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CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION

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Abstract

In this research-in-progress paper, we present a two-step approach to measure the impact of cultural values on organizational social media adoption. We build on the GLOBE framework to measure societal culture and the Competing Values Framework to measure organizational culture. We define organizational social media adoption as the use of social networking, blogs, and media sharing tools in order to communicate and collaborate with customers, partners, and organization members. Cultural values appear to be salient factors for the ongoing adoption of social media in organizations.

Keywords: Culture and information systems, societal culture, national culture, organizational culture, social media, collaborative technologies, open value creation, GLOBE, Competing Values Framework

1 Introduction: Organizational Social Media

Social media are highly accessible and scalable tools for interaction and collaboration. Social media are enabled by the Internet-based technologies of the “web 2.0” (O’Reilly, 2005). The benefits of social media are the easy creation and exchange of user-generated information and content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Social media uses include (1) social networking (e.g., Facebook), (2) blogging (e.g., blogger.com), (3) microblogging (e.g., Twitter), (4) video sharing (e.g., YouTube), (5) presentation sharing (e.g. Slideshare), and (6) picture sharing (e.g. Flickr). Social media have initially been used mainly for hedonistic purposes. However, now web 2.0 tools and social media are increasingly used in a utilitarian way in the workspace as well (Bughin, Chui and Miller, 2009; Bughin and Manyika, 2007; McAfee, 2006). Organizational social media enables organizations’ members to communicate and collaborate more easily with other organization members, with partners, as well as with costumers and consumer. However, organizational social media adoption is not without risk (e.g., risk of revealing critical information) and costs (e.g., training). Interestingly, similar approaches of using social media in the workspace seem to work in certain cases, while in they fail in others.

Recent studies indicates that the organizational adoption of social media is different from adoption of other enterprise system projects as its voluntary participation characteristics lead to an adoption process that focuses mainly on convincing users (Raeth, Urbach, Smolnik, Butler and Königs, 2010) and managers (Schlagwein and Schoder, 2011) of its benefits. As a social technology, social media has characteristics different from other ICT (Information and Communication Technology) systems. For example, a cost-saving new server system might not collide with cultural values of the organization and society. Yet, social media systems – allowing for transparency, openness, and free discussion in the working space – might collide with cultural values (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006 provides an overview of existing research on culture an ICT). To the best of our knowledge, no study has so far examined the issue of organizational and societal culture’s impact on organizational social media adaption. Social media used in the right way can provide a range of benefits for organizations adopting it – such as increased knowledge exchange efficiency or improved customer relations. However, the organizational adoption of social media requires that such collaboration and communication forms are seen as

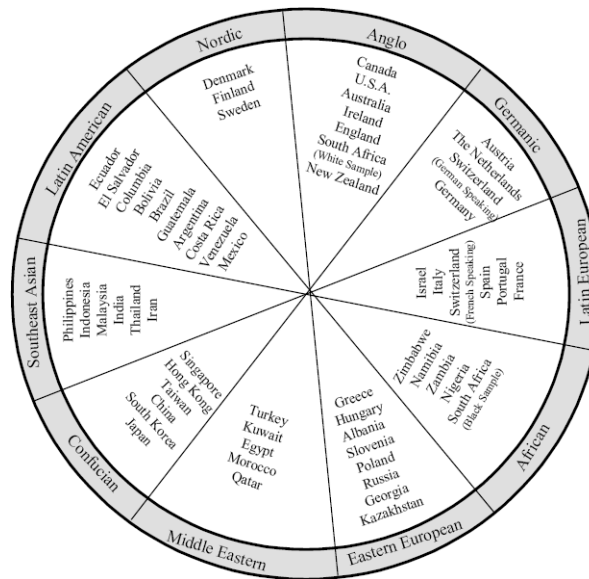


Figure 1: GLOBE Clusters of Similar National Cultures

acceptable and efficient in the respective cultural context. Hence, the research question of our study is: “How do cultural values determine organizational social media adoption?”

