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An international investigation of corporate blogging practices and corporate blog acceptance"

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to Maria

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α	Cronbach's alpha
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ATT	Attitude towards using (TAM)
AVE	Average variance extracted
BM	Blog management (blog design)
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	Comparative fit index
CR	Composite reliability
CV	Content value (blog design)
df	Degrees of freedom
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
EV	Entertainment value (blog design)
GFI	Goodness of fit index
IC	Information value and credibility (blog design)
IDV	Individualism (Hofstede)
IN	Interaction (blog design)
INT	Intention to use (TAM)
INTread	Intention to read (TAM)
INTcom	Intention to comment (TAM)
LTO	Long-term orientation (Hofstede)
MAS	Masculinity (Hofstede)
MGCFA	Multi-group confirmatory factor analysis
MM	Marketing messages (blog design)
NFI	Normed fit index
NIE	New Institutional Economics
PDI	Power distance (Hofstede)
PE	Perceived enjoyment (TAM)
PEU	Perceived ease of use (TAM)
PU	Perceived usefulness (TAM)

RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation
RMR	Root mean square residual
sd	Standard deviation
SEM	Structural equation modeling
SFL	Standardized factor loading
SRMR	Standardized root mean square residual
TAM	Technology acceptance model
UAI	Uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede)
US	Usability (blog design)
USE	Actual usage (TAM)
USEread	Actual reading (TAM)
USEcom	Actual commenting (TAM)

G	Germany
R	Russia
U.S.	United States

1 Corporate blogs: An introduction

Figure 1: Popular headlines on blogs and business

Source: Business Week (2005), Forbes (2005).

As a result of increasing customer emancipation and empowerment – which over the last years has been additionally spurred by the financial crisis – today's markets are increasingly turning into low-trust business environments (Beinhocker et al., 2009). Trust in large corporations has dwindled away, which is for example reflected in the low level of trust in large corporations among investors (Sapienza and Zingales, 2011) and by the fact that ever fewer consumers rely on company-generated advertising (Nielsen, 2009). Kotler therefore highlights that 'Trust today exists more in horizontal relationships than in vertical relationships' (Kotler et al., 2010). Individuals have of course always trusted their peers – such as family and close friends – more than companies, but a new set of online communication and information channels has enabled them to connect to virtually anyone with similar interests or relevant experience. These individuals can now check customer reviews (mostly written by people they have never met before) on virtually any product from digital cameras to restaurant visits or vacation destinations to take more informed purchasing decisions, can simply ask their peers on social networks for real-time shopping advice, or can simply become reviewers of products themselves (Horrigan, 2008). A survey among U.S. consumers conducted by Deloitte showed that 62% of consumers consider consumer-written online product reviews and recommendations before making purchasing decisions. Out of these, 82% stated that purchasing decisions had been directly influenced by such reviews, and 69% shared

the gathered information with friends, family or colleagues (Deloitte, 2007). A similar picture is to be found in Europe. The Hotwire Ipsos MORI survey revealed that 52% of Europeans are more likely to purchase products after reading positive online reviews about them, while 34% stated to not have bought a product after reading online reviews (Richter, 2006).

In addition to the rising importance of social media for purchasing decisions, companies have to cope with the declining impact of traditional communication channels, caused by significant changes in attitude and media consumption patterns of individuals over the past two decades. Classical (offline) media outlets, which for a long time have been the key target and outlet for corporate communication, are quickly losing ground as online media increasingly substitute newspapers, magazines, and even television (Kilian et al., 2008). In Germany the circulation of daily print newspapers, magazines, and scientific journals has steadily decreased since 1998 (IVW, 2009). At the same time, the increase in average TV consumption in Germany has slowed and was reversed in 2007 for the first time (Feierabend and Kutteroff, 2008, Klingler, 2008). Similar developments can be observed from an international perspective, particularly in other western-industrial nations (MacGregor, 2007), but also in Russia (Pietiläinen, 2008) and China (Michael and Zhou, 2010). In this context, the Internet is increasingly assuming the role of a primary medium (Göttgens and Dörrenbacher, 2008).

Companies are, of course, aware of the dwindling role of classical media and the rising influence of user generated contents on the Internet and seek ways to benefit from these trends. Consequently, social media has become a new hope for companies, which are desperately trying to secure their business models by re-establishing and increasing trust with their stakeholders and adapting to the new communication landscape. However, the adoption of social media within the business community has been slow and is still in progress. Especially large corporations have been slow in adapting their communication strategies and often veered between the chances and risks of the new web, which require a deeper understanding of the underlying processes and relations – a research gap, which this work aims to narrow. The evolving myth of the uncontrollable web 2.0 has raised an enormous skepticism among communication professionals, who saw (and most often still see) their company's strenuously acquired reputation and their hard-won brand values at risk.

Risk avoidance, however, cannot justify the neglect of social media by corporate communication. Facing an increasingly diverse TV, radio, and print environment, individuals started experiencing an 'information overload' in the late 1980s already, further accelerated by the evolution of the Internet. The raising complexity of the media landscape in addition to saturated markets, decreasing product diversification and more complex customer attitudes, culminated in the development of a

communication competition between companies (Bruhn, 2003). Consequently, companies have to seek and understand the new communication channels that the Internet and social media are offering, to maintain or build competitive advantage (Porter, 2001). A popular means of corporate social media activities is corporate blogs, which are promising means to effectively tackle these challenges, and at the same time provide an opportunity to benefit from customer expertise through voluntary and network-based collaboration. Similar to social media in general, the adaptation of blogs as a communication medium for business purposes has been slow. While Justin Hall as a pioneer of individual blogging first started in 1994 (Wong et al., 2007), Macromedia as one of the early movers, introduced its first product blog in 2002 (Carrol, 2002). The first German-language corporate blogs by large companies were introduced with an even larger time lag, such as Weltbild's Jokers-Blog which was established in May 2005. At the same time the blog search engine Technorati already tracked 2 million (2004) and 8 million (2005) private blogs respectively (Sifry, 2007). However, today, a majority of companies in the U.S. and Europe are using corporate blogs for stakeholder communication, and they have become a standard tool in companies' communication repertoires (Barnes and Andonian, 2011, Rölke and Flocke, 2011). As corporate blogs were gaining momentum, many theoretical approaches have been developed in order to outline potential corporate blogging or promising community building strategies. Today however, the question is not anymore whether a firm should engage in social media at all. In fact, most of the communication professionals in executive positions now agree that faineance does not pay off and that 'waiting out' is not an option. The new challenge is rather, how to *adapt* existing social media strategies and activities to better reach target groups and to better pursue corporate goals.

This work is therefore dedicated to explore the interrelationship between the characteristics of blogging practices and their effects. With plenty of corporate social media activities in place it becomes possible to evaluate varying strategies. Both the large amount of existing corporate blogs as well as a large set of readers can be a basis to study blogging practices, user behavior, and preferences. Four analyses were conducted to identify links between corporate blogging practices and the acceptance of corporate blogs by users. This first Chapter will build the basis for these four analyses presented in Chapters 2-5, by providing an introduction to corporate blogs and outlining the research problem and process.

1.1 Corporate blogs: Definition and introduction

Blogs (also called weblogs) in general can be defined from two perspectives. First of all, form-oriented definitions focus on technical aspects and characteristics of blogs. Commonly these definitions refer to a blog as a collection of dated entries (e.g., Herring et al., 2004b, Herring et al., 2005b), which are arranged in reversed chronological order (e.g., Kumar et al., 2003, Scheidt and Wright, 2004). It is frequently updated (e.g., Herring et al., 2004b, Scheidt, 2006) and builds on specific blog software (e.g., Du and Wagner, 2006, Schmidt, 2005). Other common technical features include an individual and permanent URL for every entry (e.g., Blood, 2004), the use of outgoing links (e.g., Miller and Shepherd, 2004, Walker and Mortensen, 2002), and the visible labeling of posts using date and author (e.g., Puschmann, 2009). Such technical definition, however, is not exhaustive and cannot serve for differentiating blogs from other genres and media alone (Lomborg, 2009). Consequently, content- and motivation-oriented definitions expand the concept of blogs beyond the technical horizon. In this context, blogs are acknowledged to feature high similarity to written diaries containing opinion and commentary (Herring et al., 2005b). Utilizing a variety of media – mainly text, picture, video, and audio (Schmidt, 2007b) – they form a particularly expressive and authentic communication channel and may be characterized by a strong orientation towards dialogue, which allows its publisher to eliminate communication barriers and engage in an immediate conversation with readers (Zerfass and Boelter, 2005). Bloggers, as the authors and/or publishers, can thereby establish relations to like-minded readers and bloggers (Marlow, 2006b). These relationships can be characterized as featuring little or no hierarchies (Gaudeul et al., 2008). From a personal publishing perspective a blog can address topics of the publisher's personal interests (similar to diaries) or the public's or specific subgroups' interest (similar to newspapers) (Grieve et al., 2009). Therefore, Picot and Fischer (2006) line out that the scope of blog applications is almost unlimited, ranging from a simple private diary to steering tools for project management and even to more complex content management systems, partially replacing other web tools. In conclusion, both perspectives need to be considered in constructing a definition which fully embraces the complexity and potential of blogs (Miller and Shepherd, 2004). Consequently, the following definition of blogs is used:

The term 'blog' refers to a website that is frequently updated and typically displays dated entries in reverse chronological order. A personal, informal, and subjective writing style, as well as the use of media, hyperlinks, and comments position the author (institution) and her/his (its) writing and opinion within the wider context of the blogosphere, aiming at establishing relations to readers according to the underlying motives of the author (institution), while standard software, established structures, and standardized practices enable a variety of applications for a variety of people (and institutions).

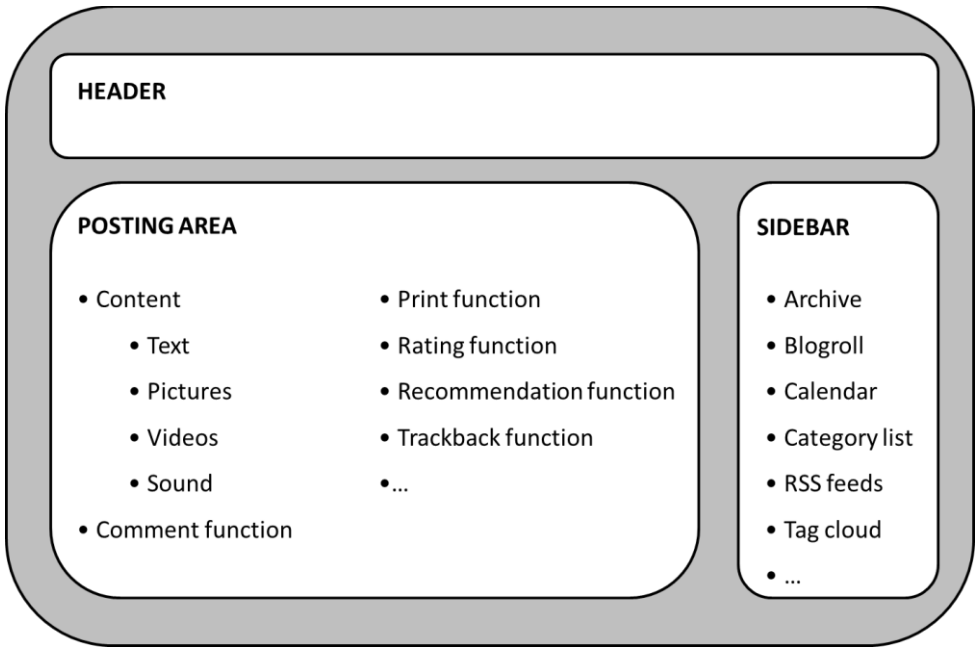
While the technical base is identical for private and corporate blogs, the goals, concepts and target audiences differ significantly. Owing to the wide variety of blogs in corporate contexts, varying definitions of the term corporate blog have evolved. Efimova and Grudin (2007) define it to be 'any blog that touches on worklife'. However, this broad definition likely includes many private blogs maintained by employees who sometimes also refer to their job. The resulting lack of companies' influence on such blogs disqualifies them to be considered corporate blogs. Consequently, most academic researchers agree that corporate blogs are created by or with the explicit support of a company and therefore exhibit branded corporate communication channels which enable a two-way communication between companies and their stakeholders (e.g., Chen et al., 2007, Fleck et al., 2007a, Lee et al., 2006). The integration of individual employees into the company's public relations strategy through corporate blogging creates a more personalized means of communication that is more authentic than mass media such as TV, print or even classical corporate websites (e.g., Fieseler et al., 2008, Zerfass, 2005). Consequently, for the purpose of this thesis, the following definition of a corporate blog is used.

A corporate blog is a blog, which is run on behalf of a company to promote or discuss the company's products/services, strategy or processes. In addition, the company features prominently as the initiator of the content and has the full copyright to all content published on the blog. Furthermore, a corporate blog is updated regularly and used as one of the firm's permanent online communication channels.

Approaching the question of features and characteristics from the surface, blogs can easily be recognized because they follow a common structure. Usually, they feature a central area where the blog posts are arranged subsequently in reverse chronological order (with the newest item on top) and where readers can conduct post-related activities such as commenting and recommending (Blood, 2002). Around this posting area, several functional and design elements can be arranged. Above the posting area, a blog header usually serves as the major design element ('key visual') with high recognition value (Scheidt and Wright, 2004). In addition, most blogs feature one or two sidebars next to the posting area that enable the reader to navigate through the blog and via a blogroll to external websites and blogs recommended by the blog author (Brady, 2005).

Figure 2 displays a standard blog structure and lists common post and sidebar functions:

Figure 2: Common blog structure



Source: based on Brady (2005), Nilsson (2003).

Figure 3 shows the FastLane Blog by General Motors (2009), one of the most popular corporate blogs in the U.S., which displays many of the above stated characteristics and shall serve as illustrative example for the outlined blog structure and elements. It features a posting area [1], where entries are displayed in reverse chronological order with the newest entry on top. In addition to the actual text and title, for every entry the name and position of the author [a], the publication date [b], the corresponding categories [c], and the number of submitted comments [d] are shown, and a direct link is provided to recommend the entry to other Internet users [e]. The blog furthermore has a unique and recognizable blog header which depicts the blog name as well as the company logo [2]. On the right-hand side an extensively used sidebar is displayed [3] which contains a search function [f], a real-time accumulation of related Twitter-entries (so called tweets) [g], a promoted partner website [h], a featured YouTube-video [i], an archive of past blog entries [j], a list of the five most recent comments [k], the possibility to subscribe to the blog's RSS feeds in several feed and news aggregators [l], a list of recommended Internet links and blogs (blogroll) [m], and disclaimer information [n].

Figure 3: Sample blog – GM FastLane Blog

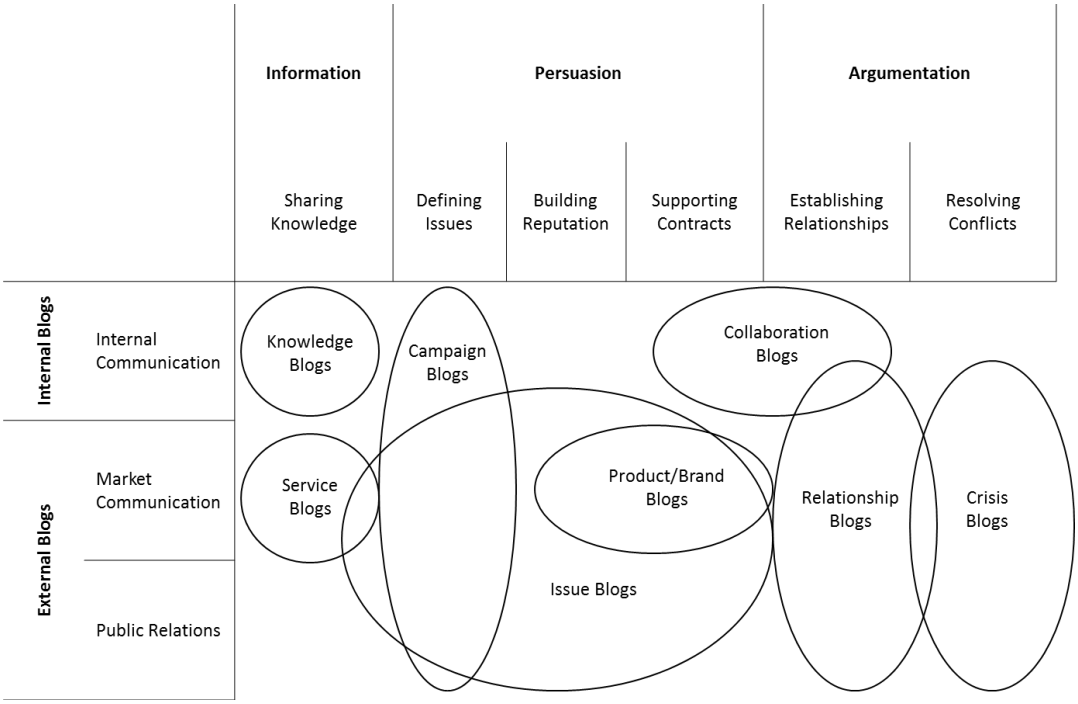
Source: adapted from General Motors (2009).

Over the past decade several classifications of corporate blogs have evolved, aiming at outlining the applicability and common uses of corporate blogs. Such classifications refer to the companies' motivation to establish a corporate blog, the subdisciplines of corporate communication and the respective target group(s), or the style of managing a corporate blog.

Classifying corporate blogs by motivation, Rokina (2007) has identified three main motives for companies to establish corporate blogs. Most often, companies aim at establishing a *new corporate communication channel* for public relations purposes. To a smaller extent, companies create corporate blogs because they are interested in receiving *feedback from customers and partners*, and to *increase transparency* (Rokina, 2007). Surveying 75 U.S. corporate blog publishers, Cass et al. (2005) found similar motivations among American corporate bloggers and identified the additional motive to *improve the Internet presence of the company*, e.g., by boosting search engine positions and link popularity, especially for small companies.

Extending the goal and motivation aspect (information, persuasion, argumentation) by communication disciplines (internal communication, market communication, public relations), Zerfass and Boelter (2005) have identified eight types of corporate blogs. *Knowledge blogs* can be used to archive or collect information such as online articles and to initiate a discussion. *Service blogs* can be established to quickly provide additional information for customers and partners. *Campaign blogs* are only established for a limited time horizon in order to support current marketing or communication activities, e.g., a product launch. *Issue blogs* are directed at occupying a particular topic, enabling companies to present their expertise and to improve their reputation. *Product blogs* can be used as a marketing instrument in order to advertise a particular product at low cost or to initiate a viral marketing effect. *Collaboration blogs* can be used by companies to foster team communication and collaboration by providing a quick and interactive exchange platform. *Relationship blogs* mainly aim at improving customer or other stakeholder relationship management by establishing a community of frequent readers. Finally, companies may use a beforehand prepared *crisis blog* platform in order to quickly react to particluar circumstances, e.g., a products recall or a sudden merger/acquisition offer. These eight blog types may be structured with respect to three underlying strategic goals. In this context, blogs may serve to present or transfer knowledge, i.e., the *information* function. Furthermore, they may serve to shape reputation and image of a company and therefore focus on *persuasion*. Finally, a corporate blog can be used to initiate or maintain relations, which characterises the *argumentation* function. As a second dimension of analysis, the field of application is added, i.e., internal communication, market communication, and public relations, which implies the definition of respective employee, customer or media target groups as summarized by the following figure:

Figure 4: Classification of corporate blogs



Source: Zerfass and Boelter (2005, p. 127).

Based on the classification by Zerfass and Boelter (2005), Fischer (2005) has identified detailed usage possibilities regarding specific corporate communication tasks for five types of corporate blogs, as presented in Figure 5. It presents an overview of general blog strategies suited to specific communication goals, acknowledging that some forms of corporate blogs are more appropriate to meet specific communication goals than others. For example, CEO and PR blogs are better suited to establish an information channel to existing or potential investors, while employee and product blogs are better suited for generating general publicity and press coverage.

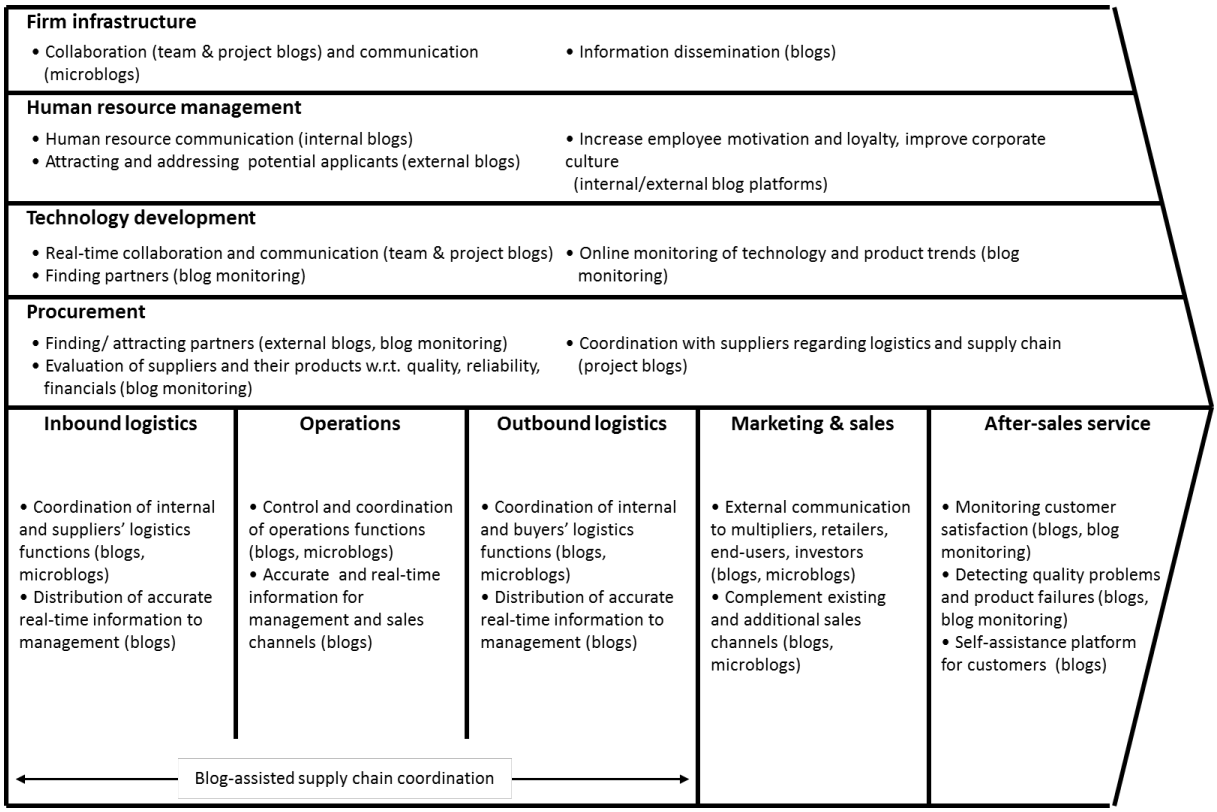
Figure 5: Usage possibilities for corporate blogs

	Information					Persuasion					Argumentation				
	CEO Blog	PR Blog	Employee Blog	Campaign Blog	Product Blog	CEO Blog	PR Blog	Employee Blog	Campaign Blog	Product Blog	CEO Blog	PR Blog	Employee Blog	Campaign Blog	Product Blog
Issue and Crisis Management	●					●		●			●	●		●	
Corporate Public Relations	●	●					●	●			●			●	
Lobbying	●			●		●			●		●	●		●	
Press Agentry	●	●	●	●	●		●		●	●					●
Publicity	●		●					●	●	●					
Investor Relations	●	●		●		●	●	●	●		●	●		●	
Public Affairs	●	●		●		●	●				●	●		●	●

Source: Fischer (2005, p. 3).

Extending the applicability of corporate blogs to other uses by differentiating different internal and external applications, corporate blogs can also be linked to individual value chain activities. In this context, corporate blogs may be differentiated with respect to access and time dimensions. Firstly, they can be characterized by internal or external use (Carmichael and Shwan, 2006). Internal blogs can only be accessed by employees or project teams that have been provided with secured access to the blog's contents, for example by embedding them in corporate intranets (Tredinnick, 2006). They can be used for project management, knowledge sharing or internal communication in order to improve collaboration and internal business intelligence (Kolari et al., 2007, Meier, 2009). Through external blogs, companies can address other stakeholders in addition to their own employees, including customers, investors, and the media. Secondly, corporate blogs can also be differentiated with respect to the time horizon. Campaign blogs are established for a limited time horizon only, e.g., accompanying a marketing campaign or a company event (Zerfass and Boelter, 2005). Contrastingly, permanent corporate blogs have no predefined time scope. In this context, Figure 6 summarizes the use of blogs for a variety of business functions and activities:

Figure 6: Blogs and the value chain



Source: adapted from König (2009ap. 5).

Corporate blogs can also be classified based on blog management styles and practices. Lee et al. (2006) have researched corporate blogging strategies by analyzing author group, the extent of blogging activities, as well as the overall purpose. Consequently, they group corporate blogs into five categories. A *bottom-up blog strategy* is based on the establishment of a general blogging platform, that all employees can utilize to create individual blogs. Four differentiable categories of *top-down blog strategies* include blogs that are run by selected individuals such as a CEO, an employee group, or the communication or marketing department, and represent a more directed form of corporate communication.

Table 1 summarizes these five types of corporate blogging strategies. Jeon et al. (2008) have researched corporate blogging practices in the U.S. and the Republic of Korea based on the above blogging strategies, finding that the Top-Down Blogging Strategy IV, which is characterized by an anonymous blog for direct promotion, is most widely used in Korea, while in the U.S. companies rather employ the Top-Down Blogging Strategies I-III, which represent a more human-centered approach to blogging, where author names and background are explicit and where more personal relationships between blog authors and readers are established.

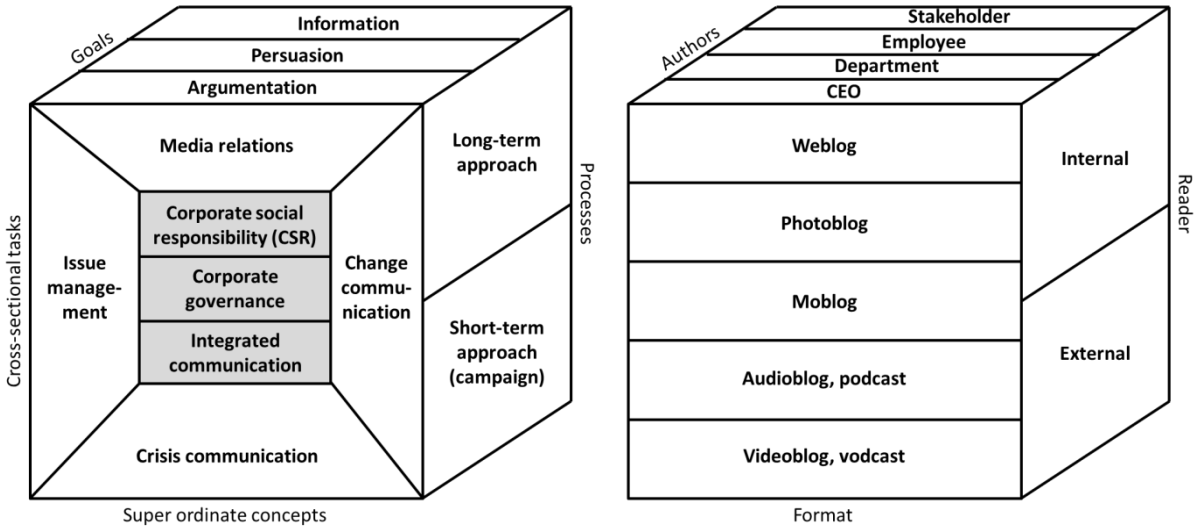
Table 1: Corporate blogging strategies

Blogging strategies	Characteristics
Bottom-up (company-wide)	*Key blogger(s)*: All employees *Extent and usage pattern*: The company maintains several blogs and has a blog aggregator site *Purpose*: Product development and customer service, each blog serves a distinctive purpose (communication channel, thought leadership, etc.)
Top-down I (top management commitment)	*Key blogger(s)*: High-ranking executives *Extent and usage pattern*: The company maintains several blogs but does not host individual employee blogs *Purpose*: Stakeholder communication channel and thought leadership
Top-down II (individual)	*Key blogger(s)*: Few selected employees from various business units *Extent and usage pattern*: The company maintains several blogs, which are hosted on corporate domains and are usually run by individual employees *Purpose*: Thought leadership
Top-down III (group)	*Key blogger(s)*: A selected group of employees *Extent and usage pattern*: The company maintains one type of blog, blogs are run by multiple authors *Purpose*: Focus on specific niche topic
Top-down IV (promotional)	*Key blogger(s)*: Nebulous, lack of human voice *Extent and usage pattern*: The company operates one type of blog *Purpose*: Promotional/marketing focus

Source: Lee et al. (2006p. 321).

Last but not least, Fleck et al. (2007a, 2007b) proposed a comprehensive blog classification scheme, integrating different approaches 'based on the specific cross-sectional tasks, concepts, goals, and processes of corporate communication' (Fleck et al., 2007a) as shown in Figure 7. It includes basic blog characteristics, such as time horizon or content format as well as elements of the underlying corporate communication strategy, such as the three goals identified by Zerfass and Boelter (2005). Furthermore it also includes author and reader characteristics, implying that varying combinations of blog characteristics have different effects on the type and size of the audience and therefore have a varying potential to support corporate blogging strategies.

Figure 7: St. Galler Blog Cube



Source: Fleck et al. (2007a).

The relevance of corporate blogs can be assessed from two perspectives: (1) based on the overall acceptance and popularity of such communication channels by companies, and (2) based on the specific benefits of using such communication channels for the companies. Both perspectives will be assessed in the following paragraphs.

As outlined in the introduction, the adaptation of blogs as a communication medium for business purposes has been very slow. However, almost 20 years after the development of the blog format and ten years after the establishment of the first corporate blogs, corporate blogging as a reaction to the 'rapid emergence of consumer generated media, has undergone an immense shift commiserate with the marketplace' (Byrne and Welde, 2008). Consequently, the number of Fortune 500 companies that were actively using corporate blog increased from 4% in 2006 to 16% in 2008 and 23% in 2011 (Anderson, 2009, Barnes and Andonian, 2011). Also in Germany the number of corporate blogs among large companies and multinational enterprises increased substantially, with 33% of DAX30 companies using corporate blogs in 2011 (Rölke and Flocke, 2011). Corporate blogs have also become a popular communication channel for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), with 33% of U.S. SMEs and 35% of SMEs in Europe, the Middle East and Asia using them in 2009 (Adobe, 2009). In addition the topic is likely to stay on the agenda for many companies, as 56% of Inc500 companies that do not yet use social media plan to start corporate blogging (Barnes and Lescault, 2011). Among smaller companies, 25% of U.S. SMEs and 28% of SMEs in Europe, Middle East, and Asia are planning corporate blogging activities (Adobe, 2009).

As outlined in Chapter 1.3, a large variety of applications for corporate blogs exists. For external corporate blogs, Forrester identifies the benefits to comprise brand visibility and other benefits (Li and Stromberg, 2007, Li and McHarg, 2007). As summarized in Figure 8, brand visibility effects include the number of visitors (blog traffic), the number of blog stories that entered traditional media (press mentions), an improved ranking in search engines, as well as the number of mentions and discussions in other social media such as social network or private blogs (word of mouth). These benefits result in a more positive awareness among target audiences (Chiou and Cheng, 2003) and, through a higher visibility online, can have an indirect effect on sales (Dellarocas et al., 2007, Zhu and Zhang, 2010). Other key benefits of corporate blogs include savings on customer insights through customer feedback for example provided in comments on a corporate blog, the reduction of negative user-generated content by positively influencing online discussions, and an increased sales efficiency as employees as well as customers are better informed about the company and its offerings.

Figure 8: Key benefits of corporate blogging

Source: based on Li and Stromberg (2007).

For specifically assessing the potential benefits for corporate communication, Smith (2005) outlines in particular three types of evaluations that in the following paragraphs will be used to assess the value of corporate blogging: output evaluation, stakeholder awareness evaluation, and stakeholder action evaluation.

Output evaluation measures communication products and their distribution, including message production, message distribution, and message cost evaluation (Smith, 2005). In the corporate blog context, message production evaluation refers for example to the number of blog entries written on a corporate blog, or more narrow the number of entries on a very specific issue. This is particularly important for topics that the company simply wants to have communicated independent of the

size of the audience or for topics that have only a small target audience or one that is difficult to measure. Daimler AG on its German blog, for example, frequently publishes entries written by interns on their tasks and working environments to give readers such as potential future interns insights into individual workplaces and jobs (König, 2009a). In addition the company invites employees to write about issues that would usually not be published in other channels but are worth being heard such as debates on the company's gender or maternity protection policies, where the publication is already a value in itself (Daimler AG, 2012, Wilke, 2009).

Awareness and action objectives relate to actual communication activity, looking both at the output and the type, size, and reaction of the reached audience (Smith, 2005). This refers for example to message exposure, which evaluates the number of individuals who were exposed to a message. For a website in general and a corporate blog in particular that usually refers to page impressions and unique visitors. The German-language Daimler-Blog for example attracts more than 20,000 unique visitors per month and more than 100,000 page impressions (Friedrich, 2010). The English-language FastLane Blog by General Motors attracts more than 7,500 unique visitors per day (Li and McHarg, 2007). In this context, a common measure for evaluating non-advertising communication activities is advertising equivalency, i.e., 'treating a non-advertising item as if it were an ad' (Smith, 2005). This concept can be transferred to the social media context to evaluate success (Gibs and Bruich, 2010). Evaluating General Motors' FastLane blog for example, Forrester calculates the estimated costs for reaching the same number of Internet users through online banner advertising to exceed $6,500 (Li and McHarg, 2007). An extended concept of media exposure also considers audience feedback as a means of understanding the effect of the message on the audience. This directly links to action objectives which evaluates activity by key publics as a reaction to a corporate communication activity. In the corporate blog context this refers to feedback left in the blog (comments), the discussion of corporate blog content in other social media (word of mouth), or the amount of coverage by traditional media (press coverage). Again, equivalency measures can be used to compare corporate blogs to traditional marketing activities. The FastLane Blog for example generates consumer insights worth about $180,000 per year (cost of focus group to produce the same level of insight). In 2005 the blog also triggered coverage by other bloggers worth $11,000 (cost of hiring professional buzz agents) and public news coverage worth approximately $381,000 (cost-equivalent of traditional advertising spending) (Li and McHarg, 2007).

As a summarizing metric, Forrester has proposed the *ROI of blogging* by evaluating the benefits of corporate blogging against the involved costs (start-up costs and recurring costs), consequently estimating the annual ROI on blogging for the General Motors FastLane blog to exceed 35% for the years 2005-2007 (Li and McHarg,

2007). While this approach clearly has its flaws[1] it positions corporate blogging activity alongside other, more traditional communication activities and is flexible enough to account for the manifold uses and benefits that corporate blogs can offer and therefore provides a starting point for researching opportunities to improve blogging practices in order to improve corporate blogging ROI.

1.2 Research gap, research questions and contribution

The previous part discussed benefits and relevance of corporate blogs, which become particularly crucial when limiting the corporate communication view to younger target groups, in particular the generation of *digital natives*[2], currently framing most of the issues discussed by marketers and communication professionals. In this context an important discussion has evolved regarding how to use social media in general and corporate blogs in particular within international communication strategies. This issue deserves special attention as particular the area of corporate communication needs to find ways to identify the best ways to interact with international and varying national target groups. A company's corporate communication department is typically very centralized and not only coordinates aspects such as investor relations, media relations, and internal communication globally, but also serves as an important agenda setter and for example for the marketing department (Argenti, 2008).

The use of social media differs between the various potential audiences worldwide. Significant international differences exist for example between Internet users' motivation to use social media, the frequency of usage, as well as content and format preferences (Anderson et al., 2010, Elliott et al., 2011, Karl et al., 2010, Kohut et al., 2011). On the other hand, social media adoption by business also differs internationally, concerning the overall use (Regus, 2011), which formats are chosen (Barnes and Lescault, 2011, Barnes and Andonian, 2011, Rölke and Flocke, 2011), and which specific channels are selected (Regus, 2011).

To investigate factors that influenceInternet users of corporate blogs and consequently identify how companies can better manage their corporate blogging activities in different institutional frameworks, this thesis will pursue to answer five major questions:

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[1] The model for example relies mostly on equivalency measures, which on the one hand simplifies the impact of corporate blogging on core company performance, and on the other assumes a unified picture of offline and online target groups.

[2] Digital natives are individuals who grew up using digital technologies, often generalized to include people born after 1980. The term implies an information and communication behavior that is fundamentally different from previous generations, with severe consequences for corporate communication (Prensky, 2001, Palfrey and Gasser, 2008).

(1) How do corporate blogging practices differ internationally?
(2) Are blogging practices linked to corporate blog performance?
(3) How can Internet users' acceptance of corporate blogs be modeled?
(4) How is corporate blog acceptance affected by the institutional framework and thus cultural dimensions?
(5) How is corporate blog acceptance affected by the various design characteristics of corporate blog?

In addition to these questions derived from corporate communications practice, the exploration and development of research methods for future academic work on the blogosphere and social media, as well as an advancement of cross-cultural management research are secondary objectives of this work.

The conducted analyses deepen our understanding about corporate blogs, the factors that influence their acceptance by Internet users in different institutional frameworks, and the role and effects of corporate blog design. This work builds on the belief that (corporate) communication in the social media age is not fated to passively watch how the online society discusses corporate interests and issues. While traditional corporate communication processes are indeed likely to fail in producing successful results, companies will be able to develop new policies, processes and channels suitable to (within limits) control and influence online conversations. Based on a detailed understanding of the mechanisms at work this thesis will provide the basis for such strategy and policy adjustments. With the produced findings, companies will be able to better address target group needs and design more effective corporate blogs. In addition, the results and employed methodology will enrich the academic sphere, in particular research on technology acceptance and cross-cultural management research, which can benefit from the successful integration of these two research streams.

The following work has been conducted largely based on the assumption that the Internet and thus social media is a combination of neutral technology tools, whose usage and outcomes are determined by its users. The question of causality in the context of technology and culture has become a core issue of cultural studies and theories (Slack and Wise, 2006), however for this work the potential of technology to drive cultural change is ignored. The growing importance of the Internet in daily life is taken as given, but basic characteristics of culture are assumed to remain constant over time. This view has been adopted because it simplifies an analysis of the current situation as a snapshot of a dynamically developing information environment. In-depth discussions of how the Internet and related technology affect culture's characteristics can be found in Benkler (2006), Shirky (2008), Keen (2008), Sunstein (2007), as well as Palfrey and Gasser (2008).

Furthermore, this thesis will not cover the practical aspects of integrating social media tools into corporate strategies and processes. The road to an 'enterprise 2.0' is long and difficult and effective strategies need to take account of specific factors such as size, industry, and corporate culture. Various aspects of this complex issue are discussed by McAffee (2009), Erz and Tomczek (2008), Buhse (2008), as well as Buhse and Reinhard (2009), while specific business models based on social media services and communities are assessed by Högg et al. (2006) as well as Hudetz and Duscha (2008).

To analyze the outlined Research Questions on international differences in corporate blogging practices by companies and corporate blog acceptance by Internet users, the following work focuses on three countries, i.e., Germany, the Russian Federation (Russia), and the United States (U.S.). The three countries were chosen based on their relevance to multinational enterprises, the relevance of social media in these countries, and the size of the population that is using the Internet. The U.S. were selected as the key country for international management research. The country features the highest level of social media penetration in terms of overall status and role for the population (e.g., see the importance of social media for politics and elections), while being home to the majority of social media platforms such as Facebook (Palo Alto, CA), YouTube (Mountain View) or Twitter (San Francisco, CA), and some of the most important blogging platforms including Wordpress (San Francisco, CA), Blogger (Mountain View, CA) or Typepad (San Francisco, CA). Germany was included as the largest member and market within the European Union. Furthermore it has a high level of Internet penetration and substantial overall social media adoption among consumers as well as businesses as was shown in the previous sub-chapters. Last but not least, Russia has been chosen owing to its importance to international business as an emerging market and the high importance of social media in the Russian society, as Russia has the most engaged social networking audience worldwide (Block, 2010).

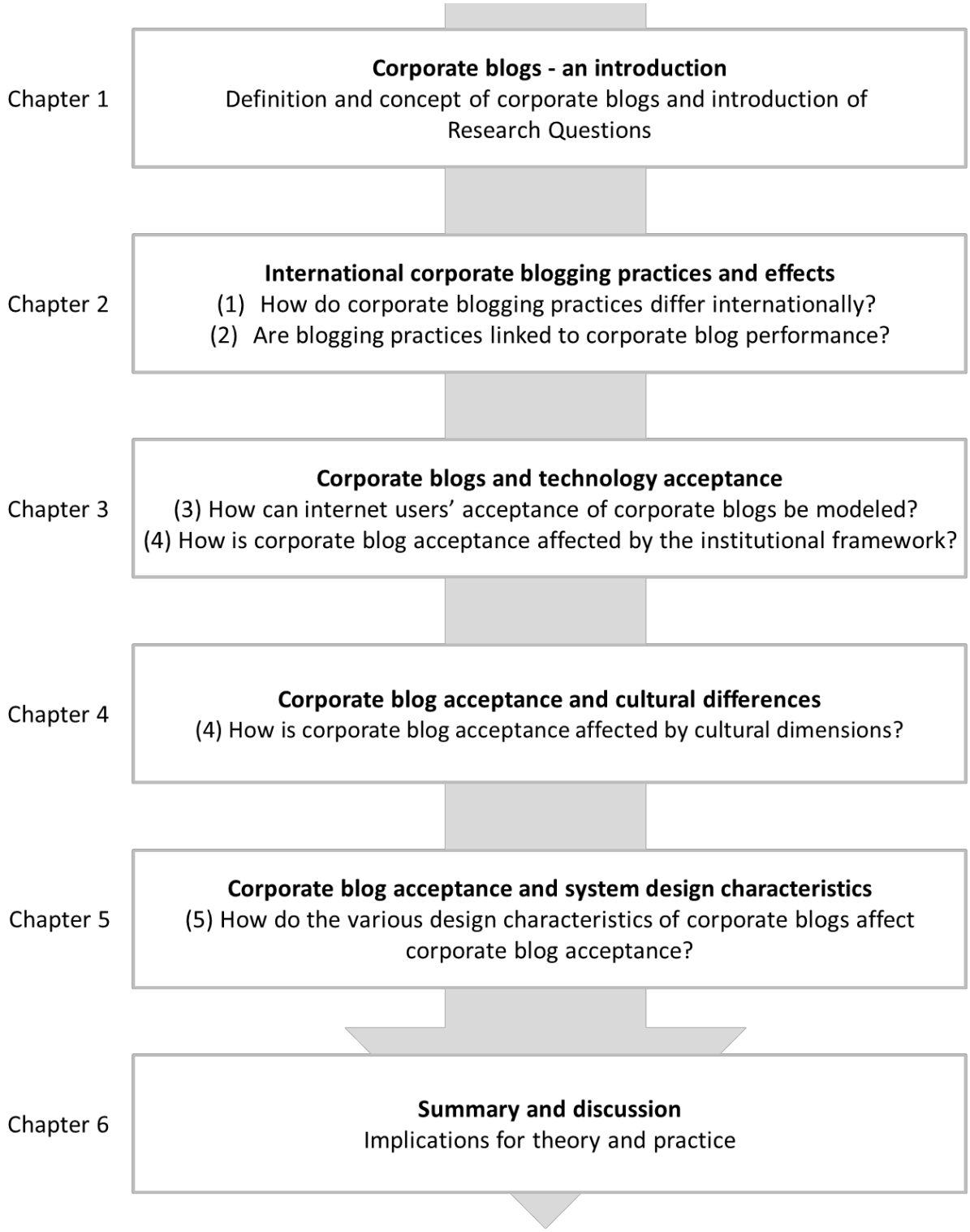
1.3 Structure of the thesis

Overall, this work consists of six chapters that can be grouped into three parts. The present chapter (Chapter 1) gives an overview of the subject and explains research questions and process. Chapters 2-5 deal with the outlined Research Questions individually using different studies, samples, measures, and types of analyses. In this context a detailed analyses of a large set of corporate blogs from the three countries will be conducted in Chapter 2 and a first link shall be established between blog characteristics and their effects on Internet users' acceptance of corporate blogs. Chapter 3 will shift the focus from individual blogs to the corporate blog concept in general and identify a model to structure the further discussion on how corporate blogs are accepted by Internet users. Chapter 4 will extend the corporate blog ac-

ceptance model to account for target group characteristics, in particular for effects of culture, explaining differences in corporate blog acceptance internationally. Chapter 5 will extend the corporate blog acceptance model by a set of observed blog characteristics, eventually providing companies with an opportunity to identify individual means of adapting blogs to target group characteristics. Chapter 6 will summarize the findings from the four conducted analyses by linking the results again to the five Research Questions stated in Section 1.4 and providing a comprehensive model for tailoring corporate blogging strategies to context.

For the analyses of Chapters 2-5, two data collections were used. Chapter 2 is based on a complete collection of corporate blogs from three countries, including all design, content, and author characteristics. Chapters 3-5 are based on a survey of Internet users from three countries. First, Chapter 3 investigates a basic corporate blog acceptance model. Subsequently, Chapters 4 and 5 use the same data set, but expand the basic model in different directions, as Chapter 4 investigates an extension to account for cultural moderators, and Chapter 5 explores antecedents to the model. This approach of analyzing a basic model and two extensions instead of analyzing separate aspects of a single model was chosen to avoid an omitted variable bias.

Figure 9: Structure of the thesis



2 International corporate blogging practices and effects

This study assesses international corporate blogging practices and their effects on the popularity of corporate blogs in terms of comments received and incoming links. Building on the blogging practices framework by Schmidt (2007b) a theoretical model is developed incorporating cause-and-effects relationships for blog characteristics and their impact, as well as international differences. The five Hypotheses are tested using a sample of 20 German, 10 Russian, and 77 U.S. corporate blogs. The results of stepwise regression analyses confirmed most Hypotheses regarding effects of blog diversity, blog authenticity, blog usability, blog sophistication, and networking efforts. The theoretical and practical implications of this are discussed.

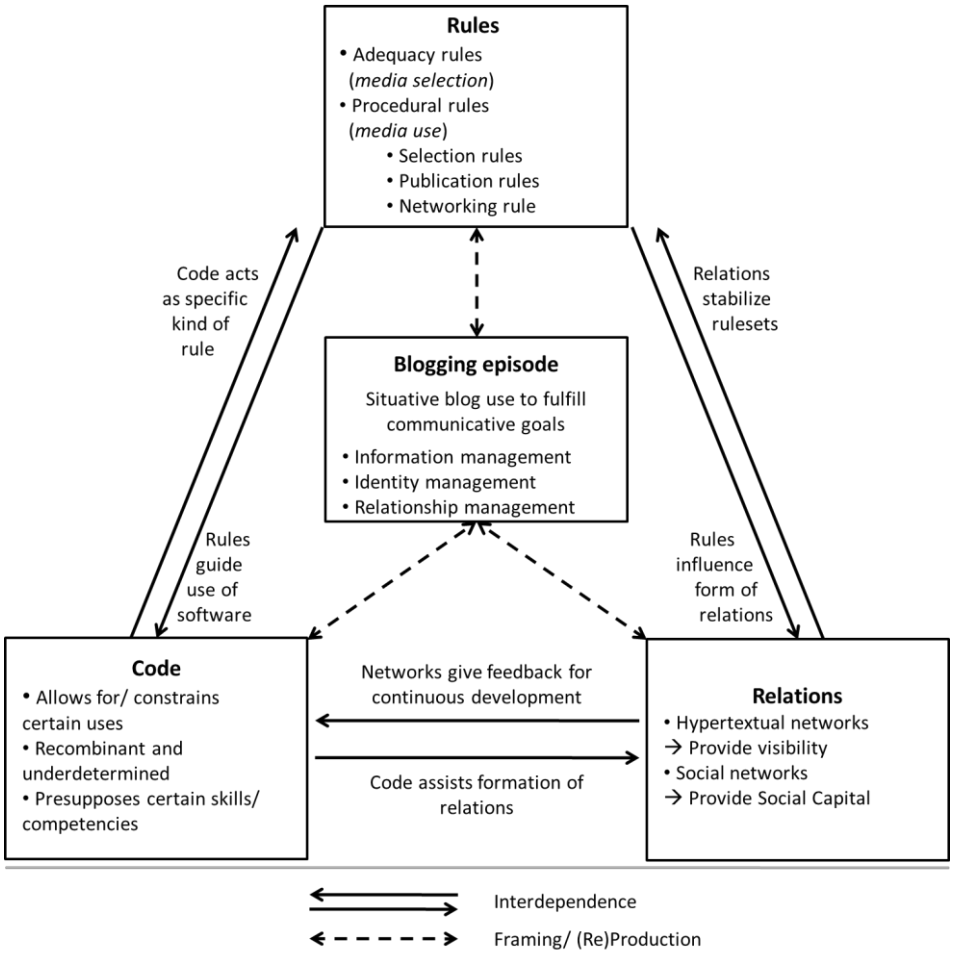
Individuals' growing use of social media applications puts pressure on companies to implement a social media mix, seeking an opportunity to establish trust through direct communication to different stakeholders (Kotler et al., 2010). Although social media allow firms to directly interact, i.e., with potential customers, at lower transaction cost and higher efficiency compared to traditional communication media (Kotler et al., 2010), companies still feel uncomfortable engaging in social media owing to the lack of control over the communication process (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This situation is aggravated by companies' short-sightedness. Expecting quick successes in the fast developing social media environment, companies quickly become disappointed as reader numbers and reader feedback remain at low levels during early stages of their corporate blogs, and often decide to abandon corporate blogging activities (König, 2011). However, the formation of social relationships (which is at the heart of success in social media) takes time and thus companies need to adapt their expectations. A key to shaping expectations and appropriate strategies is for companies to understand the effect of the communication channels' design characteristics and to anticipate users' responses to new corporate communication offerings such as corporate blogs. With an increasing number of corporate blogging activities, it becomes possible to compare blogging practices and statistically analyze larger sets of corporate blogs. This form of benchmarking (rather than looking at individual best practices and how they achieved results within a specific communication situation) should enable researchers to provide more practical guidelines for corporate bloggers and allow them to change blogging practices in order to better reach desired communication goals. Therefore, this first study aims at analyzing a large set of existing corporate blogs in order to determine factors which have an effect on how well corporate blogs are accepted by their audience. Furthermore, this study will assess differences in international blogging practices by

comparing corporate blogs from three countries, i.e., Germany, Russia, and the U.S. This will allow researchers to better identify and understand the effects of differing institutional frameworks on corporate blogging. 20 German, 10 Russian, and 77 U.S. corporate blogs will be analyzed in order to identify key determinants of corporate blog popularity and compare blogging practices across the three subsets. Using this research companies should be able to shape more realistic expectations regarding corporate blogging activities and outcomes and enable them to eventually better tailor their activities to their blogging goals.

2.1 Theoretical background: From blogging practices to blog acceptance

Schmidt (2007b) has identified three dimensions of blogging activities that guide a blogger's publication practices and therefore can be used as a '"general model to analyze and compare different uses of the blog format'"(p. 1409). According to this framework (see Figure 10), a blogging episode is largely determined by sets of rules, code and relations, which form an interdependent and dynamic system. Transferred to the corporate blog context, it can be used to assess both corporate blogging practices and their effects on the audience.

Figure 10: An analytical model of blogging practices



Source: Schmidt (2007b).

Rules

Blogging rules are the generalizable routines and procedures that govern the act of blogging. In the corporate blogging context they refer to the initial establishment of the corporate blog as well as the standard routines and processes connected to running the blog. These blogging rules comprise adequacy and procedural rules, that can be differentiated as either governing the decision to choose the corporate blog format as adequate for a specific corporate communication situation out of the large range of available media (adequacy rules), or as governing the actual usage of a corporate blog after the decision for this format has been made (procedural rules) (Schmidt, 2007b).

In the corporate blog context, adequacy rules first of all relate to the decision to establish a corporate blog (Schmidt, 2007b). This decision is usually tied to an assessment of the communication situation including the identified stakeholders and their characteristics, the company's resources and capabilities, as well as the specifics of the available communication media (Smith, 2005).

Procedural rules in the corporate blogging context refer to the routines and procedures that govern the day-to-day operation of the corporate blog. In this context, Schmidt (2007b) differentiates three types of procedural rules, i.e., selection, publication, and networking rules. Taken the establishment of a corporate blog as given, these rules can be adapted to better address certain target group needs. In addition, procedural rules for corporate blogs need to be differentiated by the involved actor, as they can be tracked to and conducted by either the company as the strategic initiator (usually the communications or marketing department as its responsible strategic department) or its individual employees as authors. With respect to selection rules, the company in general is usually responsible for the selection of authors and the broad decision of what general direction to go into (broad agenda setting), usually direct linked to the company's marketing or communication strategy. Selection rules for the individual employee as corporate blogger (similar to a private blogger) refer to the individual as a recipient of information, i.e., how the employee gathers information and what factors influence information reception including personal and professional interests, but also formal responsibilities under the employees work for the specific corporate blog. Publication rules refer to the decisions as to which issues are represented in what manner on the blog. Again, the company also in this context has strategic decision authority, for example regarding the overall selection of topics on a blog (narrow agenda setting), the desired frequency of publishing, the specific editing and approval processes of blog posts, and the presentation style. The blogging employee, on the other hand, bears responsibility for specific topic selection (considering the company agenda), the actual frequency of his (individual contributions), and the specific blogging episode, i.e., how the text is written (e.g.,

writing style, length) and presented (e.g., use of media). The third type of procedural rules, the networking rules, comprises the interaction with and involvement of the audience (or more strategically the target groups). This includes the overall relationship strategy for the corporate blog as devised by the company and the specific interaction activities conducted by the individual authors. Networking rules thereby build the basis for the evolution of relation to the blog's audience and target groups. Table 2 summarizes the different types of procedural rules and outlines the role of the company and the blogging employee.

Table 2: Overview of procedural rules

Type of procedural rule	Employee's/author's role	Company's role	Context
Selection rules	Reading, searching, considering company strategy	Recruiting authors, determining overall purpose and strategy	Company sets overall strategy and decides on goals and broad agenda; blogging employee assumes responsibility for detailed information search and selection
Publication rules	Writing, presenting	Narrow agenda setting, determining blog policy and processes	Company determines the detailed publication process and determines the specific topics to be covered; blogging employee produces the content and determines how it is presented
Networking rules	Representing, networking, connecting	Determining relationship strategy and further usage of interaction results	Company sets the specific goals for relationship building activities; blogging employee implements this strategy, represents the company towards the target group and is responsible for using feedback and forwarding inquiries

Code

The second structural dimension of blogging practices is the code, i.e., the 'blogging software and its underlying architecture' (Schmidt, 2007b). This is usually completely determined by the company (typically the corporate communication department in coordination with the IT department (Schabel, 2008)), deciding about the type of software used, the basic functionality, as well as the connection to other communication activities of the company (e.g., the corporate website).

Relations

Finally, a blogging activity involves relations, including hyper-textual, as well as social relations. In the corporate communication context one can furthermore identify internal relations, i.e., the relations between the corporate blog and other departments or employees of the company (König, 2011). Again, one can distinguish relations at the corporate and the individual level. In this context, the company

needs to identify strategic decisions and incentives for the blogging employees to connect to the blog's audience, i.e., establishing social relations. This extends beyond the networking rules discussed above by going beyond the single blogging episode and even the blog context. For the company, this also relates to the integration of blogging with other corporate communication activities, which can extend or contribute to the relationships with its target groups. Furthermore, both the company and the individual author are responsible for establishing hyper-textual relations through the use of hyperlinks and trackbacks. This enables a deeper integration into the blogosphere and to connect to other bloggers.

