

# Managing Public Relationships via Corporate Blogs

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This research explored the organization's public relationship management practices in corporate blogs on the web. Content analyses of corporate blogs of large Korean firms over two years in a longitudinal design revealed that relationship management strategies of openness, positivity and sharing of tasks were featured relatively strongly, whereas networking, access, and assurances were enacted relatively weakly. Further, most Korean corporate blogs utilized a tightly controlled top-down strategy. In addition, the use level of relationship management strategy was tied to the kind of corporate blogging strategies, but not to the industry type of the firms. Although utilized the same social media device, corporate blogs enacted different purposes and relational management activities in different countries, indicating that corporate blogs are largely cultural and driven locally.

*Keywords:* public relationship management, corporate blogs, corporate blogging strategies

## Introduction

Corporate blogs are a relatively recent online form of social media that public relations scholars and practitioners have begun to investigate as a potential tool to manage organization-public relationships. Research, for example, explored corporate blogs in crisis contexts (Sweester & Metzgar, 2007), content, structure, usability, and interactivity of the blogs (Xifra & Huertas, 2008), ethics (Smudde, 2005), power relations inside organizations (Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007), blog content and designs in public sectors (Lee, Park, & Hwang, 2008), and credibility, acceptance, and use (Wu, Kao, & Lin, 2013).

The primary rationale of corporate blogs for public relations practitioners is that they are a vital communication mechanism through which relationships with concerned publics are built and maintained. Corporate blogs can facilitate two-way communication and serve both mass and interpersonal communication (Marken, 2005). They function as a channel for an organization to directly and openly communicate with its various publics or stakeholders with the flexibility of being personal and distanced (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). They are also a valuable tool to monitor and analyze the market and measure the opinions and engagement of their audiences/consumers regarding their business, product, service or brand (Ahuja & Medury, 2010). Internally, corporate blogs can become a sustainable forum in which employees can share their organizational roles, improve work processes, increase the sense of group cohesiveness, and enhance personal ties (Baehr & Alex-Brown, 2010). Thus, corporate blogs can be an indispensable venue through which organizations can manage (build and maintain) internal and external relationships with various key publics. Yet, with an exception of Cho and Huh's (2010) pioneering research, little is known about corporate blogs from relationship management theory point of view.

Relationship management is the defining issue to public relations. Ferguson (1984), for example, argued that the relationship between an organization and its key publics should be the primary focus for public relations scholarship, which subsequently led to “a relationship paradigm for public relations theory and practice” since 1980s (Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2004, p. 14). Ehling, White, and Grunig (1992) also contended that building and nurturing relationships with various publics are the essential function of public relations. Similarly others emphasized that public relations should focus on establishing and sustaining relationships with publics (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2006; Kelleher, 2009). Thus, this study explored relational management aspects of corporate blogs.

In addition, this study examined kinds of corporate strategies used in blogs. Lee and his colleagues (S. M. Lee, Hwang, & H. Lee, 2006; Lee et al., 2008) indicated that corporate blogging strategies can impact the purpose of the blog system, type of content, access to posting, and overall level of control. Thus, this study explored the extent to which blogging strategies may influence relational management aspect of corporate blogs.

Furthermore, this study extended corporate blogging strategies and relationship management to Korean contexts. Corporate blogs are gaining the popularity among Korean companies as potential tools to communicate with customers, particularly using them as marketing and promotion platforms (Jeon, Yoon, & Kim, 2008; Murray, 2007).

Corporate blogs emerged as a viable communication tool for public relations practitioners (Marken, 2005; Smudde, 2005). Especially, due to its unique characteristic as both interpersonal and mass media, a corporate blog is considered to have the great potential for contributing to relationship management (Cho & Huh, 2010; Kelleher & Miller, 2006). However, little research investigated the potential and actual utilization of corporate blogs for corporate communication in general and relationship management in particular. Much is unknown about operational characteristics and design features of corporate blogs, their impacts on organization-public relationships, cultural differences, etc. In an attempt to theorize and answer some of these questions, this study posed four research questions (RQs) within the relationship management framework and corporate blogging strategies of large Korean companies.

RQ 1: To what extent are relationship management strategies designed into corporate blogs?

RQ 2: What kinds of corporate blogging strategy are used?

RQ 3: To what extent does corporate blogging strategy relate to relationship management strategy?

RQ 4: To what extent are corporate blogs cultural?

