CHAPTER SIX

CONVEYING TRUST IN A GLOBALIZED ERA

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1. Introduction

In present times much of a company's success depends on the relevant stakeholders' perception of their reputation and image. It is therefore particularly important for a company to disseminate suitable information about itself and use public-relations tools as effectively as possible. More particularly, the belief that a company can "do well by doing good" has been gaining momentum recently, in response to rising public awareness of the social impact of a company's performance. This has led an increasing number of enterprises to devote greater care and attention to the drafting of their Corporate Social Responsibility reports (CSR), which have thus become important communication instruments.

However, the impact of globalization, which has brought along an increase in international business exchanges and the subsequent need to address a variety of audiences, has also given rise to important and controversial issues for what concerns corporate communication in general. On the one hand, companies are faced with the challenge to reach out to a multicultural audience, but on the other hand, in order to distinguish themselves from their competitors, they cannot but emphasize some traits of their national culture and identity, in an attempt to project a trustworthy and reliable image. This is in line with Hofstede's principle: 'Think locally, act globally' (1998). In fact, several studies (Han and Terpstra 1988; Ettenson 1993; Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2006) have demonstrated that stakeholders often refer to the 'country-of-origin' image as a tool to evaluate companies and their services/products.

The present study focuses on the English version of the CSR reports published on the websites of two airlines with different cultural backgrounds: Delta (USA) and JAL (Japan). The analysis aims at finding

out whether or not, in our present globalized era, the two selected airlines still refer to the typical values of their respective countries to create a positive halo (Tversky and Simonson 1993) that may influence their stakeholders' attitudes.

The research is based on small-scale electronic corpora, which comprise the CSR reports published on the airlines' corporate websites between 2011 and 2013. The cross-cultural analysis will mainly rely on metadiscourse and corpus linguistics tools in search for patterns of variation. In the first place, Hofstede's taxonomies for analysing culture have been referred to. Then, Hyland's categorization of metadiscourse (1998) has been used to investigate the corpora in terms of discursive features.

2. Analysing corporate communication: CSR reporting

Corporate communication is an essential tool for pursuing the strategic objectives of international companies, as it contributes to building a positive image of the organization among all groups of stakeholders and it helps in building up a reputation capital based on trust. Consequently, Breeze (2013, 182) remarks that corporate communication - and in particular reports and websites - have become overwhelmingly promotional in tone, thus being closely related to Aristotele's concept of 'rhetoric' and having the major function of strengthening the adherence of an audience to the ideas that are presented. As far as CSR reports are concerned, this vision is supported also by Degano (2010), who defines them as an interplay of informative and promotional discourse, in which the firm has to convince the stakeholders of its 'goodness'.

In recent years, the social expectations of immediate stakeholders, NGOs, activists, media, communities, governments and other institutional forces have made companies more and more conscious of the need to report publicly on various aspects of their social and environmental performance, thus giving rise to a new genre of corporate reporting (Owen and O'Dwyer 2008). The issue first achieved real prominence in the 1970s because of the debate concerning the role of the corporation in society, at a time of rising social expectations and an emerging environmental awareness. Nevertheless, as the 1980s progressed, macro-economic factors, such as rising unemployment and a consequent slow-down in economic growth, focused the attention on economic priorities rather than on social and environmental performance. In the 1990s non-financial reports reappeared on the scene, probably to a large extent as a response to several environmental catastrophes. Consequent to the rising public awareness of the potentially negative impact of corporate economic activity on the

overall quality of life, the reports were dominated by environmental concerns. At the end of the 1990s a shift towards a more socially rounded reporting occurred.

Nowadays, within the broader frame of corporate communication, Dixon *et al.* (2005) have recognized that CSR reporting is increasingly becoming an important strategic instrument for companies, also because it serves three distinct objectives. First, companies need to react to stakeholder pressures for greater transparency, both by complying with the increasing number of regulations and by responding to pressure groups that require greater accountability from firms. Second, enterprises are experiencing an increasing business risk from environmental issues, which forces them to set up clear processes and procedures to manage them. Also KPMG (2013)[1] shows that in the largest companies worldwide, reports are considered drivers of performance and innovation, for example by shifting the company towards renewable energy and sustainable products. Third, it enhances the reputation internally and externally. Companies may wish to use non-financial reporting in order to improve their image, or gain benefits not only by impacting on the public's perception but also by affecting employee pride and motivation, and the recruitment and retaining of new employees.

