

Shaping Organizational Culture by Using Work Songs as a Ritual: A Case Study of the Zonson Sports Corporation in China

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Abstract

Workplace rituals are influential learning instruments for core values that support organizational culture. However, only limited empirical studies examine how these rituals process to transmit core values in organizational cultures. The aim of this paper is to analyze how the case company uses work songs as a ritual for shaping its organizational culture. The study mainly employed the ritual theory from Smith and Stewart and explored how the organizational members interpret the ritual by examining the features, functions, and mechanisms of the company songs. This study adopted mixed methods, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In-depth interviews and questionnaires are utilized for data collection. Prolonged engagement, observation, document review and triangulation techniques have been applied to support the credibility of the study. This paper found that using company songs as a ritual is an effective approach for communicating core values in the case company. The findings provide implications for organizational managers regarding how to effectively use rituals to reach strategic goals for organizational culture management.

Keywords: Organizational culture shaping, rituals, work songs, company songs.

1. Introduction

In a highly competitive and fastchanging world, corporations are facing great challenges to business success. Organizational culture plays a vital role in the success of an organization, and research on organizational culture has received significant attention recently. In the enormous amount of literature on organizational culture, rituals are considered significant among other elements of organizational culture. Workplace rituals are influential learning instruments for core values that support organizational culture. However, only limited empirical studies examine how these rituals process to transmit core values in organizational cultures.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how the case company has used work songs as a ritual for shaping its organizational culture for the past 16 years. The study mainly employed the ritual theory from Smith and Stewart [14] and explored how the organizational members interpret the ritual by examining the features, functions and mechanisms of the work songs.

The following sections proceeding to the method section are structured by first discussing organizational culture and the role of leadership in establishing and transmitting the core values. Next, the ritual theory developed by Smith and Stewart [14] is introduced. Then, the researcher further discusses work songs as a form of rituals for transmitting the core values.

2. Conceptual Background

2.1. Organizational culture

Organizational culture is like the heart or the soul of the human body. It plays a vital role in the success of an organization. Deal and Kennedy [2] asserted that every successful company has a strong culture with a particular core value which reflects the beliefs of what the people are doing in the organization. Empirical research has created a remarkable collection of findings demonstrating the importance of culture to improving organizational performance [1].

Organizational culture is defined as a continuing set of values, beliefs, assumptions and unspoken rules that guide day- to -day behavior in the workplace. Organizational culture also differentiates an organization and its members from other organizations and their members (See Cameron and Quinn [1], Deal and Kennedy [2] and Robbins and Coulter [12]). According to Cameron and Quinn [1], organizational culture represents “how things are around here” (p.16). It reflects the dominant philosophy that people hold inside their heads. Also, Hofstede [7] refers to culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from the other” (p.3).

An organization transmits the culture to its members by socialization and training, rites and rituals, communication networks, and symbols. According to Deal and Kennedy [2] the elements of culture include the business environment, the values, the heroes, the rites and rituals, and the cultural network. Similarly, Hofstede [6] developed an onion diagram model to describe the elements of culture (Figure 1).

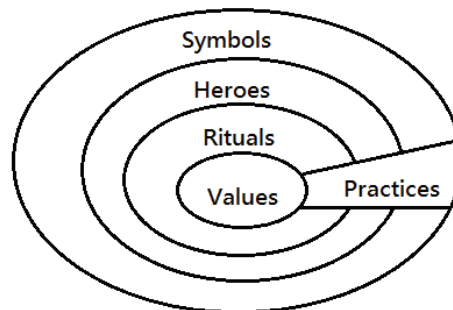


Figure 1: Onion Diagram. Adapted from “Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival,” by Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., and Minkov, M., 2010. Copyright 2010 by McGraw-Hill.

In his model, Hofstede divided culture into four layers: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. As shown in the Onion Diagram, values are the core of any culture, the inmost level of culture. As the inmost level of culture, the values will not change a lot. They have a great influence in the present for individuals and groups even if something seems to be out of date. The three other layers of organizational culture include rituals, heroes and symbols which can be trained and learned through practices.

Johnson and Scholes [9] also presented a model of organizational culture as a web which includes seven key components that are interrelated in the web.