## **Method**

### **Procedure and Sampling**

Following earlier studies (Cho & Huh, 2010; Ki & Hon, 2006; Lee et al., 2006), we conducted the content analysis of Korean corporate blogs at two points in time, 2008 and 2010 to answer the research questions. First, a corporate blog was empirically defined as a web page that displays reverse dated entries and is explicitly endorsed by a company and maintained by an individual or a group/team of individuals affiliated with the company (Sifry, 2004). Then, to sample large Korean corporations, this study used “Korea 500 Companies” by Hankyung Business and Korea Information Service similar to “Fortune 500 Companies” for 2008 and 2010. To identify companies that actually operate corporate blogs, researchers searched for the key word “each name” of Korean 500 companies, using Korean multiple and special blog search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Empas, Naver, Daum, Naaroo, Technorati, Cyworld and Blogkorea. This procedure identified 30 and 33 firms for 2008

and 2010, respectively. This sample size is quite larger than or comparable to those of previous studies (e.g., 31 to 59 blogs from Fortune 500 in Cho & Huh, 2007, 2010; 18 to 28 blogs from Fortune 500 in Lee's and his colleagues, 2006; 2008).

### Operationalizations and Coding

Once identified, in general, the home page of a corporate blog and hyperlinked pages within two clicks were content-analyzed. If necessary, however, additional pages were examined to identify certain features "buried deep" (e.g., corporate policies on confidentiality).

**Relationship management strategies.** Following earlier studies (Cho & Huh, 2007, 2010; Ki & Hon, 2006), *access* was observed by the presence of contact information such as physical address, telephone number, and email address of a corporation in its blog. *Positivity* was measured by the number of different user-friendly navigation tools (i.e., RSS, hyperlink within posts, search, archive, categories, and calendar) and the presence of multi-media features (i.e., podcast, video, audio, and animation). *Openness* was operationalized by the presence of various two-way communication features, including comment and trackback functions. *Networking* was gauged by the presence of blogroll which is a list of links to other blogs and the number of links on the blogroll. *Assurances* was observed by the presence of various blog policy statements (i.e., privacy policy, disclaimer, or copyright). *Sharing of tasks* was measured by the frequency of postings in blogs (see Table 1).

*Corporate blogging strategies* were documented by the same manner as Lee et al. (2006). Company-wide strategy was determined by whether or not blog operators allow every member of an organization to contribute or participate in corporate blogging among company-owned domains. Top management strategy was coded if blog operators are only the highest-ranking executives. Individual strategy was identified if blogs are used for thought leadership and are usually established for high ranking or other select individual use. Group strategy was counted when blog operators are established for select group or team purposes. Lastly, promotion strategy was observed by the extent to which it promotes the company's products and services.

Two trained independent coders analyzed the content of the page(s) within 2 clicks in each corporate blog for both years, 2008 and 2010. The two coders were fluent in both English and Korean. After a pre-test with a few blogs of large American corporations, each coder evaluated each of the blogs to identify each relationship management strategy and corporate blogging strategy, using a systematic coding sheet and a coding guideline. Two coders coded all blogs and items independently for 2008 data. For 2010 data, one researcher coded all pages/blogs and another researcher randomly chose and coded 25% of the sample ( $n = 9$ ) to ensure the reliability of coding. When there was a disagreement, two coders discussed and resolved the disagreement. The average Cohen's Kappa inter-coder reliability score was about 0.94 with the scores varying from 0.70 to 1.00 for both years. This level of Cohen's Kappa indicated an acceptable to high level of inter-coder reliability on the whole.

## Results

*RQ 1* asked about the extent to which Korean corporate blogs enact each of the relationship management strategies. The "access" strategy (e.g., physical address, email address, and telephone numbers) was not extensively designed into corporate blogs for both 2008 and 2010. Overall, the strategy of *positivity* (e.g., navigational multimedia presence) was well represented for both years. *Openness* (e.g., comments and trackback functions) were widely available for both years. The opportunity for *networking* (e.g., blogroll function) was less implemented over time, 66.7% in 2008 vs. 33.3% in 2010. *Assurances* (e.g., policy

statements for privacy, copyright, ethics) was observed substantially more in 2010 (i.e., about 36%) than 2008 (i.e., about 13%). There was little change in the implementation of *sharing of tasks* (e.g., blog postings) over time.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentage of Blog Features for Relationship Management Strategies*