3. Hofstede's cultural model

Among the various models which have been devised to map cultural differences, Hofstede's impressive study is still seen by many scholars as one of the most useful ones. He describes cultural differences between nations by using a series of bipolar dimensions. Every single nation under analysis is rated on each of these dimensions on a scale from 1 to 100 and the scores assigned allow for predictions to be made on the way their societies operate (1997, 89).

- Power distance (PD) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

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[1] KPMG [the name "KPMG" was chosen when KMG (Klynveld Main Goerdeler) merged with Peat Marwick] is one of the largest professional service companies in the world and one of the Big Four auditors, along with Deloitte, Ernst & Young and Pricewaterhouse Coopers' (http:// www.kpmg.com/it/it/pagine/default.aspx). Web source: PDF document "The KPMG Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting" 2013.

- Individualism (IND) vs. Collectivism (COLL) refers to the degree to which individuals are supposed to look after themselves or remain integrated in groups.
- Masculinity (MAS) vs. Femininity (FEM). Masculine-oriented cultures pursue goals such as assertiveness, financial success and heroism, whereas feminine-oriented ones value life quality and interpersonal relationships.
- Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) refers to the extent to which a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations.
- Long-Term (LTO) vs. Short-Term Orientation represents the extent to which a culture programs its members to accept delayed gratification of their material, social, and emotional needs (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005).
- Indulgence (INDUL) versus Restraint. Indulgent societies allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restrained ones control gratification of needs and regulate it by means of strict social norms (Hofstede 2011).[2]

Since Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions assumes a high degree of cultural homogeneity within a country, it has not escaped criticism (Tung 2008).[3] However, despite this criticism, Iles and Zhang (2013, 30) have confirmed that Hofstede's work has had an enormous impact on the field, because:

(i) by adopting nation/state culture as the basic unit of analysis, he succeeded in narrowing down the concept of culture into more concise and measurable components;

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[2] Minkov's World Values Survey data analysis of 93 representative samples of national populations finally led Hofstede to identify a sixth and last dimension: indulgence versus restraint.

[3] The most recurring criticism is that the IBM research was conducted many years ago and that it may no longer be able to provide an up to date view of the current situation. Moreover, it was restricted to the data collected within a single company, whose members all shared a common corporate culture which distinguished them from the wider population. Furthermore, some scholars (Gerhart and Fang 2005) argue that, even if there are differences within and across countries which should not be underestimated or ignored, the actual impact of national cultural differences on the practices of organizations should be reconsidered also in relation to the role played by organizational culture.

(ii) he established culture values as a key impact on organizational
   behaviour;
(iii) his theory enhanced the awareness of cultural variations;
(iv) his culture paradigm inspired other scholars and practitioners in
    large-case studies.

In fact, Hofstede's categories have been used by several scholars to
investigate the communication styles adopted by different countries
(Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988; Salvi 2002, 2011; De Moji 2014).
The decision to adopt Hofstede's taxonomies in the present study is
closely connected with the relevance of 'nationality' in the airline
industry, which is definitely exceptional in global business. Despite recent
mergers and take-overs (such as the consolidation of Air France and KLM
in 2004 or of British Airways and Iberia in 2010), the ownership and
control rules which still dominate the aviation industry make them in any
case much less common than those in a "normal" industry.[4] The
association of an airline with a 'nationality' is a practice which stems from
the traditional state ownership of airlines and this has remained unchanged
throughout the modern history of air transport. As a result, until the
privatization of British Airways in 1986, Swiss Air was the only flag
carrier with no state ownership in the European area. Furthermore, despite
the fact that nowadays most entirely state-owned carriers have been
replaced by private ones, many governments continue to have a significant
amount of shares in their national airlines, thus being apparently
committed to keeping a 'national carrier' (Borestein and Rose 2014, 99).

4. Rhetorical effects and metadiscourse

In discussing corporate rhetoric, Hyland refers back to the Aristotelian
categories of rhetoric, which include *logos* (appeals to rationality), *ethos*
(appeals to credibility) and *pathos* (appeals to affect). In this respect, he
stresses the importance of metadiscourse in engaging the audience, guiding
their understanding of the information presented, but above all accomplishing
persuasive objectives (Hyland 1998, 233).

