2005).

After having described the objectives of internal communications in general and the role of employee magazines in the internal communication mix, the following table 1 sums up the rational and emotional factors which lead to informed employees and helps building a community among them.

Impact of Culture

The social psychologist Geert Hofstede defines culture as the shared ability to recognize, decode and produce symbols (Hofstede et al., 2010). Culture has an impact on the way people communicate. As Yeomans points out: "The science of communication is universal, but the art of communication is always cultural = local" (2014, p. 79). Internal communication can overcome cultural differences and provide a shared meaning (Yeomans, ibid.). Especially international organisations require constant and trustworthy internal communication to motivate the employees and build trust and a common corporate identity and community (Larson, 1992 in Rosenfeld et al., 2004, p. 30). There is a gap in the theory on internal communication when it comes to the target audience (Welch & Jackson, 2007). As L'Etang criticises "employees are too often treated as a single public" (2005, p. 522). According to Smith & Mounter (2005) the internal audience varies inside companies and has to be differentiated by national culture as well. For this research

the employees will be only differentiated by national culture.

Socio-culture

Languages are one of the main challenges organisations face when working internationally. As Victor (1992) points out: "(…) perhaps no other element of international business is so often noted as a barrier to effective communication across cultures than differences in language" (p. 15). As aforementioned one of the objectives of internal communication is to build trust. However, building trust is closely linked to language as a common ground (Kassis Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen, 2011). However, speaking one common language is not enough. Every culture has preferences in the communication practices and style. Kassis Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen (2011) explored the relation between language and trust in internationally operating organisations by conducting semi-structured interviews with German and French senior executives as well as a survey with the employees. Even the way trust is built varies across borders. Whereas Germans build trust through demonstrating technological skills, people in other countries do that through informal communication.

However, there is a trend within international companies to use English as a lingua franca. Charles (2007) questions if English is always the best language to choose or if in some cases local languages are essential to deliver a message effectively. In Africa, for instance, only a small minority of the people speak English fluently Even if countries share a common language such as German in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, there can still be cultural differences identified that have an impact on internal communication practices. The same occurs

with simply translating messages into the local language. It is relevant to translate in a culturally relevant way, which means to know the culture not only the language (Freitag & Quesinberry Stokes, 2009).

Even more influential than language is the impact of cultural differences. When organisations work in various different national settings, communication is characterised by "cultural general" aspects, that are universal, and "cultural specific" aspects, that are relevant exclusively or more in a particular environment (Freitag & Quesinberry Stokes, 2009). Various scholars have developed comparative metrics to describe cultural differences that affect internal communication as well.

Edward Hall (1976, 1983), an American anthropologist, developed cultural dimensions. One of them is the difference between high and low context in communication. Communication varies a lot according to Hall's findings. High-context communication relies strongly on implicit and covert messages. Moreover, non-verbal communication and pictures are more important. Low-context communication is characterised by explicit and overt messages that contain all details. Texts can be longer as well (Freitag & Quesinberry Stokes, 2009). In South Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America the cultures are high-context. Most European countries, North America and Australia are low-context cultures where information is given explicitly and directly (Hall, 1976).

Moreover, Hall has developed the cultural dimension monochronic vs. polychronic cultures. In polychronic cultures time is relative and more tasks are completed simultaneously. Polychronic cultures are usually also high-context cultures (Hall, 1983) His last dimension information speed builds on this dimension. He argues that in polychronic cultures corporate information are distributed faster and on an informal way, whereas monochronic cultures are slower in distributing information and do it in a formal way (Hall & Hall, 1990).

The social psychologist Geert Hofstede explains cultural differences across nations according to six dimensions in his book "Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind": power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term/short-term orientation and indulgence (Hofstede, 2010). For this research only the first five dimensions will be taken into consideration due to the fact that indulgence is a relatively new dimension and not as broadly investigated yet.

In countries with high power distance the employer can present himself as the number one and is respected by the employees. In general, status symbols are more important and elder people are highly respected.

In collectivist countries collective decision-making and the well-being of the group are highly valuable and loyalty is part of the culture. The cultures are more particularistic and accept different values and want to let everyone get a chance to speak. Furthermore, relationships are more important than rules and they take decisions based on the current situation. In individualistic countries the individual character is more important than the group and universal opinions are essential. People place a high importance on rules, laws and values. The dimension is correlated with Hall's dimension of high-context.

In masculine countries achievement and success are important assets, whereas in more feminine cultures caring for others and

quality of life are more essential. Moreover, status symbols are more common in masculine countries whereas feminine cultures tend to be more modest.

Uncertainty avoidance has an important impact on internal communication as well, because in cultures that score high on this dimension the communication is more formal and less emotional. Rules and structure are perceived as a premise for success. Experts get a chance to speak more often and are highly respected and trusted. In cultures with low uncertainty avoidance innovation and changes are seen as something positive. Instead of letting experts speak, humour, as a communication style is more appropriate.

