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Master of International Communication

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Introduction:

The following is a compilation of the work produced during the master of International Communication at Macquarie University in Sydney – Australia. It contains the most relevant work from five classes: Transnational Communication, Public Diplomacy and International Public Relations, Development Communication, Corporate Writing and Intercultural Communication.
Transnational Communication

Case Study on The Coca-Cola Company: Evaluation of The Company’s Communication Strategies and Recommendations

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Abstract

Upon closer investigation, this study found that The Coca-Cola Company has yet to improve certain aspects of its communication strategies as a transnational company. The first part involves an evaluation of the company’s use of social media, specifically of Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. It is then followed by a review of Coca-Cola’s current social responsibility projects, in particular, in Japan and Mexico, which represent the crux of its glocalization strategies. The paper then enumerates some criticisms regarding its underutilization of social media, and underlined the company’s weaknesses in addressing issues of obesity. The last part of the paper outlines some suggestions on how Coca-Cola may improve its branding and advertising strategies by increasing its online presence, and recommendations on how it can further build its public relations to tackle the problem of obesity.

Introduction

After serving its flagship product 127 years ago, the Coca-Cola Company has grown to become one of the most famous brands in the world. John Pemberton, its
creator, first sold it at a pharmacy in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1886, from when it turned out to be a symbol of American culture and happiness. Now it is sold in more than 200 countries, catering to all ages and loved by many cultures. As of 31 December 2012, the Company is worth $162 billion with $48 billion net revenue. Annual dividends have also been increasing for 51 consecutive years now (The Coca-Cola Company, 2013).

How did Coke do it? Aside from the consistency of the product’s quality, it also engages well with its global branding and global advertising. It also endeavors to sustain good relationships with the local populations of the different countries it serves. Now the time-honored product has kept its own spot in the fridges of millions of households and other establishments.

Coca-Cola professes its mission “to refresh the world”, “to inspire moments of optimism and happiness”, and “to create value and make a difference” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2013). In order to achieve this, the Company has been using communication strategies with globalizing and glocalizing messages.

**Globalization: Global branding and global advertising**

Beyond the distinct taste of the beverage, Coca-Cola is easily identified by its logo of gliding white fonts over a red background. Ultimately, the most iconic is the Coke contoured glass bottle, which was created with the vision that it can be recognized as a Coca-Cola even in the dark (The Coca-Cola Company, 2013). Indeed, the trademark stuck, making Coca-Cola the most valuable brand for 13 years until 2013 (Schweizer, 2013, para. 2). The Company made this possible when it began exploiting branding and advertising strategies that can carry it through the waves of globalization.
Globalization consists of “a set of social consequences, which derive from the increasing rate and speed of interactions of knowledge, peoples, goods, and capital between states and societies” (Bisley in Lawson, 2012, p. 141). In this context, the rise of the global media system was accompanied by the rise of the global market economy, and it is through the use of global branding and global advertising that Coca-Cola was able to establish new markets outside the US.

A global brand is a brand „whose positioning, advertising strategy, personality, look, and feel are in most respects, similar from one country to another” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 1999). As mentioned above, Coca-Cola looks virtually the same in all countries where it is sold, with a few changes depending on a specific country”s culture, which will also be discussed in more detail later. The bottom line is that it has clearly reaped many benefits from its consistent branding, one of which is the license to use global advertising campaigns.

Global advertising has become indispensable in a globalized economy, and companies such as the Coca-Cola Company have used its power to expand their consumer base internationally. One principal aim of advertising is to influence attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles, replacing traditional buying habits with new habits and behaviors, and surely the famous cola has achieved this goal with its memorable and universal slogans. Some famous ones include “Coke adds life”, “Life tastes good”, “The Coke side of life”, and “Open happiness”, slogans which evolve around themes of positivity, such as cooperation, unity, and happiness. The universal appeal of these advertising messages is very clear, but at the same time, they also connect with the consumer on a personal level.
But the meaning of globalization is often misread, that some companies might think that it will result to customers having the same needs and wants, possessing a universal, global culture, and so they stick to their global communication campaigns. However, an awareness of cultural differences is still very crucial at this stage (Raaij, 1996). In order for Coca-Cola to stay at the top of its industry, one strategy it continues to use is thinking globally while acting locally.

**Glocalisation**

Coca-Cola uses a glocalised communication plan, which means that they use global marketing ideas which are then adapted into local markets, societies and cultures. For example, 'Contour bottle', 'Open Happiness', and 'Live Positively' are global marketing strategies that are adapted to each country. We will analyze two different countries and Coke’s strategy in each culture, China and Mexico.

**China**

![Coca-Cola in China](image1)

![Coca-Cola in China](image2)
In order to enter in the Chinese market, Coke brand changed its name in Chinese to “可口可乐” (Ke-kou-ke-le). They also show a deep understanding of Chinese culture and likes, as we can see they use celebrities, popular artists or athletes to promote the brand, for instance the NBA player Yao Ming.

Moreover, the company plays an important role in Chinese traditions, as it is present in the Chinese New Year or in the Moon Festival, two important familiar celebrations for this Asian country. (http://www.coca-cola.com.cn)

**Mexico**

![Coca-Cola Mexico](image)

Mexico represents a totally different target. This Latin American country is very Catholic, where traditions as Christmas or Easter have a profoundly religious meaning. However,

Coke has managed to be part of these festivities too.

Another example of glocalisation in Mexico, happened during the Bicentennial of Mexico Independence. The company decided to exclusively create 32 bottles with commemorative designs, representing the 31 states of Mexico and the Federal District and each of them is a collection of signs relating to the history, culture, traditions and ecosystems of Mexico. This proves a profound understanding of Mexican culture and history (Coca-Cola Mexico, 2013).
Coke also takes advantage of Mexico preference for soccer. This is the most important sport in Latin America, therefore Coca Cola promotes soccer tournaments in Mexico. Another curious fact is that they possess a variety of products different in each country, but in Mexico they have milk, yogurt and even ice cream.

**Japan**

Unlike in other countries” the Coca-Cola Company, the Coca-Cola Japan is one of successful company both sales and marketing adopting local cultures and environment. The Coca-Cola Japan was established in 1957 and has top five sales in the world. (The Coca-Cola East Japan, 2013) Interestingly, its sales amount of soda category, Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola Zero and Fanta, occupied just only around 15% of total amount and other percentages are divided by can coffee, green tea, sports drink and water (The Coca-Cola West Japan, 2012). The Coca-Cola Japan developed more than 300 glocalized and local products such as Hot Canada Dry (ginger ale soda), Georgia (can coffee), Aquarius (sports drink) and two billion-dollar brands ILOHAS (water) and Ayataka (green tea).
In addition, the most prominent communication way of the Coca-Cola Japan is using vending machines. In selling global Coca-Cola products, the Coca-Cola Japan communicates to consumers using vending machines applied technologies because vending machines are an integral part of Japanese culture compared with other countries, and also Japan is one of technology countries in the world, therefore Japanese people are very familiar with using new technology. One of three examples is that „Augmented Reality vending machine“ which is a kind of virtual reality technology. After downloading the Coca-Cola smartphone application, consumer can see a moving polar bear of virtual reality contents and special commercial at vending machines through application’s camera. After watching commercial application it moves to the Coca-Cola Japan Facebook page to engage them more. (The Coca-Cola Japan Peak Shift AR vending machine, 2013) Second example is “Georgia, Conversation with vending machine’s actress owner” (話せる自販機. This vending machine can send lovely and cheerful messages to consumers” smartphone’s application when consumers pass in the front of the specified vending machine. This communication forces to visit them to vending machines frequently to receive messages from actress owner of vending machine. (The Coca-Cola Japan Georgia official site, 2013)

