

CORPORATE STEWARDSHIP IN PUBLIC RELATIONS HERE AND LÁ
AND/E AQUI AND THERE: HOW TOP COMPANIES IN THE U.S. AND BRAZIL
USE THEIR WEBSITES TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

by

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(Under the Direction of Lynne M. Sallot)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the application of stewardship strategies on multinational corporations' websites of the 23 *Fortune* and 22 *Exame* largest-revenue-earning companies conducting business in both the U.S. and Brazil. An extension of Waters' (2011) study, this analysis further explores whether home and host countries' corporate websites employ those strategies differently because of cultural differences. An overall question this study asks is: given top corporations' apparent interests in global expansion, are they becoming more culturally sensitive in their online stewardship strategies to engage target stakeholders? While mixed, results suggest the answer to this question leans toward no. Common practices of stewardship strategies were found among U.S. and Brazil corporate websites, demonstrating that online organization-public relationship cultivation does not seek to distinguish cultural aspects, but rather to overlook them.

INDEX WORDS: Stewardship strategies, Online organization-public relationship, Corporate Websites, Public Relations, United States, Brazil, Cultural Dimensions

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my beloved husband, Francisco Azevedo, and to my mother, Noeli Scherer.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES	5
Aspects of Organization-Public Relationships in Public Relations	5
Stewardship Strategies in the Public Relations Process	6
Measuring Organization-Public Relationships in Online Corporate Websites.....	9
Public Relations in the Multinational Context.....	11
The GLOBE Study.....	15
Applying Cultural Concepts to Public Relations Practice Online	15
Country-of-Origin Effect in Public Relations.....	17
Research Hypotheses	19
3 METHODOLOGY	23
Replication and Extension of Waters' (2011) Research.....	23
Description of the Present Study.....	25
Data Analysis and Inter-Coder Reliability.....	27
4 RESULTS	31

Examining Application of Stewardship Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites.....	32
Effects of Country of Ownership on Stewardship Strategies Used on Corporate Websites.....	39
Effects of Global Industry Classification Standard Sector Categorizations on Stewardship Strategies on Corporate Websites	41
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	50
Examining Stewardship Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites.....	51
Examining Stewardship Strategies and Country of Ownership.....	60
Examining Stewardship Strategies and Companies' Global Industry Classification Standard Sector Categorizations	62
Representations of Ownership and the Country-of-Origin Effect	63
Limitations and Future Research	66
Implications for Practice	69
Conclusion	70
REFERENCES	78
APPENDIX	
A Code sheet.....	89

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: United States-based Companies on the 2013 <i>Fortune</i> 500 List, Their GICS Categories, and Country of Ownership.....	29
Table 3.2: Brazil-based Companies on the 2012 <i>Exame</i> 100 List, Their GICS Categories, and Country of Ownership.....	30
Table 4.1: Frequency Distributions of Reciprocity Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites.....	44
Table 4.2: Frequency Distributions of Responsibility Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites.....	45
Table 4.3: Frequency Distributions of Reporting Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites.....	46
Table 4.4: Frequency Distributions of Relationship Nurturing Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites.....	47
Table 4.5: Results of ANOVA of Stewardship Strategies by Country of Ownership.....	49
Table 4.6: Results of ANOVA of Stewardship Strategies by GICS Categories.....	49
Table 5.1: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results	71

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 5.1: Screenshot of U.S. General Motors website (2014).....	72
Figure 5.2: Screenshot of U.S. Walmart website (2014)	72
Figure 5.3: Screenshot of U.S. Boeing website (2014).....	73
Figure 5.4: Screenshot of U.S. HP website (2014).....	73
Figure 5.5: Screenshot of Brazil's Cargill website (2014)	74
Figure 5.6: Screenshot of U.S. Procter & Gamble website (2014).....	74
Figure 5.7: Screenshot of U.S. Samsung website (2014)	75
Figure 5.8: Screenshot of U.S. Chevron website (2014)	75
Figure 5.9: Screenshot of U.S. Exxon Mobil website (2014).....	76
Figure 5.10: Screenshot of U.S. Microsoft website (2014)	76
Figure 5.11: Screenshot of Brazil's Raízen website (2014)	77
Figure 5.12: Screenshot of U.S. Raízen website (2014).....	77

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the epicenter of public relations research, the number of studies of online organization-public relationships has grown exponentially as societies continue to inhabit more of the virtual environment. As organization-public interactions increasingly are transacted online via the World Wide Web, more research is being conducted to measure, analyze and understand relationship cultivation on Internet-based platforms. To date, interpersonal communication strategies commonly have served as measures of online organization-public relationships (Ki & Hon, 2006, 2009; Sweetser, 2010; Waters & Lord, 2009) along with dialogic approaches (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

However, according to Waters (2011), those measures have not successfully explored organizational performance in online relationship cultivation as thoroughly as they might have. To prove his point, Waters (2011) demonstrated the value to *Fortune* 100 corporations of stewardship strategies to relationship-building with virtual stakeholders. Originally explicated by Kelly (2001) for nonprofit organization fundraising applications, according to Waters (2011), these five stewardship strategies can be harnessed by for-profit corporations via their websites to nurture their online relationships with their various publics.

Yet, despite the evolution from the one-way, static communication styles of the Web 1.0 to the ever-more interactive capabilities of the Internet, primarily via the booming social media landscape, the challenges of cultural-difference implications apparently have remained. Until a few years ago, research indicated that local cultures are rarely reflected in online corporate

communications (Goodman, 2009; Robbins & Stylianou, 2003). While Western corporations were among the first to adopt Internet technologies as a way to communicate their default business philosophies and practices to their global audiences, they had yet to adapt their messages and communication styles to individuals in local cultures they are attempting to engage (Robbins & Stylianou, 2003; Rosenbloom & Larsen, 2003). Although the Internet exists as a global medium facilitating interactive communications, studies until now have suggested that users are more likely to employ online platforms to engage like-minded individuals in the same region, reinforcing regional cultural values and beliefs (Burgmann, Kitchen & Williams, 2006; Zahir, Dobin & Hunter, 2002). Even organizations with the most successful social media efforts have reflected local regions and cultures rather than adopting a more global approach (Stelzner, 2012). Scholars have been calling for a more blended approach, advocating glocal strategies to facilitate global interconnectivity while embracing differences in global cultures (Ess & Sudweeks, 2006). An overall question this study asks is: given top corporations' apparent interest in global expansion, are they becoming more culturally sensitive in their online stewardship strategies to engage target stakeholders?

More recently, Waters and Lo (2012) adapted some cultural concepts and dimensions from Hall (1976), Hofstede (1980, 2001) and the Global Leadership Organizational Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004) to frame their content analysis of Facebook profiles of 225 nonprofit organizations in the U.S., China and Turkey; the study was intended to be indicative of multicultural approaches to online communications by nonprofits located in different countries; findings were mixed and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Only one known study has extended Waters' (2011) online corporate stewardship

research to an international setting, and that was by scholars in Turkey (Suher & Yesilyurt, 2012), who conducted a content analysis of the websites of the top 75 corporations listed in 2010 on *Fortune Magazine Turkey*'s website. Although Kelly's (2001) stewardship strategies according to Waters' (2011) measures were represented in the Turkish corporations' websites, they were not implemented effectively enough to stimulate dialogue with all intended stakeholders (Suher & Yesilyurt, 2012). Although much attention has been given to evaluations of online organization-public relationship, stewardship strategies are yet to be further explored in online for-profit contexts.

Furthermore, Country-of-Origin (COO) effect theory (Billgen, 2013; Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 1994) has demonstrated its relevance to public relations strategies and relationship building (Billgen, 2013). Considering that organizations have publics worldwide and the Internet offers a global means to communicate, it is important to evaluate how organizations convey their origins to foreign publics (Huang, 2001; Jo & Kim, 2003). Yet, the COO effect has been studied only twice in public relations (Billgen, 2013; Han & Wang, 2012).

Therefore, the present study set out to further examine online organization-public relationships through the three different theoretical lenses of stewardship applications (Kelly, 2001; Waters, 2011), cross-cultural concepts and dimensions (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004) and COO effect (Billgen, 2013; Han & Wang, 2012) – to evaluate how multinational corporations based in two different countries – Brazil and the United States – cultivate online relationships with their various publics via their websites at home and abroad, in other words, “aqui e there” and “here and lá.”

This study will address three sets of hypotheses presented in the next chapter to test whether multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil apply stewardship

strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently and identify whether effects, if any, can be attributed to differences in corporations' country-of-ownership and global industry categorizations.

By testing these hypotheses, this study aims to add to the current body of public relations theory and research and explore the potential for further study of stewardship strategies and COO effect on online organization-public relationship cultivation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Aspects of Organization-Public Relationships In Public Relations

It has been a long time since the first proposed study of the organization–public relationship (Ferguson, 1984) called scholars’ attention to the matter of analyzing public relations as a central piece in building and maintaining interactions between organizations and their stakeholders. As the topic advanced in public relations scholarship, different examinations have identified various attributes in conceptualizations of organization-public relationships, such as interpersonal communication (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Ledingham, Bruning, Thomlison & Lesko, 1997) and dialogic approaches (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002).

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) stated that interpersonal communication facilitates public relationships management once organizations and public recognize they are partners together in a relationship. The construct of interpersonal communication involves openness, involvement, trust, commitment, and investment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). As a result, it is suggested that practicing interpersonal communication allows organizations to interact and influence attitudes to engender positive responses from their publics (Bruning, 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000).

As interpersonal communication studies advanced in public relations research, Kent and Taylor (2002) argued the importance of building interpersonal relationships between organizations and their publics by “creating organizational mechanisms for facilitating dialogue”

through procedural approaches to dialogic public relations practice (p. 32). They posited that a dialogic approach consists of five principles: mutuality, or the recognition of organization-public relationships; propinquity, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics; empathy, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests; risks, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and commitment, or the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002). This dialogic approach has been used to examine further online interpersonal relationship building in various organizational communication channels (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; McAllister-Spooner, 2009; Park & Reber, 2008; Reber & Kim, 2006; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007).

Stewardship Strategies in the Public Relations Process

Even though interpersonal communication and dialogic approaches have been a focus for diverse studies of organization-public relationships, Kelly (1998) proposed an alternate approach to organization-public relationship management focusing on the concept of stewardship from fundraising practice as a means of enhancing relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. According to Jeavons (1994), “Steward speaks of a person who is concerned with the right ordering and management of all the affairs and concerns – including what we now call economic concerns – of a household or community” (p. 111).

To Kelly (2001), public relations professionals are stewards since they are responsible for “every aspect of an organization’s behavior that might affect relations with supportive publics” (p. 284). She identified four stewardship dimensions – reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing (Kelly, 1998, 2001), to be described in more detail below. She further explicated these stewardship dimensions and suggested they are applicable in other contexts

where maximizing organization-public relationships is a goal (Kelly, 2001), even adding stewardship as a fifth step to the ROPE (research, objectives, programming, and evaluation) model, developed by Hendrix (1998). According to Kelly (2001), the addition of stewardship to create a new ROPES model “makes the public relations process truly cyclical,” arguing that other models of relationship management have not successfully delineated the public relations process, since “they ignore ongoing relationships” (p. 279). Moreover, regardless of which public an organization is interacting with – whether donors, investors, members of a community or the media, government officials, or customers, for example – ROPES explains how organization-public relationships should be effectively and efficiently managed (Kelly, 2001).

In accord with Kelly’s approach, some public relations scholars have conducted further investigations of stewardship applications outside of non-profit environments (Clark, 2000; Coombs & Holladay, 2001; Driscoll & Starik, 2004), although they may not have labeled dimensions studied, such as reporting and reciprocity, as strong *stewardship* components of relationship management (Waters, 2011).

Ultimately, interest has grown among scholars who support the use of stewardship dimensions as such as foundations for relationship management in public relations (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2003; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Waters, 2009, 2010; Waters, Burke, Jackson & Buning, 2011). Riffing off Kelly (1998), Hon and Grunig (1999) agreed the use of stewardship strategies in relationship management represents a “final but missing step in popular formulas for describing the public relations process” (p. 17).

Stewardship dimensions

Kelly (2001) explicated the four stewardship dimensions, which Waters (2011) and others have elaborated, as follows:

Reciprocity represents the gratitude organizations should express as a way to recognize their stakeholders' involvement. Waters (2011) posited that different types of stakeholder's recognitions range from partnering activities to simple valuable conversations between organizations' representatives and stakeholders. Simply stated, demonstrating caring for a stakeholder public reflects an organization's good stewardship (Waters, 2011, citing Ryan, 1994).

Responsibility. Acting socially responsible is a way for an organization to show it is capable of translating into action what it sustains in its mission and values, and that it is worthy of support (Waters, 2011). An organization's responsibility to its stakeholders has grown in meaning since the dimension covers not only responsibility for the quality of product and services, but also an organization's sense of responsible behaviors in a community.

Reporting consists of an organization's feedback to its publics. Reporting to publics what has been done, is being done and will be done gives an organization the opportunity to earn stakeholders' continued support and trust. Updating stakeholders on the organization's performance and achievement of goals and objectives reinforces the organization's commitment to listen to what stakeholders have to say and demand, be it complaints or compliments (Ledingham, 2001).

Relationship Nurturing focuses on extra efforts organizations must make to maintain credibility with stakeholders and assure stakeholders that they are valuable to the organization. Organizations need to recognize the importance of their publics in their decision-making, and acknowledge that they and their publics mutually benefit from their relationship. Organizations must show stakeholders they respect and care about them, and appreciate their involvement (Waters, 2011).

Measuring Organization-Public Relationships in Online Corporate Websites

As public relations' main principle, cultivating relationships between organizations and their stakeholders demands evaluation to better understand and maintain the relationship dynamic (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999). Ultimately, public relations scholars and practitioners became increasingly interested in how organizations use the Internet to interact with their publics (Coombs, 1998; Esrock & Leichty, 2000; Hachigian & Hallahan, 2003; Jo & Kim, 2003; Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Will & Callison, 2006). Jo and Kim (2003) claimed to be essential that organizations employ the Web not only as a medium of communication but as a way to engage with stakeholders.

As more public relations scholars have invested in studying organizational relationships (Clarkson, 1995; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2001; Jensen, 2002; Ledingham, 2003), measuring those interactions has become a growing topic of interest and discussion (Broom & Dozier, 1990; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). Early measures were based on adaptations of interpersonal strategies to public relations situations (Waters, 2011). Ki and Hon (2006, 2009), for instance, explored websites' elements in order to analyze access, networking, openness, positivity, and sharing of tasks as online interpersonal strategies of organizational relationships. Additionally, with the increasing interest in analyzing online relationship cultivation, the dialogic communication approach appeared as another alternative proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998). These scholars considered dialogical communication as part of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical communication in which dialogue is the product from that communication used to solicit, consider, and adjust to stakeholder feedback (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003).