The dimension long-term/short-term orientation differentiates between the need for perseverance and ordering and short-term goals like personal steadiness and stability, or in general the pursuit of happiness. This includes also having a sense of shame in long-term oriented, especially Asian countries. For organisations this implies the importance of quick results versus perseverance and pursuing long-term plans. Whereas in long-term oriented cultures the focus lies on the market position of compa-

nies, in short-term oriented companies the bottom line is most important.

The last dimension indulgence describes the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses. In comparison to the first dimensions, comparatively little research has been done so far on this dimension. That is why for this paper the last dimension will not be taken into consideration.

Wursten and Fadrhonc (2012) used Hofstede's cultural dimension to divide the world into Six Culture Clusters – every cluster consists of a group of countries that show similarities according to Hofstede's dimensions. The authors describe how this has an impact on marketing preferences. Their theory can be transferred to internal communication as well. The countries are not segmented geographically but culturally, which is important in order to understand cultural differences inside an organisation.

The English speaking countries Australia, the UK, Ireland, New Zealand and the US make up the *contest cluster* (Table 2). Wursten and Fadrhonc (ibid) conclude that competition and being a winner is seen as positive. Therefore, it is common to show winners and being best is something

Table 2. **Contest cluster**

Contest Cluster	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
low PDI	Practitioners
high IDV & low-context	Universalistic
	overt & explicit
	Verbal
high MAS	achievement & success
	competition & winning
	status symbols
low UAI	innovation & changes positive
	Humour

desirable. Moreover, status symbols are perceived as positive. People tend to trust practitioners more than academic experts.

The second cluster is called the *network cluster* (Table 3), to which belong Scandinavia and the Netherlands. Unlike the contest cluster, people do not like winners and prefer them behaving normally and being modest. In general, people appreciate cooperation and do not want to stand out of the crowd. Similar to the first cluster, practitioners are perceived as trust worthier than experts. Furthermore, status symbols are seen as rather negative.

The *machine cluster* (Table 4), which is describing various central European countries including Germany, is defined by a low power distance and high uncertainty avoidance. This leads to a need for structure and rules. People trust experts and rely on their recommendations. Therefore status symbols are important to show off. Structure in communication is essential to bring across a message.

The *pyramid cluster* (Table 5) is the most diverse one because it consists of countries from all over the world. The style of communication is important for people living in those countries. According to the authors all of Africa belong to the pyramid cluster, but also Central and Latin America, parts of Southern Europe,

Table 3. **Network Cluster**

Network Cluster	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
low PDI	Practitioners
high IDV & low-context	Universalistic
	overt & explicit
	Verbal
low MAS	caring for others & quality of life
	Modesty
	Cooperation
high and low UAI	

Table 4. **Machine Cluster**

Machine Cluster	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
low PDI	
average to high IDV & low-context	universalistic
	overt & explicit
	verbal
high UAI	formal communication
	rules & structure
	experts
	status symbols

the Middle East and even some South-East Asian countries. Like the machine cluster, experts are highly trusted and scientific evidence is relevant. Moreover, age plays an important role. Old people are seen as wiser and more credible than young people. Unlike the machine cluster, indirect messages are seen as positive because people do not want to lose face in front of others. Due to a high power distance hierarchy and status are appreciated.

Similar to the pyramid is the *family cluster* (Table 6), which can be found mainly in Asian countries. Unlike the pyramid cluster, the countries do not score high on uncertainty avoidance. Nevertheless, style and hierarchy are also important, age equals wisdom and indirect messages are preferred. Experts are not as much appreciated though.

People living in countries of the *solar system cluster* (Table 7) appreciate style and

Table 5. **Pyramid Cluster**

Pyramid Cluster	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
high PDI	employer number 1
	status symbols
	respect for elder people
low IDV & high-context	well-being of group
	loyalty
	particularistic
	covert & implicit
	non-verbal
high UAI	formal communication
	rules & structure
	experts

Table 6. **Family Cluster**

Family Cluster	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
high PDI	employer number 1
	status symbols
	respect for elder people
low IDV & high-context	well-being of group
	loyalty
	particularistic
	covert & implicit
	non-verbal
low UAI	innovation & changes positive

Table 7. **Solar System Cluster**

Solar System Cluster	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
high PDI	employer number 1
	status symbols
	respect for elder people
high IDV & low-context	universalistic
	overt & explicit
	verbal
high UAI	formal communication
	rules & structure
	experts

experts as well. The countries score high on individualism and prefer more direct messages and like an intellectual approach to communication.

Germany and South Africa score only slightly different on Hofstede's dimensions but belong to different culture clusters according to Wursten and Fadrhonc. Germany belongs to the machine cluster and South Africa to the pyramid cluster. However, it is not as clear as with Germany. Having a look at the dimensions reveals that South Africa would better fit into the contest cluster. When considering the criteria introduced by Wursten and Fadrhonc and applying them to Hofstede's findings of Germany and South Africa, the criteria described in the tables below are expected to be predominant (Table 8).

