MATCHING CORPORATE LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE AND FOLLOWERS' CHARACTERISTICS USING CORPORATE BLOGS

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Victor Bohorquez
Instituto de Empresa
Madrid, Spain
vwbohorquez.phd2011@alumno.ie.edu

Margarita Mayo
Instituto de Empresa
Madrid, Spain
MMayo@profesor.ie.edu

José.Esteves
Instituto de Empresa
Madrid, Spain
jose.esteves@ie.edu

Abstract

Although some studies have analyzed corporate blogging, very little academic attention has been given to the phenomena of Corporate Blogs and their content from a leadership perspective. Based on posts and comments found in two Fortune 100 Corporate Blogs, I have used content analysis to obtain specific corporate leadership characteristics (analyzing posts) as well as to obtain followers' characteristics (analyzing comments). Then, I have used correspondence analysis to identify relationships among them. Therefore, the aim of this study has been to analyze whether corporate leadership style shown in Corporate Blogs influences the kind of their followers.

The findings show empirical evidence that corporate leadership styles, expressed in Corporate Blogs, influence the kind of followers that they have. Therefore, it is more likely that Corporate Blogs attract readers/followers with compatible characteristics or maybe the audience adopts these characteristics using Corporate Blogs; hence, it means that Corporate Blogs could exerts influence not only inside but also beyond company boundaries.

Keywords: Corporate Leadership; followers' characteristics; Fortune 100; contentanalysis; correspondence analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of information is changing the way in which we work (Brown and Duguid 2000, Kanter 2001).

We are evolving from an industrial economy, where each firm only took into account cost reduction and product standardization, to a completely inter-connected environment, where the information is available from different sources and people wants to be different. In the industrial economy, power and information were filtered based on the hierarchy and the authority, in the networked economy power and information are share through informal structures (Pulley et al. 2000).

In this new context, some of our previous knowledge about leadership and organization must be rethought. Leaders must learn and understand how to integrate these new trends in their traditional approach because digital technology facilitates to hear not only voices from any level in the organization but also voices outside its boundaries (Pully and Sessa 2001). Brown (2003) considers that leaders are no longer the exclusive source of vital information because now the followers are also well-informed, so they can not follow their leaders blindly. Moreover, we need to take into account that leaders can influence followers based on their respective leadership style; and followers can also contribute based on the expectations that every leader has from them.

Followership has been an understudied topic in the academic literature. In comparison with leadership, there is a lack of research in this topic considering that they are so intertwined (Bjugstad et al. 2006). One possible reason could be originated in a misconception that leaders are more important than followers; hence, there is an assumption that followers only do what their leaders tell them. However, we need to take into account a different perspective in which followers are also important for organizations, because leaders alone cannot fulfill all the tasks to make their company successful. In addition, the traditional hierarchy between leaders and their followers has changed over time thanks to expanding social networks and the growing empowerment of followers through the possibility to access information easily (Cross and Parker 2004).

This turbulent environment provides some threats and opportunities for organizations; hence, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become the most important tool used by them to manage changes in business strategy, internal corporate processes and as a privileged communication channel. In this sense, Blogs can be considered one of the most important ICT tools because they had a big impact in the media and they allow the participation of different kind of people. The phenomenon of Blogs and Web 2.0 is gaining importance in academic research with some papers published recently (Craig 2007, Dearstyne 2007, Hodgkin and Munro 2007, Lu and Hsiao 2007, Orr 2007) and calls for special issues in top journals. Blogs have also caught the attention of the business world and represent a potentially useful communication technology for practitioners (Kelleher and Miller 2006). In this sense, organizations could use Blogs as an ICT tool to communicate their corporate values not only to their employees but also to people outside the company.

Considering the popularity of Blogs, their potential to impact the media and public agenda (Drezner and Farrell 2004), and their credibility among readers (Johnson and Kaye 2004), a Corporate Blog is fast becoming a 'must have' part of business marketing and public relation strategies. Corporate Blogs build connections and links among their key audiences, which help the corporations to use these networks over time to persuade people to action, to respond to a crisis, to leverage market conversations and to improve the business overall.