We choose a two-step approach in order to approach this research question in our study. First, we collect data available online on the organizational adoption of social media communication with costumers and consumers for 500 firms. Second, we collect primary data from countries with significant cultural differences. The survey aims to generate data covering all forms organizational use of social media, including the use within the organization and the use with partners. The data allow for testing how strongly national culture – directly and indirectly through organizational culture – influences organizational social media adoption.

“Culture” has a lot of different connotations and levels (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006). Hence, we first discuss the notions of societal/national culture (section 2) and organizational culture (section 3) in the way we use in the study. Next, we present our theoretical model (section 4). After that, we discuss how we intend to collect and treat the data (section 4). Finally, we give a brief outlook for the project (section 5). As this is research-in-progress, the final findings will be presented at a later stage.

2 National and Societal Culture

The term “national culture” is common in cross-cultural Information Systems research (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006; Myers and Tan, 2003; Raja Mohd Ali, Tretiakov and Crump, 2009). In this study, we are comparing clusters of nations with similar cultural values, i.e. cultural regions, instead of single nations. Hence, this level of culture could alternatively be called regional or “societal culture”.

Hofstede and Triandis assert that the values and beliefs held by members of certain cultures influence the behaviors of individuals and organizations, as well as the view of such behavior as legitimate, acceptable, and effective (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). Hofstede’s framework is considered the most prominent notion of national culture. Hofstede’s framework includes four dimensions of cultural values and beliefs: (1) Individualism (versus Collectivism), (2) Masculinity (versus Femininity), (3) Tolerance of Uncertainty (versus Intolerance of Uncertainty), and (4) Power Distance (versus Power Equalization) (Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede, 2001). However, there is some discussion on the validity of this framework (Hofstede, 2002; McSweeney, 2002; Myers and Tan, 2003).

We choose to use the empirically well established GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) framework. The GLOBE study builds on Hofstede's work on national culture as

well as McClelland work on motivation such as the theory of non-conscious motivation (McClelland, 1985; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell, 1953). In contrast to behavioral and motivation theories focusing on short periods of time (such as Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), McClelland accounts on long-term patterns of behavior and motivation (relationship patterns, citizenship behavior etc.). The GLOBE study itself is a major international research effort that has been initiated in 1991 by Robert J. House from the University of Pennsylvania (House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, Dorfman, Falkus and Ashkanasy, 1999; House, Javidan and Dorfman, 2001; Javidan, Dorfman, Luque and House, 2006; Liddell, 2005). This study examines cultural values and practices based on a survey of 17,300 middle managers, 951 organizations, and 62 countries. The results of the GLOBE study are published in two major volumes in 2004 and 2007 (Chhokar, Brodbeck and House, 2007; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman and Gupta, 2004). The GLOBE study highlights the different cultural values between different nations, and the different clusters of nations. For one example: the study examines people's evaluation of 65 attributes (Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004). 22 of these attributes are considered "good" in all cultural settings (e.g., honesty, trustworthiness, or decisiveness) while 8 attributes are considered "bad" in all cultural settings (e.g., non-cooperativeness, egocentrism, or ruthlessness). However, the evaluation of the majority of 35 attributes (e.g., individualism, intuitivism, or sensitivity) varies depending on the cultural settings. In other words, different societies consider different kind of individual and organizational behavior as good, appropriate, or effective. Overall, GLOBE's major finding is that organizational behavior and leadership effectiveness are embedded in (and depended on) the societal and organizational norms, values, and beliefs. Robert J. House states, "To date more than 90% of the organizational behavior literature reflects U.S.-based research and theory. Hopefully GLOBE will be able to liberate organizational behavior from the U.S. hegemony." (Robert J. House in House et al., 2004, introduction)

The GLOBE study identifies 11 regional clusters of dominant cultures (House et al., 2004). Nations in the same cluster share similar cultural value and practices, while nations in different cluster have different cultural values. According to the GLOBE data, 60 of the 62 countries can be grouped into clusters of similar national cultures, see Figure 1 (adapted from House et al., 2004). These clusters are similar to those clusters identified by related research (Inglehart, 1997; Ronen and Shenkar, 1985; Schwartz, 1999) as well as clusters developed from a more political point of view such as Samuel P. Huntington's "clashing civilizations" (Huntington, 1993; Huntington, 1996). Cultural similarity is greatest among societies that constitute a cluster; cultural difference increases the farther clusters are apart (in Figure 1). For example, the Anglo cluster of cultural value is most dissimilar from the Middle Eastern cluster of cultural values.

