

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS:
EXAMINING COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS IN EMERGING MARKETS

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Abstract

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is an asset for organizations embarking on strategic partnerships. The ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, and then translate that relationship into one of mutual understanding is important for a successful venture. The stakes are even higher for small, medium or multinational organizations expanding into emerging markets in Asia, South America, and Africa. The literature suggests that executives need to be skilled in cross cultural negotiations, behaviours, and understanding business communication processes to succeed in a new location. Through a combination of in-depth interviews with nine experts on emerging markets, from Canada, the UK, Bangkok (Southeast Asia), Senegal (West Africa), and the U.S., and then content analysis of 21 articles from two business publications, this research captures the unique experiences, the communications protocols and channels that worked for these organizations. Despite the communications barriers, risks, and challenges faced during cross cultural expansions, the rewards and opportunity of exploring new markets, meeting needs, and attracting and keeping new talent are propelling the gold rush into untapped regions of the world.

Key words: Cultural intelligence, strategic partnerships, strategic communications, emerging markets, cross-cultural ventures, developing countries.

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Introduction

The world is a global village. This is no longer a new phenomenon. People from different cultures and backgrounds are making key decisions at the business round table. Managing across cultures is crucial due to “global sourcing, global mobility, global marketing, and global wisdom and collaboration” (Solomon & Schell, 2009, p. 12). It is also a new reality that organizations have their employees working remotely and are faced with managing talents across cultures in a decentralized workplace which challenges the authentic enterprise (Arthur W. Page Society 2007).

From North America to Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa, business initiatives have spanned across borders. Whether for profit or not-for-profit, the need to understand human behaviour from the stand point of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in today’s diverse work place is a skill for the tool box of management executives and all employees. It gives leaders a competitive edge. It helps to work with people who are different from you (Middleton, 2015). Understanding and navigating through complex human relationships is vital for organizations to succeed or fail in the global market place intertwined with cultural differences. Most importantly, partnership ventures are really about people coming together, and it should be a happy and rewarding union that blossoms with time and mutual understanding (Eisner, 2010).

The success of a strategic partnership is based on “organizational choice of relationship cultivation strategies” (Hung 2005, p. 394). Kanter (1989) identified “strategic partnerships with key stakeholders as welcomed allies and not manipulated adversaries” (As cited in Grunig 1992, p.239).

These strategies are even more crucial when organizations initiate, prospect, and engage in cross border partnerships. The ability to see things from another person's perspective or through their environmental filters and cultural telescope is vital for mutual understanding. Partnerships are formidable, but also have intricate communications challenges.

Cultural intelligence plays a significant role in building lasting profit or not-for profit relationships in emerging markets which are seen as having a growing economic advantage in regards to their teeming population, cheap labour, and the rise of the middle class with disposable income. Corporations need to find ways to engage with emerging market regions (Khanna, Palepu & Sinha, 2005).

Notable among emerging markets are South America, Asia, and Africa – Nigeria in particular, with a population of about 150 million. Multinationals such as Shell Oil, Unilever, Total, and General Electric, have been in Nigeria for many years but recently there has been an influx of more consumer brands like the giant retailer Wal-Mart and KFC (Burke, 2016). Also Google, Microsoft and most recently, Netflix have entered the Nigerian market. In May 2016, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, was in Nigeria “primarily to promote the penetration of ‘fast and cheap’ internet connectivity, Express-wifi, that would help people create online businesses and reduce poverty” (Nwabughogu, 2016. p1). Facebook is also aggressively pursuing the Chinese market with its population of over one billion. Poelzl (2016) notes that “oil/gas exploration or mining and international NGOs in health services and conservation are some of the sectors where multinational professionals sent to Africa work (p.1). In addition, an influx of educational partnerships is evident in Africa (Fatunde, 2011). Some British universities have found lucrative opportunities in Africa.

Mastercard, Motorola, Visa, and Proctor and Gamble are seeking opportunities in Africa to form “public-private partnerships to advance global financial inclusion efforts” (Saharareporters, 2016. p.1). Goldman Sachs was prompted to “include Nigeria in a group of countries called, The Next Eleven. These are countries with a potential to be among the biggest economies in the 21st century” (Allafrica.com, 2016, para 1).

Specifically, this research focused on multinationals seeking to develop partnerships in other countries like India, China, Brazil, and Malaysia etc., which have similar characteristics in terms of their thriving population, rise of the middle class, and taste for Western brand and values.

It is important to note that this research was ongoing in the wake of recent global uncertainties like the “Brexit” where Britain voted to leave the European Union. In fact, the United Kingdom has most recently embarked on a free trade agreement initiative with India as it severs its long term ties with the European Union. Also Canada’s stalled effort to sign a free trade deal with the EU which was held back by a small village in Belgium (Skynews.com 2016). The deal was finally brokered but raised concerns of free trade and partnerships with the EU in the future. In addition, the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, and his plans for new trade policies which include more taxes for businesses leaving the country, has global trade implications that may affect cross-border partnerships. Nevertheless, the value of partnerships continues to prove that the world’s problems cannot be solved by only some individuals or people who think in a similar way. Moreover, China just partnered with Hollywood for its first blockbuster movie, “The Great Wall” (Yang 2014). A US-Chinese venture may be setting the pace for a new collaborative trend.

Research problem

When a global organization decides to extend its brand overseas, management often envisions a great business opportunity. With a strong brand, an established corporate culture, and communications processes adapted to their current environment, the drive is often to replicate the same in the new market. However, communications in an emerging market requires a different approach. What are the new communications protocols an organization must be aware of and initiate to ensure that its business strategy works in its new partnership abroad?

Localizing of communications realities is also important. The role of public relations in their host environment and the ability to build strong and stable relationships is a crucial part of a successful partnership in emerging markets.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the different stages of project communications for an organization exploring opportunities in emerging markets?

RQ2: How do global organizations entering emerging markets localize their communications strategies to adapt in their new environment? And what are the communication risks?

Literature Review

Definitions

Both profit and not-for-profit organizations seek opportunities to expand their businesses in new regions, which mean that communications processes would need to be modified to adapt to new environments. This demands a new set of thinking and understanding to adapt in a culturally diverse environment, hence the need for cultural intelligence. Building relationships takes time and needs two-way communication to establish trust and mutual understanding. This

becomes more complex and layered when dealing with people in a different geographical location who speak a different language.

These definitions will help to understand the concept of cultural intelligence and its role in today's global work space.

Cultural intelligence. Cultural Intelligence is needed for today's executive to function globally and effectively. According to business contributors on Forbes.com (2015), they argue that:

As globalization has rendered the business environment more complex, dynamic, and competitive, the ability to function effectively in different cultural contexts, called Cultural Intelligence (CQ), has never been more important for organizations (para.1).

Earley and Mosakowski (2004) define cultural intelligence "an outsider's seemingly natural ability to interpret someone's unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures the way that person's compatriots would" (p.1). Cultural intelligence is also related to the concept of emotional intelligence and both share a "propensity to suspend judgment-to think before acting," according to psychologist, Daniel Goleman (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004, p.1).

CQ might not be an entirely new concept but it has become increasingly relevant in today's delocalized workforce. Livermore (2010) defines cultural intelligence as, "the capability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures" (p.4). Global leaders can no longer shy away from the reality of a globalized workforce which can span vendors, employees, and suppliers from all over the world. They are immersed in making daily business transactions in a web of cultural interactions and time zones.

One does not need to master all cultures but should have an understanding or a basic knowledge of how to adapt and function in a culturally diverse landscape. Livermore (2010) also notes the four step cycle of cultural intelligence, “CQ: Drive-motivation, CQ: Knowledge-cultural knowledge, CQ: Strategy-Plans or initiatives, and CQ: Action-Behaviours needed to adapt and function effectively (p.4).

According to Forbes.com (2015), “CQ is a system consisting of three interactive components – cultural knowledge, cross-cultural skills and cultural metacognition” (para.1). CQ is an intangible asset and an indispensable soft skill.

Also crucial is what Kingston (2012) debates about today’s leadership skills, “They demand a combination of cultural dexterity, curiosity about the country, and sensitivity to working with partners in government” (p.1). A global leader’s tool kit needs a stash of cultural intelligence.

Two-way communication. Grunig (2001) discussed the importance of two-way symmetrical communications which is a vital component of strategic partnerships. Excellent organizations create opportunities and an atmosphere where there is an exchange of information. They do not just disseminate information-one way communication, but are open to feedback and interaction with their stakeholders, customers, employees, and others.