Thinking in terms of the audience of Corporate Blogs, we can consider readers as a special kind of followers because they are receptors of Corporate Blog messages, they are interested in topics discussed there; and, in some extend, they follow the bloggers' discourse, which is in plain words, the line of thought provided by company leaders. Moreover, in a traditional context, followers do not choose their respective leaders; they are imposed by the organizational structure. Instead, readers of Corporate Blogs choose freely to follow them; hence, it is more likely that they are compatible with the Corporate Blogs discourse; or maybe, they are only interested in the company or in a particular product. Therefore, this research study uses content and correspondence analysis to identify the possible relationships between corporate leadership' discourse and followers' characteristics expressed in Fortune 100 Corporate Blogs.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, I review the related literature. Next, I present the research methodology used. Then, I describe and discuss the findings. Finally, the paper suggests some implications of the results and future research trends.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

This paper analyses previous studies related with leadership and followership concepts, as well as their relationship, to generate a list of possible characteristics or topics that belong each of these roles. The main goal is to identify a correspondence among corporate leadership discourse and followers' characteristics.

Although the number of academic papers about Blogs is increasing, there are a lack of research studies about their usage as a communication tool and their impact in companies discourse, taking into account the opinions expresses there as a source of corporate leadership. Next, we review the literature related with blogs, corporate blogs, leadership and followership.

Blogs overview

Blood (2004) argues that blogs become so ubiquitous that the term is synonymous with "personal web sites", though many commercial sites now incorporate them too. A blog is defined as a Web page consisting of dated entries, with new ones pushing the old to the bottom of the page (Morris 2001). Blog entries were short, usually containing links to the other web pages and appearing together on one long page in reverse chronological order (Blood 2004). Kumar et al. (2004) affirm that blogs tend to be quirky, highly personal, typically read by repeat visitors, and inside a very active community. When Jorn Barger, editor of one of the original weblogs, Robot Wisdom (www.robotwisdom.com), coined the term "weblog" in 1997, he defined it as "A Web page where a Web logger 'logs' all the other web pages she finds interesting".

Although blog sites about politics and technology receive thousands of hits a day, the vast majority of blogs are written by common people for much smaller audiences. Nardi et al. (2004) report the results of an ethnographic investigation of blogging in a sample of ordinary bloggers. They investigated blogging as a form of personal communication and expression, with a specific interest in uncovering the range of motivations driving individuals to create and maintain Blogs. Quickly, bloggers began enthusiastically linking and cross-linking and referencing one another's sites and commentaries. These links and interactivity drove the development of Blog technology as we now know it, the "Blogosphere" (Rosenbloom 2004). However, less than 10 years ago, practically all media were a one-way street. Then, Blogs enter the scene and not only they let bloggers bypass the corporate media gatekeepers to say and show practically anything but also they reach tens of millions of computer users around the world and everyone can participate in the thread of the conversation in a very interactive way.

Ashley (2002) mentions that blogs and their model of content production and platform interoperability are proving to be increasingly useful and powerful, inspiring innovative developments and uses for the web. The power of blogs is their ability to immediately put form to thought, and in seconds share it with the world. Bloggers can obtain feedback immediately; this allows them to become experts in the subjects discussed because they can enrich their ideas through the comments and opinions of others interested in these topics. However, the Blog phenomenon is a remarkably complex and innovative means of communication, which is used for everything from spontaneous comments to interesting debates in group discussions or specialized communities. In this sense, companies have to take advantage of this new communication tool to reach their target audience with the right message according to the objectives of the company; hence, in the next sub-section I have summarized the main trend in Blog usage at corporate level.

Corporate Blogs overview

People have become more interested in top executives who run companies than in individual companies (Gaines-Ross 2000). The CEO and the Top Management Team (TMT) of a company represent the key voice that communicates to stakeholders (employees, customers, business competitors, and so on). They are the face that the world recognizes as the leaders and the main representation of a firm. As part of the highly visible role that they play in an organization, ICT can be an important tool to disseminate information not only inside the company but also outside its boundaries. Business executives that identify the advantages of ICT tools can exploit them for improved long term strategic planning and profit maximization (Spanos et al. 2002). When top executives appear in the Blogosphere, their Blogs generate instant traffic and could be used as an effective tool to establish a direct connection and interaction with stakeholders (Lee et al. 2006).

By virtue of their corporate positions, these bloggers raise the interest level in, as well as interesting legal and ethical questions about, their Blogs (Terilli and Arnorsdottir 2008). In general, other employee Blogs raise interesting ethical issues, such as whether it is appropriate for an employee to post something negative about his or her employer (Wright and Hinson 2006); but the CEO and TMT are not just employees, their words or their silence can affect markets, share prices, communities, employees and consumers.