Relationship Management Strategies and Blog Features	<i>F</i>		%	
	2008 ( <i>N</i> = 30)	2010 ( <i>N</i> = 33)	2008	2010
<b>Access</b>				
-Physical address	-	1	-	3.0
-Email address	12	17	40	51.5
-Telephone number	4	6	13.3	18.2
-Telephone number linked to own company site	-	20	-	60.6
<b>Positivity</b>				
-RSS	21	31	70	93.9
-Monthly Archive	9	10	30	30.3
-Hypertext within posts	26	31	86.7	93.9
-Site search	24	32	80	97.0
-Category	29	31	96.7	93.9
-Calendar	10	9	33.3	27.3
-Contents tags	23	31	76.7	93.9
-Podcast	-	4	-	12.1
-Video and / or audio clip	15	11	50	33.3
-Animation	11	1	36.7	3.0
<b>Openness</b>				
-No of comment	28	33	93.3	100
-No of trackback	26	21	86.7	63.6
<b>Networking</b>				
-No of links on blogroll within the corporation	20	11	66.7	33.3
-No of links on blogroll outside the corporation	-	-	-	-
<b>Assurances</b>				
-Policy statement for the blog/website	4	13	13.3	39.4
-Copyright policy	4	13	13.3	39.4
-Disclaimer or no guarantee	-	12	-	36.4
-Collection of personal information	-	11	-	33.3
-Code of ethics	-	2	-	6.1
<b>Sharing of tasks (Frequency of postings)</b>				
-More than twice a day	5	4	16.7	12.1
-Approximately once a day	8	8	26.7	24.2
-2-3 times a week	5	11	16.7	33.3
-Approximately once a week	6	3	20.0	9.1
-2-3 times a month	5	3	16.7	9.1
-Approximately once a month	1	3	3.3	9.1
-More than one month between posts	-	1	-	3.0

The implementation of the strategies to corporate blogs was further determined into 3 levels across time: high (2), medium (1), and low (0) based on the combination of design features in each of the strategies (see Cho & Huh, 2010 for the specific procedure). Results of the multivariate one-way test (Hotelling's  $T^2$ ) indicated that there was an overall significant difference between 2008 and 2010 when considering all strategies together, Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.70$ , Multivariate  $F(6, 56) = 4.07$ ,  $p < 0.002$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.30$ . Post-hoc univariate F-tests indicated there were significant differences between the two years (2008 vs. 2010) for two strategies: networking,  $F(1, 61) = 9.02$ ,  $p < 0.005$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.13$  and assurances,  $F(1, 61) = 6.00$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.09$ . An inspection of mean scores indicated that networking opportunities were significantly higher in 2008 ( $M = 0.97$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) than in 2010 blogs ( $M = 0.39$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ). On the other hand, assurances measures were significantly less in 2008 ( $M = 0.27$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) than in 2010 blogs ( $M = 0.79$ ,  $SD = 0.96$ ) (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Number of Corporate Blogs for Relationship Management Strategies Across Time*

Year	2008 ( $N = 30$ )		2010 ( $N = 33$ )		Total ( $N = 63$ )	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Access	0.53	0.73	0.70	0.77	0.62	0.75
Positivity	0.87	0.82	0.97	0.92	0.92	0.87
Openness	1.80	0.55	1.64	0.49	1.71	0.52
Networking*	0.97	0.89	0.39	0.61	0.67	0.80
Assurances*	0.27	0.69	0.79	0.96	0.54	0.88
Sharing of tasks	1.23	0.77	1.15	0.76	1.19	0.76

Note. \*  $p < 0.05$ .

RQ 2 asked about kinds of corporate blogging strategies utilized over time. Results indicated that Korean companies tend to use primarily 3 styles: individual, group, and promotion. In 2008, 11 companies used individual (36.7%), 6 companies group (20%), 11 companies promotion strategy (36.7%), respectively. Two companies used company wide strategy (6.7%). In 2010, 2 companies used individual (6.1%), 24 companies group (72.7%), 7 companies promotion strategy (21.2%), respectively. No company-wide strategy was observed. For both 2008 and 2010, no company used the top management strategy. Results of a Chi-square test revealed a significant substantial dependent association between blogging strategy and year,  $\chi = 19.82$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . On the whole, companies tended to shift the blogging strategy from individual and promotion in 2008 to group/team in 2010.