Rational appeals or *logos* have the primary objective of leading the
audience to accept an argument. This is accomplished by defining problems,

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[4] Apart from Australia, Chile and New Zealand, the vast majority of states still
limit foreign ownership of domestic airlines. An example is provided by the US,
which not only limits foreign ownership to 25 per cent of the shares, but also
requires two-thirds of the members of the board of directors to be US nationals.

supporting claims, validating premises and stating conclusions, but most of all through logical connectives. Furthermore, corporate rhetoric also aims at fostering the writer's credibility. Credibility appeals or *ethos* are related to the creation of a confident, decisive and commanding image which instils trust in the stakeholders. In fact, companies need to attain credibility if they want to persuade their audience, as the perceived authority and trustworthiness of the speaker are critical elements of an effective communication. The aspects of metadiscourse which contribute most to the credibility appeals are hedges, emphatics, relational markers and attributors, all providing an insight into the writer's conviction in his/her views. "Emphatics" (such as *in fact, definitely,* and *it is clear*) indicate the writer's certainty in a message, whereas "hedges" (such as *it is possible, might,* and *perhaps)* mitigate the writer's full commitment to statements. "Attributors" such as *according to* or *X says* draw on external sources to underline the authority of the writer's assertions. Finally, relational markers are usually expressed by the use of the personal pronouns *I* and *we* with the aim of strengthening the writer's presence in the text. In addition to the need to present a rational argument and foster credibility, affective appeals or *pathos* are used to involve the readers, address them, empathize with their values and directly invite them to respond. The categories of metadiscourse that realize affective appeals are relational markers and attitude markers.

5. Objectives, data and materials

The primary objective of this exploratory work is to ascertain whether or not some of the major global players within the airline industry draw upon their cultural identity when communicating to a variety of audiences worldwide, trying to convince them to choose their services.

This study is part of a larger project for which a small-scale corpus of 541,839 tokens was collected. It includes the CSR reports published between 2011 and 2013 by British Airways (56,783), Delta (64,650), Etihad (26,500), JAL (31,292), Korean Air (88,742), LATAM (27,832), Lufthansa (144,931) and SAS (101,109). Only the CSR reports issued as PDF documents were taken into consideration for two main reasons. Firstly, PDF documents are usually longer, thus providing a larger quantity of data for empirical analysis. Secondly, they are a 'frozen' format and therefore less volatile and subject to change.

The airlines taken into examination were selected as representatives of different cultures among the world's top 50 airlines by seats[5], in order to focus the attention on those airlines that are operating in a wider, more global context or at least addressing a greater variety of audiences. In this respect, a major constraint in the selection was posed by the format of the CSR reports because most of the airlines have not published the PDF version of their disclosures for the most recent years. For this reason, since in the Arabian region no company included in the CAPA (Centre for Aviation) list presented the PDF version of its CSR reports, Etihad was chosen as the representative for this area. In fact, the United Emirates' airline was rated the Middle East's 2014 top airline by Skytrax[6], a United Kingdom-based consultancy which runs an airline and airport review and ranking site. Low-cost airlines have been excluded from this selection mainly because they are less imbued with the idea of "nationality" than full service network carriers[7], and also because their operations are usually restricted to a more limited area. The African region was not taken into consideration because "aviation on the continent is however beset by a range of impediments to growth".[8]

The great differences in the number of tokens of the sub-corpora depend on the quantity of material which was accessible on the individual websites, according to the criteria previously described. Therefore it should be noted that a lower token number does not imply that the airline publishes less about CSR, since it might have produced CSR disclosures in the html format for some of the years within the time span under consideration.

The present study focuses on the comparison between two airlines characterized by greatly different cultural backgrounds: Delta and JAL. In the first place, the two countries where the airlines are headquartered were investigated on the basis of Hofstede's taxonomies for the analysis of culture, with a view to establishing their most relevant features. Then, Hyland's categorization of metadiscourse was used to investigate convergences and divergences which the corpora exhibit in terms of discursive features,

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[5] Web source: CAPA, 2013. Established for over 25 years, CAPA delivers market analyses and data that support strategic decision-making at many of the world's most recognized organizations.

[6] http://www.worldairlineawards.com/Awards_2014/Airline2014_top20.html.

[7] As a matter of fact, the most important full service network carriers were also the former national carriers, at least in the European Union (German Aerospace Center 2008, 5).