Since the online environment has been considered a common ground on which to build organization-public relationships (Hachigian & Hallahan, 2003; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Will & Callison, 2006), websites have long become a favorite online public relations tool to foster organization-public relationships (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; Park & Reber, 2008). Waters' (2011) Study of Stewardship Strategies in *Fortune* 100 Corporate Websites

The most relevant measures of organization-public relationships to the present study involve the stewardship strategies since they are believed to be essential to effective management of organizational-public relationships (Kelly, 2001). Waters' 2011 content analysis of the use of stewardship strategies employed on *Fortune* 100 corporate websites are the foundation for this study, and Waters' (2011) research has the distinction of being the first to apply stewardship strategies to any for-profit corporate entities. Details of methods Waters (2011) used are included in the next chapter.

After content analysis, Waters (2011) found significant representations of the stewardship strategies on the organizations' websites with Kelly's conceptualizations of stewardship translating "remarkably well" to elements of corporate websites (p. 134). The most frequently applied strategies involved responsibility stewardship by reporting details of goods and services and information about guiding philosophy. Reciprocity most often was expressed by specific sections of websites designated for different stakeholder groups, most often for investors. Various types of organizational publications posted to websites – such as annual reports, fact sheets and news releases among others – bolstered reporting strategies, as did operating an online newsroom for media. Relationship nurturing had the lowest levels of application by the *Fortune* 100 websites; for example, in 2010 only 31% promoted the company's social media platforms.

There were some differences in stewardship strategies used by global industry categorizations. Companies providing goods and services used reciprocity by means of special promotions for website visitors more often than companies in the other sectors. Information technology and manufacturing-sector companies demonstrated responsibility by providing contact information more often than companies in the other sectors. Companies in manufacturing, consumer goods/services and petroleum industries sectors used reporting via providing environmental impact reports more often than companies in the other sectors. Transportation industries, telecommunications and information technology-sector companies were more likely to nurture relationships through social media than companies in the other sectors, and healthcare, manufacturing and information technology-sector companies were more likely to nurture relationships by offering opportunities to request information on their websites than companies in the other sectors.

Public Relations in the Multinational Context

On the global public relations practice front, studies have suggested that organizations no longer limit interactions within local communities but, instead, they have expanded simultaneous communication among transnational publics (Molleda, Connolly-Ahern & Quinn, 2005; Wakefield, 2008).

The present study sought to examine stewardship strategies on online websites of multinational corporations in different countries because it is believed that international settings may influence the way organizations manage their public relationships on the Web.

According to Botan (1992), public relations management in multinational corporations has been conceptualized within models identified by Kinzer and Bohn (1985). The two considered most common are the ethnocentric model and the polycentric model.

Ethnocentric vs. Polycentric Public Relations Practice

Ethnocentric and polycentric approaches are opposing orientations to international public relations practice. The ethnocentric model takes a one-size-fits-all approach, suggesting that public relations is the same in other countries as in its country of origin (Maddox, 1993). Those who adhere to ethnocentric practice operate from the position that principles of public relations are fixed regardless of external factors such as cultural diversity among different nations. The polycentric model assumes a culturally relative perspective grounded in beliefs that public relations should be practiced differently in other cultures. A hybrid approach suggests some generic public relations principles, strategies and tactics are appropriate “blueprints” for application in all cultures and societies (Brinkerhoff & Ingle, 1989). Monochronic versus polychronic concepts of time also help explain differences in culture (Hall & Hall, 1995).

High-context vs. Low-context Cultures

Hall (1976) initially employed the terms “high context” and “low context” while distinguishing cross-cultural concepts applicable to communications. In monochronic or low-context cultures, as in the United States, schedules and deadlines are firm, privacy is valued, promptness is expected and rewarded, and communications tend to be more open with information widely available. In polychronic cultures, as in much of Latin America, plans are fluid, change easily and often; schedules and budgets are treated as guidelines, not rules; and furthering relations is considered more important than property rights or privacy.

According to Curtin and Gaither (2007), these contextual cultural differences alone might call for different public relations practices in the United States compared with Latin America. Further, Taylor (2000) argued the ways through which organizations effectively communicate with international publics depend on a variety of cultural and societal forces. These cultural and

societal influences will affect style of the communications between MNCs and their publics in their host nations. Taylor (2000) believed that “the world is a complexity of cultures and variations that affect how publics respond to organizational messages” (p. 291). For example, previous studies on user perceptions of website design found differences related to uncertainty avoidance, and country-specific economic and technological conditions (Cyr, 2013; Dinev, Bellotto, Hart, Russo, Serra, & Colautti, 2006), as well as trust, satisfaction, and website loyalty (Cyr, 2008).

Hofstede’s Cultural Constructs

The work of Geert Hofstede (1980), known for defining culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another,” draws several distinctions among cultures that may further explain differences in public relations practice in different countries (p. 25).

Hofstede (2001) proposed five major cultural constructs – power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation – and the Hofstede website (<http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>) facilitates comparisons between countries across those constructs. For the present study, the countries of interest are Brazil and the United States. Following are descriptions of Hofstede’s constructs along with scores across the constructs obtained for the U.S. and Brazil in two-country comparisons conducted via the Hofstede website on November 1, 2013 (<http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>):

Power distance expresses attitudes of a culture towards power and the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. With a score of 69, Brazil reflects a society that respects

hierarchy and accepts inequalities among people, while a score of 40 for the United States reflects its “liberty and justice for all” values.

Individualism measures the degree of interdependence a society imposes on its members, how much individuals integrate into a group, and whether they define themselves as “I” or “we.” Brazil’s score of 38 suggests that from birth its people are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, such as extended families offering protection in exchange for loyalty; its score of 91 represents the United States’ loosely-knit society in which individuals are expected to look out for themselves and their immediate families while enjoying great mobility and frequent interactions with strangers, making its citizens self-reliant.

Masculinity accounts for differences in distribution of gender roles in a culture with masculine individuals driven to be the best and feminine individuals motivated by liking what they do. Brazil’s score of 49 recognizes a softer culture which values consensus and sympathy for the underdog; conflicts are avoided at home and work. Its 62 score reflects the United States’ orientation to be the best it can and winner takes all; its people “live to work” and may boast of success and status; conflicts are resolved at individual levels with the goal to win.

Uncertainty avoidance measures how well a culture copes with ambiguity or difference and the fact the future can never be predicted nor controlled. With a score of 76, Brazil shows a strong need for rules and structure in society but its people are passionate, demonstrative and fun-loving, while a score of 46 for the United States suggests it accepts a degree of uncertainty along with new ideas, innovative products and tolerance for freedom of expression.

Long-term orientation measures the extent a culture displays a future-oriented pragmatism instead of a more conventional short-term perspective rooted model in history and tradition. At 65, Brazil is oriented toward the long-term as are Asian societies; Brazilians accept

more than one truth and accept change as part of life. The United States at 29 takes short-term views with an emphasis on absolute truth in all matters; individuals strive for quick results at work, and companies in the United States measure and report financial performance quarterly.

The GLOBE Study

Building on and extending Hofstede's (1980, 2001) work, the Global Leadership Organizational Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (House et al., 2004) ranked 62 societies on nine dimensions. One of them of potential interest in the present study – performance orientation – suggests that cultures high on performance orientation value results more than relationships, emphasizes performance, rewards achievement, and considers feedback essential for improvement (House et al., 2004). Like low-context cultures, those cultures high on performance orientation also value direct explicit communication while cultures low on performance orientation revere relationships, loyalty and belonging, while money is unacceptable as a motivator and assertiveness is avoided (House et al., 2004).

Two GLOBE constructs share identical names with Hofstede dimensions – power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004), while the GLOBE constructs of future orientation, gender egalitarianism, and in-group collectivism seem to be elaborations and refinements of the Hofstede dimensions of long-term orientation, masculinity, and in-group collectivism, respectively (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004). Other GLOBE constructs include assertiveness, humane orientation, and institutional collectivism (House et al., 2004).

Applying Cultural Concepts to Public Relations Practice Online

Although Hall's, Hofstede's and the GLOBE study's cultural concepts have sparked debate, Waters and Lo (2012) believed they had “enough explanatory power” to frame their

content analysis of Facebook profiles of 225 nonprofit organizations in the U.S., China and Turkey as indicative of different multicultural approaches to public relations online (p. 301). Differences between high- and low-context communication styles were expected to affect an organization's decisions about disclosing information that reveal their organizational identities (Waters & Lo, 2012). Because organizations in a high-context culture – such as China – might not volunteer information until directly asked, they might be as likely to proactively publish information about themselves on their websites compared with organizations in a low-context culture – such as the U.S. – more primed to communicate more directly and explicitly on their websites. The GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) ranked the U.S. highest on performance orientation, followed by China, then Turkey. Generally, the U.S. is the most individualistic culture in the world, while China and Turkey are more collectivist (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004).

The researchers reviewed trade publications and scholarly literature on how organizations use the Internet and social media to advance themselves, and they identified 41 items representing social media disclosure, organizational achievement, and stakeholder engagement, the latter thought to be related to the individualism-collectivism dimension with higher degrees of engagement more likely with more individualistic cultures (Waters & Lo, 2012). In actuality, while U.S. nonprofits did include more disclosure elements such as physical locations and email addresses in their Facebook profiles than Chinese or Turkish organizations, there were several items – such as organizational description and histories – where disclosure was similar across the three cultures (Waters & Lo, 2012). However, U.S. nonprofits also included more indicators – such as links to news stories about themselves, thought to reflect a high-performance orientation – compared with the lower-performance orientation of the Turkish nonprofits. Greater

stakeholder engagement outreach by nonprofits in the U.S. reflected the higher individualistic culture in that country compared with the more muted attempts at audience engagement by the Turkish nonprofits, suggesting the more collectivist Turkish culture. Yet, the Chinese nonprofits pursued stakeholder involvement more than either the U.S. or Turkish organizations (Waters & Lo, 2012).

The Water and Lo (2012) study has relevance for the present research by its identification from the literature aspects of an online platform that at least to some degree align with cultural concepts and dimensions postulated by Hall (1976), Hofstede (1980, 2001) and the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004), giving them some utility in the study of multicultural online communications.

To date, only one known study has replicated Waters' (2011) online corporate stewardship research in an international setting. Turkish scholars Suher and Yesilyurt (2012) conducted a content analysis of the websites of the top 75 corporations listed in 2010 on *Fortune Magazine Turkey's* website. Of the four stewardship strategies, reciprocity was applied most often on the Turkish companies' websites. Turkish companies belonging to the industrial global sector category used reciprocity more often than those in the consumer goods/services sector. Least used were relationship nurturing strategies. The researchers concluded that while Kelly's (2001) stewardship strategies, according to Waters' (2011) measures, were represented in the content of the Turkish corporations' websites, the strategies were not implemented effectively enough to stimulate dialogue with intended stakeholders (Suher & Yesilyurt, 2012).

Country-of-Origin Effect in Public Relations

The country-of-origin (COO) effect has been explored in depth by scholars from marketing and advertising disciplines to examine and establish the strong impact of country of

origin on consumers' product evaluations, decision making and consequent purchase intentions (Shimp, Samiee & Madden, 1993; Suh & Smith, 2008; Wang & Lamb, 1983), since the first experiment conducted by Schooler (1965). COO effect has been further studied in investigations of consumers' knowledge regarding a country's reputation and its development of low- or high-quality products (Johansson, 1989; Maheswaran, 1994).

Over the years, COO effect was also already applied in consumer evaluations of services (Berentzen, Backhaus, Michaelis, Blut & Ahlert, 2008), as well as tested in different countries other than the United States, Canada and Western Europe (Billgen, 2013). Recent studies on COO effect have either criticized its relevance to consumers' decision making (Thakor & Lavack, 2003) or taken a different perspective, such as analyzing COO effect on attitudes towards brands (Magnusson, Westjohn & Zdravkovic, 2011).

So far, COO effect appears to have been employed in only two studies in public relations (Billgen, 2013; Han & Wang, 2012). Han and Wang (2012) investigated how media usage would influence consumer perceptions of country of origin and found a strong link between media frames and consumers' perceptions of products purchased infrequently. Billgen's (2013) dissertation research demonstrated COO effects in three studies of online organization-public relationships (OPR) involving American and foreign car manufacturers. Her textual analysis of U.S. websites of car brands found few mentions of home countries and strong patriotic appeals by foreign manufacturers to American consumers. Depth interviews with 11 PR executives for 19 brands revealed no clearly defined strategies for communicating heritage, possibly because of different conceptualizations of origin. An experiment with 489 consumers suggested buyers respond to patriotic American appeals from foreign brands but not domestic brands and such

appeals have a stronger impact on COO effect than on OPR, although the relationship between COO and OPR begs further study (Billgen, 2013).

Although study of COO effect is in its infancy, potential applications to organizational relationship cultivation abound. As websites have enabled organizations to reach global audiences, and with the growth of multi-national organizations (Koenig, 2011), public relations strategies increasingly have incorporated cross-cultural elements in the management of organization-public relationships (Bates, 2006; Sharpe & Pritchard, 2004). Consequently, COO effect has great potential for further studies of Web-based public relations strategies, such as in this study of use of stewardship strategies on multinational corporations' websites in different countries.

Research Hypotheses

Given the differences in cultures in the U.S. and Brazil postulated by Hofstede's (1980, 2001) dimensions, the GLOBE study constructs (House et al., 2004), Hall's (1976) high-context vs. low-context cultural conceptualizations and COO-effects theory (Billgen, 2013), the first set of hypotheses suggests that:

H1: Multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently.

From the first overall hypothesis stem the following four related hypotheses:

H1a: Applications of Reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H1b: Applications of Responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H1c: Applications of Reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H1d: Applications of Relationship Nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

Further, again given the differences in cultures in the U.S. and Brazil postulated by Hofstede's (1980, 2001) dimensions, the GLOBE study constructs (House et al., 2004), Hall's (1976) high-context vs. low-context cultural conceptualizations and COO-effects theory (Billgen, 2013), the second set of hypotheses suggests that:

H2: Multinational companies with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently.

From the second overall hypothesis stem the following four related hypotheses:

H2a: Applications of Reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H2b: Applications of Responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H2c: Applications of Reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H2d: Applications of Relationship Nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

Finally, given the differences Waters (2011) found in the application of stewardship strategies in the websites of multinational *Fortune* 100 companies because of the companies' global industry categorizations, as well as the literature cited in H1 and H2, the third set of hypotheses suggests that:

H3: Multinational companies with different Global Industry Classification Standard sector categorizations and doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently.

From the third overall hypothesis stem the following four related hypotheses:

H3a: Applications of Reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global categorizations.

H3b: Applications of Responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global categorizations.

H3c: Applications of Reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global categorizations.

H3d: Applications of Relationship Nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global categorizations.