The last one is “Natural disaster emergency vending machine”. This vending machines can provide remained Coca-Cola products free by remote control when natural disaster happens such as typhoon and earthquake. 6,000 machines has been
placed at evacuation areas such as hospitals and schools, and can display natural
disaster’s news on the monitor. In fact, 88,000 drinks were provided free to local
victims in 11 March, 2011, the catastrophic earthquake happened. Glocalization is not
only products but also vending machines, furthermore, communication ways also
glocalized to vending machines to adopt local culture and geographical environment in
Japan.(The Coca-Cola Japan official site, 2013)

Critiques

“Obesity”, social problem in Mexico

Recently, overweight and obesity has become critical social problem in Mexico.
According to OECD survey (2012, Graph 1), approximately 70 percent Mexican are
overweight or obese for aged 15+ which is the worst in the world. As well as Mexican
children, around 35% for boys and girls were reported as overweight. (The
International Association for the Study of Obesity, 2013, Graph 2)

This fact probable relates to a large amount consumption of the Coca-Cola
products in Mexico. Scholars proved that the increase of the pediatric obesity in the
United States related to the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages during
adolescents (Ebbeling, et al, 2012). A Coca-Cola regular can bottle (about 350ml) contains approximately 39g sugar, more than 9 regular sugar cubes. (Sugarstacks, 2013). Regarding to consumption of Mexico, the Coca-Cola Company divides global regions into fives and Latin America consumes 29% of total consumption for the Coca-Cola products. With breakdown, Mexicans consumed the highest percentage at 44% in the Latin America countries and those per capita consumption was 480ml (about 1 regular pet bottle) every day in 2012 which is also the highest in the world. (The Coca-Cola Company Annual Review, 2013).

Therefore, it can be said that a large amount of the Coca-Cola products gave negative impacts to Mexicans” obesity problem.

**Nutritional Value and Obesity Critiques**

Some of the criticisms that Coke had been on its nutritional value and its impact on obesity of children. The problem is that Coca-Cola is taking advantage of the obesity problem to increase its financial gain. As Darren Powell (2013), doctoral candidate in Health and Physical Education at Charles Sturt University, argues the role of schools in education and how they become another communication media for Coca-Cola advertising suggest “Coke programs promote a narrow view of what health is, how it may be achieved and at the same time ignores the wider determinants of
children’s health, such as poverty, government policy, and corporate advertising.”

Then he continues explaining that Coke promotes a clear message that blame the kids or their parents for having an unhealthy life. He concludes that Coca-Cola continued promoting itself as a company with social responsibility concerned about obesity, and shifting the responsibility of obesity to children themselves.

(\text{http://theconversation.com})

This has been a problem that the company has handled very well and they have tried to be part of the solution promoting campaigns to encourage sport and a balanced diet. These campaign include Step With It®, Singapore!, Live Positively fitness centres in American schools, Happy Playtime in China, and “Zaño no jugar” in Mexico. We will analyze the “Live Positively” campaign in order to understand the company 'corporate social responsibility' (or CSR).

**The Coca Cola CSR response: “Live Positively”**

Since 2009, The Coca-Cola Company decided to unify its sustainability campaign, through the global initiative “Live Positively” which proposes a philosophy of life to make the planet a better place to live. It's a commitment to make a positive difference in the world involving people. It focus on 5 points: Balanced Living, Community, Environment, Education and Global Outreach.

- **Balanced Living**
This company is focused on improving the quality of life of people encouraging sport and a healthy diet. “Balanced life starts with an active, healthy lifestyle that's balanced with moderation.” As part of this project we have soccer tournaments in schools “Get the ball rolling”, marathons “Getting every mile count”, such as Marathon New York City, race in the fight against cancer and raise money for the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. (www.livepositively.com).

- Environment

The factor of “Environment” aims to contribute to the health and sustainability of the environment and natural resources as part of the effort to realize sustainable societies. The Coca-Cola Japan has developed ILOHAS’s (water) eco plant bottle made by up to 30% plant materials and 100% recycle bottle that it is easy to crush for its thinness and lightness (12g for 555ml). This plant bottle helps reduce impacts of planet which is oil reduction about 90 laps of earth by a normal car per every 100 million sales. Actually, mega hit sales of 2 billion ILOHAS bottles for three years since 2009 in Japan (Japanese population is 126 million) contributed approximately 1,800 laps for oils saving. Based on this success of ILOHAS bottles in Japan, it was enhanced the ILOHAS lightweight twistable bottle idea design to other countries such as Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan supported by consistent 1-2-3 (Chose-Drink-Twist) communication to reduce use of natural resources in the world. Through these activities, ILOHAS eco plant bottle got more than ten honorable international awards such as DuPont Awards for Packaging Innovation and Warc Prize for Asian Strategy. (ILOHAS official site, 2013)
• **Community**

The Coca Cola provides young people with environment, sports, cultural and educational programs and also coordinates with local governments and communities to address local needs. Due to a plenty of water consumption to produce ILOHAS products in seven groundwater samplings, the Coca-Cola Japan conducted „ILOHAS Local Water Cheer Project” from 2012 to contribute local organizations by new communication phrase, Drink-Twist- Cheer. This campaign”s purpose is donation with consumers to local NGO/NPO of all of 47 prefectures in Japan to protect natural water resources. Consumers just need to purchase ILOHAS products and can contribute maintaining natural resources activities. As a result, a part of ILOHAS revenue in 2012, JPY 57,165,724(≈$AU 612,500), donated to them and has been spent planting 18,000 trees, cleaning up mountains and holding seminars for children about natural water resources. All of activities in 47 prefectures are reported on ILOHAS website to proof donation”s usage. (ILOHAS official site, 2013)

Through these activities in the term of “Environment” and “Community”, the Coca-Cola Japan ranked 7th place out of 560 companies, according to “Environment Brand Survey 2012” conducted by Nikkei BP in Japan. Especially, they ranked 1st place in the category of „Recycle” and 6th place in the category of „Reduction of wastes”, respectively. This survey evaluated that how corporations contribute environment through their commercial activities. (Nikkei BP, 2012)
• **Education**

Coke is also contributing to the education of children in through the campaign “My Coke Rewards for Schools” that provides resources to build better opportunities for students. Additionally, the company gives scholarships to kids so they can continue their studies. (www.livepositively.com)

• **Global Outreach**

This campaign is about empowering communities to create better opportunities for people. It is the Company’s strategy to generate value for shareowners while enhancing well-being for people and communities around the globe. For example the project “Out of the fiels, into a classroom” helping to eradicate child labor in sugarcain fields in El Salvador and supporting them to return to school. Another example is the project that involves women, called 5by20, where they want to empower 5 million women entrepreneurs by 2020. In this effort, they are working with UN Women, governments as well as the private sector on three different continents. This project brings new resources, tools, ideas and inspiration to women business owners who are part of the Coca-Cola Company. (www.livepositively.com)
“5by20” Women empowering project

In order to successfully meet its goals, the company has created partners and sponsorships with different public and private companies, such as United Nations Women (UN Women), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), The Ford Motor Company, Nike, Inc., The Procter and Gamble Company, National Geographic Channel, and many others. (www.livepositively.com)

**Brands: importance of social media and online presence**

It is common knowledge that social media is impacting the way we do business nowadays. Consumers now have the capacity to make or break a product, not just with the choices they make in the market, but with the posts that they simply “like” or “share” on Facebook, or their “retweets” on Twitter.