Interrelationships

The above outlined aspects of blogging practices are interrelated in several ways interrelated. Procedural rules and adequacy rules affect the form and extent of the established relations by influencing 'the size and composition of hyper-textual and social networks emerging from ongoing blog-based interactions' (Schmidt, 2007b). Therefore, how information is selected, processed and presented in a corporate blog eventually determines the type and size of the attracted audience and how the provided information is used by readers and other bloggers. Not only do rules determine the use of the software, but the software also limits rules or enables them to emerge. A company can only publish video or audio content if the software platform is capable of handling multimedia formats. Finally, code and relations influence each other as technical networking features influence how relations are established, e.g., by enabling comments, provide trackback technology or offer other more advanced networking function.

Consequently, this comprehensive framework of blogging practices can be used to structure and to analyze practices and effects of corporate blogging. This study will therefore focus both on the individual elements as well as on their interrelationships. It will be assessing whether the outlined relationships, particularly the effects of rules and code on the evolving network (i.e., the size and activity of the audience or in other words popularity) also holds for the corporate blog context.

Several aspects and elements of private and corporate blogging practice have been assessed in theory and practice. However, most of the presented theory limits itself to theoretical evaluations or descriptive statistics, without specifically linking such blog characteristics to the performance of a blog, which is a necessary basis for companies to evaluate the usage of corporate blogs as communication tools and to initiate corrective action. While Appendix 1 provides a theoretical and mathematical model for relating blog characteristics to blog success based on current network theories, the following paragraphs will focus on specific characteristics and the derived Hypotheses. In order to analyze the determinants of corporate blog ac-

ceptance by Internet users, it is important to first define a set of blog characteristics. Due to the fact that the study has a very explorative character, it is crucial to observe a high number of characteristics. Fleck et al. (2007a) define the three dimensions authors, readers, and format as important blog characteristics. In addition, Herring et al. (2007b) underline the importance of the posted texts itself as well as of general blog features, such as design elements and media usage. As a generalization, six main factors characterize a blog and can serve as a framework to analyze corporate blogs, i.e., general blog characteristics, general post characteristics, content characteristics, author characteristics, company characteristics, and reader characteristics. To illustrate the six sets of characteristics, the following table provides examples of more detailed characteristics:

Table 3: Overall blog characteristics

Post characteristics	**Blog characteristics**
Post frequency	Blog age
Post variability	Blog elements
Average words	Interactivity
Author characteristics	**Content characteristics**
Number of authors	Language and style
Gender	Media usage
Posts written by women/men	Topics
Company characteristics	**Reader characteristics**
Company size	Gender
Industry	Purchasing behavior
Communication goal	Commenting behavior

For an empirical study of corporate blogs, the given model of a corporate blog as a combination of various characteristics needs to be simplified and the included parameters need to be limited to directly observable blog characteristics. Appendix 2 provides a detailed overview of past private and corporate blog research including the observed blog characteristics and findings. Based on an assessment of this large set of empirical studies, five sets of observable key characteristics are identified.

Several previous studies of private blogs, e.g., Herring et al. (2004a) and Nardi et al. (2004), have focused on author characteristics such as gender, age or authors' goals. However, these studies' findings were not related to a blog's performance. Communication theory assumes that whenever communicators are directly observable by the audience, the audience tends to be similar in terms of demographic characteristics and attitudes and communication effectiveness increases with higher communicator-audience similarity (e.g., Berscheid, 1966, Worchel et al., 2006), which has also been shown for corporate communication and marketing contexts (e.g., Brock, 1965, Woodside and Davenport, 1974). Consequently, a diverse group of

communicators, representing a larger set of backgrounds and attitudes, is also able to attract a diverse and eventually larger audience. In the corporate blog context this would imply that a larger group of authors from different backgrounds, gender, and age groups will be able to attract a bigger audience than a very homogeneous group of communicators. Consequently, it can be assumed that a more diverse blog can better address different reader groups. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1.1: A higher (lower) diversity will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.

Content characteristics are often cited as key factors to attract readers and built reader loyalty (e.g., Picot and Fischer, 2006, Zerfass and Boelter, 2005). For corporate blogs, it is often stated that it is crucial to create authenticity and credibility to overcome a general skepticism of consumers towards corporate communication (e.g., Röttger and Zielmann, 2006, Yang and Lim, 2009), a topic which is also prevalent in standard corporate communication theory (e.g., Argenti, 2008, Cornelissen, 2011). In this context, Zerfass and Sandhu (2005) have established the notion of 'virtual authenticity' that can be fostered by engaging in social media, e.g., by establishing a personal CEO-blog or other employee blogs. With more authentic blog entries and blogs overall being more popular among visitors (Weerkamp and de Rijke, 2008), it can also be hypothesized that more authentic corporate blogs will be more successful:

Hypothesis 1.2: A higher (lower) authenticity will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.

Another stream of research has focused on post-related characteristics. This includes tools that can increase the attractiveness of the posts by adapting posting practices. This comprises for example a high post frequency or the use of media to support written text, as factors that improve reader comfort (e.g., Schmidt, 2007a, 2007c). Hence, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1.3: A more (less) reader-friendly blog management will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.

Scheidt and Wright (2004) have identified a tendency to adapt sidebar elements to better suit publishers' needs and meet readers' expectations. In general, overall blog characteristics, such as blog age, design elements and interactivity may play an important role with respect to blogging success. Therefore it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1.4: A more (less) developed blog will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.

Blogs as tools for communication and interaction are part of the new, more people-centered Internet. As it may be characterized as a huge network of linked and inter-

connected participants and services, a blog publisher's networking effort may play an important role for establishing a corporate blog (Cass et al., 2005, Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This effort may include linking to other content, discussing issues of common interest, and actively commenting on other blogs, contributing to a more visible and more interesting blog (Ali-Hasan and Adamic, 2007). Therefore, it may be hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1.5: A higher (lower) networking effort will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.

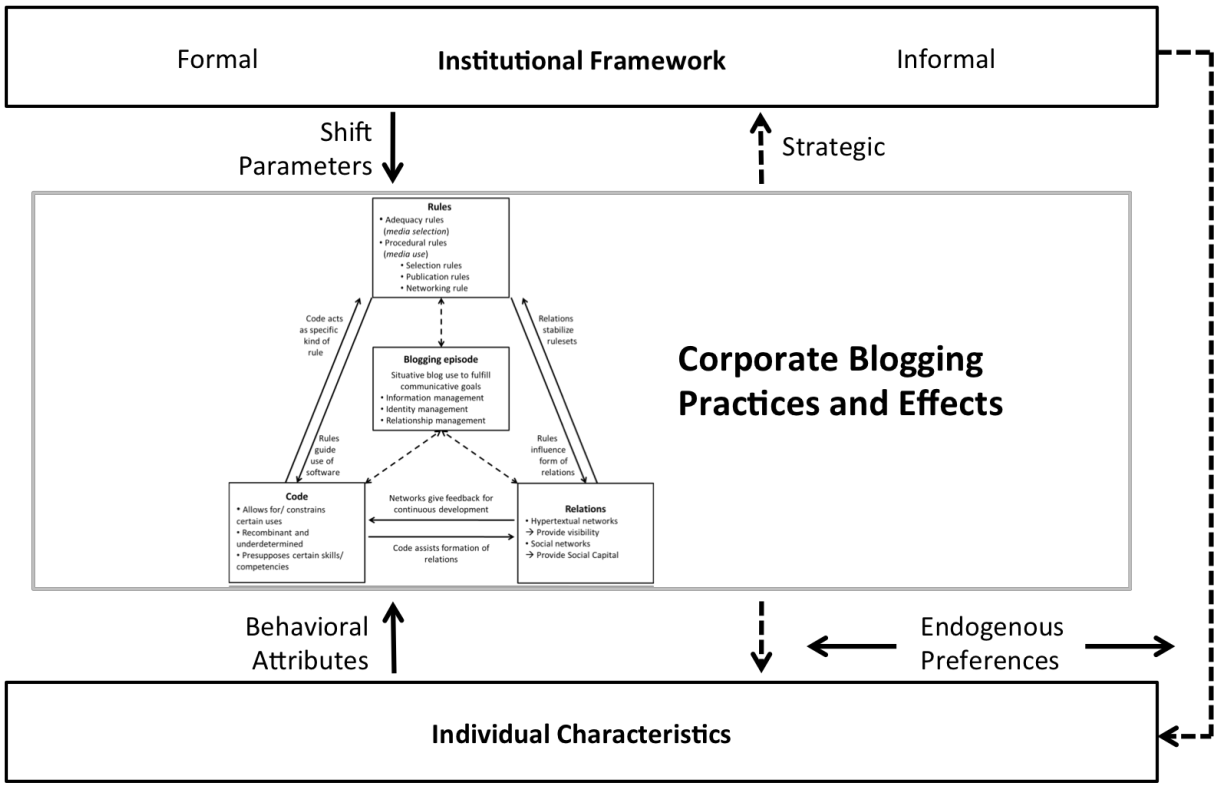
A second goal of this study is the identification of international differences in corporate blogging. To this end, it is first of all important to understanding how a corporate blog as a corporate activity is subject to its institutional environment

According to the new institutional economics (NIE) framework, corporate strategies and decisions are affected by formal institutional factors, including political, social, and legal rules, and informal institutional factors relating to culture. These cultural factors are more difficult to identify than formal factors, owing to their intangible nature. The institutional framework also affects the behavior and attitude of individuals, e.g., by influencing a person's values and preferences. Subsequently, these individuals are also related to a company's decision making that evolve from their function as employees, customers or other types of stakeholders.

In the context of the blogosphere, the NIE framework can be used to illustrate determinants of corporate blogging practices and the impact of these practices. The formal and informal institutional framework influences or even constraints decisions related to corporate blogging – e.g., Who is allowed to blog? What is the blog's structure and content in the context of binding legal rules for corporate publications? At the same time it influences readers' perceptions, values, and preferences, which in turn guide the blog-related decisions of the company. Figure 11 presents a corporate blog as unique combination of blogging practices and effects, as introduced at the beginning of this section, which is influenced by formal and informal institutional framework elements as well as individual characteristics, as outlined by Williamson (1996). It implies that on the one hand the institutional setting e.g., laws and regulations that restrict corporate communication may affect corporate blogging practices, while on the other hand individual characteristics such as personal values of authors and readers also affect the way a corporate blog is performing. The inquiry of the U.S. Security and Exchange Commission with respect to Whole Foods Market, Inc. and the publication and use of data on online platforms such as the blog of its CEO John Mackey, which led to a ten month suspension of blogging activities, may serve as an extreme example for the impact of the formal institutional framework (Mackey, 2007, 2008). On the other hand, the framework also outlines that corporate blogs may serve companies which are willing

to influence their environment. As a tool to improve reputation, it may influence opinions and attitudes of individuals. At the same time, corporate blogs may be used for lobbying and other strategic activities influencing the institutional framework.

Figure 11: A corporate blog within the institutional framework



Source: Author, based on Williamson (1996).

Realizing that companies and employees may use blogs to bridge geographical and institutional boundaries, e.g., by providing a global blogging platform for all employees, by approaching an international audience using a single channel, or by establishing a range of corporate blogs for varying national and international audiences, one can even model corporate blogs as a corporate activity which is subject to different institutional frameworks as proposed by Wolff and Pooria (Wolff and Pooria, 2004). In this context, a company may face for example differing legal frameworks regarding corporate communication and blogging activities, different audience structures, as well as differing sets of individual values. In differing contexts, audiences might value different aspects or characteristics of corporate blogs. Consequently, Trammell et al. (2006) argue that under the influence of varying institutional frameworks 'different cultural patterns of blogging, and of Internet use in general, will develop over time'. From a global communicator's perspective, we today deal with Internet audiences and blogospheres that feature significant differences between individual countries or – broader speaking – language areas, as explored by Kelly (Kelly, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, Etling et al., 2010), who identified

significant differences in the structure, content and members of the blogospheres in Germany, Russia, and the U.S. Modeling international corporate blogging activities as being subject to different institutional frameworks yields two specific research areas within the framework of corporate blogging practices. Firstly, with respect to the individual elements (rules, code, and network), institutional framework effects would result in different blogging practices under different frameworks, i.e., a corporate blog and its characteristics may be the results of formal and informal institutional frameworks, individuals' characteristics, as well as specific corporate blogging governance. Secondly, the interrelationships between the elements might be affected, implying that the size and type of interrelationships such as the effect of corporate blogging rules or software on the size and type of audience may differs between individual frameworks.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Sample and data collection procedure

To evaluate corporate blogging practices, a list of public corporate blogs was compiled. Research focused on three countries: Germany, Russian, and the U.S.

All corporate blogs from the selected three countries included in the study had to meet pre-defined criteria to ensure comparability. They had to be set up by medium-size or large companies, i.e., companies with revenues exceeding €100m in 2007. They had to be active, i.e., feature at least one new post during the time period between January 7th and March 16th 2008. They also had to be older than 10 weeks on March 16th 2008. Using an extensive research process, including a large selection of literature on corporate blogs including Weil and Lutz (2006), several Internet databases on corporate social media activities such as Anderson (2009), as well as an additional Internet search, it was found that 77 English, 20 German, and 10 Russian corporate blogs fulfilled these three criteria. Consequently the following blogs were included:

Table 4: Corporate blog sample

Sub-sample of German corporate blogs	
ahlers. (AO Deutschland Medien GmbH)	Frosch Blog (Werner & Mertz GmbH)
Alles über EVE (Delphi Corporation)	Frosta Blog (FRoSTA AG)
AMD Notebook Test Blog (Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.)	Jokers-Blog (Verlagsgruppe Weltbild GmbH)
Ausbildungsblog (Festo AG & Co. KG)	Langenscheidt Weblog (Langenscheidt Verlagsgruppe)
Bosch Trainee-Blog (Robert Bosch GmbH)	Lotus Germany (IBM Corporation)
Bredl bloggt (Telekom TA AG)	Magix Blog (MAGIX AG)
Daimler Blog (Daimler AG)	Payback Blog (Loyalty Partners GmbH)
Das Recruiting von Accenture (Accenture Ltd.)	RheinNeckarWeb (BASF SE)
DocMorris Blog (DocMorris)	T-Systems Automotive Blog (T-Systems Enterprise Services GmbH)
Frischegarantie (Wüstenrot AG)	Umweltmanagement Swisscom (Swisscom AG)
Sub-sample of Russian corporate blogs	
allsoft.ru blog (SAO Softline)	Blog Yandeksa (Yandex LLC)
Press Club (VimpelCom)	Veblog Laboratorii Kasperskogo (Kaspersky Lab)
Blog GMK Noril'skiy nikel' (MMC Norilski Nikel)	Kak zhivet IT v Intel (Intel Corporation)
Blog izdateley delovoy literatury (Mann, Ivanov & Ferber)	Ofitsial'nyy blog Google Rossiya (Google Inc)
Blog MegaFon Moskva (MegaFon)	Prosto o slozhnom (Alfa Group)
Sub-sample of U.S. corporate blogs	
A thousand words (Eastman Kodak Company)	Islamic Finance blog (PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP)
Accelerating High Performance Business (Accenture Ltd.)	IT@Intel (Intel Corporation)
Alliconnect (GlaxoSmithKline plc)	JNJ BTW (Johnson & Johnson)
Amazon Webservices Blog (Amazon.com Inc.)	Jonathan's Blog (Sun Microsystems, Inc.)
Baby Babble! (Groupe Danone)	Kia BUZZ (Hyundai Kia Automotive Group)
Backstage at Sundance (Hewlett-Packard Company)	Marriott in the Kitchen (Marriott International, Inc.)
BenettonTalk (Benetton Group)	Marriott on the move (Marriott International, Inc.)
BrewBlog (SAB Miller plc)	n-gage blog (Nokia Corporation)
Cadillac Drivers' Log (General Motors Corporation)	Nickel from Norilsk (MMC Norilski Nikel)
CheckOut (WalMart-Stores Inc.)	Official Google Blog (Google Inc)
Chrysler Blog (Chrysler LLC)	Open for Discussion (McDonald's Corporation)
Cisco High Tech Policy Blog (Cisco Systems, Inc.)	open mike (Pitney Bowes Inc.)
Coca-Cola Conversations (The Coca-Cola Company)	Play On (Xerox Corporation)
Corporate Reporting blog (PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP)	PluggedIn (Eastman Kodak Company)
Creating History Blog (Arcelor Mittal)	PwC People blog (PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP)
CSR@Intel (Intel Corporation)	Randy's Journal (The Boeing Company)
Dell Shares (Dell Inc.)	Research@Intel (Intel Corporation)
Digital Straight Talk (Cox Communications, Inc.)	Small & Medium Business Community Blog (Hewlett-Packard Co.)
Direct2Dell (Dell Inc.)	Small Business Community Blog (Microsoft Corporation)
Dr. Laundry (Clorox Company)	Sony Electronics Blog (Sony Corporation)
Ed Gottsman: Weblog (Accenture Ltd.)	Southwest Airlines Blog (Southwest Airlines Corporation)
EDS' Next Big Thing (Electronic Data Systems)	Technology@Intel (Intel Corporation)
Emerson Process Experts (Emerson Electric Company)	The Blog (Avaya Inc.)
Exchange (NYSE Euronext Inc.)	The Bovine Bugle (Groupe Danone)
Experienced Consultants Blog (Accenture Ltd.)	The Calculating World with You and Wing, (Hewlett-Packard Co.)
Fastlane Blog (General Motors Corporation)	The Future of Documents (Xerox Corporation)
Finance & Treasury blog (PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP)	The Gender Agenda (PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP)
From Edison's Desk (General Electric Company)	The Official Palm Blog (Palm, Inc.)
FYI Blog (General Motors Corporation)	The Penguin Blog (Pearson PLC)
GM TunerSource (General Motors Corporation)	The Student LoanDown (Wells Fargo & Co.)

The complete content as well as the status of all 107 corporate blogs were archived on March 17th 2008, using the software tool ScrapBook (Gomita, 2012), which allows to extract and archive more complex website networks. The available data of each individual corporate blog included data at the blog level such as name, design, and features, as well as at the individual blog entry level, including the publication date, text, author(s), supporting media content, and associated comments. Consequently, the whole dataset comprised 107 corporate blogs with in total almost 700 authors, more than 2,500 blog entries, and more than 13,000 comments:

Table 5: Overview corporate blog sample

	Germany	Russia	U.S.	Total
Blogs	20	10	77	107
Blog posts	467	353	1797	2617
Blog authors	103	87	499	689
Comments	1868	1911	9341	13120

2.2.2 Measures

Dependent variables

As outlined in Section 1.2, companies seek three main benefits from establishing corporate blogs, i.e., Internet traffic, feedback, and word of mouth. For companies it is important to identify blogging practices that influence these benefits. While it was not possible to observe the traffic to all 107 corporate blogs in the sample, indicators for the dimensions word-of-mouth and feedback were available as will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

Word of mouth on the Internet initiated through a corporate blog is expressed by the amount of other websites picking up discussions and consequently linking to the respective corporate blog, including mentions on social networks or discussions on other blogs. A common tool to make multiplication throughout the blogosphere visible is the Technorati Authority, which measures the number of other blogs linking to one specific blog and its content. It is based on Technorati's ability – as the largest search engine particularly indexing the blogosphere – to continuously monitor changes in the blogosphere and to provide a real-time picture of associations between blogs. The higher the number of incoming links (restricted to links created within the past six months to better account for frequent changes) the higher the Authority assigned by Technorati. Other estimators try to evaluate the general importance of a website within the overall web content, i.e., the Google Page Rank, and the Alexa ranking. Pages that are frequently updated and receive links from other websites are rated higher than static websites that go unnoticed. However, both feature significant drawbacks. Optimized for general web content and not

blogs in particular, both are not frequently updated, feature significant biases towards or against certain language areas , are not available for every blog in the sample and therefore may reflect an inaccurate ranking, while a scaled logarithmic computation adds further distortion (Kirchhoff et al., 2007). Therefore, this study focuses on Technorati Authority as index-based indicator for word-of-mouth.

A second approach to estimating blogging success is to evaluate the level of interaction with readers, especially if customer or other stakeholder feedback is an important goal of the blogging company. As outlined by Li and Stromberg (2007), feedback collected through a corporate blog takes the form of comments by readers under the individual blog entries. Consequently, the amount of feedback, in particular the number of comments received on a blog as well as the average length can serve as an approximation for how well a company is able to engage in a discussion with the intended target group. Therefore, the average number of comments per post shall serve as the indicator for collected feedback.

Independent variables

To estimate the individual characteristics and factors, a set of observable blog parameters had to be defined. Herring et al. (2004b, 2006) selected various author characteristics, text statistics, and the use of media and Internet links to describe blogging practices. Scheidt and Wright (2004) focused on visual design elements, such as sidebar elements used in private blogs. Lee et al. (2006, 2008) highlighted the importance of author characteristics for corporate blogs, and Fleck et al. (2007a) outlined the role of content, especially the topics covered in blog posts. Turck (2007) evaluated corporate blogs' authenticity by rating blogs based on their writing style. In order to assess the formality and indicate the degree of authenticity of blog posts, Puschmann (2007a, 2007b) has identified grammar statistics of blog posts as meaningful characteristic. Appendix 2 summarizes previous research on blogging practices and the used parameters. As a conclusion, the following list gives an overview of often used and observable corporate blog parameters:

Table 6: Observable blog parameters

Blog age/Blog start	Number of interactivity elements
Comment length	Number of standard sidebar elements
Comments per post	Number of total authors
Gender of authors	Post length
Grammar and choice of words	Posts by gender
Media use per post	Posts by week
Number of blogroll elements	Topics
Number of female/male authors	Total links

The empirical study will focus on eleven parameters to estimate blog success: number of authors, gender of authors, topical dimensions, formality, post frequency,

media usage, post length, blog age, design complexity, interactivity, and networking. The following part will introduce the selected parameters and relate them to the stated Hypotheses.

Number of authors

This independent variable summarizes the observable number of authors that was engaged with a blog over the pre-defined time horizon. As more authors increase a blog's diversity and better address varying reader preferences, it can be hypothesized that a higher number of involved authors can yield higher blog popularity, as stated by Hypothesis 1.1.

Gender of authors

The gender auf authors may have an impact on visitor demographics. Therefore, it shall be determined whether a more uniform author mix contributes to a higher Technorati Authority. In this context gender disparity represents by how much an author group varies from an assumed parity of female and male authors, i.e., the absolute value of the difference of .5 and the observable share of female authors. A more equal representation of gender in an author group may positively affect the diversity and hence contribute to a blog's success as expressed in Hypothesis 1.1.

Topical dimensions

The independent variable topical dimensions shall reflect the content of a corporate blog and allow for a content-based blog typology. For this purpose the set of archived blog texts had to be transformed into sets of quantitative data. This was done based on the transformation process proposed by Srnka and Koeszegi (2007). This process enables researchers to convert qualitative elements into statistically analyzable data and follows five steps: (1) material sourcing, (2) transcription, (3) unitization, (4) categorization, and (5) coding. The sourcing process included the collection of blogs and the archiving of the content. As a result of the archiving as described in Section 2.3.1, all blogs including the text and design elements were available in html-format. As second step, the transcription was performed by extracting the individual blog posts. The whole sample includes 1803 English, 467 German, and 351 Russian posts, i.e., 2621 posts in total. For each sample all corresponding blog posts were combined into one large text file. At the unitization stage, it was decided to analyze the texts on a single post basis, i.e., every post was to be analyzed individually. In the fourth step, a category scheme was developed, allowing categorizing every blog post with respect to the topics covered by the text. The aim was to explicitly correlate each blog post to a single topic category. The categorization scheme differentiated four major areas, namely company, industry, blog-related, and other topics, with several sub-topics identified by screening the Ger-

man sample of corporate blogs for covered topics. The following list gives an overview of the whole category scheme:

Table 7: Corporate blog content categories

Company
Administration (CA): Company official and executive information, stock information
Career/recruiting (CHR): Job experiences, career hints, HR department news
Corporate social responsibility (CSR): CSR activities
Events (CE): Events arranged by the company
History (CH): Corporate history
Marketing (CM): Advertisements, marketing department news, studies
Operations (CO): Processes, production, production topics
Products (CP): Product tests, specifications, introductions
Strategy (CS): Corporate strategy, goals, targets, profit/revenue
Technology (CT): Technological issues
Industry
Development/trends (ID): Industry trends
Events (IE): Industry events
Products (IP): Products of competitors
Technology (IT): Technology and new developments by competitors in the industry
Other
General news (OG): General news unrelated to the company, the industry or the blog
Private/employee life (OP): Content on specific employees
Society (OS): Information about society
Blogging
Direct blog-related (BD): Direct relation to the corporate blog
General blog-related (BG): General blogging-related issues

Finally, the coding process was conducted by two independent coders. Each coder had the task to evaluate and categorize every single blog post with respect to the above detailed classification scheme. As a consequence, every blog post received one classification tag from each of the coders. After conclusion, inter-coder reliability was checked using Cohen's kappa. Both the corresponding inter-coder matrices and the resulting kappa calculations are provided in Appendix 3. Because the high kappa values indicate a high level of agreement among the coders, the results of the transformation process were accepted and both coding schemes were combined into a single scheme with two tags for every individual blog post and then used to further analyze each corporate blog individually. The actual value used for the stepwise regression analyses assigned a level of covered topics to each corporate blog individually, being the number of topics that accounted for 5% or more of the total topics covered by the respective blog. Hence, a blog that only covers a single content category features a score for topical dimensions of 1, while blogs with broader coverage score higher. Being an indicator for diversity, a positive relationship between this factor and a blog's success can be assumed as expressed by Hypothesis 1.1.

Formality

Literature on blogs often highlights authenticity as a major success determinant for corporate blogs. Readers will only become loyal to a blog if the blog character differs from the traditional marketing and communication mix (Zerfass and Boelter, 2005).

Heylighen and Dewaele (1999, 2002) have developed a structured approach to assess the contextuality of language, which can be interpreted as a unifying measure for language and character of text. To this end, they distinguish between formal communication, which 'conveys information explicitly, through the linguistic expression itself' (Heylighen and Dewaele, 1999), and contextual communication, where the information is only conveyed implicitly through the context of the expression. To evaluate if texts are written rather formal or informal, all words used are grouped into different classes, i.e., nouns, adjectives, prepositions, determiners, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, interjections, and conjunctions. Nouns, adjectives, prepositions, and determiners have been identified as indicators for formality, while an increased use of pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and interjections characterizes contextual expression. A measure of formality is introduced by calculating the difference between the frequencies of formal text elements and informal text elements, i.e., the independent variable F-score (Heylighen and Dewaele, 2002):

F = (noun frequency + adjective frequency + preposition frequency + article frequency – pronoun frequency – verb frequency – interjection frequency + 100)/2

To get a more intuitive picture of the F-score measure, some general characteristics of text featuring high F-values, i.e., more formal text, and text featuring low F-value, i.e., more informal text, are given in the following table:

Table 8: Formal and informal text characteristics

High F-value	Low F-value
High noun and adjective frequency	High frequency of personal pronouns
More nominal than verbal	More verbal than nominal
Often relate complex information	Often describe past events, personal impressions, feelings
Often describe future events/potentiality	

Source: Author, based on Heylighen & Dewaele (1999).

Puschmann (2007a, 2007b) first used the F-score to measure the authenticity of selected private and corporate blogs. A similar approach will be used for this study. To derive the frequencies of the different word classes for every single post included in the study, the software TreeTagger, developed by the University of Stuttgart to analyze language, was used. This software tool processes an entered text by first partitioning it into single word elements and then analyzing each word element using

an underlying language-specific tagset, which allows the software to systematically assign a word category tag. For the application of the TreeTagger to the three selected language groups the Stuttgart-Tübingen-Tagset (STTS) was used for German text (Schiller et al., 1999), the Penn Treebank Project tagset was used for English text (Santorini, 1990), and the tagset for the Russian National Corpus was used for Russian text (Sharoff et al., 2008). As basis for the tagging process, it was necessary to create an individual corpus (collection of texts) for each of the blogs in all three samples, yielding 107 different blog corpora. Then, each corpus was processed using the above outlined software and tagsets. For each blog in the sample the frequencies of the word classes were calculated individually and an F-score was computed.

With individual F-scores it will thus become possible to estimate the effect of formality on corporate blogging success. Included in the stepwise regression analyses, it shall be evaluated whether less formal blogs are indeed more successful, as commonly assumed in literature and as stated in Hypothesis 1.2.

In addition to the regression analysis, a second interesting observation regarding F-scores will be whether blogs generally feature a lower formality (lower F-score) than a random sample of traditional press releases of the companies included in the sample. This will be tested using first an unpaired t-test between each sample of blog F-scores and press release F-scores. However, the company background has a potential effect on corporate communication, as e.g., a machine producer publishes employs more technical language and communication which would yield a higher F-score. Hence, a paired t-test will be conducted in addition, where each blog's average F-score is paired with the F-score of the respective press release.

Post frequency

The independent variable post frequency expresses how many blog posts were published on average during the ten-week observation horizon of the study. It is calculated by dividing the total number of blog entries posted on the particular blog by ten to yield an average number of blog entries published per week. Because blogs that rarely publish new content are considered less attractive for readers and they in general feature less content, a positive relation between post frequency and blog success is assumed as expressed in Hypothesis 1.3.

Media usage

The use of media elements in blogs has become more important as the technological capabilities of the various blog services evolved and is considered a determinant of traffic to a blog and driver of interactivity (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). For this study different media formats in addition to text, namely picture, video, and other formats such as polls or slideshows were evaluated. The occurrences of such elements in all blog posts were counted, and consequently the independent variable media usage per post was calculated by dividing the total number of media elements used in a corporate blog over the observed time horizon by the total number of posts published. Contributing to a more comfortable reading experience, a blogs' popularity is assumed to be positively dependent on the use of media as stated by Hypothesis 1.3.

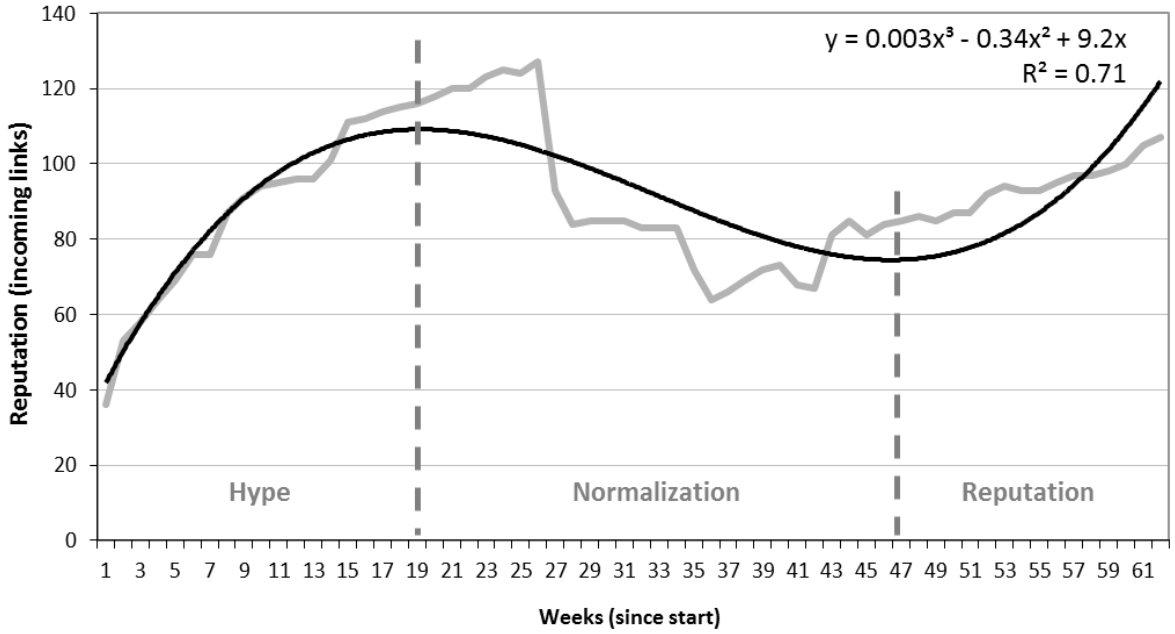
Post length

The independent variable post length was calculated as the average number of words of all posts published on an individual blog. Based on the assumption that longer blog posts have a higher potential to foster reader engagement and can transfer more information, a positive relation with respect to a blog's performance is assumed, as implied by Hypothesis 1.3.

Blog age

Social networks build over time. Therefore, age of the blog can be estimated as having a positive impact on blog success. Conducting a time-series analysis for a single corporate blog, Koenig (2009a) showed a positive long-term effect of age on the number of incoming links, reasoning that older blogs can be expected to have more readers due to reader loyalty and have already had more time to make modifications to their corporate blogging practices based on audience feedback. In addition, blogs that do not meet the expectations are more likely to be abandoned at early stages. For example, the fixingBLOG, which was created by Fischerwerke GmbH & Co. KG in December 2005, featured its last post in November 2006, and the editor eventually announced to close the blog on March 1st, 2007. The blog, which was one of the first blogs created by a large German corporation, failed in the end as the company could not motivate its employees to contribute. The variable blog age was therefore included as an independent variable, being calculated by subtracting the date of the first post on a blog from the last day of the observed time horizon, i.e., March 16th, 2008. Age is assumed to be positively related to popularity as expressed by Hypothesis 1.4.

Figure 12: The corporate blog life cycle (Daimler-Blog)



Source: König (2009a).

Design complexity

Scheidt and Wright (2004) conducted a comprehensive empirical study of design elements used in private blogs, concluding that sidebar elements were the blog design feature that was most often adapted to suit blog needs. Sidebar elements allow readers to quickly navigate through a blog, e.g., through an archive element or lists of latest posts and comments. As a second aspect, blog publishers themselves can use the sidebar to provide additional information for readers, e.g., by providing a list of often read blogs (blogroll), highlighting important or popular blog posts, offering subscription options (e.g., RSS and e-mail) or simply giving selected information about the author(s). The following list of sidebar elements was developed by screening the literature on blogging practices (see Appendix 2) as well as the sample of German corporate blogs:

Table 9: Sidebar elements in corporate blogs

Post archive	Photo archive	Search
Author list and information	Latest comments	Subscribe (RSS, e-mail)
Blog roll	Latest posts	Tag cloud
Category list	Latest trackbacks	Top commentators
Classics/hot picks	Most commented posts	Twitter
Dates	Most viewed posts	

Consequently the independent variable number of sidebar elements was calculated by counting the number of elements used out of the above list. Based on the fact

that a lack of sidebar and navigation elements makes reading the respective blog uncomfortable for readers who wish to gain additional information and further readings, it is assumed that a larger number of sidebar elements results in higher acceptance of corporate blogs as expressed in Hypothesis 1.4.

Interactivity

Since blogs evolved as social media, the commenting behavior of blog visitors has become significantly more intense (Rainie, 2005). At the same time, it became important for blog publishers to offer commenting functions and other interactive features, such as the opportunity to recommend blog posts via various social networks, e.g., delicio.us (http://delicious.com/) and digg it (http://digg.com/) as English-language and Mister Wong (http://www.mister-wong.de/) and Y!GG (http://yigg.de/) as German-language Internet services. Consequently, the independent variable interactivity elements was calculated by summing up the number of available activities out of five standard features, namely comment function, e-mail recommendation, rating mechanism, social network recommendation, and print function, which usually are provided directly below or next to an individual post. Hence, it can be hypothesized that blog managers can positively affect a blog's performance by providing more interactivity elements, as stated by Hypothesis 1.4.

Networking

Technorati Authority measures the number of incoming links, i.e., links from other blogs to the main page of a blog or individual blog posts. With the blogosphere being an interactive and interlinked network, it can be assumed that a high activity to connect with other blogs and websites is rewarded with a more intense interaction and a higher number of backlinks. This phenomenon of reciprocity in the blogosphere was observed by a range of previous studies, the most extensive one being the study by Gaudeul et al. (2008). While most networking activities of bloggers are hard to be observed (such as attending blogger meetings, exchanging e-mails or communicating through other social networks such as Twitter or Facebook), a publicly observable indicator for a blogger's networking activities is the blogroll. The blogroll is a specific sidebar element which represents a list of favorite websites or blogs respectively and creates a linking tool within the blogosphere (Picot and Fischer, 2006, Schmidt, 2007c). Hence, the number of links included in a blog's blogroll is used as an indicator for the networking activities of its publisher, summarized by the independent variable number of blogroll elements. In this context, it is assumed that a more intense networking, i.e., a higher number of blogs placed in the blogroll, has a positive effect on the blog popularity (Marlow, 2004) as stated in Hypothesis 1.5.

The following table summarizes the eleven independent variables used for the empirical analyses. These will be evaluated with respect to the two dependent variables Technorati Authority and comments per post.

Table 10: Independent variables

Blog age	Post length
Gender disparity	Topical dimensions
Formality (F-score)	# of authors
Interactivity elements	# of blogroll elements
Media usage per post	# of sidebar elements
Post frequency	

2.3 Analysis and results

The analysis comprised two steps to identify differences in blogging practices between the samples and effects of blogging practices on blog acceptance. First, analyses of variance (ANOVA) will be conducted to detect significant differences in the means of the independent variables over all three sample sets. Unpaired t-tests will reveal significant mean differences that may be caused by differences in the institutional frameworks and/or by varying blogging practices. Facing small sample sizes with respect to the German and the Russian sample set, explorative stepwise regression analyses will be employed to analyze the data. The used stepwise regression analyses will be forward selection regressions to identify the variables that are included or excluded. It will be conducted for each sample set individually as well as the overall sample set, in order to examine the effect of the outlined independent variables on the success indicators. The software used for both the analyses of variance and the stepwise regression analyses was IBM SPSS 19.

2.3.1 Analysis of variance

The following table presents means and standard deviations for the independent and dependent variables over all three sample sets:

Table 11: Descriptive and correlation statistics – pooled and German sample

All \ Germany		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Technorati Authority		-	-.07	.18	.25	.33	-.11	-.08	.55	.36	.80	.42	-.23	.51
2 Comments per post		.13	-	-.28	-.16	-.16	.14	.11	.11	.59	-.21	-.03	-.05	-.08
3 Post frequency		.18	-.02	-	-.07	.30	-.03	.17	-.19	-.22	.11	.07	-.19	.15
4 Post length		.02	-.08	-.24	-	.37	.05	-.11	.08	.02	-.13	.18	-.40	-.26
5 # of authors		.57	.08	.55	-.02	-	-.50	-.05	.02	-.08	.03	-.22	-.39	-.04
6 Gender disparity		-.02	.04	-.29	.05	-.40	-	.02	.10	.24	.00	.37	.13	-.01
7 Blog Age		.30	.12	.05	-.01	.12	.09	-	-.23	-.07	-.24	-.20	-.45	.06
8 # of blogroll elements		.42	.12	.02	-.03	.31	-.11	.05	-	.63	.45	.35	-.04	.37
9 # of sidebar elements		.01	.31	-.09	.13	2.22	.00	-.07	.19	-	.30	.35	.06	.36
10 Media per post		.03	.03	.20	.29	.17	.01	-.03	.01	-.01	-	.53	.02	.54
11 Interactivity		-.01	.03	-.09	.19	.06	-.11	-.16	.08	.16	-.02	-	-.23	-.02
12 F-score		-.02	-.12	-.02	-.03	-.06	-.03	-.05	.06	-.15	.03	-.17	-	.18
13 Topical dimensions		.14	.04	.13	-.07	.28	-.10	-.05	.22	.21	.20	-.03	.01	-
All	**Mean**	157.80	5.40	2.45	331.25	6.58	.36	568.60	9.94	5.29	.88	2.28	68.37	4.05
	sd	873.74	17.63	2.60	183.09	9.22	.17	354.92	17.29	1.71	1.09	.96	5.87	1.98
G	**Mean**	20.60	11.48	2.345	216.83	5.15	.39	504.35	5.55	5.30	.66	2.10	62.65	3.85
	sd	28.16	38.69	1.71	159.88	5.72	.15	270.97	10.67	2.18	.64	.85	5.47	2.01

Notes: Pooled sample: $N = 107$. Correlations above |.16| are significant at $p < .05$. For Germany: $N = 20$. Correlations above |.38| are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 12: Descriptive and correlation statistics – Russian and U.S. sample

Russia \ U.S.		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Technorati Authority		-	.42	.24	-.02	.62	-.03	.33	.63	-.02	.03	-.03	-.03	.15
2 Comments per post		.48	-	.17	.12	.39	-.04	.34	.46	.10	.32	.17	-.09	.25
3 Post frequency		-.19	.17	-	-.26	.61	-.25	.09	.20	.10	.21	-.17	-.11	.15
4 Post length		-.16	-.26	-.29	-	-.03	.02	-.02	-.06	.05	.30	.20	.01	-.09
5 # of authors		-.18	.61	.47	-.45	-	-.36	.12	.53	.13	.23	.10	-.14	.35
6 Gender disparity		-.23	-.61	-.65	.47	-.57	-	.10	-.08	-.19	-.02	-.20	.08	-.08
7 Blog Age		-.09	-.09	-.23	-.09	.30	.20	-	.11	-.09	-.02	-.11	-.01	-.09
8 # of blogroll elements		.92	.38	-.23	-.12	-.19	-.24	.00	-	.21	.06	.07	-.08	.28
9 # of sidebar elements		.26	-.04	-.60	.39	-.53	.34	-.18	.24	-	-.02	.11	-.00	.18
10 Media per post		-.34	-.48	.15	.80	-.31	.35	.03	-.28	-.11	-	-.05	-.09	.18
11 Interactivity		.19	.27	.21	-.33	-.00	-.09	-.72	-.02	-.14	-.34	-	-.27	-.01
12 F-score		-.02	-.63	-.04	-.31	-.37	.34	-.09	.05	.04	-.10	.20	-	-.04
13 Topical dimensions		.00	.28	.04	.22	.12	-.53	-.04	.02	.24	.01	-.45	-.64	-
R	**Mean**	14.90	4.84	3.51	234.91	10.10	.27	540.10	15.10	3.30	1.19	2.10	77.51	4.10
	sd	29.81	3.05	4.61	150.88	8.31	.17	371.92	41.32	1.25	1.43	.88	4.30	1.73
U.S.	**Mean**	214.79	3.89	2.33	373.48	6.49	.36	588.99	10.42	5.55	.89	2.35	68.67	4.09
	sd	1038.0	7.10	2.47	177.86	10.06	.18	375.51	13.47	1.47	1.14	.99	4.37	2.03

Notes: For Russia: $N = 10$. Correlations above |.55| are significant at $p < .05$. For the U.S.: $N = 77$. Correlations above |.19| are significant at $p < .05$.

The following table shows the ANOVA results, highlighting statistical differences in the means of the independent variables, which may indicate effects of the institutional frameworks on blogging practices:

Table 13: Results of analysis of variance

Variable	U.S./Germany	U.S./Russia	Germany/Russia
Topical dimensions	-	-	-
Post frequency	-	-	-
# of authors	-	-	R > G (p = .07)
Blog age	-	-	-
Post length	U.S. > G (p < .01)	U.S. > R (p = .02)	-
Gender disparity	-	-	G > R (p = .05)
Formality (F-score)	U.S. > G (p < .01)	R > U.S. (p < .01)	R > G (p < .01)
# of sidebar elements	-	U.S. > R (p < .01)	G > R (p = .01)
# of blogroll elements	-	-	-
Media usage per post	-	-	-
Interactivity elements	-	-	-

Facing small sample sizes with respect to the German (N = 20) and Russian (N = 10) corporate blogs, few statistically significant differences exist. Topical dimensions, post frequency, the number of blogroll and interactivity elements as well as the use of media show no significant mean differences.

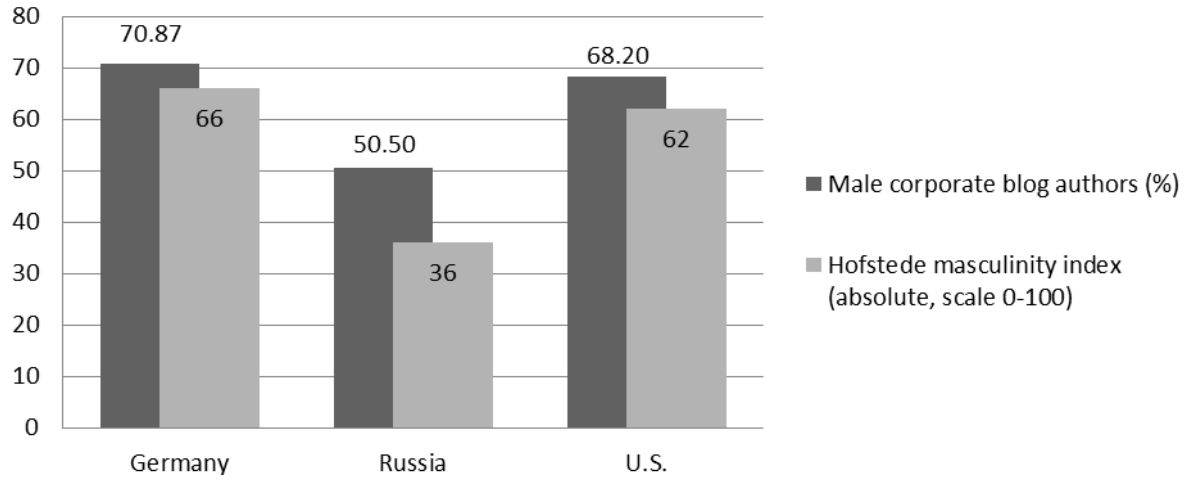
Russian corporate blogs have the highest average number of authors, resulting in a statistically significant difference with respect to German corporate blogs. The average number of authors of English corporate blogs is situated in between these values but shows no significant difference in both directions. The fact that Russian corporate blogs feature very large author groups compared to the other samples may be explained by acknowledging the more collectivist character of the Russian culture. Hofstede (1980) for example assigns a higher level of individualism to the U.S. (91) and Germany (67) compared to Russia (39), where individualism measures the extent to which people are willing to act on their own behalf in contrast to a preferred group or community membership. Relating the ANOVA findings to the impact of culture, Russians, who are less driven to act individually but rather engage in groups and communities, might tend to establishing larger author groups to run corporate blogs.

Post length is the largest in English-language corporate blogs. German and Russian blog posts are significantly shorter. To some extent this may be due to general language characteristics, as e.g., identical texts might differ in length when translated into various languages. However, as clear inter-language text length patterns have not yet been found by linguistics researchers and discussions on that often produce

contradicting results (e.g., Quinn, 2010), the identified differences are assumed to be due to different blogging practices.

The average gender disparity, i.e., the degree of difference between the number of male and female authors, is highest in German corporate blogs and smallest in the Russian sample set. Also statistically, the gender distribution is significantly closer to parity in Russian blogs than in German blogs, while English corporate blogs rank in-between. This significant difference may be due to institutional framework effects. Hofstede (1980) has identified gender roles as a main determinant of culture, by evaluating male and female values and perceptions. As a consequence, masculinity/femininity can affect corporate governance. His study revealed that Germany has a higher masculinity score (66) than the U.S. (62), which in turn features a higher score than Russia (36). Interestingly, the share of men in corporate blog authors mirrors the individual masculinity scores as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Masculinity of culture vs. share of men in corporate blogs



The calculated F-scores show the most significant pattern of mean differences among all observed parameters. German blog posts feature significantly smaller F-scores than English and Russian blog posts, while at the same time English posts feature significantly lower F-scores compared to Russian posts. This pattern cannot directly be interpreted as differences in blogging practices with respect to formal or informal language, but rather shows linguistic differences between the three languages. Therefore, these differences are best described as an institutional framework effect, as language is generally considered a part of the institutional framework in a given environment affecting the formation of culture (Huo and Steers, 1993). In terms of the F-score, the Russian language may be characterized as a more formal language, using a higher percentage of formal word types such as nouns and adjectives compared to the German and English language (Paul et al., 2011). Hence, a direct comparison of the observed F-scores in terms of formality between the three language groups for the purpose of this study is not appropriate. However, the cal-

culated F-scores are suitable for the analysis of each language-sample individually, as will be done by stepwise regression analyses in the following section.

2.3.2 Stepwise regression analyses

The following table presents the results of the stepwise regressions analyses.

Table 14: Results of regression analysis

	Technorati Authority				Comments per post			
Variables	**G**	**R**	**U.S.**	**All[a]**	**G**	**R**	**U.S.**	**All[a]**
Intercept	-29.24*** (8.46)	-10.08 (10.07)	-469.36 (403.31)	-876.69*** (200.52)	-27.26 (18.94)	43.57*** (11.66)	-8.64*** (2.44)	-11.20* (6.29)
Topical dimensions	2.97* (1.72)	Out	Out	Out	-4.92*** (1.25)	-.10* (.07)	-.46* (1.19)	-2.13*** (.84)
Post frequency	Out	Out	-63.55* (34.84)	-37.97 (29.09)	Out	Out	Out	Out
Number of authors	.95* (.51)	Out	56.20*** (11.91)	57.89*** (7.79)	Out	Out	Out	Out
Blog age	.02*** (.01)	Out	.60*** (.21)	.49*** (.18)	Out	Out	.01*** (.00)	.09*** (.04)
Post length	.06** (.02)	Out	Out	Out	-.06* (.03)	-.07** (.03)	Out	-.01* (.01)
Gender disparity	Out	Out	716.16* (454.04))	971.49*** (396.75)	Out	Out	Out	Out
F-score	Out	Out	Out	-	Out	-.48*** (.14)	Out	-
# of sidebar elements	Out	Out	-80.84* (49.79)	Out	13.01*** (3.071)	Out	Out	3.23*** (.94)
# of blogroll elements	.23* (.11)	.66*** (.09)	28.81*** (7.07)	12.68*** (3.83)	Out	Out	.19*** (.05)	Out
Media per post	31.93*** (5.44)	Out	Out	Out	-27.75** (10.54)	-1.17** (.45)	1.84*** (.56)	Out
Interactivity elements	Out	7.12* (3.90)	Out	Out	Out	Out	1.37** (.64)	Out
Adjusted R^2	.80	.85	.58	.46	.48	.60	.40	.94
F	19.37***	26.41***	18.58***	19.47***	6.94***	7.83**	11.26***	4.73***
N	20	10	77	107	20	10	77	107

[a] For the combined regression analyses, F-score as a parameter was excluded because of linguistic considerations.
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$.

For both dependent variables significant estimator models could be found with adjusted R^2 ranging between .40 and .94. The following section will highlight selected statistical findings as well as the results of the regression analyses with respect to the individual independent parameters.

Number of authors

The stepwise regression analyses yield a significant positive relation between the number of authors and a blog's Technorati Authority. The higher the number of authors of a corporate blog, the higher is the expected Technorati Authority. The impact is significant for the German, the U.S., and the total sample. With respect to comment frequency, a significant positive relation could was not found for any of the samples.

Gender of authors

In all three samples, there is a clear dominance of male post authors. This underrepresentation of women in corporate blogs is existent for both authors and individual blog posts as depicted in Table 15. Only in the Russian sample, women are more equally represented compared to men, as already outlined by the significantly higher gender parity compared to German corporate blogs. The following table presents the gender distribution with respect to the observed individual authors but also for the number of published posts.

Table 15: Representation of women and men in corporate blogs

	Authors			Share of posts written by		
Sample	Male	Female	Unknown	Men	Women	Unkown
Germany	70.87%	24.27%	4.85%	61.67%	18.42%	19.91%
Russia	50.50%	32.67%	16.83%	36.18%	43.87%	19.94%
U.S.	68.20%	29.00%	2.80%	63.15%	23.24%	13.62%

This statistical result is surprising, given a more uniform gender-related distribution within the blog community. However, the W3B study by Fittkau and Maass (2008) found that also corporate reader characteristics showed significant discrepancies from general blog reader demographics. While approximately 60% of all German blog readers are male, this number increases to 70% if the analysis is restricted to corporate blogs. Therefore, one can interpret the statistical findings as mirror image of the audience.

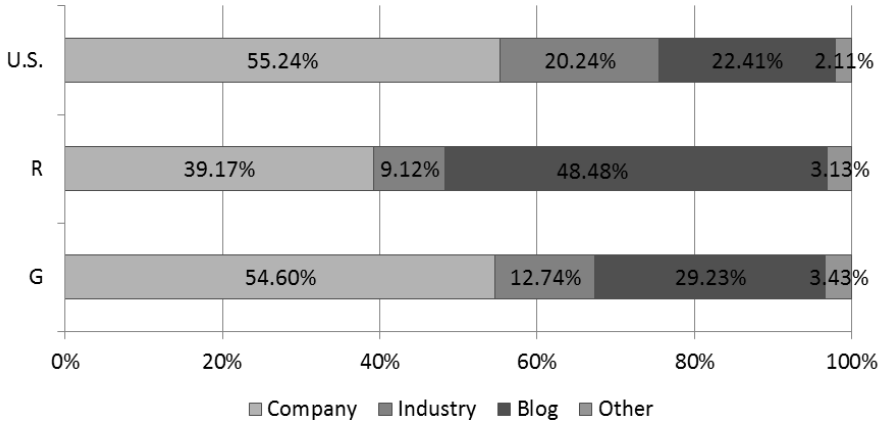
The stepwise regression analyses revealed a significant positive relation between gender disparity and Technorati Authority for the U.S. as well as the combined sample, implying that blogs may be more successful when they feature a higher disparity. This may be explained by reader demographics. A high share of men in blog

readers may be better addressed by male blog authors. On the other hand the more technical character of many blogs, coming from an automotive industry or Internet background may explain this observation as well.

Topical dimensions

Before assessing the impact of topical dimensions on corporate blogging success, the overall characteristics of the topical dimensions factor was conducted. Figure 14 shows the share of each of the four overall content categories in each of the three blog samples. Clearly, Russian corporate blogs feature a smaller share of company-related blog posts and a higher share of general interest contents:

Figure 14: Topics in corporate blogs



Differentiating individual blogs with respect to the coverage of overall content categories, one can clearly identify one-dimensional, two-dimensional, and three-dimensional blogs, reflecting each content category that accounts for 25% or more of the total content. In theory, four-dimensional blogs can exist, where all four categories account for each 25% of the content. However, the analyzed sample set does not support this assumption. The following figure summarizes the scheme as a corporate blog typology based on content, incorporating all types that were identified during the study:

Figure 15: Dimensions of corporate blog contents

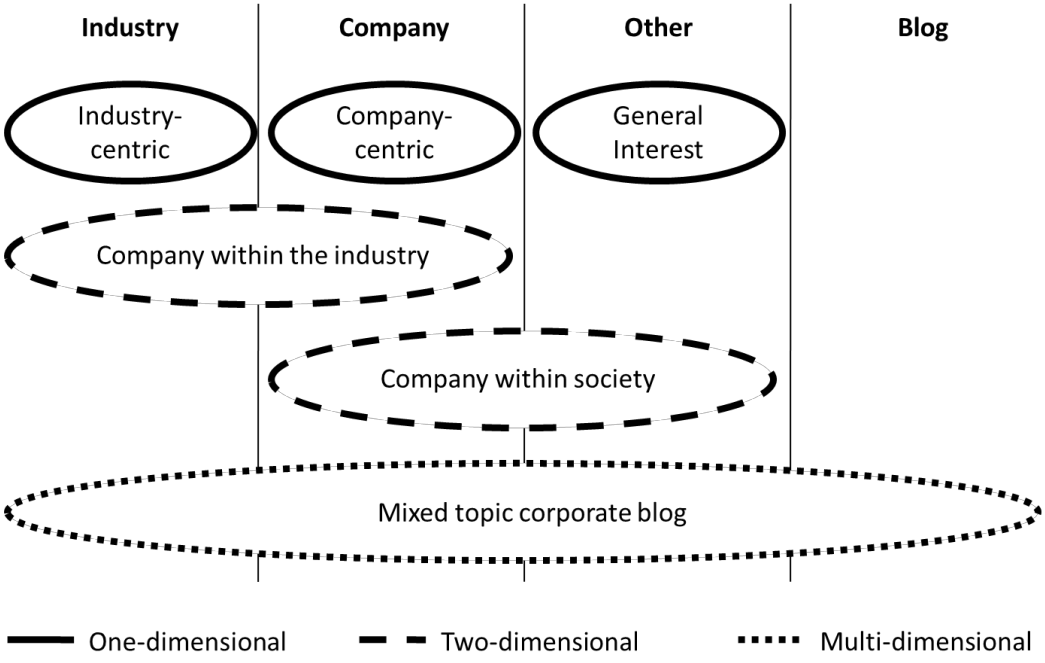
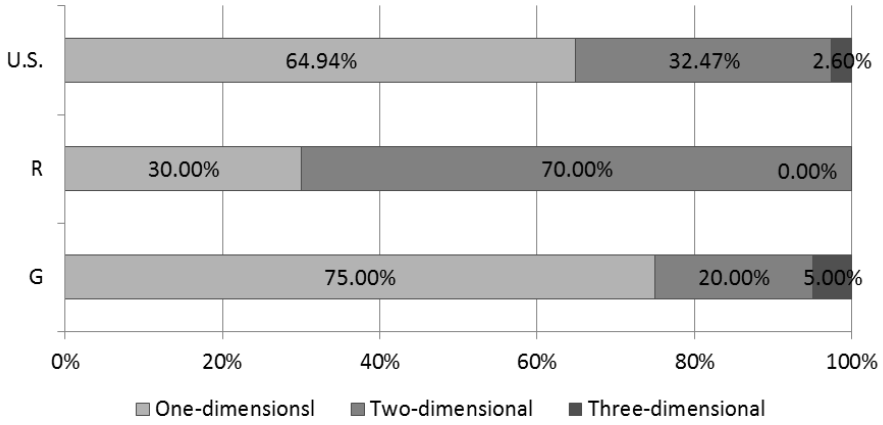


Figure 16 shows that one-dimensional blogs are more prevalent in the English and German sample, while the Russian sample features a higher share of two-dimensional blogs. The large difference may be based on the significantly higher number of authors in Russian corporate blogs as explained in Section 2.4.1. More authors are better able and likely to cover a broader range of topics. Multi-dimensional blogs are the smallest blog group in all three samples.