Table 8. **Germany and South Africa Culture Clusters**

Germany	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
low PDI	practitioners
high IDV + low-context	universalistic
	overt & explicit
	verbal
high MAS	achievement & success
	competition & winning
	status symbols
high UAI	formal communication
	rules & structure
	experts
high LTO	long-term plans
	market position
	sense of shame

South Africa	
Characteristics	**Criteria**
average PDI	employer number 1
	status symbols
	respect for elder people
high IDV + low-context	universalistic
	overt & explicit
	verbal
high MAS	achievement & success
	competition & winning
	status symbols
average UAI	formal communication
	rules & structure
	experts
low LTO	quick results
	bottom line

The bigger the differences between two cultures, the higher the risk to be misunderstood in internal communication messages (Marschan-Piekkaria, Welch & Welch, 1999). Therefore, the expected outcome of the empirical research done in this paper is to find similar employee magazines and only a few differences.

Organisational culture

The organisational culture is dependent on the socio-culture. An international organisation can never be able to have the same organisational culture worldwide and has to accept small differences caused by societal differences (Wilson, 2001).

Geert Hofstede has developed the Cultural Onion, which explains that cultures are defined by symbols, heroes, rituals, values and practices. The model can be applied to organisational culture as well (Hofstede et. al., 1990). Wilson (2001) defines organisational culture as "the visible and less visible norms, values and behaviour that are shared by a group of employees which shape the group's sense of what is acceptable and valid. These are generally slow to change and new group members learn them through both an informal and formal socialisation process" (p. 356). It reflects the internal reality that is shared by the employees – through their attitudes and behaviour. It is created through constant communication between the employees. Organisations with a strong organisational culture perform better (ibid.). The organisational culture cannot be shaped and managed because it is created by the employees in their everyday worklife (Yeomans, 2014). However, internal communication is one of the main tools to strengthen the culture (Shockley-Zalabak, 1988). The internal communication channels in use portray the organisational culture as well by sharing corporate stories, showing employees, reporting on rituals etc. Culture is also depicted in the choice of pictures (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Theoretical Model of the Organisational Culture of International Companies Depicted through Employee Magazines

In order to detect the factors included in employee magazines that generate informed employees and a strong organisational community a model (see Figure 1) is created based on the theory on internal communication and employee magazines. This leads to a universal guideline, which includes all relevant rational and emotional factors employee magazines need to include to reach the formal and informal internal communication objectives. The model is a basis for companies to develop an effective employee magazine.

However, as discussed in the theoretical background companies have to take into account cultural differences and how they affect internal communications. Therefore, in a second step the model has been adapted to the Six Culture Clusters that are presenting the cultural regions of the world. As discussed in the theory, language plays an important role in delivering the messages and employee magazines are more effective when written in the local language, translated by local people. The Six Cultural Clusters help to understand the main differences between regions and how they affect the form and content of employee magazines. Magazines that are distributed worldwide cannot be the same everywhere and need adaptations according to the model. However, companies that have large subsidiaries in a specific country have to go even more deeply and consider the specific cultural features.

Research Methodology

Research applied a case study design analysing the Volkswagen international company headquartered in Germany with a subsidiary in South Africa. The data collection instrument was four employee magazines published by the two companies. The data analysis instrument applied a qualitative content analysis to analyse the written material. The sample included all
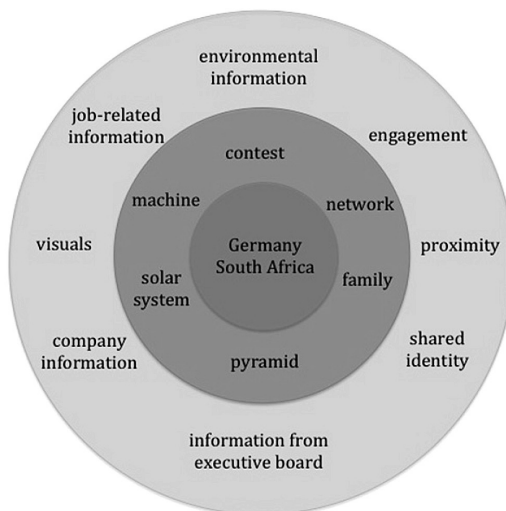

*Figure 1: **Theoretical Model (scheme) of the Organisational Culture of International Companies Depicted through Employee Magazines***

editions published in Germany and South Africa by Volkswagen in 2014. Volkswagen South Africa has an independent internal communication department and creates an independent magazine. As a sample two employee magazines from each country published in the same period of the year were chosen: November and December. In Germany the magazine "autogramm" is developed. It is written in German and also available online for a general public. Volkswagen South Africa creates the magazine "FanFare", which is written in English. Both magazines appear monthly.

Volkswagen was chosen as an exemplary international company, where cultural differences are experienced on a daily basis. In order to inform and build a community in every country alike based on the same company values is a challenging task. The magazines need to be aligned and still take into consideration cultural differences as seen in the model. There are also sectors, in which print media are still more effective than in others. In the automotive industry many employees do not have access to computers, which renders print media like employee magazines very important. For Volkswagen the model will be useful to evaluate the effectiveness of their magazines in two countries.