Grunig (1992) also identified communications with strategic constituencies as an attribute of excellence in management. This undoubtedly all stems from strategic planning associated with communications processes (Holtzhausen & Zerfass 2011). This process of communication helps to solve misunderstandings, as opposed to one-way communication where organizations do not hear, smell, and listen to their constituencies (Grunig, 1992). In cross-cultural ventures, the need

for two-way symmetrical communication is even more elaborate to foster a mutual understanding and to navigate through sensitivities.

What to say, who to approach, the channels of communications, hand and facial gestures, mannerisms, and even how to dress in face to face meetings, choice of spokespersons and language skill are core to cultural intelligence and facets of engaging and facilitating a productive two-way communication process (MacLachlan, 2015).

Culture. Culture is the way we live, eat, think, socialize, dress, and behave. Culture is the why behind actions. People often talk about culture shock because when they are thrust into a new environment, they are stunned by a new set of ideas or way of living. It often shakes the core of who we are. “Culture is a powerful force that shapes thoughts and perceptions” (Solomon & Schell, 2009, p.46). “Culture is a set of shared assumptions and values that distinguishes one group from another” (MacLachlan, 2015, p.).

This is even more important in the global workspace for businesses because “an understanding of culture develops credibility, nurtures goodwill, inspires workforce, and helps companies develop marketable products” (Solomon & Schell 2009, p.46). The importance of culture cannot be divorced from the realities of today’s international alliances. Executives must learn social norms of good manners to close the deals.

Most importantly Cockerell Lee who supervised food offerings at Disney Paris when it opened said, “Understand the culture, respect the culture” (As cited in Palmeri & Turk, 2015, p.19). This should be the mantra for brands extending into new markets.

Cross-Cultural Communication or Experience

Cross cultural experience is a key strand of cultural intelligence. Livermore (2010) cites, “individuals who with multiple experiences in a variety of places experience more of the benefits of cross-cultural interactions and travel” (p.171). To experience a new culture, you have to be immersed in it; eat their local delicacies, attend ceremonies, spend time in homes, meet their families, go sightseeing, and make a conscious effort to observe the norms and traditions. Listen to stories because all these help in making an informed decision.

When two or more people from different backgrounds, mind-sets or environment interact, there is a new dynamic to that relationship. In a world where one person, race or business does not hold the solution to all problems, people are coming together to engage in discussions and find creative ways to innovate and bring solutions. Effective cross cultural communications is a catalyst for a successful and manageable partnership.

Corporate Culture

Organizations have distinct characteristics which help to build reputation and establish a strong brand. Corporate culture is the summation of these behaviours that distinguish an entity from its peer. It is an intangible asset that organizations want to replicate globally. Barney (1986) argues that:

Corporate culture refers to the core values shared by all or most employees. It consists of a complex set of shared ideologies, symbols, and values that influence the way the firm

conducts its business. Corporate culture is the social energy that drives or fails the organization (As cited in Flynn, 2002, p.6).

Corporate culture plays a key role in how an organization establishes itself abroad and helps to know what aspects would not work or how expectations can be lowered but not entirely compromised in the new location. Notably, Khanna, et al. (2005) said, “Successful companies develop strategies for doing business in emerging markets that are different from those they use at home and often find novel ways of implementing them, too” (p.1).

In 2013, Asiana airlines crashed in San Francisco killing three people. It took a while for the airline to communicate with the public and release information. The Korean culture does not operate on speed and quick reactions keen with the American culture. When they responded, the CEO “offered not just a personal apology but a deep, solemn bow. The Asiana board members on the stage bowed with him” (Fisher, 2013, p.1). This is a corporate culture and behaviour that must be shared and imbibed by anyone who chooses to work for the airline. Communications professionals should think of deeper corporate cultures when applying for jobs. One must be prepared to practice core mannerisms in a sincere and authentic way, especially in how they apologize to consumers or how employees dress.

Cultural Convergence

Are humans more alike than they are different? Oftentimes, we all aim for the same things, but the path taken differs. Globalization has made us realize that the way of living and thinking are becoming homogenized. Grewal (2009) writes:

We should understand concerns about cultural homogenization as revealing a broad transformation in the ways of thought and life available to people today — a transformation that marks the real convergence in our time” (p.1).

When people come together, their differences are magnified but their creativity and innovative mindset can be harnessed if they truly want to achieve success for their organization and for the society at large. Partnerships are opportunities to satisfy a common need.

Strategic Communications

Strategic Communications is an orchestrated plan, which is methodically targeted to channel time and resources in relationships that have a specific purpose. It is not a one shot process, but one that continues overtime. Patterson and Radtke (2009) write that,

It is mission driven, audience focused, and action oriented. It is the art of expressing ideas combined with the science of transmitting information. It is crafting the message so that it motivates target audience to act in a desired manner (p.xiii).

According to Holtzhausen & Zerfass, strategic communications is “the practice of deliberate and purposive communication a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals” (As Sriramesh et al. 2013. p. 284). Also, “strategic communications describes the combination of plans, goals, practices, and tools used by an organization to send consistent messages” (Patterson & Radtke, 2009, p.7). It is a conscious effort navigated with knowledge and understanding of multiple stakeholders involved. Holtzhausen and Zerfass defined strategic communications as “the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission” (As cited in Sriramesh, et al, 2013, p. 83).

Strategic Partnerships

When a partnership is strategic it means that it is a rare combination - a best or perfect fit scenario. It is the coming together of people or enterprises in a symbiotic relationship where each benefits over time (Storm, 2009). Working alone might be ideal for some, but businesses and people making a huge impact in the world are not going solo. They have come to understand the formidable force of strategic liaisons because two or multiple good heads are better than one.

According to Lavinsky (2013), “A strategic partner is another business with whom you enter into an agreement that aims to help both of you achieve more success” (p.1). Strategic partnership takes time to identify and build. It often means moving “slowly” but strategically says IMAX CEO, Gelfond Richard, as the Mississauga based Canadian company establishes its theatres in China (Mann, 2015). The fact is that the two or more organizations partnering must fit like a glove for the relationship to work and be the strategic alliance that brings satisfaction to those involved. Partnership should be a growth accelerator.

Communications Protocols

Protocols are a set of rules that guide how information is shared or transmitted. It can be hidden or obvious such as initiating contacts, business laws and licenses, manners during formal interactions, proper ways of giving out business cards, addressing people, and preferable communications channels etc. In addition, communication could be planned and key audiences identified to guide staff on messaging (Sobel, 2009; Campbell 2009).

Communications protocols in relation to data transmission are crucial because they enable the receiver to accurately interpret sent data. The same analogy can be evident in human interaction. In a new environment, first impressions, gestures and non-verbals are important signals or codes that could be interpreted and can affect the building of a partnership.

Mannerisms can make or break a partnership. So it is important that senior managers are trained on how to deliver messages when managing a crisis, building relationships, and establishing a strong profile in the host community (Livermore, 2010).

Emerging Markets

The concept of emerging markets is comparable to the lifecycle of a butterfly. From the egg, to the larva and to the pupa, it is an emerging butterfly. The nations within the context of emerging markets are supposedly trapped in a formation phase. The developing nations of Asia, Africa, and South America seem to be undergoing a metamorphosis as they take their place in the global dynamics of business relevance. FT.com (2016) defines emerging markets as:

A term that investors use to describe a developing country, in which investment would be expected to achieve higher returns but be accompanied by greater risk. They generally have sound public finances, with no bloated welfare states or dependency cultures (p.2).

Most of the countries identified as emerging markets such as Nigeria, China, India and Brazil have undergone political, economic, and social instability which have in effect hampered their development, but now the stage seems to be set for more established economies to migrate to emerging nations because they have the population, “prospect of high returns, as they often experience faster economic growth as measured by GDP” (Investopedia.com 2016, p.1).

In addition, “as growth in developed economies such as the United States, Japan and Europe continues to languish, the fastest engines of global growth for several years to come will be the emerging markets of India and China” (Radjou & Prabhu 2012, p.1).

Why does Cultural Intelligence (CQ) matter?

In his book on Social intelligence, Goleman (2006), tells a story of:

American soldiers in Iraq en route to negotiate with the town's chief cleric. They are faced with a growing angry mob who are unsure of their mission but a quick thinking commanding officer, who inevitably understood or at least had some knowledge of the Iraqi culture and traditions issued commands to his soldiers who assumed a posture and gesture that appeased the mob (p.3).

This is a picture of a combination of cultural intelligence and social intelligence. An intelligence combo needed for people being sent to high risk regions of the world. For the soldiers it was a matter of life and death. In other circumstances, for oil companies drilling in hostile communities in developing countries like Nigeria, cultural intelligence plays a crucial role in managing militants. Multinationals like Shell, Chevron, Total and Exxon Mobile are major oil players in Nigeria with a history of ongoing conflicts in host communities.