Corporate Blogs are quite often used as a public relations tool. According to Hallett (2005), the communicative use of Blogs in public relations has twofold foundations. On the one hand they enable professionals to analyze the market and ascertain the opinions of their audiences, to gauge public opinion on a business, product or brand. On the other hand, they are a major environment for participating and giving opinions both personal and organizational, be it by posting comments on other Blogs or creating one's own.

Companies that use Blogs are finding that it provides them a new way to stay relevant to their customers (Singh et al. 2008). Also, Blogs are used by leaders to share their expertise and experiences with interested people. Thought leaders within firms can discuss their views about relevant issues in the firm and provide opportunities for internal and external communication and advice. This individualized communication emanating from persons, rather than from the firm, makes the communication seem more human when compared to faceless corporate communication that is often perceived as distant and impersonal (Singh et al. 2008).

Finally, Corporate Blogs can be considered an interesting source of information to analyze the relationship between leaders and followers because in these environments both groups interact freely and all the participations are conveniently stored. In addition, I believe that it is a less intrusive way to collect data because previous studies have been done using surveys and asking people directly; hence, people can be intimidated by the questionnaire and answer it with some kind of social desirability.

In the following sub-section, I have analyzed the relationship between leaders and followers found in previous studies.

Relationships between Leaders and Followers

While the industrial age was characterized by rigid structures, the new information age has underlined the need for more flexible leader-follower relationships (Bjugstad et al. 2006). According to Mumford et al. (2000), the relationship between a follower and his/her leader depends on how well their personal characteristics match up; if they have similar values and beliefs, the follower will be driven by the bond with the leader. Followers and leaders work together better when they are comfortable with each other and when they have compatible values.

Howell and Shamir (2005) suggest that followers' self-concepts may also be important in determining their motivations to follow certain leaders. When leaders have the ability to model the followers' values, identity, emotions, and goals; the potential for loyal followership increases (Gardner et al. 2005). Ehrhart and Klein (2001) examined the follower-leadership relationship and determined that followers who were achievement-oriented and risk takers preferred the charismatic leader, as did followers who liked to participate in decision-making, followers who valued interpersonal relations matched up with relationship-oriented leaders, and followers who valued achievement and structure were the best match for task-oriented leaders. Moreover, Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) situational leadership theory considers that successful leadership is achieved by selecting a style based on follower readiness and on the degree of relationship- and task-oriented behavior required by the situation.

There are many possibilities to classify followers; so, one of them is the Kelley's model of followership that categorized followers according the dim ensions of thinking and acting (Kelley 1992). In the first dim ension, followers who are independent and critical thinkers are willing to be creative and innovative. In the second dimension, active followers take initiatives in decision m aking, while passive followers have lim ited initiatives and they do what their leaders told them to do (Bjugstad et al. 2006).

Based on previous studies related with leadership styles, I had considered transactional and transformational leadership because is one of the m ost clear distinction between leaders characteristics. They are explained below.

Transactional leadership get that followers agreed with, accepted, or complied with the leader in ex change for praise, rewards, a nd resources or the avoidance of disciplinary action. Rewards and recognition were provide d contingent on follow ers successfully carrying out their roles and a ssignments (Podsakoff et al. 1982). This kind of leaders rewards and offers recognition when goals ar e achieved. The clarification of goals and objectives should result in fo llowers that only achieve exp ected levels of performance (Bass, 1985). In its more corrective form, labeled active management by exception, this style of leadership implies closely monitoring for deviances, m istakes, and errors and then taking corrective action as quickly as possible when they occur. In its more passive form, the leader either waits for problems to arise before taking action or takes no action at all and would be labeled passive–avoidant or laissez-faire (Bass et al. 2003). Previous studies show that transactional leadersh ip is positive ly related to f ollowers' commitment, satisfaction, and performance (Bycio et al. 1995; Podsakoff et al. 1984).