Volkswagen Group

Germany is the economic leader in Europe and with over 80 million inhabitants after Russia the most populated country. Among other sectors, Germany is a leader in the automobile industry (Freitag & Quesinberry Stokes, 2009, p. 271). Volkswagen is one of the leading automobile companies and active all over the world. VW produces vehicles in 47 different plants and sells them in more than 150 countries. Therefore,

VW has to understand the cultures they are operating in and be able to align internal communication across borders. VW has developed seven values that should guide all employees worldwide and be universal. Shockley-Zalabak (1988) points out that organisational values guide employees in their decision-making and behaviour. The values lie at the core of every organisation's identity. Due to an increasing internationalisation within the company caused by international staffing and international units, the demands toward aligning internal communication are rising (Riekhof, 2006).

Data Processing and Analysis

As mentioned in the theoretical substantiation, the characteristics of employee magazines are divided into rational and emotional factors, as well as into the Six Culture Clusters and the country-specific factors. For the company to achieve either rational or emotional objective, it must include certain elements in-text in the employee magazines. Thus, the following questions were applied during the employee magazine content analysis:
1. Is the rational or emotional criterion found in the magazine? (0 – no; 1 – yes);
2. How is it presented? (1-4: not thorough – very thorough).

The first question includes both the universal factors and the country-specific factors described in the theoretical substantiation. The second question refers to the section where the criteria can be found (which section and page) and how they are presented (heading, subheading, body text, own article, section, image).

Research Results

The vision statement of the Volkswagen Group is made for 2018 and called mach18.

Volkswagen wants to become the "global and environmental leader among automobile manufacturers" by 2018. Their vision is to make this world a mobile, sustainable place with access to all the citizens. Their 10 brands all work together in different segments to define Volkswagen group, as it stands today." Four steps are needed to arrive there in 2018: innovations and new technologies to achieve customer satisfaction and quality; sales of more than 10 million vehicles a year; a long-term return on sales of at least 8 per cent; become the most attractive employer in the industry (Annual Report 2014).

The Volkswagen Group has no official mission statement. However, the company's goal is expressed as follows: "The Group's goal is to offer attractive, safe and environmentally sound vehicles which can compete in an increasingly tough market and set world standards in their respective class" (Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft, 2014).

Volkswagen has articulated seven values and principles for all employees of the group worldwide. These are Customer Proximity, Respect, Create Values, Responsibility, Sustainability, Top Performance, Power of Renewal (Riekhof, 2006, p. 266–267).

Universal factors. The first part of the analysis concentrates on the universal factors and by doing the content analysis it is detected if the magazines include the characteristics and how well they are presented. This part is not concerned about cultural differences yet.

Rational factors. Two issues of the German "autogramm" give job related information and present various departments and their work. A whole section called "Business Locations" is dedicated to the work of various business departments both in Germany and worldwide. In the December issue, for instance, a two-pages long story presents the work of the IT department in the VW headquarter in Wolfsburg. Job related information can only be found in one issue of the "FanFare" and is not very broad. In the December issue the work of the project team of the internal event "Family Day" is presented in detail.

All four magazines provide company information and give more or less detailed information about updates and agreements. Especially the December issue of the "autogramm" gives extensive information on new leaders worldwide, new compliance standards and the introduction of new work clothes. However, also the November issues from Germany and South Africa present the information quite thoroughly, for instance in the editorial (Fanfare) and in a section "Current" (autogramm). The December issue of "Fanfare" does not give sufficient company information, including only an article about the resignation of the CEO.

Environmental information cannot be detected in the sample, with only the November issue of "autogramm" including one story about the automobile sector in general.

When it comes to the recommendation of giving information from the executive board, in particular from the CEO, a statement is included in the December issues of both magazines. However, this seems not to be the case in every issue, as the November issues do not include this information. Moreover, especially in the "autogramm" the CEO only talks to the employees in the preview of the magazine and the statement is relatively short.

Emotional factors. For the characteristic "shared identity" several criteria are essential. The criterion "vision" is covered thoroughly in both magazines from VWSA, with articles focusing on the topic and visuals that show where this step fits into the

vision. In the "autogramm" the vision is not clearly communicated. The November issue does not present or mention it and the December issue mentions it in one article and includes two articles about the vision. However, the word "vision" is not used and it stays unclear where the specific step fits into the vision.

The seven internal values are important in all four issues. Different articles depict especially the values "respect" and "top performance", but also other values are mentioned throughout the magazines like "sustainability" in both December issues and "create values" or "progressiveness".

The "goals & objectives" of the company are mentioned in all four issues. They are often combined with articles about the vision. Therefore, the South African magazines present them more thoroughly and consequently.

The criterion, which is found in all issues and which is presented very thoroughly, is "new developments and achievements". The topics make up the biggest part of the magazines with various sections dedicated to it, such as "Current" in the "autogramm" and "News" in the "FanFare".