In the course of their professional lives, executives could be sent abroad for growth and expansion and will be faced with opportunities to interact with diverse cultures. Gone are the days when people were promoted for having a great IQ or emotional intelligence (EQ). CQ is the new kid on the block and one that should be included in today's professional portfolio. It can be learned but one must be willing to be open, take risks, read, observe, and immerse oneself in a new environment (Livermore 2010). In addition, Radjou and Prabhu (2012) write that:

Multinationals are stepping up their capabilities in emerging economies by opening more R&D labs, factories and sales and marketing offices that can design, develop and sell locally relevant products and services (p.1).

Theory

This research was guided by three relevant theories which helped to form the core framework for exploring the concept of cultural intelligence and strategic partnerships. The theories included Excellence in Management, Relationship theory and Community Building theory. They are explained below.

Excellence in management. One attribute of excellent management in organizations outlined by Grunig, (1992) argues that “Organizations will be excellent more often in societies whose cultures emphasize collaboration, participation, trust, and mutual responsibility (p.245).

Within this context are strategic partnerships and ventures geared towards bringing people together and fostering a cohesive organization. In the same context, “an excellent organization can be successful or unsuccessful for reasons outside of management’s control... national policy and culture” p.246). In cross-cultural partnerships, an organization should be prepared to adapt and localize to the national culture for it to thrive and survive in the region and meet local customer tastes. After an organization does its CAGE (Cultural, Administrative, Geographical, and Economic) analysis, the flag raised within this analysis plays a major role in sustaining the organization in that partnership.

Relationship theory. Hung (2005) did an extensive in-depth interview with multinational executives in China, Taiwan, Japan, the US, and Canada and explored types of organizational relationships such as communal and exchange relationships and “how these types of relationships affects an organizations choice of relationship cultivation strategies” (p.394). It also emphasizes “interdependent relationships” as key for success in organizational public relations. This also hinges on the five dimensions of relationships identified by Ledingham and

Bruning as “trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (as cited in Hung 2005, p.394)

In cross-cultural ventures with emerging markets, the stakes are higher and the process of cultivating these relationships takes more time and understanding to navigate. If a party senses that they are in an exploitative relationship, there might be outcomes that have a negative impact on the continuity of that partnership and their publics.

Community building. Valentini, Kruckebergb, and Starck (2014) proposed that community-building is “both a process and an outcome” (p.284). In a cross-cultural venture, communication processes are more amplified as both parties aim to have the same goal and objectives to foster a mutual understanding. The relationship must fit into the larger context of that society; understanding its cultural norms, lifestyle, pace of living, expectations, reactions and responses.

Moreover, it is even more crucial for communications professionals to understand protocols which will help in reaching the right people, at the right time, and through the appropriate channels to build an open and sincere relationship. An organization should in a sense have a social licence to operate in a new environment. An organization should engage the community to help define its goals, objectives, and partnership opportunities.

Research Methodology

This research project used two methods of primary research, qualitative and quantitative, to provide results. In-depth interviews with nine executives and business professors provided the qualitative results. A detailed content analysis of new markets and brand expansion articles from samples of 2015 and 2016 issues of two business publications- *Canadian Business* and

Bloomberg Businessweek, provided the quantitative results. A combination of these methods and the researcher's analysis developed the three pronged approach to "converge (data) in a triangular fashion" (Yin, 2009, p. 18), to give substance and validity to the results.

In-Depth Interviews with Business Executives and Academics.

A series of nine in-depth interviews were conducted in August, September, and October 2016 with CEOs, communication directors, international development directors, and business professors with expert knowledge of strategic partnerships and knowledge of emerging markets dynamics. These professionals have been engaged in the field of international expansions and consulting for many years and have a vast understanding of navigating new landscapes. Some have decades of experience and have lived in these regions and shared their personal experiences.

Three of the business professors are from Canadian Universities in Ontario (Toronto and Ottawa) and Alberta. One of the business executives is based in the US and two other executives are from Canadian brands based in Toronto. One executive is based in the UK while two executives working for a global humanitarian organization are based in Bangkok (Thailand) and Senegal (West Africa) respectively. Significant effort was made to reach out to both men and women to have a fair representation of both voices in this research, but only one female participated out of the nine people interviewed. Effort was made to reach out to more women but some declined or did not respond.

All participants were recruited by an email invitation. Prior to receiving an email, some were recommended by the researcher's colleagues and professors as potential resources. Three of the interviews were done over Skype as participants were in the UK, Senegal (West Africa), and

Bangkok (Thailand). Two were face-to-face interviews at their offices in Toronto and four were conducted over the phone. All interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes. All but one agreed to use their name and organization. Answers to questions often overlapped as the conversation flowed. The researcher transcribed all interviews into a word document and sent it to participants who requested it for further confirmation and accurate representation.

Interview Participants

1. **Glenn Tucker, Director-International Development, *Booster Juice*, Canada.**

Booster Juice is a worldwide flavour phenomenon, with over 300 locations dotted all over this beautiful planet — from one Canadian coast to the other, and also including the U.S., Mexico, the Netherlands, India and Brazil (Boosterjuice.com 2016). Prior to coming to Booster Juice, Mr. Tucker worked for an International Pizza company. He has lived and experienced a range of Eastern European cultures and has multi lingual training.

2. **Bruno Col, Regional Communications Director, *World Vision*, WARO. Dakar, Senegal.**

World Vision is a Christian relief, development, and advocacy organization working to create lasting change in the lives of children, families, and communities to overcome poverty and injustice (worldvision.ca 2016). Established in 1957, it has over 45,000 staff globally. Mr. Col is a French-Australian. His family root extends to France, Vietnam, China and the Caribbean. He has been in Senegal for six years and also oversees several regions within West Africa.

3. **Phoung Tran, Regional Communications Director, *World Vision*, East Asia Regional Office. Bangkok, Thailand.**

Ms. Tran grew up in the US as her parents were refugees from Vietnam who were assisted by World Vision 40years ago. Her work with World Vision has come full circle giving her the opportunity to re-connect with her roots and rich heritage (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

4. **Professor Alan Middleton, Executive Director, *Schulich Executive Education Center (SEEC)* & Assistant Professor of Marketing.**

The Schulich Executive Education Centre is a strategic business unit of the Schulich School of Business at York University. Its mission is to enable individuals to continue to develop their skills in the workplace and for organizations to build the business skills and leadership capacity they need for them to sustain and prosper (seec.schulich.yorku.ca, 2016). Professor Middleton has lived in seven different countries- the longest being Japan. He is originally from the UK and his research focuses on brands domestically and international.

5. **Prof. Edy Wong, Associate Dean, International, *Alberta School of Business*, Marketing, Business Economics, and Law.**

Dr. Edy Wong is a researcher and practitioner of international business. His business experience includes past and current corporate directorships in Hong Kong and China, and presidency of the Hong Kong - Canada Business Association (Edmonton) (www.ualberta.ca, 2016). He has over 20years experience in international business.

6. **Ken Strasma, Co-founder & CEO, *HaystaqDNA, Washington, DC.***

HaystaqDNA pioneered the predictive analytics that helped the Obama campaign make history. Their expertise is in applying big data to create opportunities and solve challenging problems. Mr. Strasma has nearly two decades of experience helping companies and campaigns accurately target their communication and marketing (haystaqdna.com, 2016).

7. **Michael Miles, Assistant professor, *Telfer School of Management, University of Ottawa.***

The Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa is serious about cultivating and maintaining partnerships with local and international business associations. Strategic alliances and affiliations with these groups offer students the support and connections required to strengthen and further their education process and career opportunities (telfer.uottawa.ca, 2016). Michael has lived in Thailand, Malaysia, and Romania. He has taught in China for the last 20yrs and has also recently taught in Paris.

8. **David O' Connor- People Development & Quality Director, *Common Purpose Organization, UK.***

Common Purpose was founded in the UK in 1989 and runs leadership development programmes that inspire and equip people to work across boundaries enabling them to solve complex problems in organizations and in society. The programs equip students with "Cultural Intelligence, an increasingly crucial leadership competency for this globalized, complex and interconnected world (Commonpurpose.org 2016). Mr. O'Connor has delivered programs for the organization in India, Shanghai (China), Montreal, and the Middle East.

9. **Participant A**, CEO, *Solar Energy Company*, Canada.

This is a social enterprise that makes energy available at the price of kerosene. They design, manufacture and distribute a solar pay-as-you-go “business in a box” kit for Tanzania (Company website, 2016).