The next chapter describes the methodology used to test the hypotheses derived from the literature reviewed in this chapter and presented above.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the underlying meaning of stewardship strategies and country-of-origin (COO) effect on online organization-public relationship cultivation present on the websites of top companies in two countries, content analysis was selected as the appropriate method. To accomplish this study, an in-depth examination was conducted of a total of 90 corporate websites of 45 top companies in the United States and Brazil, highlighting and then comparing any emerging patterns of stewardship strategies and COO effect.

Content analysis enables researchers to look beyond what is on the surface of communication messages (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). The method allows comprehending what is implied in textual elements of social events, which can change one's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Fairclough, 2003). Content analysis can be characterized as a summarizing, quantitative analysis of implied meanings of communication messages that relies on the scientific method but is not limited to the measured variables nor to the context in which the messages are created or presented (Neuendorf, 2002).

Replication and Extension of Waters' (2011) Research

This research replicates and extends Richard Waters' (2011) study that suggested that Kelly's (2001) stewardship strategies used in fundraising by nonprofit organizations can be effectively applied to corporate websites and measured as an effective gauge of online relationship nurturing. In March 2010, Waters conducted a content analysis of the top 100 companies on the 2009 *Fortune* list to evaluate how those organizations incorporated

stewardship into their websites. Waters and four other scholars who had published research on stewardship in public relations and marketing, along with three public relations practitioners, created a new coding schema to measure the four strategies identified by Kelly (2001) and described in this study's literature review. To create a comprehensive code sheet for their content analysis project, Waters and his research team identified various attributes of each of the stewardship strategies and then compiled into a checklist aspects and attributes of website content from previous studies of online relationship cultivation that they agreed likely enhanced stewardship. The researchers then used content analysis in their initial exploration of stewardship strategies used online in a non-fundraising setting to determine whether each item on the code sheet was present on the companies' websites, recognizing that in the future more sophisticated measures might involve high, medium and low categorizations.

Waters and his team also coded each company according to Standard and Poors' ten global industry categories, from which seven categories were created after collapsing categories to create groups large enough to run chi-square statistics (Crocker & Algina, 1986). The resulting composition of the 2009 *Fortune* 100 companies were 23 consumer goods and services companies, 19 industrial and manufacturing companies, 17 healthcare companies, 12 banking and financial services companies, 10 utility companies, nine information technology organizations, seven telecommunication companies, and three transportation companies.

In Waters' (2011) study, two researchers independently coded 15% of the sample prior to calculating intercoder reliability using Cohen's Kappa. Intercoder reliability was deemed reliable for all four stewardship strategies: reciprocity ($K=.89$), reporting ($K=.92$), responsibility ($K=.86$), and relationship nurturing ($K=.83$).

Description of the Present Study

To add insights and understanding regarding the online use of stewardship strategies by multi-national corporations operating in two countries, a content analysis of the websites of U.S.-based and Brazil-based multinational corporations doing business in both countries was conducted to examine how these MNCs cultivate relationships with their publics via their websites in these two countries. It was thought that any differences in stewardship strategies applied might be explained at least in part by country-of-origin effect and cultural difference theories.

Brazil and the United States were the countries selected because the researcher is a native Brazilian living in the U.S. at the time of the study. Twenty-three U.S.-based corporations conducting business in the U.S. and Brazil and operating independent websites in both countries were selected from the 2013 *Fortune* list of top 500 corporations for analysis, along with 22 Brazil-based companies meeting the same criteria from the 2012 list of the largest 100 corporations operating in Brazil published by *Exame*, considered the leading business and economy Brazilian magazine. (For the lists of companies studied, see Tables 3.1 and 3.2.) Companies were ranked by revenues produced the previous year on both the *Fortune* and *Exame* lists, the most recent available in November 2013, when this study was designed.

Companies' websites in both home- and host-country were analyzed. That is, Brazil-based companies' home websites in Brazil and host websites in the U.S. were studied, as were U.S.-based companies' home websites in the U.S. and host websites in Brazil. A total of 90 websites of the 45 companies were analyzed in their entirety as any level and subpages were visited. However, content of external websites (e.g. partners) linked to the companies' home- and

host-country websites was not examined. Presence of icons and links for social media pages and blogs were noted in this study but their content was not analyzed.

The comprehensive code sheet used in this study was adapted from that used in the Waters (2011) study and was expanded as necessary with open “other” options as coding proceeded. Data consisted of whether specific attributes or aspects expressing the four stewardship strategies were present or absent on each of the 90 home and host websites examined belonging to the 45 companies. (A copy of the final code sheet is included in Appendix A.)

Reciprocity, the stewardship strategy of recognizing and demonstrating gratitude toward stakeholders, was measured with 14 items representing specific sections for different stakeholder groups, such as investors, customers, employees and media; indications of partnerships with other for-profit or nonprofit organizations; and engagement of website visitors by joining the site or offering special promotions to visitors.

Responsibility, the stewardship strategy focusing on the importance of keeping promises and remaining true to the organization’s stated focus, was measured with 12 items, such as providing information about products and services, vision and mission, history, and names and titles of company leadership.

Reporting, the stewardship strategy of providing various types of organizational media on the site, was measured with 14 items including presence or absence of annual reports, fact sheets, online newsrooms, audited financial information, and subscription options for information updates and RSS feeds.

Relationship nurturing, the stewardship strategy inviting interactions and two-way communications, was measured with 26 items, such as encouraging visitors to bookmark the

website for return visits, providing various social media engagement, listing employment opportunities, customer service outreach, offering mobile apps, provision of a feedback form or a mechanism to request information from the company, or translation service option from English-to-Portuguese and vice versa. The items did not necessarily consist of a discrete section on the website; they could appear as a description or other mention within a website section.

The code sheet also captured which list the company appeared on, *Fortune* or *Exame*; numerical ranking on *Fortune* or *Exame* list; and home-country identification (U.S. or Brazil).

Companies studied were also coded for industry categorizations according to Global Industry Classification Standards (GICS), an industry taxonomy used by the global financial community, developed by the financial services Morgan Stanley Capital International Inc. and Standard & Poor's. (The taxonomy can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Industry_Classification_Standard.)

While the 45 companies studied conducted business in both the U.S. and Brazil, their ownership headquarters were not necessarily in either of those two countries. To investigate any potential country-of-origin effect regarding stewardship strategies applied by the companies studied, country of ownership headquarters was also coded for each company.

Data Analysis and Inter-Coder Reliability

Data were collected on code sheets for each companies' home and host websites during content analyses conducted by the primary researcher during December 2013 and January 2014; the nominal-level data were entered into an SPSS data file used in analysis during January and February 2014.

To calculate inter-coder reliability, 15% of the 90 data cases were systematically selected and re-coded on February 28, 2014, independent of the initial coding. The two sub-sets of data

were compared using Cohen's Kappa procedures to assess inter-coder reliabilities. Results for each of the four stewardship strategies were as follows: relationship nurturing, $K=.87$; reciprocity, $K=.85$; reporting, $K=.84$; and responsibility, $K=.84$.

While examining the websites, the researcher also noted on the code sheets descriptions of distinguishing elements of the websites, such as their structure and design, including colors used, that was thought to be potentially useful in interpreting statistical findings.

The next chapter reports the results of the statistical analysis of the data including tests of the hypotheses previously presented.

TABLE 3.1: United States-based Companies on the 2013 *Fortune* 500 List, Their GICS Categories, and Country of Ownership

Company	Ranking	GICS Category	Ownership
Wal-Mart	1	Retail	U.S.
Exxon Mobil	2	Oil and gas	U.S.
Chevron	3	Oil and gas	U.S.
Apple	6	Hardware, software, consumer, electronics	
General Motors	7	Auto industry	U.S.
General Electric	8	Conglomerate	U.S.
Ford Motor	10	Auto industry	U.S.
Hewlett-Packard	15	Computer hardware, computer software	U.S.
International Business Machines	20	Computer hardware, computer software	U.S.
Citigroup	26	Banking, financial services	U.S.
Procter & Gamble	28	Consumer goods	U.S.
Boeing	30	Aerospace/ airplane manufacturer	U.S.
Microsoft	35	Computer software	U.S.
American International Group	38	Insurance, financial services	U.S.
INTL FCStone	39	Financial Services	U.S.
Johnson & Johnson	41	Medical equipment/Pharmaceutical	U.S.
Caterpillar	42	Heavy equipment	U.S.
PepsiCo	43	Beverage manufacturer	U.S.
Pfizer	48	Pharmaceutical	U.S.
Dell	51	Manufacturing software development	U.S.
Intel	54	Semiconductors	U.S.
Coca-Cola	57	Beverage manufacturer	U.S.
Merck	58	Pharmaceutical	U.S.

TABLE 3.2: Brazil-based Companies on the 2012 *Exame* 100 List, Their GICS Categories, and Country of Ownership

Company	Ranking	GICS Category	Ownership
Petrobras	1	Oil and gas	Brazil
Vale	3	Mining	Brazil
Volkswagen	5	Auto industry	Germany
Cargill	6	Consumer goods	US
Fiat	7	Auto industry	Italy
Raízen	9	Energy	U.K./Netherlands
Bunge	10	Consumer goods	Netherlands
Braskem	11	Chemical and Petrochemical	Brazil
JBS Friboi	14	Consumer goods	Brazil
BRF-Brasil Foods	17	Consumer goods	Brazil
Carrefour Group	20	Retailing	France
TAM	22	Air Transportation	Brazil
Usiminas	28	Mining & Siderurgy	Japan
Samsung	33	Conglomerate	South Korea
Mercedes Benz	40	Auto industry	Germany
Renault	42	Auto industry	France
Toyota	44	Auto industry	Japan
Louis Dreyfus Group	46	Commodities	France
Gerdau Long Steel	49	Iron and Steel	Brazil
Gol	54	Air transportation	Brazil
Unilever	58	Consumer goods	U.K./Netherlands
Basf	62	Pharmaceuticals/biotech	Germany

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Frequencies distributions analyses were conducted for all nominal-level variables coded from the content analysis of the home- and host-country websites of the 23 *Fortune* and 22 *Exame* largest-revenue-earning companies conducting business in both the U.S. and Brazil. Dependent variables coded and analyzed consisted of the following: 14 reciprocity strategies (results reported in Table 4.1), 12 responsibility strategies (see Table 4.2), 14 reporting strategies (see Table 4.3), and 26 relationship nurturing strategies (see Table 4.4).

Independent variables coded and used in data analysis included the eight (of ten) Global Industry Classification Standard sector categories represented by the 45 companies studied; these were collapsed into five categories to create groups that were large enough to conduct chi-square analyses (Crocker & Algina, 1986). The GICS sector composition of the companies studied consisted of 28.8% materials and industrials (N=13), combined from materials (N=2) with industrials (N = 11); 24.4% consumer goods (N = 11), combined from consumer staples (N=10) and consumer discretionary (N=1); 15.6% consumer services (N = 7), combined from health care (N=4) and financials (N=3); 15.6% information technology (N = 7); and 15.6% energy (N = 7). There were no companies studied in the GICS sectors for telecommunication services or utilities.

Country of ownership was also coded and used as an independent variable in data analysis since some of the largest companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil are owned by headquarter enterprises in other countries. Frequencies analysis for country of ownership for the 45 companies studied yielded these results: 53.3% are owned in the United

States (N = 24), 20% in Brazil (N = 9), 6.7% in Germany (N = 3), 6.7% in France (N = 3), 4.4% in the United Kingdom/Netherlands (N = 2), 2.2% in Italy (N = 1), 2.2% in the Netherlands (N = 1), 2.2% in Japan (N = 1), and 2.2% in South Korea (N = 1). For purposes of chi-square analysis, all countries of ownership other than the U.S. and Brazil were collapsed into a single “other country of ownership” value.

Examining Application of Stewardship Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

To test the first set of hypotheses that **multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently**, results for all four categories stewardship strategies were combined into a new “all strategies” dependent variable. An independent t-test of all the combined stewardship strategies by country showed no significant differences in applications used in US companies’ websites ($M=71.43$, $SD=12.79$) and Brazilian companies’ websites ($M=71.86$, $SD=10.69$, $t(43)=-.122$, $p=.903$). These results suggest that, overall, the four stewardship strategies were similarly applied in both home- and host-country websites of multinational corporations. Thus, **H1 overall was not supported.**

Reciprocity stewardship, characterized by recognizing and demonstrating gratitude toward stakeholders, was most often implemented on home-country websites (either U.S. or Brazil) through section for customers (100%), recognition of partnerships with other for-profit organizations (97.8%), and section for media (95.6%). The least frequent among the 14 reciprocity items identified in this study were becoming a member of the website (42.2%), section for employees (26.7%), and offering special promotions for website visitors (17.8%). Reciprocity was most frequent present on host-country websites (either U.S. or Brazil) through partnerships with other for-profit organizations (95%), customers (91.1%), and media (91.1%).

The least frequent were becoming a member of the website (35.6%), offering special promotions for website visitors (15.6%), and section for employees (8.9%).

H1a posited that **applications of reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ**. An independent t-test of all reciprocity stewardship strategies by country showed no significant differences in applications used in U.S. companies' websites ($M=18.52$, $SD=4.16$), and in Brazilian companies' websites ($M=19.27$, $SD= 2.89$, $t(43) = -.699$, $p =.485$). However, when chi-square tests were conducted to compare use of individual reciprocity items in home- and host-country websites, some differences were found between U.S. and Brazilian companies. All 23 U.S. companies' home websites had sections for investors compared with only 13 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites ($X^2=11.761$, d.f. =1, $p=.001$). Ten (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites had sections for employees compared with only 2 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites ($X^2=6.799$, d.f. =1, $p=.009$).¹ Twenty (of 22) Brazilian companies' host websites had sections for investors compared with only 10 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites ($X^2=11.383$, d.f. =1, $p=.001$). All 22 of the Brazilian companies' host websites reciprocated with customers, while only 19 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites ($X^2=4.199$, d.f. =1, $p=.04$). Thus, **H1a was partially supported**.

Responsibility stewardship focuses on the importance of demonstrating organizations' commitment with their stakeholders by providing detailed information about their business. Among the 12 responsibility items identified in this study, home-country websites applied responsibility more frequently through information about products and services (100%), guiding

¹ This follow-up chi-square test of expected frequencies violates the assumption that all cells being analyzed consist of a minimum of five cases; some other chi-square results in this study also violate this assumption (Crocker & Algina, 1986).

philosophy (97.8%), and historical information (97.8%). Less frequent were statement of diversity (71.1%), mission statement (51.1%), and executives' contact information (15.6%). In addition, host-country websites applied more often information about products and services (100%), guiding philosophy (93.3%), and historical information (93.3%). The least frequent or not present were statement of ethics (60%), mission statement (40%), and none (0%) offered executives' contact information.