The characteristic "engagement" is characterised by the two indicators "feedback possibility" and "role models". The South African "FanFare" does not give the employees any feedback possibility, whereas in the German "autogramm" on the second page the edition notice can be found with all the relevant contact details. However, the employees are not motivated to engage themselves and are not asked actively for their feedback. The same cannot be said, however, for the second criterion, which is visible in all four issues and presented very well. Both magazines give awards to their employees, with the "FanFare" even

having a section called "Awards". In the November issue of the "autogramm", for instance, the most successful inventor and the best apprentice are awarded.

Visuals are an important part of both magazines with at least one image on every page. However, big differences can be found between Germany and South Africa. In the "autogramm" an average of 3–4 pictures per page are counted. In South Africa the number is much higher with 6–8 pictures.

The characteristic "proximity" is considered important both in Germany and South Africa. Both magazines dedicate the largest part to local information. The "autogramm" includes a section "Business Locations", where information from all over Germany but also from all over the world is given. Furthermore, a whole section called "Wolfsburg" gives local information about the headquarter.

Country-specific factors. In the second part of the analysis the authors looked if the indicators for Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Hall's high- and low-context cultures can be found in the magazines and if the results correlate with where the authors placed the two countries on the scale. As can be seen in Figure 2 the findings in the employee magazines are relatively aligned with the cultural dimensions on three of the five dimensions. The results reveal that when it comes to the dimensions individualism/collectivism and long-term/short-term orientation the magazines draw a very different picture. In contrary to Hofstede, who adds South Africa to the individualistic countries, the magazines include more collectivistic indicators. Moreover, many of the indicators for long-term orientation could be detected in the South African magazines and much less in the German magazines.

Now, all five dimensions will be discussed separately.

More of the indicators for the dimension power distance can be found in the South African "FanFare" than in the German "autogramm". Whereas in the first one the company is presented as the employer number 1, in the second one especially status symbols are shown and managers talk mainly. None of the four issues show a special respect for

ference in the pictures chosen. In the South African pictures mostly groups are shown (November: 26; December: 83).

Looking at the indicators found for the third dimension "masculinity" relatively big differences can be seen between the two issues of the "FanFare". The December issue shows more of the indicators for masculinity than the November issue that can be located only slightly above the aver-
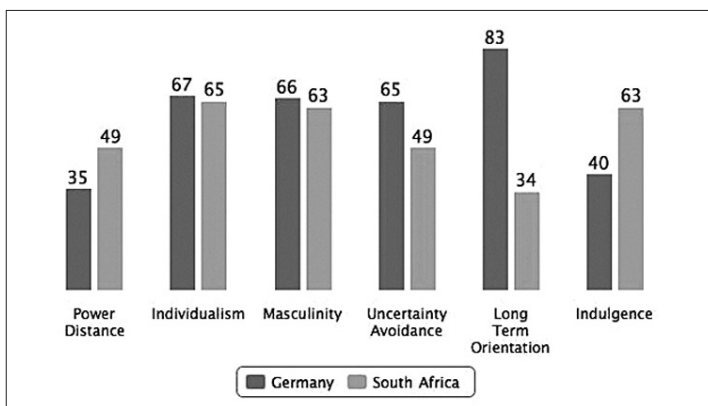

Figure 2: **Cultural dimensions Germany & South Africa (The Hofstede Centre)**

elder people. They are presented in the same way like any other employees and are also not more present.

According to Hofstede Germany and South Africa score almost the same on the dimension "individualism". However, the magazines taken for the analysis paint a different picture. The "autogramm" contains more of the indicators for individualism than the "FanFare" that scores relatively in the middle and shows both individualistic and collectivistic traits. Especially the "well-being of the group" is important throughout the magazines and they are more "particularistic" and non-verbal than the German ones. The "autogramm" shows almost only the individualistic indicators intensively – being much more "universalistic", "verbal" and "explicit". Moreover, there is a big dif-

age. All in all, all four magazines include the indicators for masculinity. Especially stories about "achievement & success" and "competition & winning" are found in all four issues. Relatively few status symbols are shown, with even less focus on that in the "FanFare". However, the South African magazine shows more indicators of femininity, in particular "caring for others & quality of life" with one section dedicated to the people and their wellbeing. Moreover, both issues report on the Family Day, an internal event with the purpose of building a community among the employees and include their families as well. Therefore, in the two issues a lot of the indicators can be found as well.

In accordance with Hofstede, who claims that Germany is a country with high

uncertainty avoidance, also the magazines mirror this and show many of the indicators. South Africa, on the other hand, shows only a few of the indicators. As can be seen, the voice of "experts" is not relevant and "rules & structure" can be found but are much less important than in the German "autogramm". The two issues of "FanFare", for instance, have a clear structure but every page looks slightly different and various colours are used, whereas the German magazines stick to the corporate colours and every page follows the same structure.