In addition, the GLOBE study empirically establishes 9 cultural dimensions (constructs) that make it possible to capture the similarities and differences in norms, values, beliefs, as well as practices of different societal cultures. These cultural dimensions build on the previous research findings (Inglehart, 1997; Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz, 1999; Smith and Peterson, 1995). According to GLOBE, the 9 dimension of societal culture are:

Assertiveness. The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others. We expect that national cultures valuing assertiveness contributes positively to organizational social media adoption, as it allows for interactions that are more explicit, direct, and unmediated. Therefore, we assume: *Proposition 1: Assertiveness positively impacts on organizational social media adoption.*

Collectivism I (Institutional). The degree to which societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action. We see no obvious argument of a strong impact on organizational social media adoption here. However, Collectivism I might impact positively on non-commercial use of social media in the private space due to its peer sharing nature (Benkler, 2006).

Collectivism II (In-Group). The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations (or families). This form of collectivism helps to develop trust (e.g. within the organization) (Doney, Cannon and Mullen, 1998). Trust is important for the uncontrolled and spontaneous interactions in social media. We expect that organizations in societies with high in-group

(organizational) collectivistic values will feel more comfortable in letting their employees use social media. Hence: *Proposition 2: Collectivism II positively impacts on organizational social media adoption.*

Future Orientation. The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as delayed gratification and investing in the future. Social media is heavily adopted in the “digital natives” generation (Tapscott, 2008) and is increasingly used as a main form of communication instead of email. Therefore, we expect that organizations that are in a future oriented society are the first do adopt social media in order to better reach this new and future customer segment. In general, it is widely recognized that social media supports modern and progressive forms of communication and collaboration. Therefore we assume: *Proposition 3: Future Orientation positively impacts on organizational social media adoption.*

Gender Egalitarianism. The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality. We see no obvious reasons for a strong impact organizational social media adoption.

Humane Orientation. The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others. There are arguments against organizational social media (e.g. digital mobbing, reduced privacy) as well as in favor of (e.g. transparency, sharing) in regard to Humane Orientation.

Performance Orientation. The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence. Social media provides an additional channel for fast communication and collaboration. Thereby, social media can enable more efficient work procedures. *Proposition 4: Performance Orientation positively impacts on organizational social media adoption.*

Power Distance. The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally. Social media tools reveal social interactions and allows for commenting, rating of participants, which are considered to be equally-righted peers in a networked, democratic structure (Benkler, 2006). This seems less appealing to culture with high power distance, such as in Asia cultures (e.g., China, Japan, Thailand) that value “face-saving”, hierarchy, and indirectness. *Proposition 5: Power Distance negatively impacts on organizational social media adoption.*

Uncertainty Avoidance. The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events. Social media and Web 2.0 a relatively new phenomena, dating back to only 2005. It’s potentially positive (e.g. efficient knowledge management) as well negative (e.g. risk of information-revealing) on organizational performance are poorly understood in business and research. Therefore, we expect risk-taking cultures, such as Germany (Leimeister, Leimeister, Knebel and Krömer, 2009), to support organizational social media adoption. *Proposition 6: Uncertainty Avoidance negatively impacts on organizational social media adoption.*