[8] http://centreforaviation.com/about-capa/updates/capa-world-aviation-yearbook-2013-country-airlinedata-in-a-comprehensive-1000-page-report-109509.

with particular reference being made to *credibility appeals.* This part of the analysis was carried out with the support of *AntConc 3.4.3.* (2014), free software for linguistic analysis developed by Laurence Anthony from Waseda University.

Finally, the findings from the analysis of the corpora were cross-referenced with the data from Hofstede's studies.

6. The analysis

As already stated, the first step of the analysis entailed applying Hofstede's bipolar dimensions to the investigation of the two countries where the airlines are headquartered. The acronyms in the first line of the following table indicate the dimensions described in paragraph 3.

6.1 Hofstede's bipolar dimensions

Country	PD	IND	MAS	UAI	LTO	INDUL
Japan	54	46	95	92	88	42
USA	40	91	62	46	26	68

Table 6-1. The ratings of the two countries on the basis of Hofstede's bipolar dimensions.

On the grounds of what has been already discussed, it is clear that the above data should be considered as providing general indications rather than prescriptive information. However, also with the necessary provisos, it seems possible to pinpoint the main features which characterize each country.

Japan	USA
Society:	Society:
• is prepared to accept both equality and inequality in the distribution of power;	• is strongly in favour of social equality;
• attaches a slightly higher degree of importance to the relationship between individuals and the group than to individualism;	• people´s self-image is defined in terms of 'I';
	• pursues financial success and assertiveness;
• wholeheartedly values financial success and assertiveness over life quality and interpersonal relationships;	• feels comfortable also in unstructured situations and is prepared to accept innovations;
• feels remarkably uncomfortable in unstructured situations and has little tolerance for deviance from the norm;	• prefers to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion;
• willingly accepts delayed gratification of material, social and emotional needs;	• expects results to be routinely and scrupulously checked and is not prepared to accept delayed gratification of material, social and emotional needs;
• accepts that gratification of needs may be regulated by means of strict social norms.	• allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires.

Table 6-2. The main distinguishing features of Japan and the USA.

6.2. Attributors

As far as credibility appeals are concerned, metadiscourse involves linguistic elements which help realize *ethos* by projecting the company into the written text to present a competent, trustworthy, authoritative, and honest *persona* (Hyland 1998, 240). Among the aspects of metadiscourse which contribute most to the credibility appeals, *attributors* are an essential part of the corporate's *ethos*. According to Degano (2010), the presentation that corporations give of themselves usually raises scepticism on the part of the reader, thus inducing them to report external points of view that are meant to reinforce the strength of their statements. These points of view are generally introduced by attributors, such as *according to* or *X says* (Hyland 1998).

A quantitative investigation of the presence of *according to* for each sub-corpus provided the results summarized in the following table.

	Delta	JAL
According to	0,07[9]	-

Table 6-3. Frequency of *according to*.

As shown by the data above, *attributors* are not very common in the analysed corpora. In fact, there are no occurrences in the JAL corpus and only a few in the Delta corpus. Moreover, by looking at the concordances of *according to* in detail, it emerges that it is used to draw on external sources and endorse the company's performance only on very few occasions:

(1) *According to* ATAG's[10] Aviation: Benefits beyond borders report, aviation provides 56.6 million jobs worldwide and $2.2 trillion of global GDP. If aviation were a country, it would be the 19th largest economy in the world. Air transport carries around 35% of world trade by value and only 0.5% by volume. (Delta)

In the above example the attribution to sources works with positive evaluation to reinforce the endorsement of the company's performance. It is by far more common to find *according to* used with the meaning of "in a manner corresponding or conforming to"[11], as a synonym for *in compliance with* or *in accordance with*.

(2) In an effort towards continuous improvement, Delta contracts with certified professional environmental auditors to review its station compliance programs with a focus on local requirements *according to* all state, city, county and district regulations that impact the airline's operations. (Delta)

For this reason, it was considered potentially interesting to compare the patterns of occurrences of a sample of words related to the semantic field of regulations and initiatives, against which airlines benchmark their economic, social and environmental performance. The list of the items to be analysed contrastively was compiled by looking at frequency wordlists of the general corpus, which was investigated so as to retrieve the ten most repeated items related to international and institutional initiatives. Also

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[9] In order to be able to compare the results, all the rough figures were normalized per thousand words (ptw).
[10] Air Transport Action Group.
[11] http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/according.

ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) has been included, because it is a specialized agency of the United Nations which codifies the principles and standards for international air transport to operate efficiently and securely in every region of the world.[12] The table below provides an overview of the frequency data for the selected items.