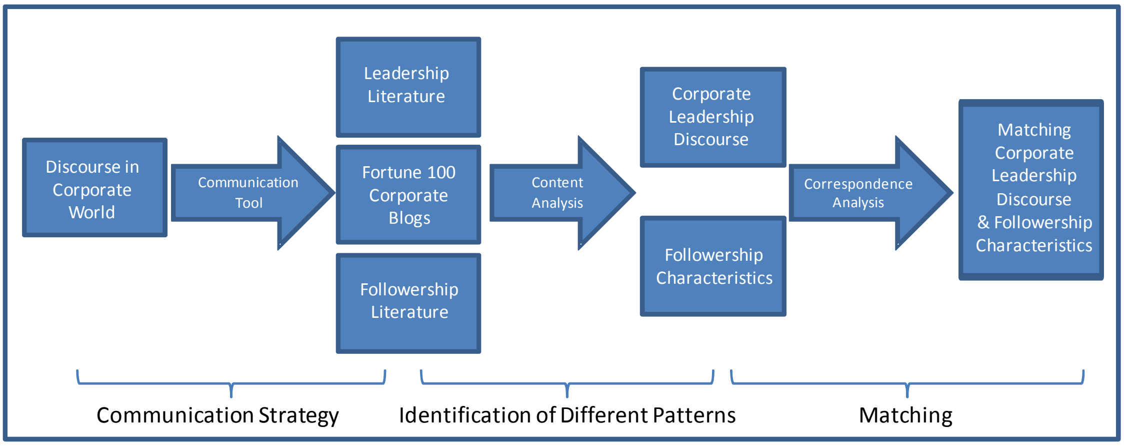
On the other hand, A volio et al. (1999) re ferred that transform ational/charismatic leadership are adm ired, respected, and truste d. Followers identif y with and want to emulate their leaders. Among the things the leader does to ear n credit with followers is to consider followers' needs over his/her own needs. The leader shares risks with followers and is consis tent in cond uct with underlying ethics, principles, and values. Moreover, leaders behave in ways that motivate those around them by providing meaning and challeng e to their followers' work; hence, enthusiasm and optim ism are displayed. Leaders also stim ulate their fo llowers to be innovativ e and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. Followers are developed to successively higher levels of pot ential, new learning opportunities are created along with a suppo rtive climate in which to grow, and individual differences in terms of needs and desires are reco gnized (Avolio et al. 1999). Finally, this kind of leader pays attention to each individual need for achievem ent and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Firstly, I have considered that Corporate Blogs are good exam ples of the possibilities that offer ICT tools to disseminate information to stakeholders. Then, based on previous studies related with leaders and followers , I have used content and correspondence analysis to extract information related with Corporate Leadership Discourse and

Followership Characteristics, and to obtain a representation of the relationship between them. The steps followed in the research methodology are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Research methodology.



Data Collection

For this study, I have focused on how Fortune 100 corporate blogs can be used to match corporate leadership discourse with followers' characteristics. The chosen period was since 2006 to 2008. During that period of time, I found only 16 Corporate Blogs from the Fortune 100. Based on the hundreds of posts and comments, I have collected a huge amount of information. For time reasons, this paper is only focused in the following companies: General Motors as example of bad performer, this company is the worst company in terms of profits in the Fortune 100 with losses around 38732 million dollars; and Wells Fargo as example of good performer, with profits around 8057 million dollars.

Data Analysis

The data collected from Corporate Blogs represented a substantial amount of mostly qualitative data. The first challenge was the identification of the leadership characteristics based on the discourse shown in the posts found in the selected Corporate Blogs, and the identification of the followers' characteristics based on the comments that follow each post. The tools chosen for data analysis were content and correspondence analysis.

Structured Content Analysis is a useful technique to determine the meaning and effectiveness of information to its users and to the research community. It can also be used to answer the complex issues arising with the proliferation of information on the Internet (Saraswat 2002). In this perspective, the rationale behind content analysis is that the real meaning of communication is created by the readers from the information contained in its source. The reader's knowledge of the subject matter and the purpose a reader brings to the task significantly influences the communication. The extraction of the content of communication thus becomes a dynamic process involving the reader and the source (Valencia et al. 1989).

Correspondence analysis consists of the analysis of cross-classified categorical, ordinal or mixed data to portray patterns of associations among row and column objects, mapping that correspondence in a joint space (Greenacre, 1984). Morin (2006) affirms that correspondence analysis produces a visual representation of the relationships between the row categories and the column categories in the same space; therefore, facilitating its understanding. According to Shen et al. (2006), the most prominent feature of correspondence analysis is to present a large number of samples and variables in a simple figure, eliminating complex mathematical calculations and sub processes, such as factor selection and factor axis rotation.

As previously mentioned, this study attempts to combine both techniques using the selected Fortune 100 corporate blogs. In summary, Content Analysis provides word frequencies and Correspondence Analysis shows the relationships among leadership styles and followers' characteristics.

Content Analysis Step

After collecting all the posts and comments, I had used TextAnalyst software (Megacomputer, 2003) to obtain word frequencies and semantic weights. All the words in the text were analyzed by the program, which had assigned their respective values. With such, I can identify the relative importance of the words and word combinations in posts and comments being analyzed. Based on words frequencies and semantic weights, I had identified specific corporate leadership characteristics in the organization discourse and I had also obtained their correspondent followers' characteristics. This step had been the more demanding in terms of time and effort, because I had had to classify all the data not only based on the frequency and the semantic weight but also taking into account leadership and followership literature.