3 Organizational Culture

In the context of social media tools, we find the CVF (Competing Values Framework) to be a valuable tool. The CVF can be used to measure the impact of organizational culture on information systems adoption (Iivari and Huisman, 2007). The CVF identifies 4 (non-exclusive) archetypes of organization cultures: (1) *The Hierarchy.* This organizational culture has a approach to structure and control that flows from a strict chain of command in a “bureaucracy” (Weber, 1922; Weber, 1947). Traditionally, this was considered the only effective way of organizing work. Hierarchies have strong respect for position and power. They have well-defined policies and processes. (2) *The Market.* This organizational culture seeks control, but focuses on looking outward. Such organizations applied a market-like view on external as well as internal transactions. This culture tries to combine the benefits from competitive value exchange with controlled structures in order to minimize transaction costs (Coase, 1937). In an efficient market organization culture, value flows between people and stakeholders with minimal cost. Market-type organizations are outward looking, driven by results, and are very competitive. (3) *The Clan.* Clan-type organization culture favors flexibility over control. People are driven through a common vision and shared goals rather than explicit rules and procedures. Where rules exist, they are often communicated

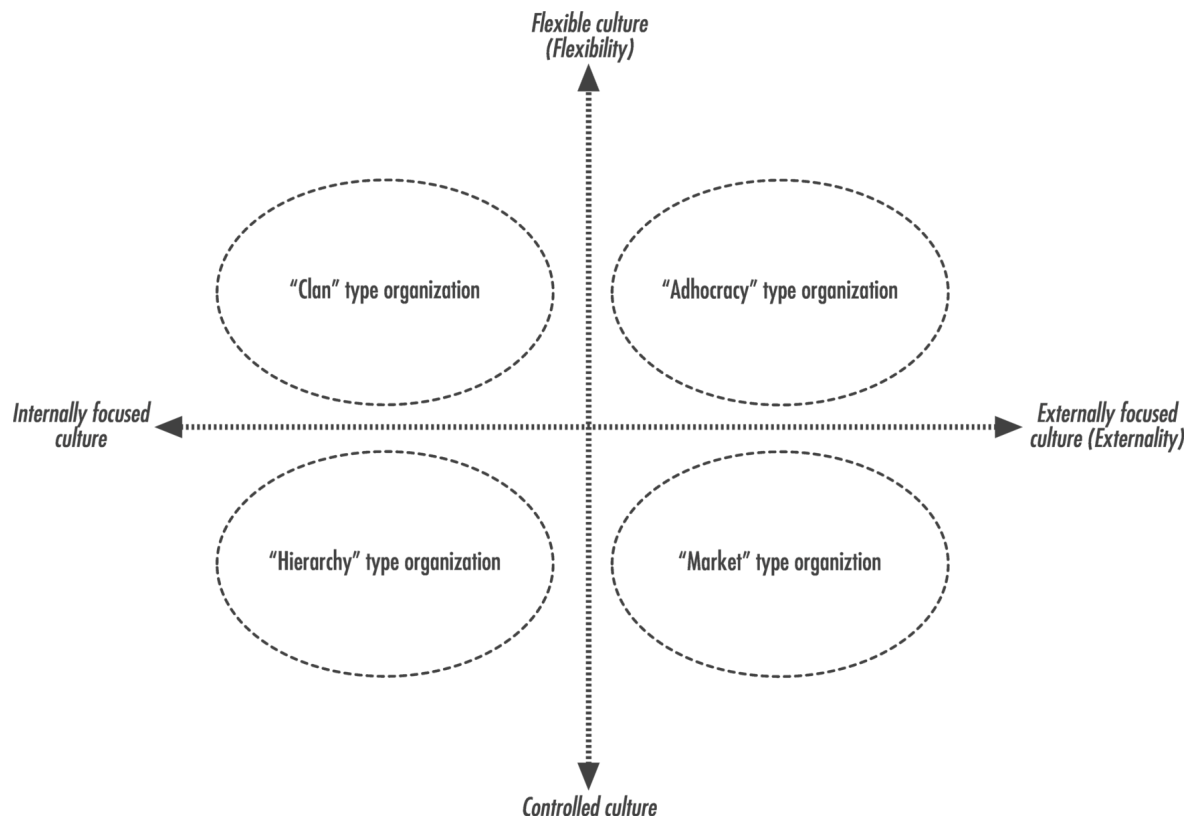


Figure 2: CVF types of Organizational Cultures

implicitly and inculcated socially. Clans often have flat organizational structures. Members of the organization can act autonomously in many instances. The clan focuses inwards, values close collaboration, and is driven by strong loyalty and shared causes. (4) *The Adhocracy*. An adhocracy-type organization culture supports high independence and flexibility of its members. This organization culture can be the most successful one in rapidly changing environments. This organizational culture focuses on speed and adaptability. The organization will rapidly form new structures in order to face new challenges. Experiments and fast results are favored over long and gradual developments.

The CVF uses two dimensions (that can be interpreted as constructs) for the assessment of organizational culture and to build the above archetypes (Quinn and Kimberly, 1984; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1981; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983): externality and flexibility. The CVF literature provides a formal instrument, the OCAI (Organization Culture Assessment Instrument) (Cameron and Quinn, 1999), in order to determine the values of the two CVF dimension – thereby determining the organizational type (see Figure 2). The OCAI questionnaire consists six categories in each of which the respondent distributes 100 points between four sub-items representing the four CVF cultures.

Externality. The horizontal dimension maps the degree to which the organization focus is set inwards or outwards. The externality dimension describes the organizations whether attention is primarily within the organization or it the organizations attention is more outwards, towards suppliers, customers, and other externals. An internal focus may be the valid in certain in industries, while in others external stakeholders are of more critical importance. In contexts, where the organization is largely self-contained, that is internally focused, the need to social media enabled communication and collaboration is low (at least in regard for the use with partners and customers). Therefore, we assume: *Proposition 7: Externality in organizational culture positively impacts on the organizational adoption of social media.*