Content Analysis

This research was anchored by reviewing content analysis of 21 articles from two business publications. Analysis involved reviewing articles on business expansions specifically targeting emerging markets. For Bloomberg Businessweek, articles were identified by scanning through the table of contents which has sections on Global economics, Companies and Industries, Markets and Finance, and Technology, searching for key words -strategic partnerships, cultural intelligence, culture, emerging markets, global outreach, localization or other cultural terminologies. In the same manner, Canadian Business Publication was also scanned for relevant articles on emerging markets.

Results and Discussion

The interviews with the executives and professors produced a robust volume of qualitative information, while the content analysis of 21 articles from two prominent business publications provided quantitative data. This section will begin with the in-depth interviews, followed by content analysis, and then proceed with a conclusion which makes comparisons and provides analysis to the themes within the literature review on Cultural Intelligence, strategic partnerships, emerging markets and communication protocols, in addition to the content analysis.

The responses to each question by the interviewees are provided below and followed by a

brief summary of three core themes: *Cultural awareness and business processes, Protocols and Channels for relationship building, and Keys for successful partnerships.*

In-depth Interviews

1. *What is your understanding of Cultural intelligence? Why is it a unique skill for today's "global" executive?*

All interviewees echoed the sentiment that cultural intelligence is about “working with people whose cultures are different from yours”, seeing things through other people’s lenses and knowing how things are done in a complex and competitive global work space. Some see it as an extension of social and emotional intelligence which helps in marketing, management, negotiations, and building “trust and understanding” in any relationship. David O’Connor whose organizational framework embodies CQ said,

Cultures can equally collide and sometimes can spark creative and new innovative ideas, and solutions to global challenges. CQ is the ability to cross divides across multiple cultures (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

Alan Middleton said people are a “blend of genetics, social cultural, and psychological” (personal communication, August 24, 2016). Glenn Tucker of Booster Juice said, “CQ is an added advantage to make adaptation easier” (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

However, Phoung Tran alluded to the fact that culture is a “complex facet to understand.” She said that CQ indicators in new recruits include, “having worked in developing countries, the global south or restricted context and in different time zones” (personal communication, August 18, 2016). Ken Strasma sees CQ as “understanding people and their culture from a “psychographical” context of issues beyond language (personal communication, October 11, 2016).

Moreover, some executives emphasized that you have to “understand your own culture” before trying to understand others. For Bruno Col, CQ “is the essence of being part of a greater world. Culture is framed by geography, gender, generations, and faith, and professionals should reflect cross-cultural knowledge and understanding” (personal communication, August 16, 2016).

Edy Wong noted emphatically that “Canadians pride themselves on being multicultural but they are not international and they tend to fail when they embark on business ventures” (personal communication, September 23, 2016). This calls for a review of the parallels of multiculturalism and what it means to have an international or global mindset. The responses echo what the literature says about cultural intelligence and its role in helping people work together and adapt abroad (Livermore, 2010).

2. *Can you share any cross cultural experiences within your organization or in your professional life? And why did your organization choose those ventures.*

All organizations represented have embarked on cross-cultural ventures either for lucrative business opportunities, to “broaden the business base” or for humanitarian reasons. For the Universities, it is an opportunity to extend the brand globally with an executive education model. Edy Wong cites “personal knowledge and initiatives” as reasons for ventures (personal communication, September 23, 2016). Glenn Tucker had a different parameter for overseas ventures:

Our international strategy at Booster Juice is to identify countries that have embraced Western brand values. We value each market based on our matrix factors that include population, GNP/GDP per capita, number of potential units

(stores), political stability, and our ability to develop a local supply line (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

All executives have had the opportunity to be immersed in a different culture for an extended period of time. They have “walked the talk!” Some of the countries include India, China, Senegal, Hong Kong, South Africa, Malaysia, Brazil, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, France, Tanzania, Poland, Hungary, UAE, and many others. Some organizations are present in about two to five countries while one has its presence in more than 100 and has over 45,000 staff globally.

Some of the interviewees have enjoyed the cultural experience. Some have been challenged, enlightened, and encourage others to go overseas with an open mind ready to question and learn. For some, it has helped to understand their own culture and to see others differently; to understand that all people want similar things but have different ways of reaching their goals and different business processes. This challenges the concept of cultural convergence and the notion that people and their tastes have become homogenous globally, as the literature argues.

3. Has your organization been involved in a business plan for expansion into an emerging market? Partnership or wholly owned subsidiaries.

Some of the interviewees have been actively involved in a small or big way in leading, supervising or overseeing an expansion into a new emerging market location. For the not-for – profit organization present in over 100 countries, they are driven by a passion to help the needy and also by their Christian faith. They work notably in West Africa and Asia amongst many others. Phuong Tran, who works for World Vision shed some more light by saying;

Emerging markets necessarily does not apply to our organization as we are trying to get away from the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) nations because they are “transitioning economies.” They are not the poorest of the poor. So we are refocusing. However, we are in China, Mongolia (although classified as middle income but it is lower income). We are more focused on the “pockets within emerging economies” that do have extreme poverty or are vulnerable to climate change effects, etc (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

For Glenn Tucker, Booster Juice is in a variety of markets:

Mexico and currently planning a re-entry into Brazil and India. Our expansion strategy is to identify a beachhead in the region and grow our brand.

The beachhead introduces masses to the Booster Juice brand helping the development of multiple units in the future across the region (personal communication, August 10, 2016)

Michael Miles noted that although they were squeezed out of China, they are in Hong Kong but Africa is a relatively untouched market and so it is a great opportunity because the University of Ottawa is a “unique” attraction for French speaking (Francophone) African countries” to expand into that region (personal communication, October 18, 2016).

David O’Connor said his organization has a hub in South Africa in addition to the UK, Germany, and Singapore. Alan Middleton said they have:

Strategic alliances and partners in China; Beihang university. Also in Malaysia;

Malaysian Institute of Technology. And in Brazil, with the biggest private university

there. We've had discussions in both South Africa and Nigeria but unfortunately nothing has come about yet" (personal communication, August 24, 2016).

For Ken Strasma, they have Africa on their radar in regards to political campaigns and they are entering the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) nations especially telecoms in India. But he notes that,

One of the interesting things for emerging markets is that they don't have much data to do the kind of work that we do. But now with cell phones, a lot of people have access to one even though they are relatively poor so it is much easier to reach consumers in countries like India (personal communication, October 11, 2016).

For Edy Wong, they are in Hong Kong, India, China, and Africa (Kenya). And he says, "The fact is that companies and universities expanding into a new region must have a strong product" (personal communication, September 23, 2016). This will inevitably distinguish your brand from various competitors and give staying power for sustaining the brand and partnership in the long haul. He also notes that universities are slow in decision making.

All responses reaffirm the trend mentioned in the literature and content analysis on the influx of multinationals, Non-governmental organizations and educational institutions to emerging markets to expand their brand and reach a new and diverse population. The participants are actively involved in the process and confirm and affirm the attraction to these markets because of their population, rising middle class and appetite for Western Values.

4. *What were the first steps taken by your organization to initiate local contacts? What were the communication protocols involved?*

All interviewees agreed that the first point or method of contact was indeed a crucial one. There was a diverse range of methods which reflected their organizational product and approach. They all emphasized the importance of “first impression” which sets the premise for a long term relationship built on trust.

The NGO executives have not been directly involved in a startup but understand the methodology especially as a grass root organization working with communities. Bruno Col was actually an “initial contact and this helped to build an initial strong understanding of how to work in the region and allowing the people to tell you their needs (personal communication, August 16, 2016).

Phoung Tran echoed the same saying, “We work through churches and faith leaders and obviously the government and our own staff in the communities and families.” She also noted the “layered and intricate” process of humanitarian work and the need to work with others like the UN (United Nations). “There is quite a high degree of coordination because we can’t go in as the lone actors with a “saviour’s complex” (personal communication August 18, 2016).

CEO of a Solar Energy company said, “We sought advice from people we knew and looked at different ways others were doing things, then we did it ourselves” (personal communication, August 2, 2016). Glenn Tucker said, “We use the Internet to selectively advertise and participate in international franchise shows in the UK and Brazil. In addition, word of mouth and using franchise brokers (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

For Ken Strasma, having a niche product restricts their method of contact. However, referrals and people reading some of their high profiled work like in the book “The victory Lap” about president Obama. Public speaking and being part of a panel were also key outlets. But he noted, “It is not direct marketing or advertising but we try to reach out, be visible, and talk about

the type of work that we do and that often generates contacts for potential customers (personal communication, October 11, 2016).