Correspondence Analysis Step

Correspondence analysis is an excellent vehicle to establish how these topics are related to each other and to the Fortune 100 companies. According to Remenyi (1992), there are two important results in this step: inertia report and perceptual map. Inertia is defined as a measure of the total variability in the original data set and is useful to determine the number of dimensions required to explain the original data set. The perceptual map shows the relative position of the different concepts and the different participating informants (in this case the relative position between leadership styles and followers' characteristics).

In plain terms, correspondence analysis is a generalization of a simple graphical concept which we are familiar with, namely the scatterplot. The method is particularly helpful in analyzing cross-tabular data in the form of numerical frequencies, and it results in an elegant but simple graphical display which permits more rapid interpretation and understanding of the data (Greenacre, 2007). Correspondence analysis is a multivariate method to visualize categorical data, typically presented as a two-way contingency table. The distance used in the graphical display of the rows and columns is the called chi-square distance between the profiles of rows and between the profiles of columns (Cuadras et al., 2006).

This technique has several features that distinguish it from other techniques of data analysis. For example, an important feature of correspondence analysis is the multivariate treatment of the data through simultaneous consideration of multiple categorical variables. The multivariate nature of correspondence analysis can reveal relationships that would not be detected in a series of pair wise comparisons of variable. Another important feature is the graphical display of row and column points in biplots, which can help in detecting structural relationships among the variable categories and objects. Therefore, in this particular case, I mapped out the relative positioning among the specific leadership styles and followers' characteristics (see Figures 2 and 3).

FINDINGS

Content Analysis Summary

The word frequencies and the semantic weights obtained in the two selected Fortune 100 Corporate Blogs, taking into account corporate leadership styles and followers' characteristics, are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the relationship between these two set of characteristics in General Motors (GM) Corporate Blog, and Table 2 shows the relationship between them in Wellsfargo Corporate Blog.

Table 1 - Correspondence table considering leadership styles and followers' characteristics (GM).

	Development	Efficiency	Effort	Leader	Opportunity	Quality	Safety	Success
Attention	3	0	3	0	0	18	0	5
Decision	6	0	0	3	3	4	0	3
Doubt	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0
Efficiency	4	0	3	0	0	31	17	0
Improvement	4	14	3	3	0	44	3	0
Innovation	3	0	0	18	3	22	3	0
Performance	4	37	4	3	7	70	37	10
Quality	4	31	20	15	3	0	18	12
Reality	0	0	4	0	0	14	0	0
Reliability	0	17	0	0	0	108	16	0
Reputation	0	0	0	3	0	46	0	0
Safety	0	17	0	0	0	18	0	0
Success	3	0	4	0	0	12	0	0

In Table 1, rows are related with followers' characteristics, whereas columns are related with corporate leadership characteristics. One of the leaders' characteristics (quality) contributes with 52% of the total frequencies. On the followers side, performance, reliability and quality contribute together with 54% of the total frequencies.

Table 2 - Correspondence table considering leadership styles and followers' characteristics (Wellsfargo).

	Community	Company	Disaster	Idea	Life	Opportunity	Preparedness
Action	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
Community	0	3	13	0	4	2	13
Disaster	13	2	0	0	7	3	20
Education	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
Emergency	5	0	8	0	0	0	11
Family	5	0	3	0	0	0	0
Life	4	0	7	0	0	0	0
Preparedness	13	0	20	2	0	0	0
Relief	2	0	9	0	0	0	0
Society	0	2	3	0	0	0	2

In Table 2, rows are related with corporate leadership characteristics, whereas columns are related with followers' characteristics. Three of the leaders' characteristics (disaster, community and preparedness) contribute with 61% of the total frequencies. The same followers' characteristics contribute together with 84% of the total frequencies.

These results, often referred as correspondence tables, form the basis for input data in correspondence analysis.

Correspondence Analysis Summary

This technique was used to determine whether the relationships between corporate leadership discourse and followers' characteristics are meaningful. Bendixen (2003) affirms that to determine the appropriate number of dimensions we should examine the eigenvalue report as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 - Correspondence Analysis Summary Statistics (GM).