Figure 16: Topical dimensions of corporate blogs



Because company-centric blogs account for a large proportion of the total sample a further differentiation is desirable for this category. In this context, one can identify three blogs that limit their content selection to one particular category, namely human resource blogs (e.g., Accenture Ltd.: Experienced Consultants Blog), CSR blogs (e.g., Johnson Controls, Inc: Your Energy Forum), and product blogs (e.g., The Clorox Company: Dr. Laundry).

The number of topics covered on a corporate blog was found to be positively related to Technorati Authority for the German sample. A different picture emerges with respect to comments per post, where a significant negative impact was identified for all three country samples and the total sample. This implies that the overall popularity (in this case incoming links) increases with an increase in topics covered on a corporate blog, while this would decrease the intensity of discussions (in terms of average number of comments per post).

Formality

Before analyzing the effect of formality on a corporate blog's success, it was desired to determine whether corporate blogs in general are less formal than traditional corporate communication. Consequently, as postulated by corporate blog theory, the calculated F-scores were tested against F-scores of a sample of official corporate press releases. For all three language blocks, a set of press releases was compiled by including one random press release of each company represented in the sample. Subsequently, F-scores were calculated for all three press release samples. The resulting benchmark F-scores were 78.2 for English press releases, 75.6 for German press releases, and 83.8 for Russian press releases. Though the values are similar, differences in the structure and other linguistic features of the languages prohibit a direct inter-cultural comparison. However, the general observation from Table 16 holds, that Russian language features a higher use of formality-indicating word types than German and English. Comparing the calculated F-scores for the press releases with the computed values for corporate blog posts, the F-scores for the blog content are significantly smaller than the F-scores for the press release. This is the case for testing the means using a pairwise t-test as well as an unpaired t-test as summarized by the following table:

Table 16: Comparison of F-scores

Sample	Press releases F-score mean	Press releases F-score st. dev.	Blogs F-score mean	Blogs F-score st. dev.	Paired t-test	Unpaired t-test
Germany (N = 20)	75.60	4.88	62.65	5.47	$F_{Press} > F_{Blog}$ ($p < .01$)	$F_{Press} > F_{Blog}$ ($p < .01$)
Russia (N = 10)	83.85	3.58	77.51	4.30	$F_{Press} > F_{Blog}$ ($p < .01$)	$F_{Press} > F_{Blog}$ ($p = .01$)
U.S. (N = 77)	78.16	2.99	68.67	4.37	$F_{Press} > F_{Blog}$ ($p < .01$)	$F_{Press} > F_{Blog}$ ($p < .01$)

Hence, one can conclude that corporate blogs are indeed significantly less formal than traditional corporate communication.

With respect to the regression analyses, only a significant negative effect was found for the Russian sample, where the F-score is negatively related to the average number of comments per post. This implies that less formal blogs can achieve a higher comment frequency in the Russian blogosphere, which is reasonable given the fact that comments and feedback are indicators for conversations, which may be fostered by a more personal writing style and tone.

Post frequency

The average number of published posts per week was not found important for a blog's acceptance. Only the U.S. sample shows a negative dependence of Technorati Authority on post frequency with low significance.

Media usage

The stepwise regression analyses present varying impacts of media usage on blog success. Most significant is a positive impact with respect to the German sample and Technorati Authority, where the resulting model predicts an increase of popularity by 31.9 for an increase in average media usage per post of one. This is large, given an average Technorati Authority of 20.60. A significant positive effect is also estimated for the English sample and comment frequency, while other stepwise regressions estimate negative impacts of media usage on the number of comments per post. This might signal two-fold effects of media usage. On the one hand, media usage can have a positive effect on overall popularity, attracting more readers and incoming links. However, larger media usage might also be seen to appeal to readers' entertainment desires, resulting in a lower commenting activity on blogs with higher media usage.

Post length

The stepwise regression analysis for the German sample has identified a small but significant effect of the number of average words in blog posts on the blog's Technorati Authority, implying that German blog visitors prefer longer post texts over shorter ones. For every increase in the number of average words, Technorati Authority is expected to increase by .054. Hence, an increase by 55 words would result in a popularity increase of '3'. Facing an average Technorati Authority of 20.60, this would represent an increase of 14.6%. In contrast, the impact of post length on comment frequency is small but negative for the German, the Russian, and the overall sample, implying that shorter blog posts better foster a conversation.

Blog age

The stepwise regression analyses identify a significant positive effect of blog age on Technorati Authority as well as comment frequency, implying that popularity and the intensity of conversations increase as corporate blogs grow older. This finding may have several reasons. A mature corporate blog has had more time to build up a loyal readership than a relatively new blog. Also, corporate blog editors can adapt the blog over time to better meet reader requirements, e.g., through changing blog design and contents.

Design complexity

The number of sidebar elements seems especially important for a blog's comment frequency, as expressed by a positive significant relation for the total as well as the German and the Russian sample. A clear impact on Technorati Authority could not be observed, with only a slightly significant negative effect for the U.S. sample. This finding implies that a blog can particularly foster conversations by improving the blog's infrastructure, while the effect on overall popularity is small. This observation may be explained by the fact that readers who comment are more willing to look through an archive or for author information, e.g., because they are interested in texts with similar topics or by the same author.

Interactivity

Interactivity, as expressed by the number of interactivity elements, is crucial for conversations on a blog, as shown by the estimation for comment frequency. It enables readers to actively use a text, e.g., in order to comment or to recommend it. Only slightly positive impacts of this factor could be identified for the Russian sample (for Technorati Authority) and the U.S. sample (for comment frequency). This may be explained to some extent by the small variance of this factor. Only two blogs in the total sample don't provide any interactivity feature, while all others (105) at least allow readers to comment. Interactivity can thus be regarded a standard feature, which therefore has little impact on a blog's acceptance.

Networking

A clear and significant effect of the number of blogroll elements on Technorati Authority was identified, with a positive impact for all analyzed samples. For commenting such effect could only be identified for the U.S. sample. This supports the finding of several researchers that popularity in terms of linking within the blogosphere is largely based on pro-activity and reciprocity. Blogs that proactively try to link to other blogs are likely to received more incoming links in return (e.g., Gaudeul et al., 2008). In this very same context, however, the question of causality

arises. It remains beyond the scope of this research to identify, what role the observed blogroll elements play within the reciprocity phenomenon. It needs to be stated that a link to another blog within the blogroll can be both the cause of an incoming link or the reaction to an incoming link. Individual case studies evidence shows that companies carefully and strategically select blogroll elements and outgoing links in general, which would tend to support the idea of outgoing links to cause inbound links (e.g., Schabel, 2008, Wilke, 2009). However, there has not yet been a thorough investigation of this phenomenon for corporate blogs.

2.4 Discussion

The observed effects of the independent variables may be used to evaluate the Hypotheses, which were introduced in Section 2.2.

Hypothesis 1.1 stipulated a positive association between corporate blog diversity and popularity. Three aspects of corporate blog diversity were observed, i.e., the number of authors, gender diversity, and topic diversity. The study has identified a positive relation between the number of authors and a blog's popularity, which may indicate the positive effect of diversity. However, gender parity as another diversity factor could not be found to positively affect blog success and may even have a negative effect, which may be caused by particular reader demographics as outlined above. With respect to topical dimensions as diversity indicator, it needs to be differentiated whether a blog aims at becoming more popular in general or whether reader feedback should be fostered. To a limited extent a higher number of topical dimensions contributes to a blog's popularity as it addresses a broader audience. However, the opposite effect can be observed when estimating comment frequency. Here, a limitation to selected topic categories may be beneficial. Though this may limit or decrease the number of readers, it contributes to the establishment of a somewhat specialized community around an issue and therefore helps initiating a conversation within this community. Hence, Hypothesis 1.1 can be verified only with respect to the number of authors, while it has to be rejected with respect to gender parity. Finally, a differentiated approach needs to be considered with respect to content categories, which should be done depending on the aim of the company.

In order to investigate the effect of corporate blog authenticity on popularity (Hypothesis 1.2), post authenticity has been assessed by calculating F-scores for all blogs and including these values in the stepwise regressions for the individual country samples. While the analysis verified that blog texts are in general significantly less formal that traditional corporate communication means, a clear relation between formality and success could not be identified by the regressions. Only the Russian sample showed some negative impact of formality. This may imply that authenticity is a general feature of blogs and may be a general precondition for blog

success, independent of the specific value. Therefore, Hypothesis 1.2 has to be rejected and further tests become necessary in order to analyze the effect of authenticity on corporate blogs.

With respect to the effect of reader-friendly blog management (Hypothesis 1.3), neither post frequency nor post length seem to have a significant impact on blogging success. No clear trend could be observed with respect to media usage. Positive as well as negative effects were revealed depending on the specific sample, although the positive estimations in general featured a higher statistical significance. Therefore, Hypothesis 1.3 needs to be rejected and further tests with respect to reader preferences become necessary to evaluate the impact of post statistics and media usage on reader behavior (see Chapter 5).

Several indicators for corporate blog development were included in the analyses to investigate their effects on popularity as stated in Hypothesis 1.4. Blog age has a small but significant positive impact on both Technorati Authority as well as comment frequency. A higher number of sidebar elements gives proactive readers additional tools to search or use a corporate blog, which particularly translates into a higher comment frequency. The number of interactivity elements had no overall impact on a corporate blog's acceptance. Therefore Hypothesis 1.4 is accepted when limited to blog age (for incoming links and comment frequency) and the number of sidebar elements (for comment frequency).

Last but not least, Hypothesis 1.5 hypothesized a positive relationship between corporate blog networking and popularity. In this context, the number of blogroll elements has a significant positive impact on a blog's Technorati Authority. As an indicator for networking effort, it signals that increased networking activities will lead to higher blog popularity in terms of incoming links. Hence, Hypothesis 1.5 is clearly accepted for Technorati Authority, where networking is considered an important determinant of blog popularity, but rejected for comment frequency.

2.4.1 Implications for theory and practice

A range of implications can be derived for research regarding corporate blogs and for corporate blog management and corporate communication strategies regarding the use of corporate blogs in varying institutional contexts.

For academic research on social media, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of the effects of corporate blogging practices within an international management context. This study integrated these two research areas, focusing on corporate blogs from Germany, Russia, and the U.S. Such integration is of particular relevance given the international proliferation of the Internet, its increasing function as international information and communication channel, and the fading

boundaries of business and communication in a globalizing world. At the same time measures were developed or adapted in order to capture different aspects of corporate blogging practices.

The study also generated several insights for corporate communication and marketing. First of all different types of acceptance measures were introduced that allow companies to evaluate corporate blog acceptance. Focusing on linking within the blogosphere (Technorati Authority) and the amount of collected feedback (average number of comments per post), the study then identified factors influencing the level of these two measures.

Technorati Authority as a measure of overall blog acceptance was found to be positively influenced by a corporate blog's diversity. In particular the number of authors and topics on the blog are important determinants. Companies that can increase the number of authors (for example by increasing the blog editing team or by actively motivating employees to voluntarily contribute) or topics (for example by encouraging employees from different departments and functional areas) are thereby able to attract more links from other bloggers and websites. Networking, i.e., proactively linking to other blogs, was found to have a similar effect, as reciprocity is an important determinant of popularity within the blogosphere. This concerns the blogroll on a corporate blog but can also be extended to other types of links on a corporate blog, for example within individual posts.

Furthermore, several factors with a significant influence on the average number of comments could be identified. The number of navigation functions and sidebar elements such as archive, categorization or search functions had a significant positive effect. The company can therefore increase the amount of feedback collection by making the blog easier to use for interested users for example by making past content better accessible or categorizing content in accordance with reader (or in this context rather commenter) preferences. An inverse effect was identified for post length. Shorter blog posts were associated with a higher number of average comments. Also media usage was overall found to negatively affect commenting, as too frequent use of media elements rather cater to readers that seek entertainment rather than ways of interacting with a company as can be observed by the range of corporate blogs that feature mostly media content rather than text content such as the General Motors FYI Blog, which attracts many visitors but features very little interaction[3]. Consequently, companies need to increase awareness among blog authors and editors regarding the effects of individual post characteristics on the level

[3] This might be one of the main reasons why the FYI Blog was in 2011 turned into a pure media portal, featuring pictures and videos of General Motors products, abandoning the blog format and thus the commenting function.

of interaction. Companies can even conduct trainings for corporate bloggers regarding writing style or good text and media usage. In contrast to Technorati Authority, comment frequency was adversely affected by the number of topics. The average number of comments was higher for corporate blogs covering fewer topics. This implies that companies can better engage readers and attract feedback and contributions by limiting the topical scope of the activity. This adverse relationship also requires companies to decide what benefits they actually seek from corporate blogging activities as it might be difficult to achieve traffic- and feedback-oriented objectives in parallel.

Blog age was found to positively contribute to both link popularity as well as comment frequency. Older corporate blogs have a higher acceptance in terms of both success measures. For companies this implies that success builds over time and companies can benefit from showing some patience with their corporate blogging activities. Many corporate blogs such as the German Fischer-Blog (by Fischerwerke GmbH & Co. KG) are very quickly abandoned when companies become disappointed with the size of audience or amount of collected feedback. However, corporate blogging as a social media activity has a strong social relationship aspect and the desired social networks around a corporate social media activity grow slowly. Therefore companies should not only look at the current absolute benefits from a corporate blog but should rather monitor the development over time to arrive at conclusions about their blog's performance.

Last but not least, the study was able to reject some of the general (mostly theoretical) assumptions about corporate blogging practices. First of all, it was shown that post frequency is not an important factor for corporate blog popularity, indicating that quality rather than quantity is key to success in the blogosphere (at least in terms of incoming links and number of comments). Second of all, the common belief about authenticity as a means to rising blog popularity can be de-mystified. While seems to be a common feature of corporate blogs to be less formal than other corporate communication activities, there is no specific impact on a corporate blog's popularity.

Figure 17 summarizes the key findings of this study for corporate blogging practice:

Figure 17: Key findings for corporate blogging practice

Comments on a corporate blog:
- \+ Blog age
- \+ Design complexity
- \+ Media usage (U.S.)
- − Number of topics
- − Post length
- − Media usage (G, R)

Inbound links (Technorati Authority):
- \+ Blog age
- \+ Number of authors
- \+ Share of male authors
- \+ Networking
- \+ Number of topics (G)
- \+ Media usage (G)
- \+ Post length (G)

2.4.2 Limitations and future research directions

Several limitations derive from the collection and the composition of the dataset underlying the conducted analyses. In particular the limitation to directly observable blog characteristics constrained the evaluation of corporate blogging practices, limiting the choice of dependent variables (for example excluding simple traffic or reader numbers that are only observable by a blog's administrator), but also limiting the choice and construction of independent variables. Consequently, several potentially important factors were excluded as they were not observable from outside such as the integration with other corporate communication activities or additional diversity aspects (for example author age or the authors' roles and functions within the company). Other important determinants were simplified owing to the restriction to observable characteristics. In particular the authenticity dimension (which against popular theory was not found to influence corporate blog acceptance) was modeled as the formality of writing style only, ignoring other aspects of authenticity such as the credibility of the individual author or the credibility of individual messages communicated in the blog posts. The diversity dimension was limited to simple observable characteristics such as author numbers or gender, neglecting other important aspects of diversity such as diversity of opinion or ethnic diversity. For example, it needs to be acknowledged that an author group of 10 authors can be homogeneous or heterogeneous depending on aspects such as ethic background, education, income etc. It was unfortunately beyond the scope of this research to analyze diversity at such level of detail. Also, networking efforts were explained through the existence of a blogroll and the number of blogs in the blogroll only, ignoring more complex networking activities (including offline activities such as participation in industry and social media events) that cannot precisely be observed from a corporate blog directly. In addition, a limitation to the networking dimension is the unknown causality. It requires additional research to

identify whether outbound links are a reaction to or a cause of inbound links. Also company characteristics were largely ignored (for example size of the company, type of products or industry), although these might cause differences in acceptance as for example corporate blogs by Internet and software companies (such as Google or Yahoo) might by more popular just because they are more relevant to Internet users. Despite these limitations, the current study represents an initial step in exploring the possible determinants of corporate blog acceptance including links by other blogs or interaction with the audience.

A key limitation of this study is the use of popularity indicators, i.e., comment statistics and inbound links from other blogs, rather than actual success measures. While this type of benchmarking allows comparing practices between corporate blogs, it is difficult to derive specific recommendations for individual communication strategies. As argued before, the meaning of success in social media for companies is extremely diverse. To correctly apply the findings from this study, companies have to first evaluate the role of popularity for their corporate blog strategy, before in detail considering the implication of specific blog characteristics.

Extensions of this research seem promising in at least three directions. First, it is worthwhile to apply the methodology to other institutional frameworks, i.e., to corporate blog samples from other countries. Second, additional research seems necessary to identify effects on traffic and reader numbers, which are often the most widely used type of popularity indicator by companies as they allow a direct comparison to other types of communication and marketing. Last but not least, an in-depth analysis of corporate blogging strategies and means and indicators of success will be helpful. Such research would enable a better application of the findings of this study to individual blogging and communication activities. Eventually, these proposed extensions will be necessary to tailor corporate blogging practices not only to general institutional frameworks but to more detailed target group characteristics as well as company objectives. Consequently, the following chapters will focus on specific preferences and characteristics of Internet users for explaining corporate blog acceptance.

3 Corporate blogs and technology acceptance

As the basis for the more detailed analyses of impact of system design characteristics and cultural dimensions on corporate blog acceptance, a prior assessment of the technology acceptance model (TAM) for the corporate blog context is necessary. As a consequence, it will be possible to evaluate the validity of all four Hypotheses dealing with the basic TAM relationships.

The evolution of the Internet has had significant effects on corporate strategy considerations, as online communication has become a key element of companies' communication strategies (Porter, 2001). Social media, such as blogs and social network sites, are becoming increasingly popular among Internet users and account for a quickly increasing share of the time individuals spend online (Nielsen, 2010a). Social media is adding to the already growing range and diversity of information and communication channels. In such a complex communication environment, companies' ability to communicate effectively with stakeholders has become a major competitive advantage (Argenti et al., 2005). Individuals' growing use of social media applications puts pressure on companies to implement a social media mix, seeking an opportunity to establish trust through direct communication to different stakeholders (Kotler et al., 2010). Today, corporate social media – corporate blogs in particular – are considered useful tools for companies' 'online reputation management' (or 'online relations'), connecting them both to customers as well as multipliers such as other bloggers (Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). Companies that use these tools can better manage key and build more positive stakeholder relationships, while benefiting from the direct control over these communication channels and all published information, which distinguishes them from many other public relations tools (Fischer, 2005). Although social media allow firms to directly interact for example with potential customers, at lower transaction cost and higher efficiency compared to traditional communication media (Kotler et al., 2010), companies still feel uncomfortable engaging in social media owing to the lack of control over the communication process (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). While it is already challenging for companies to engage in social media in their domestic markets, it is even more difficult to initiate social media activities abroad. The key purpose of this study therefore is to improve corporate communication managers' ability to manage their companies' reputation on the Internet through understanding how Internet users view and accept corporate blogs, and how this acceptance differs between individual groups including different international Internet users.

As companies and their stakeholders become more engaged in social media, it is of critical importance for corporations to understand the effect of the communication channels' design characteristics and to anticipate users' responses to new corporate

communication channels such as corporate blogs. The objective of this study is twofold: First, the influence of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment on individuals' attitude towards corporate blogs and individuals' intention to use corporate blogs. Second, in order to account for an increasing internationalization of corporate communication activities and to account for differences in the acceptance of social media globally, it is investigated whether differences in corporate blog acceptance exist between German, Russian and U.S. Internet users.

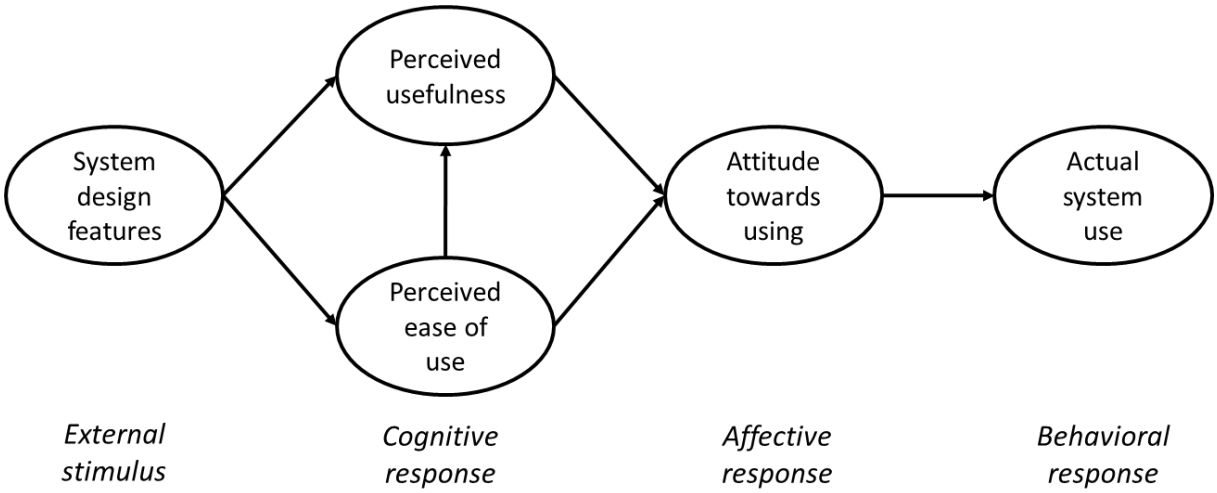
3.1 Theoretical background: Technology acceptance in the corporate blog context

Corporate reputation is the "collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. It gauges a firm's relative standing both internally with employees and externally with its stakeholders, in both its competitive and institutional environments" (Fombrun and Rindova, 1996). Reputation is consequently constructed from the company's different images with its various stakeholder groups (Fombrun, 1996), which in turn is influenced by the company's behavior, its symbols, its performance as well as its communication (van Riel and Fombrun, 2007, Gotsi and Wilson, 2001, Doorley and Garcia, 2007). The communication aspect in particular does not only include content aspects such as message selection and design but also questions of communication channel selection and design – an issue particularly important for corporate communication on the Internet, where the majority of communication tools is run completely in companies' domains (Argenti, 2006). Consequently, for understanding whether and how companies can better manage their reputation on the Internet through corporate blogs, it needs to be understood how Internet users perceive these corporate blogs and what specific aspects influence this perception.

To approach the acceptance and use of corporate blogs and to model the impact of corporate blog characteristics as well as international differences the technology acceptance model (TAM) is chosen as the basis for the research model. The original TAM developed by Davis (1989) was developed to predict the acceptance of information technology by users and has become the most widely used model to analyze factors that influence information technology usage and predict usage patterns. Based on the theory of reasoned action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), the original TAM modeled the relationship between a user's attitude towards an information technology system and the actual use of a system. Attitude again was modeled to depend on perceived usefulness (PU), defined as 'the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance' (Davis, 1989), and perceived ease of use (PEU) being 'the degree to which a person

believes that using a particular system would be free from effort' (Davis, 1989). Both parameters were viewed as related to a set of design features of the respective information technology. Furthermore, perceived ease of use was found to influence perceived usefulness as user's usefulness perception was related to the effort required to use a system (Davis, 1993):

Figure 18: Original technology acceptance model



Source: Davis (1989, 1993).

Davis already acknowledged that perceived usefulness and ease of use as extrinsic motivation factors are likely not the only mediators in the technology acceptance process and that future research on information technology acceptance would need to consider intrinsic motivation factors (Davis, 1993). Several researchers have therefore extended the TAM to account for factors such as social norms (Hung and Chang, 2005, Luarna and Lin, 2005) and entertainment (Hsu and Lu, 2004, Moon and Kim, 2001, Teo et al., 1999) influencing the acceptance of information technology. In addition cultural variables, socio-demographic factors as well contextual factors such as task and motivation or usage experience have been found influential (Lee et al., 2003, King and He, 2006, Sun and Zhang, 2006). For users who read and comment on corporate blogs such activities are usually voluntary. For example, Huang et al. (2008) showed that blog readers use blogs not only for information but also for entertainment and social networking purposes. Hence, corporate blogs that are also addressing intrinsic motivations are likely to experience increasing popularity in terms of readers and commentators. Consequently, this study will include three variables that can be addressed by companies to attract Internet users to their corporate blogs, namely perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment.

Several studies have used the technology acceptance model to assess the acceptance of Internet as well as web 2.0 applications such as E-mail, online games, virtual

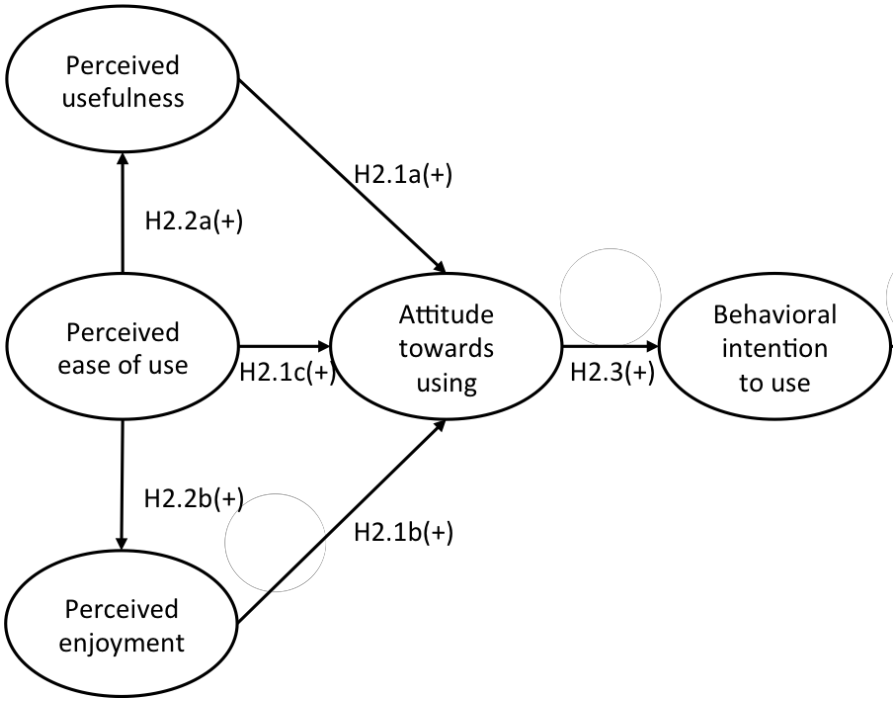
worlds as well as private blogs (see Appendix 6), signaling applicability also for other web 2.0 applications such as corporate blogs. Tailoring the above model to the corporate blog context, yields the corporate blog acceptance model as displayed in Figure 19, where reading and commenting on corporate blogs is the result of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment, that influence a user's attitude towards corporate blogs and the intention to use corporate blogs, while being influenced by corporate blogs' characteristics:

Hypothesis 2.1: Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the (a) perceived usefulness, (b) perceived enjoyment, and (c) perceived ease of use of corporate blogs.

Hypothesis 2.2: There is a positive relation between (a) perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of corporate blogs, as well as between (b) perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs.

Hypothesis 2.3: There is a positive relation between attitude towards corporate blogs and behavioral intention to use corporate blogs.

Figure 19: Basic corporate blog acceptance model



While the above outlined relationships generally hold in different institutional environments, multinational enterprises need to understand how and why information technology acceptance differs between countries, in order to utilize communication synergies while still addressing target groups effectively (Straub et al., 1997). Several studies have shown significant differences in information technology acceptance

between individual countries (Huang et al., 2003, Zakour, 2004, Zakour, 2009, Cardon and Marshall, 2008, Srite, 2006). These studies showed overall that the absolute and relative sizes of the effects of cognitive factors on attitude differ internationally, depending on the technology and the observed countries. In addition Koenig (2009b, König, 2013) showed specifically for corporate blogs from Germany, Russia, and the U.S. how design and management of corporate blogs differ between countries. Consequently, this study will not only test the application of TAM relationships to the corporate blog context but also include an exploratory assessment of differences in corporate blog acceptance by Internet users in the three selected countries.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Sample and data collection procedure

To analyze the factors that influence corporate blog acceptance, an online questionnaire survey was carried out in three languages among Internet users during 2010. The three selected languages English, German and Russian were chosen to attract Internet users from mainly three countries – Germany, Russia and the U.S. – belonging to differentiable cultural clusters as for example identified by Ronen and Shenkar (1985). These three countries were selected based on their relevance to multinational enterprises, the relevance of social media in these countries, and the share of the population that is using the Internet. The U.S. was selected as the key country for international management research. The country features the highest level of social media penetration in terms of overall status and role for the population, while being home to the majority of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or Twitter. Germany was included as the largest member and market within the European Union. Furthermore it has a high level of Internet penetration and substantial overall social media adoption among consumers as well as businesses (van Eimeren and Frees, 2010). Russia gains in importance to international business as an emerging market, and has the most engaged social networking users worldwide (Block, 2010). During the course of the study 1,854 data sets were collected. Of these, 813 were submitted using the German survey, 636 using the English survey and 405 using the Russian survey. After cleaning for incomplete questionnaires, questionnaires from users outside of the three focus countries, as well as multivariate non-normality, 992 data sets were retained for analysis. Table 17 provides demographic information of the sample.

Table 17: Demographic profile

Measure/item	Germany		Russia		U.S.	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Age	Ø 32.07		Ø 39.37		Ø 31.94	
< 20 years	7	1.63%	7	3.27%	8	2.30%
20-29 years	214	49.77%	134	62.62%	174	50.00%
30-39 years	120	27.91%	53	24.77%	102	29.31%
40-49 years	71	16.51%	14	6.54%	45	12.93%
50-59 years	15	3.49%	4	1.87%	17	4.89%
60+ years	3	.70%	2	.95%	2	.57%
Gender						
Female	129	30.00%	73	34.11%	112	32.18%
Male	301	70.00%	141	65.89%	236	67.82%
Education	Ø 17.45		Ø 17.31		Ø 16.95	
0-10 years	8	1.65%	7	3.27%	8	2.30%
11-15 years	66	15.34%	26	12.15%	63	18.10%
16-20 years	337	78.37%	176	82.24%	271	77.87%
> 20 years	19	4.42%	5	2.34%	6	1.72%
Internet experience	Ø 11.11		Ø 9.19		Ø 11.44	
0-5 years	13	3.02%	23	10.75%	9	2.59%
5.5-10 years	184	42.79%	123	57.48%	132	37.93%
10.5-15 years	196	45.58%	65	30.37%	177	50.86%
15.5-20 years	37	8.60%	3	1.40%	30	8.62%
Internet intensity	Ø 5.59		Ø 4.68		Ø 5.71	
0-5 hours per day	230	53.49%	140	65.42%	183	52.59%
5.5-10 hours	167	38.84%	61	28.50%	140	40.23%
10.5-15 hours	32	7.44%	11	5.14%	24	6.90%
15.5-20 hours	1	.23%	2	.95%	1	.29%
Blogger						
Yes	187	43.49%	71	33.18%	124	35.63%
No	243	56.51%	143	66.82%	224	64.37%

The questionnaire was initially developed in English. Following the procedure suggested by Brislin (1986), the English questionnaire was translated to German and Russian respectively, and back-translated into English to ensure linguistic as well as conceptual equivalence. For each translation, three native speakers were involved in the translation process, using one individual for the translation, another individual for the translation back into English, and again another individual in order to solve differences in the translations of the two translators. The questionnaire was technically implemented using a local installation of the open-source software Lime Survey (Schmitz, 2011), which supports multi-language surveys. Before the main survey, a pretest and a pilot study were conducted to validate the developed instrument. The pre-test included 10 Ph.D. students (from non-Internet related research fields) working at a DAX 30 company (Germany). All of them were users of the Internet, but had varying knowledge of and experience with corporate blogs. Respondents were asked for their evaluation of the time required to complete the survey, the complexity and understandability of questions as well as overall user experience when using the online-questionnaire. Finally, a pilot test was performed. The link to the study was sent to the network of 200 Ph.D. students at a DAX 30 company (Germany). With 112 completed surveys, a first test of the TAM-related

Hypotheses could be performed. Consequently, some minor modifications to the questionnaire were made. The final version of the English questionnaire in its original layout is provided in Appendix 7.

3.2.2 Measures

The core TAM variables, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use and attitude were based on the work of Hsu et al. (2008), which is an adaptation of the basic TAM (Davis, 1989, 1993) and extensions to account for intrinsic motivation (Moon and Kim, 2001, Venkatesh et al., 2002) to the blog context. Slight adaptations were conducted to better fit the items to the corporate blog context. These sources were also used as the basis for the behavioral intention to use, but a differentiation was made between two separate usage options: reading corporate blogs and actual commenting on such blogs. The resulting factors comprise perceived usefulness (4 items, e.g., 'Reading and commenting on corporate blogs enable me to better accomplish my work/ learning/ leisure activities'), perceived enjoyment (3 items, e.g., 'I have fun reading and commenting on corporate blogs'), ease of use (3 items, e.g., 'Corporate blogs are easy to use'), attitude (3 items, e.g., 'I like reading and commenting on corporate blogs'), intention to read and comment (2 items, e.g., 'I will read corporate blogs in the future' / 'I will comment on corporate blogs in the future'). For all variables (except for actual reading and commenting with question-specific anchor points), the items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree').

A range of control variables was included in the study, as technology acceptance can be influenced by individual user characteristics. Three sets of user characteristics have been identified to be of particular relevance for technology acceptance, i.e., gender, age and previous experience with a technology (or related technologies). Studies on private blogging revealed significant differences in the use of blogs between genders (e.g., Argamon et al., 2007, Herring and Paolillo, 2006, Hesse, 2008b, Huffaker, 2004, Huffaker and Calvert, 2005, Nowson et al., 2005, Pedersen and Macafee, 2006a). The identified differences comprised the motivation to establish a blog as well as differences in writing and media use. Gender was also identified as an important factor for technology acceptance, with direct as well as some moderating effects. In general the impact of perceived ease of use on use intent was stronger for women, while the impact of perceived usefulness on intent was stronger for men (Sun and Zhang, 2006, Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). In addition, direct effects of gender were identified for technology acceptance. Men seem to perceive a technology generally as easier to use, while the perceived usefulness can be higher for men or women depending on the type and characteristics (e.g., social presence) of the technology (Gefen and Straub, 1997). Besides gender, also age was found to influence the use of (private) blogging (e.g., Argamon et al., 2007,

Schler et al., 2006). Significant differences between age groups were found for content and media selection as well as frequency and readers attracted. Age was also identified as an important determinant of technology acceptance, the most important one being that younger users were generally more likely to adopt a new technology, expressed by inverse effects of age on perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment and eventually also attitude, intent and actual usage (Igbaria et al., 1995, Morris and Venkatesh, 2000). In addition, the effect of extrinsic motivation on usage intention was stronger for younger users, and was also greater than the effect of perceived usefulness (Sun and Zhang, 2006, Venkatesh et al., 2003). Blogging activity was found to change over time with increasing blog experience, shifts in motivation/motives and environmental differences (Herring et al., 2007b, Schmidt et al., 2006a), mainly determining decisions to continue or discontinue blogging. In the context of corporate blogging the willingness and desire for interaction is significantly higher with respect to readers who maintain a blog themselves, signaling higher experience with a related technology that leads to a more positive attitude and indicates that corporate blogs are indeed a good way of engaging with other bloggers (Pfeiffer, 2008, Schneider, 2007). In technology acceptance research, the focus has been on the effect of experience with a technology on attitude towards and use of a technology. These were found to be significantly influenced by prior knowledge of the technology or at least of a similar technology (Szajna, 1996, Wu and Wang, 2005). The impact of such experience goes beyond positive effects on perceived ease of use, but also comprises positive effects on perceived usefulness, enjoyment, attitude, intention to use and eventually usage, (Sun and Zhang, 2006), to some extent also through the indirect effects of perceived ease of use on other TAM elements. Experience in the context of corporate blog usage can relate to experience with blogs through being a blogger, or – more widely – through overall experience with or frequency of using the Internet as the underlying infrastructure for blogs.

3.2.3 Measurement model, measurement invariance, and common method bias

In a first step, the data sets were examined country by country using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). AMOS 18 and the maximum likelihood estimation procedure were used for the analyses. Given the chi-square (χ^2) statistic's inadequacy for tests of model fit for large sample sizes (>250) (MacCallum et al., 1996, Cheung and Rensvold, 2002), the study focused on a set of fit indices to provide a complete assessment of model adequacy (Byrne, 2009, Browne and Cudeck, 1993, Hu and Bentler, 1999). In particular, the comparative fit index (CFI) was used as well as the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). For CFI, values of .9 or higher are considered acceptable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). For RMSEA, values below .08 are considered to indicate good fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). For SRMR, values below .08 are

considered acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999). As shown in Table 18 the values of the CFI for CFA were well above the .9 threshold and RMSEA as well as SRMR values were well below the .8. The χ^2-statistic did not yield significant results. Overall, the CFA results of the revised measurement model indicate an acceptable fit.

Table 18: Model-data fit assessment for the basic TAM

	Country	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	ΔCFI
CFA results								
Read	Pooled sample (992)	623.9	107	.00	.97	.07	.05	
	Germany (430)	372.5	104	.00	.96	.08	.05	
	Russia (214)	169.4	104	.00	.98	.06	.04	
	U.S. (348)	223.3	104	.00	.98	.06	.04	
Comment	Pooled sample (992)	549.0	104	.00	.97	.07	.05	
	Germany (430)	341.2	104	.00	.96	.07	.04	
	Russia (214)	141.1	104	.00	.99	.05	.03	
	U.S. (348)	212.8	104	.00	.98	.06	.04	
MGCFA results								
Read	Configural invariance	765.2	312	.00	.97	.04	.03	-
	Full metric invariance	792.3	328	.00	.97	.04	.04	.00
	Full scalar invariance	881.0	359	.00	.97	.04	.06	.00
Com-ment	Configural invariance	782.8	312	.00	.97	.04	.04	-
	Full metric invariance	795.0	328	.00	.97	.04	.04	.00
	Full scalar invariance	814.1	359	.00	.97	.04	.04	.00

Notes: CFA = Confirmatory factor analysis, MGCFA = Multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, *df* = Degrees of freedom, CFI = Comparative fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual

In a second step, the pooled data set was examined using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) to test the invariance of the measurement models using AMOS 18 and maximum likelihood estimation. Given the inadequacy of the χ^2 difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$) for large samples (Cheung and Rensvold, 2002) the difference in CFI between models was used to statistically compare the measurement models, where the difference in CFI between (successive) equivalence models may not exceed .01. The results for the configural model show a satisfactory fit (for blog reading χ^2 = 765.2; *df* = 312; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .03; for blog commenting χ^2 = 782.8; *df* = 312; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04). In the metric model, the measurement weights (factor loadings) were allowed to vary between groups to test for metric invariance. As presented in Table 18, the results of the estimation of the second model indicate that the constructs were measured adequately through their indicators across countries, while for both scenarios, blog reading and commenting, the difference to the configural model was not significant. The factor structure can therefore be considered invariant across the countries. The third model tested scalar invariance, constraining the relationship between variables across countries. The results show an adequate fit of the model for both scenarios, with differences in CFI below the proposed cut-off, thus signaling scalar invariance.

With all items being measured at the same time using a single self-reported questionnaire, the findings may be susceptible to common method bias, which is prevalent in information systems research (Malhotra et al., 2006) as well as cross-cultural research (Chang et al., 2010). To overcome the concern of common method bias in the survey design, questionnaire items were arranged so that the dependent variable followed rather than preceded the independent variables, and a common latent factor was included in the SEM analysis to address common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003, Podsakoff and Organ, 1986), with resulting common variance below 2% for the three countries, indicating that the sample does not display common method variance issues. In addition, a single-factor test was conducted using SPSS 19, factoring all indicators in the study to see if a single common factor emerges, indicative of common method variance (Harman, 1967), with the resulting explained variance below the .5 cutoff-value (single factor explaining 22.4% of the variance for the pooled, 21.1% for the German, 23.0% for the Russian, and 23.6% for the U.S. sample). The item measure and validity assessment is presented in Table 19.

Table 19: Item measure and validity assessment

Item	SFL		
	G	R	U.S.
Perceived usefulness			
(G: CR .92 = AVE = .85, α = .94; R: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .95; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .95)			
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs enable me to better accomplish my work/learning/leisure activities	.92	.92	.93
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would improve my work/learning/leisure performance	.93	.94	.92
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would enhance my work/learning/life effectiveness	.91	.92	.93
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs can increase my productivity when performing my work/learning/life activities	.93	.93	.93
Perceived ease of use			
(G: CR = .82, AVE = .69, α = .91; R: CR = .87, AVE = .76, α = .84; U.S.: CR = .87, AVE = .78, α = .85)			
Corporate blogs are easy to use	.69	.82	.83
Learning to use corporate blogs is easy	.84	.89	.91
Overall I believe corporate blogs are easy to use	.95	.92	.92
Perceived enjoyment			
(G: CR = .88, AVE = .79, α = .92; R: CR = .92, AVE = .86, α = .92; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .87, α = .92)			
While reading and commenting on corporate blogs I experienced pleasure	.93	.94	.95
The process of reading and commenting on corporate blogs is enjoyable	.81	.88	.89
I have fun reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.93	.95	.95
Attitude towards using			
(G: CR = .95, AVE = .85, α = .91; R: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .91; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .87, α = .92)			
I like reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.90	.93	.94
I feel good about reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.93	.93	.94
Overall my attitude towards corporate blogs is favorable	.83	.91	.91
Intent read			
(G: CR = .94, AVE = .88, α = .86; R: CR = .91, AVE = .84, α = .81; U.S.: CR = .94, AVE = .89, α = .88)			
It is worth reading corporate blogs	.94	.92	.95
I will read corporate blogs in the future	.94	.92	.95
Intent comment			
(G: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .82; R: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .84; U.S.: CR = .92, AVE = .86, α = .83)			
It is worth commenting on corporate blogs	.92	.93	.93
I will comment on corporate blogs in the future	.92	.93	.93
How many corporate blog comments have You (approximately) written within the last seven days?	.94	.95	.93

Note: G denotes Germany (*N* = 430), R denotes Russia (*N* = 214), and U.S. denotes the United States (*N* = 348). CR = critical ratio, AVE = average variance extracted, α = Cronbach's alpha, SFL denotes standardized factor loadings.
G: Read χ^2 = 372.5, *df* = 97, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .08; Comment: χ^2 = 341.2, *df* = 97, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .07.
R: Read χ^2 = 169.4, *df* = 97, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06; Comment: χ^2 = 141.1, *df* = 97, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .05.
U.S.: Read χ^2 = 223.3, *df* = 97, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06; Comment: χ^2 = 212.8, *df* = 97, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .06.

3.3 Analysis and results

3.3.1 Testing the technology acceptance model

Table 20: Descriptive and correlation statistics – pooled and German sample

All / Germany		1	2	3	4	5	6
1 PU		-	.44	.24	.61	.66	.59
2 PE		.49	-	.45	.85	.68	.57
3 PEU		.27	.44	-	.49	.50	.26
4 ATT		.66	.85	.50	-	.85	.65
5 INT read		.68	.70	.51	.85	-	.66
6 INT com		.59	.57	.26	.63	.65	-
All	**Mean**	3.23	3.52	4.62	3.69	3.88	3.14
	sd	1.04	.99	.76	.99	.96	1.08
Germany	**Mean**	3.2	35	4.56	3.70	3.89	3.15
	sd	1.06	1.02	.80	1.01	.97	1.09

Notes: Pooled sample: *N* = 992. Correlations above |.06| are significant at $p < .05$. For Germany: *N* = 430. Correlations above |.1| are significant at $p < .05$.

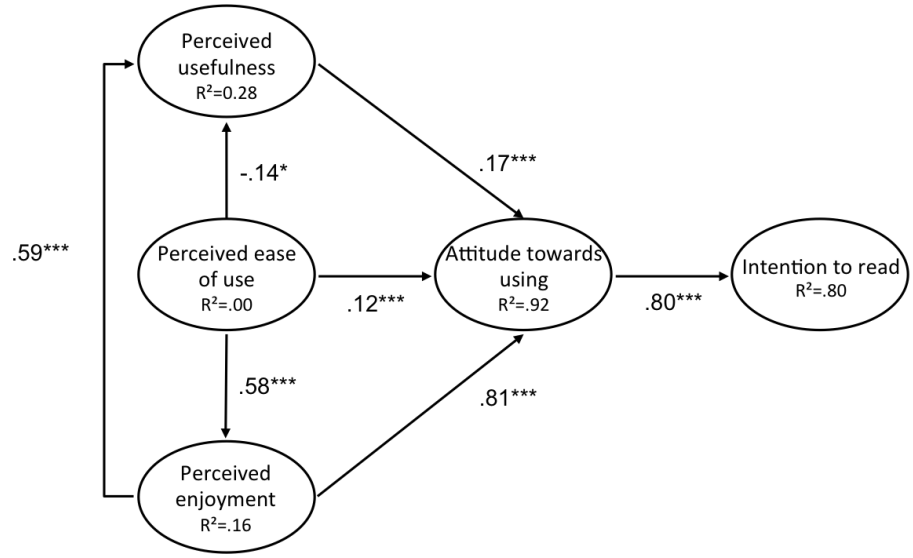
Table 21: Descriptive and correlation statistics – Russian and U.S. sample

Russia / U.S.		1	2	3	4	5	6
1 PU		-	.55	.35	.73	.73	.60
2 PE		.47	-	.44	.85	.73	.54
3 PEU		.20	.41	-	.52	.52	.26
4 ATT		.60	.83	.48	-	.89	.60
5 INT read		.64	.68	.49	.80	-	.62
6 INT com		.59	.59	.27	.65	.67	-
Russia	**Mean**	2.97	3.44	4.62	3.52	3.84	3.09
	sd	.97	.96	.75	.93	.92	1.03
U.S.	**Mean**	3.36	3.57	4.69	3.77	3.91	3.16
	sd	1.03	.99	.69	.98	.97	1.09

Notes: For Russia: *N* = 214. Correlations above |.14| are significant at $p < .05$. For the U.S.: *N* = 328. Correlations above |.11| are significant at $p < .05$.

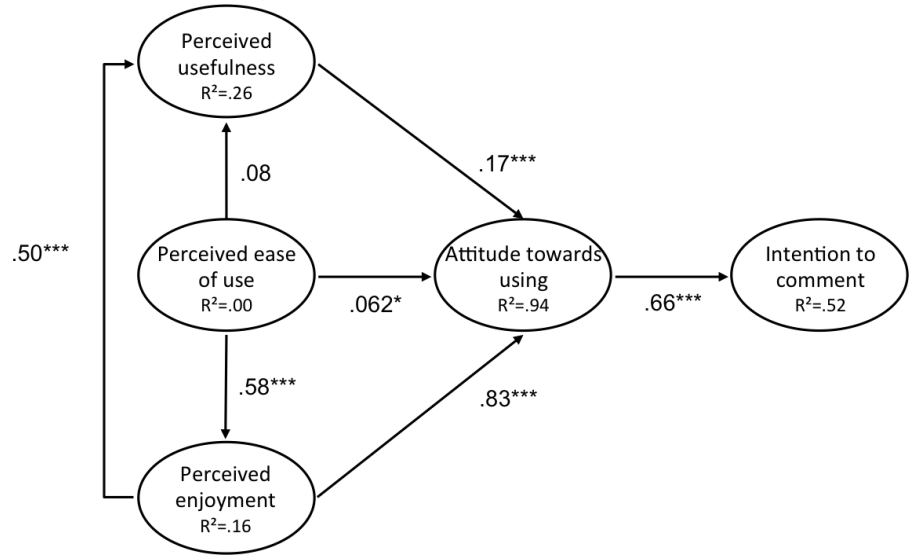
Figure 20 to Figure 27 present the resulting findings of the structural equation modeling (SEM) analyses for the pooled sample as well as the three country-samples, differentiating the two use scenarios.

Figure 20: TAM for reading corporate blogs (German sample)



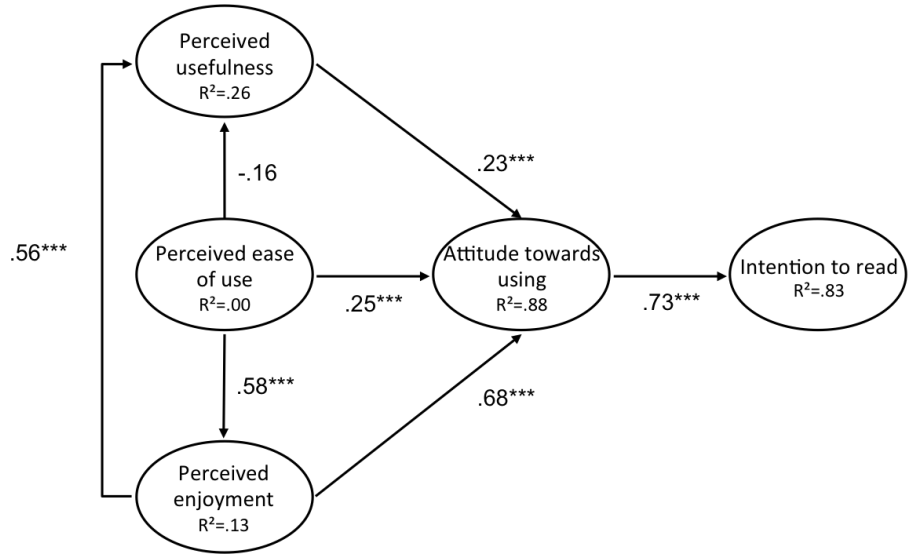
Notes: χ^2 = 528.75; *df* = 97; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .08; SRMR =.06.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 21: TAM for commenting on corporate blogs (German sample)



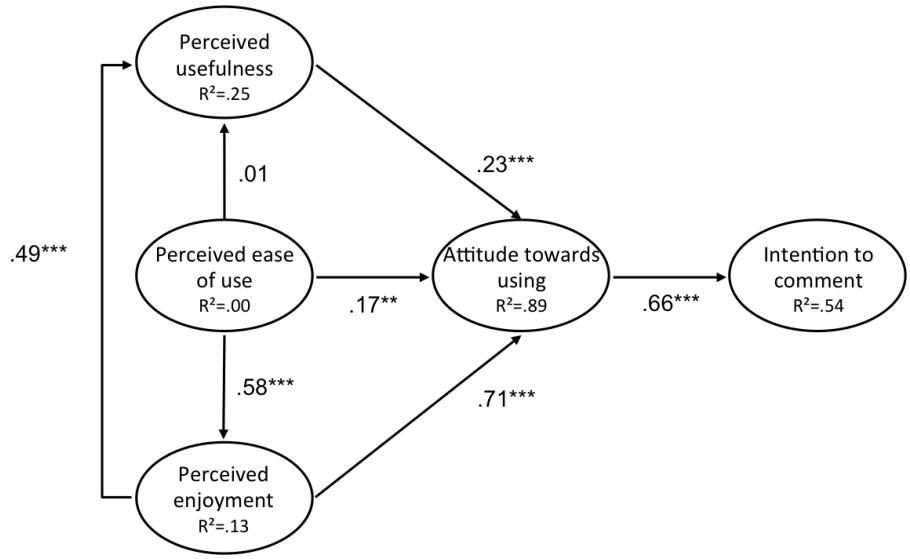
Notes: χ^2 = 354.14; *df* = 97; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .07; SRMR =.04.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 22: TAM for reading corporate blogs (Russian sample)



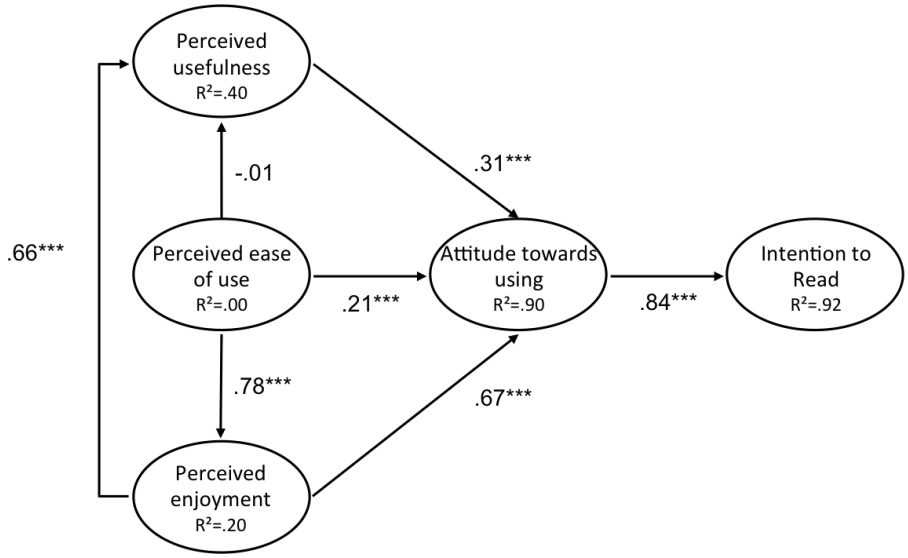
Notes: χ^2 = 191.47; *df* = 97; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .06; SRMR =.05.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 23: TAM for commenting on corporate blogs (Russian sample)



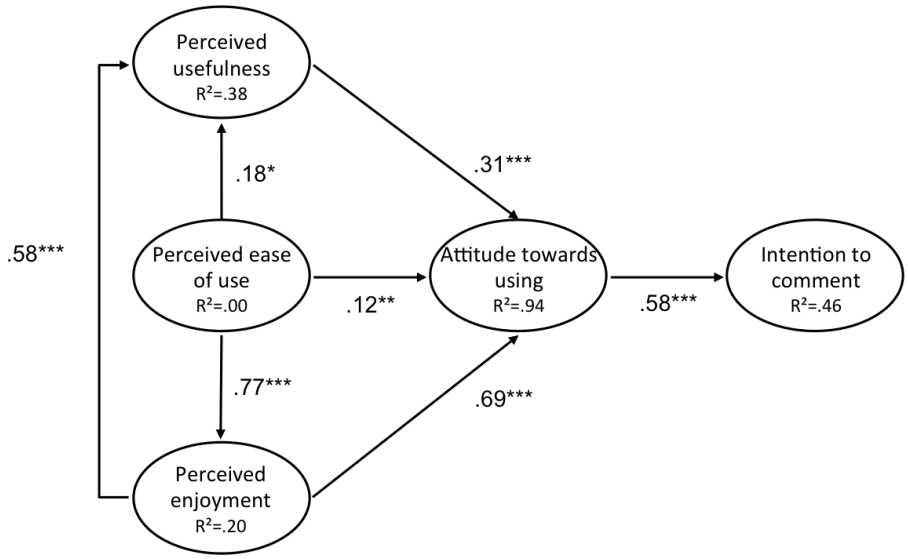
Notes: χ^2 = 134. 75; *df* = 97; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .04; SRMR =.03.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 24: TAM for reading corporate blogs (U.S. sample)



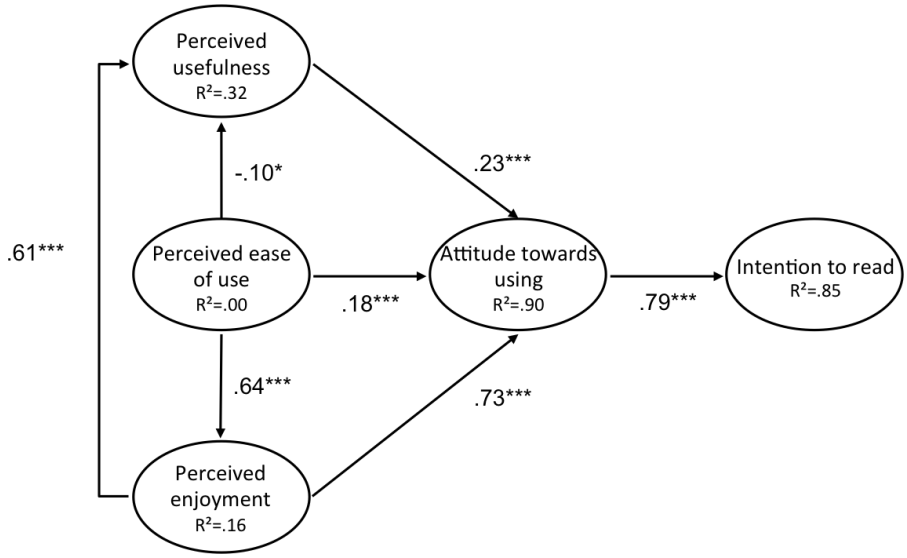
Notes: χ^2 = 323.52; *df* = 97; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .06; SRMR =.05.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 25: TAM for commenting on corporate blogs (U.S. sample)



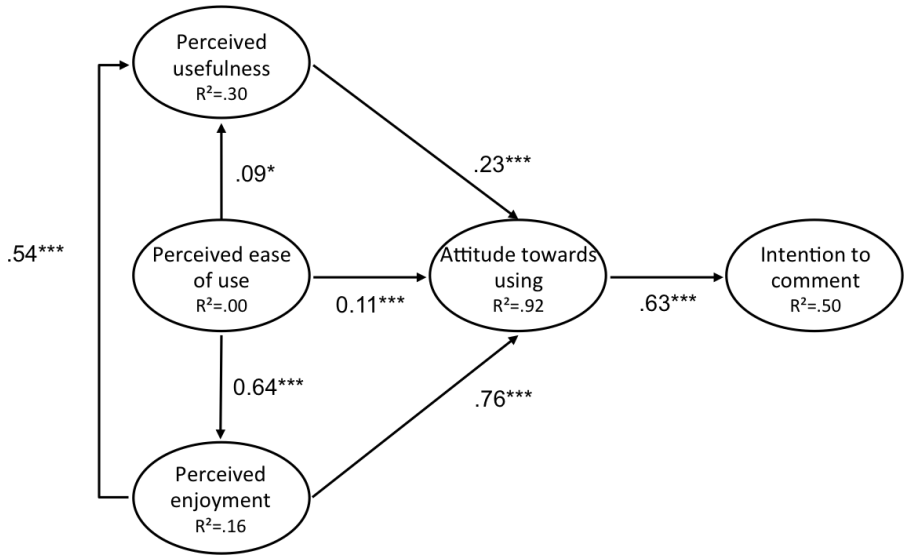
Notes: χ^2 = 234.13; *df* = 97; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .05; SRMR =.04.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 26: TAM for reading corporate blogs (U.S. sample)



Notes: χ^2 = 889.23; *df* = 97; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .07; SRMR =.05.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

Figure 27: TAM for commenting on corporate blogs (Pooled sample)



Notes: χ^2 =558.32; *df* = 97; CFI = .98; RMSEA = .06; SRMR =.03.
Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

The fit indicators for all samples signal a good overall applicability of the TAM for the corporate blog context – for both reading and commenting. This section will first of all summarize the findings with respect to the stated Hypotheses, before focusing on the dependent variables and discussing, how they are influenced and what this implies for corporate blogging.

