

Article

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# The Workplace Culture Analysis from the Angle of the Public Statement: Cases Study of Chinese Global Corporation Haier

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**Abstract:** Haier's workplace culture integrates Confucian principles with modern organizational management to develop communication strategies that enhance employee motivation, thereby improving workplace inclusivity and employee performance. The Confucian advocacy for a sense of moral responsibility offers a sustainable inspiration for modern management practices. This paper uses a qualitative research strategy combining textual analysis and organizational models to illustrate the advantages of Haier's current statement from the perspective of macro organizational differences and individual differences. Regarding an organization, using a balanced communication strategy can effectively enhance employees' belonging sense of the workplace. Further, in terms of individuals' development, self-management leadership is more conducive to stimulating creativity. However, there are significant differences in employee perceptions and feedback on workplace culture at different positions. Finally, the analysis suggests that in an increasingly competitive global landscape, companies should re-evaluate the application of Confucian values in their communication strategies to improve employee positivity and organizational competitiveness.

**Keywords:** workplace culture; self-management; communication strategy; Confucian; leadership

## 1. Introduction

In the last decades, the process of globalization has been developing at an unprecedented speed. Haier capitalizes on the opportunity to turn from a factory to a competitive corporation. The globalized workplace culture pushes the organization, which pursues the obsolete flow to a new development stage. Therefore, in the last decades, the upgrading and refining of Haier Group's public statement are notion-worthy, which reflects the process of forming a competitive workplace culture. In the following part, I will briefly introduce the formers' empirical research results and conceptualization in the second section; The third part will illustrate how data are accessed and in which way are classified; The fourth section corporates the analysis of leadership, organizational value and mission statement based on workplace culture from the textual perspective. The summarization and further research suggestions will be found in the final part.

## 2. Literature review

Workplace culture originates from anthropology study and is nowadays widely combined with and adopted in business operations (Morgan, 1997, p.119). According to published articles and books, quantities of scholars and experts have analyzed workplace cul-

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ture from textual and contextual angles. In the last decades, Wright et al. (1994) generalized workplace culture as a management tool, while Brown (1995) uses metaphors to materialize this form of culture.

As for Schnurr (2013), she explored workplace culture from a micro-view, such as the way of swearing and email, to conclude that specific words and concrete behavior identify the distinguishing character of a workplace. Hence, workplace culture with the performative and dynamic essence and formed by negotiation and interaction between internal members (Miller 1999; Riad 2005). Concern the contextual model of organizational culture, the schools of scholars is represented by Hofstede regards workplace culture as “the collective programming of minds” and further reinforces daily practices including symbols, heroes and rituals level (Hofstede, 1997). Furthermore, Hofstede and his colleagues (1997) use quantitative research methods to specifically divide the organizational culture into six dimensions, which brings enlightenment to the latter researcher although it holds one-sided and too generic characteristics of an empirical research conclusion.

However, Schein (1992) adopts qualitative measurement to structuralize workplace culture model; In this way, three levels of culture are summarized— “artifacts, espoused values and basic underlying assumptions”. In Schein’s culture model, the tangible corporate statement (artifacts), the ultimate pursuing goal and company principles (espoused values) and implicit expectations are interactive. These three items are not inclusive or unidirectional.

Furthermore, Kim and Jung (2022) assert that organizations prioritizing a clan-oriented and cohesive culture can significantly alleviate employees' perceptions of workplace stress while simultaneously improving their adaptability. To some extent, a customer-oriented corporate mission statement is better aligned with market demands, thereby fostering enhanced employee performance. Beno (2021) explores how workplace norms (workplace culture) based on the value of integrity affect employee performance via the medium of WhatsApp, revealing higher levels of interpersonal respect, appreciation, and efficient collaboration.