	Delta	**JAL**
audit*	0,59	1,73
certificat*	-	0,13
code	0,49	0,10
compliance	1,31	0,26
G3/G4	0,06	-
GRI	0,20	-
guideline*	0,25	-
ICAO	0,28	0,06
regulation*	0,57	0,03
standards	0,46	0,35
Total	**4,22**	**2,65**

Table 6-4. Frequency of markers of attribution.

This suggests that another strategy used by airlines in order to promote their 'legitimacy to operate' and reduce stakeholders' scepticism consists in highlighting their adherence to international initiatives, standards and codes. Delta scores much higher than JAL in this respect. This may sound surprising since Japan has less tolerance for uncertainty (UAI) than the USA and one would have therefore expected Japan to be more concerned with the observance of external regulations. However, it should not be forgotten that while Japanese society accepts that companies will only achieve the expected results in the long run (high LTO), in the USA society expects results to be routinely and scrupulously checked.

By looking at the concordances of two of the above words, i.e. *guidelines* and *compliance*, it is possible to notice another clear difference between the two airlines:

> (3) We will fulfill our responsibilities as a corporate citizen not only through activities that build the basis of our company, such as flight safety, which constitutes the Group's foundation, as well as *compliance* and corporate governance, but also through activities that only the JAL Group can perform. (JAL)

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[12] http://www.icao.int/about-icao/Pages/default.aspx.

(4) We have established JAL Philosophy as conduct *guidelines* of our company and encourage employees to put them to practice. The general affairs department promotes the maintenance of the internal controls system. The general affairs department oversees operations related to compliance and monitors the operations situation and maintenance of related official regulations. We have set up an inspection system to ensure the employees execute their duties in compliance with relevant laws and regulations. (JAL)

(5) The Board of Directors has established corporate governance standards by adopting Corporate Governance *Guidelines* as a key set of rules to supplement the Companies Act, related laws and regulations, and our own Articles of Incorporation.(JAL)

(6) In addition, these training modules make employees aware of where they can go for help should they be concerned about a potential violation of the Code of Ethics and Business Conduct or the company's *compliance* obligations. Ninety-four percent of Delta's salaried employees have completed Delta' Ethics and *Compliance* course since 2010. Employees can anonymously report unsafe, illegal or unethical activity through Delta's Safety, Ethics & *Compliance* Hotline. (Delta)

While JAL has established an inspection system to ensure that employees execute their duties in compliance with relevant laws and regulations, ninety-four percent of Delta's salaried employees have completed Delta Ethics and Compliance course since 2010. Employees can therefore anonymously report unsafe, illegal or unethical activity through Delta's Safety, Ethics & Compliance Hotline. In other words, while JAL has felt the need to set up an inspection system to invigilate on its employees' behaviour, Delta, after providing training courses on compliance, leaves its workers free to autonomously report on unsafe, illegal or unethical activities.

This becomes more easily understandable if we bear in mind that Japan is a borderline hierarchical society and Japanese are always conscious of their hierarchical position in any social setting and of the need to act accordingly. Therefore the people who are higher up in rank have the responsibility of making sure that their subordinates carry out their duties. On the contrary, in the USA, as a consequence of the lower PD, individuals are granted much more freedom to autonomously choose their own preferred course of action.

In addition, by looking at the examples, there is another difference which is worth noticing. Rather than describing and commenting on the

measures and actions already implemented as part of a consolidated policy, as is the case with Delta

(7) Formal domestic and international union agreements also address safety and health at a broad level to ensure *compliance* with governmental regulations and standards. Health and safety topics include employee safety committees; participation of employees in health and safety inspections, audits, and accident investigations; and training and education. (Delta)

in the reports of JAL we can perceive a thrust toward a future course of action which has still to be implemented. This is confirmed, for instance, by the frequent use of *will (*a frequency of 1.31 ptw in the JAL corpus vs a frequency of 0.03 in the Delta corpus):

(8) We take these matters seriously and *will* thoroughly investigate these incidents, rigidly enforce preventive measures, and reinforce measures to ensure flight safety so that customers can rely on us and fly with peace of mind. JAL recognizes that ensuring safety in flight operations is the basis of the existence of the JAL Group and our social responsibility. As a leading company in safety in the transportation sector, JAL will maintain the highest *standards* of safety. (JAL)

Looking at the content of the sub-corpus in more detail, we learn that for a year the company has been wading through troubled waters and is now feeling the need to prove its ability to keep its promises to its stakeholders:

(9) The JAL Group is now similar to a first-year company with a long way to go. We can never let down our guard, even when business results are positive, and we will do our best to further improve business performance by ensuring flight safety and providing unparalleled services. We must never forget our remorse and regret for past failures or our gratitude to all who have helped bring us to this point.