H1b posited that **applications of responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ**. An independent t-test of all responsibility stewardship strategies by country found that Brazilian companies' websites used responsibility strategies more frequently ($M=18.86$, $SD= 2.51$) than U.S. companies' websites ($M=16.83$, $SD= 3.99$, $t(43) = -2.03$, $p < .047$). Therefore, **H1b was supported**. Chi-square tests were conducted to compare use of individual responsibility items in home- and host-country websites by U.S. and Brazilian companies. All 23 of the U.S. companies' home websites provided names and titles of the companies' leadership while only 14 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=10.172$, $d.f. =1$, $p=.001$). All 22 of the Brazilian companies' home websites expressed visions for the future while only 18 (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites addressed future visions ($X^2=5.38$, $d.f. =1$, $p=.02$). Fifteen (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites included mission statements while only 8 (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites addressed mission ($X^2=5.02$, $d.f. =1$, $p=.025$). Twenty-one (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites included "other" responsibility strategies while only 15 (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites used other responsibility strategies ($X^2=6.425$, $d.f. =1$, $p= .011$). Some elements described as "other" responsibility strategies were: recycling financial history, testing field information ("campo de

provas”), global overview, strategic pillars, global initiatives, social media policy, stock information, and code of conduct. Nineteen (of 22) Brazilian companies’ host websites reported names and titles of company leaders while only 13 (of 23) U.S. companies’ websites did ($X^2=4.874$, d.f. =1, $p=.027$). Twenty-one (of 22) Brazilian companies’ host websites addressed guiding values while only 17 (of 23) U.S. companies’ host websites did ($X^2=3.972$, d.f. =1, $p=.046$). Twenty-one (of 22) Brazilian companies’ host websites addressed visions for the future while only 17 (of 23) U.S. companies’ websites did ($X^2=3.972$, d.f. =1, $p=.046$). Seventeen (of 22) Brazilian companies’ host websites addressed ethics while only 10 (of 23) U.S. companies’ host websites did ($X^2=5.351$, d.f. =1, $p=.021$). Nineteen (of 22) Brazilian companies’ host websites used “other” responsibility strategies while only 13 (of 23) U.S. companies’ websites did ($X^2=4.874$, d.f. =1, $p=.027$). Some elements described as “other” responsibility strategies were: main operations governance, rules the company follows, workplace safety information, and certifications.

Reporting stewardship focuses on reinforcing positive organizational attitudes and behaviors toward stakeholders. In home-country websites, the most frequent items were annual reports (97.8%), fact sheets (93.3%), and audited financial information (93.3%). Less common were newsletters (24.4%), magazines (24.4%), and infographics (6.7%). In host-country websites, reporting was most frequent through annual reports (95.6%), green initiatives and environmental impact reports (91.1%), and news releases (88.9%). Host-country websites less often included magazines (13.3%) or brochures (8.9%), and there were no usages of infographics (0%).

H1c posited that **applications of reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and**

Brazil will differ. An independent t-test found no differences in how U.S. ($M=16.61$, $SD=2.85$) and Brazilian companies' home- and host-country websites applied reporting strategies ($M=6.27$, $SD=3.26$, $t(43)=.368$, $p=.716$). However, when chi-square tests were conducted to compare application of individual reporting strategies in home- and host-country websites, some differences were found between U.S. and Brazilian companies. All 23 of the U.S. companies' home websites posted news releases while only 17 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=5.881$, d.f. =1, $p=.015$). Twenty-one (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites posted podcasts/webcasts while only 15 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=3.757$, d.f. =1, $p=.053$). Eleven (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites posted brochures while only 2 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=8.213$, d.f. =1, $p=.004$). Seventeen (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered information updates by subscription while only 8 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=6.421$, d.f. =1, $p=.011$). Nineteen (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered information by RSS feed subscriptions while only 8 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=10.02$, d.f. =1, $p=.002$). Sixteen (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites included "other" reporting strategies while only 10 (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites did ($X^2=3.943$, d.f. =1, $p=.047$). Some elements described as "other" reporting strategies were: product security bulletin, social investment policy, user guidelines, and "most shared, most debated, most watched." Twenty (of 22) Brazilian companies' host websites included fact sheets while only 14 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites did ($X^2=5.494$, d.f. =1, $p=.019$). Six (of 22) Brazilian companies' host websites included newsletters while only 1 (of 23) U.S. company's host website did ($X^2=4.499$, d.f. =1, $p=.034$). Twenty-one (of 22) Brazilian companies' host websites included audited financial information while only 16 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites did ($X^2=5.156$, d.f. =1, $p=.023$). Seventeen (of 22) Brazilian

companies' host websites included "other" reporting strategies while only 8 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites did ($X^2=8.222$, d.f. =1, $p=.004$). Some elements described as "other" were: "truths and myths," executive speeches, and "personalize your report." Therefore, **H1c** was partially supported.

Relationship Nurturing stewardship focuses on organizational "extra efforts" to consistently nurture public engagement. Relationship nurturing was most frequently used on home-country websites through providing a listing of job opportunities (100%), customer service outreach (100%), ability to request information from the organization (100%), and promoting the organization's social media accounts (82.2%) such as Twitter (77.8%), Facebook (75.6%), and YouTube (71.1%). On the other hand, relationship nurturing strategies used less frequently or not at all on home-country websites were Tumblr (4.4%), MySpace (2.2%), Foursquare (0%), and other social media (0%). Host-country websites applied relationship nurturing more often through customer service outreach (100%), ability to request information from the organization (100%), providing a listing of job opportunities (97.8%), and promoting the organization's social media accounts (60%) such as Facebook (60%), Twitter (53.3%), and YouTube (53.3%). The strategy was less often or not represented through Slide Share (2.2%), Foursquare (2.2%), other social media (2.2%), and MySpace (0%). Some elements described as "other social media" were Tech community, WordPress, and Digg.

H1d posited that **applications of relationship nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ**. An independent t-test found no differences in how U.S. ($M=19.47$, $SD=5.72$) and Brazilian companies' home- and host-country websites applied relationship nurturing strategies ($M=17.45$, $SD=6.8$, $t(43)=1.081$, $p=.288$). However, when chi-square tests

were conducted to compare application of individual reporting strategies in home- and host-country websites, some differences were found between U.S. and Brazilian companies. Eighteen (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites posted a company blog while only 6 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=11.745$, d.f. =1, $p=.001$). Twenty-one (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered a corporate Twitter link while only 14 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=4.98$, d.f. =1, $p=.026$). Twenty (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered a corporate YouTube link while only 12 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=5.75$, d.f. =1, $p=.016$). Fifteen (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered a corporate LinkedIn option while only 4 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=10.197$, d.f. =1, $p=.001$). Twelve (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered a mechanism for feedback while only 4 (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites did ($X^2=5.670$, d.f. =1, $p=.017$). Seven (of 23) U.S. companies' home websites offered mobile applications while only 1 (of 22) Brazilian company's home website did ($X^2=5.156$, d.f. =1, $p=.023$). Nine (of 22) Brazilian companies' home websites included a translation service option while only 1 (of 23) U.S. company's home website did ($X^2=8.696$, d.f. =1, $p=.003$). Eleven (of 22) Brazilian companies' host websites included a Google+ option while only 2 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites did ($X^2=9.338$, d.f. =1, $p=.002$). Nine (of 22) Brazilian companies' host websites included a translation service option while only 2 (of 23) U.S. companies' host websites did ($X^2=6.318$, d.f. =1, $p=.012$). Therefore, **H1d was partially supported.**

Effects of Country of Ownership on Stewardship Strategies Used on Corporate Websites

To test the effects, if any, of country of ownership on the stewardship strategies used on the websites of the 45 largest-revenue-earning companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil analyzed in this study, a second set of hypotheses was tested:

Overall, **H2** posited that **multinational companies with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently**. Four sub-hypotheses – one each per stewardship strategy type – were derived from H2. A series of oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test whether there were differences of stewardship strategies between home- and host-country websites of companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil when ownership country was considered (see Table 4.5).

The oneway ANOVA used to test H2 found there were no differences in all stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by whether these companies had U.S.-based owners ($N=24$, $M=71.13$, $SD=12.6$), were owned in Brazil ($N=9$, $M=71.67$, $SD=13.01$), or had owners headquartered in countries other than the U.S. or Brazil ($N=12$, $M=72.67$, $SD=9.43$, $F(2, 42) = .067$, $p = .936$). Therefore, **H2 was not supported**.

H2a posited that **applications of reciprocity stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by whether these companies have owners in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries**. The oneway ANOVA used to test H2a found no differences in all reciprocity stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by whether these companies had U.S.-based owners ($M=18.46$, $SD= 4.09$), were owned in Brazil ($M=19.11$, $SD = 3.18$), or had owners headquartered in other countries ($M=19.58$, $SD = 2.84$, $F(2, 42) = .405$, $p = .67$). Therefore, **H2a was not supported**.

H2b posited that **applications of responsibility stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by whether these companies have owners in the U.S. or**

Brazil or other countries. The oneway ANOVA used to test H2b with Tukey follow-up procedures found that the websites of companies with Brazil-based owners used more responsibility stewardship strategies in combination ($M=20.56$, $SD = 1.51$) than did those websites of companies having U.S.-based owners ($M=16.92$, $SD= 3.93$, $F(2, 42) =4.153$, $p=.023$). There were no differences in responsibility strategies used in combination on websites of companies studied that had owners based in countries other than the U.S. or Brazil ($M=17.58$, $SD = 2.50$). Therefore, **H2b was partially supported.**

H2c posited that **applications of reporting stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by whether these companies have owners in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries.** The oneway ANOVA used to test H2c found no differences in all reporting stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by whether these companies had U.S.-based owners ($M=16.67$, $SD=2.81$), were owned in Brazil ($M=15.56$, $SD = 3.05$), or had owners headquartered in and other countries ($M=16.67$, $SD = 3.58$, $F(2, 42) =.471$, $p=.628$). Therefore, **H2c was not supported.**

H2d posited that **applications of relationship nurturing stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by whether these companies have owners in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries.** The oneway ANOVA used to test H2d found no differences in all relationship nurturing stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by whether these companies had U.S.-based owners ($M=19.08$, $SD=5.92$), were owned in Brazil ($M=16.44$, $SD=7.35$), or had owners headquartered in other countries ($M=18.83$, $SD =6.41$, $F(2, 42) =.590$, $p=.559$). Therefore, **H2d was not supported.**

Effects of Global Industry Classification Standard Sector Categorizations
on Stewardship Strategies on Corporate Websites

To test the effects, if any, of Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) sector categories on the stewardship strategies used on the websites of the 45 largest-revenue-earning companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil analyzed in this study, a third set of hypotheses was tested:

Overall, **H3** posited **that multinational companies with different GICS sector categorizations doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently**. Four sub-hypotheses – one each per stewardship strategy type – were derived from H3. A series of oneway ANOVAs were conducted to test whether there were differences of stewardship strategies between host and home-country websites of companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil when their recorded global industry sector categorizations were considered (see Table 4.6).

The oneway ANOVA used to test H3 found there were no differences in all stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by their GCIS sector categorizations of energy ($N=7$, $M=70.14$, $SD=13.02$), materials and industrials ($N=13$, $M=74.0$, $SD=6.9$), consumer goods ($N=11$, $M=69.36$, $SD=10.69$), consumer services ($N=7$, $M=67.57$, $SD=16.74$), or information technologies ($N=7$, $M=76.43$, $SD=13.95$, $F(4, 40) = .755$, $p = .561$). Therefore, **H3 was not supported**.

H3a posited that **applications of reciprocity stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by their GICS sector categorizations**. The oneway ANOVA used to test H3a found no differences in all reciprocity stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by their GCIS sector categorizations of energy ($M=18.0$,

SD=3.51), materials and industrials ($M = 19.46$, $SD=2.93$), consumer goods ($M=18.64$, $SD=3.26$), consumer services ($M=17.71$, $SD=4.79$), or information technologies ($M=20.29$, $SD=4.27$, $F(4, 40) = .637$, $p=.639$). Therefore, **H3a was not supported.**

H3b posited that **applications of responsibility stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by their GICS sector categorizations.** The oneway ANOVA used to test H3b found no differences in all responsibility stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by their GCIS sector categorizations of energy ($M=19.43$, $SD=3.41$), materials and industrials ($M = 16.92$, $SD=2.96$), consumer goods ($M=19.55$, $SD=1.29$), consumer services ($M=16.57$, $SD=4.16$), or information technologies ($M=16.43$, $SD=4.995$, $F(4, 40)=1.929$, $p=.124$). Therefore, **H3b was not supported.**

H3c posited that **applications of reporting stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by their GICS sector categorizations.** The oneway ANOVA used to test H3c found no differences in all reporting stewardship strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by their GCIS sector categorizations of energy ($M=17.0$, $SD=2.52$), materials and industrials ($M = 16.23$, $SD=3.17$), consumer goods ($M=15.91$, $SD=2.66$), consumer services ($M=16.14$, $SD=4.41$), or information technologies ($M=17.43$, $SD=2.76$, $F(4, 40)=.340$, $p=.849$). Therefore, **H3c was not supported.**

H3d posited that **applications of relationship nurturing stewardship strategies in combination in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ by their GICS sector categorizations.** The oneway ANOVA used to test H3d did find differences in all relationship nurturing stewardship

strategies used in combination on the websites of companies studied by their GCIS sector categorizations ($F(4, 40)=2.89, p=.034$). Eyeball examination of the means suggests differences should have been significant at the $p=.05$ level between companies with GCIS sector categorizations of consumer goods (with the lowest $M=15.27, SD=6.0$) and information technologies (with the highest $M=22.28, SD=7.06$). However, Tukey followup procedures found that only the comparison of means of consumer goods ($M=15.27, SD=6.0$) with materials and industrials ($M=21.38, SD=3.94$) only approached significance at $p=.09$; none of the other comparisons of means involving energy ($M=15.71, SD=6.82$), or consumer services ($M=17.14, SD=6.09$) were significant. Therefore, **H3d was partially supported.**

The next chapter provides a discussion of these findings, along with limitations of this study, suggestions for future research and conclusions.