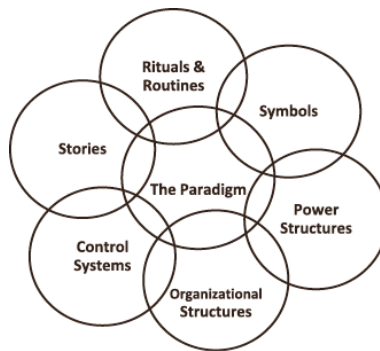


Figure 2: Culture Web. Adapted from “Exploring Corporate Strategy. (8th ed),” by Johnson, G. and Scholes, K., 2008, P 196. Copyright 2008 by Prentice Hall.

The core of the web is the “paradigm” — the pattern or model — of the work environment or commonly held assumptions and values of the organization. The six other elements presented in the web are stories, rituals and routines, symbols, power structures, organizational structures, and control systems. The Culture Web helps people gain a comprehensive understanding of a culture and its effects on an organization, and it can be a useful tool for analyzing the culture within an organization (See Johnson and Scholes [9], Sun [15]). As shown in these two models, in the huge amount of literature on organizational culture, rituals are an integral part among other elements of organizational culture.

2.2. Leadership and core values

Values are the basic ideas and philosophies of an organization. They are the foundation of any corporate culture. They define success in tangible terms and set up standards for performance within the organization. The strong culture company is characterized by a rich and complex system of values that are commonly shared within the organization (See Deal and Kennedy [2]). After the values, beliefs, assumptions or paradigm has been established and defined, the leaders need to find ways to transmit the values within the organization.

Madu [10] address the importance of the role of the leader to the organizational culture. He asserted that one of the many responsibilities challenging leaders is to create

and maintain the kind of the organizational culture that rewards and encourages cooperative effort. Schein [13] believed that the leadership and the organizational culture were two sides of the same coin. Moreover, many scholars presented the same perspective: in practice, the assumptions, beliefs, and values are mostly established by leaders of the organization and transmitted to an organization's member by rituals and routines, communication networks, organization systems, stories and heroes, and symbols (See Deal and Kennedy [2], Johnson and Scholes [9] and Sun [15]). Therefore, leaders with a talent for understanding and managing culture will bring a great impact on the success of an organization.

2.3. A theoretical framework for culture building

Based on the literature review, the researcher developed a theoretical framework for organizational culture building (Figure 3). It provided a clear picture of the relationship between cultural elements and the process of culture shaping. The framework is composed of two phases which are *culture creation and culture communication networks*. The phase of culture creation focuses on developing of values, beliefs and paradigms based on the founder's values and preference and the business environment of the company. The phase of *culture communication networks* addresses the channels that can be utilized to transmit the value, beliefs and paradigms within the organization so that the desired organizational culture can be established. This study focused on ritual for culture learning. In section 2.4, we will continue to discuss the significant role of the workplace rituals for transmitting the core values in an organization.