Dimension	**Singular Value**	**Inertia**	**Chi-square**	**Sig.**	**Proportion of inertia**	
					Accounted for	**Cumulative**
1	0.558	0.311			0.404	0.404
2	0.426	0.182			0.235	0.639
3	0.320	0.102			0.133	0.772
4	0.283	0.080			0.104	0.876
5	0.253	0.064			0.083	0.959
6	0.157	0.025			0.032	0.991
7	0.084	0.007			0.009	1.000
Total		0.771	594.276	0.000[a]	1.000	1.000
Note	[a] 84 degrees of freedom					

Table 4 - Correspondence Analysis Summary Statistics (Wellsfargo).

Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi-square	Sig.	Proportion of inertia	
					Accounted for	Cumulative
1	0.634	0.401			0.517	0.517
2	0.464	0.215			0.277	0.793
3	0.272	0.074			0.095	0.888
4	0.223	0.050			0.064	0.952
5	0.168	0.028			0.036	0.989
6	0.094	0.009			0.011	1.000
Total		0.777	145.325	0.000[a]	1.000	1.000
Note	[a] 54 degrees of freedom					

For GM Corporate Blog, I have 8 corporate leadership characteristics in the sample; so, if the data were purely random with no significant dependencies, the average axis should account for 100/(8-1)=14.4% of the inertia. On the other hand, the average axis should account for 100/(13-1)=8.3% in terms of 13 followers' characteristics. Thus, any axis contributing more than the maximum of these two percentages should be regarded as significant and included in the solution. In Table 3, the third axis accounts for only 13.3% of the inertia. Therefore, a 2-dimensional solution should be used to account for the 63.9% of the inertia in the solution.

For Wellsfargo Corporate Blog, I have 10 corporate leadership characteristics in the sample; hence, if the data were purely random with no significant dependencies, the average axis should account for 100/(10-1)=11.1 % of the inertia. For the other axis, its average should account for 100/(7-1)=16.7% in terms of 7 followers' characteristics. As well as in the GM case, any axis should contribute more than the maximum of these two percentages to be included in the solution. In Table 4, the third axis accounts for only 9.5% of the inertia. Therefore, a 2-dimensional solution is suggested, and it accounts for the 79.3% of the inertia in the solution.

The perceptual map is the key product of correspondence analysis which shows how the row and columns variables may be grouped. It is up to the analyst using correspondence analysis to attribute meaning to these axes. In this sense, it is interpreted in terms of proximities among the rows and the columns. The closeness in points means similarity in the underlying structure (Ivy 2001).

Figure 2 represents the perceptual map for GM Corporate Blog. Based on the literature review, it is possible to label the two axes. The vertical axis can be matched with two different leadership styles; the top side of the perceptual map has characteristics that are related with Transformational Leadership, we can see that the most important words in the corporate leadership discourse are related with leader, development and opportunity, and in terms of followers characteristics we can find words related with decision and innovation; the bottom side of the perceptual map corresponds with Transactional Leadership, here we can find that the most important terms in corporate leadership discourse are related with efficiency, safety and effort, whereas related with followers characteristics we can see the following terms: safety, performance and quality.

According to these results, I can underline that GM Corporate Blog shows two different leadership styles; and each of them has followers with compatible characteristics.

The horizontal axis can be matched with participation levels of readers; the left side may be associated with active followers because they want to participate in decision making and innovation; whereas the right side may represent passive followers because they have doubts and this situation decreases their active participation, and they are looking for reputation and reliability doing what their leaders want.

Figure 2 - Positioning of leadership styles and followers' characteristics for GM.