On the last dimension long-term/short-term orientation Germany and South Africa score very differently. This picture drawn by the analysis is contradictory. The South African magazines show much more of the indicators of long-term orientation than expected. "Long term plans" and the "market position" are present, with a focus on the "long term plans" of Volkswagen South Africa, which are presented very thoroughly. The German "autogramm" even contains articles about the "bottom line", which is an indicator for short-term orientation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Research analysis reveals that both magazines miss some of the rational factors that are important in order to reach the internal objective of informing the employees. Employee magazines are an instrument to share "job related information" and in the South African "FanFare" almost none of this information can be found. Both magazines do not present "environmental information". Moreover, only little "information from the executive board" is given. However, the missing information can be explained by a low power distance index of both countries. The only characteristic that could be found relatively well is "company information". It

is strongly recommended for both Germany and South Africa to revise their employee magazines and try to include more of the rational factors.

When it comes to the emotional factors a lot of the recommended characteristics are shown in the magazines. There are some recommendations for both Volkswagen Germany and Volkswagen South Africa. In the "autogramm", the criteria "vision" and "goals & objectives" should be presented more consistently and explicitly because it is important for employees to know where the company is heading to in order to create a "shared identity". Both magazines should include "feedback possibilities" that go beyond the contact details and give employees the chance to participate actively in the discussions. Volkswagen Germany scores relatively low on visuals.

The second level of the analysis was relevant to see how the cultural differences are visible in the magazines from Germany and South Africa. The model gives recommendations on what characteristics employee magazines from different countries have to include in order to being culturally relevant and thus reaching the internal objectives. First of all, the German employee magazines fit into the machine cluster. However, after conducting the analysis it becomes clear that it is not so easy to classify South Africa into one of the Six Culture Clusters. South Africa belongs to the pyramid cluster. However, the magazines show only a few criteria of high power distance and uncertainty avoidance. The contest cluster seems to fit better. On the other hand, the magazines do not include many of the criteria of individualism. Still, the contest cluster is the closest to the findings. This shows that companies that want to be successful and create culturally relevant employee magazines need to go deeper and look at the

specifics of one country, rather than dividing the world only into the Six Culture Cluster.

On the first dimension power distance the magazines reflect the theory relatively well. Only a few of the indicators of high power distance can be found in the German "autogramm". The editors could include some more of the indicators, for instance by presenting Volkswagen as an "employer no. 1" without exaggerating and over-doing it.

Whereas in the German "autogramm" many of the indicators for "individualism" were found, in the South African "FanFare" a lot more collectivistic indicators were present. This does not represent the theory, where South Africa is almost as individualistic as Germany. Furthermore, Germany is not as individualistic as the magazines would suggest. This leads to some recommendations. The "autogramm" could include more of the collectivistic indicators, for instance present more groups in the pictures and show that they care for the well-being of the employees as a group by presenting teams and not only individual fighters.

The findings are aligned with Hofstede's findings when it comes to the third dimension "masculinity/femininity". Both countries are masculine and this can be seen in the magazines as well. They editors should continue presenting stories of success and achievement and winning.

On the dimension "uncertainty avoidance" the "FanFare" mirrors the theory and includes both indicators of high and low uncertainty avoidance. However, although Germany is a country with high uncertainty avoidance, the "autogramm" goes beyond it and includes far more of the indicators than are needed. Volkswagen is an innovative company – this is even articulated in the corporate values and vision. Therefore, innovation should be seen as something positive in the employee magazine as well by presenting new ideas and successful innovations more thoroughly.

According to Hofstede South Africa is a short-term oriented country. In the "FanFare" almost only indicators of "long-term orientation" could be found. It is recommended to show also quick results and bottom line information and not only the long term plans in order to fulfil the employees' expectations, who like hearing about short-term goals. For instance, like in the German magazine at the end of the year the financial success of Volkswagen South Africa could be shown, as well as up-to-date successes. On the other hand, Germany is much more long-term oriented than the magazines let readers believe. The editors should focus more on the company's long-term plans and market position as articulated in the vision. This is strongly recommended, as the vision is not communicated enough, as mentioned before.

Finally, the research findings confirm that the substantiated theoretical model can be applied in various international companies attempting to detect how well the employee magazines serve in achieving the rational and emotional goals in the organization.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annual Report 2014 (2014). *Group Strategy 2018.* Retrieved from <http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/the_group/strategy.html>.

BARTELS, J.; PETERS, O.; de JONG, M. D. T.; PRUYN, A.Th.H. & Van der MOLEN, M. (2010). Horizontal and vertical communication as determinants of professional and organizational identification. *Personnel Review*, 39(2), 210–226.

BARTELS, J.; PRUYN, A.T.H.; De JONG, M.D.T. & JOUSTRA, I. (2007). Multiple organizational

identification levels and the impact of perceived external prestige and communication climate. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28, 173–190.

BENTELE, G.; FRÖHLICH, R. & SZYSZKA, P. (2008). *Handbuch der Public Relations.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

BERGER, B. (2011). *Employee / Organizational Communications*. Retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/employee-organizational-communications/>.

BREYER-MAYLÄNDER, T. (2009). *Aktives Wertemanagement. Basis der Unternehmenskommunikation*. Renningen: Expert Verlag.

BURGESS, D. (2005). What motivates employees to transfer knowledge outside their work unit? *Journal of Business Communication,* 42, 324–348.