Moreover, the future of business lies more in the hands of “Millennials” or the Generation Y. This is the generation born between the 1980s to the early 1990s. Members of this generation have been raised within a time period where there is constant access to technology. The following statistics explain the impact that this age group entails on the world of marketing and advertising (Gibson, 2012). “52% of the world population is under 30. 96% of generation Y indicates to have used social media
tools. 71% say they liked a brand on Facebook to take advantage of an offer. 40% check their Facebook more than 10 times a day. 76% spend more than 1 hour each day on Facebook. 58% say they used Twitter all the time.” “The global youth market will account for 70% of the world’s spending power by 2020” (Moye, 2013).

If you are a brand, you should be present in places where these Millennials always are, targeting them on purpose not just as consumers, but also as product advocates.

**Evaluation of Coca-Cola”s Social Media Presence**

According to a research conducted by Piper Jaffray, the top four most important social media sites for teens are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Google+ (Edwards, 2013). This paper will analyze Coca-Cola’s influence in these sites and evaluate the effectiveness of its user engagement.

**Twitter**

On Twitter, Coca-Cola has more than 20 verified accounts, most of them targeting a specific country. Its main account (@CocaCola), which inevitably has the most followers, is principally used for actively answering „mentions”, such as general complaints, „follow” requests, and some small talk. Aside from that, regular posts concern Coke’s activities in different countries from Canada to Uganda to Rio Janeiro. As a whole, it appears to target Millennials with its references to music and Music artists, environment activism, and fashion, among others.

Their Diet Coke account (@DietCoke) is also important because in terms of followers, it comes second to the @CocaCola account. It is important to note first that
Diet Coke was originally intended for women. It was also observed that their tweets, though varying in topics including marketing messages, random questions, and inspirational quotes, are targeting mostly women. But these are only overt broadcasts and it does not communicate with its customers.

**Facebook**

Coca-Cola employs Facebook’s Global Pages tool, a tool that makes it possible for “Facebook users [to] be directed to the best version of a Page based on the country those users are in, enabling them to see localized cover photos, profile photos, Page apps, milestones, "about" information, and news feed stories from Pages—all while remaining part of the global brand community” (Facebook Studio, 2012). But this tool does not seem to be delivering well enough, because viewing Coca-Cola’s official brand page on Facebook, it is evident that content is not clearly targeting Australians. More importantly, updates from Coca-Cola are infrequent, usually a few weeks apart.

So far, for 2013, there have only been nine posts, with only a maximum of two posts per month. Although Coca-Cola is the number one brand on Facebook based on number of followers, it comes across as complacent with the status of its brand that it ends up compensating user engagement online.

**Google+**

On Google+, Coca-Cola posts regularly, but content varies considerably in language, with videos in Vietnamese, Spanish, Turkish, German, and Russian, aside from English. There is also a very low level of user engagement, but that must largely be due to the low popularity of Google+ in comparison to the two former sites.
Conclusion

In terms of managing its social media presence, Coca-Cola would find it beneficial to increase its presence and participation in the virtual world. On Facebook, it could post more frequently and spark more conversations among its more than 75 million followers. It is currently doing a commendable job on Twitter, but for its Diet Coke account, it could increase customer loyalty (Moth, 2013) by communicating with its users in the same way that the main Coca-Cola Twitter account does. As for its activity on Google+, communication with its users would be more effective if posts in different languages were not all combined in a single account. One proposal would be to create more accounts that would target specific countries.

The Company’s ways of communication are diverse, prominent and successful in each country. However, in order to keep societies healthy and maintain their high sales in the world, Coke should change its focus in advertising healthier products, especially in countries with health problems related to Coca-Cola ingredients. As a final proposal, our team suggests to increase advertising of the Coca-Cola’s non-soda products, such as water, tea, vitamin drink, milk, sport drinks; by more use of social media, and developing smartphone and tablet applications.
References


Public Diplomacy and International Public Relations

Branding China through the 2008 Beijing Olympics

With the eyes of the world looking at Beijing, the Government of the People’s Republic of China saw in the Olympic Games a wonderful opportunity to promote its image as a modern, innovative and organized nation. China is not the first country to do this, other countries that have hosted the Olympics also used it to promote themselves in an international arena. Although the Olympic Charter explicitly highlights that the use of sports for political objectives is contradictory to the essence of the Olympics (Olympic Charter section 4, article 27.6 and section 5 article 50.1), the Chinese government attempted to organize a public diplomacy (PD) campaign together with the Beijing Olympics to construct and manage China’s international reputation, however it was not so successful. This essay will analyze and evaluate the failed attempt to rebrand China and its image in the world through the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

This paper has included theoretical concepts regarding PD and nation image and soft power that are necessary to understand in order to comprehend the ideas within the essay. The essay will be divided into three parts. The first one gives an overview of the international image problem that China was facing during the 20th century. The second section will explain the campaign, its actors, goals and expectations and the results. Finally the essay will conclude with how China could improve its campaign and how can apply in its future attempts at image manipulation by learning from its mistakes.
Public Diplomacy and its Role Branding a Country’s International Image

In world politics the image and identity of a nation are extremely important. The image of a nation is understood as the way a country or nation is perceived by foreign audiences (Wang and Wang, 2007). Today, states are realizing that they can manipulate their own image in a more positive and proactive way. Therefore, states, similarly to international corporations and businesses, are using public relations to brand themselves. In this regard, public diplomacy is “a diplomatic tool that allows a state to use its image proactively as a means of realizing its foreign policy goals” (Murray 2011, p.37). This tool helps to improve the communication between states and to positively influence public opinions. Additionally, a well-managed and preformed PD campaign can help create a positive change to how a nation is perceived. The benefits of this are numerous as when done successfully it can bring political and economic advantages. For instance, it enhances its international reputation, increases its tourism, attracts more economic partners and brings external investment into the country. The implementation of PD for a nation is crucial.

China Image Problem in the 20th Century

In the recent past, China struggled with an international image problem. Foreigners associated China with communism, extreme control over the population and communication and little or no freedom of speech among other issues. Key events in China’s history such as The Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre were terrible events in China’s history that accentuated its
negative international image. Moreover, China’s conflict over ownership of Tibet, Taiwan and the Xinjiang province did not benefit its international reputation (Murray 2011).

Today, many elements have changed for China. It has been inserted into the international relations system and became a key part of a globalized world. Despite these positive elements, China was still considered an old fashioned Communist country without modernity or development and with very negative stereotypes; all of these elements motivated China’s Communist Party (CCP) to rebrand itself in order to improve the international image of the nation, therefore the CCP is the major actor and force behind China’s PD campaigns.

The Campaign

The 2008 Summer Olympic Games was located in Beijing, China’s capital city in August 2008. The Government of the People’s Republic of China invested an immense amount of money in infrastructure, transportation and marketing to promote and improve the Summer Olympics. China saw this as a great opportunity to rebrand China and show the world it is an open and modern country. The CCP spent approximately US$43 billion in preparations for the Olympics. Nineteen new Olympic locations were built, the subways capacity expanded by double and a new technological airport terminal was constructed in Beijing. Neighborhoods were renovated, streets and avenues were enlarged and environmental measures were taken to clean the polluted air of Beijing. Moreover, a new campaign was introduced to society, known as “Olympic civility”, where the idea was to culturally prepare citizens for the Olympics. People were educated to behave in a western manner, for example they were asked not to spit on the street, which is often commonplace
in China. Taxi drivers, policemen, waiters were all taught English in order to communicate with the visitors.

In China’s case, it is clear that they were using soft power to improve its international image and create a better international reputation of the CCP. (Jarvie, Dong-Jhy and Brennan 2008). Soft Power, as defined by Joseph Nye’s (2004) is the ability to influence people and obtain what you want from others through the power of attraction and persuasion using one’s values. But, how effective was its campaign influencing the target audience? Did China change its international image in a more favorable way?