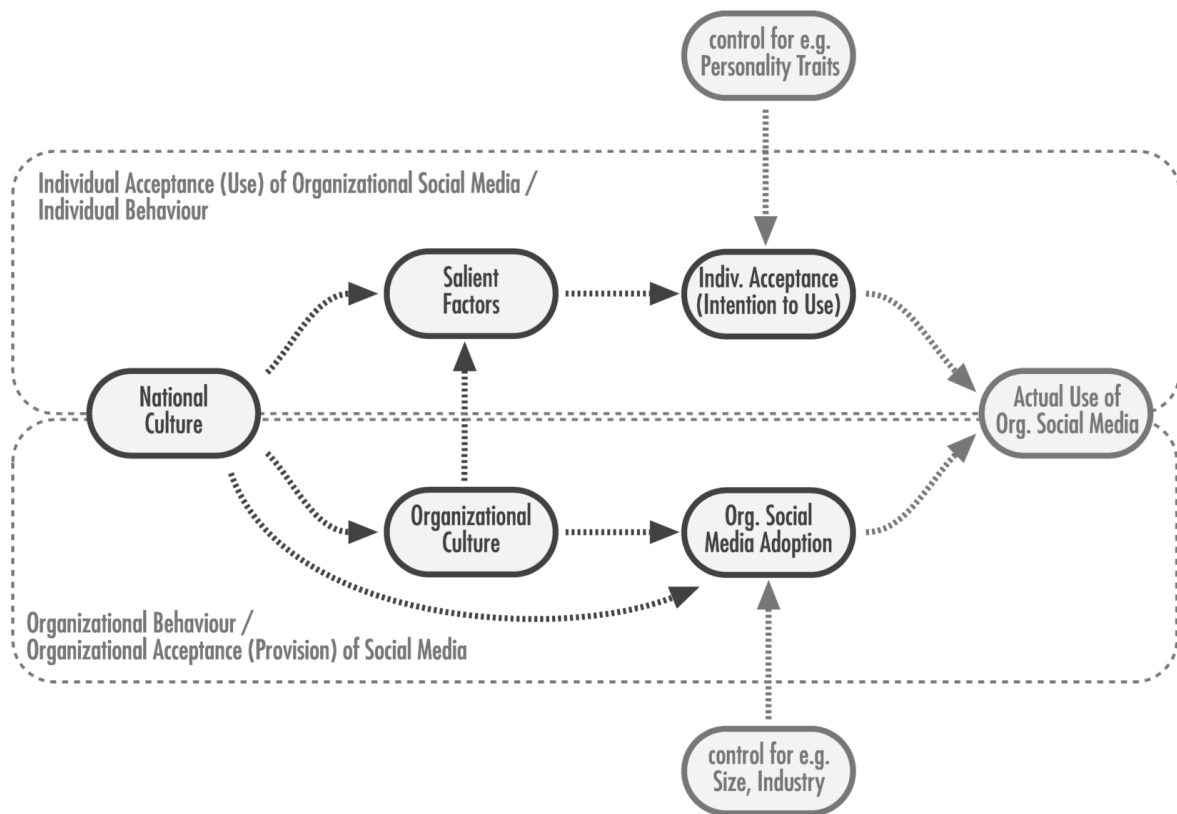


Figure 3: Culture and Individual Acceptance and Organizational Adoption of Social Media

Flexibility. The vertical dimension maps the degree to which the organization grants openness, freedom, and independence to its members. The flexibility dimension measures the freedom of organizational members to decide for them self – as opposed to being more strictly controlled in a hierarchical management. Control may provide stability, which is critical in certain industries and society. Flexibility is appropriate for environments that require need for rapid change. It is a common concern on the use of social media that independent (non-controlled) acts of individual organization members may harm the organization, such as revealing business secrets or inappropriate costumer communication. The contrary view is that the flexibility provided by social media allows for more efficient communication and collaboration. Hence, we assume: *Proposition 8: Flexibility in organizational impacts positively on the organizational adoption of social media.*

4 Theoretical Model

The adoption of social media in an organization has two sides (see Figure 3). Firstly, the organization has to offer social media tools (provision). Secondly, the individuals have to use these tools (acceptance). The various studies on national culture point out that national culture impacts on both individual and organizational behavior (Chhokar et al., 2007; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004). In this study, we examine the organizational side, i.e. the organizational adoption and provision of social media. Overall, we are interested in the direct impacts of societal culture on organizational social media, as well as the indirect impact though organizational culture (see Figure 4).

Existing research studies come to different conclusions to which extend societal or national culture impacts on organizational culture. E.g. Dastmalchian et al. uses the CVF (as we do) and find in their comparison of Korean and Canadian firms that some aspects of organizational culture have to attributed to national culture while others are depending on the industry (Dastmalchian, Lee and Ng, 2000). Webster and White find a strong interaction between national culture and organizational culture in a