Besides, a few researchers linguistically discussed workplace culture. From the outsider view, texts and statements published by an organization from an image of the organization for the public and target customers, in turn, distinct organizational culture affects inside communication and leadership differently. The mission statement is the key to spreading corporate philosophy and further empowers ethnical and historical visions (Swales & Rogers, 1995). Moreover, mission statement generally refers to the purpose and ultimate goal of the organization (Schnurr, 2013) which can “be used to create, shape and change an organization’s culture” (Kirkbride & Chaw, 1987).

Based on theoretical and workplace culture model research, this paper will fill the gap with researching organizational culture from the textual perspective and aim to focus on one organization and analyze its workplace culture and attached statement on cultural and practical aspects.

### 3. Methodology

The creation of this paper is to narrow down the research scope with a broader discussion target, that is, choosing Chinese corporation Haier as the only target company and extract its full-scale textual information including mission statement, management style description and employees' feedback. As for the business data, operational results and authentic employees' feedback showed in this paper, and those are accessible from Haier UK official website, financial analysis journals, Haier 2018 annual report and Haier intranet (the authorization from a current employee of Haier).

To deeply and comprehensively analyze one specific type of workplace culture and avoid as many incredibility and generalization of the empirical research as possible, the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is a better measurement for the

study subject of this paper. Specifically, on account of the practical influence of organizational values and statements as the main target of the whole exploration, we mainly employ qualitative research approaches which are generally applied in sociology to measure the method and motivation of human behaviour (Terrell, 2012). Compared with quantitative research, qualitative approaches focus on a smaller but more concentrated sample, yielding information or results about a typical case. Hence, the depth of sample analysis is required while the width is limited. Consequently, the evolution of the organization's published statement, including management approaches and mission statements, will be discussed in the cultural, social, and operational way. However, the advantage of quantitative measurement models is utilizing the mathematic method or specific data to evaluate a specific phenomenon and management approaches systematically.

#### 4. Analysis

Haier is entitled as one of the ten most innovative worldwide companies (Notte,2010) and features outstanding performance in General Electric, especially consumer appliances market. Self-management leadership style plays a significant role in the successful transition from a debt-ridden refrigerator factory to a competitive general appliance company. It is worth noting Zhang Ruimin's published statement, which reflects his management behaviour conforms well to the modern-applied Confucian leadership model.

I want each employee coming to work for Haier to have the sense that he or she can find a place in the company to realize his or her values as well as create values for the enterprise. I have no desire to over-supervise employees. (Zhang, 2007, p.142)

According to Hofstede's theories of contextual organizational culture, the traditional Confucian values turns to be a miniature in Zhang's leadership system. Zhang's self-management idea epitomizes deep-rooted values in Chinese minds – Ren (benevolence/ humanity), Yi (righteousness/ honesty), Li (politeness) and Zhi (wisdom). Zhang's statement embodies the combination of Chinese wisdom and international leadership discipline (Zhang & Alon, 2009, p.247). Based on Hofstede's model (1997) and later scholars Hawes and Chew (2011), Haier's success is a consequence of Zhang acting as a leader in organizational culture, furthermore, (i) defining organizational values and corporate philosophy, (ii) creating organizational "myths" that induces maximize employees' collaboration and innovation, (iii) building "rituals" to admire and award company's "hero" and criticize those who violate or breach common-shared values, (iv) internalizing values by financial incentives and firm re-structure (it is a proper way to optimize subculture and further guide it accords well to innovative mainstream values.), (v) CEO acting as a role model to affirm corporation's values on discursive and behavioural aspects.

Guided by the corporate culture that encourages multicultural development and origins from the essence of Confucian Culture, Haier Group developed the Win-Win Value Added (WWVA) statement. The WWVA approaches based on a new customer relationship model—microenterprises". This initiative accords with Zhang's original intention and the workplace culture mainstream led by Zhang. The Win-Win strategy with the focus of user-centric as well as the creative combination of Internet of Things (IoT) "ecosystem" and customer-friendly and environment-friendly products, which highlights the "Ren" (humanitarian spirit) characteristic of traditional Chinese culture particularly the Confucianism. Furthermore, with the common goal of providing customized and advancing appliances to customers, Haier has received culture-driven regular clients and outstanding financial rewards through strategic and operational advancement. The transformation from the enterprise-centric to the user-centric operational model based on the win-win corporate values maximizes the benefits for both users and stakeholders.