RQ 3 explored the linkage between blogging strategies and relationship management strategies. With relationship management strategies recoded into 3 levels of implementation (high, medium, and low) and blogging strategies into 3 types (individual, group, and promotion), an one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the corporate blogging strategy on the relationship management strategies. Results suggested a significant effect of the type of blogging strategies on the implementation of the relationship management strategies, Wilks'  $\lambda = 0.58$ , Multivariate  $F(12, 106) = 2.80$ ,  $p < 0.005$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.24$ . Results of the univariate ANOVAs showed that the type of blogging strategies significantly differs for two strategies: access,  $F(2, 58) = 7.84$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.21$  and networking,  $F(2, 58) = 7.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.20$ . There was a marginal significance for the strategy of assurances,  $F(2, 58) = 1.74$ ,  $p < 0.10$ , partial  $\eta^2 =$

0.07. Results of post-hoc Tukey's HSD further indicated that group blogs were significantly *higher* in their implementation levels of *access* than individual and promotion blogs. There was no difference between individual and promotion blogs. Similarly, group blogs tend to show *higher* implementation levels of *assurances* than individual and promotion blogs. On the other hand, companies with group blogging strategy enacted significantly *lower* levels of *networking* strategy than their counterparts with individual and promotion strategies (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Relationship Management Strategies Across Three Primary Blogging Strategies*

Blogging strategies	Individual (n = 13)		Group (n = 30)		Promotion (n = 18)		Total (n = 61)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Access*	0.23	0.44	0.93	0.83	0.28	0.46	0.59	0.74
Positivity	0.92	0.86	90	0.92	1.00	0.84	0.93	0.87
Openness	1.85	0.38	1.67	0.55	1.67	0.59	1.70	0.53
Networking*	1.23	0.83	0.33	0.61	0.83	0.86	0.67	0.81
Assurances <sup>a</sup>	0.31	0.75	0.80	1.00	0.33	0.89	0.56	0.89
Sharing tasks	1.46	0.66	1.20	0.76	1.06	0.80	1.21	0.76

Notes. \*  $p < 0.001$ ; <sup>a</sup>  $p < 0.10$ .

RQ 4 asked about cultural influence on corporate blogs. To answer this question, we used data from the current study and reports in Cho and Huh (2007, 2010), Lee et al. (2006) and Jeon et al (2008) concerning the implementations of relationship management strategies and corporate blogging strategies. All studies followed the same measures to observe the implementation of the relationship management strategies and blogging strategies (see Tables 4 and 5). First, there were three significant differences in implementation of relationship maintenance strategies between Korean and American blogs: openness,  $t(90) = 4.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; networking,  $t(90) = -3.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and assurances,  $t(62) = -2.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Second, a frequency inspection in the use of blogging strategies indicated that American firms tend to employ Top management, Group, and Promotion strategies, whereas Korean counterparts appear to utilize Group and Promotion strategies. This pattern, as a whole, is suggestive that corporate blogs are largely cultural.

Table 4

*Means and Standard Deviations of Relationship Management Strategies Across Studies*

	Current study (2008) <sup>a</sup> N = 30	Current study (2010) <sup>a</sup> N = 33	Cho & Huh (2006) <sup>a</sup> N = 31	Cho & Huh (2008) <sup>a</sup> N = 59
Positivity <sup>b</sup>	0.87 (0.82)	0.97 (0.92)	1.13 (0.67)	1.05 (0.68)
Openness***	1.80 (0.55)	1.64 (0.49)	1.13 (0.73)	1.12 (0.61)
Sharing tasks	1.23 (0.77)	1.15 (0.76)	1.10 (0.61)	1.15 (0.74)
Networking***	0.97 (0.89)	0.39 (0.61)	1.06 (0.68)	0.94 (0.82)
Assurances*	0.27 (0.69)	0.79 (0.96)	1.25 (0.73)	n/a
Access	0.53 (0.73)	0.70 (0.77)	n/a	n/a

Notes. <sup>a</sup> The year in the parenthesis is the date of data collection. The mean value is on a 3-point scale with 0 = low, 1 = medium, and 2 = high. <sup>b</sup> All t-tests were conducted using the most recent data available (Mean, Standard deviation, and N). The t-test for the assurances strategy used Cho and Huh's 2006 data. \*  $p > 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p > 0.001$ .

Table 5

*Frequencies of Corporate Blogging Strategies Across Studies*

	Nationality and No. of Companies	Company-wide	Top man't	Individual	Group	Promotion
Current study (2008)	Korea (30)	2	0	11	6	11
Current study (2010)	Korea (33)	0	0	2	24	7
Lee et al. (2006)	USA (18)	2	5	2	4	5
Jeon et al. (2008)	USA (23)	2	6	2	6	7
Jeon et al. (2008)	Korea (17)	0	0	1	1	15

**Discussion**

Successful relationship management is paramount to public relations (Ferguson, 1984; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Heath, 2001). Corporate blogs are one form of social media to which critical internal and external stakeholders gravitate and, thus, can serve as a vital venue through which organizations can develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their strategic as wells ambient publics. To explore such potential role of corporate blogs, this study at two points in time examined several characteristics of corporate blogs in Korean settings and explored cultural implications.