Figure 4: National Culture, Organizational Culture, Organizational Social Media Adoption

comparison of US-American and Japanese firms (Webster and White, 2009). Nelson and Gopalan state that notion of national culture impacting on organizational culture seems to be quiet intuitive, but sparsely evaluated in research studies (Nelson and Gopalan, 2003). Their study of organizational cultures and national cultures (using data from India, Brazil, and the US) supports the notion of national culture impacting on organizational culture. Similarly, Gerhardt finds some support for the national culture impacting on organizational culture as well (Gerhart, 2009). However, Myers and Tan argue specifically against Hofstede's notion of a national culture in Information Systems research (Myers and Tan, 2003). Leidner and Kayworth argue in favor of an integrated notion and consideration of different levels of culture in Information Systems research (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006). King demands to integrate organizational and national culture in the same research agendas (King, 2007). Hence, our model tests the impact on national culture (as defined in the GLOBE study) on organizational culture (as specified in the CVF).

The impact of societal culture on organizational social media adaption has not been studied so far (to our knowledge). In general, the impact of culture on information systems is widely regarded as significant (Leidner and Kayworth, 2006). In specific, studies show that national culture directly impacts on the adoption of IS (Twati, 2008). Social media tools have distinct features such as comments functions, rating functions, and transparency of user behavior (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). One might expect that the adoption of such “social” ICT systems have even stronger societal and cultural implications than more “technical” ICT systems. Hence, our model tests the direct impact on societal culture (as defined in the GLOBE study) on organizational adoption of social media.