Overall, all four Hypotheses received support from the above calculations. Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by perceived usefulness (Hypothesis 2.1a), perceived enjoyment (2.1b), and perceived ease of use (2.1c). A positive relation was found between the perceived ease of use of corporate blogs and perceived usefulness (2.2a), and the perceived ease of use of corporate blogs and perceived enjoyment (2.2b), although the hypothesized effect of 2.2a was of an indirect nature, mediated by the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived enjoyment and consequently the effect of perceived enjoyment on perceived usefulness. A positive relation could also be confirmed between the attitude towards corporate blogs and the intention to use corporate blogs (2.3). These Hypotheses hold for the pooled as well as for the three country samples.

With respect to the cognitive response elements of the TAM, perceived ease of use was found to have a strong effect on perceived enjoyment exceeding .5 for all samples. This implies that ease of use is a significant determinant of enjoyment. The easier corporate blogs can be used, the higher is also the perceived enjoyment from corporate blogs. In addition, perceived enjoyment is significantly affecting perceived usefulness, with effects exceeding .4 for all samples. The higher the perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs, the higher is also the perceived usefulness. This also implies a high indirect effect of perceived ease of use on perceived usefulness, mediated by perceived enjoyment. Raised perceived ease of use leads to higher perceived enjoyment, which in turn leads to a higher perceived usefulness.

Users' attitudes towards corporate blogs are well explained by the cognitive response elements perceived usefulness, enjoyment and ease of use, with the share of explained variance (R^2) exceeding .87 for all samples. Perceived enjoyment clearly has the largest effect on attitude. Exceeding .6 for all samples it was found to be more than twice as large as the effect of perceived usefulness (> .17). The impact of perceived ease of use on attitude is the smallest, but it was also found to be significant for all samples, exceeding .06 for all samples. These findings show the high importance of perceived enjoyment for corporate blog acceptance, although it also needs to be noted that the significant indirect effects of perceived ease of use on perceived enjoyment and of perceived enjoyment on perceived usefulness, make this evaluation slightly more complex.

Intention to use corporate blogs was well explained by the devised technology acceptance model with the share of explained variance (R^2) exceeding .75 for intent to read corporate blogs and .45 for commenting on corporate blogs for all samples. Attitude is the most important determinant of usage intention, exceeding β = .7 for corporate blog reading and ß = .4 for commenting.

3.3.2 Testing inter-country differences

For a further, more detailed analysis in order to identify which TAM-relationships display significant inter-country differences, critical ratio analyses were conducted. All structural weights were compared individually for two of the three sample countries at a time. Table 22 provides an overview of the critical ratio analyses, displaying significant relationships for each sample, and showing the identified significant differences. Most striking are the differences on the effect of perceived ease of use and attitude as well as perceived enjoyment on attitude. For the German sample, the effect of perceived ease of use on attitude is significantly smaller than in the Russian and the U.S. sample. With respect to perceived enjoyment, its effect on attitude is significantly larger for the German sample. Other differences exist for the relationship between attitude towards corporate blogs and intention to use. The impact of attitude on usage intention was strongest in the U.S. sample, being significantly different from the Russian sample.

Table 22: TAM relationships and critical ratio analysis

	Relationship	Germany	Russia	U.S.	Germany vs. Russia	Germany vs. U.S.	Russia vs. U.S.
Read	ATT→INT	.80***	.73***	.84***	-	-	R < U.S.*
	PU→ATT	.17***	.23***	.31***	-	G < U.S.***	-
	PEU→ATT	.12***	.25***	.21***	G < R*	G < U.S.***	-
	PE→ATT	.81***	.68***	.67***	G > R**	G > U.S.**	-
	PEU→PU	-.14*	-.16	-.01	-	-	-
	PEU→PE	.58***	.58***	.78***	-	G < U.S.*	-
	PE→PU	.59***	.56***	.66***	-	-	-
Comment	ATT→INT	.66***	.66***	.58***	-	-	-
	PU→ATT	.17***	.23***	.31***	-	G < U.S.**	-
	PEU→ATT	.06*	.17**	.12**	G < R*	G < U.S.***	-
	PE→ATT	.83***	.71***	.69***	G > R*	G > U.S.***	-
	PEU→PU	.08	.01	.18*	-	-	-
	PEU→PE	.58***	.58***	.77***	-	G < U.S.*	-
	PE→PU	.50***	.49***	.58***	-	-	-

Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$.

3.3.3 Effects of control variables

The introduced control variables were also found to significantly influence individual elements of the corporate blog acceptance model. While gender does not affect cognitive factors, age has a two-fold effect on corporate blog acceptance. On the one hand, it has an inverse effect on perceived ease of use, implying that younger Internet users find using corporate blogs easier. On the other hand, there were positive associations of age with perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. Regarding Internet and blogging experience, own blogging activity has significant positive impacts on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, while a negative effect was observed on perceived enjoyment. Also for the other experience indicators, impact was significant and positive as both individuals with an overall longer previous use of the Internet and individuals with a higher usage frequency find corporate blogs easier to use, more useful, and more entertaining. Last but not least, education was found to positively influence the perceived ease of use, while adverse effects where identified on both perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment.

3.4 Discussion

The observed effects regarding the proposed corporate blog acceptance model may be evaluated with respect to the four Hypothesis developed in the beginning of this chapter, before discussing the resulting implications for theory and practice.

Attitude was significantly and positively affected by all three cognitive factors, i.e., perceived usefulness (Hypothesis 2.1a), perceived enjoyment (2.1b), and perceived ease of use (2.1c). All three relationships were positive and significant for all three country samples as well as the pooled sample, and for both usage types. Consequently, Hypothesis 2.1 is accepted.

Hypothesis 2.2 could only partially be verified. Only the positive relation between perceived ease of use of corporate blogs and perceived enjoyment (2b) was confirmed for all sample sets and usage types, while a positive effect of perceived ease of use of corporate blogs on perceived usefulness (2.2a) could only be confirmed in four out of eight structural equation models and if it was confirmed it was done so only with a comparatively low level of significance ($p < .1$). Consequently, Hypothesis 2.2a is rejected, while Hypothesis 2.2b is confirmed.

All models confirmed the positive relation between attitude towards corporate blogs and behavioral intention to use corporate blogs. These significant positive effects were prevalent in both the reading and commenting models. Consequently, Hypothesis 2.3 can be confirmed.

An exploratory assessment of differences in individual TAM relationship between the country samples showed that perceived usefulness was a more important determinant of attitude in the U.S. compared to Germany, while perceived enjoyment was significantly more important in the German sample. At the same time perceived ease of use had a significantly lower positive influence on attitude than in the other two samples.

Table 23 summarizes the Hypotheses developed at the beginning of this chapter and the associated results.

Table 23: Overview of findings on corporate blogs and technology acceptance

	Hypothesis	Support
H2.1a	Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the perceived usefulness of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.1b	Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.1c	Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the perceived ease of use of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.2a	There is a positive relation between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of corporate blogs.	No
H2.2b	There is a positive relation between perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.3	There is a positive relation between attitude towards corporate blogs and behavioral intention to use corporate blogs.	Yes

3.4.1 Implications for theory and practice

A range of implications could be derived for research regarding the technology acceptance model, as well as for international management research and practice, in particular for international corporate communications regarding the use of corporate blogs in varying institutional contexts.

For academic research, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of the acceptance of social media and in particular of corporate blogs and the cognitive elements that determine acceptance. In addition, this study contributes to understanding how technology differs in an international management context. This study integrated these two research areas, focusing on the application of the technology acceptance model to a sample of German, Russian, and U.S. Internet users. Such integration is of particular relevance given the international proliferation of the Internet, its increasing function as international information and communica-

tion channel, and the fading boundaries of business and communication in a globalizing world. In addition, this study also sheds light on a basic relationship that is not very often accounted for in technology acceptance research – the effect of perceived enjoyment and thus entertainment value on perceived usefulness. The entertainment value of an information technology cannot only affect a user's attitude directly but also indirectly by its impact on perceived usefulness. This might also apply to other modern information technologies, in particular for technologies that combine aspects of information, communication and entertainment.

This study also generated several insights for corporate communication and corporate marketing. In general, the findings show that companies can influence the use of their corporate blogs by Internet users through specific blog management and strategy decisions. This implies that corporate blogs are indeed valid instruments for companies' online reputation management and companies can thus strategically affect communication by and about the company on the Internet. In particular, companies should incorporate these first findings into their corporate blogging strategies by realizing the overall importance of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and in particular perceived enjoyment for shaping Internet users' attitudes towards corporate blogs. Also they should be aware of the role that usability (ease of use) plays for perceived usefulness and enjoyment. Last but not least they need to recognize that perceived enjoyment largely forms perceived usefulness – a factor that is very often neglected by companies and consultants, which assume that the value and the relevance of provided information are the basic drivers of corporate blogging success. By making corporate blogs easier to use, companies can significantly increase the level of enjoyment by Internet users. In turn, blogs that are perceived more enjoyable are also found more useful.

Furthermore, companies have to acknowledge the differences in corporate blog acceptance between varying user groups in different countries, in particular the identified differences in the effects of perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of use on attitude. The role of the institutional framework, which still has to be assessed at higher detail, thus implies that 'one fits all'-solutions are risky in the corporate blogging context and might not deliver intended results. This in particular concerns two common business practices: First of all, these findings shed some doubts on the common perception of the 'single social media space', where users have basically identical or at least converging expectations and preferences regarding communication (Drotner, 2002). Common patterns might indeed be more dictated by the universal availability of these communication tools rather than common demands (Nicovich and Cornwell, 1998). Thus, lessons learnt in one region cannot be directly transferred to other regions. They have to at least be corrected by considerations of the institutional context. Second of all, it shows that companies, which follow a global (in contrast to a locally responsive) communica-

tion strategy, e.g., by engaging with stakeholders through a corporate blog only in English for an otherwise international audience, displease or even forgo readers and commenters, as these channels – in addition to the obvious language barrier – limit their readership as well as the (sometimes more important) scope of interaction.

A more detailed assessment of the identified differences implies that companies need to pay more attention to usefulness aspects in the U.S., for example by increasing the information value of corporate blog content, providing more information, as well as improving the selection or relevance of featured topics. In Germany corporate blogs need to be relatively more entertaining than in the U.S. Strategies to achieve this might include a more extensive use of multimedia content, training blog contributors regarding writing style and media usage, as well as introducing games and competitions that entertain and better engage users. Corporate blogs created for Russian Internet users need to relatively more take into account the Internet skills of its users and make the channel easy to use in order to increase its acceptance. Measures to achieve this are clear structures, simple blog navigation and simplified interaction mechanisms making for example commenting as easy as possible.

Last but not least, companies need to recognize the general effects of the included control variables in order to increase the acceptance of their corporate blogging activities by their stakeholders. Factors to consider mainly include, age, Internet usage and educational background. Older user groups have a tendency to perceive corporate blog usage as more difficult and thus need to be more supported in using blogs. The same holds for users with low Internet experience and non-bloggers, as well as for less educated individuals. Younger and more educated users might find using a corporate blog generally easier, but the company needs to spend more effort on convincing them of the usefulness and enjoyability of the corporate blog using for example measures discussed in the previous paragraphs.

3.4.2 Limitations and future research directions

Some limitations derive from the collection and the composition of the dataset underlying the analyses. First, a bias existed because the sample was self-selected from Internet users that were mostly recruited from a set of online social networks, implying a limited representativeness with respect to the whole population. Second, it is not possible to isolate actual differences in corporate blogging practices between countries. These differences inevitably exist, resulting in varying associations with the term corporate blog by Internet users. Last but not least, some caution should also be used when generalizing the findings or when transferring the approach to other countries. Despite these limitations, the current study represents an initial step in exploring the possible antecedents of corporate blog acceptance.

Extensions of the analyses presented in this study seem promising in at several directions. First, it is necessary to investigate the root causes of differences in corporate blog acceptance between countries, which potentially can be traced to cultural differences. Second, additional research is necessary with respect to the determinants of cognitive dimensions, i.e., identifying actual blog design factors that influence perceived usefulness, ease of use and enjoyment. This will eventually enable companies to not only understand the demands of their stakeholders better, but also to work on specific characteristics of their corporate blogs. Last but not least, this study investigated determinants of corporate blog reading and commenting, but did not in detail explore the specific motivations underlying Internet users reading and commenting. Companies will greatly benefit from understanding the various reasons for Internet users to read and – and even more – provide feedback on corporate blogs through commenting, opening up an interesting field of corporate communication research.

4 Corporate blog acceptance and cultural differences

In this chapter, the influence of cultural dimensions on corporate blog acceptance will be assessed. For this purposes the corporate blog acceptance model from Chapter 3 will be extended by cultural dimensions according to Hofstede (2001, 1980), in particular uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. The Hypotheses are empirically tested using a sample of 992 individuals from Germany, Russia, and the U.S. The results of the structural equation model and moderated regression analyses confirmed both Hypotheses for the moderating effects of culture on technology acceptance. The theoretical and practical implications of this are discussed.

As companies and their stakeholders become more engaged in social media, it is of critical importance for corporations to understand the effect of the communication channels' characteristics and to anticipate users' responses to new corporate communication offerings such as corporate blogs. With increasing usage of corporate blogs, research in the academic literature is augmenting. Scholars have studied the effects and characteristics of corporate blogs, i.e. how firms can motivate their employees to use corporate blogs (e.g., Wattal et al., 2010) or the effects of corporate blogs on customers' purchase intentions (e.g., Brengman and Karimov, 2012, Hsu and Tsou, 2011, Tran et al., 2012), but little empirical work has examined differences in Internet users' use and acceptance of corporate blogs. Although recent research has enriched scholars' understanding of the role of engagement and involvement in shaping corporate blogs users' perceptions and intentions (Doyle et al., 2012), we know little about how these perceptions and their effects on attitude and usage intentions differ internationally as prior research in this area utilized a single-country study design, often focusing on North America. Scholars have called for taking a more international approach to more fully understand country-specific differences as well as cross-country similarities in determinants corporate blog usage (Thakur et al., 2013).

In an effort to address the identified gaps in the existing literature, this study aims to develop a framework based on the technology acceptance model and cultural dimensions that affect corporate blog acceptance and, therefore, the successful implementation of corporate blogs. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether cultural dimensions moderate the relationships between the dependent and independent variables in an adapted technology acceptance model. Through the extension of the proposed corporate blog acceptance model by cultural dimensions at the individual level, this study responds respond to calls for considering cultural dimensions in technology acceptance research directly rather than just national differences

and citizenship (Straub, 1994, 1997). Thus, the contribution of this study lies in the extension of current research on corporate blogs and technology acceptance with the first large-scale empirical study that examines how cultural dimensions affect technology acceptance.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, an overview of the related literature is provided and theoretical arguments that explain the effects of cultural dimensions on technology acceptance are developed. Then follows an empirically test of the hypotheses and a discussion of the study's contributions to theory and practice. Finally, thee limitations the study and the perspectives for future research are discussed.

4.1 Theoretical background: Cultural dimensions and corporate blog acceptance

Following differentiable streams of technical (e.g., Herring et al., 2004b, Blood, 2004) and non-technical (e.g., Gurak et al., 2004, Schmidt, 2007b) definitions, the term blog refers to a website that is frequently updated and typically displays dated entries in reverse chronological order. A personal, informal and subjective writing style, as well as the use of media, hyperlinks and comments position the author (or institution) and her/his (its) writing and opinion within the wider context of the blogosphere. It aims at establishing relations to readers according to the underlying motives of the author (institution), while standard software, established context structures and standardized practices enable a variety of applications for a variety of people (and institutions). The term corporate blog refers to a blog used for organizational and – in the business context – corporate purposes. While the number of companies using such corporate blogs for communication with stakeholders has continuously increased over the past years, currently only 87, i.e. 17.4%, of the Fortune 500 companies use public corporate blogs (Cass, 2012).

Out of the various research streams on information system usage, the technology acceptance model (TAM) – originally introduced by Davis (1986, 1989) as an extension of Ajzen and Fishbein's theory of reasoned action (TRA) – has become the most widely used theory to explore the factors influencing the acceptance of an information technology by users (King and He, 2006, Lee et al., 2003, Venkatesh et al., 2003). According to the original TAM, a user's attitude towards a technology (ATT) is determined by the user's perception of the usefulness (PU) and the ease of use (PEU) of the technology, which derive from the technology's various design features. The user's attitude then determines the actual use (USE). As information technologies became more complex and varied, and researchers became interested in other effects on technology adoption, the TAM was continuously extended, for example by use intention (INT) which serves as the intermediary between attitude

and actual usage (Mathieson, 1991). In addition, various extensions were proposed depending on the type of information technology including social norms and influence (Hung and Chang, 2005, Luarna and Lin, 2005), and intrinsic motivation, i.e. perceived enjoyment (PE) that can have an impact on attitude exceeding the impact of usefulness (Davis et al., 1992, Hsu and Lin, 2008, Heijden, 2003). With an increasing number of social media applications and their quickly growing popularity among Internet users, a small stream of research has emerged, focusing particularly on the use and acceptance of various social media within the TAM framework. In general, these studies confirmed the TAM's validity for the social media context, but found different additional drivers of acceptance. Analyzing the acceptance of a multi-functional web portal, Heijden (2003) found perceived enjoyment to be a key element of the portal's acceptance, and found a significant influence of the portal's visual attractiveness on perceived usefulness and enjoyment. Paris et al. (2010) confirmed the important role of perceived enjoyment for users' acceptance of Facebook and identified trust, credibility and relationship-enabling functions as additional system design factors that positively influence acceptance. For the acceptance of private blogs, Hsu & Lin (2008) found the author's reputation and the possibility to establish relationships and community as key factors.

Multinational enterprises need to understand how and why information technology acceptance differs between countries or – more broadly – cultures, in order to utilize communication synergies while still addressing target groups effectively (Straub et al., 1997). Several studies have shown significant differences in the adoption of information technology, testing for differences in the overall TAM-Model between individual countries (Huang et al., 2003, Zakour, 2004, Zakour, 2009, Cardon and Marshall, 2008, Srite, 2006). Few researchers have explored the effect of cultural dimensions on technology acceptance. Where cultural dimensions were included in the research, they were used when forming hypotheses rather than actually included as model variables. As a consequence, Straub et al. (1994, 1997) recommended to explicitly include culture rather than citizenship in TAM research in order to identify specific effects of individual aspects of culture and allow for better organizational responses. Several approaches to study the effect of culture on organizations have emerged. Hofstede's (2001, 1980) set of five dimensions of culture have become the most popular method of quantitatively investigating cultural differences as it not only permits analyses at national-level but also comparisons between countries. Table 24 summarizes the five cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede.

Table 24: Hofstede dimensions of culture

Hofstede dimension	Description
Power distance (PDI)	Measures to what extent power is distributed equally within a society and the degree that society accepts this distribution. A high PDI culture prefers strict hierarchies and highly respects authority. A low PDI culture favors personal responsibility and autonomy.
Uncertainty avoidance (UAI)	The degree to which individuals require set boundaries and clear structures: a high UAI culture allows individuals to cope better with risk and innovation; a low UAI culture emphasizes a higher level of standardization and greater job security.
Collectivism vs. individualism (COL)	The degree to which individuals base their actions on self-interest versus the interests of the group. In an individual culture, free will is highly valued. In a collective culture, personal needs are less important than the group's needs.
Masculinity vs. femininity (MAS)	A measure of a society's goal orientation: a masculine culture emphasizes status derived from wages and position; a feminine culture emphasizes human relations and quality of life.
Long-time orientation (LTO)	The degree to which a society does or does not value long-term commitment and respect for tradition. High LTO cultures are more resistant to institutional change.

Theoretical assessments as well as a limited set of research studies have indicated that particularly uncertainty avoidance (UAI) might play a significant role in information technology acceptance. Uncertainty avoidance captures the degree to which individuals require set boundaries and clear structures: a low UAI culture allows individuals to cope better with risk and innovation; a high UAI culture emphasizes a higher level of standardization and greater job security. UAI represents the most often cited relationship between culture and technology acceptance. However, assumptions and findings regarding the impact of UAI on technology acceptance are contrasting. Already Hofstede stated that new technologies are particularly appealing to highly uncertainty avoiding countries, as technical solutions are more predictable than human solutions and can reduce uncertainty (Hofstede, 2001). Also the authors of the GLOBE study concluded that high uncertainty avoidance leads to an emphasis on science and technology development (House et al., 2004). Several researchers confirmed these statements (McCoy, 2002, Cardon and Marshall, 2008), stating that more uncertainty avoiding individuals favor technologies that help them to cope with uncertain situations. In the online context, Hwang and Lee (2012) concluded that websites with clear structures and a social element such as active interaction and feedback opportunities appeal in particular to uncertainty-avoiding individuals as they build trust. Corporate blogs can be considered uncertainty-reducing technologies, providing clear and simple structures and enabling a constant and very personal level of interaction between Internet users and companies, contrasting traditional means of corporate communication such as corporate websites (Dwyer, 2007). This aspect of corporate blogs yields the hypothesized effect that – given a fixed level of the cognitive technology acceptance elements perceived usefulness, ease of use and enjoyment - more

uncertainty-avoiding individuals would hold a more favorable view of corporate blogs, i.e., a positive moderation by uncertainty avoidance as stated in Hypotheses 3.1-3:

Hypothesis 3.1: Perceived usefulness of corporate blogs has a positive effect on attitude towards corporate blogs. This effect is positively moderated (strengthened) by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.

Hypothesis 3.2: Perceived ease of use of corporate blogs has a positive effect on attitude towards corporate blogs. This effect is positively moderated (strengthened) by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.

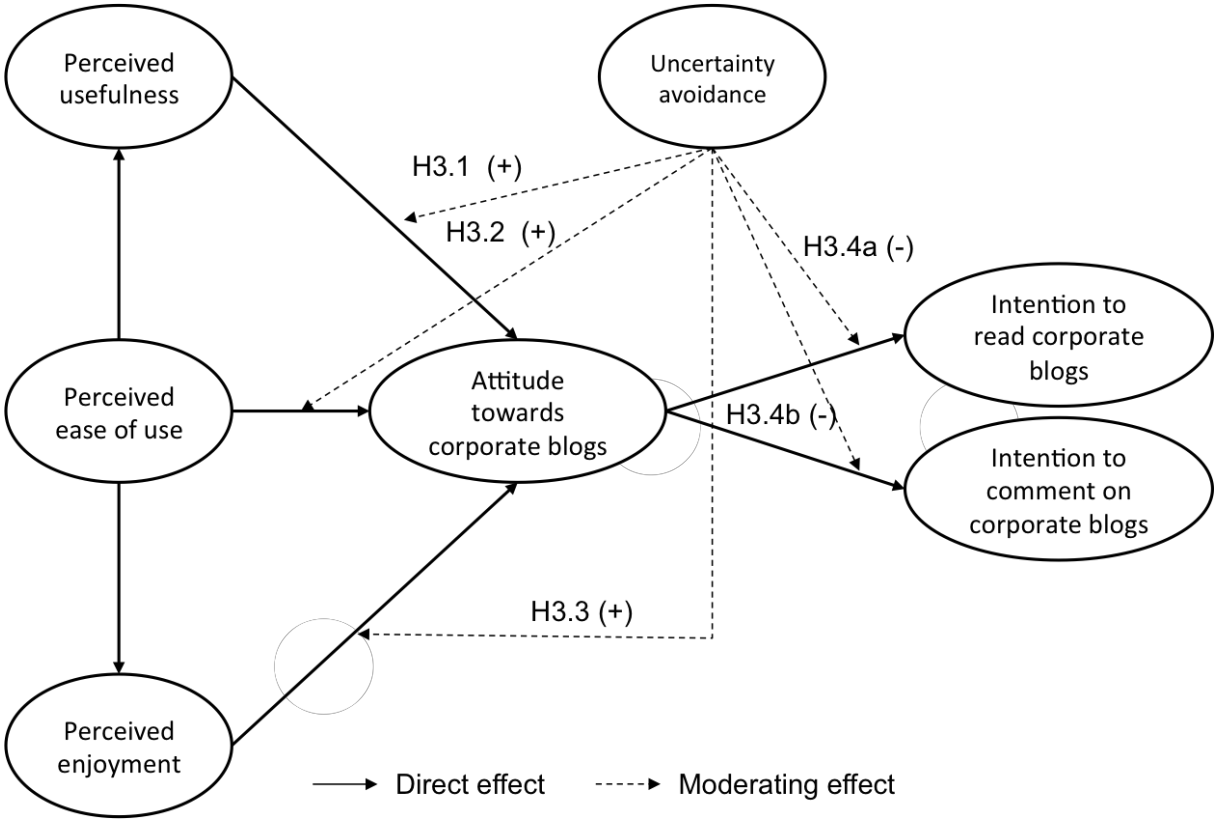
Hypothesis 3.3: Perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs has a positive effect on attitude towards corporate blogs. This effect is positively moderated (strengthened) by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.

A range of researchers has concluded that the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and technology acceptance can be negative, depending on the level of uncertainty related to the use or the introduction of a technology, eventually leading to a deferred adoption of technology (Zakour, 2004, Garfield and Watson, 1998). This view does not necessarily contradict the positive influence on technology acceptance as stated by Hypotheses 1-3, as technology acceptance can be divided into an overall attitude formation process and a technology adoption process. Both are indeed related but might diverge for individuals with different uncertainty avoidance levels. While uncertainty-avoiding individuals might in general prefer new technologies as means to reduce uncertainty, they can still tend to adopt these new technologies slower than less uncertainty-avoiding individuals, who are more likely to be early adopters. This can also be assumed for corporate blogs. As an information-rich and more personal medium, corporate blogs might be in general more appealing to uncertainty avoiding individuals (Straub et al., 1997, Sun and Zhang, 2006), but at such early stage of introduction are more used by less uncertainty-avoiding individuals. Transferring the above findings to the devised corporate blog acceptance model implies, that more uncertainty-avoiding individuals would be more likely to form a positive attitude about a technology but still show a deferred adoption, since less uncertainty avoiding individuals need lower levels of perceived ease of use, usefulness and enjoyment to first adopt a new technology. Consequently, a fourth Hypotheses is formulated regarding the effect of uncertainty avoidance on the attitude-intent relationship:

Hypothesis 3.4: Users' attitude towards corporate blogs has a positive effect on the intention to read and comment on corporate blogs. These effects are negatively moderated (weakened) by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance (reading 3.4a, commenting 3.4b).

Figure 28 summarizes the Hypotheses that will be assessed using a sample of Internet users from three countries.

Figure 28: Research model – corporate blog acceptance and culture



4.2 Methodology

4.2.1 Sample and data collection procedure

To analyze the factors that influence corporate blog acceptance as well as the moderating role of culture, an online questionnaire survey was carried out in three languages among Internet users during 2010. The three selected languages English, German and Russian were chosen to attract Internet users from mainly three countries – Germany, Russia, and the U.S. – that belong to differentiable cultural clusters as for example identified by Ronen and Shenkar (1985). During the course of the study 1,854 data sets were collected. Of these, 813 were submitted using the German survey, 636 using the English survey and 405 using the Russian survey. After cleaning for incomplete questionnaires, questionnaires from users outside of the three focus countries, as well as multivariate non-normality, 992 data sets were retained for analysis. Table 25 provides demographic information of the sample.

Table 25: Demographic profile

Measure/item	Germany		Russia		U.S.	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Age	Ø 32.07		Ø 29.37		Ø 31.94	
< 20 years	7	1.63%	7	3.27%	8	2.30%
20-29 years	214	49.77%	134	62.62%	174	50.00%
30-39 years	120	27.91%	53	24.77%	102	29.31%
40-49 years	71	16.51%	14	6.54%	45	12.93%
50-59 years	15	3.49%	4	1.87%	17	4.89%
60+ years	3	.70%	2	.95%	2	.57%
Gender						
Female	129	30.00%	73	34.11%	112	32.18%
Male	301	70.00%	141	65.89%	236	67.82%
Education	Ø 17.45		Ø 17.31		Ø 16.95	
0-10 years	8	1.65%	7	3.27%	8	2.30%
11-15 years	66	15.34%	26	12.15%	63	18.10%
16-20 years	337	78.37%	176	82.24%	271	77.87%
> 20 years	19	4.42%	5	2.34%	6	1.72%
Internet experience	Ø 11.11		Ø 9.19		Ø 11.44	
0-5 years	13	3.02%	23	10.75%	9	2.59%
5.5-10 years	184	42.79%	123	57.48%	132	37.93%
10.5-15 years	196	45.58%	65	30.37%	177	50.86%
15.5-20 years	37	8.60%	3	1.40%	30	8.62%
Internet intensity	Ø 5.59		Ø 4.68		Ø 5.71	
0-5 hours per day	230	53.49%	140	65.42%	183	52.59%
5.5-10 hours	167	38.84%	61	28.50%	140	40.23%
10.5-15 hours	32	7.44%	11	5.14%	24	6.90%
15.5-20 hours	1	.23%	2	.95%	1	.29%
Blogger						
Yes	187	43.49%	71	33.18%	124	35.63%
No	243	56.51%	143	66.82%	224	64.37%

The questionnaire was initially developed in English. Following the procedure suggested by Brislin (1986), the English questionnaire was translated to German and Russian respectively, and back-translated into English to ensure linguistic as well as conceptual equivalence. For each translation, three native speakers were involved in the translation process, using one individual for the translation, another individual for the translation back into English, and again another individual in order to solve differences in the translations of the two translators. The questionnaire was implemented using a local installation of the open-source software Lime Survey (Schmitz, 2011), which supports multi-language surveys. Before the main survey, a pretest and a pilot study were performed to validate the instrument. The pre-test included 10 Ph.D. students (from non-Internet related research fields) working at a German corporation. All of them were users of the Internet, but had varying knowledge of and experience with corporate blogs. Respondents were asked for their evaluation of the time required to complete the survey, the complexity and understandability of questions as well as overall user experience when using the online-questionnaire. Finally, a pilot test was performed. The link to the study was sent to the network of 200 Ph.D. students at a German corporation. With 112 completed surveys, a first test of the TAM in the corporate blog context as well as test-wise confirmatory fac-

tor analyses of the TAM and culture constructs could be performed. Consequently, some minor modifications to the questionnaire were made.

4.2.2 Measures

The core TAM variables, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use and attitude were based on the work of Hsu et al. (Hsu and Lin), which is an adaptation of the basic TAM (Davis, 1989, Davis, 1993), and extensions to account for intrinsic motivation (Moon and Kim, 2001, Venkatesh et al., 2002) to the blog context. Slight adaptations (terminology) were conducted to better fit the items to the corporate blog context. These sources were also used as the basis for the behavioral intention to use, but a differentiation was made between two separate usage options: reading corporate blogs and actual commenting on such blogs. Perceived usefulness was measured by four statements, perceived enjoyment, ease of use and attitude by three statements, and usage intention by two statements. For all variables, the items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Following the recommendation of Taras et al. (2010) primary data was used to measure the cultural dimensions. The CVScale was used as suggested by Yoo et al. (2011), based on the five cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980, 2001). Uncertainty avoidance was measured using 5 items (e.g., "Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me"). All items were measured on five-point Likert scales with question-specific anchor points.

The study controlled for a range of demographic and use-related factors that have been found to be related to technology acceptance and the effect of cultural dimensions in previous research (Venkatesh et al., 2003, Burton-Jones and Hubona, 2006, Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). These control variables included age (in years), gender (dichotomous variable coded as 0 for female and 1 for male), education (in years of full-time education, including school, college and university as well as equivalent studies, but without vocational training), Internet usage history and frequency, and association with a blog. Moreover, the questionnaire included questions about citizenship and citizenship at birth to control for sample homogeneity. In addition to these demographics, the other four Hofstede dimensions of culture (masculinity, power distance, individualism, long-term orientation) were included in the study to control for their effects, with items also taken from the CV scale instrument.

4.2.3 Measurement model, measurement invariance, and common method bias

In a first step, the data sets were examined country-by-country using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). AMOS 18 and the maximum likelihood estimation procedure were used for the analyses. Given the chi-square (χ^2) statistic's inadequacy for tests of model fit for large sample sizes (> 250) (MacCallum et al., 1996, Cheung and Rensvold, 2002), the study utilizes a set of fit indices to provide a complete assessment of model adequacy (Byrne, 2009, Browne and Cudeck, 1993, Hu and Bentler, 1999). In particular, the comparative fit index (CFI) was used as well as the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). For CFI, values of .9 or higher are considered acceptable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). For RMSEA, values below .08 are considered to indicate good fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). For SRMR, values below .08 are considered acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The internal consistency of the measurement model was evaluated using composite reliability (CR > .7), average variance extracted (AVE > .5) and Cronbach's alpha (α > .60) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). As shown in Table 26 the values of the CFI for CFA were well above the .9 threshold and RMSEA as well as SRMR values were well below .8. Overall, the CFA results of the revised measurement model indicate acceptable fit.

Table 26: Model-data fit assessment for the TAM with cultural dimensions

	Country	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	ΔCFI
CFA results								
Read	Germany (430)	564.61	151	.00	.94	.08	.05	
	Russia (214)	271.91	151	.00	.96	.06	.05	
	U.S. (348)	306.97	151	.00	.97	.06	.05	
Com-ment	Germany (430)	613.97	151	.00	.93	.08	.06	
	Russia (214)	258.25	151	.00	.97	.06	.05	
	U.S. (348)	328.10	151	.00	.97	.06	.05	
MGCFA results								
Read	Configural invariance	1143.49	453	.00	.96	.05	.06	-
	Full metric invariance	1168.50	481	.00	.96	.05	.06	.00
	Full scalar invariance	1588.68	521	.00	.94	.05	.06	.02
Com-ment	Configural invariance	1200.33	453	.00	.95	.04	.04	-
	Full metric invariance	1225.34	481	.00	.95	.04	.04	.00
	Full scalar invariance	1661.94	521	.00	.93	.05	.05	.02

Note: CFA = Confirmatory factor analysis, MGCFA = Multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, *df* = Degrees of freedom, CFI = Comparative fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual.

Following the recommendations in the literature to test for measurement invariance when comparing different groups (e.g., Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998, Vandenberg and Lance, 2000), in a second step, measurement invariance was examined using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) to test the invariance of the measurement models using AMOS 18 and maximum likelihood

estimation (Byrne, 2009). While metric invariance is necessary for comparisons of factor structures and constructs across national contexts, scalar invariance is necessary for comparisons of means (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). Given the inadequacy of the χ^2 difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$) for large samples (Cheung and Rensvold, 2002) the difference in CFI between models was used to statistically compare the measurement models, where the difference in CFI between (successive) equivalence models may not exceed .01. The results for the configural model show a satisfactory fit (for blog reading χ^2 = 1090.75; *df* = 453; CFI = .96; RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .06; for blog commenting χ^2 = 1200.33; *df* = 453; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .05). In the metric model, the measurement weights (factor loadings) were allowed to vary between groups to test for metric invariance. As presented in Table 26, the results of the estimation of the second model indicate that the constructs were measured adequately through their indicators across countries, while for both scenarios, blog reading and commenting, the difference to the configural model was not significant. The factor structure can therefore be considered invariant across the countries. The third model tested scalar invariance, constraining the relationship between variables across countries. The differences in CFI exceed the proposed cut-off (blog reading ΔCFI =.023, commenting ΔCFI = .025), thus signaling scalar variance.

With all of items are being measured at the same time using a single self-reported questionnaire, the study findings may be susceptible to common method bias, which is prevalent in management research (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003), information systems research (Malhotra *et al.*, 2006) as well as cross-cultural research (Chang *et al.*, 2010). To overcome the concern of common method bias in the survey design, questionnaire items were arranged so that the dependent variable followed rather than preceded the independent variables, and a common latent factor was included in the SEM analysis to address common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003, Podsakoff and Organ, 1986), with resulting common variance below 5% for the three countries and the pooled data set, indicating that the sample does not display common method variance issues. In addition, a single-factor test was conducted using SPSS 19, factoring all indicators in the study to see if a single common factor emerges, indicative of common method variance (Harman, 1967), with the resulting explained variance below the .5 cutoff-value. The item measure and validity assessment is presented in Table 27.

Table 27: Item measure and validity assessment

Item	SFL			
	G	R	U.S.	pooled
Perceived usefulness				
(G: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .94; R: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .95; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .95; Pooled: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .93)				
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs enable me to better accomplish my work/learning/leisure activities	.92	.92	.93	.92
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would improve my work/learning/leisure performance	.93	.94	.92	.93
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would enhance my work/learning/life effectiveness	.91	.92	.93	.92
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs can increase my productivity when performing my work/learning/life activities	.93	.93	.93	.93
Perceived ease of use				
(G: CR = .82, AVE = .69, α = .91; R: CR = .87, AVE = .76, α = .84; U.S.: CR = .87, AVE = .78, α = .85; Pooled: CR = .86, AVE = .75, α = .86)				
Corporate blogs are easy to use	.69	.82	.83	.83
Learning to use corporate blogs is easy	.84	.89	.91	.90
Overall I believe corporate blogs are easy to use	.95	.92	.92	.92
Perceived enjoyment				
(G: CR = .88, AVE = .79, α = .92; R: CR = .92, AVE = .86, α = .92; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .87, α = .92; Pooled: CR = .91, AVE = .87, α = .92)				
While reading and commenting on corporate blogs I experienced pleasure	.93	.94	.95	.94
The process of reading and commenting on corporate blogs is enjoyable	.81	.88	.89	.89
I have fun reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.93	.95	.95	.95
Attitude towards using				
(G: CR = .95, AVE = .85, α = .91; R: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .91; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .87, α = .92; Pooled: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .90)				
I like reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.90	.93	.94	.93
I feel good about reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.93	.93	.94	.94
Overall my attitude towards corporate blogs is favorable	.83	.91	.91	.91
Intent read				
(G: CR = .94, AVE = .88, α = .86; R: CR = .91, AVE = .84, α = .81; U.S.: CR = .94, AVE = .89, α = .88; Pooled: CR = .91, AVE = .85, α = .83)				
It is worth reading corporate blogs	.94	.92	.95	.94
I will read corporate blogs in the future	.94	.92	.95	.94
Intent comment				
(G: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .82; R: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .84; U.S.: CR = .92, AVE = .86, α = .83; Pooled: CR = .92, AVE = .86, α = .83)				
It is worth commenting on corporate blogs	.92	.93	.93	.93
I will comment on corporate blogs in the future	.92	.93	.93	.93
Uncertainty avoidance				
(G: CR = .73, AVE = .57, α = .80; R: CR = .71, AVE = .52, α = .70; U.S.: CR = .74, AVE = .59, α = .82; Pooled: CR = .71, AVE = .55, α = .78)				
It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do	.72	.67	.72	.77
It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures	.66	.62	.70	.73
Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me	.83	.83	.80	.85
Standardized work procedures are helpful	.73	.60	.76	.78
Instructions for operations are important	.81	.76	.84	.85

Note: G denotes Germany (n = 430), R denotes Russia (n = 214), and U.S. denotes the United States (n = 348). SFL denotes standardized factor loadings

4.3 Analysis and results

4.3.1 Testing the technology acceptance model and inter-country differences

Table 28: Descriptive and correlation statistics – pooled and German sample

Germany / All		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*
1 PU		-	.44	.24	.61	.66	.59	-.17	.00	.10	.19	.11	.13	.07	-.13	.27	.13	.30
2 PE		.49	-	.45	.85	.68	.57	-.02	.01	.25	-.08	.03	-.07	-.08	-.14	.14	.06	-.04
3 PEU		.27	.44	-	.49	.50	.26	-.09	.02	.15	-.13	-.11	-.16	-.06	.10	.08	.10	.06
4 ATT		.66	.85	.50	-	.85	.65	-.06	-.04	.18	-.06	.00	.02	-.03	-.09	.27	.13	.16
5 INT read		.68	.70	.51	.85	-	.66	-.07	-.04	.13	.01	.00	.06	.06	-.02	.21	.12	.17
6 INT com		.59	.57	.26	.63	.65	-	-.11	-.08	.17	-.01	.09	.13	.10	-.12	.26	.15	.22
7 IDV		-.04	-.02	.00	-.01	-.04	-.04	-	-.04	-.02	-.12	-.05	-.03	-.10	-.07	-.02	-.01	-.01
8 UAI		-.10	-.08	-.12	-.14	-.09	-.11	-.36	-	.41	.18	.18	-.09	-.02	-.10	-.26	-.22	-.22
9 LTO		.17	.20	.07	.17	.13	.15	.10	.10	-	.00	.03	-.07	-.08	-.06	-.11	-.16	-.21
10 PDI		-.02	-.07	-.11	-.11	-.05	-.05	-.31	.28	-.28	-	.44	.04	.16	-.09	.01	-.13	-.05
11 MAS		.11	.04	-.08	.03	.04	.13	.00	.12	.07	.23	-	-.06	.28	-.15	.01	.04	-.01
12 Age		.15	.00	-.10	.07	.10	.12	-.06	.05	.23	-.01	-.08	-	.13	.05	-.02	.15	.11
13 Gender		.04	-.10	-.03	-.04	.04	.09	.07	-.01	.01	.05	.36	.11	-	-.03	.08	.19	.23
14 Education		-.10	-.13	.07	-.08	-.03	-.12	-.12	-.03	.02	-.03	-.15	.08	-.03	-	-.05	.07	-.10
15 Frequency		.32	.15	.15	.31	.26	.28	.09	-.24	-.01	-.16	.06	.00	.08	-.07	-	.30	.56
16 History		.17	.04	.14	.14	.12	.14	.15	-.25	.06	-.29	.04	.18	.17	.08	.31	-	.29
17 Blogger		.34	.00	.14	.21	.21	.26	.06	-.17	-.06	-.26	.04	.10	.22	-.09	.57	.29	-
All	**Mean**	3.23	3.52	4.62	3.69	3.88	3.14	2.47	4.19	4.95	2.6	3.12	31.4	1.68	17.2	5.44	10.8	.39
	sd	1.04	.99	.76	.99	.96	1.08	.94	.89	.81	.87	1.01	8.57	.47	2.55	3.22	3.2	.49
G	**Mean**	3.2	35	4.56	3.70	3.89	3.15	2.52	4.65	5.37	2.47	3.31	32.1	.70	17.5	5.59	11.1	.44
	sd	1.06	1.02	.80	1.01	.97	1.09	.91	.86	.77	.83	1.09	8.59	.46	2.63	3.25	3.12	.50

Note: Pooled sample: $n = 992$. Correlations above |.06| are significant at $p < .05$. For Germany: $n = 430$. Correlations above |.10| are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 29: Descriptive and correlation statistics – Russian and U.S. sample

U.S. / Russia		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*16*	*17*
1 PU		-	.55	.35	.73	.73	.60	-.04	-.09	.13	-.14	.13	.15	.04	-.09	.37	.19	.42
2 PE		.47	-	.44	.85	.73	.54	-.14	-.11	.15	-.02	.01	.02	-.10	-.10	.14	.03	.01
3 PEU		.20	.41	-	.52	.52	.26	.04	-.27	-.07	-.14	-.02	-.09	-.02	.05	.26	.18	.25
4 ATT		.60	.83	.48	-	.89	.60	-.09	-.15	.08	-.13	.03	.09	-.04	-.06	.34	.13	.24
5 INT read		.64	.68	.49	.80	-	.62	-.08	-.12	.10	-.10	.05	.13	.01	-.03	.30	.12	.23
6 INT com		.59	.59	.27	.65	.67	-	.03	-.15	.10	-.11	.11	.13	.10	-.09	.31	.17	.30
7 IDV		-.20	-.03	-.04	-.10	-.13	-.12	-	-.22	-.25	-.33	.10	-.22	.28	-.09	.21	.11	.35
8 UAI		-.03	-.17	-.13	-.19	-.08	-.18	-.16	-	.35	.14	.07	.33	.03	-.09	-.19	-.10	-.15
9 LTO		.08	.20	.12	.15	.05	.16	.02	.18	-	.15	-.04	.45	.01	.10	-.12	-.01	-.06
10 PDI		.05	-.04	-.07	-.03	.04	-.05	-.02	.31	.06	-	.15	.10	-.01	.02	-.27	-.23	-.53
11 MAS		.13	.11	-.06	.13	.10	.27	.10	-.02	.08	.24	-	-.08	.50	-.14	.12	.06	.08
12 Age		.13	.07	-.03	.11	.10	.10	-.22	.22	.34	.12	-.14	-	.11	.10	.04	.21	.16
13 Gender		-.02	-.12	.03	-.07	.05	.03	.14	-.10	-.09	.05	.32	.04	-	-.03	.07	.16	.20
14 Education		.01	-.14	.07	-.10	-.05	-.19	-.18	-.02	-.05	-.02	-.22	.11	-.06	-	-.08	.09	-.05
15 Frequency		.29	.16	.15	.32	.27	.27	-.09	-.26	-.08	-.15	.06	-.08	.10	-.09	-	.30	.59
16 History		.09	-.02	.14	.03	.06	.07	-.03	-.18	-.07	-.20	.00	.05	.16	.16	.25	-	.31
17 Blogger		.33	.07	.15	.28	.27	.31	-.14	-.30	-.14	-.34	.07	-.04	.23	-.17	.57	.23	-
R	**Mean**	2.97	3.44	4.62	3.52	3.84	3.09	1.83	5.49	4.41	4.05	3.05	29.4	.66	17.3	4.68	9.2	.33
	sd	.97	.96	.75	.93	.92	1.03	.83	.68	.73	.77	.95	8.04	.48	2.57	3.37	3.02	.47
U.S.	**Mean**	3.36	3.57	4.69	3.77	3.91	3.16	3.28	3.72	4.88	2.57	3.07	31.9	.68	16.9	5.71	11.4	.36
	sd	1.03	.99	.69	.98	.97	1.09	.80	.80	.65	.72	.92	8.69	.47	2.41	3.02	3.08	.48

Note: For Russia: $n = 214$. Correlations above |.14| are significant at $p < .05$. For the U.S.: $n = 328$. Correlations above |.11| are significant at $p < .05$.

To test the technology acceptance model in the corporate blog context, a structural equation modeling approach was employed using AMOS 18 (Byrne, 2009). Table 28 and Table 29 present means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients for the pooled sample as well as for the country samples. The structural coefficients of the resulting model confirm the applicability of the TAM for each of the three countries and for both usage scenarios. Internet users' attitude towards corporate blogs is positively dependent on perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment as well as perceived ease of use. Last but not least attitude has a positive influence on the intentions to both read and comment on corporate blogs.

4.3.2 Testing moderating effects of cultural dimensions

The research questions were investigated by performing hierarchical moderated regression analyses using the pooled sample (Aiken and West, 1991, Aguinis, 2002). Kenny and Judd (1984) recommend the avoidance of SEM in complicated moderating test. Given the relatively high number of potential moderators – the five cultural dimensions – and the respective numerous two-way moderating relationships hierarchical regression analyses was used instead of SEM. The significance of interaction terms was confirmed additionally by an assessment of the increase in R^2 caused by inclusion (Baron and Kenny, 1986, Carte and Russell, 2003). Significant moderating effects could be identified for both uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Table 30 provides an overview of the performed analyses and shows significant interaction terms.

Table 30: Results of regression analyses for moderating effects of culture

Variables	PU (x_1=PEU)	PE (x=PEU)	ATT (x_1=PU)	ATT (x_2=PE)	ATT (x_3=PEU)	INT_{read} (x=ATT)	INT_{com} (x=ATT)
PU				**.27*** (.02)**		-	-
PE				**.63*** (.02)**		-	-
PEU	**.33*** (.04)**	**.60*** (.04)**		**.13*** (.02)**		-	-
ATT				--		**.84*** (.02)**	**.65*** (.03)**
INT_{read}				-		-	-
INT_{com}				-		-	-
MAS	.11*** (.03)	.08** (.03)		-.013 (.015)		-.02 (.02)	.08*** (.03)
IDV	-.08** (.03)	-.09*** (.03)		.00 (.01)		-.02 (.02)	-.09*** (.03)
UAI	-.10*** (.04)	-.08** (.04)		.00 (.02)		.02 (.02)	-.09*** (.03)
LTO	.25*** (.04)	.21*** (.04)		-.02 (.02)		.01 (.02)	.09** (.04)
PDI	.17*** (.04)	-.02 (.04)		-.02 (.02)		.04** (.02)	.04 (.04)
x*UAI	.01 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	.04***□ (.02)	.08***□ (.02)	.07***□ (.02)	-.03** (.02)	-.05**□ (.03)
x*LTO	.06** (.03)	.09***□ (.03)	.02 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)	.07***□ (.02)	.06**□ (.03)
x*MAS	.14***□ (.03)	-.03 (.03)	.02 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.04**□ (.02)	.02 (.02)	.06**□ (.03)
x*IDV	.06**□ (.03)	-.00 (.03)	.03** (.01)	.02 (.02)	-.02 (.01)	.01 (.02)	-.02 (.03)
x*PDI	.02 (.03)	.07**□ (.03)	.01 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	.03* (.02)	-.08***□ (.02)	.04 (.02)
Blogger	.56*** (.08)	-.31*** (.07)		.11*** (.04)		.08* (.04)	.24*** (.07)
Frequency of internet use	.04*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)		.03*** (.01)		-.01* (.07)	.00 (.01)
History of internet use	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)		-.00 (.01)		.01 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Gender	-.22*** (.07)	-.20*** (.07)		.00 (.03)		.18*** (.04)	.11* (.06)
Education	-.04*** (.01)	-.07*** (.01)		.01 (.01)		.02** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)
Age	.01*** (.00)	.01* (.00)		.004** (.00)		.00 (.00)	.01* (.00)
Constant	.32 (.42)	1.28*** (.401		-.22 (.15)		-.44** (.18)	.45 (.36)
F	24.61***	24.66***		167.84***		168.69***	47.33***
R^2	.30	.31		.84		.75	.46
Adjusted R^2	.29	.30		.83		.74	.45
n	992	992		992		992	992

Note: In **bold** is the respective independent TAM-variable (x) that is being moderated. Moderating effects of cultural dimensions are marked in grey shade.

Probability: * $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$. Significance: □ = change in R^2 (when interaction term is included) significant at the .05-level. Highest observed VIF was 1.761 (Blogger).

Uncertainty avoidance was found to moderate a range of TAM relationship – in particular related to individuals' attitudes towards corporate blogs. It moderates the effect of perceived usefulness (ß = .04) as well as perceived enjoyment (ß = .08) and perceived ease of use (ß = .07) on attitude. Furthermore it negatively moderates the relationship between attitude and intention to read (ß = -.03) as well as intention to comment (ß = -.05).

A range of other effects of cultural dimensions as well as control variables were identified as shown in Table 30. Long-term orientation positively moderates the effect of perceived enjoyment on perceived usefulness (ß = .11) as well as perceived enjoyment (ß = .09). It also has a positive effect on the relation between users' attitude and intention to use, both for reading (ß = .07) and commenting (ß = .06). Masculinity was found to moderate the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived usefulness (ß = .19) and the effect of perceived enjoyment on perceived usefulness (ß = -.07). The study also found a negative effect of perceived ease of use on attitude (ß = -.04). For commenting on corporate blogs masculinity has a positive effect on the relation of attitude on intention to use (ß = .06). This influence is insignificant for blog reading. Individualism has a moderating effect on the relationship between perceived ease of use (ß = .08) as well as perceived enjoyment (ß = -.07) on perceived usefulness. It furthermore positively moderates the relationship between perceived usefulness and attitude (ß = .06) and the relationship between the intention to comment on corporate blogs and actual commenting (ß = .31). Power distance positively moderates the relationships between perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment (ß = .07). It was also found to negatively impact the relationship between attitude and intention to read (ß = -.08), and to positively moderate the effect of read intention on actual reading (ß = .04). Regarding control variables, education, age, gender and internet experience had expected effects on acceptance, implying that perceived ease of use was higher for younger and more experienced users, while attitude and usage were higher for older users, more experienced users and women. Remarkable differences were identified between bloggers and non-bloggers with significant impact of blogging activity on all regression analyses.