**China Expectations, Campaign Evaluation and Results**

China was very explicit with the goal that it was expecting to achieve, an image of “humanistic Olympics”, “green Olympics” and “technological Olympics” (Syed 2010). All these elements, were part of the negative image that China maintained before the Games. Therefore, an image of “humanistic Olympics” was important to show in response to Western criticism of Chinese human rights (Brady 2008). Under the slogan “One World One Dream”, China wanted to communicate it belonged to the same world and shared the same dreams of other countries. The slogan represented values of harmony connoted in the concept of "humanistic Olympics". A “Green Olympics” image was aimed to change the perception of a polluted environment into an image of a more environmentally friendly country, and finally a “technological Olympics” image that represented all China’s technological developments.

The campaign achieved some successes and it also had some failures. On one hand, the CCP did have some remarkable achievements, for instance, as we all saw, China
marveled the world with its perfect organization and extravagance of the games. They
displayed a country with technological and economic development, fulfilling in this sense
its third objective of promoting “technological Olympics”. Complementary,
communications efforts were successful in emphasizing volunteerism and cooperation
among people (Brady 2008). However, on the other hand, many negative issues also arose
such as political and cultural problems, environmental degradation, Tibet riots, public
security, traffic congestion and ethnic disagreements.

After the Olympics, China’s national image did not have any positive change. In
fact it deteriorated in countries like the U.S. (Syed 2010), China’s second largest trading
partners. A study conducted in the U.S. that analyzed the media and polling, one year after
the Beijing Olympics, shows that the U.S. media images of China became gradually more
negative after the Olympics (Syed 2010). Therefore, the U.S. public opinion of China
similarly became more negative. As displayed on international media, China was still
considered a human-rights violator, air polluter and economically unbalanced country.

For some scholars, China’s campaign failed from the outset with the program
“Olympic Civility”, which “to Western ears, all this might sound like yet another example
of an authoritarian state telling its subjects what to think and do”(Bell 2008, p102–3). Some
other issues were athlete qualifications, human rights violations, oppressive military police
presence and several features of the opening ceremonies (Heslop 2010).
The Olympics were supposed to be China’s shining moment, where people celebrated the end of poor and isolating times. Yet, it showed a controlling Chinese government by being “too perfect”, which created an image of oppression and lack of human freedom among its citizens. “The rigidity, precision, and scale of coordinated human activity may be judged by the West more as an indicator of oppression, rather than as a triumph of national pride” (Heslop 2010, p. 425).

Some incidents reinforce the image of the old China, especially the CCP’s obsession with control and public order. As portrayed in the U.S. newspaper Washington Post, “the Olympics showcased how willing China is to use its authoritarian hand to hide its problems and intimidate, detain, and punish those who might have spoiled their postcard perfect Beijing they hoped to show the world” (Cha 2008). For example, during the opening ceremony the singer Yang Peiyi, who was elected to sing the national anthem, did not fit with the beauty standards that the Party was looking for. Her voice was kept, but Lin Miaoke, who was more beautiful face structure, physically replaced her on the stage (Branigan 2008). Her beauty was more appropriated to be China’s international face.

On a more serious note, the Beijing Olympics was labeled as the “Genocide Olympics” because China was linked to human right abuses happening in North Korea, Zimbabwe and Sudan. Particularly, in Sudan where more than 400,000 people were killed and China was associated with this issue. “The central problem is that in exchange for access to Sudanese oil, Beijing is financing, diplomatically protecting and supplying the arms for the first genocide of the 21st century. China is the largest arms supplier to Sudan, officially selling $83 million in weapons, aircraft and spare parts to Sudan in 2005” (Kristof
The CCP was even more questioned when they repressed pro-Tibetan protest in Tibet, killing people and leaving others injured (Economy & Segal 2008). These examples demonstrate how controlling the Chinese government was and how in its search for perfection it violated several human rights.

**How to improve the campaign**

The campaign can be improved by focusing on key topics such as media and human freedom by allowing more freedom for foreign journalists and for the Chinese people, human rights by increase its treatment of minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang, food safety and environment pollution by managing environmental and safety issues, not only during the days of the Olympics, but as a long-term policy objective. China should invest more in its human capital, in education and in a good environmental sustainability program for its people.

After the games, one can see how China learnt from its mistakes, and today it has implemented changes in its new innovative PD campaigns. The CCP has a better understanding of the use of soft power and they are promoting more than ever the ancestral and millenarian Chinese culture as its first and most valuable asset. For example, they are using the Confucius Institute to spread the Chinese language and culture globally, which has being enormously effective (Park 2013; Wheeler 2014).

**Conclusion**

China’s campaign offers wider lessons regarding PD and how it becomes an indispensable tool in the management of international affairs. The aim of this campaign can be understood as an effort from China to create a more favorable international image.
However the CCP found some difficulties with its execution as did not manage effectively the task and therefore, it led to the failure of its objective. Ultimately, the Olympics did not help China to portray a successful national image. In fact, after the games, the world kept criticizing China on its political, social, economic and environmental problems.

From China’s case study, we learn the importance of a well-managed PD campaign. It can help to successfully brand a nation’s image; however, if it is not well managed, it can reinforce negative stereotypes. As demonstrated in this essay, China’s campaign was very controversial. In my opinion, the most critical aspect of the campaign was its credibility regarding human rights, because in order to have a good response from the audience, the campaign must communicate legitimate information (Melissen 2005). In China’s instance, the CCP was trying to create a utopian image of China that was not true. As Eduard Murrow (1963) once said, “to be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful”. Truth is the best soft power tool.
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Development Communication

Development Campaign Project: “Yes We Can”

Vanessa Cork and Isabel Grijalva

Introduction

“To Educate is to Free.” — José Martí

“Yes, We Can” is a literacy project focused on adult development, created in Cuba by Leonela Relys as part of the national literacy campaign. It has been implemented in 28 countries around the world, mostly in Latin America and Africa, (Angola, Mozambique, Colombia, Argentina, Guatemala), and other developing countries, with successful results across all countries.

Although the campaign only reached a basic level of education in people (teaching them to write their name, signs, or to write a basic letter) the most important value is that it marks the beginning of learning. It is the first step but the most significant one. It helps to build confidence in people and letting them know that they can do it.

After discovering this literacy program which has been implemented all over the world we decided to take the concept of this program and implement it into a new country with the added element of participatory communication, thus making it a new development communication project.

Part 1: - Situation Analysis
After researching the original project “Yes We Can” we made the decision that we would aim to implement this program, with a strong development communication focus to our chosen country of Cambodia.

Cambodia is a small South-east Asian country of approximately 13.4 million people situated between Thailand and Vietnam. The 2008 Census reported a Population of 13,395,682 people, 6516054 males and 6878628 females. It has been estimated that 80.5 per cent of Cambodians live in rural areas and 28.3% of Cambodians live in on less than $1.25 per day.

Presently, Cambodia’s Human Development Index is 139. With Norway being the most developed country at number 1 and the Republic of Congo the least developed with a score of 187 we can see that Cambodia is considered extremely under developed.

**Education in Cambodia**

In 2004, 22.2% of rural girls were allowed to complete lower school. Only 4.7% per cent of rural girls were allowed to complete secondary education. It is estimated only 50% of rural women are functionally literate. Education is particular dire in rural areas particularly for female Cambodians who are often denied access to education due to poverty & cultural practices which reinforce their domestic roles as mothers and caregivers.

Considering these alarmingly low statistics of education and literacy in Cambodia, particularly among women in rural areas, we saw great potential to implement “Yes We Can” into this country.

Cambodia has made significant progress in reconstructing its educational system which was destroyed during the Khmer Rouge reign in 1975 to 1979. Cambodia’s
Constitution now guarantees a universal right to basic education including free & compulsory education for the first 9 years.