A number of studies highlight the impact of organizational culture on the use of ICT systems in general (not social media in specific). E.g. McDermott & Stock find that organizational culture (in terms of the CVF) significantly impacts on technology adoption (McDermott and Stock, 1999). Iivari and Huisman find that organizational culture (again, in terms of the CVF) impacts on Information System development method deployment (Iivari and Huisman, 2007). Thong finds that organizational characteristics (but not e.g. the market competition) has strong impact on firms’ IS adoption (Thong, 1999). Twati studies other forms of organizations (with the CVF) finds direct relations between organizational culture and the adoption of IS (Twati and Gammack, 2006). The results suggest that cultural characteristics, as defined by the CVF, are significantly impacting the adoption and implementation of IS. Hence, our model tests the impact on organizational culture (as specified in the CVF) on organizational adoption of social media.

5 Data Collection

For an exploratory study examining our theory, we collected data of organizational social media adoption from the 2010 edition of “Fortune Global 500” (Fortune, 2010) firms. This list presents the 500 largest companies of the world. This is in contrast to the “Fortune 500”, which includes US-American firms only. We expect that large firms are more likely “early adopters” (Rogers, 1962; Rogers, 2003) of external use of social media because of their larger customer bases and their wider brand recognition. The data we collect include the use of social networking, blogs, microblogging, video sharing, picture sharing, presentation sharing. Additionally, we have collected data such as “followers” (Twitter), “fans” (Facebook) etc. Relating the data to our model, we can test the proposition that national culture impacts on organizational social media adoption. That is, we theorize that certain constructs of the GLOBE framework are direct determinations of organizational social media adoption. However, we cannot test

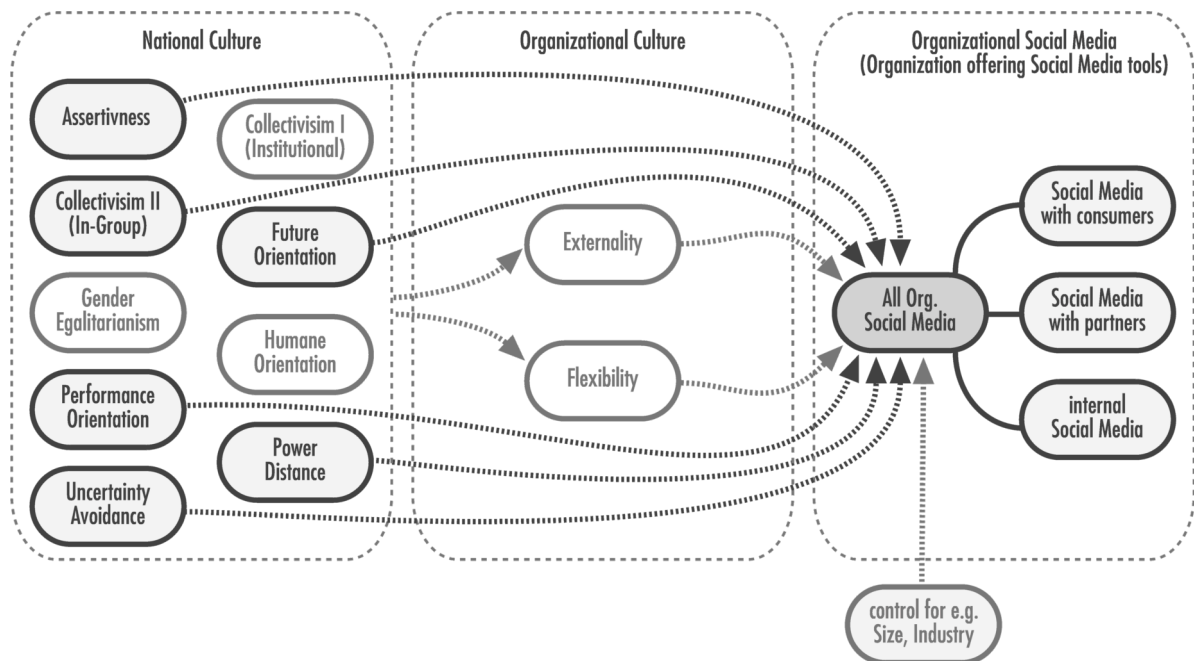


Figure 5: National Culture, Organizational Culture, and Organizational Social Media