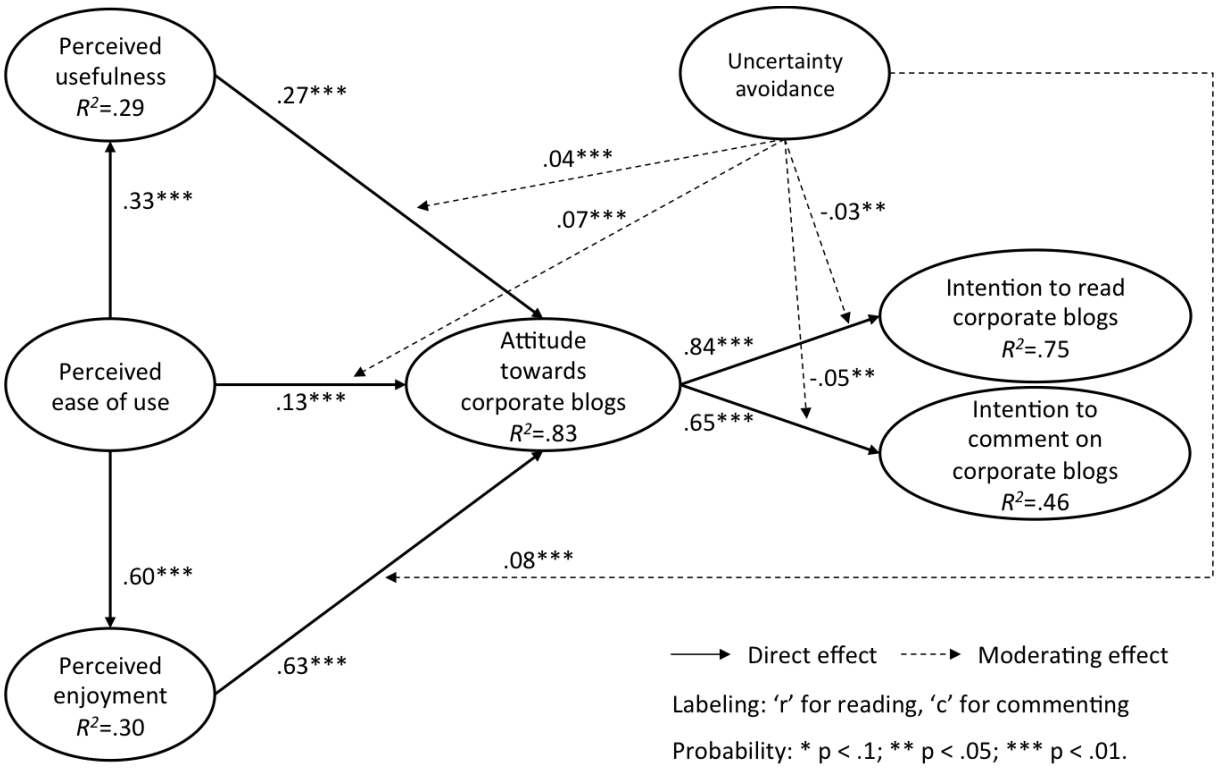
4.4 Discussion

In this study, the applicability of the technology acceptance model to the corporate blog context was examinded, and whether or not cultural dimensions moderate the relationships modeled by TAM. This study revealed that the acceptance of corporate blogs by German, Russian and U.S. Internet users can be predicted by an extended TAM. Perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use influenced the users' attitude towards corporate blogs. Attitude influenced the intention to read and comment on corporate blogs, which in turn had a direct impact on actual reading and commenting. In this context, this research found support for the general applicability of the TAM to corporate blogs. In addition, the study identified significant effects for all Hypotheses related to the impact of culture on TAM. Uncertainty avoidance was found to moderate TAM relationships in several ways. As hypothesized, uncertainty avoidance was found to have a positive effect on attitude formation by strengthening the effect of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment on attitude, while negatively moderating the effect of attitude on the intention to both read and comment on corporate blogs. These findings support the view of uncertainty avoiding individuals as favoring new technologies that reduce uncertainty (for example by providing a more personal and direct communication channel) in general, while still adopting them at a slower pace than less uncertainty avoiding individuals. The main results are summarized in Table 31 and Figure 29 respectively.

Table 31: Overview of findings on corporate blog acceptance and culture

	Hypothesis	Support
H3.1	The positive effect of perceived usefulness on attitude towards corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Partial support (through indirect effects)
H3.2	The positive effect of perceived ease of use on attitude towards corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H3.3	The positive effect of perceived enjoyment on attitude towards corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H3.4a	The positive effect of attitude on intention to read corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H3.4b	The positive effect of attitude on intention to comment on corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes

Figure 29: Resulting model - corporate blog acceptance and culture



4.4.1 Implications for theory

Emerging research has begun to explore adoption issues for corporate blogs. Very little research has been conducted to understand how the technology acceptance differs between countries and cultures.

In keeping with the predictions, the relationships proposed by the basic TAM as well as the extension by cultural dimensions were supported. Consequently, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of the effect of cultural dimensions on technology acceptance. This study integrated these two research areas, focusing on the national culture of German, Russian, and U.S. Internet users. Such integration is of particular relevance given the international proliferation of the Internet, its increasing function as international information and communication channel, and the fading boundaries of business and communication in a globalizing world. Going beyond analyses of inter-country differences, this study showed that individual cultural dimensions moderate technology acceptance, supporting the conclusion of Straub et al. (1994, 1997) that the benefits of accounting for cultural dimensions during the data collection and analysis processes by far outweigh the costs of these measures, given the depth of the gained insights.

The first major contribution of this study is the empirical test of the utility and applicability of an extended TAM framework to examine the acceptance of corporate

blogs. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study that utilizes the TAM to explain corporate blog acceptance. Previous corporate blog research has investigated in particular the effect of corporate blog usage on economic outcomes, such as purchase intention. The study showed that the basic TAM relationships are supported across countries. These findings supported previous results for blogs and other social media applications, in that corporate blog perceived ease of use significantly impacted perceived usefulness, which in turn significantly affected corporate blog adoption. Furthermore, this study is one of the first to consider a hedonic component (perceived enjoyment) within the corporate blog domain, as it has been suggested as being an important determinant of the adoption of social media. The results demonstrate that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment significantly influenced the attitude towards corporate blogs, showing a larger path coefficient from enjoyment to attitude than from usefulness and ease of use to attitude. Therefore, this

study showed that perceived enjoyment may have a large impact on the adoption of companies' corporate blogs, which may be due to the more social character of this marketing and corporate communication medium as compared to other communication channels. The results suggest that corporate blogs may have strong enjoyment functionality, and this may have contributed to a degree of enjoyment experienced by potential users of corporate blogs.

While the test of the utility of the basic TAM and it's extension have contributed to our understanding of the corporate blog domain, the primary contribution lies in the identification and examination of the potentially important role of cultural dimensions in forming favorable believes and attitudes toward corporate blogs, as well as use intention. This study demonstrated that cultural dimensions – in particular uncertainty avoidance do in fact have a significant impact corporate blog acceptance, positively moderating the relationships between cognitive elements perceived usefulness, enjoyment and ease of use on attitude, and negatively moderating the effect of attitude on use intention (reading and commenting). The findings confirmed that cultural dimensions can lead to a more positive or negative attitude and use intention towards corporate blogs.

4.4.2 Implications for practice

The results also have several implications for practice. First of all, the results indicate that by ensuring the usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment of corporate blogs, firms can influence the attitude and intention towards the corporate blog in a positive manner. Thus, firms that focus on the aspects of usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment increase the acceptance of a corporate blog. In particular, these results show that in the corporate blog context enjoyment plays a critical role in the adop-

tion process. Second, the study results indicate that corporate blog acceptance is significantly influenced by cultural dimensions. Consequently, corporate blogging practices and experiences cannot simply be transferred to other institutional contexts. While it might be tempting to simply transfer an established corporate blog concept from one institutional setting to another, corporate blog acceptance, i.e. reading and commenting, will differ between (and to some extent presumably within) countries, as cultural dimensions influence how a corporate blog's characteristics such as usefulness and enjoyment influence the users' attitudes, and usage intention. Strategies related to design, content, and structure that are successful in one country or for one specific target group might be doomed to fail in other contexts. Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of culture can be used as the basis to assess target group specifics. These results allow firms to better tailor corporate bogs to target group characteristics. Companies can use these findings to either improve existing corporate blogging activities, or to design better concepts and strategies when establishing new corporate blogs. The results show that corporate blogs are in principal better suited for uncertainty-avoiding audiences as they highly value the more transparent and personal communication style as expressed by the positive moderation between cognitive TAM elements and attitude. At the same time, they need to be more encouraged to use corporate blogs as a higher attitude does not necessarily result in higher use intention among uncertainty-avoiding individuals, as they need to get used to this form of communication. Such audience would require specific measures to promote usage (for example promoting them through contests, or better integrating them with traditional communication activities such as traditional corporate websites). On the other hand, the positive effect of long-term orientation on corporate blog acceptance shows the particular usefulness of corporate blogs for customer relationship management in more long-term oriented cultures. The visibility of corporate blog authors and the opportunity to engage in actual conversations with a company and its employees through the blog, cater to these individuals' needs for personal contact and longer-term connections. Vice versa, in order to increase usage in more short-term oriented societies, additional measures to promote usage might be needed (see above). Consequently, one can object the large set of background literature that often highlights the simplicity of and little effort required for developing a corporate presence in social media (Owyang, 2009), as these findings show that thorough preparation – in particular a detailed target group assessment and a well-grounded blog concept and design – are worthwhile. These may increase the costs of social media campaigns and corporate blogs in particular, but will make the activity more sustainable and successful in the long run.

Regarding control variables, the findings also have a range of implications for corporate blogging practices. Regarding age, older Internet users find corporate blogs more useful and enjoyable, resulting in a higher attitude and use intentions. This

implies that, corporate blogs serve as good tools to engage older Internet users, provided that they are sufficiently easy to use also for older audiences. Important implications also derive from the effect of blogging. While bloggers find corporate blogs less enjoyable than non-bloggers, they regard them as more useful and have both more favorable attitude and higher use intention. Consequently, corporate blogs can be effectively utilized to connect to bloggers – people that are regarded as important multipliers ion the Internet.

4.4.3 Limitations and future research directions

Some limitations derive from the collection and the composition of the dataset underlying the analyses. First, a bias existed because the sample was self-selected from Internet users that were mostly recruited from a set of online social networks, implying a limited representativeness with respect to the whole population. While the derived cultural differences are mostly in line with Hofstede's (2001) findings, researchers have pointed out that globalization and globalized communication networks such as the Internet lead to an increasing convergence of cultural values and characteristics. This effect is strongest among younger generation Internet users. Consequently, the derived sample cannot be seen as representative for the whole population, and implications can only be derived for the group of Internet users. Second, it is not possible to isolate actual differences in corporate blogging practices between countries. These differences inevitably exist, resulting in varying associations with the term "corporate blog" by Internet users. Last but not least, some caution should also be used when generalizing the findings or when transferring the approach to other countries. While this study found the TAM to be valid for all three countries under consideration, McCoy (2007) found significant problems when researching technology acceptance in a range of countries, indicating that the model might not produce satisfying results in countries with rather extreme cultural characteristics such as very low uncertainty avoidance or very high power distance. A transfer of these findings to such countries might thus entail additional limitations. Despite these limitations, the current study represents an initial step in exploring the possible antecedents of corporate blog acceptance.

Extensions of this research seem promising in at least two directions. First, it is worthwhile to apply the framework to other technologies in order to identify effects of culture on these technologies and to consequently compare findings over a larger set of technologies (as well as countries). Second, additional research is necessary with respect to the corporate blog context, in order to identify specific determinants of perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use, eventually enabling companies to adapt their corporate blogs to the needs of their target groups more precisely.

5 Corporate blog acceptance and system design characteristics

This chapter will analyze the effects of corporate blog design on corporate blog acceptance by extending the TAM by six blog design factors identified through an exploratory factor analysis. Consequently, effects of these blog design factors on perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of used are analyzed, and the resulting consequences for technology acceptance research and corporate blogging practices are discussed.

As companies and their stakeholders become more engaged in social media, it is of critical importance for corporations to understand the effect of the communication channels' design characteristics and to anticipate users' responses to new corporate communication offerings such as corporate blogs. With increasing usage of corporate blogs, research in the academic literature is augmenting. Scholars have studied the effects and characteristics of corporate blogs, i.e. how firms can motivate their employees to use corporate blogs (e.g., Wattal *et al.*, 2010) or the effects of corporate blogs on customers' purchase intentions (e.g., Brengman and Karimov, 2012, Hsu and Tsou, 2011, Tran et al., 2012), but little empirical work has examined the arrival process in corporate blogs, namely the factors that motivate individuals to read and participate in corporate blogs. Although recent research has enriched scholars' understanding of the role of engagement and involvement in shaping corporate blogs users' perceptions and intentions (Doyle *et al.*, 2012), we know little about how firms can actually influence already existing and potential blog users toward a more favorable view of the corporate blog and in this way positively affect their intention to use corporate blogs. Thus, increasing understanding about this topic is theoretically and practically important (Baxter and Connolly, 2013). Moreover, prior research utilized a single-country study design, often focusing on North America. Scholars have called for taking a more international approach to more fully understand country-specific differences as well as cross-country similarities in the factors that determine corporate blog usage (Thakur *et al.*, 2013).

In an effort to address the identified gaps in the existing literature, this study aims to develop a framework based on the technology acceptance model and corporate blog design factors that play a role in individuals perception and, therefore, in the successful implementation of corporate blogs. The purpose of this study is threefold: First, this study aims to identify the specific corporate blog design characteristics that positively influence the view of actual and potential corporate blog users. Through the identification and empirical testing of these design characteristics, calls for examining how firms influence the perceptions and decisions of individuals about corporate blogs are acknowledged (Baxter and Connolly, 2013, Lee et al.,

2006, Varadarajan and Yadav, 2009). Thus, the first contribution of this study lies in the extension of current research on corporate blogs with the first large-scale empirical study that examines which corporate blog characteristics positively affect individuals' perceptions of corporate blogs. The second purpose of this study is to examine the specific mechanism that underlies the formation of individuals' perceptions and through which corporate blog design characteristics influence individuals' acceptance of corporate blogs. The literature has primarily focused on direct relationships between corporate blog usage intention and its determinants. Researchers have not comprehensively tested the mechanism through which of those factors, such as the design characteristics, a corporation can actively influence, the perceptions and intentions of individuals toward corporate blogs. Thus, currently little is known about how firms can influence the usability and usefulness of their blogs to cause individuals to hold more positive attitudes and intentions toward the adoption of corporate blogs. By examining the process through which corporate blog design characteristics affect individuals' intention to read and respond to corporate blogs, a more complete and more detailed picture of the process from whence positive perceptions arise is provided, an area which has been identified as being understudied in this research field (Baxter and Connolly, 2013). Therefore, the second contribution lies in the identification of the mechanism through which firms can actively influence the perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment, ultimately resulting in more favorable attitudes and intention towards corporate blogs. Finally, the third purpose of this study is to assess the cross-country applicability of the developed framework using a unique multinational sample with a dataset in three countries. This study is the first study that provides a cross-country comparison of the factors that determine the intent to read corporate blogs. In this way, this study contributes to the existing literature by improving our understanding of the factors determining individuals' acceptance of corporate blogs in different countries and provide a cross-national validation of the proposed model, which is important to better understand individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions cross-nationally.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. First, an overview of the related literature is provided in order to develop theoretical arguments that explain the effect of corporate blog design factors on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment, which mediate the relation between the design factors and individuals' attitude towards corporate blogs as well as their intentions towards reading and participating in corporate blogs. Then the hypotheses are empirically tested and the study's contributions to theory and practice are discussed. Finally, the limitations of this study and the perspectives for future research are discussed.

5.1 Theoretical background: Design characteristics in the corporate blog context

A blog can be defined as a website that is frequently updated and typically displays content in an interactive format with dated entries in reverse chronological order, and can be written by an individual or an organization (Blood, 2004, Schmidt, 2007b). The term *corporate blog* refers to a blog that is established by a company rather than a private individual and is thus used for professional (and – in the business context – corporate) purposes. As stakeholders represent different groups with different interests, two different forms of corporate blogs can be distinguished: (1) external corporate blogs which can be read by individuals outside the corporation; and (2) internal corporate blogs which are only accessible by individuals within the firm. External corporate blogs can be used as a platform, i.e., to promote new products or services, to provide feedback for customers, and make purchasing suggestions. Internal corporate blog sites can be used as a platform for a firm's employees, as an internal communication channel to share information, as well as a tool to improve knowledge management within the organization. Further characteristics that distinguish a corporate blog from private blogging activities regard the inclusion into the company's communication strategy, which can translate into the strategic selection of authors as well as the choice of topics and content according to the company's communication agenda and commercial interests rather than authors' individual choices and opinions. Consequently, corporate blogs and their content are often criticized as having a low credibility among Internet users (Evans et al., 2008), while others argue that they are more credible in nature than other corporate communication channels such as corporate websites or printed publications (Seltzer and Mitrook, 2007a). In this context, prior research shows that more personal and credible corporate blogs are more successful (Yang and Lim, 2009). Typical uses of corporate blogs can be found in various areas of corporate communication including customer relations (marketing), investor relations, and media relation (Brecht et al., 2010), resulting in a need to understand the varying effects of corporate blog characteristics on target groups' perceptions and attitudes. While the number of companies using such corporate blogs for communication with stakeholders has continuously increased over the past years (Lee et al., 2008, e.g., Brecht et al., 2010), currently only 87, i.e., 17.4 percent, of the Fortune 500 companies use public corporate blogs (Cass, 2012). Table 32 summarizes the key differences between private and corporate blogs, showing that these regard management and strategy considerations rather than technical and design aspects.

Table 32: Differences between private and corporate blogs

	Private blog	Corporate blog
Authors	Private individuals, typically self-selected, working on their own	Employees, selected by the company, often with communication or marketing background
Responsibility	Individual author	Company, usually corporate communication or marketing department
Content	Selected by the author, depending on his/her preferences and opinion	Selected by the company depending on its communication agenda
Purpose	Serving the individual's goals, often intrinsic (see below)	Supporting the company's communication agenda and goals, mostly extrinsic (see below)
Motivation	Documenting the author's life Expressing opinion/commenting Coming to terms with issues (catharsis) Thinking through writing Building/joining a community	Reaching target groups Communicate corporate topics/views Quick reaction/crisis communication Providing outside stakeholders a platform Interact with target groups personally

While previous corporate blog research focused on either abstract strategic considerations (general applications of corporate blogs), or individual corporate blog design aspects such as topics or formality, current research lacks a general corporate blog acceptance model. Such a model needs to integrate strategic aspects, such as attitude of and usage by target groups, with practical design aspects of corporate blogging. Out of the various research streams on information system usage, the technology acceptance model (TAM) – originally introduced by Davis (1986, 1989) as an extension of Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action – has become the most widely used theory to explore the factors influencing the acceptance of an information technology by users (King and He, 2006, Lee et al., 2003, Venkatesh et al., 2003). According to the original TAM, a user's attitude towards a technology (ATT) is determined by the user's perception of the usefulness (PU) and the ease of use (PEU) of the technology, which derive from the technology's various design features. The user's attitude then determines the actual use (USE). As information technologies became more complex and varied, and researchers became interested in other effects on technology adoption, the TAM was continuously extended, for example by use intention (INT) which serves as the intermediary between attitude and actual usage (Mathieson, 1991). In addition, various extensions were proposed depending on the type of information technology including social norms and influence (Hung and Chang, 2005, Luarna and Lin, 2005), and intrinsic motivation, i.e., perceived enjoyment (PE) that can have an impact on attitude exceeding the impact of usefulness (Davis et al., 1992, Hsu and Lin, 2008, Heijden, 2003).

With an increasing number of social media applications and their quickly growing popularity among Internet users, a small stream of research has emerged, focusing particularly on the use and acceptance of various social media within the TAM framework. In general, these studies confirmed the TAM's validity for the social media context, but found different additional drivers of acceptance. Analyzing the acceptance of a multi-functional web portal, Heijden (2003) found perceived enjoyment to be a key element of the portal's acceptance, and found a significant influence of the portal's visual attractiveness on perceived usefulness and enjoyment. Paris *et al.* (2010) confirmed the important role of perceived enjoyment for users' acceptance of Facebook and identified trust, credibility, and relationship-enabling functions as additional system design factors that positively influence acceptance. For the acceptance of private blogs, Hsu and Lin (2008) identified the author's reputation and the possibility to establish relationships and community as key factors. A key consideration in TAM research was the effect of design characteristics, being already introduced into technology acceptance theory at very early stages. Such design characteristics are modeled to affect perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and (later) perceived enjoyment. Davis *et al.* (1993) found that particularly the perceived ease of use was affected by the system's design. Lederer *et al.* (2000) found significant effects of system design on the acceptance of World Wide Web services. Their study identified the ease of understanding and ease of finding as significant factors for the perceived ease of use and information quality as significant factor for perceived usefulness. In the context of corporate blogs, five main sets of blog characteristics can be identified, whose theoretical integration with the corporate blog acceptance model will be discussed subsequently.

Davis (1993) argues that system design features have a direct effect on the perceived ease of use and the perceived usefulness – the beliefs that shape an individual's attitudes towards a specific behavior. In the context of corporate blogs, perceived usefulness can be defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using a corporate blog would enhance the effectiveness of specific actions related to the corporation, i.e., the purchase task as a consumer. Content characteristics refer to the specific content published on a corporate blog, such as the topics, different content types, or the value of the actual published information. Content value captures characteristics that relate to the value as well as the credibility of information on a corporate blog. In today's information rich environment, the relevance and the quality of information have become key criteria for individuals' information selection and consumption (Eppler and Mengis, 2004). Being challenged by the vast amount of available information and media channels, individuals simply ignore all information that they regard as irrelevant, useless, or inauthentic and unreliable. For companies, this implies that in order to be heard by their target audiences they have to produce information that is useful, relevant, and credible to their audiences,

which is of particular importance for proactively consumed digital media (Argenti and Barnes, 2009). In this context, content characteristics were identified as determinants of corporate blog success, e.g., by Ahuja and Medury (2010) and Ma and Zhang (2007). Overall, such characteristics can be hypothesized to positively affect perceived usefulness:

Hypothesis 4.1: Corporate blogs' perceived usefulness is positively affected by the content value of a corporate blog.

In the context of corporate blogs, perceived ease of use can be defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using corporate blogs would be free of effort and would enhance the specific action that is related to the corporation. Blog management reflects the timeliness and professionalism of a corporate blog. In the real-time communication environment on the Internet, digital corporate communication needs to consider its audiences' expectations and use practices. This in particular regards Internet users' preferences for current and up-to-date information, the amount and complexity of provided information, and the use of multi-media elements, all of which companies can influence through digital communication management strategies (Argenti and Barnes, 2009). In the corporate blog context, management characteristics refer to the company's or editor's management style and practices. Several previous studies assessed corporate blog management issues such as the volume and frequency of posting, the length of posts, or the professionalism of design (e.g., Ahuja and Medury, 2010, Heijden, 2003, Ma and Zhang, 2007). Within the TAM framework, such design characteristics can be hypothesized to be positively related to perceived ease of use:

Hypothesis 4.2: Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by blog management characteristics.

Usability relates to the structure of and navigation opportunities on a corporate blog. The management aspect comprises both design and strategy issues that impact how easy or difficult users find the use of the communication channel. Particularly in the online environment, usability is influenced by the organization and design of content on the site, the ability to navigate through the site, and the actual aesthetic design of the site (Djonov, 2007, Cyr et al., 2006). By considering and optimizing these factors, companies can support individuals that wish to use the site and create a simpler usage experience. Consequently, corporate blog usability characteristics include elements that determine how easy or difficult it is to use a corporate blog as a reader. This can for example refer to navigation features and subscription opportunities (e.g., Cho and Huh, 2007), or the structure of the blog and its content (Nielsen, 2010b). Information technology research has shown that this is a key de-

terminant of perceived ease of use, implying a positive relationship between the existence of such features and perceived ease of use:

Hypothesis 4.3: Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by usability characteristics of corporate blogs.

In the context of corporate blogs, perceived enjoyment can be defined as the extent to which the activity of using a corporate blog creates excitement and is perceived as being enjoyable. Entertainment in general is a major motive for individuals' Internet and social media usage (Correa et al., 2010). The overall attractiveness' of online communication activities is thus not only determined by its usefulness, as discussed above, but also by the level of emotional engagement with users, which in the corporate context is achieved through creating enjoyable and amusing content (Argenti and Barnes, 2009). Entertainment value is associated to the amount of entertainment and the intensity of discussion on a corporate blog. Huang *et al.* (2008) showed the importance of the entertainment motive for reading blogs. In this context, an audience's entertainment is related to various corporate blog characteristics such as the various media formats employed, the predominant writing style, or the actual content (Stocker and Tochtermann, 2008). They can be considered important determinants of perceived entertainment value, hypothesizing a positive effect:

Hypothesis 4.4: Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment is positively affected by the entertainment value of blog content.

Interaction relates to readers' ability to interact with the corporate blog authors and editors. Interaction covers aspects of relationship building and interactivity on a corporate blog, which in addition to the above discussed entertainment factors can emotionally engage users and thus affect perceived enjoyment. In the online environment, such engagement can be achieved through more personal connections between company representatives and the support of lively discussions (Argenti and Barnes, 2009). The personal nature of blogs and blog writing makes them a good tool for companies to interact with their stakeholders (Kelleher and Miller, 2006). Ahuja and Medury (2010), for example, found that companies can increase reader engagement by specifically publishing corporate blog content that stimulates discussion. Cho (2006) highlighted the importance of author visibility and disclosure, such as author pictures or real names, implying a positive effect on the level of company-reader interaction on corporate blogs. Consequently, such interaction characteristics can be hypothesized to positively affect entertainment value (Gustavsen and Tilley, 2003, Kelleher and Miller, 2006):

Hypothesis 4.5: Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment is positively affected by the level of interaction between Internet users and corporate blog editors and authors.

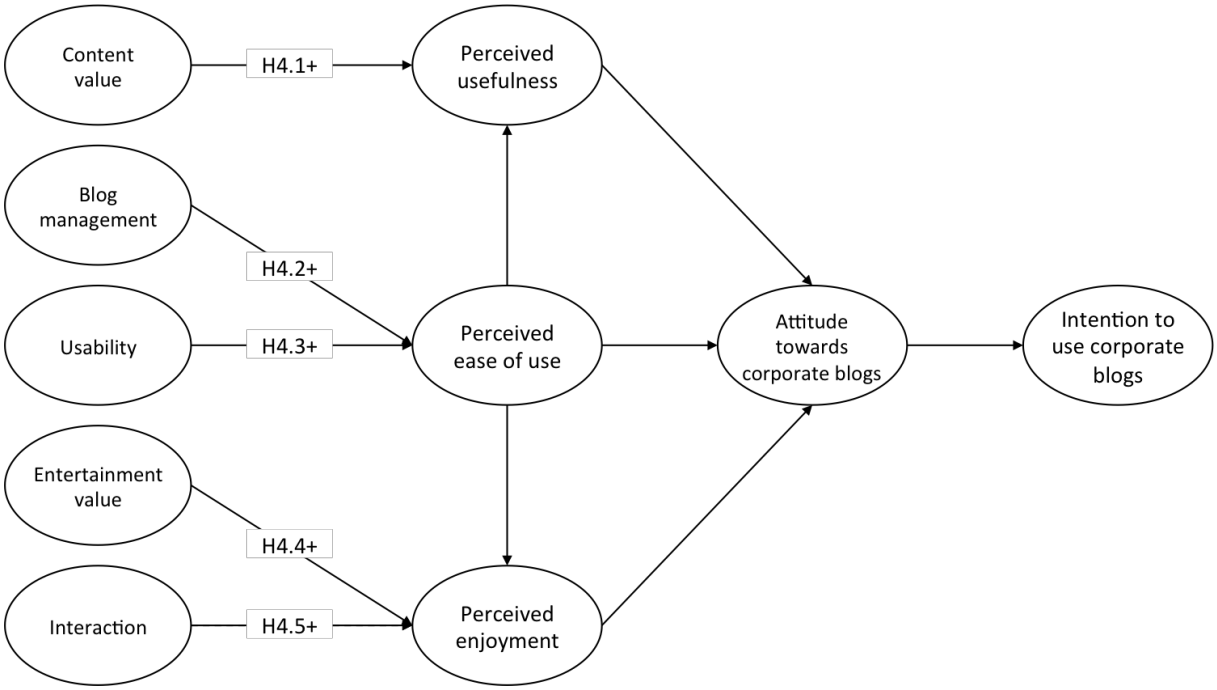
In addition to the direct effects identified and hypothesized above, technology acceptance literature stipulates several mediation effects by cognitive factors as well as attitude (e.g., Burton-Jones and Hubona, 2006). As outlined above, system design characteristics are assumed to affect usage intention indirectly through the three cognitive factors perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of use (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). Consequently, two additional hypotheses are identified to test for the model's mediation effects:

Hypothesis 4.6a: Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' attitude towards corporate blogs.

Hypothesis 4.6b: Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment and attitude mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' intention to use corporate blogs.

Figure 30 provides an overview of the extended model with the developed Hypotheses:

Figure 30: Conceptual model - corporate blog acceptance with design factors



5.2 Methodology

5.2.1 Sample and data collection procedure

To investigate the applicability of the adapted technology acceptance model and to analyze the system design factors that influence corporate blog acceptance, an online questionnaire survey was carried out in three languages among Internet users during 2010. When conducting a multi-country study, it is necessary to account for several methodological aspects such as the translation of the survey instrument, the data collection procedure, and measurement invariance across countries (e.g., Harzing et al., 2013). The three selected languages English, German, and Russian were chosen to attract Internet users from mainly three countries – Germany, Russia, and the U.S. – that belong to differentiable cultural clusters as for example identified by Ronen and Shenkar (1985). These three countries were selected based on their relevance to multinational enterprises, the relevance of social media in these countries, and the size of the population that is using the Internet. The U.S. was selected as the key country for international management research. The country features the highest level of social media penetration in terms of overall status and role for the population (Nielsen, 2012), while being home for the majority of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter. Germany was included as the largest member and market within the European Union (EuroStat, 2013). Furthermore, it has a high level of Internet penetration and substantial overall social media adoption among consumers as well as businesses (Psychogiopoulou, 2012). Russia gains in importance to international business as an emerging market and has the most engaged social networking audience worldwide (Block, 2010). The questionnaire was implemented using a local installation of the open-source software Lime Survey (Schmitz, 2011), which supports multi-language surveys. The software allows to switch the language according to the participant's preferences and tracks both the location of the participant (based on IP-address) and the referring website. The data was collected simultaneously for the three countries. Participants were invited through placing links on several social networking sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and vKontakte, which is particularly popular in Russia. During the course of the study, 1,854 data sets were collected. Of these, 813 were submitted using the German survey, 636 using the English survey, and 405 using the Russian survey. After cleaning for incomplete questionnaires, questionnaires from users outside of the three focus countries, participants referred by a specific corporate blog, as well as multivariate non-normality, 992 data sets were retained for analysis. Table 33 provides demographic information of the sample.

Table 33: Demographic profile

Measure/item	Germany		Russia		U.S.	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Age	Ø 32.07		Ø 29.37		Ø 31.94	
< 20 years	7	1.63%	7	3.27%	8	2.30%
20-29 years	214	49.77%	134	62.62%	174	50.00%
30-39 years	120	27.91%	53	24.77%	102	29.31%
40-49 years	71	16.51%	14	6.54%	45	12.93%
50-59 years	15	3.49%	4	1.87%	17	4.89%
60+ years	3	.70%	2	.95%	2	.57%
Gender						
Female	129	30.00%	73	34.11%	112	32.18%
Male	301	70.00%	141	65.89%	236	67.82%
Education	Ø 17.45		Ø 17.31		Ø 16.95	
0-10 years	8	1.65%	7	3.27%	8	2.30%
11-15 years	66	15.34%	26	12.15%	63	18.10%
16-20 years	337	78.37%	176	82.24%	271	77.87%
> 20 years	19	4.42%	5	2.34%	6	1.72%
Internet experience	Ø 11.11		Ø 9.19		Ø 11.44	
0-5 years	13	3.02%	23	10.75%	9	2.59%
5.5-10 years	184	42.79%	123	57.48%	132	37.93%
10.5-15 years	196	45.58%	65	30.37%	177	50.86%
15.5-20 years	37	8.60%	3	1.40%	30	8.62%
Internet intensity	Ø 5.59		Ø 4.68		Ø 5.71	
0-5 hours per day	230	53.49%	140	65.42%	183	52.59%
5.5-10 hours	167	38.84%	61	28.50%	140	40.23%
10.5-15 hours	32	7.44%	11	5.14%	24	6.90%
15.5-20 hours	1	.23%	2	.95%	1	.29%
Blogger						
Yes	187	43.49%	71	33.18%	124	35.63%
No	243	56.51%	143	66.82%	224	64.37%

The questionnaire was initially developed in English. Following the procedure suggested in the literature (Brislin, 1986), the English questionnaire was translated to German and Russian respectively and back-translated into English to ensure linguistic as well as conceptual equivalence. For each translation, three native speakers were involved in the translation process, using one individual for the translation, another individual for the translation back into English, and again another individual in order to solve differences in the translations of the two translators. Before the main survey, a pretest and a pilot study to validate the instrument were performed. The pre-test included 10 Ph.D. students (from non-Internet related research fields) working at a German corporation. Finally, a pilot test was performed. The link to the study was sent to the network of 200 Ph.D. students at a German corporation. With 112 completed surveys, a first test of the TAM-related Hypotheses as well as test-wise confirmatory factor analyses could be performed. Overall, comments and evaluations of the pre-test were satisfactory, with some minor modifications to the questionnaire conducted based on the results.

The core TAM variables, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, perceived ease of use, attitude as well as usage intention were based on the work of Hsu and Lin (2008), which is an extension of the basic TAM (Davis, 1989) to account for intrinsic motivation (Moon and Kim, 2001, Venkatesh et al., 2002) to the blog context. Slight adaptations (terminology) were conducted to better fit the items to the corporate blog context. Perceived usefulness was measured by four items, perceived enjoyment by three items, ease of use and attitude by three items (for more detailed information on items and fit please refer to Table 37). For all variables, the items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree').

Based on the identified previous studies related to blogs (e.g., Cass and Carl, 2006, Chu and Kamal, 2008, Fleck et al., 2007a, Herring and Paolillo, 2006, Scheidt and Wright, 2004) and other online and social media (e.g., Heijden, 2003, Lederer et al., 2000), the survey included 30 items on blog characteristics. Using SPSS 19, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the whole sample. For this EFA, Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization was used. For the sample, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olin Criterion is calculated as .9, signaling excellent sample adequacy as it exceeds the recommended value of .6. The Bartlett-test of sphericity also renders the sample appropriate with $p < .001$ for $\chi^2 = 18{,}318.68$ at 435 degrees of freedom. Six factors were extracted using the Kaiser criterion (Eigenvalue > 1) and screeplot inspection, explaining 63.88 percent of the sample variance.

Table 34: Exploratory factor analysis of corporate blog design factors

Construct items	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	.80					
8	.78					
25	.70					
30	.68			.43		
5	.64					
12	.54					
29	.51			.41		
11	.50					
23	.48					
15		.47				
16		.83				
14		.75				
13		.63				
10		.62				
3		.53				
2			.79			
1			.79			
4			.78			
17			.75			
7			.66			
28				.79		
26				.79		
27				.64		
22				.56		
24				.40		
18					.79	
20					.75	
21					.73	
19					.70	
9						.83
Eigenvalues						
Total	10.01	2.78	2.23	1.60	1.41	1.15
% of variance	33.36%	9.25%	7.42%	5.33%	4.69%	60.05%
Cumulative %	33.36%	42.61%	50.03%	55.36%	60.05%	63.88%

Notes: Rotation converged in six iterations. Extraction method: Principal components analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Displayed are factor loadings > .4.

As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, six constructs were identified and consequently related to the factors derived from theory: content value, entertainment value, blog management, interaction, usability, and marketing massages. The sixth factor, marketing messages, seems unrelated to the five constructs derived from theory. To identify the most appropriate factor model, three alternative models have been calculated for every factor separately. In general, factor loadings below .4 are considered weak and above .6 are strong (Hair et al., 1995). Consequently, the strong factor model comprises only items with factor loadings above .6. The moderate factor model includes items with factor loadings above .5 and the weak model includes all items with loadings above .4. For all three models the associated Cronbach-alphas were calculated. Together with a qualitative analysis of factor items, the Cronbach-alphas were then used to decide on the individual factor structures. In particular, three constructs showed different item numbers when evaluated by the respective factor loadings, i.e., content value, entertainment value and interaction. Regarding content value, the moderate factor construct clearly outperformed the strong and the weak model in terms of Cronbach-alphas. This finding was supported by a qualitative assessment of the associated items. Consequently, the moderate factor model with seven items was retained. Judging by Cronbach-alphas, the factor entertainment value performed better over all three sub-samples and the total sample when only five items were retained instead of six. The 6th item (Corporate blogs frequently feature videos) differed from the other five factors, resulting in an identical judgment to drop this item from the construct. Consequently, the strong factor model with only five items was adopted for this construct. The factor interaction featured three items in the strong factor model, four items in the moderate factor model and five items in the weak factor model. A comparison of the models based on Cronbach-alphas showed a clearly inferior performance of the strong factor model. When comparing the moderate and the weak model, the moderate model performed better for the German, U.S., and total sample, while the weak model performed better for the Russian sample. A qualitative assessment of the 6th item (Authors of corporate blogs are personally visible) showed that it only had a weak relation to the other items. Consequently, the moderate factor model was adopted for the further analysis. The factor marketing messages – although only measured by a single item – was included in the further analysis owing to the significant role of marketing messages for corporate communications strategy and the observed skepticism of Internet users towards marketing messages in corporate blogging activities (Evans et al., 2008, Yang and Lim, 2009).

Table 35: Corporate blog design factors

Corporate blog design factor	Description
1 Content value (CV)	Measures the extent to which information provided in corporate blogs is relevant and credible to the reader, including perceptions of the authors and companies.
2 Entertainment value (EV)	The degree to which corporate blogs feature content that is entertaining (including writing style and media usage) and how they relate to other discussions on the Internet.
3 Blog management (BM)	The extent to which corporate blogs are run professionally, indicated by the frequency and timeliness of blog content, as well as professional blog design.
4 Interaction (IN)	Measures the degree to which companies encourage and value relationships that can be initiated with a blog.
5 Usability (US)	Measures how easy corporate blogs are to navigate, to use and to understand.
6 Marketing messages (MM)	The extent to which corporate blogs are used to display marketing messages.

The study controlled for a range of demographic and use-related factors that were found to be related to technology acceptance and the effect of system design characteristics in previous research (Venkatesh et al., 2003, Burton-Jones and Hubona, 2006, Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). These control variables included age (in years), gender (dichotomous variable coded as 0 for female and 1 for male), education (in years of full-time education, including school, college, and university as well as equivalent studies, but without vocational training), Internet usage history and frequency, and association with a blog. Moreover, the questionnaire included questions about citizenship and citizenship at birth to control for sample homogeneity.

5.2.2 Measurement model, measurement invariance, and common method bias

In a first step, the data sets were examined country-by-country using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). AMOS 18 and the maximum likelihood estimation procedure were used for the analyses. Given the chi-square (χ^2) statistic's inadequacy for tests of model fit for large sample sizes (> 250) (MacCallum et al., 1996, Cheung and Rensvold, 2002), this study focused on a set of fit indices to provide a complete assessment of model adequacy (Byrne, 2009, Browne and Cudeck, 1993, Hu and Bentler, 1999). In particular, the comparative fit index (CFI)was used as well as the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). For CFI, values of .9 or higher are considered acceptable (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). For RMSEA, values below .08 are considered to indicate good fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). For SRMR, values below .08 are considered acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The internal consistency of the measurement model was evaluated using composite reliability (CR > .7), average variance extracted (AVE > .5) and Cronbach's alpha (α > .60) (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). As shown in Table 36 the values of the CFI for CFA were above the .9

threshold and RMSEA as well as SRMR values were below the .08. Overall, the CFA results of the revised measurement model indicate acceptable fit.

Table 36: Confirmatory factor analysis

	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	NFI	GFI	RMSEA	RMR	SRMR	ΔCFI	ΔRMSEA	ΔSRMR
CFA results												
Total	3962.3	601	.000	.914	.891	.894	.077	.059	.052			
Germany	2436.7	601	.000	.919	.911	.903	.075	.055	.058			
Russia	1069.3	601	.000	.945	.922	.919	.062	.048	.048			
U.S.	1578.4	601	.000	.934	.909	.906	.069	.058	.049			
MGCFA results												
Configural invariance	5415.3	1803	.000	.908	.937	.901	.043	.040	.032			
Full metric invariance	5520.4	1861	.000	.902	.935	.894	.045	.042	.038	.006	.002	.006
Partial metric invariance	5477.2	1840	.000	.907	.935	.897	.045	.041	.034	.001	.002	.002
Full scalar invariance	5953.7	1937	.000	.894	.928	.863	.051	.053	.048	.013	.006	.014

Notes: Germany *N* = 430, Russia *N* = 214, U.S. *N* = 348, pooled sample *N* = 992.

In a second step, it was checked whether the identified factors were first-order or second-order constructs. Again, the CFA method was used on the six extracted factors with a common design factor as secondary construct. The analysis showed that the extracted factors are first-order constructs, as the second-order construct showed unsatisfactory fit (χ^2 = 190.6; *df* = 9; CFI = .85; RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .17).

Following the recommendations in the literature to test for measurement invariance when comparing different groups (e.g., Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998, Vandenberg and Lance, 2000), in a third step, measurement invariance was examined using multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) to test the invariance of the measurement models using AMOS 18 and maximum likelihood estimation (Byrne, 2009). While metric invariance is necessary for comparisons of factor structures and constructs across national contexts, scalar invariance is necessary for comparisons of means (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). Given the inadequacy of the χ^2 difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$) for large samples (Cheung and Rensvold, 2002), the recommendations in the literature were followed (Chen, 2007, Cheung and Rensvold, 2002) and the difference in CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR between models was used to statistically compare the measurement models. The difference between the models for loading invariance and intercept invariance should be smaller than .01 for the CFI and the RMSEA (Chen, 2007, Cheung and Rensvold, 2002). For the SRMR the change should be smaller than .025 for the loading invariance and smaller than .005 for the intercept variance given the sample size and unequal samples in the current study (Chen, 2007). To compare relationships across the three countries, the measurement of constructs needs to show at least partial metric invariance (e.g., Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). The results for

the configural model – as displayed in Table 36 – show a satisfactory fit (χ^2 = 5415.3; *df* = 1803; CFI = .908; RMSEA = .043, SRMR = .032). The results of the metric model show acceptable fit (χ^2 = 5520.4; *df* = 1861; CFI = .902; RMSEA = .045; SRMR = .038). The difference between the configural model and the metric model was not significant for the change in CFI (ΔCFI = .006; ΔRMSEA = .002; ΔSRMR = .006), indicating that the factor structure can be considered to be fully invariant across countries (Chen, 2007, Cheung and Rensvold, 2002). The results of the partial metric invariance model indicate that the constructs were measured adequately across countries (χ^2 = 5477.2; *df* = 1840; CFI = .907; RMSEA = .045; SRMR = .034; ΔCFI = .001; ΔRMSEA = .002; ΔSRMR = .002). The results show an inadequate fit of the scalar model (χ^2 = 5953.7; *df* = 1937; CFI = .894; RMSEA = .051; SRMR = .048). The comparison between the metric model and the scalar model (ΔCFI = .013; ΔRMSEA = .006; ΔSRMR = .014) shows that the data did not fit the requirement for scalar invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998)

With all items are being measured at the same time using a single self-reported questionnaire, the findings may be susceptible to common method bias, which is prevalent in management research (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003), information systems research (Malhotra *et al.*, 2006) as well as cross-cultural research (Chang *et al.*, 2010). To overcome the concern of common method bias in the survey design, questionnaire items were arranged so that the dependent variable followed rather than preceded the independent variables, and a common latent factor was included in the SEM analysis to address common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003, Podsakoff and Organ, 1986), with resulting common variance below 2% for the three countries, indicating that the sample does not display common method variance issues. In addition, a single-factor test was conducted using SPSS 19, factoring all indicators in the study to see if a single common factor emerges, indicative of common method variance (Harman, 1967), with the resulting explained variance below the .5 cutoff-value (single factor explaining 22.4% of the variance for the pooled, 21.1% for the German, 23.0% for the Russian, and 23.6% for the U.S. sample). The item measure and validity assessment is presented in Table 37.

Table 37: Item measure and validity assessment

Measures	Standardized factor loadings		
	Germany	Russia	U.S.
Perceived usefulness			
(Germany: CR .92 = AVE = .85, α = .94; Russia: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .95; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .86, α = .95)			
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs enable me to better accomplish my work/learning/leisure activities	.92	.92	.93
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would improve my work/learning/leisure performance	.93	.94	.92
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would enhance my work/learning/life effectiveness	.91	.92	.93
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs can increase my productivity when performing my work/learning/life activities	.93	.93	.93
Perceived ease of use			
(Germany: CR = .82, AVE = .69, α = .91; Russia: CR = .87, AVE = .76, α = .84; U.S.: CR = .87, AVE = .78, α = .85)			
Corporate blogs are easy to use	.69	.82	.83
Learning to use corporate blogs is easy	.84	.89	.91
Overall I believe corporate blogs are easy to use	.95	.92	.92
Perceived enjoyment			
(Germany: CR = .88, AVE = .79, α = .92; Russia: CR = .92, AVE = .86, α = .92; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .87, α = .92)			
While reading and commenting on corporate blogs I experienced pleasure	.93	.94	.95
The process of reading and commenting on corporate blogs is enjoyable	.81	.88	.89
I have fun reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.93	.95	.95
Attitude towards using			
(Germany: CR = .95, AVE = .85, α = .91; Russia: CR = .92, AVE = .85, α = .91; U.S.: CR = .93, AVE = .87, α = .92)			
I like reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.90	.93	.94
I feel good about reading and commenting on corporate blogs	.93	.93	.94
Overall my attitude towards corporate blogs is favorable	.83	.91	.91
Intention read			
(Germany: CR = .94, AVE = .88, α = .86; Russia: CR = .91, AVE = .84, α = .81; U.S.: CR = .94, AVE = .89, α = .88)			
It is worth reading corporate blogs	.94	.92	.95
I will read corporate blogs in the future	.94	.92	.95
Content value			
(Germany: CR = .75, AVE = .69, α = .87; Russia: CR = .76, AVE = .69, α = .88; U.S.: CR = .78, AVE = .71, α = .90)			
Corporate blogs provide credible information about the companies, their products and activities	.87	.88	.88
Corporate blogs contain interesting information about the companies, their products and activities	.81	.77	.85
Authors of a corporate blog are credible	.83	.89	.86
Corporate blogs increase the companies' credibility	.87	.87	.88
Corporate blogs display representative images of the companies	.75	.75	.74
Corporate blogs provide relevant information about companies, their products and activities*	-	-	-
Posts on corporate blogs are often written in an authentic writing style*	-	-	-
Entertainment value			
(Germany: CR = .77, AVE = .62, α = .85; Russia: CR = .77, AVE = .62, α = .85; U.S.: CR = .78, AVE = .64, α = .86)			
Corporate blogs often discuss topics that are relevant to the blogosphere	.81	.83	.82
Corporate blogs often take up discussions from other blogs or websites	.85	.86	.84
Corporate blogs provide interesting links to other blogs and websites	.77	.74	.79
Posts on corporate blogs are often written in an entertaining writing style	.76	.76	.78
Corporate blogs feature content that is entertaining	.75	.75	.79
Blog management			
(Germany: CR = .73, AVE = .62, α = .81; Russia: CR = .77, AVE = .66, α = .83; U.S.: CR = .73, AVE = .63, α = .80)			
Corporate blogs are regularly updated	.80	.83	.80
Corporate blogs are frequently updated	.87	.86	.83
Corporate blogs frequently feature images	.72	.78	.75
Corporate blogs feature a professional design	.76	.79	.79
Corporate blogs contain timely and up-to-date information about the companies, their products and activities*	-	-	-
Interaction			
(Germany: CR = .81, AVE = .67, α = .84; Russia: CR = .81, AVE = .68, α = .84; U.S.: CR = .81, AVE = .66, α = .83)			
Companies are grateful for feedback and comments on their corporate blogs	.80	.77	.81
Authors of corporate blogs are grateful for comments and feedback	.79	.85	.78
Corporate blogs enable a personal relationship between the companies and blog readers	.86	.86	.85
Corporate blogs enable personal relationships between authors and readers	.83	.81	.81
Usability			
(Germany: CR = .82, AVE = .69, α = .85; Russia: CR = .79, AVE = .66, α = .82; U.S.: CR = .80, AVE = .67, α = .84)			
Corporate blogs are simple to navigate, e.g., through archives, categories, tag clouds	.87	.85	.84
Corporate blogs provide simple subscription opportunities, e.g., RSS-Feeds	.80	.81	.81
Corporate blogs are clearly structured and content is well arranged	.83	.77	.82
Corporate blogs are easy to interact with, e.g., through a comment function or recommendation function for social networks	.82	.81	.80
Marketing messages			
Corporate blogs often contain marketing messages	/	/	/

Notes: Germany *N* = 430, Russia *N* = 214, U.S. *N* = 348, * Items were deleted in the process of the confirmatory factor analysis.

5.3 Analysis and results

5.3.1 Testing the technology acceptance model and blog design effects

Table 38: Descriptive and correlation statistics – pooled and German sample

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1 PU		-	.44	.24	.61	.66	.50	.21	.20	.40	.27	-.11	.13	.07	-.13	.28	.13	.30
2 PE		.49	-	.45	.85	.68	.60	.56	.35	.53	.38	-.15	-.07	-.08	-.14	.14	.06	-.04
3 PEU		.27	.44	-	.49	.50	.38	.24	.47	.26	.48	.08	-.16	-.06	.10	.08	.10	.06
4 ATT		.66	.85	.50	-	.85	.64	.42	.37	.50	.42	-.07	.02	-.03	-.09	.27	.13	.16
5 INT		.68	.70	.51	.85	-	.58	.32	.37	.48	.42	-.01	.06	.06	-.02	.21	.12	.17
6 CV		.55	.61	.39	.65	.60	-	.48	.50	.65	.44	-.11	.02	-.06	-.10	.20	.04	.08
7 EV		.24	.60	.27	.44	.36	.48	-	.33	.45	.40	-.16	.06	-.09	-.15	-.20	-.15	-.28
8 BM		.26	.32	.41	.36	.34	.44	.29	-	.27	.59	.06	-.10	.08	.03	.06	.07	.10
9 IN		.48	.55	.27	.54	.53	.65	.45	.34	-	.42	-.23	.01	-.12	-.18	.21	.03	.09
10 US		.28	.38	.51	.42	.42	.44	.40	.50	.42	-	-.01	-.08	-.05	-.06	.10	.01	.19
11 MM		-.12	-.11	.12	-.04	-.01	-.07	-.11	.11	-.20	.01	-	-.08	.12	.07	-.01	-.06	.01
12 Age		.15	-.00	-.11	.07	.10	.07	.09	.04	.06	-.05	-.05	-	.13	.05	-.02	.15	.11
13 Gender		.05	-.10	-.03	-.04	.04	-.05	-.10	.05	-.11	-.04	.10	.11	-	-.03	.08	.19	.23
14 Education		-.10	-.13	.07	-.08	-.03	-.08	-.13	-.02	-.15	-.06	.02	.08	-.03	-	-.05	.07	-.10
15 Frequency		.32	.15	.15	.31	.26	.23	-.13	.13	.26	.11	.02	.00	.08	-.07	-	.30	.56
16 History		.17	.04	.14	.14	.12	.06	-.10	.18	.08	.04	-.04	.18	.17	.08	.31	-	.29
17 Blogger		.34	-.00	.14	.21	.21	.12	-.22	.10	.15	.20	-.01	.11	.22	-.09	.57	.29	-
Pooled sample	Mean	3.22	3.52	4.62	3.69	3.88	18.2	12.0	13.9	11.0	11.8	3.78	31.4	.68	17.2	5.44	10.8	.39
	sd	1.04	1.00	.76	.99	.96	3.73	2.77	2.77	2.43	2.17	.82	8.57	.47	2.55	3.22	3.20	.49
Germany	Mean	3.24	3.52	4.56	3.70	3.89	17.9	11.6	13.6	11.3	11.9	3.79	32.1	.70	17.5	5.59	11.1	.44
	sd	1.06	1.02	.80	1.01	.97	3.69	2.80	2.18	2.60	2.24	.81	8.59	.46	2.63	3.25	3.12	.50

Notes: The correlation coefficients for the pooled sample are presented above the diagonal and below the diagonal the correlation coefficients are presented for the German sample. For the pooled sample: $N = 992$. Correlations above |.07| are significant at $p < .05$. For the German sample: $N = 430$. Correlations above |.10| are significant at $p <. 05$.

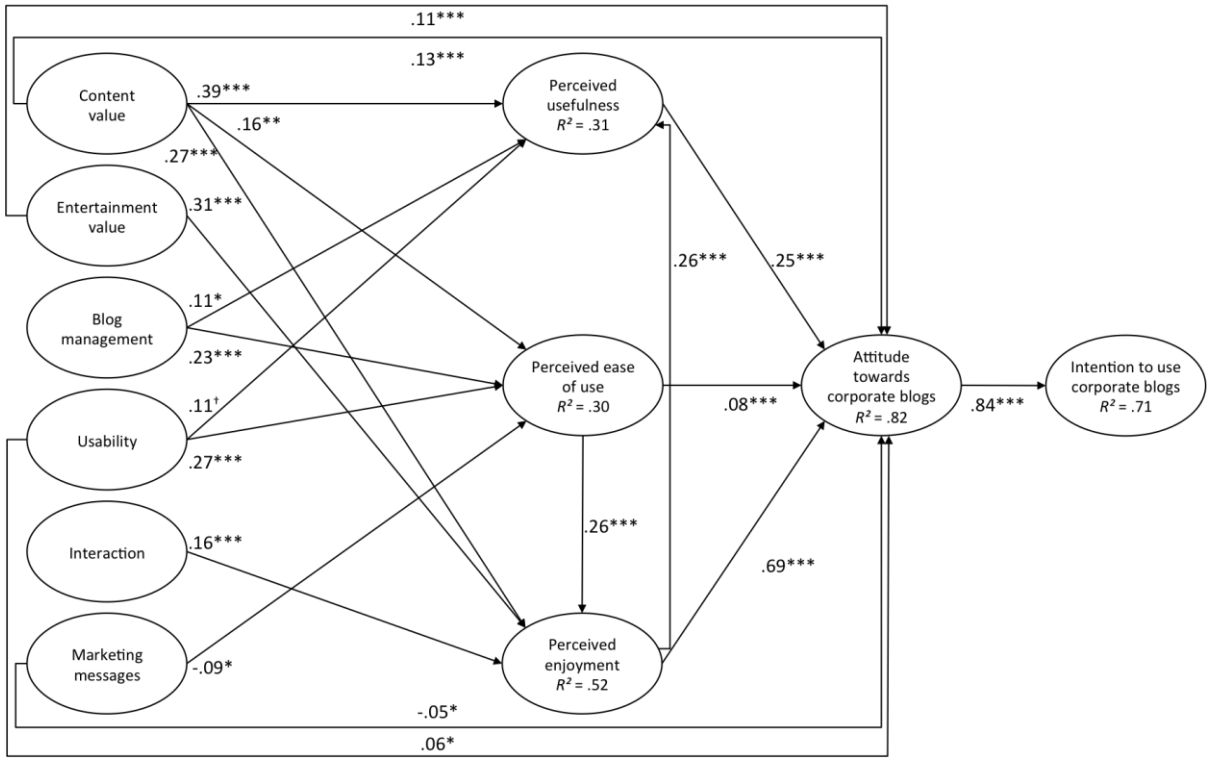
Table 39: Descriptive and correlation statistics – Russian and U.S. sample

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1 PU		-	.55	.35	.73	.73	.63	.31	.24	.48	.30	.01	.15	.05	-.09	.37	.19	.42
2 PE		.47	-	.44	.85	.73	.63	.69	.34	.61	.34	-.07	.02	-.11	-.10	.14	.03	.00
3 PEU		.20	.41	-	.52	.52	.41	.33	.50	.31	.53	.16	-.09	-.02	.05	.26	.18	.25
4 ATT		.60	.83	.48	-	.89	.68	.52	.37	.59	.40	.04	.09	-.04	-.06	.34	.13	.24
5 INT		.64	.68	.49	.80	-	.64	.43	.37	.55	.40	.08	.13	.01	-.03	.30	.12	.23
6 CV		.54	.58	.34	.59	.59	-	.50	.47	.67	.43	-.03	.07	-.05	-.04	.24	.04	.18
7 EV		.19	.51	.22	.38	.32	.47	-	.35	.51	.37	-.09	.09	-.09	-.11	-.04	-.06	-.13
8 BM		.28	.36	.40	.37	.35	.41	.35	-	.34	.59	.14	-.01	.01	.04	.05	.08	.09
9 IN		.65	.57	.24	.56	.62	.70	.45	.28	-	.42	-.15	.06	-.13	-.11	.27	.05	.18
10 US		.23	.43	.54	.46	.45	.44	.42	.45	.44	-	.03	-.06	-.06	-.02	.11	.06	.21
11 MM		-.36	-.13	.16	-.09	-.15	-.07	-.06	.15	-.26	.01	-	-.02	.10	.03	.06	-.00	.02
12 Age		.13	.07	-.03	.11	.10	.17	.18	.08	.09	.01	-.08	-	.11	.10	.04	.21	.16
13 Gender		-.02	-.12	.03	-.07	.05	-.06	-.13	.04	-.07	-.01	.04	.04	-	-.03	.07	.16	.20
14 Education		.01	-.14	.07	-.10	-.05	-.11	-.08	-.15	-.18	-.12	-.08	.11	-.06	-	-.08	.09	-.05
15 Frequency		.29	.16	.15	.32	.27	.23	-.15	.13	.30	.10	.00	-.08	.10	-.09	-	.30	.59
16 History		.09	-.02	.14	.03	.06	.02	-.13	-.05	.03	.01	-.09	.05	.16	.16	.25	-	.31
17 Blogger		.33	.07	.15	.28	.27	.11	-.21	.05	.20	.18	-.11	-.04	.24	-.17	.57	.23	-
Russia	Mean	2.97	3.44	4.62	3.52	3.84	17.5	11.9	10.9	10.3	11.4	3.75	29.4	.66	17.3	4.68	9.19	.33
	sd	.97	.96	.75	.93	.92	3.71	2.75	2.48	2.28	2.13	.83	8.04	.48	2.57	3.37	3.02	.47
U.S.	Mean	3.36	3.57	4.69	3.77	3.91	18.9	12.4	13.8	11.1	11.8	3.79	31.9	.68	17.0	5.71	11.4	.34
	sd	1.03	.99	.69	.98	.97	3.80	2.71	2.13	2.23	2.12	.82	8.69	.47	2.41	3.02	3.08	.48

Notes: The correlation coefficients for the Russian sample are presented above the diagonal and below the diagonal the correlation coefficients are presented for the U.S. sample. For the Russian sample: $N = 214$. Correlations above |.14| are significant at $p < .05$. For the U.S. sample: $N = 328$. Correlations above |.11| are significant at $p < .05$.