TABLE 4.1: Frequency Distributions of Reciprocity Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

<i>Reciprocity in home-country websites</i>					
Item	Home country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Customers	45	0	45	23	22
Partnerships with other for-profit orgs	44	1	45	22	22
Media	43	2	45	22	21
Other publics	43	2	45	21	22
Community relations	43	2	45	22	21
Partnerships with nonprofit organizations	38	7	45	19	19
Educational institutions	38	7	45	20	18
Investors*	36	9	45	23	13
Other	33	12	45	18	15
Nonprofit organizations	32	13	45	15	17
Government agencies	30	15	45	13	17
Becoming a member of/joining the website	19	26	45	10	9
Employees*	12	33	45	10	2
Offering special promotions for website visitors	8	37	45	3	5

<i>Reciprocity in host-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Partnerships with other for-profit orgs	43	2	45	21	22
Customers*	41	4	45	19	22
Media	41	4	45	22	19
Community relations	41	4	45	20	21
Other publics	40	5	45	19	21
Partnerships with nonprofit organizations	32	13	45	16	16
Educational institutions	32	13	45	16	16
Investors*	30	15	45	10	20
Other	21	24	45	9	12
Government agencies	20	25	45	9	11
Nonprofit organizations	18	13	45	10	8
Becoming a member of/joining the website	16	29	45	9	7
Offering special promotions for website visitors	7	38	45	3	4
Employees	4	41	45	2	2

* indicates differences in frequencies between companies doing business in the U.S. and Brazil at $p < .05$

TABLE 4.2: Frequency Distributions of Responsibility Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

<i>Responsibility in home-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Information about products and services	45	0	45	23	22
Information about their guiding philosophy	44	1	45	22	22
Providing historical information	44	1	45	22	22
Description of the organization's guiding values	41	4	45	20	21
Vision for the future*	40	5	45	18	22
Providing a corporate goal	40	5	45	19	21
Providing names and titles of the leadership*	37	8	45	23	14
Other*	36	9	45	15	21
Statement of ethics	35	10	45	17	18
Statement of diversity and inclusive emp. practices	32	13	45	21	11
Providing a mission statement*	23	22	45	8	15
Contact information for executives	7	38	45	5	2
<i>Responsibility in host-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Information about products and services	45	0	45	23	22
Information about their guiding philosophy	42	3	45	21	21
Providing historical information	42	3	45	21	21
Description of the organization's guiding values*	38	7	45	17	21
Vision for the future*	38	7	45	17	21
Providing a corporate goal	33	12	45	15	18
Providing names and titles of the leadership*	32	13	45	13	19
Other*	32	13	45	13	19
Statement of diversity and inclusive emp. practices	31	14	45	16	15
Statement of ethics*	27	18	45	10	17
Providing a mission statement	18	27	45	8	10
Contact information for executives	0	45	45	0	0

* indicates differences in frequencies between companies doing business in the U.S. and Brazil at $p < .05$

TABLE 4.3: Frequency Distributions of Reporting Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

<i>Reporting in home-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Annual reports	44	1	45	23	21
Fact sheets	42	3	45	21	21
Audited financial information	42	3	45	21	21
Green initiatives/ environmental impact reports	42	3	45	21	21
News releases*	40	5	45	23	17
Online newsroom	40	5	45	22	18
Podcasts/webcasts	36	9	45	21	15
Subscription option for RSS feeds*	27	18	45	19	8
Other*	26	19	45	10	16
Subscription option to informational updates*	25	20	45	17	8
Brochures*	13	32	45	11	2
Newsletters	11	34	45	6	5
Magazines	11	34	45	7	4
Infographics	3	42	45	3	0
<i>Reporting in host-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Annual reports	43	2	45	22	21
Green initiatives/ environmental impact reports	41	4	45	21	20
News releases	40	5	45	21	19
Audited financial information*	37	8	45	16	21
Podcasts/webcasts	35	10	45	18	17
Fact sheets*	34	11	45	14	20
Online newsroom	32	13	45	17	15
Other*	25	20	45	8	17
Subscription option to informational updates	19	26	45	9	10
Subscription option for RSS feeds	15	30	45	7	8
Newsletters*	7	38	45	1	6
Magazines	6	39	45	1	5
Brochures	4	41	45	2	2
Infographics	0	45	45	0	0

* indicates differences in frequencies between companies doing business in the U.S. and Brazil at $p < .05$

TABLE 4.4: Frequency Distributions of Relationship Nurturing Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

<i>Relationship Nurturing in home-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Providing a listing of job opportunities	45	0	45	23	22
Customer service outreach	45	0	45	23	22
Ability to request info. from the organization	45	0	45	23	22
Promoting the organization's social media accounts	37	8	45	21	16
Twitter account*	35	10	45	21	14
Facebook account	34	11	45	20	14
YouTube*	32	13	45	20	12
Other	31	14	45	17	14
Organizational blog*	24	21	45	18	6
Sharing content on social media	22	23	45	14	8
LinkedIn account*	19	26	45	15	4
Provision of a feedback form*	16	29	45	12	4
Google + account	14	31	45	9	5
Instant chat option	12	33	45	5	7
Translation service option	10	35	45	1	9
Mobile Apps*	8	37	45	7	1
Flickr	7	38	45	5	2
Instagram	7	38	45	3	4
Forums	6	39	45	5	1
Encouraging visitors to bookmark	5	40	45	1	4
Pinterest	3	45	45	3	0
Slide Share	3	45	45	2	1
Tumblr	2	43	45	2	0
MySpace	1	44	45	1	0
Foursquare	0	45	45	0	0
Other social media	0	45	45	0	0

Relationship Nurturing in host-country websites

<i>Relationship Nurturing in host-country websites</i>					
Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Customer service outreach	45	0	45	23	22
Ability to request info. from the organization	45	0	45	23	22
Providing a listing of job opportunities	44	1	45	22	22
Promoting the organization's social media accounts	27	18	45	14	13
Facebook account	27	18	45	13	14
Twitter account	24	21	45	12	12
YouTube	24	21	45	13	11
Other	23	22	45	10	13
Sharing content on social media	16	29	45	7	9
Google + account*	13	32	45	2	11

TABLE 4.4 Cont'd.: Frequency Distributions of Relationship Nurturing Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

Relationship Nurturing in host-country websites

Item	Home Country				
	Combined U.S./Brazil			U.S.	Brazil
	Present	Absent	Total	Present	Present
Organizational blog	12	33	45	7	5
LinkedIn account	11	34	45	4	7
Translation service option	11	34	45	2	9
Flickr	9	36	45	5	4
Instant chat option	9	36	45	6	3
Provision of a feedback form	7	38	45	4	3
Forums	5	40	45	4	1
Instagram	3	42	45	1	2
Pinterest	3	42	45	0	3
Mobile Apps	3	42	45	0	3
Encouraging visitors to bookmark	4	41	45	2	2
Tumblr	1	44	45	1	0
Slide Share	1	44	45	0	1
Foursquare	1	44	45	1	0
Other social media	1	44	45	1	0
MySpace	0	45	45	0	0

* indicates differences in frequencies between companies doing business in the U.S. and Brazil at $p < .05$

TABLE 4.5: Results of ANOVAs of Stewardship Strategies by Country of Ownership

Measuring Items	U.S.		Brazil		Other countries		F	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
All Stew. Strats.	71.12	12.6	71.66	13.0	72.66	9.42	.067	44	.93
Reciprocity	18.46	4.08	19.11	3.18	19.58	2.84	.40	44	.67
Responsibility	16.92	3.93	20.56	1.50	17.58	2.50	4.15	44	.02*
Reporting	16.67	2.80	15.56	3.04	16.67	3.57	.47	44	.62
Relationship	19.08	5.92	16.44	7.35	18.83	6.40	.59	44	.55
Nurturing									

* p < .05

TABLE 4.6: Results of ANOVAs of Stewardship Strategies by Global Industry Classification Standard Sector Categorizations

Measuring items	Energy		Mat.&Ind		Cons. G.		Cons. S.		Info. Tech.		F	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
All Stew. S.	70.14	13.0	74.0	6.90	69.36	10.7	67.57	16.7	76.43	13.95	.75	44	.56
Reciprocity	18.00	3.51	19.46	2.93	18.64	3.26	17.71	4.78	20.29	4.27	.63	44	.63
Responsibility	19.43	3.40	16.92	2.95	19.55	1.29	16.57	4.15	16.43	4.99	1.9	44	.12
Reporting	17.00	2.51	16.23	3.16	15.91	2.66	16.14	4.41	17.43	2.76	.34	44	.84
Relationship	15.71	6.82	21.38	3.94	15.27	6.00	17.14	6.1	22.29	7.06	2.9	44	.034*
Nurturing													

* p < .05

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to examine the application of stewardship strategies in websites of top multinational corporations based in the U.S. and Brazil but conducting business in both countries, and whether their home- and host-country websites would employ stewardship strategies differently because of cultural differences. An extension of Waters' (2011) study of *Fortune* 100 companies' websites, this analysis explored online organization-public relationship cultivation from an international perspective, using differences in cultures in the United States and Brazil postulated by Hofstede's (1980, 2001) dimensions, the GLOBE study constructs (House et al., 2004), Hall's (1976) high-context vs. low-context cultural conceptualizations, and representations of country-of-origin theory (Billgen, 2013).

It was assumed from the scholarly public relations literature (Molleda et al., 2005; Wakefield, 2008) that the cross-cultural theoretical perspectives cited above would impact expressions of online organizational-public relationship-building and would be polycentric in nature (Maddox, 1993; Curtain & Gaither, 2007; Taylor, 2000), with culturally-sensitive stewardship content on their websites in the two countries. That is, contrary to earlier scholarly literature in marketing and new media (Burgmann, Kitchen & Williams, 2006; Goodman, 2009; Robbins & Stylianou, 2003; Rosenbloom & Larsen, 2003; Zahir et al., 2002), it was expected in this study that home- and host-country websites of U.S. and Brazil-based companies would employ distinctly different stewardship strategies reflective of their specific, local publics. Previous studies had found differences on user perceptions of website design related to

uncertainty avoidance, and country-specific economic and technological conditions (Cyr, 2013; Dinev et al., 2006), and Cyr's (2008) study indicated differences between countries regarding website design related to trust, satisfaction, and website loyalty.

Contrary to expectations, the results from this study of home- and host-country websites of top multinational corporations doing business in the U.S. and Brazil suggest that selection of stewardship strategies for online organization-public relationship cultivation *generally* does not distinguish, or emphasize, cultural aspects of different nations, but rather overlooks them. However, this study's mixed results (see Table 5.1) somewhat confirm Kelly's (2001) assumptions about applicability of stewardship strategies in organizations outside of fundraising settings and, to some degree, reinforce Water's (2011) research that, yes, top corporations do apply some stewardship strategies in their corporate websites.

Examining Stewardship Strategies in Home- and Host-Country Websites

The first set of hypotheses proposed that multinational corporations doing business in the U.S. and in Brazil would apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently. When analyzed as a whole, there were no differences between the two countries overall, suggesting an ethnocentric approach to organization-public relationship cultivation (Maddox, 1993).

This Study Replicates Waters' (2011) Study of Responsibility Stewardship

When comparing the stewardship strategies individually, the hypothesis positing differences between corporations based in the U.S. and Brazil in applications of responsibility stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites was the only one in the subset to be fully supported. In Waters' (2011) study, responsibility was the stewardship strategy with the two most common items of all stewardship strategies present on the *Fortune* 100 companies'

websites: providing detailed information about product and services, and providing information about guiding philosophy. With but a few exceptions, in this study virtually all U.S. and Brazilian companies employed these responsibility strategies on their home- and host-country websites. However, the Brazilian companies took greater care on their U.S.-version websites to try to win the support of their American publics in their host-country websites by expressing their commitment to ethics, and providing names and titles of corporate leadership, along with statements of visions for the future and guiding values, than did the American companies in their Brazilian-version websites. Perhaps the American companies believed their favorable reputations in the U.S. would translate to their Brazilian constituents. On their respective home fronts, all of the American companies on their U.S. websites reported names and titles of leadership compared with a few more than half of the Brazilian companies' home websites, likely reflecting U.S. Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) regulations requiring public companies to disclose leadership, and perhaps the monochronic, low-context culture of the U.S. (Hall, 1976). At home, the Brazilian companies were more likely to provide mission statements and share visions for the future than their American counterparts. Additional information, such as overviews of global initiatives and recycling financial history, perhaps reflected the greater Brazilian long-term orientation and penchant to avoid uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004).

While only partially supported, the remaining H1 sub-set hypotheses predicting different cultural expressions by U.S. and Brazilian companies of reciprocity, reporting and relationship nurturing stewardship strategies on their home- and host-country websites, resulted in some interesting findings.

Different Reciprocity Strategies Used for Investors at Home and Abroad

When expressing reciprocity – gratitude for the involvement of stakeholders – on both their home- and host-country websites, with few exceptions, virtually all the U.S. and Brazilian company websites make extra efforts by explicitly communicating with media and with other for-profit organizations with which they have partnerships. And when it comes to their customers at home, all U.S. and Brazilian companies acknowledged their appreciation to this major target public on their home websites. Interestingly, not all of the American companies expressed gratitude to their Brazilian customers on their host websites but, conversely, all of the Brazilian companies on their host-country websites expressed appreciation of their American customers, perhaps a reflection of the more collective culture of Brazilians who prize and reward loyalty more than Americans (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004).

On their home-country websites, all U.S. companies specifically target investors, again likely reflecting U.S. SEC rules regulating public companies, compared with just over half of the Brazilian companies' home websites. Virtually all Brazilian companies do target investors on their American-version websites, possibly again due to tighter financial oversight by the U.S. government, although Brazil has an SEC-like government arm called "Comissão de Valores Mobiliários" (CVM). And, it should be noted that many Brazil-based companies trade their corporate stock on U.S. stock exchanges, such as Petrobras, which posts its stock's sales performance on the New York Stock Exchange, São Paulo's Bovespa, and Buenos Aires' Latibex, and even compares its performance in live time with the Dow Jones and other indices.

However, at home – as well as in America – only two Brazilian companies expressed gratitude to their employees while half of the American companies at home extended appreciation to employees. With their greater collectivism culture, perhaps Brazilian companies

view employees as part of their family or the “in group” with whom it might not be necessary to overtly express gratitude, compared with American companies who might have to work harder to earn the loyalty of employees in the “me first” American society (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004). By comparison, only a very few of the U.S. companies recognized their employees in Brazil on their host-country websites – apparently in the American cultures, gratitude for the “in group” only applies at home – or in this instance, perhaps the U.S. companies are reflecting the more collectivist Brazilian culture (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House et al., 2004).

U.S.-based companies did tend to recognize at-home employees’ participation in contributions to corporate social responsibility (CSR) community outreach programs, such as General Motors’ employee-based “teamGM Cares” program (see Figure 5.1). Websites of the U.S.-based Walmart, Ford, HP, Procter & Gamble, Microsoft, PepsiCo, and Intel had similar expressions of appreciation to employees engaged in CSR activities. U.S. companies also recognized their employees’ CSR engagement at home through storytelling strategies, strengthening reputations internally while showcasing corporate social responsibility outreach to external publics (Dowling, 2006; Mittins, Abratt, & Christie, 2011). One example was “Working at Walmart” (see Figure 5.2); other examples involved Apple and PepsiCo in the U.S. while some Brazilian companies also acknowledged CSR contributions by “telling “employees’ stories” of them including Petrobras, Vale and Gerdau.

The least-used reciprocity strategy employed by U.S. and Brazilian companies at home and abroad was offering special promotions for website visitors.