To achieve striking corporate development, the consistent corporate culture, advanced market strategies and pioneering management models are indispensable and in-

teractive. Therefore, OEC management created by Haier's Zhang Ruiming plays a significant element of Haier Culture and has far-reaching influence for firm rules and employee behaviours.

O stands for Overall; E stands for Everyone, Everything, and Every-day; C stands for Control and Clear. OEC means that every employee has to accomplish the target work every day. (Lin, 2005)

At the cultural aspect, the proposal of OEC management to develop a new workplace with fair rewards and penalties to supervise people to pay attention to details. Moreover, according to Zhang (2007), the tight management system is vital to avoid practices based on the descriptive norms of tending to ignore rules in some cases like crossing the streets. The specific rule representing the core of the management model is that "each piece of glass in a particular building is associated with an employee who must take care of it" (Zhang, 2007). In this way, the role of personal values plays a crucial part in the guidance of workplace culture and the improvement of the management system. On the operational level, the high awareness of responsibility and regulation enhance the innovation efficiency, the understanding of customer value, product quality, and marketing competitive. Furthermore, the sub-systems also emerge with the OEC management-control system, that is, "control, checking, clearance and incentive mechanism" (Lin, 2005). In this way, the role model is promoted and rewarded by the organization. The OEC system allows them to feel included and involved in company management.

As for the far-reaching function of the OEC, Frynas et al. (2018) regarded the OEC management as the Japanese-inspired practice to control every item and every detail to enhance the employees' accountability as well as transit the traditional hierarchical workplace structure to the projected-based structure. Subsequently, the emergence of a more refined and elaborate department division with higher decision-making power becomes prevalent.

The mission statement is inevitably developing and upgrading to conform to the market competition as well as an intrinsic organizational value. From the textual level, the pursuit of "premium quality" is a concrete manifestation of the shared workplace culture; The words like "customer" "matter" represent the customer-centric value shared by every employees and employer; "State-of-art products" is the ultimate goal of the corporation; And "zero distance" works in concert with the concept of the OEC management—controlling every detail.

Zero distance with the consumer. At Haier, our aim is to deliver premium quality, state-of-the-art products that respond to the continually changing needs of the modern home, ultimately giving consumers more time to do the things that matter to them. (Haier, 2019)

On theoretic level, based on Schein's model (1992), the text published by the corporation (mission statement) is the visible "artifact" to display the intrinsic values and underlying assumptions. According to Hofstede et al. (2001), we can regard the mission statement as the symbols of the cultural values at practical aspects. Although the critique of these two theoretical models is upgrading, the essence of the ideas is applicable to contemporary practices.

The employees' feedback is a significant indicator to explore the workplace culture deeply and measure its strengths and limitations. There are interesting reviews from current and former employees of the Haier Group. The managers and senior employees show a higher level of organizational culture recognition and workplace satisfaction compared with the entry-level employees (Glassdoor, 2019). Managers working in Haier claim that they enjoy Haier's culture and the group ambition and they feel proud of the product quality. In contrast, the general staff feel pressured by the central service leadership and complain about less democracy. To sum up, the awareness and feedback to the workplace culture from employees at a different position are different.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the text as mentioned above and analysis, the consistent public speeches reflect the ultimate organizational goal, and the upgrading management model has introduced the systematization to the workplace culture. Furthermore, feedback from employees on workplace culture acts as a significant guide for workplace culture development or employees' training. From the perspective of the text, it is possible to analyze workplace culture on the macro level. However, due to the limitation of the length of the article, the overall role of microanalysis of workplace culture and staff feedback on the organizational culture needs further research.

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