**Relationship Management Strategies**

What Korean firms do in their corporate blogs reflect web design features of all relationship management strategies. However, a few strategies are more frequently designed into their blogs than others. Openness (1.71 on a scale of 0.0 = low, 1.0 = moderate, and 2.0 = high) was most highly used, followed by sharing tasks (1.19), positivity (0.92), networking (0.69), access (0.62), and assurances (0.54). Features that facilitate an interaction, ease of navigation, sense of enjoyment, and sharing thoughts and tasks are well reflected in their corporate blogs (i.e., openness, sharing of tasks, and positivity). From the relationship management theory point of view, this pattern hints that Korean firms focus on building a blog site that an experience of visit is easy, pleasant, and enjoyable, which is likely to help build and sustain relationships with all the visiting publics. The “emotional” desire to forge and maintain perhaps mutually beneficial relationships with publics is apparent in their corporate blogs. At the same time, snubbing networking, access and assurances features does not meet the theoretical expectation that all strategies be fully implemented to realize the development and maintenance of equitable relationship. Although slightly “getting better” over time, corporate blogs offer limited access to decision makers (i.e., lack of contact information) and tend to leave any contributions from visitors vulnerable (i.e., lack of assurances regarding confidentiality, copyright, editorial policy, ethics). Further, the number of links on the blogroll in 2010 is small (about 2.5). Less than one link was for outside its own corporation. This implementation of assurances, access, and networking suggests that Korean corporate blogs seem to show characteristics of one-way asymmetric communication activities that are not likely to serve relationship management function well. This state of affair is quite consistent with Taylor and Kent’s (2014) overall observation that an engagement via social media is largely one-way communication process from an organization to publics with little participatory or interactive encounters. Thus, on the whole, Korean corporate blogs welcome visits whole-heartedly, but are not ready for any serious or substantive conversations. They tease and flirt, but are not ready for serious relationships with their publics on the virtual space of corporate blogs. To establish mutually beneficial relationships (e.g., control mutuality, satisfaction, trust, commitment),

Korean companies may need to work on the “environment” in which visitors or publics sense that the blogs are open, interactive, and enjoyable, and simultaneously feel assured about their personal information, copyrights of posts and comments, ethics, and other expectations. Korean companies may also need more time to experiment and fine-tune various ways to take advantage of blogs’ interactive and other capabilities in managing organization-public relationships.

### **Corporate Blogging Strategies**

Most Korean firms appear to prefer a top-down blogging strategy. There is little difference across time. They may be overly concerned about the potential risks such as revealing sensitive data or information inadvertently in their blogs. This also reflects the lack of established rules that govern the blogosphere (Lee et al., 2006). By insisting on top-down strategies (e.g., individual control, group control, and promotion), however, they may miss out the benefits of unencumbered blogs can offer such as credibility, interactivity, trust, satisfaction, and the like (Kelleher, 2009; Xifra & Huertas, 2008).

On the other hand, there was a definite move from individual strategy in 2008 to group strategy in 2010. This may reflect that Korean firms want to operate corporate blogs by a group of individuals (e.g., innovators or opinion leaders) rather than a single author, thereby providing quality contents and minimizing the potential risks associated with personal blogs (Lee et al., 2006). This seems to be also consistent with their attempts to accomplish multiple and broader purposes via corporate blogs. With a greater number of contributors/authors, corporate blogs could actively experiment or broaden their contents to include elements related to product development, improvement, and innovation, moving beyond “simple translations of traditional marketing campaigns” or traditional “marketing speak” (Backbonemedia, 2005).

### **Effects of Blogging Strategies on Use of Relationship Management Strategies**

Findings indicated that design features of relationship management strategies are strongly tied to corporate blog strategy. Access, networking and assurances activities were utilized differently across corporate blogging strategy types. Group-managed corporate blogs tended to offer greater access and assurances, but less opportunities for social networks than individual-managed corporate blogging types. This pattern makes sense. When a group of individuals work together, they are likely to be open to each other (access) and assure each other that they interact in a “safe” environment with mutual trust. At the same time, they have each other to associate with. Thus, they may not feel needs to offer or pursue opportunities for social networks outside of their networks/workgroups. Future research should explore reasons or other variables to help explain differential use of relationship management strategies across corporate blog strategies.