U.S. and Brazil-based Companies Use Some Different Reporting Strategies

Reporting – the stewardship strategy in which organizations volunteer information about themselves to earn publics’ continued support and trust – was expressed with only very few

exceptions by virtually all U.S. and Brazil-based companies on their home- and host-country websites by the inclusion of annual reports and reports of green initiatives and environmental impacts. At home, with few exceptions, virtually all U.S.- and Brazil-based companies also posted fact sheets and audited financial statements on their websites as part of reporting strategies.

However, U.S. companies were less likely to post audited financial information on their Brazilian websites while the Brazilian companies did post audited financial information on their American websites, again perhaps as a function of differences in government oversight in the two countries, and possibly due to the monochronic, low-context culture of the U.S. where privacy is valued (Hall, 1976); it appears if U.S. companies are not required to disclose financial information, they might decide to withhold it. U.S. companies at home were more likely than Brazilian companies at home to post news releases and brochures to domestic websites along with options to subscribe to RSS feeds. The Brazilian companies at home were more likely to post “other” reporting items, such the social investment policy of IBM Brazil and “Truths and Myths” by Coca-Cola Brazil, although at home, IBM U.S. posted “other” items such as product security bulletins and Coca-Cola U.S.’s “Most Shared, Most Debated, Most Watched” feature.

Although U.S. companies were more likely to post brochures on their home-country websites than Brazilian companies, and that Brazilian companies were more likely to post fact sheets and newsletters on their host-country websites than U.S. companies, it should be noted that, overall, brochures, newsletters, and magazines were used less frequently by all companies’ home and host-country websites than other reporting strategies. This could be the case because other website content conveyed the stories and information more effectively or as well as brochures, newsletters and magazines could. Interestingly, only a few U.S. companies

domestically used infographics on their websites, perhaps indicative of U.S. corporations' very recent attraction to them, but they weren't used on Brazilian websites, and Brazil-based companies apparently haven't discovered infographics at all. The U.S. companies' use of optional RSS feed subscription and infographics on their domestic websites may reflect the cultural lower levels of uncertainty avoidance with greater openness to new ideas and innovation (Hofstede, 1980, 2001), and greater performance orientations which values direct, explicit communications (House et al., 2004).

Although the reporting strategic item online newsroom did not present significant differences in neither country at home or abroad, it's noteworthy that most corporations' websites not only had online newsrooms, but some featured a complete range of media resources such as multimedia and external recognitions in addition to press kits and the like; companies with extensive newsrooms included Chevron, General Electric, Procter & Gamble, Caterpillar, and Petrobras. Yet, some Brazilian-based companies did not have any online newsrooms at home or abroad, including General Motors Brazil, Ford Brazil, INTL FCStone U.S., INTL FCStone Brazil, and Johnson & Johnson Brazil. Studies from the early 2000s found leading international corporations were resistant to adapt then-new Internet-based technologies for online media relations (Gower & Cho, 2001; Holtz, 1999; Porter & Sallot, 2003). Unfortunately, it appears some companies are still lagging in their adoption of these corporate communications strategies.

No Differences in Top Three Relationship Nurturing Tactics by U.S. or Brazilian Companies

With only one exception, all U.S. and Brazil-based companies on their websites at home and abroad used three identical tactics to nurture relationships by demonstrating value of key stakeholders and acknowledgement of mutual benefits to the organization and its publics.

These three tactics were: customer service outreach, providing mechanisms to request information from the company, and providing listings of employment opportunities.

There were some interesting differences between U.S. and Brazil-based companies when comparing their social media tactics choices to nurture relationships on their home-country websites. Twitter, YouTube, company blogs, LinkedIn accounts and mobile apps were more likely to be used on their home websites by U.S. companies. The U.S. companies' use of these very popular social media platforms (CNN Money, 2014) may reflect American's cultural lower levels of uncertainty avoidance with greater openness to new ideas and innovation (Hofstede, 1980, 2001), and greater performance orientations which values direct, explicit communications (House et al, 2004). On the other hand, half of the Brazil-based companies used Google+ on their American websites, which less than 25 percent of them used on their home websites, perhaps indicating the fact that Google+ has not yet caught on in the U.S., or indicating cultural-difference awareness regarding new digital media abroad.

Despite the exponential growth of social media networks and the important role social media have played in organization-public relationship nurturing (Sweetser, 2010), companies in both countries apparently have been slow to adopt some platforms, such as Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, Slide Share, and Tumblr, and some of these haven't been adopted at all on host-country websites. Although corporate social media networks were not specifically analyzed in this study other than presence or absence on a company's website – with website being typically the primary communications tool used by organizations online (Stuart & Jones, 2004; Sullivan, 1999), if a company in this study did not promote a social media platform on its website, the assumption was that the company is not using that platform at all. As a strategy to nurture relationships and engage with target publics, some companies on their websites promoted and

drew attention to the company's use of social media networks by having a section showcasing them or reporting recent corporate tweets or YouTube video posts, as Boeing U.S. does in its social media center (see Figure 5.3). Some corporate websites invited visitors to connect those with common interests via online discussion forums, such as Hewlett-Packard's "Join the Conversation" page (see Figure 5.4).

Interestingly, just fewer than half of the Brazil-based companies offered relationship nurturing English-Portuguese (or vice versa) language translation options on their websites at home and abroad, while only two U.S.-based companies offered English-Portuguese language translation options on their Brazilian websites and only one U.S.-based company offered a language translation option on its website at home. This study expected, based on the public relations literature, that multinational corporations might take a more polycentric approach (Kinzer & Bohn, 1985) to online organization-public relationships by commonly providing language translation options on their websites to reach, not only local, but global audiences (Ess & Sudweeks, 2006). Instead, this study found that far fewer corporations offered translation options on their websites than anticipated, particularly the U.S. companies which appeared to be exhibiting ethnocentric values (Maddox, 1993) with regard to language. Cargill was an example of a Brazilian-based (but U.S.-owned) company offering language translation service (see Figure 5.5). Some Brazilian companies also offer translation to other languages, such as Spanish, as does Petrobras.

Some companies – such as P&G – on their home- and host-country websites provide a link, usually located on the upper right side of the home page, connecting the website to others of the same company around the world (see Figure 5.6); sometimes these are labeled "worldwide sites", replacing the language-translation choice through interconnectivity to different corporate

websites around the world. However, this technique prevents potential website visitors in other countries from learning about Walmart in Brazil, for instance, if they do not read or speak Portuguese. Another explanation for the rare translation options in most of the corporate websites analyzed in this study might be related to costs of translation options and cultural contexts of the audiences (Harrison-Walker, 2002; Hillier, 2003; Nantel & Glaser, 2008). According to Nantel and Glaser (2008), even the best translation might not properly reflect the original message due to the “culture-specific frames of reference passed on to all individuals during their primary socialization” (p. 113).

In addition, it is important to highlight how some of the corporate websites used storytelling strategies to nurture relationships. For instance, the researcher noticed an apparent trend to make corporate websites resemble an electronic magazine, in which sections and pages devoted to specific topics seem designed to capture visitors’ attention through copy and design that evokes a journalistic environment. Visitors to the website don’t just learn about the company but they also interact with the company (or at least its website), and make selections among a diverse collection of information, such as “the next big thing in music” from Samsung U.S. (see Figure 5.7), “Human Energy Stories” from Chevron U.S. (see Figure 5.8), and “take the energy quiz” from Exxon Mobil (see Figure 5.9). Microsoft, as another example, uses storytelling to promote its products online (see Figure 5.10). On its homepage, for instance, different characters offer testimonials about a specific laptop, tablet, or cellular telephone as if they were customers satisfied with their acquisition. The website visitor is invited to learn more about each of these stories and consequently to learn about the product, its benefits and cost. Headlines beginning with the word “honestly” – are repeated as a media campaign mantra, as in “Honestly, I needed a laptop and a tablet, see my story”; and “Honestly, more megapixels, better camera, see my

story.” Coca-Cola, General Electric, and Ford, among others, also make use of storytelling strategies on their websites to nurture relationships.

Greater interactivity has apparently become a blanket approach to engage the website visitor in an interpersonal-type interaction in a bid to nurture relationships. However, increased interactivity just as well reflects the application of stewardship strategies to enhance online organizational relationship management and should not be interpreted only as the application of interpersonal communication strategies (Waters, 2011).

Nevertheless, while the first set of hypotheses were not completely supported, the mixed results of some sub-set hypotheses do suggest some influences on choices by multinational corporations of online stewardship strategies due to cultural differences. However, these instances are comparatively rare. Instead, top corporate websites of U.S.- and Brazil-based companies more generally reflect their offline home cultures even when, via the World Wide Web, those companies extend their reach through their own websites in each other’s backyards meant to reach publics with different cultures (Waters & Lo, 2012).

Examining Stewardship Strategies and Country of Ownership

The second set of hypotheses proposed that multinational companies with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil would apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently. When all four stewardship strategies were analyzed altogether, there were no differences among U.S. and Brazil-based companies’ home- and host-country websites when country of ownership was considered. When analyzed individually, neither reciprocity or reporting nor relationship nurturing presented significant differences due to country of ownership. The responsibility stewardship strategy was the only one to suggest differences in frequency of applications on

corporate websites due to distinct country of ownership. Overall, Brazilian-owned corporations' home- and host-country websites used more responsibility items in combination than U.S.-owned companies, suggesting that Brazilian companies make greater efforts on their websites to demonstrate their social consciences and good corporate citizenship than American-owned companies. One reason for this might be attributed to the result that Brazil-owned companies' home- and host-country websites had more applications of responsibility items combined than U.S.-owned companies, and the tendency of Brazil being more of a collective society compared with the individual-oriented U.S. (Hofstede, 2001, 2013). There were no differences in demonstrations of responsibility strategies on websites of companies with owners in countries other than the U.S. or Brazil.

Inclusion of mission statements, visions for the future, statements of ethics and guiding values and "other" responsibility expressions were more frequently applied by Brazilian companies' home- and host-country websites. U.S companies' home websites provided leadership names and titles more often than the Brazilians. Differences in management styles could be related to culture (Culpan & Kucukemiroglu, 1993). Similar to Bartkus, Glassman and McAfee's (2002) study, which compared inclusion of mission statements by European, U.S. and Japanese firms on their websites, many companies would not include these types of responsibility items on their home pages. In the present study, some companies, such as Walmart, BRF-Brasil Foods, and Apple, placed their mission, vision and/or values statements on pages designated for investors. Other companies interwove such institutional information throughout their websites instead of in specific statements (Bartkus et al., 2002). The mean score on this responsibility measure of companies with ownership outside of the U.S. or Brazil was closer to the mean score of the U.S.-owned companies (see Table 4.5 in the previous chapter).

This suggests companies owned elsewhere might be following U.S. business practices, as Guyon and Hjelt (2001) argued, even though in this study the comparison with the means of the Brazilian-owned companies was not significantly different.

Examining Stewardship Strategies
and Companies' Global Industry Classification Standard Sector Categorizations

The third set of hypotheses predicted that multinational companies with different Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) sector categorizations conducting business in both the U.S. and Brazil would apply stewardship strategies on their home- and host-country websites differently. As the nature of industry in which a company does business has been identified as a significant factor governing organizational disclosure practices (Amran & Haniffa, 2011; Jenkins & Yakovleva, 2006; Sobhani, Amran & Zainuddin, 2012; Stanwick & Stanwick, 2006), it was assumed the use of stewardship strategies on corporate websites would also reflect particularities of each industry sector. Tagesson, Blank, Broberg and Collin (2009), for example, found that the extent of disclosures on corporate websites were associated with ownership and type of industry.

However, when all four stewardship strategies were analyzed altogether, there were no differences in their frequencies of application due to GICS classifications on the U.S.-based and Brazil-based companies' home- and host-country websites. While Waters' (2011) study found differences by GICS categories among *Fortune* 100 companies' websites across each of the four stewardship strategies, this research found differences due to GICS classifications on the U.S.-based and Brazil-based companies' home- and host-country websites only in the use of relationship nurturing. Companies classified in the information technology sector applied more relationship nurturing tactics on their websites than did those companies whose classification is in consumer goods, replicating one of Waters' (2011) findings. It should be noted that in this study the ten sector classifications were collapsed into five categories to facilitate chi-square

statistics (Crocker & Algina, 1986), whereas Waters conducted his analyses with eight of the ten categories.

Representations of Ownership and the Country-of-Origin Effect

This study's findings that country of ownership has minimal effects on stewardship strategies applied on home- and host-country websites of U.S.- and Brazil-based companies conducting business in both countries mirrors Billgen's (2013) research regarding the lack of representations of origin on multinational company websites. Of the 45 host-country websites analyzed, only four indicated country of origin through overt representations and all were based in Brazil – JBS Friboi, TAM Airlines, Usiminas, and Gol Airlines. These representations of origin consisted of reports on the websites of news and general information about Brazil, not specific identification of Brazil as the company's country of origin. For example, the JBS Friboi host-country website offers a link inviting visitors to click and “follow the news and latest developments at all JBS business units in Brazil.” Usiminas' host-country website mentions Brazil in news postings and institutional message-headlines in Portuguese, such as “A Usiminas está pensando lá na frente e você?” which translates to “Usiminas is thinking ahead, how about you?”

Indirect representations of origin were more common in the form of brief mentions in historical information sections on the websites describing history of the company in the host-country with global information about the company, as Procter & Gamble, Exxon Mobil, and Chevron did on their Brazilian websites. General descriptions of the company's global presence were even more common, such as carried on the host-country websites of U.S.-based Coca-Cola, Pfizer, INTL FCStone, and PepsiCo as well as Brazil-based Petrobras and Gerdau. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, some companies highlighted their international nature through overt

statements of global status, having pages such as Procter & Gamble's "P&G Worldwide" or Exxon Mobil's "ExxonMobil mundial" listing the countries where the company does business, and/or providing links to their external websites in other countries. Some multinational corporations' host websites boasted of accomplishments in the host country. For instance, Exxon Mobil emphasized its presence in Brazil with messages detailing its achievements in Brazil such as: "ExxonMobil pioneered the installation of a single call center, the launch of the first additive alcohol in the country, the Maxxi Alcohol, and the launch of the first premium leaded gasoline in the country." Other companies add the host country to their names on their host websites such as "Johnson & Johnson do Brasil" which translates to Brazil's Johnson & Johnson.