According to David O'Connor, tapping into their 50,000 strong alumni network to build and develop local contacts is significant. He adds that:

Typically, our first introduction is via *email*. Next there is an individual conversation via *Skype* with prospective speakers and then we put together a brief about the program and what we want them to speak on and what are some of the interesting questions to consider in developing a piece (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

The academics have a diverse range of paths to initiating contacts. Some were hinged on initial research, existing relationships and knowledge of the region. Edy Wong said:

I was the person responsible for the liaison functions between China and the university.

We had to work with the cultural habits of China; that means verbal communication and face to face meetings are important. Canadian ideas of using emails and Skype were ineffective (personal communication, September 23, 2016).

For Michael Miles, they put just one advertorial page in the newspaper about plans to establish an MBA program and asked if people would be interested. "We received application from 40 students .Once we had the students then we set up facilities to start the program. We rented a hotel and we ran the program from there" (personal communication, October 18, 2016).

For Alan Middleton it was more of a "bureaucratic and structural approach," working with business councils and consuls in Canada and in the new location; alumni networks, frequent visits, ethnic communities in Canada, contacting Canadian businesses based in those regions, the embassies and local consulates. Then they focused on getting two or three contracts and expanding from there.

That strategy worked very well. It's a matter of keep building off the contacts. Keep building slowly, going and speaking at events and conferences. Also you have to have that on the ground presence for network and because cultures evolve rapidly in developing economies...they leap frog" (personal communication, August 24, 2016). His approach is more like a "ground network design" which echoes what Glenford, CEO of IMAX cinemas said about developing strategic partners in China, it has to be done slowly but strategically which takes time (Mann, 2015).

And as a cautionary measure, Edy Wong said:

When you are talking about cross cultural communications sometimes your economic position matters. Are you in a strong position or in a weak one? This gives you the confidence and backing to even initiate a contact process in the new region (personal communication September 23, 2016).

This goes to show that initial approach is not a one size fits all. It could be a blend of many, a trial and error or even some that can be refined and fine-tuned over time. The whole idea is to get your foot in or knock on one or multiple doors. When and if it opens, then navigate your path.

5. *How do you organize your communications team (Internal and external) to manage a partnership? Any special skills (training, language or cultural backgrounds)?*

All participants agreed that "language" played a major role in entering a new location because building and maintaining a long term relationship had a "language dynamic." Issues of translation and interpretation could also pose challenges. However, they all hit on a crucial point of having strong local partners, language experts, and people from the community on staff that

understand the region, the cultural and social sensitivities and can help navigate through those complexities.

Alan Middleton said, “Make sure you have got people locally but also in your own office who speak the language so there is communication there, because language is a representation of a view point, it’s not just words” (personal communication, August 24, 2016). For his organization, in Brazil, Portuguese is the local language and in India although English is the official language there are still language issues when it comes to Hindi which is also largely spoken.

For Edy Wong, he prefers to do it alone:

The Chinese like to deal with just one person because when Canadians get involved, things fall apart! Canadians end up annoying everyone because they say, “yes we need to be accountable, do our due diligence- Canadian concepts that makes everyone angry. Canadians like to have things in writing, for the Chinese it is all verbal. After a few years of doing it with Canadians, I decided to work alone. Also, I have a Chinese background and I prefer to talk to them at night. No one else wants to work at night and when you do international business, the night is tough (personal communication, September 23, 2016).

While other academics leaned on bilingual accommodations, for Michael Miles, his organization emphasized that the MBA program being offered is an “English only” program. With faculty strength of 15, all based in Canada, they travel to Hong Kong to deliver lectures but also have local staff for administrative purposes (personal communication, October 18, 2016).

For the CEO of the Solar energy company, they used meetings and phone calls and don't really use social media" (personal communication, August 2, 2016).

For Glenn Tucker, it is about building a local network:

Hire local PR companies to re-enforce the messaging internationally in addition to having a strong corporate expertise. For Brazil, we hired a Brazilian who lived in Canada and his assistance was invaluable. He helped with site strategy, access strategy, market visits, and adapting the menu (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

For Ken Strasma, in addition to language skills, his company also dealt with time zone issues while working with a client in Malaysia and hired someone to sleep during the day and work at night on Malaysian time (personal communication, October 11, 2016). However, David O'Connor said:

Instead of the communications team, the "programs team" would manage all communications as they plan to enter a region and that depends on having a strong understanding of their products and portfolio and also contracting a local expert on the language to help out with projects (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

For the humanitarian organization, communications is much more complex, intricate, and robust. The process is larger than the communications team who constantly fight against being siloed. Phuong Tran said it might be the advocacy team or government relations team managing partnerships in the community,

It might be the national director of an office that handles the relationship building and politicking, and diplomacy. So communications comes in and supports those efforts but

might not be the one to broker or maintain or steward those relationships (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

Tran also noted that World Vision has a pool of 45,000 employees to “poach” from during emergency situations to help with communication issues like if a language expert is needed (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

Bruno Col who manages 13 people with eight different nationalities sums it up succinctly:

My role is to make sure that the communications team is not only informed about the global approach to communication but also make sure that they perform well, are skilled, and work closely with our partners. They understand how to communicate our work, make sure that they are strong cross-culturally and emotionally intelligent to be able to gather the best stories and resources coming from the communities (personal communication, August 16, 2016).

6. *Do you have a key spokesperson overseeing emerging market ventures?*

The choice of a spokesperson depends on the size of the organization, its unique product, language skills, and sensitivities associated with communication in that space. The strategy also depends on the extent of “international tentacles.” Some of them hire local PR firms. Some have CEOs in each region who are spokespersons. Some of the interviewees said that knowledge of the organization and region, and media training is important for spokespersons. They all emphasized “message consistency” as priority for spokespersons.

Most of the interviewees are spokespersons for their organizations. All participants had a role to play in representing, delivering and developing a consistent message. Glenn Tucker was quick and emphatic in pointing out that:

This is not a one man show! A strong vetting process is done by me and I along with our President and CEO Dale Wishewan help determine if the market is suitable for Booster Juice. We make prolonged market visits and help set up a supply line and do the competitive analysis. We train and educate potential franchisees on the requirements, format, standards, and the benefits of being a franchisee and help them understand the elements of rigidity in franchising and the fact that it is “a promise” that consumers will get the same experience. Consistency in customer experience is part of our brand identity (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

Ken Strasma who is the spokesperson but also trains staff said:

On message consistency, I brief the staff person ahead of time on what the subject of the interview, but because these are the same people who are doing the day to day work, they are very familiar and well positioned to answer the questions that might come up (personal communication, October 11, 2016).

David O'Connor said in addition to the CEO of each hub being the spokesperson:

We do internal training on our brand positioning and as part of our induction process for staff as well, we talk a lot about the key ways in which we communicate the vision and the values that we stand for. That is all embedded as part of our internal training and development (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

For the academics, Edy Wong gets some help with communication materials from his secretary because she speaks and writes Mandarin. He already mentioned that he prefers to go solo avoiding “Canadian interference” in communicating with partners.

For Michael Miles, they have a program coordinator who is the spokesperson managing all messaging and helps with administrative work. Alan Middleton is the spokesperson along with one of his deputies but his entire team has a “traveling culture” because of the diversity of staff.

For World Vision, the communications structure is hierarchical. Bruno Col who is a regional communications director said:

We have seven regions and each region has a leader who represents the organization.

Under these regional leaders, we have national leaders and then regional directors. I work closely with the regional leader who is the main spokesperson. I support the national leader for a particular issue, cultivate the communications and will guide with the narrative or information that they would like to convey to the media about the people to know how to approach it (personal communication August 16, 2016)

Phoung Tran had a more pragmatic take on the role of spokespersons as frontline staff might need to step up sometimes. She said, “Everyone has to have some sort of tools from the tool kit box of communications for emergency situations where we might not have a specialized communications person on staff” (personal communication, August 18, 2016). However, she also noted that “large or controversial issues with international relevance are managed by headquarters spokesperson” (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

7. Which communication channels are most effective to foster a mutual understanding?

All interviewees gave a resounding affirmation that “face-to face” meetings (in –person meetings) for a personal touch, was the best and most effective communication channel especially in emerging markets. One executive said to avoid scams and to check out information, in-person visits are mandatory. CEO of a Solar energy company did not mince words, he said, “Definitely face-to-face meetings and especially for contracts. These are all abstracts but things are also written down so that all partners understand their roles” (personal communication August 2, 2016). It is important to establish a two-way communication for decision making purposes and to ensure that all parties are carried along.