However Cambodia’s education system still faces many challenges including an acute shortage of qualified teachers, infrastructure and teaching materials, these are all areas we believe we could improve with the Yes We Can project.

**Need for “Yes We Can”**

Research has shown that the high rates of illiteracy and endemic poverty has long term implications on the socio-economic independence and wellbeing of Cambodia women. Furthermore, studies have indicated that illiterate and poor Cambodian women are more likely to engage in prostitution for their survival or to be violently trafficked as sex slaves.

Cambodia is extremely dependent on the garment industry with it generating 90% of the country’s export earnings & 27% of its industrial employment in 2007. Cambodia’s garment industry has grown quickly over the past two decades. By 2005, the industry employed more than 250,000 workers, mostly poorly educated, young women.

According to Natsuda, Goto & Thoburn Challenges, “The garment industry requires low levels of production technology & abundant cheap labour” (2009). Cambodia’s garment industry is the third most successful industry after tourism and agriculture and has brought large numbers of poorly educated workers (mostly rural women) into the labour market.

After considering these statistics, we determined that our target market for the “Yes We Can” campaign in Cambodia will be illiterate, female Cambodians. Many of these will be garment workers who need to develop their literacy skills to gain greater independence.
By developing their literacy capabilities they will be able to improve their life skills, with an aim to avoid exploitation in the workplace. We would also like to see women achieve greater independence but are aware that due to the cultural restrictions on women, this may not be possible.

**Cambodian Women Profile**

Cambodian society continues to change with the introduction of democracy and technological advances yet there is still a strong focus on gender identity. Women are still considered lower status than men. Cambodia is a hierarchal structured society with strong notions of power and status. Men are considered breadwinners and women are considered householder managers and carers.

Moral codes that determine “proper” conduct of women - *Chaba’p* still taught in schools today. Socio-economic change is introducing new values and opportunities but yet society is fighting to regain traditional values and ideals.

**Part Two: – “Yes, We Can”**

“Yes, We Can” is a literacy project focused on adult development, created in Cuba by Leonela Relys as part of the national literacy campaign. It has been implemented in 28 countries around the world, mostly in Latin America and Africa, (Angola, Mozambique, Colombia, Argentina, Guatemala), and other developing countries, with successful results across all countries.

Although the campaign only reached a basic level of education in people (teaching them to write their name, signs, or to write a basic letter) the most important value is that it marks the beginning of learning. It is the first step but the most significant one. It helps to build confidence in people and letting them know that “they can do it!”
The Campaign – First Stage

There are three aspects of the campaign. The first aspect is to mobilise the whole community around the issue of literacy and build a local campaign structure which drives the campaign.

The second aspect is a pre-recorded set of DVDs on which there are lessons; each lesson is like a class where learn how to read and write.

The last part of the campaign sees people complete 64 lessons. It is then up to the community or local government to organise activities or projects to continue with the teaching.

“Yes We Can” has had a mass scale impact and does not need professional teachers. In fact, the project is designed to use village-based tutors and facilitators to do the teaching and organising. We want to adapt this development campaign into a development communication campaign introducing participatory communication. We consider that PC can be applied in this type of projects with successful results. In the Cambodian community of Prek Touch we would like to use “Yes We Can” project and implement participatory community radio and participatory video to increase the level of impact of the campaign in the society.

The Development Communication Campaign – Second Stage

Objective:

Educate illiterate women in Cambodia, using the Cuban method “Yes we can” and introducing participatory communication to spread and increase the learning results.
Target:

Young and adult Cambodian women, between 12 to 50 years old. Workers, with a low level or non-education.

Strategy:

As Wilkins (1996) suggested, “Participatory development communication advocates the role of communities in setting and working toward their own development goals. Participatory models envision communities as actively engaged in the process of “Denning their problems and in resolving them through the use of media or group communication.” As a result, our strategy is to use participatory communication to multiply the benefits and the range of the campaign.

Using participatory radio and video, we can make this project sustainable, because it does not use too many economic resources. The other advantage of the project is to empower people to continue with the educational teaching afterwards. The basic idea is that after teaching a group of students in the first part of the project, they can become teachers in their villages and so the project can reach more people. In the end the community will have a stronger link and commitment with the project, obtaining better results.

- Participatory Radio

Radio enables everybody to communicate and to have a voice. Using PR the community can share their learning experiences and get ideas of how to improve the project “Yes we can”.

Participatory radio does not need a lot of economic resources; it just needs people from the community and their willingness to share. It is important that the ideas must come from
the community and not from an outsider, because otherwise it will be ideas imposed from above.

We want to change a vertical top to down way of communication into a horizontal one, where ideas come from the community and goes back into to the community positively affecting people’s lives and creating change.

PR requires the participation of the community to create and stronger relationships between the project and the grassroots.

During the radio programs, people can discuss how they feel about the project, its affect to their lives, changes they feel in their behaviour after the classes and ways in which they can improve the project. They can also create a community radio to continue with the education into a major level, they just have to get the books and then follow the classes from their homes, having at the end of the program an open discussion to clarify any questions.

- Participatory Video

It is much easier to work with images when people do not know how to read and write, so we would like to implement PV into the project “Yes We Can”. As Shirley White (2003, pg.146) mentions in her book “Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower”, through the process of making participatory videos “local communities are learning the art of constructing messages to communicate their concerns, describe their successes, or share their dreams with other”. Consequently we can realise the power of using video in a development communication campaign and the benefits for the community.
Using PV, the Cambodian women who have already received the 64 lessons of the program can communicate their experiences to other women. They can share their learning techniques, and how they overcame difficulties in learning. If you are able to explain in your own words what you have just learnt it provides a better and deeper understanding of the ideas and concepts.

Other media used:-

In parallel, we would like to work with social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

We are aware that the target to which our project is focused would not have the economic access required to use any social network platforms, however we believe we should include the benefits of social media as a way of communicating our results. Firstly the creation of groups and pages is completely free and they can be updated with very low budget. Second, the amount of people we hope to educate is far too big to not utililse digital technology.

Social networks will be used to upload images and videos, as well as post the main outcomes, in order to communicate about our project and inform other people in the world of our work. The main goal of informing is to potentially receive economic investment from people interested in helping us or to draw the attention of other groups who are interested. It will also attract people working on similar projects, or people who want to give opinions or criticisms, to improve the project.

Campaign Evaluation and Monitoring
In order to evaluate the success of the campaign, and to know how much we reach the objective of the campaign, we will use

- Surveys, at the beginning and at the end of the campaign. These will determine the changes generated by the project at the beginning and at the end of the project. It is going to be an oral evaluation conducted by a volunteer.

- Prior Assessment or prior Evaluation

This will provide us with the information needed to make an appropriate decision about whether or not the project should be implemented in the community, what is the most suitable project for the community, or what changes should be made in the campaign before its execution.

- “On going” Evaluation

This will extract information, reflections and conclusions on the progress and performance of the project. Also this evaluation will give us a review of the progress and problems encountered during the implementation of the campaign. Therefore, we can rectify our weaknesses and consolidate our strengths thus allowing the community to have a better project adapted to their needs.

- Final Evaluation

This evaluation will assess the overall performance of the completed project. It will help us to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact, sustainability and replication of the project. Moreover, we will analyse the contingencies that
occurred during the implementation of the project in order to improve the planning of the future one.

- Participatory Evaluation

As Perea (2013, pg. 27) suggested, “It is a form of internal assessment, but in this case, the responsibility for it lies not so much (or only) in the implementing body but beneficiaries themselves are the main agent in the collection of data, interpretation and even the projection of recommendations for the future.” It is intended to minimise the gap between the evaluator and the beneficiaries. The evaluator is considered as a mediator than a judge. The role of the evaluator is stimulate and facilitate discussions as well as collect their results.

