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Title

CODES OF CONDUCT AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATION: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE 100 LARGEST PORTUGUESE AND BRAZILIAN COMPANIES.

Body Text

Codes of ethics and conduct are formal documents that put into circulation inside and outside the organization an ideal of behavior expected of both managers and employees in dealing with the company's business and its operations (WOOD; RIMMER, 2003; AZEVEDO ET. AL., 2011). According to Schwartz (2002), codes of ethics are defined as a written, formal and specific document that includes the standards of behavior that must be followed throughout the organization. New technologies, new media and in particular the advent of the Internet facilitated the access of consumers to the policies and actions of companies, increasing the pressure for transparency of organizational principles (STOHL; STOHL; POPOVA, 2009). In response, a growing number of companies have been creating and disseminating their codes of ethics and conduct (HUMBERG, 2008). One of the aspects included in these codes involves corporate communication. This theme comprehends image management policies, relationship with media, the appointment of appropriated spokespersons and, furthermore, the implications and effects of individual behavior on the organizations' reputation. This study aims to analyze differences and similarities in the codes of ethics of the largest companies of Portugal and Brazil. These two countries present cultural similarity, with a significant load of values and beliefs in common, since the South-American was colonized by the European. In addition, they share the same language (Portuguese), which allows a better lexical analysis, without difficulties and biases caused by translation. The cross-cultural descriptive study was focused on the 100 largest companies in both countries (except for financial companies). From the collection of codes of ethics and conduct available on the Internet, the authors used the techniques of content analysis to identify and categorize themes, words and structures revealed by those codes. Then the researchers made comparisons to verify similarities and differences between Portuguese and Brazilian companies official

discourses expressed by these documents. A total of 129 companies codes (85 Brazilian and 44 Portuguese) were evaluated . The results indicate that 58.1% of Brazilian companies and 64.3% of Portuguese address issues of communication in their codes of ethics. There are differences in terms of the number of topics covered and the number of words used (smaller in Portuguese firms). Analyzing the more frequent conceptual words (excluding articles, prepositions, verbs and other linguistic transition elements) it was possible to observe that "information" is present among the 10 most relevant words in Portuguese codes (# 8) and the word "informations" is the second most important conceptual word in Brazilian codes. By discourse analysis was possible to identify a prescriptive stance of behavior that seeks to establish a company's central "voice" and a tendency to point out the responsibilities that arise from deviant behavior. There was also a clear concern about the confidentiality of information from the point of view of relations with investors and competitors. In general it was possible to identify the fact that information is considered as an important equity and communication is a relevant issue to understand the ethical approaches of those companies.

Keywords

Corporate communications, ethics, codes of conduct, content analysis

Research Sections

16 12. Organisational and Strategic Communication

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