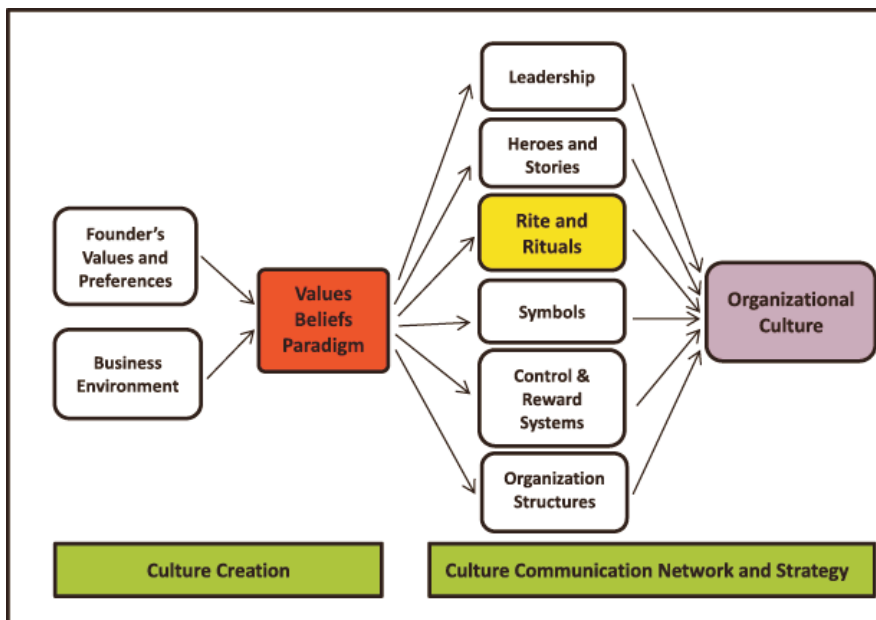


Figure 3: A Theoretical Framework for Culture Building.

2.4. Workplace rituals

Rituals have been studied from the roots of anthropology and sociology for decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, scholars began to study rites, rituals, and ceremonies in the context of organizations (See Islam and Zyphur [2]). Rituals are described as the systematic and programmed routines of daily activities in the company. They address what is important in the culture and tell employees what kinds of behaviors are expected in given situations (See Deal and Kennedy [2], Johnson and Scholes [9]). Workplace rituals are powerful learning instruments for core values that support organizational culture. Thus, some scholars have studied various perspectives of rituals such as the features, forms, functions, mechanisms, and application of workplace rituals in creating and managing organizational culture. (See Erhardt et al. [4], Islam and Zyphur [8], Smith and Stewart [14], Trice and Beyer [16]).

Trice and Beyer and were [16] the first scholars to integrate and categorize diverse forms of organizational rituals into six different types based on their functions. The six types of rituals include rites of passage, rites of degradation, rites of enhancement, rites of renewal, rites of conflict reduction, and rites of integration. The ritual action was defined by Islam and Zyphur [8] as “a form of social action in which a group’s values and identity are publicly demonstrated or enacted in a stylized manner, within the context of a specific occasion or event” (p.116). Islam and Zyphur [8] examined Trice and Beyer’s [16] taxonomy on organizational rituals and discussed their applications in different cases.

Smith and Stewart [14] studied the features of ritual, their functions, and operating mechanism in organizations. Their assertions can be summarized in two key arguments. First, they differentiated “full or complete rituals” and “ritual-like activities” based on the degree of fulfillment of the feature of rituals which are invariability, formality, symbolism, and performance expectations. Full ritual events are more powerful but less frequent than ritual-like activities in an organization.

Second, Smith and Stewart [14] proposed that rituals are managed through three reinforcement mechanisms. The first mechanism, cognitive *capture*, suggests a linkage between ritual practice and the communication of cognitive content. The second mechanism, *affective anchoring and conditioning* suggests a relationship between ritual practice and emotional response. The third mechanism, *behavioral prescription* suggests a connection between ritual practice and other organizational events.

In addition, nine interrelated functions of rituals are defined which include (1) providing meaning; (2) managing anxiety; (3) exemplifying and reinforcing the social order; (4) communicating important values; (5) enhancing group solidarity; (6) including and excluding others; (7) signaling commitment; (8) managing work structure; and (9) prescribing and reinforcing significant events.

The aim of this paper is to analyze how the case company uses work songs as a ritual for shaping its organizational culture for the past 16 years. The study mainly employs the ritual theory of Smith and Stewart [14] and explores how the organizational members interpret the ritual by examining the features, functions, and mechanisms of their work songs.

2.5. Connecting workplace rituals and values

The nine functions of rituals presented by Smith and Stewart [14] emphasize the role that rituals play as communication networks and learning instruments, emphasizing that they are important ways to channel the thoughts, spirits, and actions of the organizational members. Organizational rituals are especially significant because they not only communicate and support the shared understanding of culture but also provide a lens for its management and change (See Trice and Beyer [16]). As a result, connecting workplace activities with values is critical for an organization to create a strong culture. Since full rituals in the organizations are more effective than ritual-like activities, Smith and Stewart [14] proposed to recognize full organizational rituals through the traits of rituals which are “standardized, rule-bound, predictable, repetitive, and undertaken with specific performance expectations” (p.128). Although ritual-like activities are less powerful on culture and behavior than full rituals, change mediators should be aware that ritual-like events convey cultural norms in more accessible ways (See Smith and Stewart [14]). Workplace rituals are values in action. Therefore, any routine or activity which is imbedded in the organizations’ core values can be treated as workplace rituals (See Erhardt et al. [4])