### **Cultural Influence**

Several differences between American and Korean corporate blogs emerged. For one, American firms are twice likely to engage in corporate blogs than Korean counterparts (13% vs. 6.6% in the most recent data). Further, when compared to American counterparts, Korean companies implemented significantly less networking and assurances, but significantly more openness. Another striking contrast is the choice of blogging strategy. For example, unlike American executives ( $n = 6$ ), no Korean top managers were the representative of their firm in their corporate blogs.

Korea is known for her high level of institutional and in-group collectivism (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). The society emphasizes in-group goals, belonging or fitting into the in-group, “we” identity, and interdependence among in-group members. It is a high-context culture in which communication is

rather indirect, imprecise, and informal (Hall, 1976). Further, unlike American “loose” culture, Triandis (2000) suggested that Korea has “tight” culture in which the behavioral norms and rules tend to be clear or rigid, especially to in-group members. In other words, behaviors or rules of conduct are predictable to the point that they do not need to be verbalized or spelled out. This expectation may have spilled over to corporate blogs. The corporate blog itself is a community of participants who are likely to consider themselves as in-group members of the blog, obviating the need to build features of assurances, networking, or access.

Korean business firms tend to have tall structures with many hierarchical levels and decision-making power concentrated in the upper levels of the hierarchy. Korean managers tend to display an authoritarian and paternalistic style. However they are expected to understand the feelings of subordinates and make decisions accordingly. Likewise, a subordinate is expected to understand the superior’s intentions out of the general context (Lee & Jablin, 1992). Thus, the prevailing authoritarian managerial style and employees’ ability to reflect the managerial wishes in what they are doing appear to afford for Korean top managers to delegate tasks of corporate blogs to their subordinates (i.e., top-down strategy and no active participation).

### **Implications**

Current findings reaffirm that the relationship management strategies can serve as a valid framework to analyze (and build) corporate blogs (Cho & Huh, 2010). Corporate blogs reflect most major features that represent relationship management strategies that facilitate mutually beneficial organization-public relationships. However, some additional tweaking may be needed in the way that the strategies are conceptualized and observed in corporate blogs. For example, the strategies of access and openness may need to be further refined conceptually and operationally. In particular, the operationalization of access (the presence/absence of physical address, email address, and phone number) seems to actually measure the extent to which the corporation is willing to be in touch with or open to communicate with publics. The issue of getting “access” to the corporate decision making process should be also addressed. Staff or generic email addresses do not mean influential decision maker. Further, security, easiness, and fastness/speed of access may be also added (Lee et al., 2008). As new media technology evolves, corporate blogs seem to reflect them, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, etc. As such, the operationalization of relationship management strategies should be updated periodically. Furthermore, the current findings indicate that use of the relationship management strategies is tied to the corporate blogging strategies. In other words, future theorizing of relationship management should involve the role of the corporate blogging strategy. Additionally, corporate blogs are culture-laden. Relationship management framework in corporate blogs should be able to account for cultural contingencies. What is effective in one culture may not be so in another culture.

### **Limitations**

Although the current sample size of 63 corporate blogs is not uncommon in studies of corporate blogs or websites (e.g., 31 and 90 in Cho & Huh’s studies in 2007 and 2010, respectively and 18 and 28 in Lee et al.’s research in 2006 and 2008, respectively), it will be prudent to interpret the results of this study with caution and view them as a benchmark profile of early adopters of corporate blogs. Future research should continue to examine newly emerging corporate blogs to illuminate the trends in corporate blogging practices over time. Specifically, it would be valuable to examine how corporate blogging strategies impact relational outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, control mutuality, trust, commitment; Hon & Grunig, 1999).

## Conclusion

This study investigated the extent that business firms utilize corporate blogs to manage their relationships with key publics. From the relational management framework and corporate blogging strategies, content analyses were conducted to examine how Top 500 Korean corporations utilize blogs for building and maintaining their relationships with tech-savvy publics over a two-year period. Findings indicate that the utilization of a blog for corporate communication is growing, yet limited to a small portion of major firms in Korea. In addition, corporate blogs as a whole tend to reflect relationship management strategies of openness, positivity, and sharing tasks more extensively than the other strategies. Korean firms preferred to use a top-down blogging strategy (with a group/team of staff members). The observed implementation pattern of the relationship management strategies in corporate blogs tends to be consistent with cultural orientation as well.

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