As for companies owned in countries other than Brazil and the United States, representations of origin were comparatively minimal. Those companies' websites in Brazil and the U.S. mainly emphasized their global and local presence. It is worth noting that all the companies owned by countries other than Brazil and the U.S. were in *Exame's* list of top revenue-producing companies in Brazil; all the companies on the *Fortune* list were U.S. owned. That said, companies like Raízen, owned in the Netherlands and United Kingdom, described its presence in Brazil by identifying itself on its home-country Brazilian website as "brasileira, aposta na inovacao, na tecnologia, e no talento" which translates to "Brazilian, invests in innovation, technology and in talent" (see Figure 5.11). Its host-country website in the U.S. identifies Raízen Brazil on the home page as "accelerating with Brazil," but does not mention being owned in the Netherlands and U.K. (see Figure 5.12). In contrast, the Carrefour Group, owned in France, does not mention its country of ownership on its home-country Brazilian website, but does mention its French ownership directly in its U.S. host-country website in the historical information section and on the home page where a window pops up with a feedback

form in both English and French. Other companies like the Louis Dreyfus Group, owned in France, specifically mentions its “global leadership in agribusiness,” citing France only in the historical timeline on its Brazilian home-country website. Its host-country website in the U.S. also emphasizes its global presence with messages like “helping feed the world” and the company has a section for “employees profiles around the world.”

Further, other companies made no mention or representation of country of origin on their home-country websites, such as Apple, Ford, Boeing, Caterpillar, Dell, Intel, Citigroup, General Motors, and General Electric; perhaps they assume their country of origin is well known and no statement is necessary. For example, Apple’s foundation date was reported in a “Frequently Asked Questions” section: “Apple was incorporated in the state of California in 1977.” On the host-country Brazilian websites of these companies, some sections are titled in English and are imported from the home-country website. For instance, on the Brazilian website of Apple, when the visitor clicks on the link for “investidores” (investors), the U.S. section for investors opens in English. So even though country of origin is not explicitly stated, there may be navigation or other mechanisms that reveal it.

Overall, the lack of representations of origin on multinational corporation websites could be interpreted as another sign that the online environment has a homogenizing effect contributing to cultural convergence (Burgmann, Kitchen & Williams, 2006; Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009; Robbins & Stylianou, 2003) and implying ethnocentric public relations practice (Maddox, 1993).

Limitations and Future Research

This study analyzed only 90 corporate websites in the U.S. and Brazil owned by 23 companies based in the United States and 22 based in Brazil. It is possible that more differences in stewardship strategies would have been found by analyzing a greater number of corporate

websites. Although this study used the same Global Industry Classification Standard sector categorization as Waters' (2011) study, collapsing categories to facilitate statistical testing reduced the number of categorizations by half in this study; again, analyzing a greater number of corporate websites might correct this shortcoming.

Due to language constraints of the primary researcher, only U.S. (English) and Brazilian (Portuguese) host-country websites sponsored by the multinational corporations under investigation were analyzed. Future studies might be conducted by researchers with additional language capabilities to include more countries, much as Waters accomplished in his further studies of use of stewardship strategies in Facebook profiles by nonprofit organizations in other countries (Waters & Lo, 2012).

This study focused on the presence or absence of stewardship strategies on websites analyzed and did not consider how these strategies were applied to deepen analysis of online relationship cultivation. For example, reciprocity stewardship strategy tactics aimed at employees were largely absent on home- and host-country websites. Although this study interpreted this absence as valuing employees less than, say, customers, the finding does not in reality necessarily signal less regard for employees. In fact, the corporations did communicate differently with employees on their websites, recognizing employees in CSR program reports, stories of success in the careers section, among other instances. To address this, one adaption to future studies could be inclusion of an open coding mechanism to capture in more detail how companies express the reciprocity strategy, rather than limiting coding to presence or absence of specific tactics. Such coding mechanisms might permit more nuanced identifications and interpretations of stewardship applications online.

Besides expanding this research to greater numbers of companies in additional GICS sectors and operating in additional countries, interviews of public relations professionals affiliated with the companies under investigation to gather practitioners' perceptions of stewardship strategies intended, along with analysis of corporate websites similar to this study, might add considerably to deeper evaluations and understanding of stewardship efforts and applications among companies in different industries operating in different countries.

Moreover, all of the companies with ownership in countries other than the U.S. and Brazil in this study were analyzed as being Brazil-based with home-country websites designated as Brazilian, while all the websites analyzed as U.S.-based were, in fact, owned in the U.S. It would be ill-considered to generalize about differences in stewardship strategies implemented on home- and host-country websites strictly from this data; in fact, one of the companies designated as "Brazil-based" – Cargill – is owned in the U.S. More studies are needed to explore further country of origin or ownership influences upon online choices of stewardship strategies.

Throughout this study, some of the chi-square tests of differences in expected frequencies between U.S. and Brazilian companies' applications of individual strategies on their home- and host-country websites had fewer than five frequencies, thereby violating an assumption of chi-square tests of expected frequencies, and calling into question some of this study's results. Such is the case of the differences between social media accounts, as representative of relationship nurturing. While some host-country websites had only three frequencies on social media accounts, such as Pinterest and Mobile Applicative, others like Myspace and Foursquare would have none. Only one Brazilian home-country website had forum discussions, compared to five U.S. home-country websites. Again, a greater number of companies under study would address this limitation. It would also be interesting for future studies with greater numbers of companies

analyzed to examine, for example, the social media variables by the companies' Global Industry Classification Standard sector categorizations (CNN Money, 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) for better understanding of how social media channels aid relationship nurturing in cultivating online organization-public relationships.

Moreover, this study relied on Hall's (1976) contextual cross-cultural concepts, Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions, a few GLOBE study (House et al, 2004) constructs and ethnocentric/polycentric practice models (Maddox, 1993) to evaluate possible cultural influences in interpreting differences among U.S.- and Brazil-based companies' home- and host-country website content to cultivate organization-public relationships. It is reasonable to question the validity and reliability of using measures intended to study offline societal attitudes and behaviors to investigate online corporate content. Future research is needed to deepen understanding of cultural implications of online corporate stewardship strategies used by multinational companies to stimulate virtual interactions around the globe. It would be difficult from this study with its limitations of sample size and others mentioned above to state unequivocally whether the companies in this study are practicing ethnocentric or polycentric or hybrid public relations or that any of the cultural interpretations suggested here are iron-clad.

This study is only the second to examine country-of-origin effect from content analysis of corporate websites and the first study to associate COO effects with online corporate stewardship strategies. This investigation only analyzed home- and host-country websites of companies doing business in Brazil and the United States, from half of the GICS sector categorizations. Thus, this thesis is only one small step in furthering research of COO effect in public relations, and it does not provide conclusive, generalizable information about how multinational corporations use their representations of origin to nurture relationships with their publics. A much wider range of

companies and countries should be studied before any patterns can be identified with any confidence. Such research would benefit from studies comparing multinational corporations originating in eastern as well as western countries given the growing importance of global commerce today. Additional methodologies, such as Billgen (2013) used, in further studies of COO effects would also be helpful.

Finally, as this thesis was near completion and mere days from defense, the author's primary advisor reviewed a blind submission to a scholarly public relations journal that investigated management strategies used to maintain organization-public relationships on tourism websites by U.S. state tourism entities compared with online travel agencies. Some of the measures used were new to both the author and the advisor. For example, *Yslow* was used to analyze webpage performance on 22 testable rules; *AccessColor* was used to score webpage color tones; and *Website Speedtester*, a search engine optimization tool by *LinkVendor*, was used to assess site speed accessibility. These and other yet-to-be-identified tools might be helpful in future studies to measure applications of stewardship strategies online.

Implications for Practice

The mixed results of this study suggest that, while reaching out to global audiences online, public relations practitioners' applications of stewardship strategies at present may be only somewhat sensitive to cultural differences. Culturally sensitive professionals who wish to practice international public relations with more polycentric approaches should endeavor to adapt their practices to accommodate different cultures by localizing their communication strategies. Understanding how this can be accomplished in the global environment of the Internet is the key for these public relations practitioners to maximize their online international organization-public relationship management.

Conclusions

This study is the first to compare stewardship strategies on for-profit corporate websites across countries. Results suggest there are few differences in applications of stewardship strategies on home- and host-country websites of multinational corporations conducting business in Brazil and in the United States. Also, the results showed that representation of origin is little-used in organization-public relationship cultivation. In general, top revenue-producing companies in Brazil and the United States cultivate online relationships via their home- and host-country websites similarly, and do not use representations of origin or ownership to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders online.

These outcomes suggest a tendency toward ethnocentrism in online organizational relationship management. Considering the small sample of corporate websites and the few number of countries involved in this investigation, these results and interpretations cannot and should not be generalized. The findings can only be considered within the scope of the organizations analyzed and the methods used – with all their limitations – in this study.

While this thesis adds knowledge to the study of stewardship strategies in the online environment of multinational corporations, hopefully future research will further explore how stewardship strategies are applied in corporate websites with a larger group of countries. Only then it will be possible to truly argue in favor of an emergent, global pattern in online organization-public relationship cultivation by for-profit organizations.

TABLE 5.1: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

(Supported hypotheses in boldface; *partially supported in individual chi-square tests or oneway ANOVAs in italics*)

H1: Multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently.

H1a: Applications of Reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H1b: Applications of Responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H1c: Applications of Reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H1d: Applications of Relationship Nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will differ.

H2: Multinational companies with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently.

H2a: Applications of Reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H2b: Applications of Responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H2c: Applications of Reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H2d: Applications of Relationship Nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, but with ownership in the U.S. or Brazil or other countries, will differ.

H3: Multinational companies with different global industry categorizations and doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil will apply stewardship strategies in their home- and host-country websites differently.

H3a: Applications of Reciprocity stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global industry categorizations.

H3b: Applications of Responsibility stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global industry categorizations.

H3c: Applications of Reporting stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global industry categorizations.

H3d: Applications of Relationship Nurturing stewardship strategies in the home- and host-country websites of multinational companies doing business in both the U.S. and Brazil, will differ because of the companies' global industry categorizations.

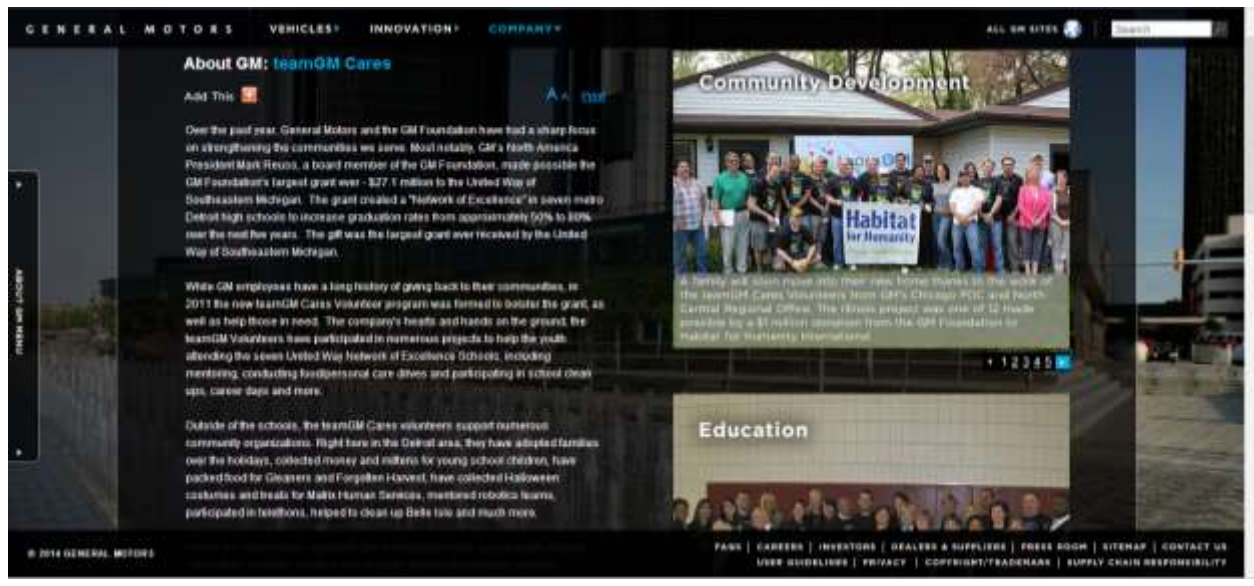


Figure 5.1: Screenshot of U.S. General Motors website (2014)



Figure 5.2: Screenshot of U.S. Walmart website (2014)

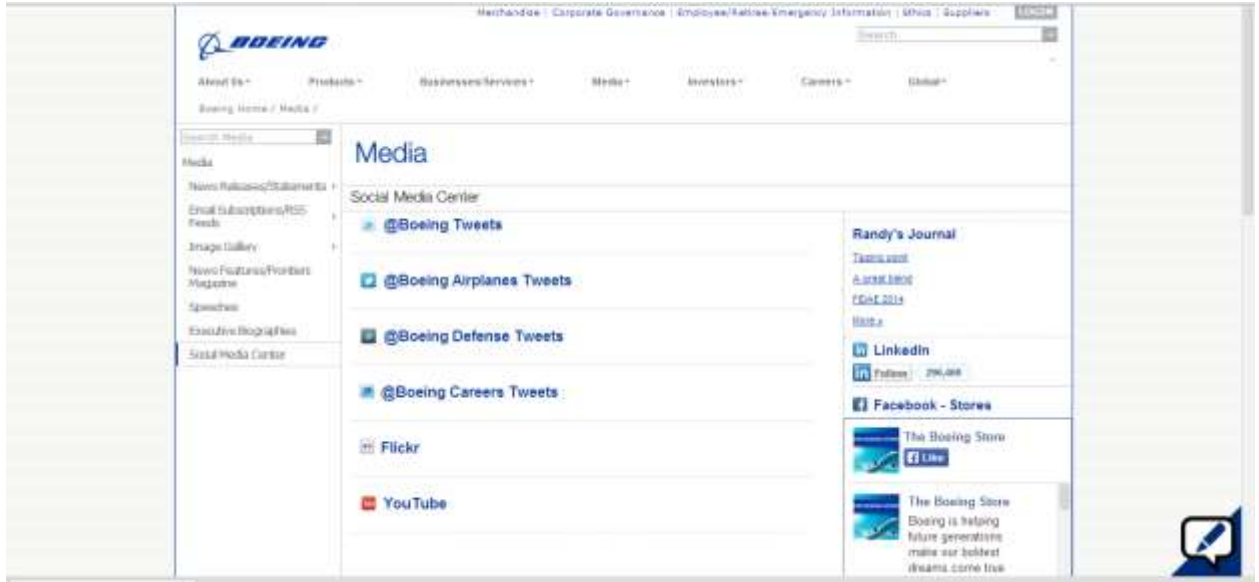


Figure 5.3: Screenshot of U.S. Boeing website (2014)