Despite the challenges of time and resources to travel, in person meetings help to build trust and understanding. However, people should be prepared for different business communication processes in different regions which are often hierarchical especially in China. The same applies to Africa and India. According to David O’Connor, his organization develops relationships and networks through “conversations” through a formal introduction via email, followed by Skype video calls, which is also an internal policy:

In the very early stages, the more face-to-face that you can do is ideal because that helps to build trust and mutual understanding. As you start to become more comfortable, you can do more email and phone conversations (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

Ken Strasma is concerned about the importance of “body language” which video calls cannot show. He said “the reason for that is amplified when you are dealing with people from a different culture” (personal communication, October 11, 2016).

Glenn Tucker uses Skype calls but also talked about entering a “remote” relationship and the need to be candid, open, and honest from the onset. He also said:

We make market visits both planned and unplanned. We use mystery shoppers in that market to help monitor customer experiences and quality. To build good communication and instill our brand expectations, the master franchisees come to Canada for a 3-weeks training and are encouraged to visit Canada once a year (personal communications August 10, 2016).

For Not-for-profit organizations, progress is hinged on “community conversations” which are definitely face to face meetings as they know and work closely with the national and community leaders. They also mentioned portal platforms, storytelling, and most importantly radio where they produce educational programs especially during the Ebola crisis, because radio is more accessible in West Africa and other emerging market regions. They also use local television. Bruno Col said, “We use all available communication tools to foster a mutual understanding in the region” (personal communication, August 16, 2016).

For Phuong Tran, “segmenting” the audience based on internet penetration in the region and “landscaping” the media for how people consume news is vital.

The people determine the medium based on access interests and knowledge, face-to-face house visits, town hall meetings, travelling photography exhibits, or music concerts (a diffusive way of communication). At the regional level where my audience is different-donors, prospective donors and partners, we use social media - facebook, Twitter and our website, to help people find us and to position our experts (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

For the academics, their perspective was more of blending communications channels; face-to face, phone, brochures, emails, chats, Skype, and conference or video calls depending on

the business culture or process in the region. There was a collective theme that some countries disliked communication by email.

Alan Middleton who enjoys storytelling cited his “old age” and prefers to go out for a drink after work. “The notion that you are not just dealing with a person in a role but you are getting to know them outside is so critical (personal communication August 24, 2016).

Michael Miles was told to “banquet frequently:”

Eat with people, spend time socially and get to know each other and talk about family and sports and all kinds of different things. To have a banquet, “you have to be there” particularly in China (personal communication, October 18, 2016).

As a former consultant with the CIDA(Canadian International Development Agency), Michael wrote a cross-cultural training manual for the organization that emphasized a mandatory three days mission program for anyone in a CIDA sponsored program or project before they went overseas (personal communication, October 18, 2016).

And finally, Edy Wong wraps it up in a cultural clash saying:

We have all these protocols, we have all these processes, plans and everything, and then you go to China! I tell my staff not to waste time doing anything but just go and get to know them first. Then you can talk about your planning after that. But Canadians think that the Chinese ask one question today and another tomorrow and that drives Canadians crazy! Why can't they collect all the questions and ask it as one? That is the difference in culture. In China, they like to see the person behind the product (personal communication, September 23, 2016).

8. *What are some of the reasons for failures and success of partnership ventures in emerging markets beyond economic factors? Could you mention some challenges and risks of cross cultural partnerships?*

This question captured the heart and soul of why organizations should or should not delve into emerging market partnerships. Why should they bother to become a global brand and how can they be prepared to survive in the unknown? The overarching theme of risks and challenges echoed “misunderstanding” of aims and objectives, and “motives” for the partnership. But participants agreed that it was a “worthy” adventure and a “cultural experience.” They also warn others thinking of doing the same to do their homework, study the market, be patient, and anticipate change.

All participants echoed the sentiment that constant communication is key to the success of any partnership and cross –cultural ventures adds a deepened level of interaction to ensure that all parties understand what they expect from each other.

Four of the participants emphasized the need to “understand your own culture before trying to understand other people.” Beware of your own biases. Nevertheless, the CEO of a solar energy company challenged organizations in his rousing question. He said, “*What do you actually do to add value to the lives of the people?*” He also said “in addition to losing your investments, all possible risks and challenges are there. But overall, it has been a wonderful venture, very good (personal communication, August 2, 2016). Ken Strasma, whose clients come based on referrals says:

The biggest risks are people overestimating what data is going to be able to do for them. I like to have an ongoing retainer relationship with the client so we can help them use the data rather than just delivering a

report. The key to success is managing expectations and over delivering. I would rather for them to be utterly surprised (personal communication, October 11, 2016).

Glenn Tucker whose brand aims and hopes to be like the Canadian global icon, *Tim Hortons*, said;

Some of our master franchisees underestimate the challenge of introducing smoothies to consumers which is an unknown commodity unlike chicken or pizza. Secondly, our product is not cheap. It is premium quality and selling it at an affordable price and sourcing for quality ingredients are some of the challenges (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

However, he embodies the entrepreneurial mindset and wraps it up by saying of all challenges both language and resources, “In business, no barrier is insurmountable!” (personal communication, August 10, 2016).

David O’Connor was keen to point out that organizations and partners could see or define success differently, “is it more on the financial or the working conditions, or the building or access and opening you up to new markets?”(personal communication, October 26, 2016).

Working in humanitarian situations poses its unique cultural sensitivities especially with the Ebola case in West Africa. Bruno Col said:

That is one of our failures: the Ebola response. Like many organizations we were very slow to respond. We were not medically prepared; we did not have doctors or nurses guiding us on how to manage the barriers. The reason for the outbreak was because West Africa is very sensitive to culture and how they bury their dead... people were getting

Ebola because of contact. We talked to the leaders and told them we are a faith based organization and we understand the need for them to honour their dead but they could do it differently...How *we can help you is to actually “compromise” your values* (personal communication, August 16, 2016).

Phoung Tran was concerned about trust. She said:

As a Christian organization working in restricted contexts, there might be lack of trust that can make relationship building fraught. If that trust is not established, we will have a hard time going into a community. It's like every relationship, if there is no trust, the bond is quite fragile. The challenge we face is dealing with preconceived notions, the fears, and the misunderstanding (personal communication, August 18, 2016).

For the academics it was not a “textbook approach” but a pragmatic “tell it as it is” because they have the opportunity to actually train global executives and can get into their head and find out what they really want, how they think, and how to make partnerships work.

Michael Miles said:

The personal creativity of the individual going overseas is key to success or failure of the partnership. Also having emotional intelligence; to understand other people in your guts to know that something is not quite right and to sit on that feeling and explore that with the other person and find a solution (personal communication, October 18, 2016).

For Edy Wong, his organization identified a good market and had a differentiated product. However, he noted:

The biggest challenge is culture because different economic and social circumstances require different approaches and processes, but also not understanding the market. People say India is growing at 10%, China is growing at 10%, let's go. Nigeria is growing at 8% or 9%, lots of opportunities, let's go, well it's good to take a look, but to go to Nigeria you need to do a lot more homework. They say, India and China are the big markets and send a delegation there and half of the time the delegation is useless. They go to parties and that is not how people find partners. On the other hand, maybe tradeshow are more important (personal communication, September 23, 2016).

Alan Middleton identified reasons for failure:

By observation, firstly, lack of enough research, not having a unique product and not having a different distribution channel. Secondly, impatience- expecting a quick return, and thirdly an expectation of too high a return. By personal experience, challenges came as a result of "constant change" especially when people got transferred, moved, retired after they had built relationships. Also errors in not anticipating change and product failure (personal communication, August 24, 2016).

Alan also cited people as a risk factor saying that:

The relationship might not work out or people are not suited for the roles or are they are not prepared to adjust culturally or otherwise in a new location despite their qualifications. Demands when you are doing business internationally is not always doing the job itself, not only getting on within your corporate culture, but getting on and

making that transition and the learning about another culture (personal communication, August 24, 2016).

All participants echoed that economic and political factors in the region has a profound effect on partnerships but these other factors mentioned also play a major role in ensuring that they sustain their quest for stamping their brand in emerging markets.

Content Analysis

The contexts in which the words - strategic partnerships, cultural intelligence, culture, emerging markets, global outreach and localization, were used and their relevance to the research is summarized in the tables below. The full coding of the content analysis and publication references are listed in *Appendix B*. The content analysis asked two key questions,

1. Why and which are some of the companies (industries) looking for opportunities in emerging markets?
2. What terms are used to describe their entry model, cultural awareness, communications or adaptation process?

(Please refer to the tables on the following pages.)