Stakeholders

1) Female garment workers

The biggest participants will be illiterate Cambodian female garment workers, aged between 10 and 50. Cambodia only has compulsory education up until the age of 9 so it is important to target young females who need to complete further education.

2) Volunteers

The volunteers will be teachers from developed countries like Australia, UK and USA. The volunteers will implement the program and follow through with the social media aspect of the campaign to encourage advocacy, fundraising and campaign awareness across the world.

3) NGOs
The NGOs such as UNICEF will help promote the program and generate advocacy.

4) Cambodian Government

By gathering support from the Cambodian government we will able to drive greater awareness. We also hope to create strong political alliances between the Cambodian Government and nations such as Australia, United States and Britain. This is crucial in order to gain financial support for the program.

5) IBM

IBM will donate the technology we need to implement the program – Computers, mobile phones, video cameras, DVD teaching/lesson resources. We also hope to create partnerships with Australian schools for old textbooks to use as reading materials.

Conclusion

Education is primordial in developing countries. Freire (1971, pg. 1) argues that "true education is praxis, reflection and action of man on the world to change it". Therefore by educating we are giving people power, new opportunities to improve and the sensation of being included in the world. We have successfully incorporated participatory video into a literacy program that has already achieved international success. By modifying this program to suit the target market of Cambodia we are able to introduce a new generation of participants to the program, with the aims of improving their educational abilities and thus providing them with an improved way of life. Although the programs’ aims is initially small, with the aim to see participants write their name by the end of the course. By using participatory communication and having those who have finished the course teach others
within their communities, there is so much potential to work with the stakeholders like NGOs and the volunteers to further improve the outcomes of the program.
The World Bank and its Relation with Ecuador

The World Bank has failed its aim in Ecuador. The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) implemented by The World Bank have deteriorated living standards, reduced access to public services, devastated environments, and decreased employment prospects. During the late 1990’s Ecuador experienced political, economic and social crisis. Ecuadorians were left unemployed and deprived of access to sanitary commodities or basic facilities. Ecuador needed desperate an economic reform. The World Bank and The International Monetary Found started the structural adjustment period in Ecuador. However, SAPs did not reach the objective they pursue.

The World Bank: History and Functions

The World Bank was established in 1944 to assist post-war recovery. It is the world’s leading supporter of “development” initiatives, policies and programs with a primary focus on poverty reduction. The World Bank aspires to improve the economic issues countries face by encouraging economic cooperation between nations.

The World Bank has identified two primary objectives to decrease extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity. It has become a significant source of financial support for developing countries. The World Bank Group includes five institutions. One of these, The International Development Association, focuses on the world's poorest nations. This
association provides loans, credits and grants to be invested in infrastructure projects, education, health, agriculture, etc.

The World Bank together with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) supervises economic policies and reforms public institutions in developing countries. For example, they helped countries involved in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. They also facilitate loans to South American countries to ward off economic crises. The Bank also cooperates with the United Nations (UN) to support the Millennium Development Goals to reduce poverty around the world.

**Structural Adjustment Programs**

Structural Adjustment Projects (SAPs) are economic policies for developing countries. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have sponsored them since 1980. SAP’s involve conditions and rules on the borrowing countries. They are intended to activate the economy by eliminating government control and promoting market competition.

However, many critics have declared that the imposed conditions are inappropriate, excessive and intrusive. SAP’s are usually related with changes to inflation rates, exchange rates and laws. They promote market liberalization and privatization of the state-owned industries. Criticizers argue that the SAP’s generates dramatic increases of income
inequality, aid dependency and they threaten the sovereignty of national economies. SAP’s have also impact on the social sector. Studies have shown that SAPs policies have reduced or deteriorated the health status of people in countries implementing them.

Joseph Stiglitz in his book “Globalization and its Discontents” comments on international institutions and critics their poor management. After his experience as vice president of The World Bank, he reflects on the mistakes made by the institution. Stiglitz argues that economic policies implemented by the IMF and the WB have caused economic disasters in countries that have followed them. He expresses that the problem is that recommendations provided by the IMF and the WB are almost never the most appropriate. Many economic policies do not consider other important aspects, for example cultural adaptation, environmental protection, social justice or human rights.

Ecuador Overview

Ecuador’s history has been riddled with economic crises. Its political dramas are related to economic problems. Bad administrations of the public economy, corruption, kleptocracy and nepotism have deteriorated the national economy and increased levels of poverty.

SAPs conditions regarding currency devaluation, privatization, trade liberalazation
implemented since the early 1980s, failed to rebuild economic growth. They had a negative
effect in Ecuador and lead the country into financial crisis. The economic policies were
slow and conflictive, which result into social and political instability.

During the late 1990’s Ecuador was hit by four major problems El Nino storms,
currency depreciation, political crisis and falling of oil prices. “El Niño” is a severe storm
that struck Ecuador in 1997. It devastated much of the country’s infrastructure and
agriculture. Ecuador was also vulnerable to fluctuations in world oil prices because oil and
bananas were two of its principal exports. In 2000 the banking and financial crisis led to
the process of dollarization where the national currency “Sucre” was supplanted by the
American Dollar.

In 1999 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dropped to -5%, the worst performance
in Ecuador history. The currency dropped by 67%. Inflation also reached 60.7%, according
with the data obtained from the World Development Indicators of the World Bank.
This crisis unleashed severe social dislocations and a reduction of health. The freezing of bank deposits, high inflation, currency devaluation, and dollarization brought severe consequences for the poor. Between 1997 and 1999, poverty increased from 38% to 59%. The number of poor people augmented from 3.5 to 5.2 million.
Health expenses per capita reached its lowest point 53% in 2000. People were isolated from health care and health facilities. Living conditions declined.
Ecuador current situation displays a positive change. It has managed to maintain political stability thanks to the administration of the current President Rafael Correa. Since his first presidential term in January 2007 he has been re-elected two times as president of the republic. Political stability is interrelated with the economic and social stability of the country.

According to the World Bank, Ecuador economy began to recover from the effects of the global crisis, with a growth rate of 3.5% in 2010, reaching 7.8% in 2011. Economic growth continued strong in 2012, with a growth rate of 5.1%. Growth persisted robust through the third quarter of 2013, at an annual rate of 4.9%.
During the last years, Correa’s has worked to eradicate poverty and shown economic growth. Ecuador has experienced a reduction in poverty and inequality. The statistics have revealed that between 2006 and 2013 poverty declined from 37.6% to 25.5% and extreme poverty fell from 16.9% to 8.6%.
The World Bank finances Ecuador with US$ 305 million. This is invested on different projects regarding infrastructure, irrigation, transport, water and sanitation. Some of the projects include: The Manta Public Services Improvement Project, The Quito Metro Line One Project, the Chimborazo Development Investment Project and The Growing with Our Guaguas.

The World Bank announced on April 2014 that they will double its lending capacity in middle-income countries such as Brazil or Mexico. Ecuador is already considered a middle-income country, because of its performance over the last decade.
On April 2014, the Ecuadorian president announced that the country will accept a credit of USD 1000 million offered by the World Bank. The money will be used to cover the deficit generated by the government’s investment plan. According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Finance, Correa’s government drags a fiscal deficit of almost USD 5 billion, equivalent to 4% of GDP.

**Conclusion**

The World Bank has a clear objective combating and eradicating global poverty. Despite the good will of this financial institution, there are other key issues directly related to the economic problems that have not been considered. For instance, most developing countries have social and political problems.