6.3 Emphatics

When external attributions are not employed, a company has to build its *ethos* through an appropriate presentation of the self. One way this can be accomplished is through the use of *emphatics*, which are widely used to demonstrate a decisive and commanding image and instil confidence and trust in the stakeholders. In the present analysis, alongside the typical terms mentioned by Hyland (1998), it was decided to include also *will,* but

only when used in its dynamic meaning (Palmer 1979) expressing the company's willingness to undertake a certain course of action.

	Delta	**JAL**
definitely	-	-
clearly	0.030	0.22
firmly	-	0.15
believe	0.015	0.28
strongly	-	0.16
will	0.770	3.48
Total	**0.815**	**4.29**

Table 6-5. Frequency of emphatics.

For what concerns the use of emphatics, JAL scores 5 times as high as Delta. This is probably due to the peculiar situation the company has been going through, but may also be considered in line with the tendency of Japanese society to value assertiveness (high MAS, almost twice as high as the MAS index of the USA).

(10) Policies should be a reflection of what Delta is as a company and *clearly* tie back to the Rules of the Road and the Flight Plan. (Delta)

(11) We plan to *clearly* distinguish ourselves from our competitors in the three areas of Enhancement of the JAL Brand, Route Network, Products and Services and Cost Competitiveness under the Medium Term Management Plan, toward our goal of becoming the customers' most preferred airline by providing unparalleled services to continuously deliver a fresh and enjoyable travel experience for customers. (JAL)

(12) While JAL's resurgence was nothing short of a miracle, I came away from reading this report with the impression that JAL had *clearly* recovered integrity in its management. (JAL)

(13) The JAL Group wants to pass on a promising future to the next generation and therefore *strongly* hopes that children will have dreams to pursue for the future. (JAL)

It is quite common to find the modal auxiliary verb co-occurring with first person personal pronouns (frequency 1.31 ptw), to express the writer's willingness to undertake a certain course of action. This form of personal attribution represents "an overt acceptance of personal

responsibility and is the most explicit attempt to build a personal ethos of competence and authority" (Hyland 1998: 41).

(14) Each and every employee who works for the JAL Group must be thoroughly committed to safety, meticulously prepared, and willing to take on challenges to ensure safety. *I will continue* to do everything I can to ensure this becomes deeply rooted as our corporate culture. (JAL)

(15) We can never let down our guard, even when business results are positive, and we will do our best to further improve business performance by ensuring flight safety and providing unparalleled services. (JAL)

6.4 Hedges

Hedges can serve the purpose of gaining an *ethos* of credibility by means of frank admission and rhetorical honesty.

	Delta	**JAL**
generally	0.09	0.22
may	0.20	1.02
might	0.03	0.22
perhaps	0.01	0.06
should	0.17	0.25
would	0.23	0.67
Total	**0.73**	**2.44**

Table 6-6. Frequency of hedges.

There are more hedges in the JAL corpus than in the Delta one. Obviously this does not mean that the company is tentative in the implementation of the suggested actions/measures. Rather, the use of hedges adds to the idea of frank honesty.

(16) While this *may* have made JAL appear to have been a victim of circumstances, private companies cannot use such an excuse. (JAL)

(17) The JAL Group promotes CSR activities so that we *may* pass on a better society to future generations. (JAL)

(18) The JAL Group is embarking on a new journey as a private company through the understanding and cooperation of many people. We will press forward with optimism and positivity through joint efforts, while never

forgetting our gratitude to society, so that we *may* become the world's most preferred airline group by customers. (JAL)

Moreover, the higher frequency of *hedges* in the JAL corpus could also be correlated with high UAI. In fact, while *will* is mostly used when it is necessary to emphasize an idea of willingness (see Paragraph 5.3), whenever the need occurs to refer to a future prediction, the mitigated, more tentative *would* is employed, in line with Japan's high UAI index.