BYRNE, Z. S. & LeMAY, E. (2006). Different Media for Organizational Communication: Perceptions of Quality and Satisfaction. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 21(2), 149–173.

CARLSON, J. R. & ZMUD, R. W. (1999). Channel Expansion Theory and the Experiential Nature of Media Richness Perceptions. *The Academy of Management*, 42(2), 153–170.

CHARLES, M. (2007). Language Matters in Global Communication. *Journal of Business Communication*, 44(3), 260–282.

CHENEY, G. & CHRISTENSEN, L. (2001). Organizational identity linkages between internal and external communication. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds). *The New Handbook of Organizational Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage.

CORNELISSEN, J. (2014). *Corporate Communication – A guide to Theory & Practice*. New York: Sage.

D'APRIX, R. (1996). *Communicating for change:* Connecting the workplace with the marketplace. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

DAFT, R. L. & LENGEL, R. H. (1984). Information Richness: A New Approach to Managerial Behavior and Organization Design. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 6, 191–233.

De RIDDER, J. (2004). Organisational communication and supportive employees. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 14(3), 20–31.

DEETZ, S. (2001). Conceptual foundations. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.). The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods (p. 3-46). SAGE Publications.

DOLPHIN, R. R. (2005). Internal Communications: Today's Strategic Imperative. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 11(3), p. 171–190.

El-SHINNAWY, M. & MARKUS, M. L. (1997). The poverty of media richness theory. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 46(4), 443–467.

FREDRIKSSON, R.; BARNER-RASMUSSEN, W. & PIEKKARI, R. (2006). The multinational corporation as a multilingual organization: The notion of common corporate language. *Corporate Communications*: An International Journal, 1(4), 406–423.

FREITAG, A. R. & QUESINBERRY STOKES, A. (2009). *Global Public Relations. Spanning borders, spanning cultures.* Oxon: Routledge.

GRINIG, J. E. (ed.) (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

HALL, E. (1976). *Beyond Culture.* New York/Garden City: Anchor Press.

HALL, E. (1983). *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*. Garden City: Anchor Press.

HALL, E. & HALL, M. R. (1990). *Understanding Cultural Differences*. Maine/Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

HOFSTEDE, G.; HOFSTEDE, G. J. & MINKOV, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations*: Software of the Mind (3rd ed.). New York, USA: McGraw-Hill.

HOFSTEDE, G.; NEUIJEN, B.; OHAYV, D. & SANDERS, G. (1990). Measuring organizational cultures: qualitative and quantitative study across twenty cases. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35, 286–316.

HUME, J. & LEONARD, A. (2014). Exploring the strategic potential of internal communication in international non-governmental organisations. *Public Relations Review*, 40, 294–304.

KASSIS HENDERSON, J. & LOUHIALA-SALMINEN, L. (2011). Does language affect trust in global professional contexts? Perceptions of international business professionals. *Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization,* 2(1), 15–33.

KITCHEN, P. J. (1997). *PR: Principles and Practice*. London: Thomson Business.

KLÖFLER, F. & NIES, U. (2001). *Erfolgreich durch interne Kommunikation. Mitarbeiter besser informieren, motivieren, aktivieren* (2nd ed.). Neuwied, Kriftel: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag GmbH.

L'ETANG, J. L. (2005). Critical public relations: some reflections. *Public Relations Review*, 31, 521–526.

LAWLER, E. E. (1989). With HR help, all managers can practice high-involvement management. *Personnel*, April, 26–31.

LINJUAN, Rita Men (2014). Strategic Internal Communication: Transformational Leadership,

Communication Channels, and Employee Satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 28(2), 264–284.

LOUHIALA-SALMINEN, L. & KANKAAN-RANTA, A. (2012). Language as an issue in international internal communication: English or local language? If English, what English? *Public Relations Review*, 38, 262–269.

MARSCHAN-PIEKKARIA, R.; WELCH, D. & WELCH, L. (1999). In the shadow: the impact of language on structure, power and communication in the multinational. *International Business Review*, 8, 421–440.

McCALLISTER, L. (1981). The interpersonal side of internal communication. *Public Relations Journal*, 37(2), 20–23.

MOOIJ, M. de (2010). *Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes*. (3rd ed.). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

NGWENYAMA, O. K. & LEE, A. S. (1997). Communication Richness in Electronic Mail: Critical Social Theory and the Contextuality of Meaning. *MIS Quarterly*, 21(2), 145–167.

PIWINGER, M. & ZERFASS, A. (2007). *Handbuch der Unternehmenskommunikation*. Wiesbaden: GWV Fachverlage GmbH.

RIEKHOF, H.-C. (ed.) (2006). *Strategien der Personalentwicklung*. Mit Praxisbeispielen von Bosch, Linde, Philips, Siemens, Volkswagen und Weka (6th ed.). Wiesbaden: Gabler.

ROSENFELD, L. B.; RICHMAN, J. M. & MAY, S. K. (2004). Information Adequacy, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Culture in a Dispersed-Network Organization. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32(1), 28–54.