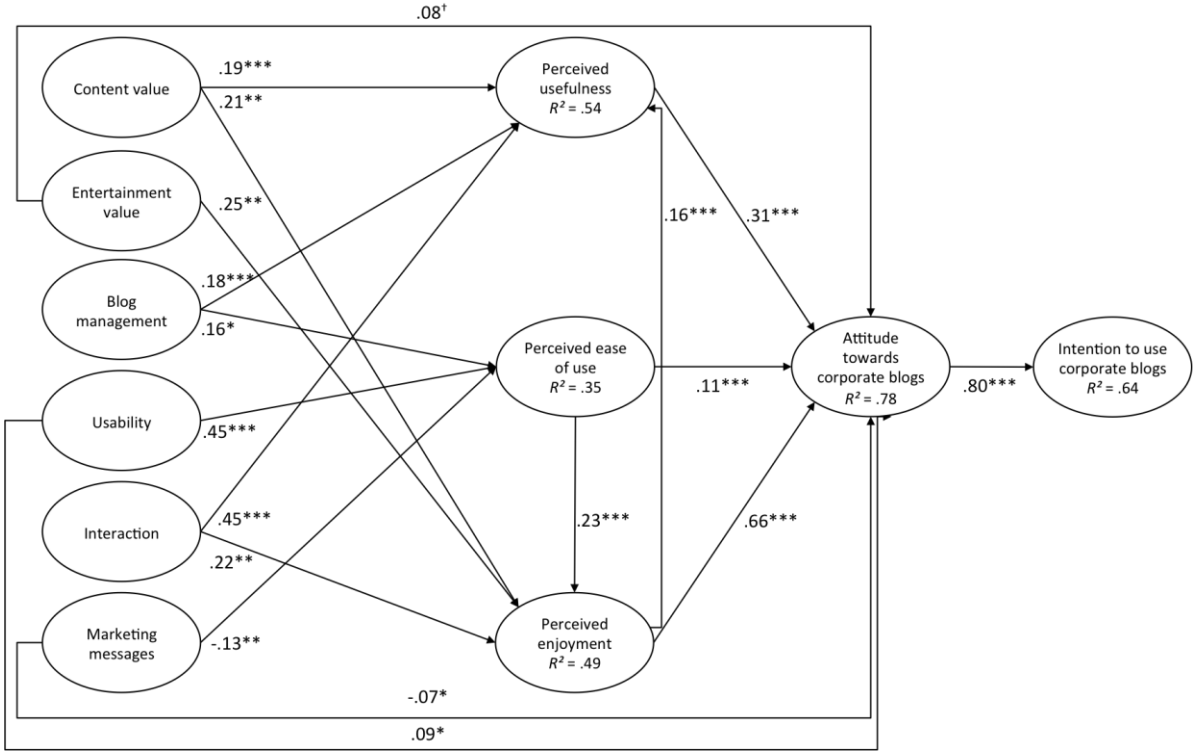
Table 38 and Table 39 provide overviews of the respective descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for all variables and sample sets used during the following calculations. The effects of blog design factors were tested by using a structural equation modeling approach (Byrne, 2009). Overall, the SEM analyses confirm the applicability of the technology acceptance model to the corporate blog context, with significant positive effects of cognitive TAM elements on attitude towards corporate blogs.

Figure 31: Full and partial mediating effects (German sample)



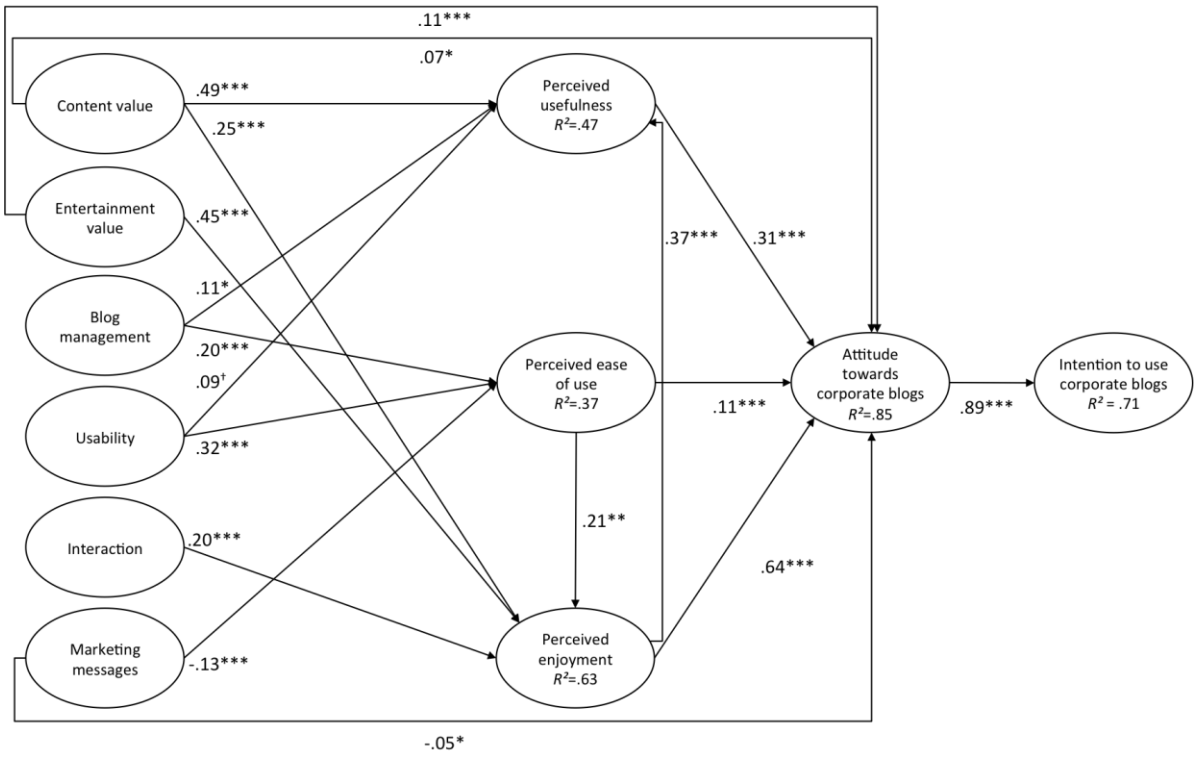
Notes: Only significant paths are displayed. χ^2 = 149.2; *df* = 12; CFI = .944; RMSEA = .172; SRMR = .048.
Probability: † $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure 32: Full and partial mediating effects (Russian sample)



Notes: Only significant paths are displayed. χ^2 = 52.6; *df* = 10; CFI = .967; RMSEA = .141 SRMR = .039.
Probability: † $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure 33: Full and partial mediating effects (U.S. sample)



Notes: Only significant paths are displayed. χ^2 = 43.4; *df* = 10; CFI = .987; RMSEA = .098; SRMR = .019.
Probability: † $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Corporate blog design and perceived usefulness

Hypothesis 4.1 proposes that corporate blogs' perceived usefulness is positively affected by the value of a corporate blog's content. As shown in Figure 31 to Figure 33, a positive effect of content value on perceived usefulness was found for the German (ß = .39), the Russian (ß = .19), as well as the U.S. sample (ß = .49). Hypothesis 4.1 is therefore supported. In addition, perceived usefulness was also positively influenced by perceived enjoyment as well as blog management characteristics in all three samples. For the German and the U.S. sample, usability also had a positive effect on perceived usefulness, while this was the case for interaction in the Russian sample. With adjusted R^2s ranging from .31 (German sample) to .54 (Russian sample), the identified corporate blog design characteristics exhibit significant explanatory power for predicting perceived usefulness.

Corporate blog design and perceived ease of use

Hypothesis 4.2 posits that corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by blog management characteristics. As shown in Figure 31 to Figure 33, blog management characteristics were positively associated with perceived ease of use (Germany ß = .23; Russia ß = .16; U.S. ß = .20). Hypothesis 4.2 was therefore supported. Hypothesis 3 predicts a positive relationship between usability and perceived ease of use. Usability was positively related to perceived ease of use for all three country samples (Germany ß = .27; Russian ß = .45; U.S. ß = .32), providing support for Hypothesis 4.2. Moreover, the use of marketing messages had a negative effect on perceived ease of use in all three samples (Germany ß = -.09; Russia ß = -.13; U.S. ß = -.13). The explained variance (adjusted R^2) ranged from .30 (German sample) to .37 (U.S. sample), indicating that the model exhibits significant explanatory power for predicting perceived ease of use

Corporate blog design and perceived enjoyment

Hypothesis 4.4 posits that entertainment value has a positive effect on perceived enjoyment. As shown in Figure 31 to Figure 33, entertainment value was positively related to perceived enjoyment for all three country samples (Germany ß = .31; Russia ß = .25; U.S. ß = .45). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Hypothesis 4.5 predicts that interaction also has a positive effect on perceived enjoyment. Interaction characteristics had a positive effect on perceived enjoyment for all three samples (Germany ß = .16; Russia ß = .22; U.S. ß = .20). In addition to the hypothesized relationships, content value was positively related to perceived enjoyment (Germany ß = .27; Russia ß = .21; U.S. ß = .25). With adjusted R^2s ranging between .49 (Russian sample) and .63 (U.S. sample), the devised model exhibits significant explanatory power for modeling perceived enjoyment.

Mediation hypotheses

Hypothesis 4.6a proposes that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment mediate the influence of blog design characteristics on the attitude towards corporate blogs. Hypothesis 4.6b posits that in addition to the three antecedents of attitude also attitude itself mediates the influence of blog design characteristics on the intention to use corporate blogs. Following the procedure recommended by James et al. (1982), structural equation modeling with chi-squared-difference tests and a CFI-difference tests was used to test the two mediation hypotheses. The test compared a full mediation model, a partial mediation model, and a non-mediation model. To test Hypothesis 4.6a, this procedure was conducted for the mediation of the relationship between the system design characteristics and attitude by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment. To test Hypothesis 4.6b, this procedure was employed for the mediation of the relationship between system design characteristics and usage intention by perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, as well as attitude. As presented in Table 40, the results of the mediation analysis show that for both tested models a partial mediation exists, with the non-mediated model being inferior in terms of $\Delta\chi^2$ and ΔCFI to both the full and the partial mediation model. Comparing the partial and the full mediation model, the partial mediation was found to have a better fit than the full mediation model with CFI improving between .005 and .011, and χ^2-differences being small but significant at a .05 probability level. Two direct effects of system design characteristics were consistent across the three country samples. Entertainment value had a positive effect on users' attitude towards corporate blogs (Germany ß = .11; Russia ß = .08; U.S. ß = .11). The use of marketing messages had a negative effect on attitude for all three samples (Germany ß = -.05; Russia ß = -.07; U.S. ß = -.05). Content value had a positive effect on attitude for the German (ß = .13) and the U.S. sample (ß = .07), but not for the Russian sample. In addition to the SEM procedure, the Sobel test (Sobel, 1982, MacKinnon et al., 2002) and the bootstrap method (Preacher and Hayes, 2004, Preacher and Hayes, 2008) were also used. The Sobel and the bootstrap test supported the mediation (the detailed results are available upon request). Overall, the results suggest that corporate design characteristics influence attitude and intention towards corporate blogs in particular indirectly through individuals' perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment. Therefore, Hypothesis 4.6a and 4.6b are supported.

Table 40: Mediation test

		χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	ΔCFI	ΔRMSEA	ΔSRMR
Mediation by PU, PE, PEU											
Full mediation model	Germany	123.9	16	.00	.96	.13	.03				
	Russia	64.9	16	.00	.96	.12	.04				
	U.S.	68.4	16	.00	.98	.10	.03				
Partial mediation model	**Germany**	**89.0**	**10**	**.00**	**.97**	**.14**	**.03**	**34.9**	**.01**	**.01**	**.01**
	Russia	**52.6**	**10**	**.00**	**.97**	**.14**	**.04**	**12.3**	**.01**	**.02**	**.00**
	U.S.	**43.4**	**10**	**.00**	**.99**	**.10**	**.02**	**25.0**	**.01**	**.00**	**.01**
Non-mediated model	Germany	555.6	11	.00	.80	.31	.10	431.7	.16	.19	.06
	Russia	254.2	11	.00	.82	.23	.09	189.3	.15	.11	.05
	U.S.	428.5	11	.00	.84	.30	.09	360.1	.14	.21	.06
Mediation by PU, PE, PEU, ATT											
Full mediation model	Germany	123.9	16	.00	.96	.13	.03				
	Russia	64.9	16	.00	.96	.12	.04				
	U.S.	68.4	16	.00	.98	.10	.03				
Partial mediation model	**Germany**	**102.6**	**10**	**.00**	**.97**	**.15**	**.02**	**21.3**	**.01**	**.02**	**.01**
	Russia	**30.7**	**10**	**.00**	**.98**	**.10**	**.02**	**34.2**	**.02**	**.02**	**.02**
	U.S.	**52.5**	**10**	**.00**	**.98**	**.11**	**.02**	**15.9**	**.00**	**.02**	**.01**
Non-mediated model	Germany	450.1	11	.00	.84	.31	.09	326.2	.12	.18	.05
	Russia	143.7	11	.00	.90	.24	.07	78.8	.06	.12	.03
	U.S.	395.2	11	.00	.85	.32	.08	342.7	.13	.22	.05

Notes: Germany *N* = 430, Russia *N* = 214, U.S. *N* = 348, *df* = Degrees of freedom, CFI = Comparative fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual. Best fitting model is indicated in **bold**. PU = perceived usefulness, PE = perceived enjoyment, PEU = perceived ease of use, ATT = attitude.

5.4 Discussion

Extending the application of the technology acceptance model to the corporate blog context, the structural equation model investigated which factors determined the basic cognitive response elements of technology acceptance theory. Table 41 summarizes the developed Hypotheses and associated findings.

Table 41: Overview of findings on corporate blog acceptance and design characteristics

	Hypothesis	Support
H4.1	Corporate blogs' perceived usefulness is positively affected by the content value of a corporate blog.	Yes
H4.2	Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by blog management characteristics.	Yes
H4.3	Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by usability characteristics of corporate blogs.	Yes
H4.4	Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment is positively affected by the entertainment value of blog content.	Yes
H4.5	Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment is positively affected by the level of interaction between Internet users and corporate blog editors and authors.	Yes
H4.6a	Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' attitude towards corporate blogs.	Yes
H4.6b	Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment and attitude mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' intention to use corporate blogs.	Yes

The findings of these analyses have a range of implications for both for corporate communication theory and corporate blog management.

5.4.1 Implications for theory

Emerging research has begun to explore adoption issues for corporate blogs. Very little research has been conducted to understand how the perception and believes are formed in the context of corporate blogs. In particular, little is known about the design characteristics that may function as a base of the development of individuals' attitudes and intentions towards corporate blogs. A major purpose of this study was to understand which and how corporate blog design characteristics may influence the intention to adopt corporate blogs. Based on prior research specific design characteristics of corporate blogs are identified and, based on the technology acceptance model, it is proposed that perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment link these design characteristics with the attitude towards corporate blogs and ultimately drive the usage intention towards corporate blogs.

In keeping with the predictions, for all three country samples, design characteristics played an important role in the development of perceptions, which, in turn, were related to attitudes and intentions toward corporate blogs. Specifically, it was found that corporate blogs' content value was associated with perceived usefulness. Corporate blog management and usability were positively related to the perceived ease of use. Entertainment value and interaction were positively related to perceived enjoyment. Further, the relationships proposed by the basic TAM as well as the extension by perceived enjoyment were supported. Additional tests suggested that perceptions mediate the relationship between design characteristics and attitudes as well as intentions. In sum, as predicted, individual's perceptions emerged as an important link between the identified corporate blog design characteristics and an individual's attitude, ultimately determining behavioral intentions.

The first major contribution of this study is the empirical test of the utility and applicability of an extended TAM framework to examine the acceptance of corporate blogs. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study that utilizes the TAM to explain corporate blog acceptance. Previous corporate blog research has investigated in particular the effect of corporate blog usage on economic outcomes, such as purchase intention. The study showed that the basic TAM relationships are supported across countries. The findings supported previous results for blogs and other social media applications, in that corporate blog perceived ease of use significantly impacted perceived usefulness, which in turn significantly affected corporate blog adoption. Furthermore, this study is one of the first to consider a hedonic component (perceived enjoyment) within the corporate blog domain, as it has been suggested as being an important determinant of the adoption of social media. The results demonstrate that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment significantly influenced the attitude towards corporate blogs, showing a larger path coefficient from enjoyment to attitude than from usefulness and ease of use to attitude. Therefore, this study showed that perceived enjoyment may have a large impact on the adoption of companies' corporate blogs, which may be due to the more social character of this marketing and corporate communication medium as compared to other communication channels. The results suggest that corporate blogs may have strong enjoyment functionality, and this may have contributed to a degree of enjoyment experienced by potential users of corporate blogs.

While the test of the utility of the basic TAM and it's extension have contributed to understanding of the corporate blog domain, the primary contribution lies in the identification and examination of the potentially important role of corporate blog design characteristics in forming favorable believes and attitudes toward corporate blogs. Despite the importance of design characteristic for corporate blogs, very few studies have addressed the topic. Although different corporate blog design characteristics have received scholarly attention, prior studies have not focused on a

broader set of characteristics and their effect on use intentions. This study demonstrated that corporate blog design characteristic do in fact have a significant impact on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment. The findings confirmed that those design characteristics are key factors for creating a useful and easy to use corporate blog as well as an enjoyable user experience.

A third major contribution is the identification of the underlying mechanism through which corporate blog design characteristic affect intention. The results suggest that by positively influencing an individuals' believes, design characteristics lead to favorable attitudes and intentions toward corporate blog usage. This observation supports the view that design factors do not directly affect attitude and intention, but are (at least partially) mediated through the constructs that are determinants of attitude towards corporate blogs. Overall, the mediating role of the basic TAM as well as the extension was not fully supported, a pattern consistent with prior empirical evidence, e.g. in the field of information systems. This raises a question about social media applications when there is only partial mediation of design characteristic by TAM constructs.

5.4.2 Implications for practice

These results also have several implications for practice. First of all, the results indicate that by ensuring the usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment of corporate blogs, firms can influence the attitude and intention towards the corporate blog in a positive manner. Thus, firms that focus on the aspects of usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment increase the acceptance of a corporate blog. In particular, these results show that in the corporate blog context enjoyment plays a critical role in the adoption process. Accordingly, corporate blog design characteristics are central in determining the level of enjoyment experienced by individuals, as well as perceived usefulness and ease of use. Second, these results indicate that corporate blog design characteristics at the functional and design level, allow firms to increase the potential for participation, enjoyment, and engagement by positively influencing perceptions of usefulness and ease of use. This study proved that corporate blog design characteristic can significantly impact the important antecedents to attitude as well as the intention towards corporate blogs. Moreover, the results show that different characteristics influence different antecedents of attitude, indicating that firms need to implement and manage specific design characteristics to positively influence perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment. The study indicates that companies can take specific steps to increase both Internet users' attitudes towards corporate blogs and their intention to use them. Companies can use these findings to either improve existing corporate blogging activities, or to design better concepts and strategies when establishing new corporate blogs. Using these findings and the

calculated effects between variables, companies can balance the costs of such improvements against the expected effects.

First, it was shown that perceived ease of use was strongly determined by usability, blog management, as well the use of marketing messages. Evaluating the underlying factors, improvements in the following indicators can be used to increase the perceived ease of use of corporate blogs. Usability can be enhanced by improving structure and navigation of a corporate blog (for example through the use of archives, categories, and tags), by providing subscription opportunities, and by enabling simple interaction through commenting or recommendation functions. Blog management can be improved by publishing content on a blog frequently and regularly and through the use of images and professional blog design. Also it is expected that company-related information on a blog is timely and up-to-date. Last but not least, companies need to carefully consider which kind of messages they want to communicate on their corporate blog, as the use of marketing messages was found to negatively impact perceived ease of use.

Perceived enjoyment can be influenced by means of entertainment value, as well as interaction activities. Regarding entertainment value, perceived enjoyment can be increased by two main activities. First, they can better integrate a blog within the blogosphere through picking up topics from other blogs or choosing topics that are relevant to other blogs. Companies therefore need to encourage blog managers and contributors to better interact with other (including private) bloggers. Such activities are not limited to blogging, but interaction with bloggers can take place online through social networks (such as Twitter, Facebook) or offline, for example at major social media conferences (such as the BlogWell conference in the U.S., the re:publica in Germany, or the Social Media Conference Russia, but also the various local/regional BarCamps). Second of all, they can provide more interesting content or use a more entertaining presentation of content. Measures to achieve this include a more entertaining writing style as well as the use of media. Companies can for example actively train blog contributors, who as professionals from other fields usually have no significant writing or communication experiences, how to better write for public audiences. They can also be trained to use different media formats in addition to text including photo and video, which typically also includes the purchase of the necessary equipment. Means of relationship building can also raise the entertainment value for German, Russian and U.S. Internet users. Companies can consequently work towards the active encouragement and acknowledgment of feedback and user input, for example by using games and competitions, surveys or more provoking topics, and writing style. At the same time, an increased personal interaction between users and company employees on the corporate blog can be achieved through training blog contributors and encouraging/incentivizing them to interact with readers.

Last but not least, companies can address perceived usefulness by means of raising corporate blog acceptance. This can be achieved mainly through increasing the content value of a corporate blog. The key to achieve this is to display content that is more authentic, credible, interesting and relevant for the audience, and by a more credible and personal representation of the company on its blog. Companies working on the content value of their corporate blogs therefore need to carefully search and select topics based on their target groups' desires, potentially involving an evaluation of previously popular blog posts as well as surveying targeted Internet users for their preferences. Again training and instructing employees here plays an important role, as also writing style and credible interaction contribute to perceived usefulness. Credibility and interaction can particularly be supported by publicly displaying employee names and pictures, so that readers feel to rather interact with an individual than with an organization. Particularly for Russian Internet users, perceived usefulness can also be increased through more interaction and better relationship building activities (in contrast to the German and U.S. sample, where blog management and usability had additional positive effects on usefulness).

Regarding control variables, the findings also have a range of implications for corporate blogging practices. Regarding age, younger Internet users – just like more educated individuals – find corporate blogs easier to use, while overall perceived usefulness was higher for older users. This implies that, corporate blogs serve as good tools to engage older Internet users, provided that they are sufficiently easy to use also for older audiences. Experience in terms of Internet usage was particularly determining perceived ease of use. Individuals with higher Internet experience or frequency found corporate blogs easier to use, implying that it is more difficult to reach less experienced Internet users with a corporate blog. Important implications also derive from the effect of blogging on cognitive response elements. In particular, bloggers find corporate blogs more useful, implying that corporate blogs can be effectively utilized to connect to corporate bloggers using content that is more authentic, credible, interesting and relevant.

5.4.3 Limitations and future research directions

Some limitations derive from the collection and the composition of the dataset underlying the conducted analyses. First, a bias existed because the sample was self-selected from Internet users that were mostly recruited from a set of online social networks, implying a limited representativeness with respect to the whole population. Second, the sample draws on data from only three countries. This limits the ability to generalize the findings to other countries (Franke and Richey, 2010). While there is only limited indication that results will differ greatly between countries, the influence of formal (i.e., laws and regulations) and informal (i.e., cultural norms and values) national institutional contexts could affect the determinants of

the attitudes and intentions toward corporate blogs. While this study found the technology acceptance model relationships to be valid for all three countries under consideration, McCoy (2007) found significant problems when researching technology acceptance in a range of countries, indicating that the model might not produce satisfying results in countries with rather extreme cultural characteristics such as very low uncertainty avoidance or very high power distance. Future research should investigate the identified blog design characteristics in other institutional contexts to increase our understanding and provide valuable implications for international corporate communication practice. Finally, the cross-sectional character of the data does not allow testing for causality of the proposed relationships. Despite the confidence that the theoretically derived conceptual model is solid, the hypothesized effects of the design factors as well as the determinants of attitudes and intentions could be studied over time using a longitudinal study design to exclude the possibility of causal bias and to test the effect of intention on actual usage behavior of corporate blogs. Despite these limitations, the current study represents an initial step in identifying the antecedents of corporate blog acceptance.

6 Summary and discussion

Four analyses were conducted to investigate the five basic Research Questions stated in Chapter 1.4. For these analyses two sets of data were collected. Chapter 2 was based on a complete collection of corporate blogs from three countries, including all design, content, and author characteristics. Chapters 3-5 were based on a survey of Internet users from three countries. In order to avoid an omitted variable bias, three separate analyses were conducted, first investigating a basic corporate blog acceptance model and consequently developing extensions of the model accounting for cultural moderators and eventually antecedents on the form of corporate blog design characteristics. This Chapter will therefore summarize the findings of all 4 analyses, discuss their implications for the five Research Questions, and derive overall implications for theory and practice, before outlining limitations as well as recommendations for future research.

The first study (Chapter 2) assessed specific blogging practices by identifying a set of corporate blog characteristics that could be managed by the responsible company, authors and editors. Consequently, it was assessed whether effects of these characteristics on corporate blogs' popularity exist. Researching effects of diversity, the study identified a positive relation between the number of authors and a blog's popularity. However, gender parity as another diversity factor could not be found to positively affect blog success and may even have a negative effect. With respect to topical dimensions a two-fold effect could be observed. On the one hand, a higher number of topical dimensions contributed to a blog's popularity in terms of Technorati Authority, but an opposite effect was be observed when estimating comment frequency. Considering the effect of corporate blog authenticity on popularity, it was verified that blog texts are in general significantly less formal that traditional corporate communication means, but a clear relation between formality and success could not be identified, implying that authenticity is a general feature of blogs and may be a general precondition for blog success, independent of the specific authenticity level. With respect to the effect of reader-friendly blog management, neither post frequency nor post length seemed to have a significant impact on blogging success. Also, no clear trend could be observed with respect to media usage, as positive as well as negative effects were revealed depending on the specific sample, although the positive estimations in general featured a higher statistical significance. Several indicators for corporate blog development were included in the analyses to investigate their effects on popularity. Blog age had a small but significant positive impact on both Technorati Authority as well as comment frequency. A higher number of sidebar elements translated particularly into a higher comment frequency. The number of interactivity elements had no overall impact on a corporate blog's acceptance. Last but not least, blog networking was evaluated. In this context, the number of blogroll elements was found to have a significant positive im-

pact on a blog's Technorati Authority, but not on comment frequency. As an indicator for networking effort, it signals that increased networking activities will lead to higher blog popularity in terms of incoming links.

Following this first evaluation of blogging practices and popularity, a large set of user data was collected to identify factors that influence the acceptance of corporate blogs by Internet users. This analysis of the relationships again comprised three steps, i.e., the application of the technology acceptance model to the corporate blog context, the analysis of direct, indirect and moderating effects of culture, and third, an analysis of effects of corporate blog design characteristics on perceived ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment.

The evaluation of overall TAM applicability in the second study (Chapter 3) found a range of relationships that have basic implications for the use of corporate blogs: Attitude towards corporate blogs was found to be positively influenced by perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of use, where the effect of perceived enjoyment was the strongest for all sample sets. Positive relations were furthermore identified between the perceived ease of use of corporate blogs and perceived enjoyment, and between perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness (implying an indirect effect of perceived ease of use on perceived usefulness). With respect to behavioral aspects of corporate blog acceptance, a positive relation was confirmed between the attitude towards corporate blogs and the intention to use corporate blogs, and between the behavioral intention to use corporate blogs and actual corporate blog usage. These findings held for the pooled and for the three country samples, as well as for both the commenting and the reading model of corporate blog acceptance. This general corporate blog acceptance model was also used to identify inter-country differences. Such differences were found for a range of relationships. The relationship between the intention to read and actual reading was significantly stronger for the Russian sample compared to the other two samples. For commenting, this relationship was significantly weaker for the German sample compared to the other two samples. The impact of attitude on usage intention was strongest in the U.S. sample, being significantly different from the Russian sample. The effect of perceived usefulness on attitude was smallest in the German sample and highest in the U.S. sample, with significant differences between these two. Also for perceived ease of use, the effect on attitude was weakest in the German sample, while it was strongest for the Russian sample. The effect of perceived enjoyment on attitude, however, was significantly stronger in the German sample, compared with the Russian and U.S. sample. In addition, the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived enjoyment was weaker in the German compared to the U.S. sample.

The third analysis (Chapter 4) found a range of effects of culture on corporate blog acceptance. In particular, effects were identified for the five Hofstede dimensions of culture – i.e., uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, long-term orientation, individual-

ism, and power distance – causing differences in corporate blog acceptance between cultures. Uncertainty avoidance, in this context, moderates both the effects of cognitive response elements on attitude, and attitude on use intention. Findings were however contrasting as more uncertainty avoiding individuals featured stronger effects of perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment on attitude, but a weaker effect of attitude on usage intention than low uncertainty-avoiding individuals. In addition to these moderating effects, direct effects were identified, generally negative, implying that more uncertainty avoiding individuals perceived corporate blogs as less useful, less enjoyable, and less easy to use than individuals with lower uncertainty avoidance. Long-term orientation was found to strengthen the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived enjoyment and the effect of perceived enjoyment on perceived usefulness, rooted in high persistence and the valuation of long-term relationship. Long-term orientation also increased the effect of attitude on usage intention, implying that more long-term oriented individuals were more willing to use corporate blogs given a certain attitude level. These findings were complemented by direct and indirect effects of long-term orientation, as more long-term oriented people perceived corporate blogs in general as easier to use, more useful and enjoyable, resulting through indirect effects also in higher attitude as well as higher intended use. Masculinity was identified as a strong moderator for the effect of perceived ease of use on usefulness, which was stronger for more masculine individuals, while the effect of perceived enjoyment on usefulness was stronger for more feminine individuals, as was the effect of perceived ease of use on attitude. In addition, moderating effects were particularly identified for participants' commenting behavior. The effect of attitude on the intention to comment was stronger for more masculine individuals. Regarding direct and indirect effects of masculinity, a negative effect on perceived ease of use was identified, as well as positive effects on perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. A strong positive impact on the intention to comment (but not to read) confirms the findings regarding the moderating effect on commenting. The cultural dimension individualism was found to strengthen the relation between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, and to weaken the relation between perceived enjoyment and perceived usefulness. In general, individualism had negative direct and indirect effects on corporate blog acceptance, with lower perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and perceived enjoyment. This also held for attitude and usage intention. Last but not least, power distance was found to strengthen the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived enjoyment, and weaken the effect of attitude on intention to read. These effects were complemented by the identified positive direct and indirect effects of power distance on perceived usefulness, and usage intention (read). In addition a range of effects of control variables were identified, complementing the findings of the first analysis. While perceived ease of use was higher for younger individuals owing to their more natural use of and higher openness towards infor-

mation technology, age was in general positively related to corporate blog acceptance, including perceived usefulness and enjoyment, but also attitude and intended usage. Using corporate blogs was easier for more educated Internet users, but perceived usefulness enjoyment are lower. Still, education was positively related to attitude and use intention. With respect to gender, perceived usefulness and enjoyment were higher for women, implying that they perceived corporate blogs in general as more positive. Experience factors regarding history and frequency of Internet use have an overall positive impact. More experienced Internet users perceived corporate blogs as easier to use, more useful, and more enjoyable, leading to a more positive attitude and higher usage. This implied in contrast, that less experienced Internet users are less likely to read or comment on corporate blogs, owing to lower perceived ease of use, usefulness, and enjoyment. Last but not least, blogging behavior had strong and mostly positive effects on corporate blog acceptance, implying the high value of corporate blogs for connecting to bloggers. For (private) bloggers, it is easier to use corporate blogs, and they are perceived as more useful, although the enjoyment is perceived as lower. Also, overall attitude as well as usage intention, were higher for bloggers.

The fourth analysis (Chapter 5) investigated factors that determined the basic cognitive response elements of technology acceptance theory – i.e., perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of use. In this context, corporate blogs' perceived usefulness was found to be affected by content characteristics and the value of the content on a corporate blog. Information value and credibility had the largest effect for all three country samples. Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use was affected by blog management characteristics. Blog management can be related to the timeliness and professionalism of a corporate blog, that includes characteristics such as the frequency and regularity of postings or the professionalism of design. Furthermore, perceived ease of use was found to be significantly affected by usability characteristics of corporate blogs, including the ease of navigation or the structure of content. Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment was found to be significantly affected by the entertainment level and format of blog content, including characteristics of writing style and the actual entertainment derived from blog content. The effect of interaction opportunities between Internet users and corporate blog editors on perceived enjoyment was found inconsistent. For the German and the U.S. sample, relationship activities were a significant determinant of perceived enjoyment, while for the Russian sample it was a major determinant of perceived usefulness. Finally, the mediation analysis showed that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' attitude towards corporate blogs. Also, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment in combination with attitude served as a mediator between blog design characteristics and usage intention, holding for blog reading as well as commenting.

Table 42 summarizes the findings regarding the Hypotheses from all four studies.

Table 42: Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationships	Confirmation/findings
H1.1	A higher (lower) diversity will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.	Partial support (# of authors)
H1.2	A higher (lower) authenticity will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.	No
H1.3	A more (less) reader-friendly blog management will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.	No
H1.4	A more (less) developed blog will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.	Yes
H1.5	A higher (lower) networking effort will yield a higher (lower) blog acceptance among Internet users.	Yes (for Technorati Authority)
H2.1a	Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the perceived usefulness of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.1b	Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.1c	Attitude towards corporate blogs is positively influenced by the perceived ease of use of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.2a	There is a positive relation between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of corporate blogs.	No
H2.2b	There is a positive relation between perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment of corporate blogs.	Yes
H2.3	There is a positive relation between attitude towards corporate blogs and behavioral intention to use corporate blogs.	Yes
H3.1	The positive effect of perceived usefulness on attitude towards corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Partial support (through indirect effects)
H3.2	The positive effect of perceived ease of use on attitude towards corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H3.3	The positive effect of perceived enjoyment on attitude towards corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H3.4a	The positive effect of attitude on intention to read corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H3.4b	The positive effect of attitude on intention to comment on corporate blogs is positively moderated by the users' level of uncertainty avoidance.	Yes
H4.1	Corporate blogs' perceived usefulness is positively affected by the content value of a corporate blog.	Yes
H4.2	Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by blog management characteristics.	Yes
H4.3	Corporate blogs' perceived ease of use is positively affected by usability characteristics of corporate blogs.	Yes
H4.4	Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment is positively affected by the entertainment value of blog content.	Yes
H4.5	Corporate blogs' perceived enjoyment is positively affected by the level of interaction between Internet users and corporate blog editors and authors.	Yes
H4.6a	Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' attitude towards corporate blogs.	Yes
H4.6b	Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment and attitude mediate the effects of blog design characteristics on Internet users' intention to use corporate blogs.	Yes

Based on these findings, the five stipulated Research Questions can be approached:

(1) How do corporate blogging practices differ internationally?
A range of differences in blogging practices was found between corporate blogs in Germany, Russia and the U.S. Such differences were particularly observed for the number of authors, the length of posts on corporate blogs, the gender of involved authors, as well as blog design decisions (for example the use of sidebar elements). Also the formality of writing on corporate blogs was found to be different.

(2) Are blogging practices linked to corporate blog performance?
A key task of this work was to investigate whether blogging practices are indeed linked to corporate blog performance. To this end, it was confirmed that both blog popularity (in terms of Technorati Authority and comment frequency) as well as blog acceptance by Internet users (in terms of reading and commenting intention/behavior) were significantly influenced by companies' blogging practices. The observed blogging practices included for example author selection, choice of content and media, blog design decisions and others.

(3) How can Internet users' acceptance of corporate blogs be modeled?
It was found that the technology acceptance model, as originally proposed by Davis (Davis, 1986, Davis, 1989, Davis et al., 1989) and later extended by a range of researchers, was a suitable theoretical model for the acceptance of corporate blogs by Internet users. All three proposed constructs, i.e., perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment were found to be significant determinants of attitude and intention to use. With R^2 above .8 for attitude and .5 for intended usage, the prosed corporate blog acceptance model has significant explanatory power.

(4) How is corporate blog acceptance affected by the institutional framework and thus cultural dimensions?
In addition to the identified institutional framework effects on blogging practices (see above), such effects were also observed on corporate blog acceptance by Internet users. Going beyond simple inter-country differences, this work assessed in detail, how cultural dimensions relate to corporate blog acceptance. In this context a range if direct as well as moderating effects were found. The most important effects of the institutional framework related to the moderating effects of uncertainty avoidance (for example on the effects of cognitive response elements on attitude, and of attitude on use intention), long-term orientation (for example on the effect of perceived ease of use on perceived enjoyment, the effect of perceived enjoyment on perceived usefulness, and the effect of attitude on usage intention), or masculinity (for example on the effect of perceived ease of use on usefulness, or the effect of perceived enjoyment on usefulness).

(5) How is corporate blog acceptance affected by the various design characteristics of corporate blog?

The use of the technology acceptance model enabled an extension of the model to incorporate a set of system design characteristics. The three cognitive elements of the model, i.e., perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment were found to be influenced by a range of blog characteristics. Corporate blogs' perceived usefulness, for example, was found to be affected by information value and credibility as well as relationship enabling characteristics. Perceived ease of use was affected by usability characteristics as well as timeliness and professionalism. Perceived enjoyment was significantly affected by the entertainment level and format of blog content, including characteristics of writing style and the actual entertainment derived from blog content, as well as by relationship and interactivity characteristics. Using the set of items underlying the blog design constructs, companies can identify blog design aspects and decisions that can positively influence the acceptance of the corporate blog by the desired audience.

6.1 Implications for academic research on technology acceptance and social media

A range of implications could be derived for research regarding corporate blogging and the technology acceptance model. For academic research on social media, this study contributes to a theoretical understanding of the effects of corporate blogging practices within an international management context. This study integrated these two research areas, focusing on corporate blogs from Germany, Russia, and the U.S. Such integration is of particular relevance given the international proliferation of the Internet, its increasing function as international information and communication channel, and the fading boundaries of business and communication in a globalizing world. At the same time measures were developed or adapted in order to capture different aspects of corporate blogging practices. In particular three technology acceptance measures for corporate blogs were developed and applied, i.e. incoming links (Technorati Authority), commenting (frequency of comments as well as intention to comment by Internet users), and reading.

A particular contribution to theory is rooted in the integration of technology acceptance and culture. The impact of culture on technology acceptance has long been discussed, but few general and transferable approaches have been introduced. Previous approaches often used cultural dimensions to explain national differences only. However, this study and the resulting findings show that it is indeed possible to develop a replicable method to test cultural effects on technology acceptance also on the individual level. In this context, the CVscale proved to be a useful instrument that can extend standard TAM research and data collection. Doing both, an analysis of simple inter-country differences as well as a more detailed analysis of the

effects of individual cultural dimensions (see Chapters 3 and 4), it can be concluded that real implications for technology acceptance can only be drawn from the second type of analyses.

Last but not least, this work contributes to a theoretical understanding of the effects of system design characteristics on technology acceptance in an international management context. Several dimensions of corporate blog design characteristics were developed using an exploratory factor analysis, before testing their effects on the cognitive response elements of the technology acceptance model. The research process as well as some of the basic insights into corporate blog design characteristics can thus aid future research on social media and the application of the technology acceptance model to Internet technologies.

6.2 Implications for corporate communication and corporate blogging practices

Based on the above outlined factors for corporate blog acceptance, a range of implication and activities can be identified, which can increase the success potential of corporate blogging activities. For summarizing the effects and recommendations, again Schmidt's (2007b) framework of blogging practices, which has been used in Chapter 2 to structure the review of previous studies of blogs, will be utilized.

Rules

Blogging rules are the generalizable routines and procedures that govern the act of blogging. In the corporate blogging context they refer to the initial establishment of the corporate blog as well as the standard routines and processes connected to running the blog. As outlined in Chapter 3 blogging rules comprise adequacy and procedural rules, that can be differentiated as either governing the decision to choose the corporate blog format as adequate for a specific corporate communication situation out of the large range of available media (adequacy rules), or as governing the actual usage of a corporate blog after the decision for this format has been made (procedural rules).

In the corporate blog context, *adequacy rules* first of all relate to the decision to establish a corporate blog (Schmidt, 2007b). This decision is usually tied to an assessment of the communication situation including the identified stakeholders and their characteristics, the company's resources and capabilities, as well as the specifics of the available communication media (Smith, 2005). This research has shown that significant differences exist between Internet users in their acceptance of corporate blogs, underlining the necessity to carefully choose the right communication channel for the targeted audience. Significant differences in acceptance were found to be rooted in cultural dimensions, Internet usage, as well as a range of other demographic variables. These findings, however, do not imply, that corporate blogs are

necessarily failing in other cultural or demographic contexts. The research found that the overall relationships of technology acceptance model hold over all sample sets also individually, while the outlined impact of user characteristics explains some of the variability in corporate blogs acceptance. Consequently, recommendations can be given to the extent that certain user characteristics are more favorable for the successful establishment of a corporate blog.

The identified effects of culture that were summarized at the beginning of this chapter, imply that corporate blogs are better accepted by individuals that are generally more uncertainty avoiding, more long-term oriented, and more collectivist. A particular differentiation with regard to commenting is worthwhile, as commenting on corporate blogs is better accepted by more masculine individuals (and men in general). Companies can benefit from these findings by considering cultural dimensions during their target group analysis. Initially, the corporate blog as a communication medium is more preferable in cultural contexts that can be characterized as more collectivist, more long-term oriented, and more uncertainty avoiding. When the company is particular concerned about valuable feedback of its target group, it should assess the level of masculinity and individualism. Appendix 7 offers a starting point for assessing the level of the five cultural dimensions on a country (or in some cases country and language) basis, by summarizing the data from both Hofstede studies (Hofstede, 1980, 2001).

The study also identified a significant impact of Internet usage and – in particular – of blogging activities. Overall, the acceptance of corporate blogs was significantly larger among bloggers, with positive influence on attitude and usage intention. These findings imply, that corporate blogs are particularly useful for targeting bloggers. However, the decision to use a corporate blog for addressing the blogosphere needs additional consideration with respect to procedural rules as will be outlined below, as bloggers are a very sensitive target group. In addition, a range of other demographical variables provide starting points for assessing the adequacy of the corporate blog format for addressing specific target groups. Age was found to have a significant impact on blog acceptance as younger Internet found corporate blogs easier to use, but all other dimensions were positively related to age, implying that the blogging format is generally more suitable for addressing older users. Education also had differentiable effects on corporate blog acceptance as education is inversely related to perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment, while at the same time more educated users find corporate blogs easier to use and also feature a more positive attitude and higher usage intention compared to less educated users. For companies this implies the overall suitability for more educated target groups with some necessary considerations regarding the content of the blog (see procedural rules). Last but not least, within the sample women were indicating higher perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment. Consequently, a corporate blog with its complex

and sophisticated interaction mechanisms is more suitable for addressing in particular female target groups.

For corporate blogging activities, *procedural rules* refer to the routines and procedures that govern the day-to-day operation of the blog. In this context, Schmidt (2007b) differentiates three types of procedural rules, i.e., selection, publication, and networking rules. Taken the establishment of a corporate blog as given, these rules can be adapted to better address certain target group needs. In addition, procedural rules for corporate blogs need to be differentiated by the involved actor, as they can be tracked to and conducted by either the company as the strategic initiator (usually the communications or marketing department as its responsible strategic department) or its individual employees as authors and editors.

With respect to *selection rules*, the company in general is usually responsible for the selection of authors and the broad decision of what general direction to go into (broad agenda setting), usually direct linked to the company's marketing or communication strategy. Selection rules for the individual employee as corporate blogger (similar to a private blogger) refer to the individual as a recipient of information, i.e., how the employee gathers information and what factors influence information reception including personal and professional interests, but also formal responsibilities under the employees responsibilities for the specific corporate blog. When targeting a specific audience, the company needs to identify a suitable balance between entertainment and information value, which depends on age but also on other user characteristics such as Internet usage behavior, blogging or even the cultural background. An important driver for acceptance is diversity. Differentiating reading and commenting, companies can therefore increase the amount of topics covered on a blog in order to increase the size of the audience, or, in contrast, limit the amount of topics to increase the amount of collected feedback and the intensity of debate. In this context, the company also needs to consider the appropriate amount of authors. As was shown in this work, a larger amount of authors can also attract a larger audience.

Publication rules refer to the decisions as to what issues in what manner are represented on the blog. Again, the company also in this context has strategic decision authority, for example regarding the overall selection of topics on a blog (narrow agenda setting), the desired frequency of publishing, the specific editing and approval processes of blog posts, and the presentation style. The blogging employee, on the other hand, bears responsibility for specific topic selection (considering the company agenda), the actual frequency of his (individual contributions), and the specific blogging episode, i.e., how the text is written (e.g., writing style, length) and presented (e.g., use of media). Overall the company can set goals for the number post blogs posts published and for the overall entertainment and information content. Furthermore it can increase the author's awareness of the role of infor-

mation as well as entertainment value. The company can also support the individual blog authors and editors by providing trainings regarding writing style and media usage. In this context, the author has to recognize the impact of media usage or linking to other blogs and websites on incoming links, reading and commenting.

The third type of procedural rules, the *networking rules*, comprises the interaction with and involvement of the audience (or more strategically the target groups). This includes the overall relationship strategy for the corporate blog as devised by the company and the specific interaction activities conducted by the individual authors. Networking rules thereby build the basis for the evolution of relation to the blog's audience and target groups. Networking therefore closely related to credibility factors as well as relationship factors. Credibility with respect to a single blogging episode, involves the blogger and his ability to influence relationship building through his writing style, in particular the level of authenticity and entertainment related to writing. In this context, authentic and entertaining writing lead to a higher information value and credibility, thus benefitting perceived usefulness and attitude. The consideration of style is of particular importance as writing style in blogs is generally acknowledged to significantly differ from other corporate writing styles (Puschmann, 2010). Other relationship activities comprise linking with the blogosphere or to other websites. Last but not least, the author himself has to decide what to do with audience reactions to his blog entry. Guided by the company's overall relationship strategy he can serve as a discussion partner for the reader/commenter, or as a mediator and connector between the reader/commenter and the relevant functions in the company.

Code

The second structural dimension of blogging practices is the code, i.e., the 'blogging software and its underlying architecture' (Schmidt, 2007b). This is usually completely determined by the company, deciding about the type of software used, the basic functionality as well as the connection to other communication activities of the company (e.g., the corporate website). A range of implications of the corporate blog acceptance study can be derived for the code decisions. Code in particular has a relation to three observed variables – timeliness and professionalism, usability, as well as the use of media that was contained in the entertainment value variable. A key decision in blog design refers to the selection of either an individual blog solution (usually through an adaptation and installation of a script package such as the Wordpress, Typepad or Moveable Type on a company-administered server) or an external solution (with a public blog hosting service such as wordpress.com, lifejournal.com or blogger.com). This decision is connected to the perceived professionalism of the corporate blog as it results in a broad (script package) or narrow (hosting services) set of adaptation possibilities. Hosting services in general offer less

flexibility with respect to the use of design templates, add-ons, as well as functionality (Gardner and Birley, 2008). Consequently, the decision to use a hosting service limits the ability to use a professional design, which lowers perceived professionalism and thus negatively influences perceived ease of use and eventually attitude towards the blog. Additionally, the code is directly related to the ease of use. To target specific audience, several implications can be derived from the study. In general, older, less educated and experienced users display a lower perceived ease of use. As this factor is an important determinant of attitude, companies that increase the ease of use will be more successful when connecting to these target groups. Strategies to incorporate this would include the increase of usability (through a simple navigation, simple blog structure, easy comment functionality, subscription opportunities) and – as outlined above – timeliness and professionalism of the corporate blog. Furthermore, infrastructure improvements were found to better enable certain uses. In this context, interactivity features such as recommendation functions or sidebar elements such as archives and search can simplify commenting. Last but not least, entertainment value is also rooted in code characteristics, as it includes the use of videos. By technically enabling the embedding of videos in addition to text and pictures (and consequently motivating authors to use this function), the company can increase entertainment value and thus perceived enjoyment, eventually raising the user's attitude

Relations

Last but not least, a blogging activity involves relations, including hyper-textual as well as social relations. In the corporate communication context one can furthermore identify internal relations, i.e., the relations between the corporate blog and other departments or employees of the company (König, 2011). Again, one can distinguish relations at the corporate and the individual level.

Regarding the company, it needs to identify strategic decisions and incentives for the blogging employees to connect to the blog's audience, i.e., establishing social relations. This goes beyond the networking rules discussed above by going beyond the single blogging episode and even the blog context. The company can provide support through making the blogger aware of the relationship-goals of the blogging activity (explicitly outlining the goals of the blog, for example for customer relationship management, and the role of authentic and credible presentation) and enable him to act in a certain way when pursuing these relationship goals. Both can jointly address the important issue of credibility, which (as part of the factor information value and credibility) is the major determinant of perceived usefulness. The company, in this context, can provide a transparent blogging process (making publicly known who was the author of a blog entry, or allowing pictures of the authors to be displayed with each blog entry). A second aspect of the relationship potential

is the factor relationship, which is of particular importance for more collectivist target groups. This factor comprises how company and author deal with feedback collected through the blog, again with a perspective going beyond a single blogging episode. The level of openness to and gratefulness for feedback was a main determinant for perceived usefulness by these Internet users, with a high valuation for a more personal interaction (for example in contrast to the mainly impersonal interaction on a corporate website). This also relates to the integration of blogging with other corporate communication activities. Last but not least, both the company and the individual author are responsible for establishing hyper-textual relations through the use of hyperlinks and trackbacks. This enables a deeper integration with the blogosphere and to connect to other bloggers.

Interrelations

The above outlined aspects of blogging practices are in a range of ways interrelated. Procedural rules, in particular the networking rules directly relate to the type of relations that a blog is able to establish. They influence the size and composition of the audience (Schmidt, 2007b). This also holds for the corporate blog context as was shown by this study. The amount of incoming links (Technorati Authority) as well as the level of commenting and reading by Internet users were directly related to blogging practices in terms of rules and code. For example, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment, and perceived ease of use can be specifically adapted, resulting in a higher attitude towards the blog among the target group, and eventually higher usage intention. The same holds for the code aspect, as the software and design used can influence bot the rules that guide individual blogging episodes as well as the size and composition of the audience. Consequently, working on the individual blogging aspects will contribute to an overall higher acceptance of the corporate blog by the target group. Table 43 summarizes the findings from this sub-chapter by both giving an overview of implication as well as recommendations for corporate blogging practices.

Table 43: Implications/recommendations for corporate blogging practices

Aspect	Implications	Recommendations
Rules	Adequacy rules determine whether the corporate blog format is appropriate for a given communication strategy and target group. Procedural rules guide individual blogging episodes and are linked to the size and composition of the corporate blog's audience.	Carefully consider target group characteristics: corporate blogs are better suited for more educated and more frequent/intense Internet users, bloggers, women, and individuals with higher uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and collectivism. When focusing on comments/feedback also more masculine and more individualist Internet users. Increase the number of topics to attract more readers, limit the number of topics to generate more feedback.
Code	Code provides the technical framework for a corporate blogging activity. It enables certain uses of the blog format and also influences the size and composition of the audience by providing functionality, presenting the design, and enabling navigation of a corporate blog by the user.	Improve infrastructure to simplify usage (for example through easier navigation, simplified structure, professional design, more frequent and regular publication). Support the variety of uses and acceptance measures (e.g., support commenting by providing archives and interactivity features, support linking by providing outgoing link/trackback functions).
Relations	Relations frame how a corporate blog (better its authors and the company) are able to connect to an audience. More intense relationship building can increase the audience's loyalty and improve attitude, while also insights, feedback channels, and contact opportunities for the company.	Better engage employees and motivate them to interact with the audience. Make blogging more transparent (e.g., through real names or pictures of authors). Integrate the corporate blog with other (online) communication activities.

This study also generated a range of insights for corporate communication beyond the field of corporate blogging. First of all, corporate blog practices and experiences cannot just be transferred to other institutional contexts. It was shown that corporate blog acceptance, i.e., reading and commenting, differs between (and to some extent presumably within) countries, as cultural dimensions influence how a corporate blog's characteristics such as usefulness and entertainment value influence the users' attitudes and usage intention. Strategies with respect to design, content, structure etc. that are successful in one country or for one specific target group might be deemed to fail in other contexts. Hofestede's dimensions of culture can be used as the basis to assess target group specifics. This makes improvements in corporate blog design aimed at improving users' attitude more worthwhile for such target groups as – for example – simple awareness raising activities. Consequently, objections arise to the large set of background literature that *often* highlights the simplicity of and little effort required for developing a corporate presence in social media (Owyang, 2009), as these findings show that thorough preparation – in particular a detailed target group assessment and a well-grounded blog concept and design – are worthwhile. These can evidently increase the costs of social media

campaigns and corporate blogs in particular, but will make the activity more sustainable and successful in the long run. In addition the role of blog age was highlighted in the context of social network evolution, calling on companies to engage with more long-term strategies and using some patience when judging on the performance of corporate blogging activities.

6.3 Further research directions

This section briefly identifies potential tracks for future research. From the presented research, several directions of research seem particularly promising and worthwhile.