2.6. Using work songs as a ritual

Work songs have been used by workers in various occupations worldwide such as industrial workers and farmers. In some organizations, ritual practices that include chants, singing songs, and physical engagement is associated with bolstering morale, building unity and achieving success [14]. For example, Walmart employees perform the “Walmart Chant” accompanied by body movements and hand clapping in the morning before each shift to bolster their work spirit and cultivate a sense of belonging among coworkers. Another example of commonly adapted singing ritual is the “company song” used in Japanese firms. The glue between Japanese firms and their employees is strengthened by rituals such as singing the company song, which is expected to reveal company spirit (See Head [5]).

The company song written by a firm differentiates it from others and presents the theme or the core values of its organization. The company song is one of the characteristics that contribute to the reputation of the case company, the Zonson Sports Corporation, as a strong culture organization. Zonson has been using company songs to accompany meeting rituals since it was established in the year 2001. The employees in Zonson sing one of the company songs in the meeting which is held before they start their work every day. Some of the company songs were written by the founder and some were adapted from contemporary Christian songs. These songs serve multiple functions for the company such as communicating the values, boosting the spirit, increasing group unity, managing work structures and so forth.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This study adopted mixed methods, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In-depth interviews and questionnaires are utilized for data collection. Prolonged engagement, observation, and document review are also utilized in the study. In addition, member checks and triangulation techniques have been applied to support the credibility of the study.

All of 15 participants participated in the in-depth interviews are full-time employees who have at least three years working experience in the company. The interviewees included the founder (CEO), vice president, managers, factory chiefs, section managers, team leaders, and staff members. The interviews were held in a nice meeting room at the company. Before the interview, a small gift was given to the interviewee in appreciation for his/her participation in the study, and a consent form was given to every interviewee to explain the purpose and the confidentiality of the interview. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was adopted for this study so that the questions serve as the guide but not as restrictions for the conversations. Each interview lasted from 40-60 minutes and was recorded and transcribed.

For triangulation purposes, a questionnaire was designed to collect data from more employees, which served as different sources for the researcher to compare and confirm the data from the in-depth interviews. The questions were designed based on the theoretical framework and the input of the initial interview with the founder. The first part of the questionnaire was the demographic information of the respondents. The second part of the survey was grouped into four sections in a total of 40 items of five-Likert Scale questions and four open-ended questions. The four sections include the recognition of company core values, the recognition of company culture, strategies for promoting the organizational culture, and the impact of the work songs to the company culture. The questionnaires were conducted and collected during their company weekly meeting. A total of 54 copies of questionnaires were given to the respondents including 7 upper-level managers, 8 middle-level managers, 19 team leaders and 20 staff and workers. Out of the 54 questionnaires, 50 copies were used in this study while the other four copies were invalid due to missing information or failure to meeting the criteria. The respondents had at least one-year of work experience in the company so that he/she had a certain degree of understanding for the company culture.

3.2. The introduction of case company

The case company, the Zonson Sports Corporation established its first golf bag factory in Taiwan in 1980, and the company shifted its plant to China and established Zonson China in Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province in the year 2001. Zonson was recognized as a premium OEM company for seven international golf companies such as Nike, Adidas, TaylorMade, Titleist, etc. Famous golf players such as Tiger Woods and Jordan Alexander Spieth carried the bags that were made by Zonson. The company currently has about 600 employees, and it provides service that is characterized by integrity,

collaboration, and efficiency. It has gained a reputation among its employees, clients and the local government not only as a successful company but also as a company with a very distinctive culture. One of the uniqueness of its culture is that Zonson has utilized work songs or company songs as a ritual to embed the core values in its members for almost 15 years. Singing songs is considered to be a highly effective channel and successful strategy to shape the organizational culture for the company.