(19) Second, although I *would* not say this about all JAL employees, many of them had never given serious consideration to the customer first concept. They were only concerned with doing the job they had been assigned and made no additional efforts, even when doing so *would* have been of service to customers. Employees seemed somewhat arrogant in their belief that JAL could not fail, even at this level of work quality. (JAL)

(20) Under the amended rule, actuarial gains and losses and past service costs that are yet to be recognized in profit or loss *would* be recognized within the net asset section, after adjusting for tax effects, and the deficit or surplus *would* be recognized as a liability or asset without any adjustments. (JAL)

6.5 Relational markers: first person pronouns

An interesting feature of the attempt to build a personal *ethos* is the extensive use of first-person pronouns: 109 in the Delta corpus out of a total of 203 occurrences of all personal pronouns and 453 in the JAL corpus out of a total of 515 occurrences of all personal pronouns.

	Delta	**JAL**
we	1.17	11.28
I	0.51	3.19
Total	**1.68**	**14.47**

Table 6-7. Frequency of first-person pronouns.

A remarkable feature of these data is the significant quantitative difference in the frequency of the pronoun *we* across the different sub-corpora, with JAL scoring very high, as opposed to Delta. The use of *we* in JAL contributes to restoring some humanity to a faceless corporation and makes it easier for stockholders to identify with its ideals and objectives.

(21) Moreover, *we* were allowed to continue our operations as *we* proceeded along the path to rehabilitation. Today, as *we* continue to advance step by step as the reborn JAL, *we* are entirely indebted to the understanding, cooperation and support of a great number of stakeholders, to whom *I* once again express my sincere gratitude. (JAL)

At times we can also find *we* followed by *must* to provide the idea of a kind of self-imposed duty.

(22) To optimize this business opportunity, we realize *we must* continuously review our Medium Term Management Plan, enforce new measures to survive future competition, and strengthen cooperation with our alliance partners. Differentiation to Outlast the Competition. (JAL)

(23) Our work is not simply about handling the flights assigned to us; it's also about making a united effort through collaboration, cooperation, support and seamlessly passing along responsibilities from one colleague to another. Consequently, *we must* constantly be talking and confirming with each other. (JAL, emphasis added)

The company is willing to take on responsibility for the implementation of measures which will, in the future, yield positive results. We also have this idea of the company as a group (slight COLL) which has to improve on its cohesion and common efforts towards the ultimate goal of customer satisfaction, as in (21). By looking at the Delta corpus, it is possible to notice that the company is often mentioned by its proper name, as in the following examples:

(24) *Delta*'s high value customers and members of the media were invited to Restaurant Eugene. (Delta)

(25) *Delta* will be the sole airline among many large companies discussing ways we can find affordable energy while being mindful of our impact on the planet. (Delta)

In addition to the company's names, other more impersonal forms of self-mentions are used, such as *the company, the Group, the Board of Directors*. Here is an example:

(26) Delta has separated the role of Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer because *the Board* believes this structure strengthens independence and enables the CEO to focus on the management of Delta's business. (Delta)

6.6 Address pronouns

In order to convey an idea of trust, it is also important to create a dialogue and to involve the audiences by directly addressing them. The second-person pronoun *you* and its relative possessive *your* introduce an element of *pathos* as they make the reader feel directly involved by the company.[13]

Quantitative results are reported in Table 6-8.

	Delta	JAL
you	0.09	0.29
your	0.02	0.29
Total	0.11	0.58

Table 6-8. Frequency of *you*.

What seems to emerge from the quantitative analysis is that JAL scores higher than Delta in directly addressing readers. Furthermore, a closer qualitative scrutiny has also shown some differences in the actual "type" of readership being addressed. In fact, Delta seems to address a general audience, as inferred from the following sentences:

(27) Thanks, and we look forward to seeing *you* on your next Delta flight. (Delta)

(28) Along with this report, *you* can find more information about our commitment. (Delta)

In the above sentences the information conveyed is quite general, and the tone is neutral and detached. On the other side, JAL shows a higher degree of emotional involvement, signalled by evaluative lexis, expressions of beliefs, emphatics and argumentative connectives, as in the excerpts reported below:

(29) Thank you very much for sharing *your* <u>valuable</u> thoughts. (JAL)

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[13] In the case of JAL, however, the total number of instances of *you* also include interviews with members from the top management, whereby the personal pronoun mostly referred to the interviewees. For this reason, each wordlist was searched and filtered manually, in order to select only those instances of *you* and *your* that actually address the readership.