First, several corporate blog design and management characteristics have been identified that can directly be observed and can be linked to blog acceptance measures. These have yet to be confirmed for other sets of corporate blogs, potentially from smaller companies or other institutional frameworks. Extensions of this research seem promising in at least two directions. First, it is worthwhile to apply the methodology to other institutional frameworks, i.e., to corporate blog samples from other countries. Second, additional research seems necessary to identify effects on traffic and reader numbers, which are often the most widely used type of success indicator by companies as they allow a direct comparison to other types of communication and marketing. Last but not least, research on the specific effects of corporate blogs on the audience will be worthwhile. Such research would not only be able to prove the findings of this study from a second perspective, but it would actually enable companies to identify effects on specific target groups (e.g., by gender, age, Internet usage, etc.) which will eventually be necessary to tailor corporate blogging practices not only to general institutional frameworks but to more detailed target group characteristics. Consequently, the following chapters will focus on specific preferences and characteristics of Internet users for explain corporate blog acceptance.

Second, several extensions of this work regarding the corporate blog acceptance can be identified. Extending the affective and behavioral response elements of the technology acceptance to better account for varying activity levels as proposed by Forester Research in the context of its social demographics research (Bernoff and Li, 2008, Forrester Research, 2012) would help companies to better understand and target the preferences of the various types of Internet users such as Creators, Critics or Collectors. Eventually this will help companies to optimize their blogging and social media activities by tailoring them to different target groups, exceeding the presented aspects of demographics or culture. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to extend the analyses to include data from more countries to confirm or even extend the identified differences between user groups.

Third, a transformation of the proposed static corporate blog model will be necessary, using time-series data from individual corporate blogs to track acceptance (as a result of Internet users' attitude towards an individual blog) over time and evaluate whether the dynamic model will confirm the static corporate blog model.

Last but not least it seems of interest to the corporate communication and research community to extend some of the findings and practices to other corporate social media activities. An extension of this research to other new web technologies such as corporate wikis, corporate micro-blogging or the corporate use of content sharing platforms such as YouTube, Slideshare of Flickr will produce valuable and relevant insights. Increasingly, companies engage in communication and interaction online, extending their communication channels beyond corporate website and traditional corporate blogs. Researching target group attitudes and specifics in such environments will eventually enable companies to make sophisticated choices and select the right tools for given communication tasks and target groups.

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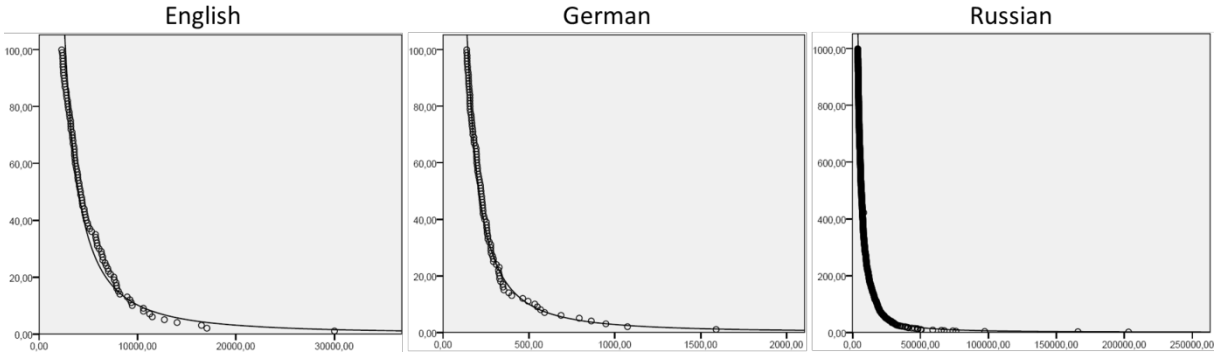
Appendices

Appendix 1

Excursus: Corporate blog acceptance & network theory

A social network 'is made up of nodes representing organizations or individuals that are connected and interacted through links' (Costa et al., 2006). From a structural perspective, the blogosphere can be viewed as such a social network which consists of a set of blogs that function as nodes which are connected through edges, e.g., links and comments (Finin et al., 2007, Götz et al., 2009, Karandikar et al., 2008). A variety of studies has shown that the distribution of these edges within the blogosphere do not follow a Poisson distribution as predicted by random network theory, but a power law that hints at a scale-free network structure (Marlow, 2004, Shi et al., 2007, Zezzatti et al., 2008), which has considerable effects on the influence of individual bloggers within the blogging community and the diffusion of information through the blogosphere (Gruhl et al., 2004). With respect to incoming links, for example, it can be observed that few blogs have been able to acquire an extremely high number of incoming links, whereas the majority of blogs displays only a small number of incoming links. This is shown in the Figure below using the degree distribution for the English top 100 (Technorati, 2009), the German top 100 (Schröder, 2009) and the Russian top 1000 (Yandex, 2009) blogs.

The blogospheres as scale-free networks



Such power laws and scale-free network structures have been detected also for other parts of the blogosphere, such as the Chinese-language blogosphere (Zhu et al., 2008), as well as for internal and therefore closed corporate blog networks, where few bloggers receive very high levels of attention while the large majority of bloggers receives little or no attention (Kolari et al., 2007, Yardi et al., 2009), which is important to understand information diffusion within internal corporate blog networks and to avoid employee frustration. In addition, the prevalence of network structures has led to a revision of success evaluation. As 'tracking metrics like page

views, unique site visitors, etc., are becoming less adequate for online social media measurement' it becomes necessary to approach the interaction and connectivity within social networks by choosing network-oriented indicators such as links and comments (Pascu, 2008).

Consequently, this section will outline the general structure of scale-free networks and introduce characteristics of scale-free networks that will be used to construct a model of link and consequently corporate social capital creation through corporate blogs.

Scale-free networks refer to networks in which the distribution of links between nodes follows a power law, which cannot be reproduced by random graph or small world models (Albert and Barabási, 2002). Such power law function for a network can be expressed by the following equation (Barabási and Albert, 1999):

$$p(k) = k^{-\gamma}$$

Where:	k	represents the number of links to a certain node
	$p(k)$	represents the probability that a node acquires k links
	γ	is the degree exponent

Consequently, it can be assumed that the blogosphere is a scale-free network, which obeys to:

$$p(k) = k^{-\alpha}$$

Where:	k	represents the number of incoming links to a certain blog
	$p(k)$	represents the probability that a blog acquires k incoming edges such as links or comments
	α	is the degree exponent

As verification, such power laws can be fitted to the above displayed blogosphere data. For empirical data, the corresponding power law function for the degree distribution $p(k)$ with degree exponent α can be calculated using the cumulative degree distribution $P(k)$ (Newman, 2003):

$$P_k = \sum_{k'=k}^{\infty} p_{k'} = \sum_{k'=k}^{\infty} k'^{-\alpha} = k^{-(\alpha-1)}$$

The calculations yield the following results:

Degree exponent estimators for blog data

	Germany	Russia	U.S.
(α – 1)	-1.85	-1.65	-1.74
A	-2.85	-2.65	-2.734
p(k)	$k^{-(\alpha)}$	$k^{-(\alpha)}$	$k^{-(\alpha)}$
R²	.99	.99	.97

These derivations support the findings by Leskovec et al. (2007) calculating an α for the overall blogosphere of -2.7 and other findings that derived degree exponents between -2 and -3 for various sub groups of the blogosphere (Kumar et al., 2003, Shi et al., 2007).

Scale free networks evolve because a network features two important factors: preferential attachment and growth (Albert and Barabási, 2002, Barabási, 2003, Barabási and Albert, 1999, Barabási and Nonabeau, 2003).

Growth

The continuous addition of new nodes to the system is a basic condition for the evolution of scale-free networks, i.e., the network increases over time. The evolution of scale-free networks is therefore more likely in networks that enable the simple and quick creation of nodes that can establish connections to existing nodes at low cost (Albert and Barabási, 2002, Barabási, 2003).

Preferential attachment

New nodes in the network establish links to existing nodes following specific non-random patterns based on the degree of existing nodes, i.e., on the number of previously acquired links such that the probability $\Pi(k)$ that a new node connects to to node i is proportional to the degree k of node i (Albert and Barabási, 2002):

$$\Pi(k_i) = \frac{k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} k_j}$$

According to the original model by Barabási and Albert (1999) this would result in the 'rich get richer' phenomenon, because first of all new nodes with no incoming edges would not be able to acquire links, and secondly the probability to acquire links is only dependent on the previous accumulation of links. However, real networks show that new nodes are indeed able to acquire links (i.e., $\Pi(0) \neq 0$) and can even surpass more mature nodes in terms of degree. Consequently, the original model has been extended in two ways. Firstly, Dorogovtsev et al. (2000) have introduced the notion of initial attractiveness which adds a factor A to describe the likelihood of an isolated node to acquire its first link:

$$\Pi(k_i) = A + \frac{k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} k_j}$$

Secondly, Bianconi and Barabási (2001) argue that linking in real networks does not occur based on maturity in terms of accumulated links only. Consequently, they introduce a fitness parameter η that represents the respective node's ability to compete for links such that the propability of receiving new links is proportional to the degree and the fitness of the node (Albert and Barabási, 2002):

$$\Pi(k_i) = A + \frac{\eta_i k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \eta_j k_j}$$

Consequently, a node that displays a high fitness parameter can acquire a high number of links despite having a low degree (Albert and Barabási, 2002, Barabási, 2003).

As shown, the blogosphere displays both characteristics of scale-free networks. Firstly, it features high growth and researchers assume further growth of the blogosphere as a certainty. Secondly, preferential attachment is prevalent. This preferential attachment is related to degree, i.e., mature blogs are more likely to attract links than new blogs, as well as fitness, i.e., young but fit blogs can acquire links at a high rate (Herring et al., 2005a, Marlow, 2004). This holds for network connections in the blogosphere including the distribution of links and comments (Mishne and Glance, 2006, Schmidt et al., 2009, Tremayne et al., 2006). In this context, Marlow (2006a, 2006b) found that a blog's probability to acquire links and comments – i.e., its fitness – depends both, on blog age as well as the blog author's investment in terms of time spent on blogging, post frequency and external commenting.

As outlined before, the blogosphere can be described as a scale-free real network, such that the distribution of connections between blogs follows a power law:

$$p(k) = k^{-\alpha}$$

Where:	k	represents the number of incoming links to a certain blog
	$p(k)$	represents the probability that a blog acquires k incoming edges such as links or comments
	α	is the degree exponent

In this system newly created links, e.g., links established by new blogs, are not placed randomly. Like other real networks, the blogosphere features competitive aspects, i.e., different blogs display a varying ability to acquire links. Such preferential attachment cannot be explained by the popularity of blogs alone, because new blogs can acquire links and even surpass older blogs in terms of popularity. Following the fitness model by Bianconi and Barabási (2001), each blog i out of a blog-

osphere of size n features an initial attractiveness A_i, a record of previously accumulated links k_i, and an individual fitness η_i^B that determines its ability to acquire links, i.e., the probability that new links will be directed towards the particular blog:

$$\Pi(k_i) = A_i + \frac{\eta_i k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \eta_j k_j}$$

Consequently, some blogs are more successful than others in acquiring links depending on their fitness. This fitness is determined by a vector of p blogging routines and characteristics, which determine the respective blog's fitness as expressed by the modeled functional relation f:

$$\eta_i^B = f(c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_p)$$

In the context of the New Institutional Economics, culture enters the above blog fitness function. A given set of blog characteristics yields different fitness values depending on the institutional framework the blog is established in. Consequently it is the functional transformation f, which models how blog routines and characteristics translate into fitness, which requires a culture-dependent adaptation:

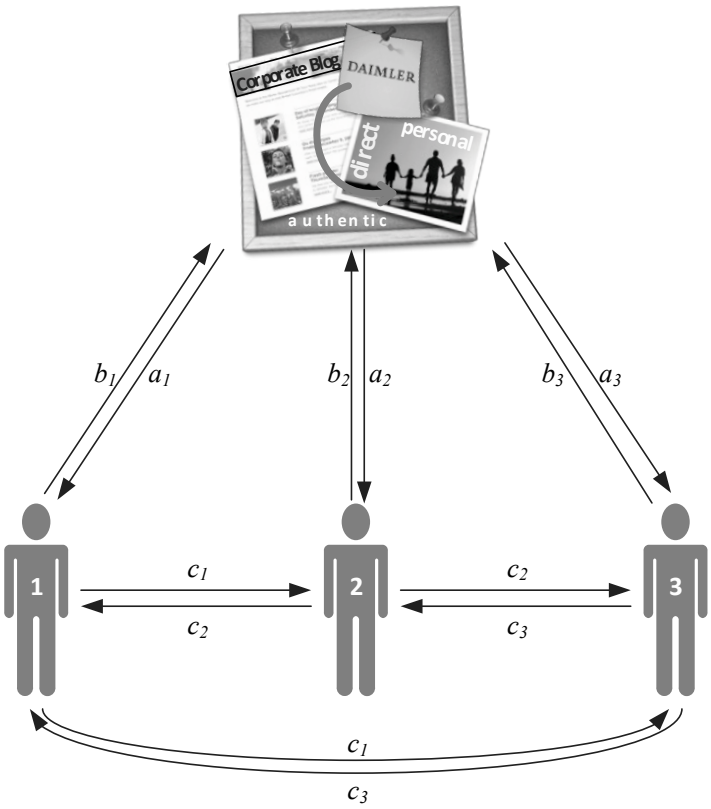
$$\eta_i^{IFB} = f^{IFB}(c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_m)$$

The blog-fitness model is connected to the blogosphere model, because linking patterns are dynamic and change over time. Therefore, the degree of a single node, i.e., the number of links accumulated by each blog, is estimated to be the product of the blog's probability to acquire new links and the number of additional links in the blogosphere m, and thus is proportional to the blog's fitness (ceteris paribus):

$$\frac{\delta k_i}{\delta t} = m\left(A_i + \frac{\eta_i k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \eta_j k_j}\right)$$

Permanent external corporate blogs as defined in Section 1.1 are a part of the blogosphere, such that companies that can increase their corporate blog's fitness are able to increase the size of the network around the blog (for example in terms or readers, commentators or incoming links from other blogs). A blog network model can be used to estimate the value of such network. For the model it should be assumed that a blog attracts an audience of size k. Links can be established between the blog and the individuals within this audience, as well as between the individuals. These links can be used to transmit information and represents social capital as defined by Coleman (1999). Thus, a company that establishes a corporate blog can attach a certain value to the evolving network based on the value of the individual information flows. The Figure below illustrates such a communication network around a corporate blog of involving a small audience of size $k = 3$:

Visualization of social capital created by a corporate blog



As argued before, a company can have three main purposes when establishing a corporate blog and initiating connections to individuals, which can serve as the starting point to value the network in terms of corporate utility. First of all, the company can aim at establishing an information channel to stakeholders, e.g., for promoting its products and services to customers. Such information is expected to yield certain benefits a_i for the company for example if it initiates a purchase. The resulting utility for the company deriving from a network of size k is the sum of utilities attached to each individual information event at a_i. If substituting a_i by the average information utility $\bar{a}$, the network valuation reflects Sarnoff's Law which was developed to estimate the value of television broadcasting networks (Swann, 2002):

$$U_{Inf}(k) = \sum_{i=1}^{k} a_i = \bar{a}k$$

Secondly, a company can also benefit from a reciprocal information stream, e.g., if the feedback can be used in quality assessments or market research. The value of this information is reflected in the model through the term b_i which can for example represent the value of the information for marketing, production or quality assessment purposes. Consequently, the corporate utility function is expanded while still following the linear Sarnoff's Law:

$$U_{Com}(k) = \sum_{i=1}^{k}(a_i + b_i) = (\bar{a} + \bar{b})k$$

Thirdly, companies can benefit from information flows between individuals within the audience, e.g., relating to word-of-mouth marketing or a customer innovation platform. The derived utility is illustrated by the term c_i. The resulting function reproduces the collaboration function of social networks, yielding a value which deviates from Sarnoff's Law because it grows exponentially as predicted by Metcalfe's Law for the valuation of collaborative social networks (Shapiro and Varian, 2000, Swann, 2002):

$$U_{Col}(k) = \sum_{i=1}^{k}(a_i + b_i) + (k-1)\sum_{i=1}^{k} c_i$$

$$= (\bar{a} + \bar{b})k + \bar{c}k(k-1) = (\bar{a} + \bar{b} + \bar{c}k - \bar{c})k$$

Simplifying these expressions by introducing the average interaction utility u yields:

$$U_{Inf}(k) = uk$$

$$U_{Com}(k) = 2uk$$

$$U_{Col}(k) = (u + uk)k = uk^2 + uk$$

A differentiation with respect to network size yields the following marginal network values:

$$\frac{\delta U_{Inf}}{\delta k} = u$$

$$\frac{\delta U_{Com}}{\delta k} = 2u$$

$$\frac{\delta U_{Inf}}{\delta k} = 2uk + u$$

Integrating the blogosphere model into the above corporate utility model $\left(\text{i. e.}, \frac{\delta U}{\delta t} = \frac{\delta U}{\delta k} \times \frac{\delta k}{\delta t}\right)$ yields the following eqation where the change in utility equals the product of the marginal utility and the number of new links received:

$$\frac{\delta U_{Inf}}{\delta t} = um\left(A_i + \frac{\eta_i k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \eta_j k_j}\right)$$

$$\frac{\delta U_{Com}}{\delta t} = 2um\left(A_i + \frac{\eta_i k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \eta_j k_j}\right)$$

$$\frac{\delta U_{Inf}}{\delta t} = (2uk + u)m\left(A_i + \frac{\eta_i k_i}{\sum_{j=1}^{n} \eta_j k_j}\right)$$

Assuming the average utility of connections to be constant and nonnegative (which is reasonable given that information gained can be of no (zero) value in the worst case, i.e., $u \geq 0$*),* the increase in utility depends solely on the share of new links within the blogosphere that can be acquired by the corporate blog and therefore is proportional to the corporate blog's fitness η_i. Consequently, a blogging company has an incentive to increase its blog's fitness by optimizing the set of corporate blog characteristics.

Appendix 2

Overview of past blog-related research

Study/publication details						Blog type							Observed characteristics				
Institution(s)	**Year(s) of study**	**Language areas/ countries**	**Type of study**	**Sample**	**Reference(s)**	**Private blogs**	**Corporate blogs**	**Small business blogs**	**Public sector blogs**	**Academic blogs**	**Journalist blogs**	**e-learning blogs**	**Blog characteristics**	**Author characteristics**	**Post characteristics**	**Company characteristics**	**Reader characteristics**
MIT Media Laboratory, Cambridge/MA	2001-04	English	Automated content and link analysis	1,000 blogs	Marlow (2004)	•							Blogroll, links, comments, trackbacks	-	-	-	-
Indiana University, Bloomington	2003	English	Manual content analysis	203 blogs	Herring et al. (2004b, 2005b)	•							Purpose, blogging software, post frequency, comment function, calendar, archive, badges, ads	Gender, age, profession, location, pseudonym	Links, images, post length, quotations	-	-
IBM Research, Almaden; MIT Laboratory for Computer Science,	2003	English	Automated content analysis	11,804 blogs 401,021 posts	Gruhl et al. (2004)	•							Posting time, links	Post topic	-	-	-
New York State University, Oswego; Florida State University, Tallahassee	2003	Korean	Survey, manual content analysis	433 bloggers	Jung et al. (2007)	•							Post frequency, profile, pictures, background music, design	Gender, age, income, competence, abilities, motivation, communication practice	-	-	-
Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo	2003	Japanese	Automated link analysis	39,272 blogs	Nanno et al. (2004)	•							Links, popularity	-	-	-	-
University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh	2003	English	Survey + manual content analysis	71 bloggers and corresponding blogs	Nowson (2006), Nowson et al. (2005)	•							Post frequency, software, formality	Gender, age, place of birth, location, education, profession, personality	Text/word statistics	-	-
Indiana University, Bloomington	2003	English	Manual content analysis	154 blogs	Scheidt and Wright (2004)	•							Software, design elements, type	-	-	-	-

University of Tampere, Tampere	2003	English, German, others	Manual content analysis	17 blogs	Vuorinen (2005)	•							Comments, trackbacks, blogroll	Link strategy	-	-	-
Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo	2003-04	English	Automated content analysis	> 500,000 posts	Fujiki et al. (2005)	•							Topics	-	-	-	-
Intelliseek Applied Research Center, Pittsburgh	2003-04	English	Automated content analysis	> 100,000 blogs	Glance et al. (2004)	•							-	Post topic	-	-	-
HP Information Dynamics Lab, Palo Alto	2003-04	English	Automated content analysis	239 blogs	Adar et al. (2004)	•							Links	-	-	-	-
Indiana University, Bloomington	2003-04	English	Manual content analysis	457 blogs	Herring et al. (2007b)	•							-	Gender, age, disclosure	Number of links, type of links, length, images, comments	-	-
Telematica Instituut, Enschede; Tilburg Institut, Tilburg	2003-04	English	Manual content analysis	32 bloggers/ commenters	Efimova and De Moor (2005)	•							-	Activity patterns	-	-	Commenting patterns
Georgetown University, Washington D.C.	2003-04	English	Manual content analysis	68 blogs	Huffaker (2004, 2006), Huffaker and Calvert (2005)	•							Topics, social elements	-	Age, gender, disclosure	Text statistics	-
Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff	2003-05	English	Automated content analysis	500 blogs	Grieve et al. (2009)	•							-	Location	Linguistic text statistics	-	-
Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago; Bar–Ilan University, Ramat; University of Texas, Austin	2004	English	Automated content analysis	46, 947 blogs	Argamon et al. (2007)	•							Language use, subject areas	Gender, age	-	-	-
University of Hongkong, Hongkong	2004	English	Manual content analysis	31 blogs with 279 blog posts	Du and Wagner (2005)							•	-	Learning performance	-	-	-
Indiana University, Bloomington	2004	English	Automated content analysis	5,517 blogs	Herring et al. (2005a)	•							Links & Reciprocity	-	-	-	-
University of Georgia, Atlanta	2004	Polish	Manual content	358 blogs	Trammell et al. (2006)	•							Topics, characteristics, links	Gender, motivation	-	-	-

Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw; Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge			analysis													
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge	2004	English	Manual content analysis	209 blogs	Trammell et al. (2006)	•							Post frequency, images, blog type	Gender, disclosure	-	-	-
Indiana University, Bloomington	2004	English	Manual content analysis	357 blogs	Herring et al. (2004a)	•							Type	Gender, age	-	-	-
University of Hongkong, Hongkong	2004	English	Manual content analysis	126 blogs	Du and Wagner (2006)	•							Popularity, popularity dynamics, software and software-enabled blog features	-	-	-	-
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam	2004	English	Automated content analysis	624,905 posts	Mishne (2005)	•							Post frequency,	Mood expres-sion,	Post length, word statistics	-	-
University of California, Irvine ; Stanford Universi-ty, Stanford	2004	English	Interviews	23 bloggers	Nardi et al. (2004), Schiano et al. (2004)	•							Software, design	Motivation	-	-	-
Cornell University, Ithaca; Washington University, Seattle; Microsoft Re-search, Redmond	2004	English, Chinese	Automated link analysis	4,285 blog commentators, 14,884 com-ments	Lento et al. (2006)	•							Link structure, comment structure	Activity	-	-	-
Natl. Institute of Information and Communications Technology, Kyoto; NEC Laboratories, Cupertino; Kyoto University, Kyoto	2004-05	Japanese	Automated content analysis	> 400,000 blogs 10 mio posts	Nakajima et al. (2005)	•							Links, blog communities	-	-	-	-
NTT Cyber Solu-tions Laboratories, Tokyo	2004-05	Japanese	Automated link analysis	305,000 blogs	Fujimura et al. (2005)	•							Links, authority	-	-	-	-

Technische Universität Dresden, Dresden	2005	German	Content analysis	92 blogs, 607 posts	Unger (2005)	•							Main topics & subject areas, tone/expression, linking patterns	-	-	-	-
University of Science and Technology, Hongkong; Microsoft Research, Hongkong	2005	English	Automated content analysis	9,918 blogs	Shen et al. (2006)	•							Main topics & subject areas	-	-	-	-
Telematica Instituut, Enschede Microsoft Research, Redmond	2005	U.S.	Interviews	38 Microsoft employees	Efimova and Grudin (2007)		•						Technology, topics	Motives, experiences	-	-	-
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam; Nielsen BuzzMetrics, New York	2005	English	Manual/ automated content analysis	645,402 comments 8,842 blogs	Mishne and Glance (2006)	•							Comment frequency, Popularity	-	Links	-	-
Cornell University, Ithaca Stanford University, Palo Alto; Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh	2005	English	Automated content analysis	45,000 blogs 2.2 million posts	Götz et al. (2009)	•							Links, post frequency	-	Post popularity	-	-
NEC Laboratories, Cupertino; University of California, Santa Barbara	2005	English	Automated content analysis	130 blogs	Tseng et al (2005)	•							Topics	-	-	-	-
University of Liverpool, Liverpool	2005	English	Interviews	15 bloggers	Hill (2005)			•					Post frequency	Motivation, time spent, attitude	-	-	-
Intelliseek Applied Research Center, Pittsburgh	2005	U.S.	Automated content analysis	239,876 blogger profiles	Hurst (2005)	•							-	Location	-	-	-
Indiana University, Bloomington	2005	English	Manual content analysis	127 posts	Herring and Paolillo (2006)	•							Genre	Gender	Text statistics	-	-
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	2005	U.S.	Experiment	42 students	Kelleher and Miller (2006)		•						Relation building	-	-	Relational strategy	-
Université de	2005	English	Automated	68,022 RSS	Lambiotte et	•							-	-	Text statistics	-	-

Liége, Liége ; University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton			content analysis	feeds	al. (2007)											
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	2005	English	Manual content analysis	18 companies	Lee et al. (2006, 2008)		•						Blog type, popularity	Number of authors, status of author(s)	-	Blogging strategy	-
Cornell University, Ithaca	2005	English	Automated content analysis	812,000 posts	Leshed and Kaye (2006)	•							-	Mood expression	Text statistics	-	-
Yahoo! Research, Sunnyvale	2005	English	Automated content and link analysis Survey	15 million links	Marlow (2006b)	•							Post frequency, comments, popularity	Social capital, comment activity	-	-	-
University of California, Berkeley	2005	English	Manual content analysis survey, interviews	8 blogs and bloggers	Carter (2005)	•							Topic	Motivation, sourcing, time, perception	Text statistics, links, quotation	-	-
University Paris Diderot, Paris; France Telecom R&D, Issy Moulineux	2005	French	Interview, Automated link analysis	27 blogs and bloggers	Cardon et al. (2006)	•							Link, comments	Motivation, topics	-	-	Audience structure
PEW Internet & American Life Project , Washington, DC	2005-06	English	Surveys	233 bloggers 4,753 Internet users	Lenhart and Fox (2006)	•							Software platform, comments, blogroll, RSS feed	Gender, age, racial background, disclosure, motivation, ethics, Internet usage	-	-	-
Universität Bamberg, Bamberg	2005-06	German	Survey	5,246 bloggers and blog readers	Schmidt (2007a, 2008a, 2008b) Schmidt and Wilbers (2006)	•	•						Blog age, post frequency, blog platform, identity disclosure, comment function, use/size of blogroll	Gender, age, education, profession, income, nationality, Internet usage, motivation, group size	Content types	-	Gender, age, education, expectations, reader relations
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen	2005-06	UK	Survey + Manual content analysis	48 blogs and corresponding bloggers	Pedersen and Macafee (2006a, 2006b)	•							Software, design, blog ring membership, popularity, blogroll	Age, gender, education, blogging practices, computer equipment,	Media usage, post length	-	-

University of Nebraska, Lincoln	2006	U.S.	Manual content analysis	28 blogs	Lee et al. (2008)		•						Contact, RSS, blogging policy, media, navigation elements, security, loading time, trackbacks	-	-	Disclosure, blogging policy	-
Ruhr-Universität, Bochum	2006	German	Manual content analysis	464 random blogs	Hesse (2008b, 2008a)	•							-	Gender, age	-	-	-
Universität Bamberg, Bamberg	2006	German	Follow-up survey	1,439 bloggers and blog readers	Schmidt et al. (2006a, 2006b), Schmidt (2007c)	•							Blog age, post frequency,	Gender, age, education, profession, income, nationality, Internet usage, motivation, group size	Content types	-	-
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge; University of Georgia, Athens; University of Kentucky, Lexington; Eastern Illinois University, Charleston	2006	U.S.	Survey	131 public relations professionals	Porter et al. (2007)		•						Credibility	Motives, expertise	-	-	-
Northeastern University, Boston; Backbone Media, Waltham	2006	English	Interviews	20 experts	Cass and Carl (2006)		•						Transparency, dialogue, networking	-	-	Corporate culture	-
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis	2006	English	Manual content analysis	31 corporate blogs	Cho and Huh (2007)		•						Navigation elements, accessibility, size of blogroll, blog policy, post frequency	-	-	-	-
University of Hongkong, Hongkong	2006	Chinese	Interviews	33 blog readers	Kwai Fun and Wagner (2008)	•							-	-	-	-	Access type, duration, preferred software, blogging interests
Indiana University,	2006	International	Automated	1,000 + 5,025	Herring et al.	•							Language,				

Bloomington			content analysis	blogs	(2007a)								language networks				
University of Hongkong, Hongkong; National University of Singapore, Singapore	2006	English	Manual content analysis	100 blogs	Hui et al. (2007)	•							Visits, comment frequency, post frequency, sidebar, profile, archive, track-backs, links, ads, search box	Gender, location, age	Length, images	-	-
University of Maryland, Balti-more	2006	International	Automated link analysis	1.2 million links	Java et al. (2006)	•							Linking patterns, popularity	-	-	-	-
National University of Science and Technology, Taipei	2006	Chinese	Survey	155 bloggers	Lu and Hsiao (2007)	•							Post frequency	Gender, age, education, profession, motivation, expectations	-	-	-
Drexel University, Philadelphia; Long Island Uni-versity, Brookville	2006			9 blogs	Ma and Zhang (2007)		•						Type, post frequency	Group size, author status	-	-	-
University of California, Berke-ley	2006	English	Automated content analysis	120 blogs	Qu et al. (2006)	•							Blog type	-	Word statis-tics, topic	-	-
Hans-Bredow-Institut, Hamburg	2006	German	Manual content analysis	188 blogs	Schmidt (2008a)	•							Incoming links, age	-	Gender	-	-
University of Florida, Gainesville	2006	English	Manual content analysis	50 blogs	Seltzer and Mitrook (2007a, 2007b)	•	•						Navigation, media usage, loading time, design elements, interactivity elements	-	-	-	-
University of Texas, Arlington; New York State University, Buffalo	2006	Global	Survey	154 bloggers	Stefanone and Jang (2007)	•							-	Age, education, gender, extraversion, disclosure, social relation-ships	-	-	-
Polytechnic University of Valencia, Valencia	2006	English	Manual content analysis	39 blogs	Stuart (2006)					•			Academic field	-	Word statis-tics, linguistic features	-	-
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam	2006	Dutch, Flemish	Manual content analysis	100 blogs	Van Doorn et al. (2007)	•							-	Disclosure, gender, age, sexual prefer-	-	-	-

													ences, living conditions, education, profession			
Universität Leipzig, Leipzig	2006	German	Survey	605 blog readers	Zerfass and Bogosyan (2007)	•							Credibility	-	-	-	Age, gender, motivation, typology
Singapore Management University, Singapore; University of Texas, Dallas	2006	English	Matched Sample Comparison	54 companies	Chen et al. (2007)		•						-	-	-	Company performance, blog engagement	-
PEW Internet & American Life Project	2006	U.S.	Survey	308 bloggers, 4,753 Internet users	Lenhart and Fox (2006)	•							-	Age, gender, race, blogging practices, information behavior, writing behavior, motivation	-	-	-
University of Maryland, Baltimore; IBM Toronto Lab, Toronto	2006-07	International	Automated link analysis	23,500 internal blogs	Kolari et al. (2007)		•						Linking patterns, comment frequency, Popularity	-	-	-	-
Texas A&M University, College Station	2006-07	English	Manual/ Automated content analysis	10 blogs, 1390 posts, 73,652 comments	Dwyer (2007)		•						Post frequency, comment frequency, comment patterns	-	-	-	Trust, linking, commenting behavior
Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen	2006-07	U.S./UK	Survey + Manual content analysis	120 bloggers, 112 blogs	Pedersen (2007)	•							Popularity, blogroll, topic, blog ring membership	Age, gender, employment, blogging practices, disclosure, motivation	Picture use, outgoing links, post length	-	-
Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf	2006-07	English	Automated content analysis	134 blogs	Puschmann (2007a, 2007b)	•	•						-	-	Word statistics, formality (F-score)	-	-
University of Gerona, Gerona; Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona	2006-07	English	Manual content analysis	67 blogs	Xifra and Huertas (2008)	•	•						Topic, interactivity, usability, design	Position,	-	-	-
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	2007	U.S., (Republic of)	Manual content	40 companies	Jeon et al. (2008)		•						-	Group size, position	-	Blogging strategy	-

		Korea	analysis														
University of Nebraska, Lincoln	2007	(Republic of) Korea	Manual content analysis	3 government blogs	Kim et al. (2008a)				•				Popularity, interactivity, enthusiasm, post frequency, linking patterns, number of friends	-	Topic	-	-
University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Keimyung University, Daegu	2007	English	Case studies	4 blogs/blog communities	Kim et al. (2008b)		•						-	Motivation, position	-	-	-
University of Texas, Austin	2007	U.S.	Experiment	145 students	Chu and Kamal (2008)		•							Credibility	Argument quality	-	-
Universidade de Brasília, Brasilia	2007	Brazil	Manual content analysis	150 bloggers	Do Nascimento Ferreira and Claudio (2007)	•							Blog type	Gender, age	-	-	-
Northwestern University Evanston; University of Burgundy, Dijon; University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh	2007	English	Manual content analysis	65 blog readers	Gill et al. (2008)	•							-	-	-	-	Emotion perception
University of Maryland Baltimore; NEC Laboratories America, Cupertino	2007	International	Automated content analysis	1.35 million posts from 76,177 microbloggers	Java (2007)	•							Links, network patterns, authority	-	-	-	-
University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza	2007	English	Manual content analysis	15 blogs	Luzón (2009)					•			-	-	Links, link functions	-	-
London School of Economics, London	2007	English	Interview	7 microbloggers	Mischaud (2007)	•							Topics,	Motivation, disclosure emotion, reader relations	-	-	-
Kobe Gakuin University, Kobe; Senshu University,	2007	Japanese	Survey	1,343 bloggers	Miura and Yamashita (2007)	•							-	Gender, age, motivation, blog experi-	-	-	-

Senshu													ence			
NetMind, Moscow	2007	Russian	Manual content analysis + interviews	137 blogs + 6 blogs	Rokina (2007)		•						-	-	Number of authors, position	Industry, goal	-
Universität der Bundeswehr, Munich	2007	German	Automated content analysis	76 blogs	Schäfer et al. (2008)	•							Blog cluster	-	Word statistics	-	-
Universität Freiburg, Freiburg (CH)	2007	German	Survey	191 blog readers	Schneider (2007)		•						-	-	-	-	Motivation, gender, age, usage frequency, comment frequency, software, opinion leadership
University of Warsaw, Warsaw	2007	Polish	Survey	1835 bloggers & readers	Zając et al. (2008)	•							Topic, blog type, popularity, post frequency, comments, blogroll, media	Age, gender, profession, motivation, experience	-	-	Internet usage, gender, age, location, motivation, comment frequency
Peking University, Peking; Harvard University, Harvard	2007	Unknown	Automated link analysis	7520 blogs	Zhu et al. (2008)	•							Linking patterns	-	-	-	-
Universidad de Costa Rica	2007	Costa Rica	Manual contents analysis, interviews	130 blogs, 10 bloggers	González (2008)	•							Linking/citing patterns, blog age	Age, gender, motivation, context, commenting	Text statistics, media use	-	-
Universidade Católica de Pelotas, Pelotas	2007-08	Brazil	Interviews	150 Blogs, 32 Bloggers	Da Cunha Recuero (2008)	•							Topics	Motivation, perceived social capital, perceived impact	-	-	-
Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta; Cornell University, Ithaca; Hewlett-Packard Labs, Palo Alto	2007-08	English	Interviews	96 blog community members	Yardi et al. (2009)		•						Visits	Posting practices, reading practices, age, gender	-	-	-
University of California, Irvine;	2008	English	Manual content	12 blog readers	Baumer and Fisher (2008)	•							Blogroll elements	-	-	-	Blogroll use

Microsoft Research, Redmond			analysis														
University of California, Berkeley; Microsoft Research, Redmond	2008	English	Content analysis	1,061 blogs	Hearst and Dumais (2009)	•							Technorati authority	Group size, gender	Post frequency post length	-	-
University of California, Irvine	2008	English	Survey, interviews	15 blog readers	Baumer et al. (2008)	•							-	-	-	-	Blog reading practices & preferences
University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam	2008	English	Automated content analysis	> 100,000 blogs	Weerkamp and de Rijke (2008)	•							Comment frequency, credibility	-	Post length, emotion, text characteristics	-	-
University of Munich, Munich	2008	International	Manual content analysis	250 Bloggers	Gaudeul et al. (2008)	•							Post frequency, comment frequency	Age, nationality, friends, commenting	-	-	-
Fachhochschule Köln, Köln	2008	German	Survey	353 Bloggers and readers	Fank (2009)	•	•	•					Topics, policy	Motivation, gender, age,	-	Industry, monitoring efforts	-
Fu-Jen Catholic University, Taipei; Ming Chuan University, Taipei	2008	Taiwan	Survey	204 Blog Readers	Huang et al. (2008)	•							-	-	-	-	Reading motives, reader response
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore	2008	English	Interviews, manual content analysis	8 Bloggers 3 Blog	Zeledon (2008)	•							Post frequency	Personality, opinion	Links, texts	-	Credibility
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich	2008	German	Survey	203 blog readers	Pfeiffer (2008)		•						Design, navigation, timeliness, mistakes, credibility	Competence, credibility, education, sympathy	Media, mistakes, links, sources, downloads, topic	Popularity, size, fairness, transparency, accessibility, ability to accept criticism, industry	Internet usage, demography
University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba; University of Tokyo, Tokyo	2008	English, Japanese	Automated content analysis	430 Japanese and 902 English blogs	Nakasaki et al. (2009)	•							-	-	Topic/term statistics	-	-
YeungNam University, Gyeongsan	2008	South Korea	Automated link analysis	79 private blog	Park and Thelwall (2008)	•							Linking patterns	Political opinion, party affiliation	-	-	-

Appendix 3

Cohen's kappa

Cohen's kappa as a measure of inter-rater agreement is calculated using the following formula:

$$\kappa = \frac{p_0 - p_c}{1 - p_c}$$

p_0 is the measured level of agreement of both raters, where h_{ii} becomes '1' for cases of agreement and '0' for cases of disagreement for N items that are to be categorized into z categories:

$$p_0 = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{z} h_{ii}}{N}$$

p_c is the expected level of agreement, i.e., the agreement if the rating is random. Brennan and Prediger (1981) have proposed a corrected pc in order to correct for marginal distribution effects:

$$p_c = \frac{1}{z}$$

With z=21, N_G=467, $N_{U.S.}$=1803, N_R=351 and the following kappas were calculated based on the inter-rater scores:

Country	Level of inter-coder agreement	Level of expected agreement	
U.S.	.92	.05	.92
Germany	.91	.05	.91
Russia	.90	.05	.89

Landis and Koch (1977) have studied Cohen's kappa and provided the following guidance on how to interpret calculated kappa-values:

κ	Interpretation
< 0	No agreement
.0 - .20	Slight agreement
.21 - .40	Fair agreement
.41 - .60	Moderate agreement
.61 - .80	Substantial agreement
.81 - 1.00	Almost perfect agreement

Source: Landis and Koch (1977).

Appendix 4

Intercoder-matrices

Intercoder matrix for U.S. blog posts (*N* = 1803)

Coder B \ Coder A		Company											Industry					Other			Blog		
		CS	*CP*	*CO*	*CHR*	*CE*	*CT*	*CSR*	*CM*	*CH*	*CA*	*CC*	*IP*	*IT*	*ID*	*IE*	*IA*	*OG*	*OS*	*OP*	*BD*	*BG*	∑
Company	*CS*	114		2			5		1						1	1							124
	CP	2	228			1	3								1					1			236
	CO	1		67			1		3		1									1			74
	CHR			3	19																		22
	CE		2	3		39	3	1	4									1					53
	CT	1	1				138		1					2		1							144
	CSR			1		1	1	51							1	1		1					57
	CM	7	10	1			1		181	1		1	1					2					205
	CH		1	1					1	60													63
	CA								1		4												5
	CC											9											9
Industry	*IP*												37										37
	IT													31									31
	ID	2				1	1							3	88	1							96
	IE	1	4				3									152							160
	IA												3		1		37	1					42
Other	*OG*								3						1			280	1	4			289
	OS														2			2	9				13
	OP	1		2					1									13		84	1		102
Blog	*BD*				1													1		1	28		31
	BG	1							1						1			1			1	5	10
	∑	130	246	80	20	42	156	52	197	61	5	10	41	36	96	156	37	302	10	91	30	5	1803

Intercoder matrix for German blog posts (*N* = 467)

Coder B \ Coder A		Company											Industry					Other			Blog		
		CS	*CP*	*CO*	*CHR*	*CE*	*CT*	*CSR*	*CM*	*CH*	*CA*	*CC*	*IP*	*IT*	*ID*	*IE*	*IA*	*OG*	*OS*	*OP*	*BD*	*BG*	∑
Company	*CS*	8					1																9
	CP		90																				90
	CO			8			1																9
	CHR				47																		47
	CE		3			15			1							4					1		24
	CT						11																11
	CSR							10															10
	CM		2						47												1		50
	CH								1	1													2
	CA										0												0
	CC											2											2
Industry	*IP*												5										5
	IT													1									1
	ID								1						12			1					14
	IE		1						1						1	29							32
	IA																7	1					8
Other	*OG*																	68	2		1		71
	OS				1													4	15				20
	OP		3	1														6		37			47
Blog	*BD*																				12		12
	BG																	1				2	3
	∑	8	99	9	48	15	13	10	51	1	0	2	5	1	13	33	7	81	17	37	15	2	467

Intercoder matrix for Russian blog posts (*N* = 351)

Coder B \ Coder A		Company											Industry					Other			Blog		
		CS	*CP*	*CO*	*CHR*	*CE*	*CT*	*CSR*	*CM*	*CH*	*CA*	*CC*	*IP*	*IT*	*ID*	*IE*	*IA*	*OG*	*OS*	*OP*	*BD*	*BG*	∑
Company	*CS*	29							2		1							2					34
	CP		33						2									1					36
	CO			3																			3
	CHR				4					2													6
	CE					2																	2
	CT						4																4
	CSR							13										5					18
	CM	1	2						21									1					25
	CH																						0
	CA										12												12
	CC											1											1
Industry	*IP*																						0
	IT													3									3
	ID														10								10
	IE							1								6		2					9
	IA																11						11
Other	*OG*	1													1			139		1	1		143
	OS																	1					1
	OP																	7		15			22
Blog	*BD*																				5		5
	BG																	1			1	4	6
	∑	31	35	3	4	2	4	14	25	2	13	1	0	3	11	6	11	159	0	16	7	4	351

Appendix 5

Corporate blog data

Data for the German sample set

Company	Blog Title	Technorati Authority	Comments per post	Post frequency	Post length	# of authors	Diversity	Blog age	# of blogroll elements	# of sidebar elements	Media per post	Interactivity elements	F-Score	Topical dimensions
Werner & Mertz Gmbh	Frosch Blog	27	1.000	2.8	137.357	7	0.214	194	0	5	1.143	2	63.260	6
Loyalty Partners GmbH	Payback Blog	16	7.375	2.4	78.917	4	0.250	421	0	4	0.833	1	70.470	5
Daimler AG	Daimler Blog	120	4.833	2.4	473.917	15	0.300	153	30	9	2.417	3	62.540	7
FRoSTA AG	Frosta Blog	46	9.400	3	158.500	8	0.250	1022	0	5	0.800	2	55.100	8
T-Systems Enterprise Services GmbH	T-Systems Automotive Blog	14	1.500	1	695.000	4	0.500	430	2	6	0.000	3	58.840	2
DocMorris	DocMorris Blog	9	175.000	0.3	125.333	1	0.500	627	11	11	0.000	2	61.980	3
Langenscheidt Verlagsgruppe	Langenscheidt Weblog	0	0.227	2.2	121.955	1	0.500	693	0	4	0.000	1	74.420	5
Festo AG & Co. KG	Ausbildungsblog	5	0.300	1	199.700	7	0.071	881	4	4	0.000	1	60.360	2
Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.	AMD Notebook Test Blog	11	1.523	4.4	310.477	24	0.333	671	0	4	0.023	1	54.540	2
International Business Machines Corporation	Lotus Germany	0	0.146	4.1	195.073	4	0.500	124	0	4	0.073	1	69.920	5
BASF SE	RheinNeckarWeb	8	3.333	1.2	85.667	1	0.500	485	0	5	0.917	3	63.330	3
Verlagsgruppe Weltbild GmbH	Jokers-Blog	16	0.018	5.7	226.789	1	0.500	1037	0	6	0.719	2	58.070	5
AOL Deutschland Medien GmbH	ahlers.	26	0.500	2.2	126.955	1	0.500	422	39	8	0.864	3	60.560	6
Telekom Austria TA AG	Bredl bloggt	47	4.143	0.7	146.857	1	0.500	549	13	5	1.286	2	63.580	4
Robert Bosch GmbH	Bosch Trainee-Blog	0	0.292	2.4	273.750	9	0.167	168	4	5	0.042	2	65.760	1
Wüstenrot AG	frischegarantie	7	15.400	2.5	107.240	4	0.250	335	0	2	0.720	2	58.910	2
MAGIX AG	Magix Blog	48	2.619	6.3	179.444	4	0.500	613	0	4	1.206	4	58.820	2
Accenture Ltd.	Das Recruiting von Accenture	3	0.000	0.5	465.600	4	0.500	480	0	2	0.000	2	57.550	1
Swisscom AG	Umweltmanagement Swisscom	8	2.000	0.3	165.667	2	0.500	560	4	6	1.000	2	63.300	4
Delphi Corporation	Alles über EVE	1	0.000	1.3	62.462	1	0.500	222	4	7	1.077	3	71.660	4

Data for the Russian sample set

Company	Blog Title	Technorati Authority	Comments per post	Post frequency	Post length	# of authors	Diversity	Blog age	# of blogroll elements	# of sidebar elements	Media per post	Interactivity elements	F-Score	Topical dimensions
Intel Corporation	Как живет IT в Intel	0	3.667	0.3	610.667	2	0.500	223	0	5	3.667	2	75.810	4
Alfa Group	Просто о сложном	0	6.452	3.1	181.935	14	0.143	105	0	2	0.355	3	74.550	5
MMC Norilski Nikel	блог ГМК "Норильский никель"	0	2.662	14.2	222.148	11	0.045	244	0	2	2.838	2	79.930	5
SAO Softline	allsoft.ru blog	0	4.700	1	226.300	7	0.214	655	5	5	0.100	1	74.230	7
VimpelCom	Press Club	8	8.935	9.2	80.054	23	0.196	615	0	2	0.239	3	75.320	2
Google Inc	Официальный блог - Google Россия	89	7.857	0.7	182.857	6	0.167	563	132	4	0.143	2	78.580	4
Kaspersky Lab	Веблог «Лаборатории Касперского»	0	0.667	0.6	335.333	4	0.500	1174	0	2	3.167	1	77.080	3
Yandex LLC	Блог Яндекса	0	6.111	2.7	184.111	25	0.220	1144	0	3	0.741	1	76.850	5
MegaFon	Блог МегаФон Москва	5	0.000	0.2	89.000	1	0.500	357	0	4	0.000	3	88.510	1
MANN, IVANOV & FERBER	Блог издателей деловой литературы	47	7.387	3.1	236.677	8	0.250	321	14	4	0.742	3	74.210	5

Data for the U.S. sample set

Company	Blog Title	Technorati Authority	Comments per post	Post frequency	Post length	# of authors	Diversity	Blog age	# of blogroll elements	# of sidebar elements	Media per post	Interactivity elements	F-Score	Topical dimensions
Hyundai Kia Automotive Group	Kia BUZZ	45	3.091	1.1	310.364	9	0.278	196	23	8	2.000	3	75.610	9
Chrysler LLC	Chrysler Blog	46	5.559	5.9	508.017	34	0.412	225	0	4	3.000	3	64.520	7
Toyota Motor Corporation	Toyota Open Road	47	8.303	3.3	540.273	9	0.278	290	15	7	1.909	2	70.270	5
Southwest Airlines Corporation	Southwest Airlines Blog	287	17.127	6.3	301.063	26	0.077	716	39	6	0.667	5	65.820	5
General Electric Company	From Edison's Desk	49	2.500	1	288.300	9	0.389	796	0	3	0.900	2	68.980	4
Palm, Inc.	The Official Palm Blog	182	11.895	1.9	243.211	8	0.500	351	46	4	1.105	2	70.980	8
Hitachi Ltd.	Hu Yoshida	34	1.143	0.7	558.000	1	0.500	879	18	6	0.000	2	72.040	4
Verizon Communications, Inc.	Verizon Policy Blog	103	4.632	1.9	455.000	4	0.500	533	0	4	1.105	2	71.560	8
Xerox Corporation	Play On	22	0.000	0.1	111.000	1	0.500	1035	0	5	0.000	1	69.440	1
Clorox Company	Dr. Laundry	3	0.000	0.9	334.556	1	0.500	657	24	4	0.000	2	66.880	1
Pitney Bowes Inc.	open mike	20	0.714	0.7	640.143	1	0.500	279	10	7	0.143	3	69.640	5
Nokia Corporation	n-gage blog	159	10.971	3.4	226.912	1	0.500	454	0	3	1.029	1	73.110	3
Newell Rubbermaid	Graco Blog	16	3.500	4.6	351.130	9	0.500	88	34	6	1.304	2	59.790	1
Johnson Controls, Inc.	Your Energy Forum	3	0.000	0.2	468.000	2	0.000	601	0	4	0.000	2	72.960	1
Google Inc	Official Google Blog	8912	20.538	6.5	305.538	57	0.325	1428	79	5	0.462	2	67.490	6
ING Groep NV	ING's Asia/Pacific Blog	17	1.000	0.3	378.667	2	0.500	622	15	4	0.667	2	67.260	3
Emerson Electric Company	Emerson Process Experts	23	0.375	2.4	480.500	1	0.500	748	1	6	0.000	3	73.710	2
Cox Communications, Inc.	Digital Straight Talk	9	0.000	1.2	288.250	3	0.167	898	19	5	0.083	0	75.550	4
Texas Instruments	TI Video360 Blog	6	0.000	0.3	646.667	1	0.500	921	0	5	0.333	3	65.020	3
Electronic Data Systems	EDS' Next Big Thing	25	0.488	4.1	292.098	5	0.500	1006	0	4	0.024	1	65.800	6
Amazon.com Inc.	Amazon Webservices Blog	270	0.762	2.1	300.238	3	0.500	1224	0	5	0.905	2	68.050	5
Avaya Inc.	The Blog	7	0.545	1.1	337.636	2	0.500	313	9	7	0.273	2	71.700	4
Yahoo! Inc.	Yodel Anecdotal	178	7.324	3.4	341.588	20	0.100	799	0	6	1.088	3	69.230	6
Yahoo! Inc.	Yahoo! Search Blog	1186	17.182	1.1	266.273	6	0.500	1225	19	6	0.455	3	71.530	5
Cisco Systems, Inc.	Cisco High Tech Policy Blog	52	0.375	0.8	389.375	7	0.214	1137	11	8	0.125	2	71.570	5
NYSE Euronext Inc.	Exchange	19	2.533	3	496.667	3	0.167	829	10	6	0.000	2	69.050	3

Company	Blog Title	Technorati Authority	Comments per post	Post frequency	Post length	# of authors	Diversity	Blog age	# of blogroll elements	# of sidebar elements	Media per post	Interactivity elements	F-Score	Topical dimensions
GlaxoSmithKline plc	alliconnect	50	1.000	0.7	207.857	3	0.167	290	9	7	1.143	2	65.840	5
Wells Fargo & Co.	Guided By History	32	1.591	2.2	375.136	9	0.056	735	18	6	1.136	2	72.330	4
Wells Fargo & Co.	The Student LoanDown	19	0.960	2.5	302.240	5	0.500	559	7	8	0.360	2	57.810	4
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP	Corporate Reporting blog	4	0.000	0.3	694.000	1	0.500	388	6	7	0.000	2	69.040	3
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP	Finance & Treasury blog	3	0.000	0.2	146.000	1	0.500	883	2	7	0.000	2	72.830	2
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP	IFRS blog	6	0.600	0.5	588.400	1	0.500	528	5	7	0.000	2	70.490	4
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP	Islamic Finance blog	0	0.000	0.2	147.000	1	0.500	636	4	6	0.000	2	73.030	2
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP	PwC People blog	4	0.333	0.3	489.000	2	0.000	714	0	6	0.000	2	62.440	2
PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP	The Gender Agenda	0	0.000	0.7	622.857	3	0.500	160	16	6	0.714	1	68.190	4
SAB Miller plc	BrewBlog	36	0.481	5.4	268.833	1	0.500	290	11	6	0.352	2	73.840	5
Groupe Danone	Baby Babble!	8	0.577	2.6	199.500	1	0.500	1446	4	6	0.923	2	63.390	1
Groupe Danone	The Bovine Bugle	8	1.944	1.8	397.111	1	0.500	1137	13	5	2.167	4	63.080	4
Nike, Inc.	Inside NikeBasketball	0	0.000	6.1	301.557	1	0.500	766	0	3	3.721	0	71.040	2
McDonald's Corporation	Open for Discussion	76	4.875	0.8	328.375	5	0.100	788	5	5	0.000	5	63.620	3
Intel Corporation	Technology@Intel	103	2.400	3.5	268.200	8	0.375	343	6	6	1.486	2	68.560	6
Intel Corporation	CSR@Intel	42	1.448	2.9	435.862	11	0.318	277	5	7	1.207	2	69.580	4
Intel Corporation	IT@Intel	43	1.333	1.5	491.667	8	0.375	202	0	6	0.133	3	59.670	6
Intel Corporation	Research@Intel	84	1.067	1.5	734.067	15	0.300	525	8	6	1.933	3	77.710	5
Pearson PLC	The Penguin Blog	107	2.444	1.8	442.333	8	0.250	599	24	5	1.000	2	62.960	6
Eastman Kodak Company	A thousand words	60	8.117	6	390.417	27	0.019	558	9	6	5.300	2	64.690	5
Eastman Kodak Company	PluggedIn	31	2.400	1	829.100	10	0.400	413	9	6	4.600	2	66.300	6
Sun Microsystems, Inc.	Jonathan's Blog	1447	37.143	0.7	875.571	1	0.500	1358	20	5	5.429	2	66.610	5
Sun Microsystems, Inc.	Greg Matter	60	4.000	0.1	496.000	1	0.500	1134	10	4	0.000	2	68.710	1
Dell Inc.	Dell Shares	-	0.250	0.4	617.250	2	0.000	137	1	8	0.250	4	69.920	2
Dell Inc.	Direct2Dell	868	6.586	12.8	288.641	49	0.133	621	23	7	0.586	2	66.930	7
Delta Air Lines, Inc.	Under the Wing	244	5.938	1.6	139.438	13	0.269	207	35	5	1.313	4	64.240	4