Table1. Canadian Business Publication (Summary of Content Analysis)

International Strategy Models	Observation	Expected results (by organization)
Strategic Partnerships , Acquisitions,	-Companies expanding into emerging markets are pursuing new growth opportunities as the North American market is “saturated.” They have a strong Western base but need to establish their brands abroad. -There is a strong pull towards partnerships in Asia, Russia, South America, and Africa.	-Open up to new populations, new ideas and innovation. -Catalyst for growth -Increase in income -Become a global leader and have a global recognition
	-Some are not prepared for the risks and challenges involved and learn as they make their decisions and open shop overseas. There is no mention of communications process.	-Although there are initial challenges and language barriers, serving new markets where there is and will continue to be a “growing need” is bound to increase global profits. -Optimistic views on global impact
Cultural Awareness	The companies mentioned identified key success in a choice of strategic local partners. -Local production through factories -Local investors -Local supply and distribution channels Local taste, preferences and family/social life styles.	-A global strategic collaboration -Cheaper and faster products -Ability to cater for more consumers -Opportunity to stretch and be creative in a new space

Table 2. Bloomberg Businessweek Publication (Summary of Content Analysis)

International Strategy	Observation	Expected results (by organization)
Partnerships , Acquisitions, stocks, ownership,	Asia-China in particular is the “oasis” for growth opportunities for most Western companies and Industries. -The “taste” and “thirst” for Western values in the Asian region is a huge attraction for foreign companies. The market is untapped	-Opportunity to capitalize on the rising income of the middle class and help to shape their Western values consumption. -Opportunity to diversify and create new products customized for the environment -Job creation and social responsibility to regions that are impoverished.
	-There is a realization that for an organization or company to be relevant and truly global, they have to make efforts now to enter emerging markets. –In addition to the local competitors, they also have global competitors all grappling for a market share. It is a “survival of the fittest.”	-Have a base and multiply success in one region to growth in multiple regions. -Added value for the company -Recruiting global talent -Making a difference and improving the quality of life and experience or entertainment available to people.
Cultural Awareness	-Although there is no mention of “cultural intelligence,” an underlining tone of product adaptation to help the company meet consumer expectations and experience is critical. -An ongoing discussion and local learning on what the national culture is and how to tailor products and services for the region.	-Opportunity for Western brands to foster an understanding and integration of indigenous tastes with their product offerings through innovation. -Opportunity for employees to become creative and source for local expertise - Growth acceleration -Opportunity to develop new ways of “communicating” products and ideas.

Conclusions

All human beings are fundamentally more alike than they might appear or act. Everyone wants to be heard and understood (Storm, 2009). It borders on the mode and manner of verbal and non-verbal communication. The stakes are even higher when there is a language barrier or a difference in ideologies. But the end result is that we all want, desire, and need good things and partnerships are a pursuit of those good things. Building strategic relationships is a path to fulfilling the desire for partnerships because communication is always the bridge to make such collaborations happen. Cultural Intelligence (CQ) equips executives with a new mental, emotional, social, and cultural skill to survive and thrive in a new territory.

The purpose of this research was to gain some insight on the communications protocols in emerging markets and how organizations navigating these ventures adapt their communications strategies in their new environment. The questions presented to the nine executives in this research focused on three core themes: *Cultural awareness and business processes, protocols and channels for relationship building, and keys for successful partnerships.*

Cultural awareness and business processes

The literature highlighted the need for global executives to develop Cultural Intelligence as a necessary skill for today's complex international work space. It is about coming together and knowing about another person's world. Business creates a unique opportunity and emerging markets have flung the doors open to those willing to overcome the barriers and make the efforts to reach out (Livermore 2010; Middleton, 2015; Khanna et al, 2005). There is the need to

engage with emerging markets and be immersed in it to explore new cultures and ways of doing things for innovative purposes. David O'Connor summed it up succinctly:

When you have CQ, it goes beyond the pleasantries of partnership and goes more into the depth and ingrain detail of why organizations might come together or why people might come together or whatever it might be (personal communication, October 26, 2016)

Protocols and channels for relationship building

According to Solomon and Schell (2009):

Communication style is the confluence of several cultural values and reflects elements of hierarchical beliefs in society through body language and level of politeness, Importance of relationships in word choice and tactful language and Attitudes towards saving face and avoiding conflicts by the emotions (or lack of emotion) of the message (p.142).

All interview participants acknowledged that face-to-face communication was the preferred and most effective method to build trust and to truly understand, see, hear, feel, and be part of the emotions of their partners. Other channels were add-ons that re-enforced the first impression and contact.

For a long lasting and sustainable cross-cultural partnership, both parties must be aware of their differences, see areas where they can flex and try to merge or adjust their pace of doing things. Westerners like documents and due process, but this might clash with often laid back culture and relationship brokers in emerging markets.

Keys for successful partnerships

There are great success stories of multinationals finding the ideal marriage within emerging market regions. Some have thrived there for decades, have grown and blended into the national culture. Some new entrants are thriving and some are frantically looking for their niche

as the North American market is saturated. Imagine what the future would look like for Facebook if they can get into the Chinese market.

Nevertheless, with the prospects of growth and profits, also comes challenges and of course barriers to entry. But Glenn Tucker believes that companies must “innovate or stagnate” and despite his rigid method of master franchising and difficulties in finding the right business environment, partnerships presents that unique opportunity to innovate (personal communication, August 10, 2016). According to Soko (2016), Lessons on doing business in emerging markets such as in Nigeria include:

The importance of carrying out detailed market research, undertaking thorough due diligence, executing the right market strategy, choosing the correct acquisition target and finding a suitable local partner. The list of critical things to focus on to mitigate risk also includes building relations and managing stakeholder relations, learning from peers’ coping strategies, being flexible and open-minded (p.2).

This undoubtedly echoes the challenges and warnings mentioned by interview participants who have explored China, India, Brazil, Malaysia, Russia, Kenya, and many others. David said, “Organizations should be aware that the way that you work might not necessarily marry with the way in which organizations in different international contexts might approach issues” (personal communication, October 26, 2016).

In addition, Alan Middleton said:

It is amazing how naive companies are when they try to enter the US. It gets even worse when you go into China or Indian markets where you have to get to know it and find your way around which takes a degree of patience (personal communication, August 24).

Overall, all interview participants re-enforced the definitions of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) posited by Livermore (2010) as a skill which is acquired by executives who have travelled widely and have had the opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. In their personal and professional experiences, the experts confirmed what the literature said about strategic partnerships with local businesses and leaders within the community. This was also strongly echoed by the content analysis which showed that a strong point for a successful partnership is having local partners who understand the language, can navigate through the sensitivities of culture and can help to customize products and services to reach the target market or audience.

However, participants had differing views on strategic communications and how it really plays out in ventures abroad. They highlighted the fact that in cross-cultural business processes, cultural interactions differ and that might not necessarily allow for orchestrating and planning ahead. Instead, relationships and networks could be unplanned, happen through other webs of interactions, and happen during banqueting time with people in informal settings. Experts also mentioned the need for organizations to anticipate change which most Western organizations are not prepared for and do not diligently do their homework on a continuous basis.

Communities or stakeholders often decide what channels of communication works for them based on the level of technology accessible to the region as the NGO's realized. This also echoes the sentiment mentioned in the literature about protocols in terms of how messages are received and sent back to individuals involved in a partnership. It echoes the need for two-way symmetrical communication which allows for feedback and interaction with stakeholders.

Moreover, the literature focused on the importance of international exposure and interactions but the experts mentioned that despite these, people can be mismatched for their role if they have no drive or ambition to embrace the partnership opportunity and make it work. Academic qualification is not a guarantee for an executive to succeed abroad. The experts mentioned personal creativity of executives and understanding of their own culture before embarking on overseas ventures. The experts confirm the argument that cultural knowledge and cross-cultural skills are important.

In Forbes.com (2015) it was noted that, “CQ is a system consisting of three interactive components – cultural knowledge, cross-cultural skills and cultural metacognition” (para.1). This means knowing, thinking, and adjusting thoughts as opportunities and interactions present themselves in strategic partnerships. This emphasizes and knits together the recurring theme that Cultural Intelligence is a skill that requires learning like every other new skill and global executives must embrace the concept, constantly have it on their mind during international expansions and be prepared to learn and apply it more frequently. They must have a global mindset but not necessarily be a global citizen.

Limitations

Recruiting executives to participate in the research was quite a challenge initially. The researcher reached out to 40 global organizations and business professors to recruit participants. Eventually nine participants were recruited for this research and it is a small sample which does not represent the diverse business partnerships that exist globally. If more time and money were available, the researcher could have travelled and been immersed in a new culture to interview

more people, experience different cultures as an observer and key to developing cultural intelligence.