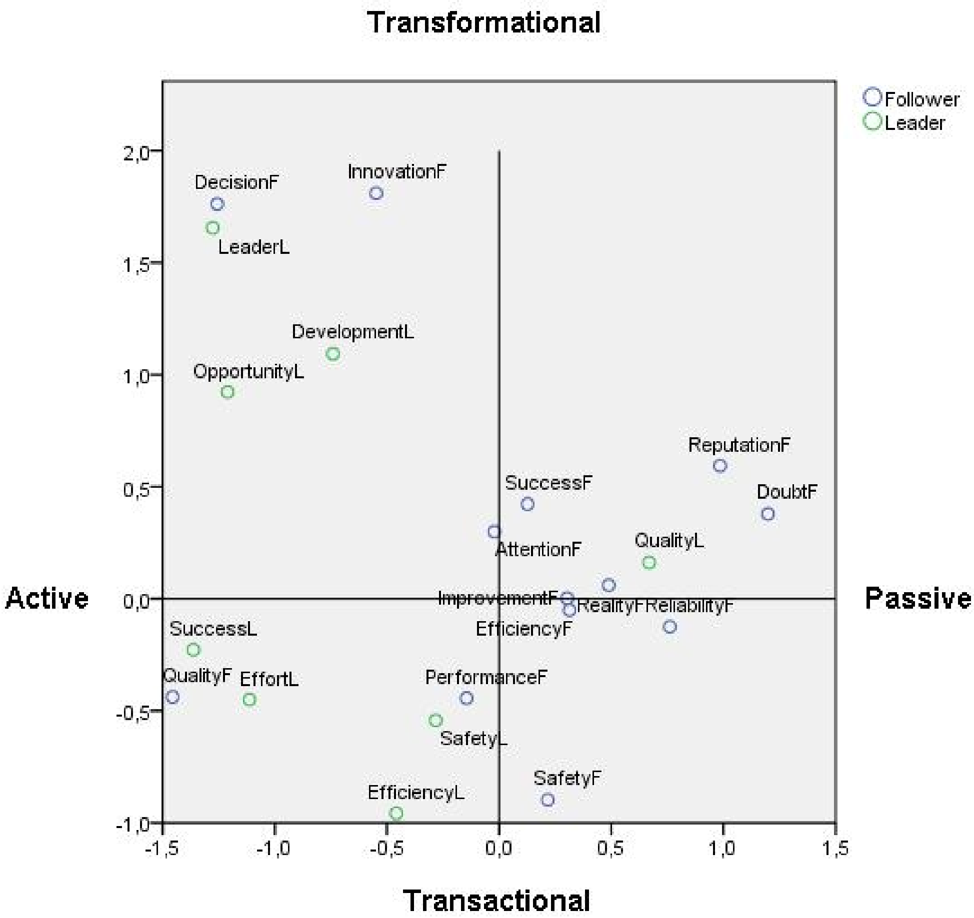
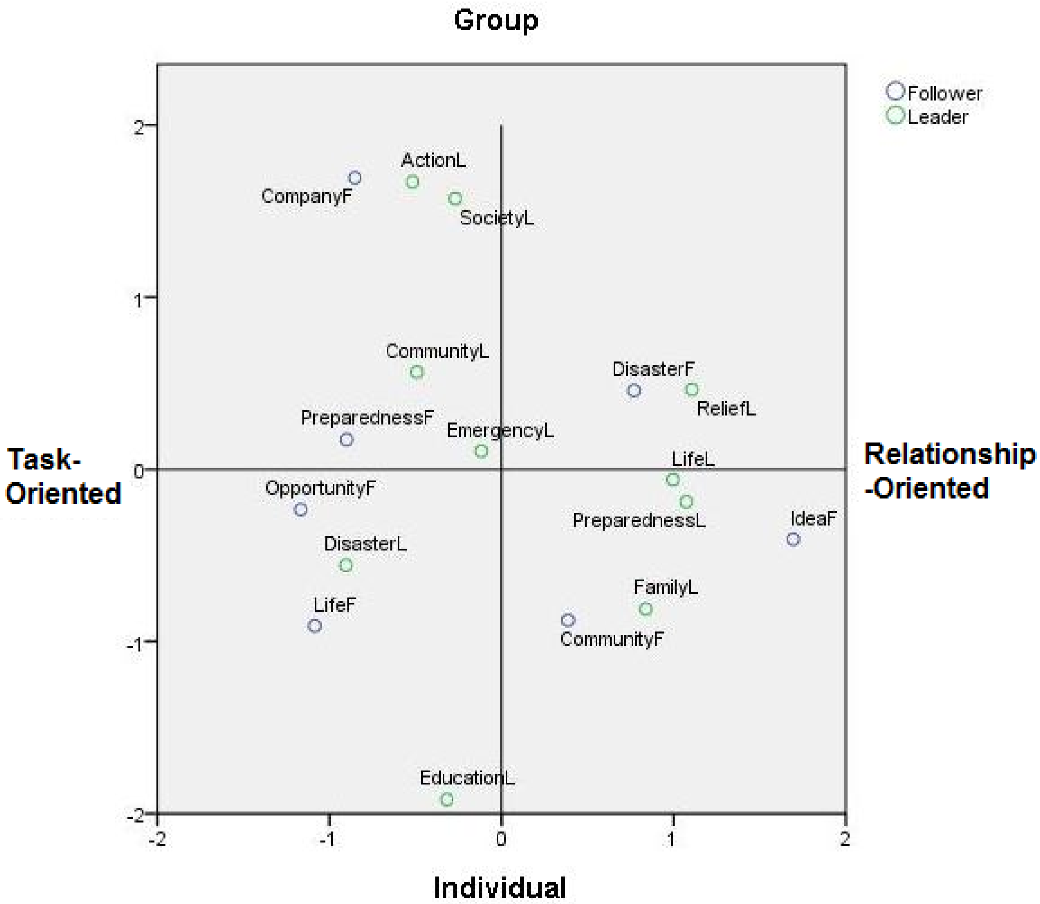