the indirect effects (via organizational culture) with the data. The propositions tested are marked dark in Figure 5. There are some limitations and choices to consider. First, we have considered only account of the main firms, not of subsidiaries. Furthermore, we have considered only social media use that states the firm’s name (not necessarily the contents) in English (i.e. the researchers were able to unambiguously identify the firm’s social media use as such). In addition, social media platforms are restricted in some countries (e.g., in China).

In our main study, we will collect survey data organizations from different GLOBE clusters on both organizational culture as well as on the organizational use of social media for customer-, partner-, and internal communication and collaboration. This data allows us to test all the propositions in Figure 4. We could not find studies on how the GLOBE constructs and the CVF constructs relate. Hence, we do not make a priori propositions for the relation of national culture and organizational culture (for a methodological discussion see Iivari and Huisman, 2007). In order to test how strongly cultural value determines organizational behavior – the adoption of social media for communication and cooperation – we select our sample from countries that have a significant variety in the relevant GLOBE values and fall into different clusters. Hence, the selection criterion for the countries of is to maximize cultural differences. To follow the selection criterion, we have decided to use data from three different countries representing different clusters (depending on access to data, we are considering including countries representing the other GLOBE clusters in the study as well). We gathering survey data from a “Germanic”, a “South-Asian”, and “Latin-American” country. In the survey, we collect data on organizational culture (CVF), as well as data on organizational adoption of the 6 types of social media us regarding different communities (i.e., organization member, partners, consumers). Furthermore, we will control for firm size, industry, and infrastructure (e.g., broadband Internet access).

6 Outlook

Primarily, we expect to find support for the notion that national/societal culture is impacting on organizational social media adoption. We assume that we will see direct effects and indirect effects via organizational culture. Hence, this study will contribute to confirming the common – yet seldom validated (Nelson and Gopalan, 2003) – assumption that national culture has an impact on organizational culture. If our propositions hold there are implications for practitioners, technology consultants and IT

department leaders working with social media. For example, culturally adapted social media strategies will be more successful than generic strategies. Social media adoption will require more work (i.e. costs) in “difficult” cultural settings.

However, there are some limitations for this study to consider. One problem it will be difficult to isolate the effects of single cultural values. There are cultural values both supporting and hindering social media adoption in most cultural settings. It will be difficult to make strong predictions. In addition, while culture will have some impact the question needs to be solved how strong cultural factors are in contrast to other factors affecting organizational social media adoption (e.g., industry factors). An alternative approach would be to contrast the GLOBE clusters instead.

The study is concerned with the organizational level. It imposes the question how cultural values impact on the individual acceptance of social media (the upper level in Figure 3). Individual-level information systems acceptance theories are usually based on the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior, such as the Technology Acceptance Model(s) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Davis, 1986; Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1989; Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis and Davis, 2003). Culture is not explicitly accounted for in these models. Some of the effects of organizational and national culture on individual level are represented in constructs such as “Social Influence”, “Facilitating Conditions”, or “Voluntariness of Use” (a moderator in the UTAUT). Usually these theories measure the “Intention to Use” (proxy) instead of the “Actual Use” of a technology. Yet, social media tools are often well known to most employees in their private space – before these tools are offered in their workspace. Hence, intention (or willingness) to use social media tools in the workspace may be evaluated quite differently than other information technology. Recent research highlights that personality moderates the effects of individual technology adoption and use theories (Devaraj, Easley and Crant, 2008). It would be interesting to see studies on individual acceptance of social media that take cultural determinations into account.

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