(30) <u>I think</u> *you* <u>have shared</u> my experience of getting a quick sense of how well a branch office is doing by its overall energy level. <u>And</u> like *you*, I have <u>certainly felt</u> that <u>motivation</u> is rising. (JAL)

Once again this might be linked to the particular situation of JAL, but on the other hand it is also in line with the country's COLL index, which makes it strive for the harmony of society as a whole.

7. Discussion of findings

Delta scores higher than JAL in the use of *attributors*. This can be interpreted as a consequence of the tendency of American society to routinely and scrupulously check results (low LTO). At the same time, the results also show that JAL tends to keep a much firmer grasp on its employees, to ensure that they follow the recommended course of action (high PD), while Delta leaves its employees more freedom in their chosen course of actions. On the other hand, JAL uses many more *emphatics* than Delta, which may be considered to be in line with the tendency of Japanese society to value assertiveness (high MAS, almost twice as high as the MAS index of the USA). In the JAL corpus there are also more *hedges*. This could correlate with the country's high UAI, which leads to the mitigation of epistemic predictions.

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in the case of JAL, probably on the grounds of its particular situation, the need to maintain a delicate equilibrium between confidence and candour is clearly reflected in the balance between emphatics and hedges. The degree of commitment or assurance that the company invests in its statements provides the readers with an image of authority (by means of *emphatics*) and sincerity (*hedges*).

Finally, JAL also relies more heavily than Delta on first person pronouns and address pronouns. This is in line with the company's willingness to take on responsibility for the actions and initiatives that will be undertaken (high PD and MAS). Moreover, the frequent use of *we* contributes to restoring some humanity to a faceless corporation and makes it easier for stockholders to identify with its ideals and objectives. The company is seen as a group (COLL) which should strive to improve its undertakings (see reference to bad employees' behaviour in example (17)). This process will take place under the guidance of those who occupy high-ranking positions (PD) with the ultimate aim of reaching a harmonious society (COLL), since the harmony of the group goes above the expression of individual opinions. In contrast, in the case of Delta, we can infer the idea of the company described as a group of independent individuals (high IND).

8. Conclusions

Several studies have been made on the effect of the country of origin. Schooler (1965) has been one of the first scholars to analyse and empirically demonstrate the existence of effects on consumers' behaviour due to the products' country of origin. After the introduction of the concept itself by Schooler, one of the first theoretical frameworks on the country of origin was proposed by Nagashima (1970), who defines it as "the picture, reputation, stereotype that businessmen and consumers attach to products of a specific country" (Nagashima 1970, 68). Banking on this, companies may try to reinforce their audiences' favourable attitude and create a positive halo.

In the past, when it came to booking their flights, many people often chose them on the basis of the airline operating them. For instance, many people used to favour Lufthansa on the grounds of its being the German national carrier and as such symbolically charged with the typical traits that everybody tends to associate with this country: high performance, robustness, quality, unfriendliness, trustworthiness (Viale 2012). Nowadays, however, most airlines have been privatized and have been involved in mergers and global alliances. This new context, therefore, requires different strategies for building and maintaining trust.

The investigation of Delta's and JAL's CSR reports has unveiled a pattern of variations which can be interpreted in different ways. In the first place, in the case of JAL it is important to bear in mind the particular situation the company was going through at the time the corpora were compiled. However, it cannot be denied that some of the differences that have been outlined are actually related to differences in their cultural backgrounds. Delta draws on its American heritage by introducing itself as a company which consists of autonomous and independent individuals, devoted to routinely and scrupulously checking results. JAL seems to rely on its Japanese origins by clearly underlining its firm grasp on its employees, as well as its willingness to take on responsibility for a series of actions which have to be undertaken for the benefit of all its stakeholders. Moreover, it also stresses its willingness to strive for the harmony of society, which is the ultimate goal to reach, more important than the expression of individual opinions.

In other words, we can conclude that global communication in the airline industry is still deeply influenced by values related to the carriers' cultural identity, which, albeit only in part, seem to overshadow the need for cosmopolitanism and for reaching out to a global audience. This would confirm the hypothesis advanced by Garzone (2007, 320) that "there

continues to exist a tension between the original cultures of the people who use English for transnational communication and their identity as global interactants, i.e. between the local and the global dimension". However, because of the limited sample of the corpora under scrutiny here, there is still much need for future research both in the airline and in other industries, in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the impact of globalization on intercultural communication and local cultures in business settings.

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