However, facilitating loans or credit does not solve the root of the poverty problem. International agencies should focus on the proper administration of these grants to ensure they do not end up in the wrong hands. They should also put emphasis on eliminating problems such as corruption and social and political instability.

Correa’s presidency has demonstrated positive changes in the Ecuadorian economy, which has improved the standard of living. Despite some improvements, more than half of the population continues to live in poverty. Ecuador still remains with many significant
challenges to overcome in the future and international institutions could play a positive role in this struggle.
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The Taboo of Homosexuality

The world is a cultural mosaic constructed by individual difference. Differences and diversity makes the world an interesting place to live. However, for some people, being born different has placed their lives under the label of ‘taboo’. Homosexuality is still considered a taboo subject around human sexuality. For the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersexed and asexual (LGBTQIA) community the fight for equality continues. On a positive note however, there has recently been an increasing acceptance of LGBTQIA groups. Although this acceptance varies largely from city to city and country to country, a large number have demonstrated their open mindedness as they have welcomed homosexuals to “come out of the closet” and be publicly proud of their sexuality. There is also a diversity of cultural elements such as religion, economic or political situation, age, education, personal values and beliefs that have influenced peoples acceptance level. This essay will argue how intercultural cities are more inclined to be tolerant with regard to homosexuals than other cities.

In order to support the argument, in this paper I will use the example of the United States of America (U.S.A) to highlight the relationship between intercultural cities and the taboo of homosexuality. In doing so, the present analysis will be divided into five parts. In the first part I will introduce the concept of “Taboo” and the history of homosexuality as a taboo for the western society. In the second part, I will analyze the U.S. case, presenting how religion, industrialization and intercultural societies have impacted on American beliefs and attitudes toward homosexuals. In the third section, I will analyze religion using a study conducted by the Pew Research Center (Menasce-Horowitz 2013) regarding the relationship between religion and opinions about homosexuality. Then, I will introduce the connection between industrialization and the public opinion, based on the “World Cultural Map”, by Inglehart and Welzel (2005). In the last part, I will evaluate the relation between intercultural cities with this taboo, by using the research of Louis Wirth (1938) and Thomas Wilson (1985) about urban versus rural areas, and Gouldner (1957) analysis of Merton’s concept of “locals” versus “cosmopolitans”.

Taboo and homosexuality

According to Keith Allan and Kate Burridge (2006 p. 237), taboos “are merely social sanctions placed on behavior that is regarded as distasteful or impolite within a certain social context.” Homosexuality, in the western society has being historically considered as a taboo. It has been condemned, persecuted and even reached the extreme of considering homosexual as criminals or sick people (Berliner 1987).

The taboo about homosexuality was originated in the Judeo-Christian beliefs. Later, this taboo was developed during the Jewish nationalism period, the Catholic and Protestant inquisition (Berliner 1987). In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the act of sex is only intended for reproduction objectives. Therefore, only heterosexual activity is “normal” and “proper”. For the Judeo-Christian churches, homosexuals were considered as sick people, with mental problems who should be treated and cured. Homosexuality was similarly interpreted as a “religious offense” and still today it is considered an “unacceptable sexual orientation” in some religions.

The taboo of homosexuality is an idea frequently found in the western world. However, in non-western societies, homosexuality has been interpreted in many different ways. For instance in Ecuador, according to anthropological studies, it was found that native tribes respected homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals. Based on the laws and beliefs of these natives’ tribes, in order to be a “chamán” or priest, it was essential to be homosexual. Being homosexual implied to have male and female wisdom into one being (Sanchez-Navarro, 2010).

Allan and Burridge (2006 p.237) continued explaining that “many taboos of contemporary western society rest ultimately on traditions of etiquette, and are therefore defined by culturally sensitive social parameters such as age, sex, education and social status”. Traditional Western thought generally regards homosexuality a taboo because it contradicts the traditional Judeo-Christian belief. Yet, religion is simply one of the numerous factors that can influence in a society behavior towards taboos. There are many other cultural conditions that affected on the development of taboos, especially the homosexuality example.
Recently, the world has experienced significant changes and more cultures speak openly about controversial topics, including homosexuality. The level of tolerance toward this minority has been rising worldwide. However, there are also contrasting opinions increasing within societies. In order to comprehend these variances, this paper will focus on the U.S. example.

**U.S. and the taboo of homosexuality**

U.S. gay community is one of the most developed and visible worldwide. Gay and lesbian movements in this country have taken major steps forward by gradually incorporating homosexuals’ rights into their federal legislation.

In 1996, the Congress passed The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) approved by former U.S. President Bill Clinton. “DOMA defined marriage solely as a union between a man and a woman, thereby denying same-sex couples federal marriage benefits, including access to healthcare, retirement, and tax benefits for spouses of veterans and federal employees, and green card approvals for immigrant spouses of U.S. citizens” (CFR.org 2013). However, in recent developments, after the nullification of DOMA by the Supreme Court, thirteen states and the District of Columbia have established same-sex couples the right to marry (CFR.org 2013). States like New York, Washington, New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois, Delaware, Minnesota, Rhode Island and California now enjoy the legal authority to allow gay marriage.

Despite growing acceptance of sexual diversity in many states of the U.S., the LGBTQIA community continues to face discrimination by conservatives. There are still thirty-three states that currently express marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman and they consider as forbidden marriages of the same-sex. In states like Florida, Michigan, Virginia, Kentucky, Texas, Georgia and Alabama homosexual marriage is, until today, considered unconstitutional. (Finzel, R. & Frederick, S. 2014)
As expressed before, U.S. can be a country with diverse opinions about the taboo of homosexuality. The question arises then, how can ideas about homosexuality considerably vary from one state to another? In order to explain this situation, it is necessary to consider some cultural elements such as religion, industrialization and intercultural circumstances that have impacted laws and the public opinion of the American people.

**Religion**

Social attitudes and people believes can be influenced by religion, and the Church has an immense power in creating or leading public opinion. Consequently, religion is
usually interpreted as an important creator of attitudes about homosexuality. Most doctrines of the world have seen homosexuality as a taboo topic and they had categorized it as a “sin” (Berliner 1987; Bloch, Wood 1995).

According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center (Menasce-Horowitz 2013, para 13), there is a “strong relationship between a country’s religiosity and opinions about homosexuality, with far less acceptance in countries where religion is central to people’s lives.” Consequently, more religious people will disapprove homosexuality than people with no religion or less religious. For example, Germany and Canada have demonstrated more acceptance to gays and lesbians and they can be consider less religious countries. On the other hand, Middle Eastern and African countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Nigeria or Kenya, which maintain a strong religiosity, are less tolerant to homosexuality. However, there are some clear outliers like China and Russia, where people are less more accepting than one might suppose given their relatively low levels of religiosity. Or the case of the Philippines and Brazil, where there is higher acceptance of homosexuality than the countries with high levels of religiosity would suggest (Menasce-Horowitz, J. 2013).
% Homosexuality 100% should be accepted by society

Religiosity Scale


This relationship between religiosity and gay-tolerance clarifies the U.S. case, where Americans are more religious in some states than others. In the United States the principal religious institutions continue performing a significant public role in the debate on homosexuality (Bloch, Wood, 1995). More religious states like Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi did not implement laws for same-sex marriage. Contrary, states like New York or California, with less religious levels, already enacted this law in its legislature. For the American population, as well as for the rest of the world, religion is still a fundamental column for the construction of their society, and it has a legitimizing power.
Industrialization

Industrialization is the second element to be considered. Industrialization, as a process that develops economic and political stability is directly connected to the development of a society values and opinions. Some studies propose that industrialization, economic and political stability can play a central role in shaping public opinion and basic values of a society (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). In order to understand this concept, it is necessary to review Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel studies (2005). They analysed the World Values Survey (WVS) data, and as conclusion they developed a “Cultural Map of the World”. In the “Cultural Map” they identify two dimensions of multi-cultural changes around the world. In the first dimensions there are “traditional values” and their opposite “secular values” and in the second dimension “survival values” and “self-expression values”. (World Values Survey 2005)

“Traditional values” are related to religion, family and country values. Traditionalists will believe suicide, abortion, divorce and euthanasia and are never justifiable. They will have a strong national pride sense and will incline to be more nationalistic. Contrasting “traditional values” there are “secular-rational values”. Secular societies will give emphasis to the opposite values.