Company	Blog Title	Technorati Authority	Comments per post	Post frequency	Post length	# of authors	Diversity	Blog age	# of blogroll elements	# of sidebar elements	Media per post	Interactivity elements	F-Score	Topical dimensions
Sony Corporation	Sony Electronics Blog	57	4.448	2.9	327.586	1	0.500	245	15	8	1.138	2	73.340	5
Hewlett-Packard Company	Backstage at Sundance	10	0.103	2.9	318.931	6	0.333	63	0	5	1.966	3	65.230	1
Hewlett-Packard Company	The Calculating World with You and Wing	2	1.250	0.4	209.000	1	0.500	160	0	5	0.000	3	69.530	3
Hewlett-Packard Company	hp Laserjet Blog	17	0.200	0.5	98.000	1	0.500	544	0	5	0.000	3	77.400	4
Hewlett-Packard Company	Small & Medium Business Community Blog	8	0.000	0.5	373.200	1	0.500	291	0	4	0.400	3	60.050	4
Microsoft Corporation	Windows Mobile UK Blog	4	0.414	2.9	152.828	2	0.500	780	0	4	1.103	2	73.050	3
Microsoft Corporation	Small Business Community Blog	22	3.397	7.8	265.256	1	0.500	1184	0	4	0.590	2	69.440	3
The Coca-Cola Company	Coca-Cola Conversations	88	4.750	4.4	220.023	1	0.500	54	0	6	0.841	2	69.280	3
Marriott International, Inc.	Marriott on the move	113	10.455	1.1	391.636	1	0.500	426	0	5	1.000	4	60.490	6
Marriott International, Inc.	Marriott in the Kitchen	18	0.300	1	458.600	1	0.500	60	28	6	1.500	3	70.810	2
The Boeing Company	Randy's Journal	70	9.636	1.1	397.091	1	0.500	1155	8	5	0.727	2	68.440	7
Arcelor Mittal	Creating History Blog	20	0.500	3.4	186.912	3	0.167	54	0	4	0.824	1	74.530	6
Benetton Group	BenettonTalk	149	0.157	12.1	232.132	9	0.056	818	0	7	1.041	1	67.750	1
WalMart-Stores Inc.	CheckOut	0	11.135	3.7	318.946	7	0.214	214	31	9	0.486	4	62.260	6
Johnson & Johnson	JNJ BTW	68	0.833	1.8	225.889	3	0.167	287	20	7	0.611	2	69.330	10
General Motors Corporation	FYI Blog	169	1.375	5.6	121.536	14	0.071	698	21	7	0.804	2	70.390	5
General Motors Corporation	Fastlane Blog	411	39.031	3.2	386.969	19	0.237	1167	22	8	0.719	3	70.010	4
General Motors Corporation	Cadillac Drivers' Log	23	3.294	1.7	156.706	3	0.500	411	21	5	0.412	2	67.770	4
Accenture Ltd.	Accelerating High Performance Business	1	0.500	0.2	569.000	2	0.500	417	2	6	2.500	4	73.000	1
Accenture Ltd.	Experienced Consultants Blog	0	0.000	0.4	549.750	4	0.000	58	0	1	0.000	4	65.710	1
Accenture Ltd.	Ed Gottsman: Weblog	5	1.150	2	459.400	1	0.500	1166	4	4	0.100	4	64.630	4
Xerox Corporation	The Future of Documents	12	0.667	1.5	169.133	1	0.500	363	1	3	0.000	1	71.810	6
Xerox Corporation	Ideas, Ideas, Ideas	2	0.000	0.9	58.556	1	0.500	231	7	6	0.000	1	66.230	5
General Motors Corporation	GM TunerSource	0	0.154	1.3	359.462	2	0.000	367	0	5	0.000	4	67.960	4
MMC Norilski Nikel	Nickel from Norilsk	0	0.000	0.2	815.500	1	0.500	195	0	4	0.500	2	78.800	1

Appendix 6

Empirical studies on information technology acceptance

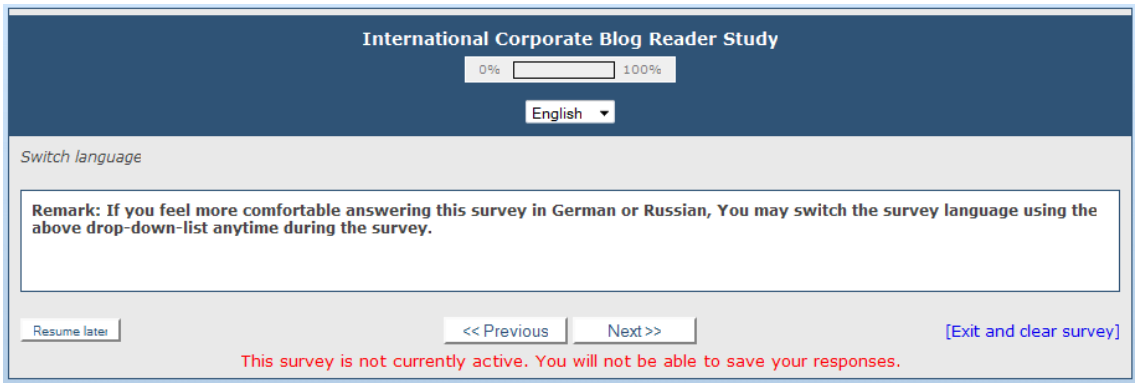
Year	Publication	Information technology	Study type	Sample	Findings
1989	Davis et al. (1989)	Word processing software	Survey	107 students	PEU→INT; PU→INT; INT→USE
1989	Davis (1989)	E-Mail software, File editing software	Experiment	152 users	PU→INT; PU→USE; PEU→PU; PEU→INT; INT→USE
1991	Thompson et al. (1991)	Personal computer	Survey	212 users	PEU→USE; PU→USE
1991	Mathieson (1991)	Spreadsheet software	Survey	149 users	PEU→PU; PEO→ATT; PU→ATT; ATT→INT; INT→USE
1992	Adams et al. (1992)	Voice mail, e-mail	Survey	118 users	PU→USE; PEU→USE; PEU→PU
1993	Davis (1993)	E-mail software; text editor	Survey	112 users	System→PEU; System→PU; System→ATT; PU→ATT; PEU→ATT; PU→USE; ATT→USE
1994	Szajna (1994)	Database management software	Survey	47 users, 231 responses	PEU→ATT; PEU→INT; PEU→USE; PU→ATT; PU→INT; PU→USE
1997	Straub et al. (1997)	E-Mail system	Survey	99 users (USA) 142 users (Japan) 152 users (Switzerland)	PU→USE Nationality→PU; Nationality→PEU
1997	Gefen and Straub (1997)	E-mail	Survey	392 users	PU→USE; Gender→PU; Gender→PEU;
1999	Teo et al. (1999)	Internet	Survey	1370 users	PU→USE; PEU→USE; PE→USE
2000	Gefen and Straub (2000)	E-commerce	Experiment	217 users	Task→PEU; PEU→INT; PU→INT; PEU→PU
2000	Lederer et al. (2000)	World wide web	Survey	163 users	PU→USE; PEU→USE; System→PU; System→PEU
2001	Moon and Kim (2001)	World wide web	Survey	152 students	PEU→PE; PEU→PU; PE→ATT; PU→ATT, PEU→ATT; ATT→INT; PU→INT; PE→ATT; INT→USE
2002	Chen et al. (2002)	Online-shop	Survey	253 users	Compatibility→PU; Compatibility→ATT; PU→ATT; PEU→PU; PEU→ATT; ATT→INT; INT→USE
2003	Heijden (2003)	Web portal	Survey	825 users	ATT→INT; PEU→USE; PU→USE; PE→USE; System→PU; System→PEU; System→PE
2003	Venkatesh et al. (2003)	Various	Survey	215 users	PU→INT; PEU→INT; Social norms→INT; Gender→PU; Gender→PEU; Age→PU; Age→PEU; Experience→PEU
2004	Hsu and Lu (2004)	Online games	Survey	233 users	Social Norms→INT; Critical Mass→ATT; ATT→ INT; PU→ ATT; PEU→ATT, PEU→PU; PEO→Flow Experience; Flow Experience→INT
2005	Hung and Chang (2005)	WAP Services	Survey	267 users	PU→ATT; PU→INT; PEU→PU; ATT→INT; INT→USE
2005	Luarna and Lin (2005)	Mobile banking	Survey	180 users	PU→INT; PEU→ATT; PEU→PU; Perceived credibility→INT; Perceived self-efficacy→ATT; Perceived cost→ATT
2008	Hsu and Lin (2008)	Weblogs	Survey	212 bloggers	PEU→ATT; PE→ATT; Altruism→ATT; Reputation→ATT; ATT→INT; Community→INT
2008	Fetscherin and Lattemann (2008)	Virtual worlds	Survey	249 users	Community→PU; ATT→PU; Social Norms→PU; PEU→PU; PEU→INT

Appendix 7

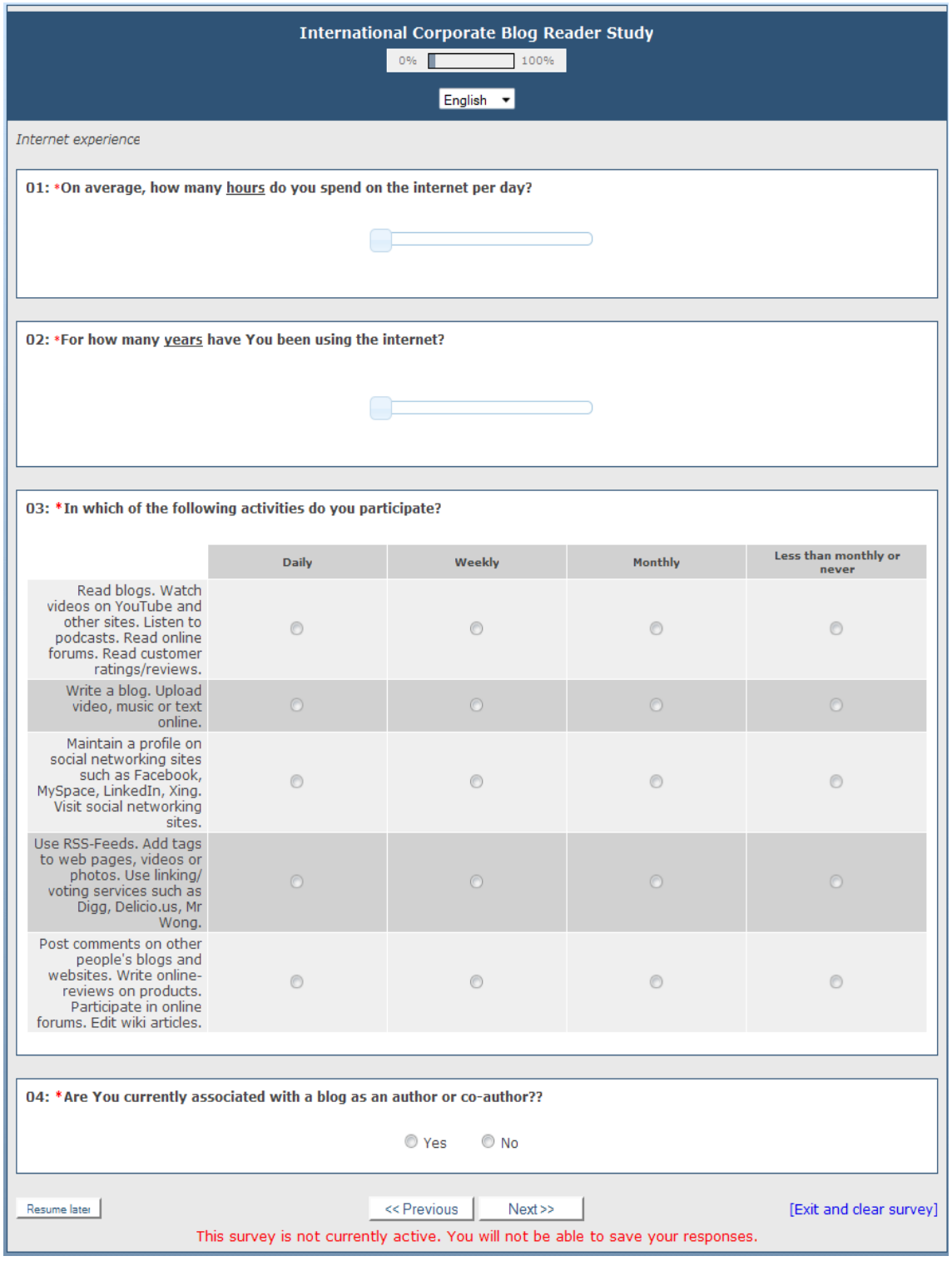
Online preview (English-language version)

Screen 1

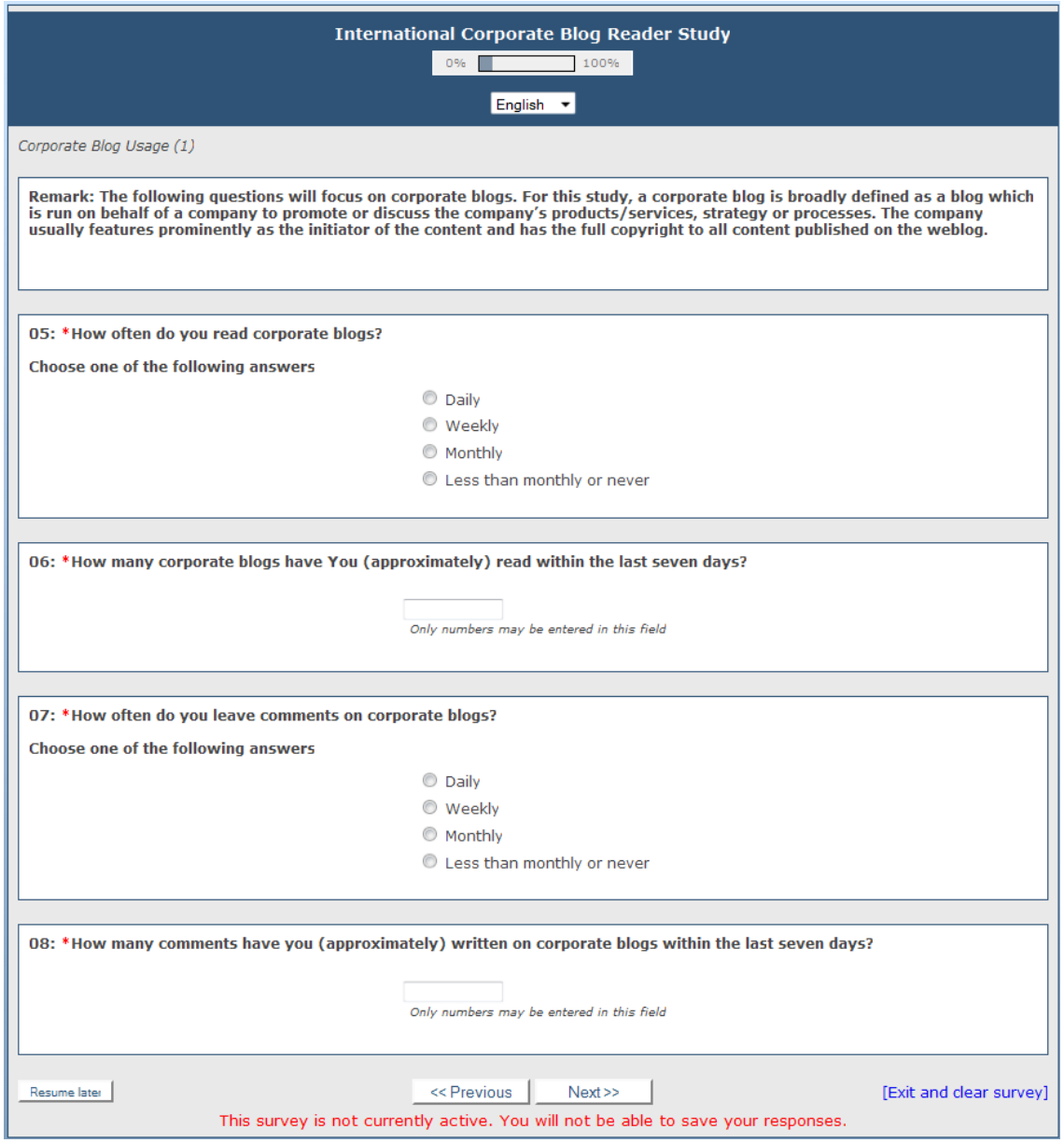
Screen 2



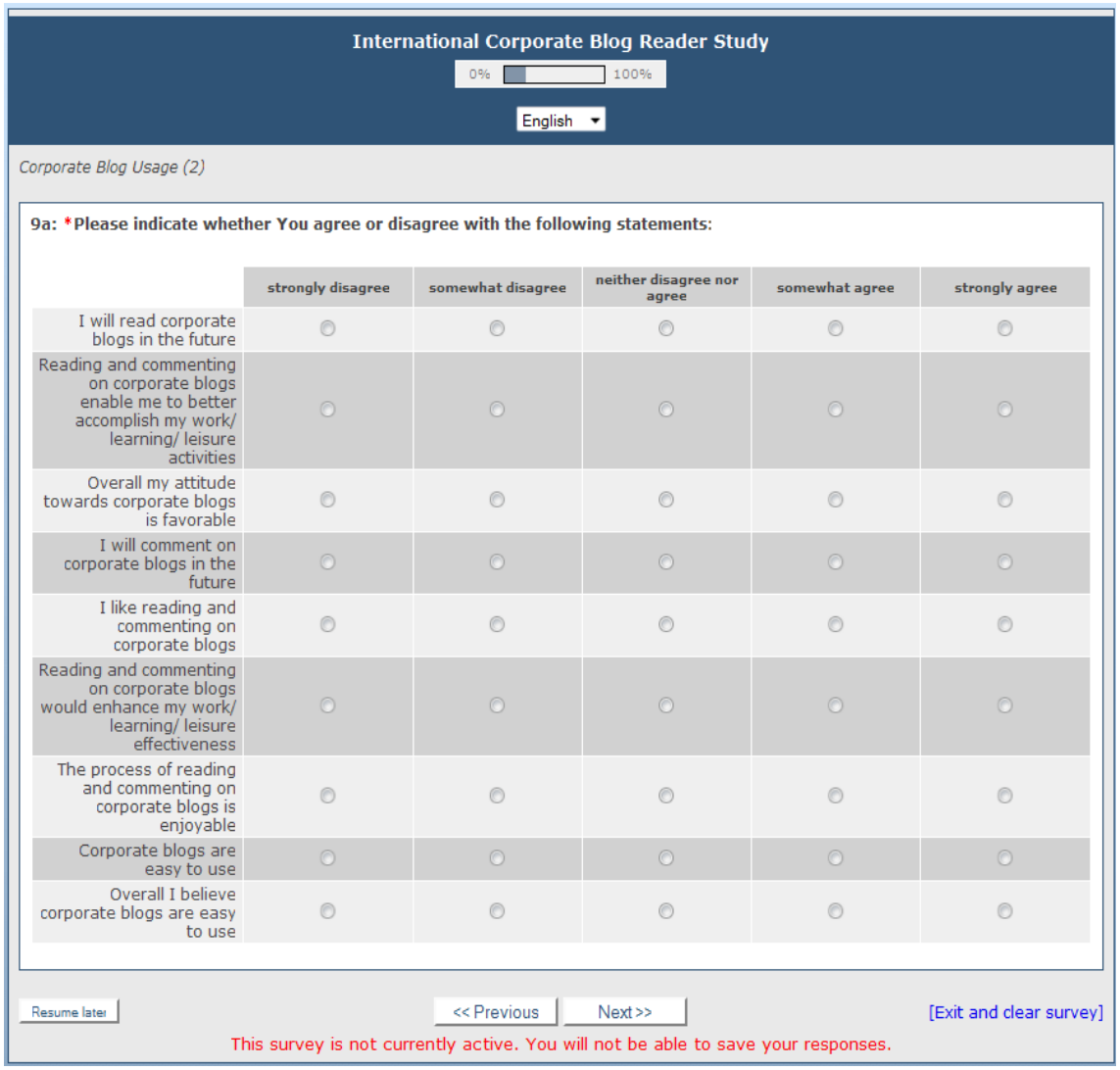
Screen 3


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Internet experience
01: *On average, how many hours do you spend on the internet per day?
02: *For how many years have You been using the internet?
03: *In which of the following activities do you participate?
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Less than monthly or never
Read blogs. Watch videos on YouTube and other sites. Listen to podcasts. Read online forums. Read customer ratings/reviews.
Write a blog. Upload video, music or text online.
Maintain a profile on social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Xing. Visit social networking sites.
Use RSS-Feeds. Add tags to web pages, videos or photos. Use linking/ voting services such as Digg, Delicio.us, Mr Wong.
Post comments on other people's blogs and websites. Write online-reviews on products. Participate in online forums. Edit wiki articles.
04: *Are You currently associated with a blog as an author or co-author??
Yes
No
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

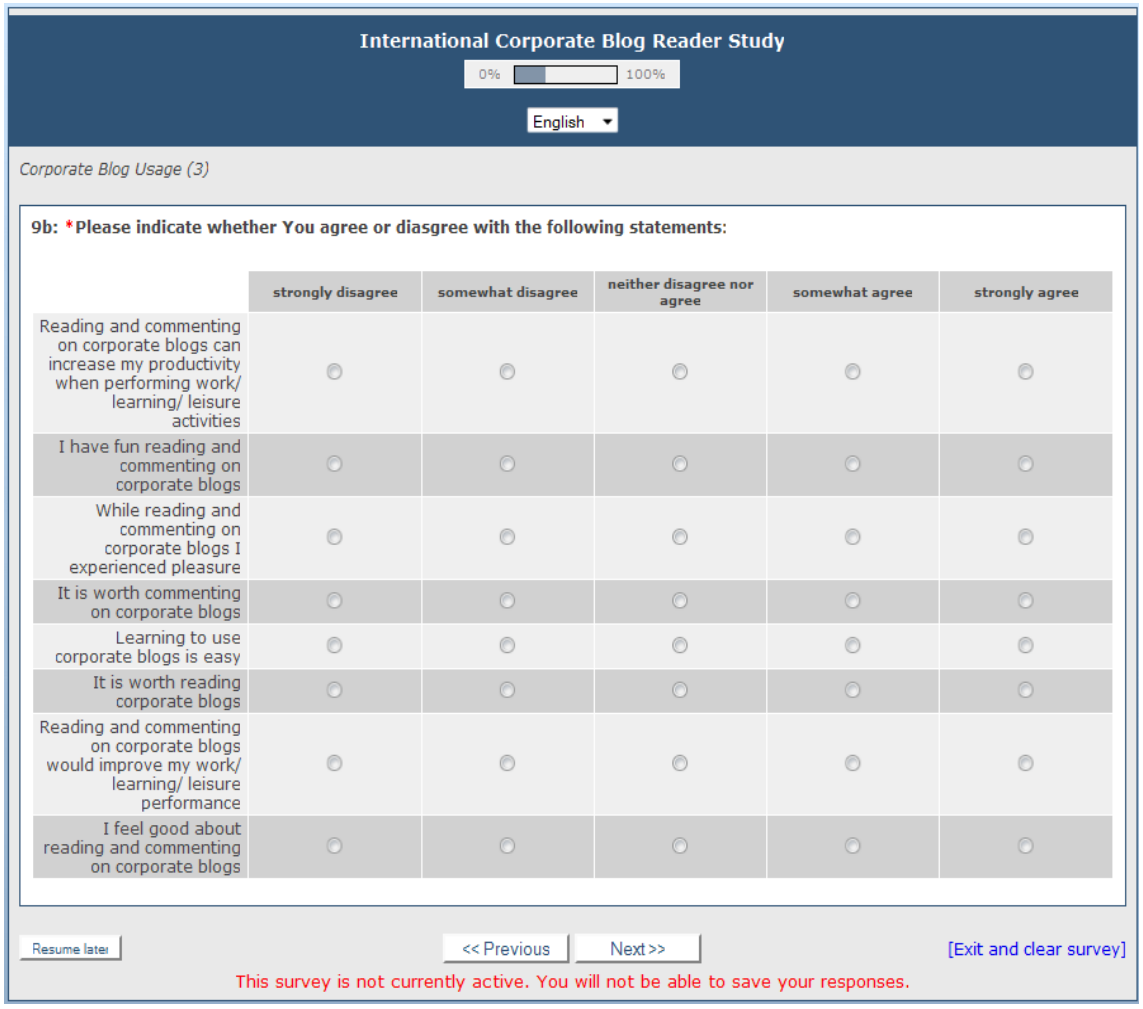
Screen 4


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Corporate Blog Usage (1)
Remark: The following questions will focus on corporate blogs. For this study, a corporate blog is broadly defined as a blog which is run on behalf of a company to promote or discuss the company's products/services, strategy or processes. The company usually features prominently as the initiator of the content and has the full copyright to all content published on the weblog.
05: *How often do you read corporate blogs?
Choose one of the following answers
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Less than monthly or never
06: *How many corporate blogs have You (approximately) read within the last seven days?
Only numbers may be entered in this field
07: *How often do you leave comments on corporate blogs?
Choose one of the following answers
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Less than monthly or never
08: *How many comments have you (approximately) written on corporate blogs within the last seven days?
Only numbers may be entered in this field
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

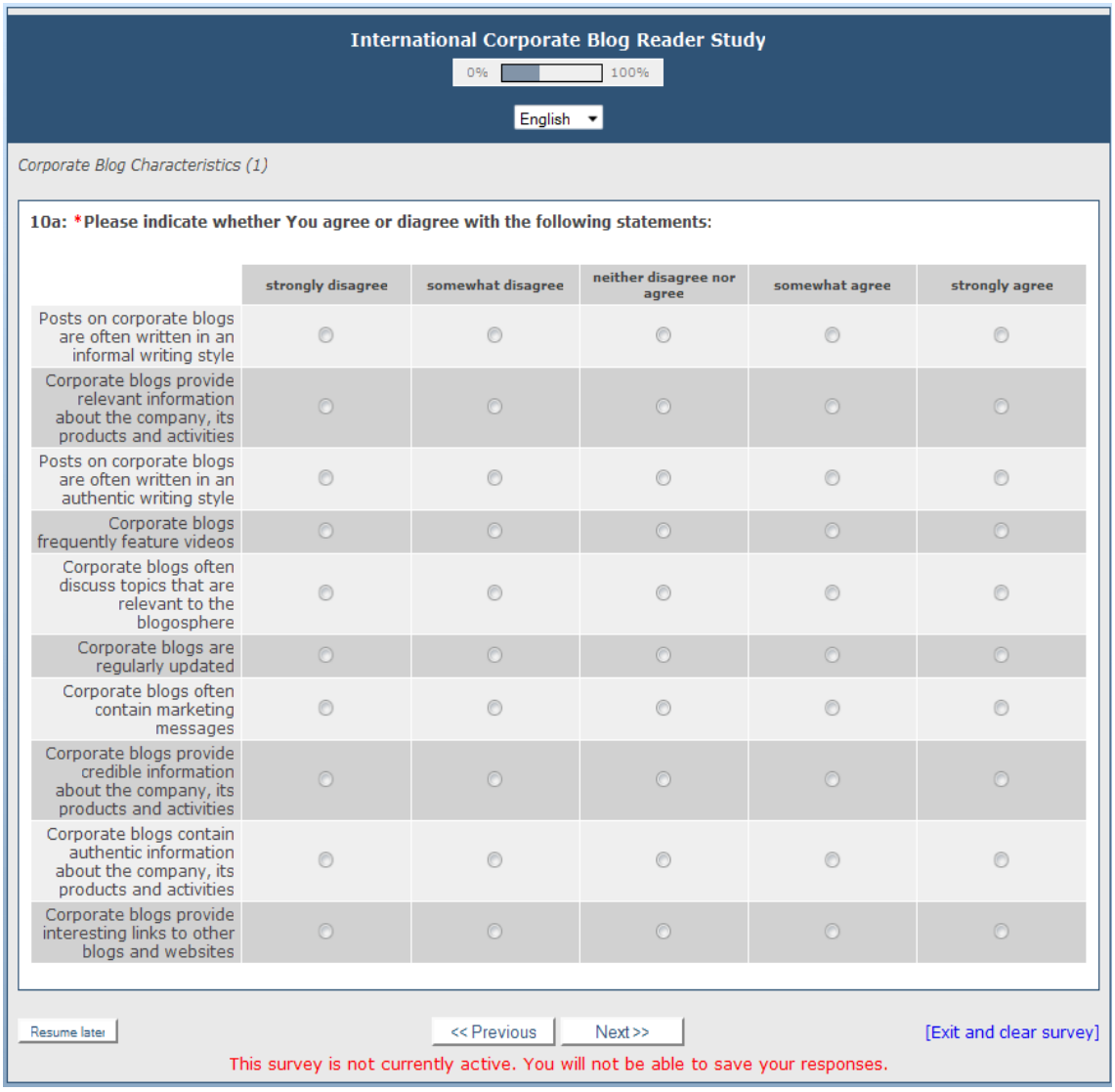
Screen 5


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Corporate Blog Usage (2)
9a: *Please indicate whether You agree or disagree with the following statements:
strongly disagree
somewhat disagree
neither disagree nor agree
somewhat agree
strongly agree
I will read corporate blogs in the future
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs enable me to better accomplish my work/ learning/ leisure activities
Overall my attitude towards corporate blogs is favorable
I will comment on corporate blogs in the future
I like reading and commenting on corporate blogs
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would enhance my work/ learning/ leisure effectiveness
The process of reading and commenting on corporate blogs is enjoyable
Corporate blogs are easy to use
Overall I believe corporate blogs are easy to use
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

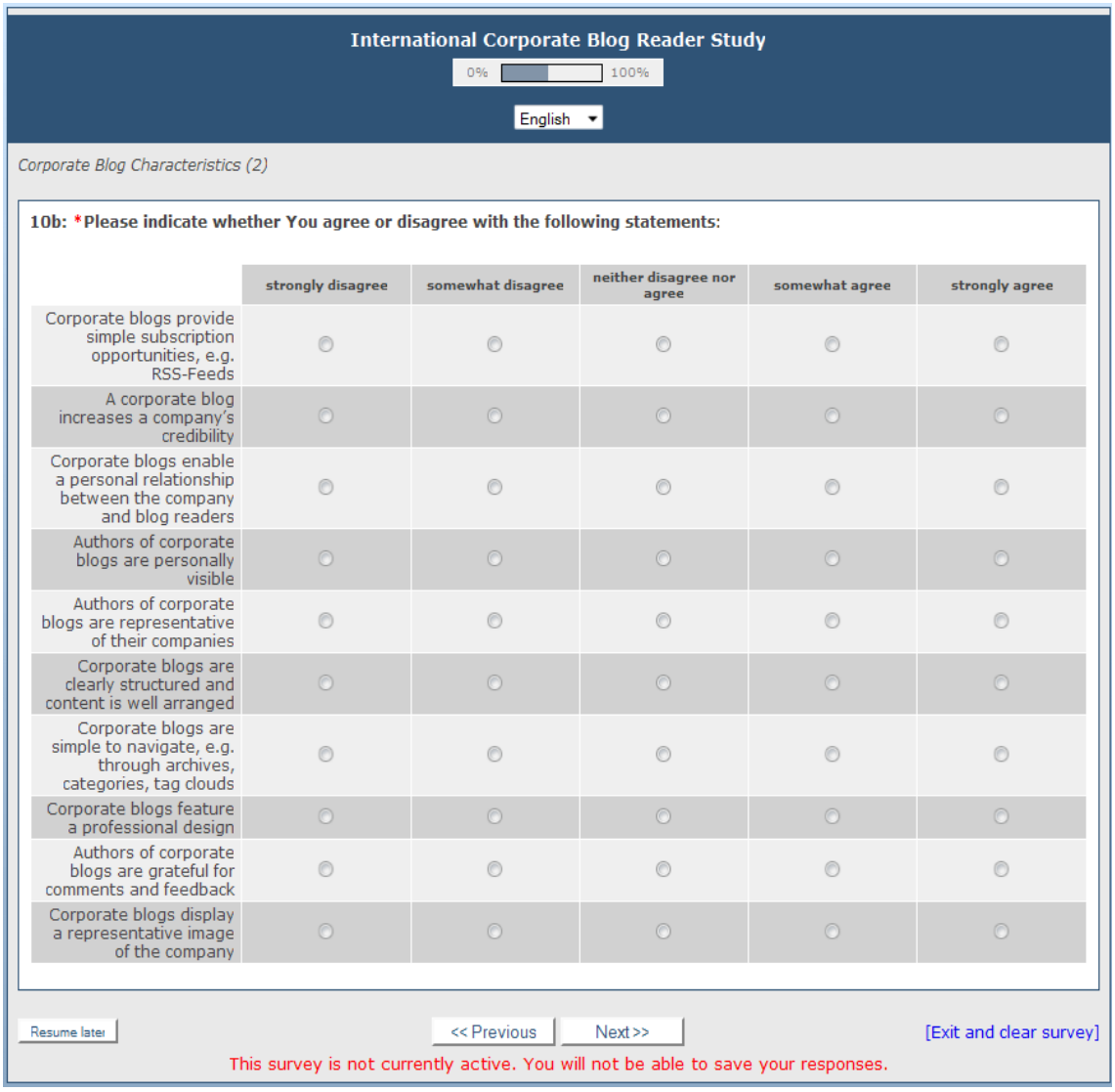
Screen 6


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Corporate Blog Usage (3)
9b: *Please indicate whether You agree or diasgree with the following statements:
strongly disagree
somewhat disagree
neither disagree nor agree
somewhat agree
strongly agree
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs can increase my productivity when performing work/ learning/ leisure activities
I have fun reading and commenting on corporate blogs
While reading and commenting on corporate blogs I experienced pleasure
It is worth commenting on corporate blogs
Learning to use corporate blogs is easy
It is worth reading corporate blogs
Reading and commenting on corporate blogs would improve my work/ learning/ leisure performance
I feel good about reading and commenting on corporate blogs
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

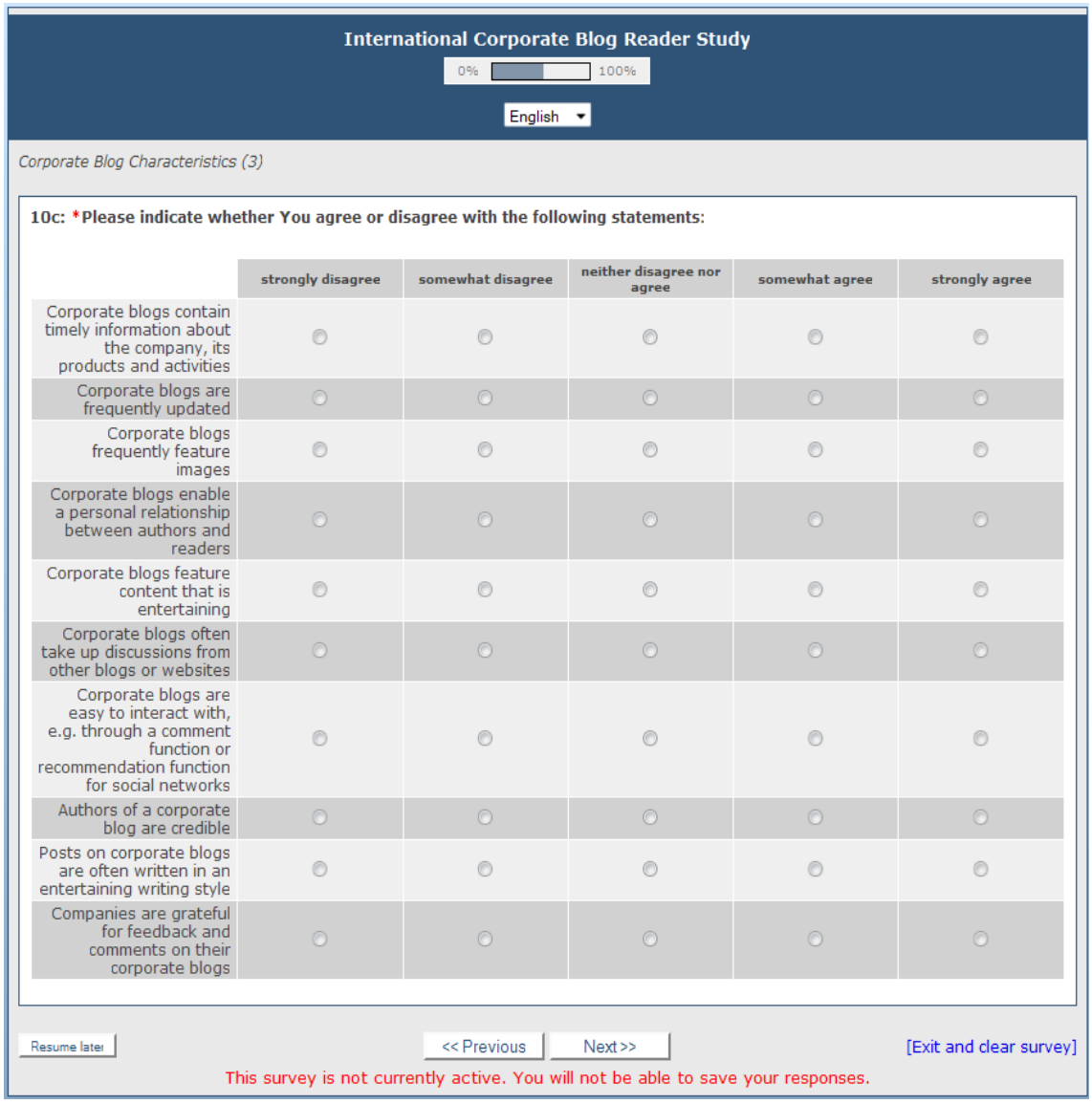
Screen 7


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Corporate Blog Characteristics (1)
10a: *Please indicate whether You agree or diagree with the following statements:
strongly disagree
somewhat disagree
neither disagree nor agree
somewhat agree
strongly agree
Posts on corporate blogs are often written in an informal writing style
Corporate blogs provide relevant information about the company, its products and activities
Posts on corporate blogs are often written in an authentic writing style
Corporate blogs frequently feature videos
Corporate blogs often discuss topics that are relevant to the blogosphere
Corporate blogs are regularly updated
Corporate blogs often contain marketing messages
Corporate blogs provide credible information about the company, its products and activities
Corporate blogs contain authentic information about the company, its products and activities
Corporate blogs provide interesting links to other blogs and websites
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

Screen 8


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Corporate Blog Characteristics (2)
10b: *Please indicate whether You agree or disagree with the following statements:
strongly disagree
somewhat disagree
neither disagree nor agree
somewhat agree
strongly agree
Corporate blogs provide simple subscription opportunities, e.g. RSS-Feeds
A corporate blog increases a company's credibility
Corporate blogs enable a personal relationship between the company and blog readers
Authors of corporate blogs are personally visible
Authors of corporate blogs are representative of their companies
Corporate blogs are clearly structured and content is well arranged
Corporate blogs are simple to navigate, e.g. through archives, categories, tag clouds
Corporate blogs feature a professional design
Authors of corporate blogs are grateful for comments and feedback
Corporate blogs display a representative image of the company
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

Screen 9



International Corporate Blog Reader Study

0% 100%

English

Corporate Blog Characteristics (3)

10c: *Please indicate whether You agree or disagree with the following statements:

	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	neither disagree nor agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree
Corporate blogs contain timely information about the company, its products and activities					
Corporate blogs are frequently updated					
Corporate blogs frequently feature images					
Corporate blogs enable a personal relationship between authors and readers					
Corporate blogs feature content that is entertaining					
Corporate blogs often take up discussions from other blogs or websites					
Corporate blogs are easy to interact with, e.g. through a comment function or recommendation function for social networks					
Authors of a corporate blog are credible					
Posts on corporate blogs are often written in an entertaining writing style					
Companies are grateful for feedback and comments on their corporate blogs					

Resume later << Previous Next >> [Exit and clear survey]

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

Screen 10


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Dimensions of Culture (1)
11: *The following statements pertain with the dominant values in culture. How important are the following values to You?
very unimportant
unimportant
neither unimportant nor important
important
very important
Working hard for success in the future
Careful management of money (Thrift)
Going on resolutely in spite of opposition (Persistence)
Personal steadiness and stability
Long-term planning
Giving up today's fun for success in the future
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

Screen 11

International Corporate Blog Reader Study

0% 100%

English

Dimensions of Culture (2)

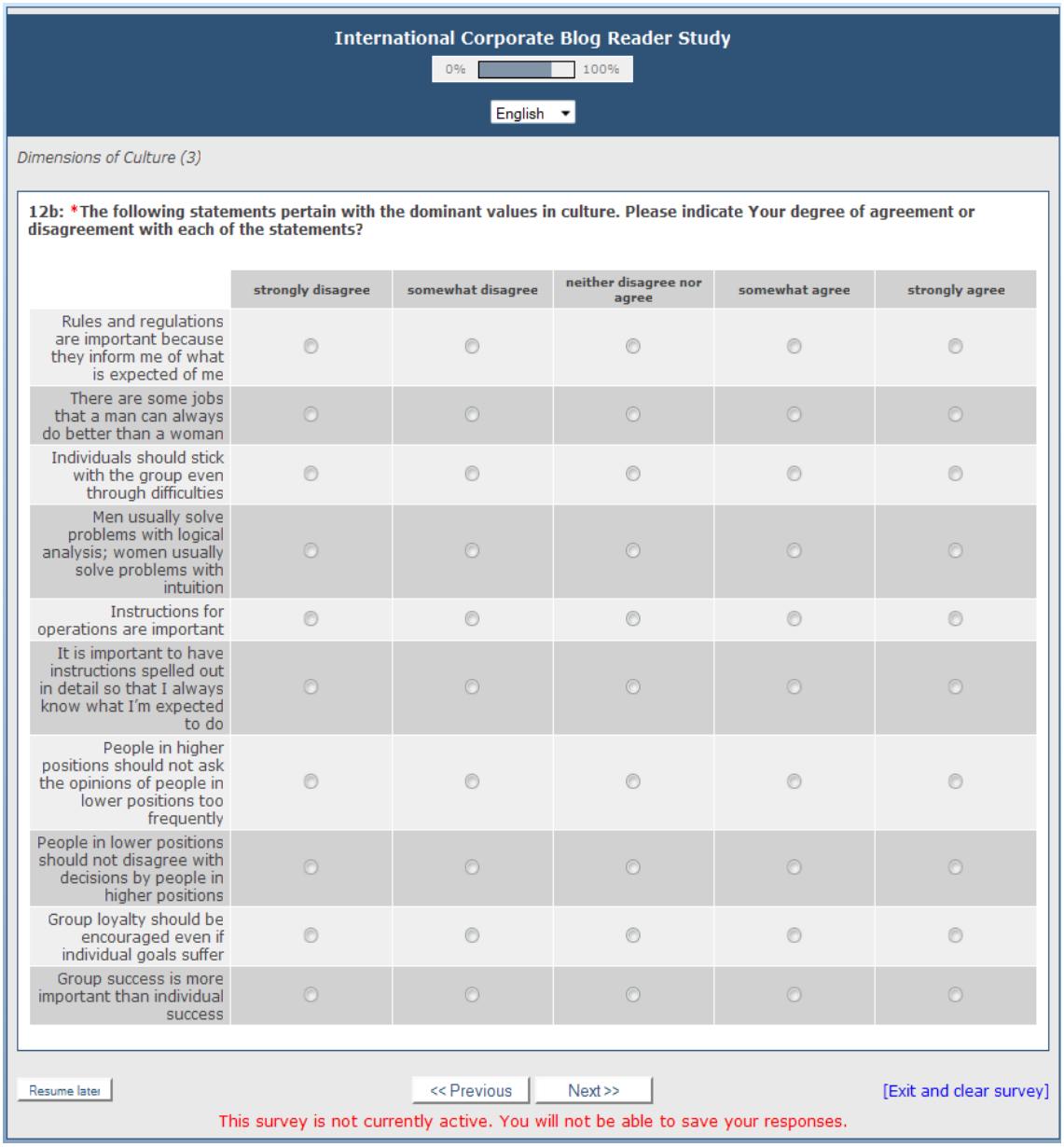
12a: *The following statements pertain with the dominant values in culture. Please indicate Your degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements.

	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	neither disagree nor agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree
People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions					
It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women					
Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group					
Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group (either at school or the work place)					
It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures					
Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men					
People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions					
Standardised work procedures are helpful					
People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions					
Group welfare is more important than individual rewards					

Resume later << Previous Next >> [Exit and clear survey]

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

Screen 12



International Corporate Blog Reader Study

0% 100%

English

Dimensions of Culture (3)

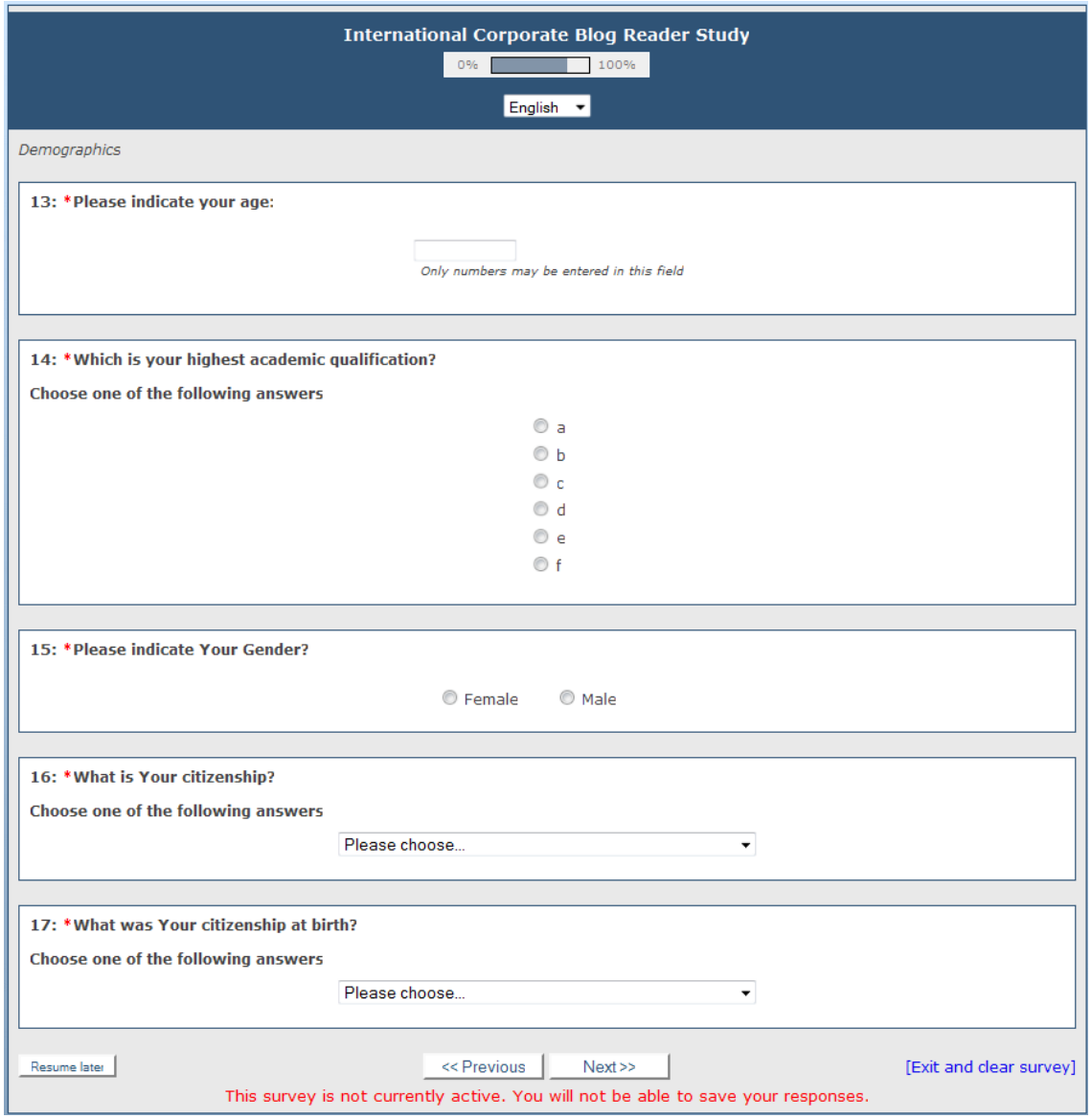
12b: *The following statements pertain with the dominant values in culture. Please indicate Your degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the statements?

	strongly disagree	somewhat disagree	neither disagree nor agree	somewhat agree	strongly agree
Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me					
There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman					
Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties					
Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition					
Instructions for operations are important					
It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do					
People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently					
People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions					
Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer					
Group success is more important than individual success					

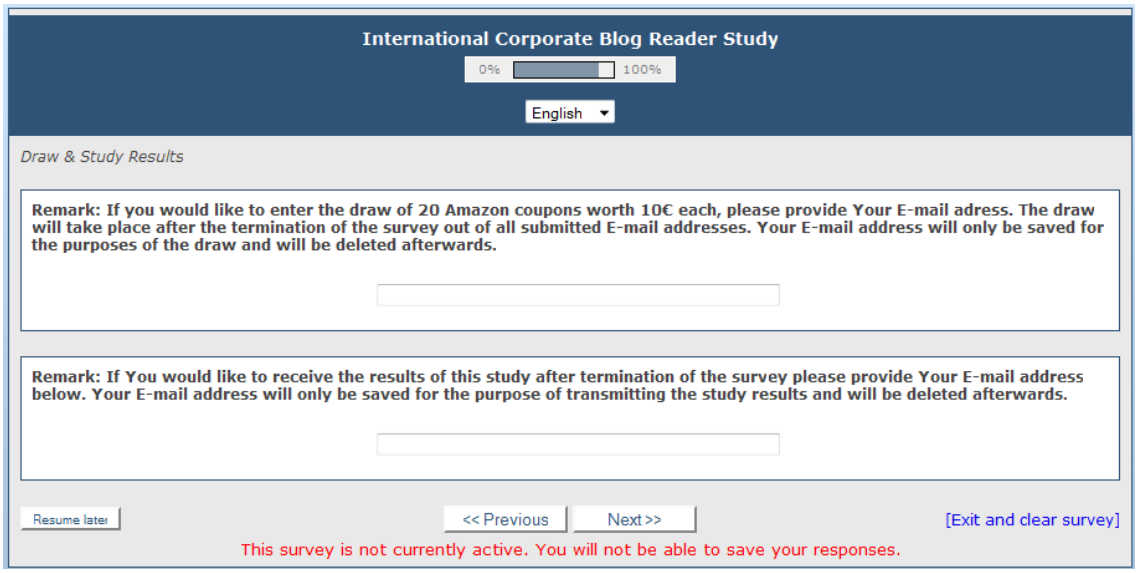
Resume later << Previous Next >> [Exit and clear survey]

This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

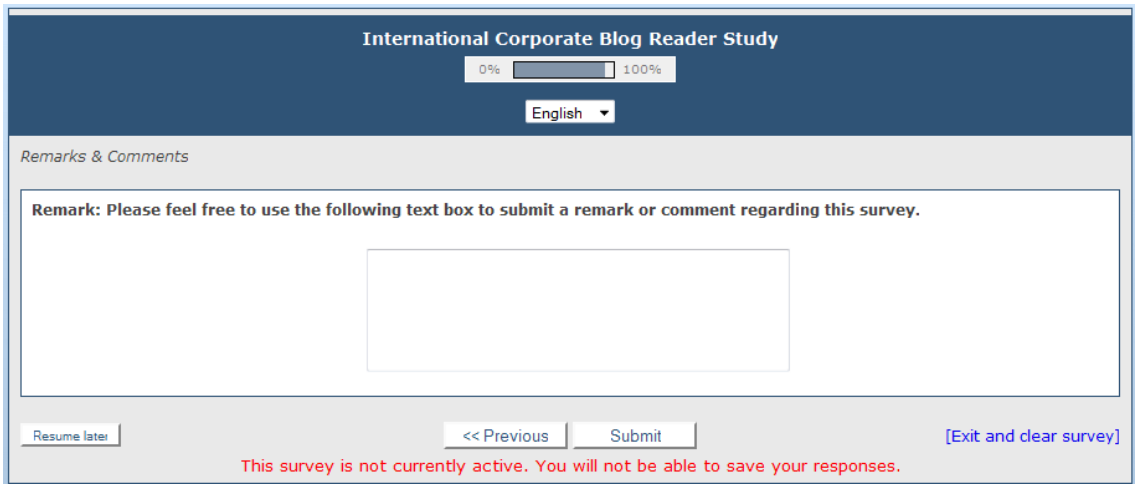
Screen 13


International Corporate Blog Reader Study
0%
100%
English
Demographics
13: *Please indicate your age:
Only numbers may be entered in this field
14: *Which is your highest academic qualification?
Choose one of the following answers
a
b
c
d
e
f
15: *Please indicate Your Gender?
Female
Male
16: *What is Your citizenship?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose...
17: *What was Your citizenship at birth?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose...
Resume later
<< Previous
Next >>
[Exit and clear survey]
This survey is not currently active. You will not be able to save your responses.

Screen 14



Screen 15



Appendix 8

Hofstede dimensions and data

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
WORLD Average	***59***	***45***	***50***	***68***	***45***
Africa East	64	27	41	52	32
Africa West	77	20	46	54	9
Albania	-	-	-	-	61
Algeria	-	-	-	-	26
Andorra	-	-	-	-	-
Arab countries	80	38	53	68	23
Argentina	49	46	56	86	20
Armenia	-	-	-	-	61
Australia	36	90	61	51	21
Austria	11	55	79	70	60
Azerbaijan	-	-	-	-	61
Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	47
Belarus	-	-	-	-	81
Belgium	65	75	54	94	82
Belgium French	67	72	60	93	-
Belgium Netherl	61	78	43	97	-
Bosnia	-	-	-	-	70
Brazil	69	38	49	76	44
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	69
Burkina Faso	-	-	-	-	27
Canada	39	80	52	48	36
Canada French	54	73	45	60	-
Chile	63	23	28	86	31
China	80	20	66	30	87
Colombia	67	13	64	80	13
Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	-
Croatia	73	33	40	80	58
Cyprus	-	-	-	-	-
Czech Rep	57	58	57	74	70
Denmark	18	74	16	23	35
Dominican Rep	-	-	-	-	13
Ecuador	78	8	63	67	-
Egypt	-	-	-	-	7
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	20
Estonia	40	60	30	60	82
Finland	33	63	26	59	38
France	68	71	43	86	63
Georgia	-	-	-	-	38
Germany	35	67	66	65	83
Germany East	-	-	-	-	78
Ghana	-	-	-	-	4
Great Britain	35	89	66	35	51
Greece	60	35	57	112	45
Guatemala	95	6	37	101	-
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	61

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Hungary	46	80	88	82	58
Iceland	-	-	-	-	28
India	77	48	56	40	51
Indonesia	78	14	46	48	62
Iran	58	41	43	59	14
Iraq	-	-	-	-	25
Ireland	28	70	68	35	24
Israel	13	54	47	81	38
Italy	50	76	70	75	61
Jamaica	45	39	68	13	-
Japan	54	46	95	92	88
Jordan	-	-	-	-	16
Korea South	60	18	39	85	100
Kyrgyz Rep	-	-	-	-	66
Latvia	44	70	9	63	69
Lithuania	42	60	19	65	82
Luxembourg	40	60	50	70	64
Macedonia Rep	-	-	-	-	62
Malaysia	104	26	50	36	41
Mali	-	-	-	-	20
Malta	56	59	47	96	47
Mexico	81	30	69	82	24
Moldova	-	-	-	-	71
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	75
Morocco	70	46	53	68	14
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	67
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	33
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	13
Norway	31	69	8	50	35
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	50
Panama	95	11	44	86	-
Peru	64	16	42	87	25
Philippines	94	32	64	44	27
Poland	68	60	64	93	38
Portugal	63	27	31	104	28
Puerto Rico	-	-	-	-	0
Romania	90	30	42	90	52
Russia	93	39	36	95	81
Rwanda	-	-	-	-	18
Saudi Arabia	-	-	-	-	36
Serbia	86	25	43	92	52
Singapore	74	20	48	8	72
Slovak Rep	104	52	110	51	77
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	49
South Africa	-	-	-	-	34
South Africa white	49	65	83	49	-
Spain	57	51	42	86	48
Suriname	85	47	37	92	-
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53
Switzerland	34	68	70	58	74
Switzerland French	70	64	58	70	-

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Switzerland German	26	69	72	56	-
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	93
Tanzania	-	-	-	-	34
Thailand	64	20	34	64	32
Trinidad and Tobago	47	16	58	55	13
Turkey	66	37	45	85	46
U.S.A.	40	91	62	46	26
Uganda	-	-	-	-	24
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	86
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	26
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	16
Vietnam	70	20	40	30	57
Zambia	-	-	-	-	30
Zimbabwe	-	-	-	-	15

Source: Hofstede (1980, 2001).