SCHICK, S. (2010). *Interne Unternehmenskommunikation. Strategien entwickeln, Strukturen schaffen, Prozesse steuern* (4th ed.). Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel Verlag.

SHOCKLEY-ZALABAK, P. (1988). *Fundamentals of organizational communication: knowledge,* *sensitivity, skills, values*. New York/London: Longman.

SMIDTS, A.; PRUYN, A. T. H. & Van RIEL, C. B. M. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organisational identification. *Academy of Management journal*, 44(5), 1051–1062.

SMITH, L. & MOUNTER, P. (2005). Effective Internal Communication. London/Sterling, Va.: Kogan Page Limited. the impact of perceived external prestige and communication climate. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28, 173–190

TOMCZAK, T.; ESCH, F.-R.; KERNSTOCK, J. & HERMANN, A. (ed.) (2012). *Behavioral Branding*. Wie Mitarbeiterverhalten die Marke stärkt (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: Gabler.

VICTOR, D. (1992). *International business communication*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft (December 31, 2014). The Group. Retrieved from: <http://www.volkswagenag.com/content/vwcorp/content/en/the_group.html>.

WELCH, M. (2011). The evolution of the employee engagement concept: Communication Implications. *Corporate Communications:* An International Journal, 16(4), 328–346.

WELCH, M. & JACKSON, P. R. (2007). Rethinking internal communication: a stakeholder approach. *Corporate Communications*: An International Journal, 12(2), 177–198.

WILSON, A. M. (2001). Understanding organisational culture and the implications for corporate marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(3/4), 353–367.

WURSTEN, H. & FADRHONC, T. (2012). *International marketing and culture.* Retrieved from <http://geert-hofstede.com/tl_files/Marketing_and_Culture_itim_International.pdf>.

YEOMANS, L. (2014). Internal communication. In R. Tench, & L. Yeomans (Eds.). *Exploring Public Relations* (3rd ed.). Harlow, England: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

TARPTAUTINIŲ KOMPANIJŲ ORGANIZACINĖ KULTŪRA KOMPANIJOS NAUJIENLAIŠKIUOSE (AUTOMOBILIŲ PRAMONĖS VOKIETIJOJE IR PIETŲ AFRIKOJE ATVEJIS)

Miriam Grabuschnig, Jurgita Vizgirdaitė

S a n t r a u k a

Vidinė organizacijos komunikacija su darbuotojais turi du esminius tikslus: darbuotojų informavimas ir organizacinės kultūros kūrimas bei jos puoselėjimas. Pirmasis tikslas yra labiau racionalus, o antrasis akcentuoja emocinį organizacijos siekį. Tokiu būdu išskiriami du poreikiai – racionalūs (informavimo) ir emociniai (organizacinės kultūros, psichologinio klimato), kurių organizacija siekia kompanijos nau-

jienlaiškiais. Naujienlaiškiai yra viena efektyviausių optimalių priemonių, kad būtų galima pasiekti visus darbuotojus. Tačiau šiuolaikinės tarptautinės kompanijos suvokia, kad šie tikslai skirtingose jų dukterinėse įmonėse turėtų būti siekiami skirtingai – akcentuojant tiek naujienlaiškio turinį, tiek formą. Dėl šios priežasties esminis šio straipsnio tikslas – pagrįsti trisluoksnį modelį, vadovaujantis tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos, kultūrinių dimensijų mokslininkų teorijomis (Hall, Hofstede ir kiti). Pirmasis sluoksnis yra bendrinis ir aiškina, kaip kompanija turi informuoti darbuotojus ir kurti organizacinę kultūrą pasitelkdama naujienlaiškius. Antrasis sluoksnis analizuoja pasaulio regionų, kultūrų (pvz., Lotynų Amerikos ir Ispanijos) ypatumus vadovaujantis šešiais kultūrų klasteriais. Trečiasis sluoksnis (centrinis) yra pats detaliausias.

Jis analizuoja konkrečių šalių savybes. Siekiant patikrinti pagrįsto teorinio modelio veiksmingumą, buvo pasirinkta motininė tarptautinė kompanija, leidžianti kompanijos naujienlaiškį dukterinėse kompanijose. Pasitelkiant kokybinio turinio analizės metodą, buvo tiriami pasaulyje populiarios automobilių kompanijos „Volkswagen" naujienlaiškiai motininėje kompanijoje Vokietijoje ir dukterinėje kompanijoje Pietų Afrikoje. Tyrimo rezultatai patvirtina teorinio modelio veiksmingumą. Rezultatai taip pat detalizuoja, kad abi šalys turi tobulintinų sričių informuojant darbuotojus ir kuriant organizacinę kultūrą. Šio straipsnio teorinis reikšmingumas – pagrįstas teorinis modelis. Praktinis reikšmingumas yra šio modelio pritaikymas tarptautinėse kompanijose, siekiančiose atitikti šalies, kurioje vykdoma veikla, kultūrą.

Įteikta 2015 m. liepos 21 d.