Figure 3 represents the perceptual map for Wellsfargo Corporate Blog. According to the previous studies and the words found in posts and comments, I identified and labeled the two dimensions in the solution. The words that are closer to the top of the perceptual map can be considered in the Group Level (Company and Society), whereas words in the bottom of the figure can be included in the Individual Level (Education and Life). On the other hand, in the left side, words describe Task-Oriented Leaders because there are terms (Opportunity and Company) that are related with followers that value achievement and structure; and followers, in the right side, are more compatible with Relationship-Oriented Leaders because they value interpersonal relations (i.e. Family, Life and Community). Therefore, I can highlight that Wellsfargo Corporate Blog shows two different leadership styles; and each of them seduces different kind of followers.

Figure 3 - Positioning of leadership styles and followers' characteristics for Wellsfargo.



DISCUSSION

This study has analyzed the corporate leadership discourse and the followers' characteristics found in two Fortune 100 Corporate Blogs. The rationale behind this analysis considers leaders as social paradigms. In this sense, their discourse can exert influence inside organizations and outside them; hence, it is more likely that they can attract compatible type of followers. Compared with previous studies, I have identified the same relationships found in the literature related with leadership: Transformation vs. Transactional Leadership as well as Task-Oriented vs. Relationship-Oriented Leadership. These results are interesting because through Corporate Blogs I found empirical evidence that corporate leadership styles influence the kind of followers that they have.

According to Bjugstad et al. (2006), organizations tend to have certain predominant leader and/or follower style; so, specific organization will have to fit the two types together. Moreover, they argue that while leaders and followers should have a dominant style, they not tend to use one unique style in all situations.

Drawing on the findings of this research and the used methodology, I highlight implications for researchers and practitioners, and suggest directions for further research.

Implications for researchers

The research methodology used in this paper might be replicable in other research studies and fields because content analysis is very useful to analyze documents, manuscripts, speeches or any type of communication. However, this technique requires that researchers identify the concepts or categories addressed by the documents analyzed. The challenge then faced is the analysis of the data in such a way to establish principal concepts which could be used in formulating a theory.

The use of correspondence analysis helps to identify clusters and to gain a greater understanding of the data. The association of such variables may be interpreted as a type of correlation in which the association shows existing relationships between these variables. The perceptual map does not indicate the type of relationship. It depends on the environment being described by this technique.

Scholars not only can follow these steps to analyze their particular research interests but also they can combine these techniques with others to obtain a clearer picture of the relationships hidden inside their information. Moreover, they can build a semantic network to understand better the context in which these words have been used.

Implications for practitioners

Organizations should understand that this new communication channel (Corporate Blogs) brings benefits but also some hindrances. Thus, it is very critical to analyze and identify the message and discourse that these companies want to share and disseminate. Because of the particularities of some channels like digital channels, ambiguous messages in corporate discourses may cause wrong interpretations. Furthermore, companies should analyze their discourses not only in their Corporate Blogs but also in the traditional media to convey the message according to their communication's strategy.

This research may help not only Fortune 100 organizations but also other companies to know that their communication strategy could determine the type of followers that they have. Therefore, they have a prescriptive role in society because people that are interested in them or have compatible characteristics are more likely that follow their discourse. In addition, this kind of people could be loyal customers in the future and companies need to reach them with the appropriate message.

Directions for Further Research

As future research, I will attempt to test the other Fortune 100 Corporate Blogs using the same approach (content and correspondence analysis) and I will consider other data reduction techniques like discriminant or cluster analysis. Moreover, I will build semantic networks with the found words to have a complete picture of the context in which corporate leaders and followers use them. In addition, some information found in Corporate Blogs was in podcast, video or image formats; hence, I encourage other scholars to apply new and more sophisticated techniques to analyze, categorize and interpret this information.

Finally, it would be interesting to conduct in-depth interviews with people in charge of Corporate Blogs (CEO and/or TMT) to explore the motivations of their creation and to improve the understanding of their communication purpose from a leadership perspective.

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