The second category, “self-expression values”, is related to economic, politics and quality of life attributes. The values of a “self-expressive” society contrast with a “survival” one. “Self-expression values give high priority to environmental protection, tolerance of diversity and rising demands for participation in decision making in economic and political life. These values also reflect mass polarization over tolerance of outgroups, including foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality” (World Values Survey 2005, para 7).

On the other hand, “survival” values are related to societies where people is more concerned about how to satisfy basic needs like food, health, safety and a place to live. In these societies, people are more engage in reinforcing family values. They accentuate traditional norms and beliefs. As a consequence, “survival” societies will be less open minded and more intolerant to different lifestyles and concepts, for instance homosexuality.
The cultural map, as expected, shows poor countries with high levels of traditionalism and high survival values at the bottom left, and wealthier Europeans at the top right. However, U.S. position in the cultural map is a peculiar case. “On the quality-of-life axis, it is like Europe: a little more ‘self-expressive’ than Catholic countries, such as
France and Italy, a little less so than Protestant ones such as Holland or Sweden. This is more than a matter of individual preference. The ‘quality of life’ axis is the one most closely associated with political and economic freedoms” (The Economist 2003).

U.S. contains a divided group of the values, one side of United States is traditional and the other side is secular. Traditional Americans maintain a high level of patriotism and religion is very important for them. These group of people are disposed to be relatively more intolerant about taboo topics, such us homosexuality. On the other side, secular Americans with more self-expressive values are more disposed to be tolerant toward homosexuals. However, it does not always fit this criterion, because there are other important factors such as personal religion beliefs and individual values. This is the case of U.S. which is a nation with high level of self-expression, but people have a variety of opinions related to the acceptance of homosexual rights.

**Intercultural cities and the Taboo of Homosexuality**

Intercultural cities tend to be more opened minded to homosexuals. Studies have also shown that societies from cities -urban areas- are more disposed to be tolerant than people from towns -rural areas- (Wirth 1938; Wilson 1985). To understand the relation between intercultural cities and homosexuality is important to analyze Alvin Gouldner (1957) studies of Merton’s (1957) concept of “locals” versus “cosmopolitans”. Locals (insiders) are in interaction with people with similar values and culture. Therefore, they become a more close society, who is worry about local problems related to the local public sphere. On the contrary, cosmopolitans (the outsiders) are constantly in interaction with people from diverse beliefs and philosophies. Then, they develop a better understanding of the world, which leads to be more empathetic towards people. Locals do not have the benefit of living with different individuals; as a result, they won’t be as open-minded as cosmopolitans (Gouldner 1957).

We can infer that intercultural societies, because they have contact with more cultures, are more tolerant with homosexuals. Cities that are known worldwide as being gay-friendly include San Francisco, New York, London, Seattle, Sydney, Rio de Janeiro, Melbourne, Tel Aviv, Paris, Chicago, Brighton, Amsterdam, Shanghai or Berlin (Lonely
Planet 2012). The common denominator is that all of these cities maintain an intercultural society and are likely to be more westernized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishment for homosexual acts</th>
<th>Relatively neutral</th>
<th>Recognition of same-sex unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual acts can be punished by death</td>
<td>No specific laws on gay rights</td>
<td>Same-sex marriage is allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual acts are illegal</td>
<td>Homosexual acts are legal</td>
<td>Same-sex marriage is allowed in some jurisdictions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the relation between cosmopolitan’s cities and gay-tolerance will also depend on several cultural values. There are governments that have granted rights for gays and lesbians to get marry. For instance Canada, France, Argentina, Netherlands, South Africa, among other countries had approved same-sex marriage as legal (CFR.org 2013). But, on the other hand, there are countries where homosexual behavior is illegal; it is
punishable by years in prison and even the death penalty. This is the situation of some countries around the world, especially countries from Middle East or Africa. Countries where societies are extremely homophobic and the government had enacted laws against homosexuals. For instance, in Uganda and 37 other African countries, is illegal to be gay or lesbian. In Saudi Arabia, Qatar or United Arab Emirates there are laws that prohibit homosexual acts and condemn gays to penal or death sentences (Rupar 2014).

The relation between intercultural cities and homosexuality tolerance is also visible in the U.S. case. Cosmopolitan cities like San Francisco and New York are known for being gay friendly, and now they legislatures have approved same sex married; cities and towns with less diversity of cultures tent to be intolerant to homosexuals. These cities are against creating laws to allow the gay marriage.

**Conclusion**

Evolving times are coming for our society. We are witnessing changes and transformations in the world. Even the Catholic Church is reforming antiquated ideas related to multiple taboos. But, despite the efforts and tireless struggle to destroy the old perceptions and stereotypes related to the homosexuality taboo, there are still many societies that remain intolerant towards LGBTQI groups.

This paper analyzed three major concepts – religion, industrialization and intercultural environment - to understand the development of homosexuality as a Taboo. After this analysis, this paper concludes that the position of religion is vital in the transformation of this taboo, and until today the church have a legitimizing power in the society. Religion has the power to create public opinion and lead it in the U.S. society and in the world. Through this analysis, we can affirm that in the U.S. society, homosexuality is still a major taboo topic, and it is supported by the different religions and churches. Many groups of Americans are still very conservative and traditional.

Industrialization was the second concept studied in this paper. It helped us to realize that the U.S. is divided into two groups of values, the traditional and the seculars. Traditional Americans are more attached to religion and patriotism and more intolerant about the homosexuality taboo. On the other hand, secular Americans show more tolerance
to this minority. Despite, U.S. being considered as a nation with high level of industrialization and therefore “self-expressive values”, there are many conservative groups who are not open minded to gays and lesbians inclusion into the U.S. legislature. We realize that industrialization was an important factor to determine this taboo, but not as striking as religion and personal believes appeared to be.

Finally, the intercultural level of a city was equally analyzed. We conclude that cities with more intercultural societies can develop better acceptances for homosexuals. Cosmopolitan cities are likely to be more empathetic with homosexuals thanks to the expose of diverse cultures, the level of industrialization and the interaction between different religions. Intercultural cities have industrial development, economic and political stability; so, they have a society with more “self-expressive values”. Consequently, the first two concepts analyzed –religion and industrialization- support my argument. Intercultural cities are more inclined to be tolerant with homosexuals than other cities. In these cosmopolitans homosexuality is considered less “taboo” and its controversy is minimized. For instance, intercultural cities such as New York or San Francisco have a greater tolerance to homosexuals. Gay and lesbian groups feel safer to “come out of the closet” in these cities, and they are highly accepted in the public opinion.

This paper focused on religion, industrialization and intercultural levels. Yet, there are other relevant and equally important elements such as age, education, gender, the size of city, social status and media (Svallfors 2005). It is difficult to define only one factor that influences on peoples tolerance to homosexuals, because at the end everything relies on each individual and their personal values and beliefs.

Homosexuality could be considered a decreasing taboo for western societies because there are factors that are influencing this change such as intercultural ideas and economic development. However, this taboo is still latent in our world and undoubtedly influences the cultural development of identities. Homosexuality is a force that continues creating debate.
Resources