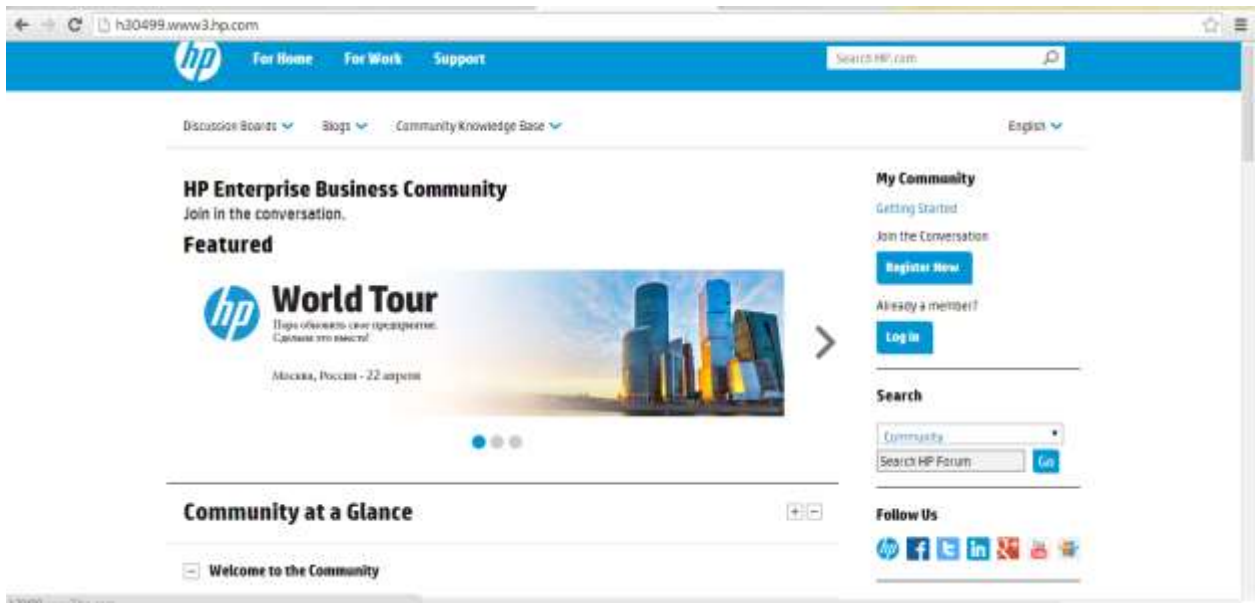


Figure 5.4: Screenshot of U.S. HP website (2014)

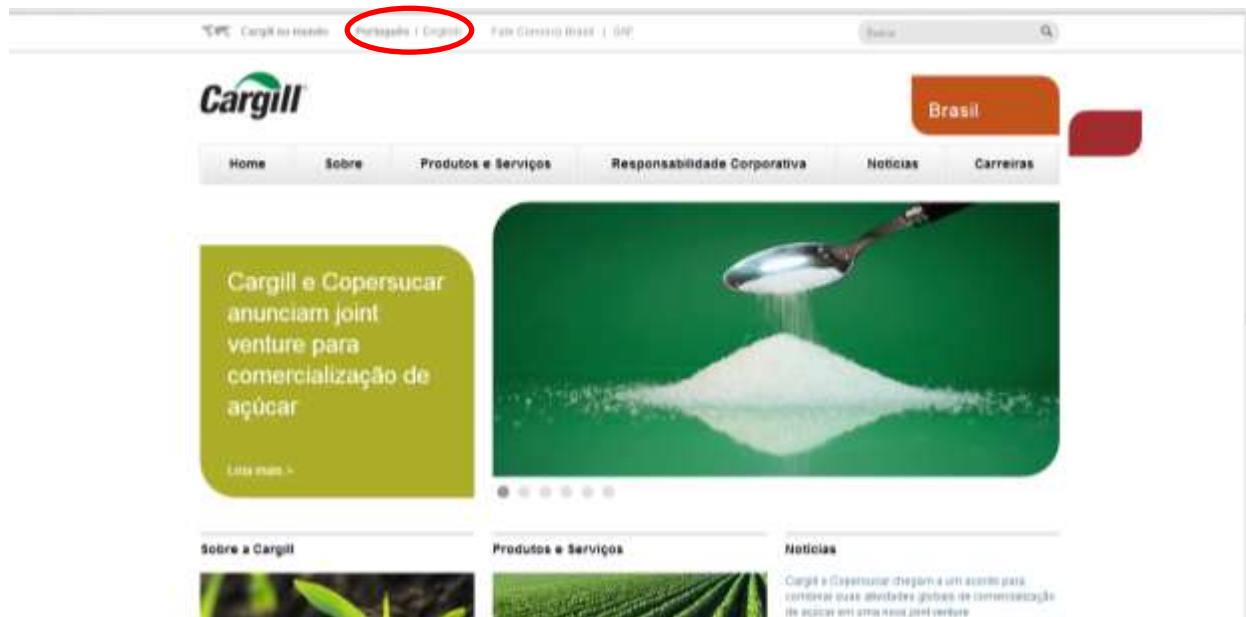


Figure 5.5: Screenshot of Brazil's Cargill website (2014)



Figure 5.6: Screenshot of U.S. Procter & Gamble website (2014)



Figure 5.7: Screenshot of U.S. Samsung website (2014)

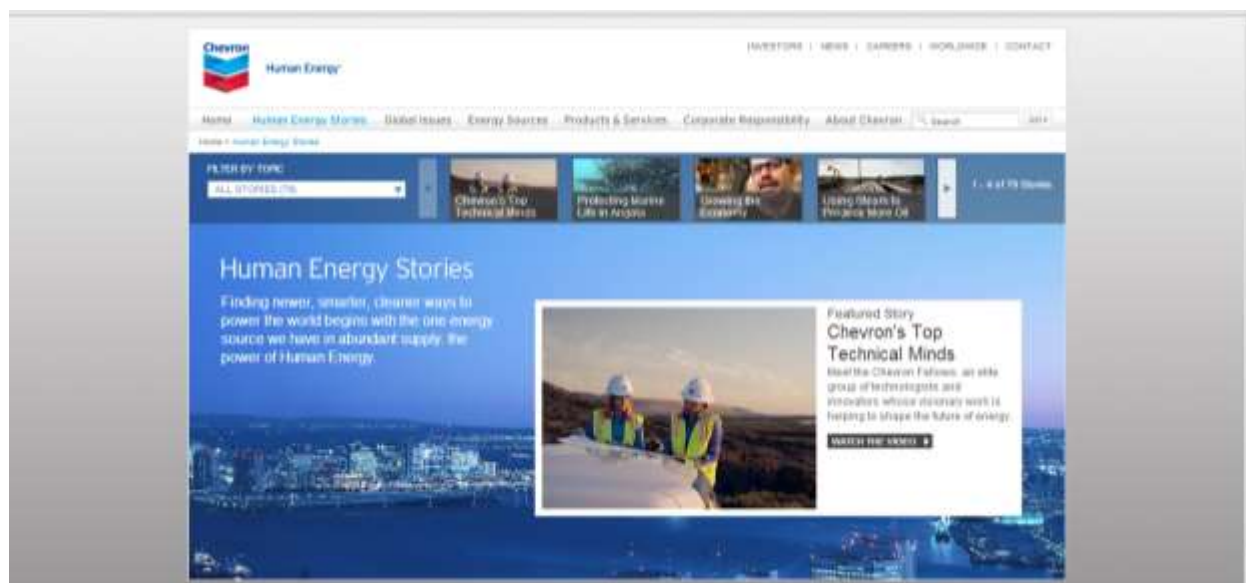


Figure 5.8: Screenshot of U.S. Chevron website (2014)

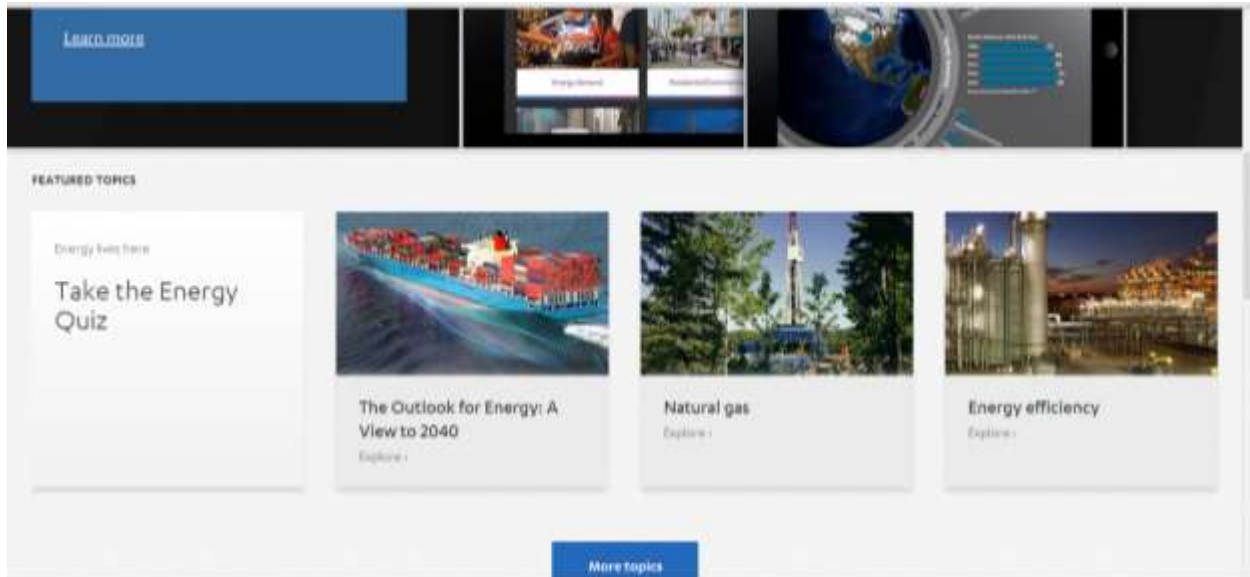


Figure 5.9: Screenshot of U.S. Exxon Mobil website (2014)

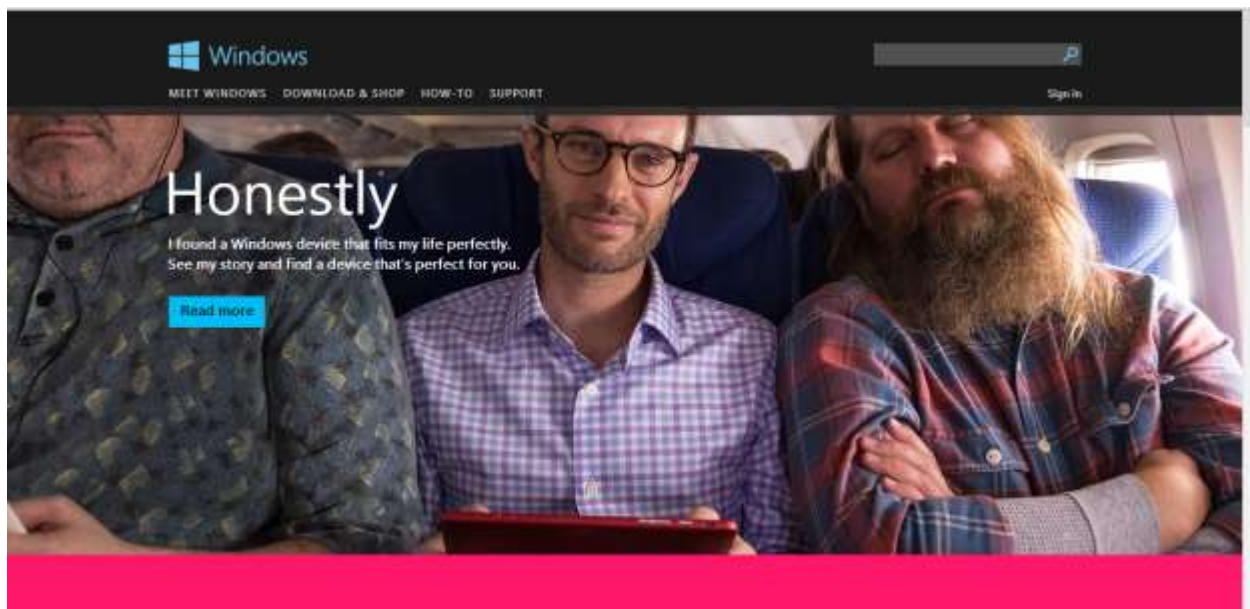


Figure 5.10: Screenshot of U.S. Microsoft website (2014)



Figure 5.11: Screenshot of Brazil’s Raízen website (2014)



Figure 5.12: Screenshot of U.S. Raízen website (2014)

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APPENDIX

A. Code sheet

Company name/Case ID: (e.g: 0188)_____

Home-Country:_____

01= US

02= Brazil

Ownership country:_____

01= US

05= UK

09= Belgium

02= Brazil

06= Netherlands

10= Japan

03 = Germany

07= UK/Netherlands

11= South Korea

04 = Italy

08= France

12= Other (Specify)_____

Category:_____

Categories' code:

Code

Sector

10

Energy

15

Materials

20

Industrials

25

Consumer Discretionary

30

Consumer Staples

35

Health Care

40

Financials

45

Information Technology

50

Telecommunication Services

55

Utilities

Stewardship strategies

Yes, present = 1 No, not present on the website = 2

_____ **Reciprocity** (recognizing and demonstrating gratitude toward stakeholders, e.g. having specific sections for different stakeholder groups)

_____ Investors

_____ Customers

_____ Media

_____ Employees

- Other publics
- Nonprofit organizations
- Community relations
- Partnerships with other for-profit orgs
- Partnerships with nonprofit organizations
- Government agencies
- Educational institutions
- Offering special promotions for website visitors
- Becoming a member of/joining the website
- Other: (specify) _____

Responsibility (focuses on the importance of keeping promises and remaining true to the organization's stated focus)

- Detailed information about products and services
- Providing information about their guiding philosophy
- Providing names and titles of the organization's leadership
- Stating commitment to diversity and inclusive employment practices
- Providing historical information
- Description of the organization's guiding values
- Vision for the future
- Statement of ethics
- Providing a corporate goal
- Providing a mission statement
- contact information for executives
- Other: (specify) _____

Reporting (providing various types of organizational publications throughout the site)

- Annual reports
- Fact sheets
- News releases
- Podcasts/webcasts
- Newsletters
- Brochures
- Magazines
- Online newsroom
- Audited financial information
- Green initiatives/ environmental impact reports
- Subscription option to informational updates
- Subscription option for RSS feeds
- Infographics
- Other: (specify) _____

Relationship nurturing (inviting return visits, facilitating interactivity mechanisms)

- Encouraging visitors to bookmark the site for future visits
- Promoting the organization's social media accounts
- Sharing content on social media

- Organizational blog
- Twitter account
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Flickr
- MySpace
- Tumblr
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Google +
- LinkedIn
- Slide Share
- Mobile Apps
- Forums
- Foursquare
- Other social media:
 - Providing a listing of job opportunities
 - Customer service outreach
 - Ability to request information from the organization
 - Provision of a feedback form
 - Instant chat option
 - Translation service option
 - Other: (specify) _____