The researcher originally proposed to focus on West Africa (Nigeria) as a key emerging market but was unable to get a response from organizations with expansions in the region after multiple efforts by cold calling and by email. Even when such partnerships were identified in Nigeria and the executives contacted, they declined to participate. The researcher worked with organizations in Canada, the US and the UK with partnerships in other emerging markets regions (China, India, Brazil, Mexico, Malaysia,) but also with future or current interests in other parts of Africa like Kenya, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Tanzania.

Future study

Further research on this topic will provide an opportunity for communications professionals to continue to study the convergence of communication and culture and how it can be leveraged to strengthen the role of public relations practitioners. Cultural Intelligence opens the window for communications executives to explore new opportunities in improving and expanding their global portfolio. Becoming an internal communications training expert on CQ, especially for organizations with cross –cultural ventures overseas and integrating that into Human Resources and Communications is also a path for the profession. In the light of this study, the following areas could be explored,

A case study model where one organization is studied over a period of time would be ideal to allow the researcher see how an organization can monitor, manage and measure cultural intelligence and its impact on partnerships. Communications programs in universities in Western institutions should have CQ as part of the curriculum. It is not enough to be multicultural as

communication professionals, international exposure is also important to give the profession an informed global voice. Cross-cultural issues especially during negotiations in emerging markets should be highlighted by simulating scenarios and critical analysis of how and why organizations react and communicate based on their environment and cultural mindset.

Lastly, the possibility of integrating CQ measurement into existing tools for marketing, branding and reputation management could be explored. Cultural intelligence overlaps and is deeply embedded in a lot of existing communication parameters but needs to be brought to the forefront as it adds a unique voice to communications professionals which can get them to the table when making international decisions. Communicators should also be at the innovation table to help organizations shape their products and services based on the input from communicators who have a global mindset garnered from local interactions in new markets.

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Appendix A

Tips for strategic partnerships in emerging markets

1. Communication 101:

- *Educate yourself:* Study the market and your industry. Read books, watch, listen and try to learn about the cultural trends in your country of interest. Travel and be immersed in the culture. Meet with emerging market ethnic communities at home and get information.
- Do your Homework by getting in touch with business councils in your home country and establish networks with companies or organizations already doing business in your emerging country of interest. Get contacts for important and key authorities in the region to expedient necessary documents if necessary.
- Research on political power in industries in the region to understand the decision making process. How is management structured? Is it hierarchical (decision is made from the top) or egalitarian? This will affect your communication channels.
- Research on Internet penetration in the region to avoid wasting resources on websites and social media. What media platforms are predominant in the region? Newspapers, radio, cell phone SMS (Texts), chats etc.

2. Feed your curiosity

- Ask questions. Do not follow the band wagon or latest statistics on growth in emerging markets.
- Do you have a strong product? Prepare for global and local competition.
- Attend tradeshow.

3. Travel

- Observe the culture: Track the communication trends and national tastes and cravings.
- Plan multiple visits and attend tradeshow to find potential partners. What are the special dates and holidays in the region?
- Banquet and educate your taste buds because this could help to close business deals.

4. Language and Manners

- Learn or leverage the skills of a local talent or an international with local language skills.
- Train your staff to be patient, be emotionally intelligent and persevere to adapt and relate with the locals. Be prepared to flex and adapt.
- Learn how to address people, how to respectfully introduce your business card and perception of time in the region.

5. What's in your wallet?

- Be prepared to spend money, so have a strong financial capital base.
- Does your organization have the human capital, stamina, and time to invest in the venture for the long haul?

Appendix B (Content Analysis)
Canadian Business Publication

Industry and companies mentioned		Keywords in article (Some are obvious or have an implied undertone)	Emerging market regions mentioned	Section in Magazine
1.	<i>Saputo's Global Reach</i> (Diary) by Sissi Wang	Emerging markets, global outreach,	Brazil, China	Special report: Investor 500 Issue 7/8, Volume, 88, Summer 2015, p.32
2.	<i>How to sell to China</i> (tips from various CEOs). Exports(Trade)	Culture, local agent(partner),	China, emerging Asia,	Profit (Crowdsourced) February 2015.p.12, Volume 88,Issue 2
3.	<i>How to relocate for 2015.</i> Investments/finance	Emerging markets	China	Invest: Trends and Strategies. February 2015.p.12, Volume 88, Issue 2. p.65 & 66
4.	<i>Suit Up - Indochino</i> (Fashion) by Murad Hemmadi.	Emerging markets, production and distribution partnerships, strategic investor,	China(Shanghai)	Special report: April 2016. Volume 89, Issue 4. P.46
5.	<i>What Tims learned from the king</i> by James Cowan Burger King and Tim Hortons.	Foreign Markets/ownership, Partners,	Brazil, India	Editor's Letter April 2016. Volume 89, Issue 5. p.4
6.	<i>Against the Stream Stingray Digital</i> by Joe Castaldo (Digital Music)	Global growth	Asia, Africa (Namibia)	Features. March 2016. Volume 89, Issue 3. P.52
7.	<i>The free-trade backlash</i> (Comment by Kevin Carichael)	Global commerce, emerging markets,	India (Mumbai),emerging Asian countries, Vietnam,	Comment June 2016, Volume 89, Issue 6.p.18

Bloomberg Businessweek Publication

Industry and companies mentioned		Keywords in article	Emerging markets regions mentioned	Section in Magazine
1.	<i>Lunch is a tasty perk at Shenzhen's factory by Shai Oster. (Nourish –Emerson Electric, Foxconn Technology, Black and Decker). Food Technology.</i>	Culture, locals, taste	China	Companies & Industries. Workplace. November 16-22, 2015. P.23
2.	<i>Charlie Rose talks to Italian coffee impresario Andrea Illy</i>	Culture	Brazil, Ethiopia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Tanzania,	Companies & Industries. Workplace. November 16-22, 2015. p.25
3.	<i>The gold rush in India's silicon Valley by Anto Anthony & George Smith Alexander. Technology and investment firms</i>	Investment opportunities	India	Markets/Finance May 18-24, 2015, p. 41& 42
4.	<i>The NBA's Hoop Dream: World Domination. Sports</i>	Commercial partners	China, South Korea, The Phillipines, South Africa, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Latin America.	Companies & Industries. February 23 - March 1. 2015. p.22
5.	<i>Pizza Hut wants to roll its dough in Africa. By Janice Kew & Chris Spillane Restaurants</i>	Emerging markets, Local culture/taste global pedigree,	China, Africa -South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana.	Companies & Industries. Workplace. February 23 rd - March 1. 2015. p.44
6.	<i>Bob Diamond hunts for African Deposits –Stefania Bianchi & Paul Wallace Banking</i>	Acquisitions	China, Sub-Saharan Africa –Uganda, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Ghana	Markets & Finance. September 28 – October 4 th 2015.p.41 & 42
7.	<i>China's New Silk Road Dream by Michael Schuman</i>	Emerging economies, developing countries, strategic and economic interests	China	Opening remarks. November 30- December 6 2015. P.14-15.

Industry and companies mentioned (con't)		Keywords in article	Emerging markets regions mentioned	Section in Magazine
8.	<i>Rethinking Disneyland for the Chinese Family</i> by Christopher Palmeri & Gregory Turk.	Chinese Culture, Partnership, language, Customized for China	China- Shanghai, Beijing,	Companies and Industries. July 13-19, 2015.p.18-19.
9.	<i>The middle Kingdom wants its own Magic</i> by Rachel Chang & Emma Dong. -Entertainment (Theme parks)	Chinese culture, indigenous culture, local players	China	Companies & Industries. June 6-12, 2016.p.15 &16.
10.	The people's republic of Wechat by Dune Lawrence & Lulu Chen	Expatriates, Language, etiquette	China	Global Technology June 13-26, 2016. p.64-66
11.	Disney's Cultural Revolution by Bloomberg News. -Entertainment (theme parks)	Partnering, language training,, competition	China	Companies & Industries. May 30-June6, 2016. P.22-24.
12.	<i>The Middle Kingdom wants Its own Magic</i> by Rachel Chang & Emma Dong - Entertainment (theme parks) Disney, DreamWorks, Six Flags	Local conditions, indigenous Culture, local players	China	Companies & Industries. June6-12, 2016. P.15 &16
13.	<i>This Owl won't Save American jobs</i> by Shannon Pettypiece -Wal-Mart		China,	Global Economics, July 25-31, 2016.p.14-15
14.	<i>China's Tiny Stocks Trade like Giants</i> by Bloomberg News.	Emerging markets	China	Markets & Finance. Emerging markets. July 4-10,2016.p.31,32