3.3. Data analysis

Coding and categorizing of data

After the interview, all the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher reviewed the script back and forth and constantly compared and asked questions of the data by using the open coding technique. After the scripts were broken into small units and codes were given, the researcher used axial coding to organize the codes into categories. The interview data regarding the company songs were given 19 codes and were put into three thematic categories which include features, functions, and mechanisms of singing ritual. The following example demonstrated the process of coding and categorizing (Table 1).

Table 1: Example of Coding and Categorizing Process.

Interview Data	Open Coding	Category
When I entered this company, the company songs already existed. We never stop singing the company songs, and we sing a different song every day.	The singing ritual is <i>invariable</i> .	<u><i>The features</i></u> of the ritual
Everyone in every department has to sing the company songs. Every team leader has to lead the singing.	The singing ritual is <i>formal</i> .	
When you sing in the morning, it provokes s your spirit, and you believe it will be a good start, a nice day.	<i>Boosts the spirit</i>	<u><i>The functions</i></u> of the ritual
Each song is embedded with the core values when you are thinking of the meaning of the content.	<i>Communicates important values</i>	
Company songs are very influential for group inspiration and unity.	<i>Enhances group solidarity</i>	<u><i>The Operational Mechanism</i></u> of the ritual
Rich contents such as important values, cultural elements, and working procedure were embedded in the lyrics.	<i>Cognitive capture</i>	
We are not only singing songs, more important we are singing about hope, love, and unity.	<i>Affective anchoring and conditioning</i>	

Quantitative data analysis

To support interview data, the quantitative data in this study was analyzed through descriptive statistics in order to demonstrate the characteristics of the entire sample (See Mertens [11]). Employees' perceptions regarding company's core values, cultures, strategies for promoting culture, and the impact of work songs were collected through the questionnaire. The data served as additional sources to support and confirm the interview data for the purpose of triangulation.

3.4 Research credibility

Some research strategies can be used to improve credibility. The researcher tried to use multiple strategies to provide evidence of credibility of the research from a variety of sources. Five strategies were employed to increase the credibility, including prolonged and substantial engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, member check, and triangulation.

First of all, prolonged and substantial engagement: the researcher stayed two weeks at the company and had multiple opportunities to engage in their meetings and to interact and communicate with the people at the site. In addition, the researcher continued to receive information through the connection of a key informant who visited the company regularly. Secondly, persistent observation: the researcher also had the opportunity to observe the people on the site in their daily activities while the researcher was not scheduled for interviews. Thirdly, peer debriefing: the codes and categories were rated by two peers who have undergone similar training and experience. Fourthly, member check: the interview questions were reviewed by people on site to ensure the meaning was understood and applied to their situation. In addition, for data analysis, both the coding and categorizing process were reviewed by external reviewers who provided scores from 1 (low) to 10 (high) in terms of their level of agreement. The average agreement score is 9.3 out of 10. Last but not least, triangulation: the information was checked through the data collected from different methods and sources for consistency of evidence across sources of data (See Mertens [11]). The data in this study was collected through observation, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and document reviews.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study explored how company songs operated as a learning mechanism and tool to shape the organizational culture. Ritual theory from Smith and Stewart [14] was employed to examine the features, functions, and mechanisms of the singing ritual in the Zonson Sports Corporation.

The empirical data indicate that the singing ritual plays a vital role for learning the core values that underpin the organizational culture of the company. The narrative data is categorized into four themes that suggest: linking company songs with core values; company songs display full ritual features; the multiple functions of company songs; and the operational mechanism of company songs.

4.1 Linking company songs with core values

Culture is created by shared experience; however, Schein [13] asserts that it is the leader who starts this process by reinforcing his or her beliefs, values, and assumptions from the beginning. The founder of Zonson incorporated Christian values into the company core values which are honoring God, benefiting people, trustworthiness and justice. The core values were described by eight Chinese characters made into two plates and were put on the wall of the company lobby. The founder further explained: "Honoring God means doing things that respect, please and give the credit to God; benefiting people means doing things that are helpful to people; trustworthiness means having honesty and integrity; justice means doing the right things."

Zonson's company songs are composed of two sources, some are from selective contemporary Christian songs, and some were written by the founder. The founder wrote the first company song "It's Nice to Have a Job" the first year the company started. The founder explained:

During our character shaping course in the first year here, we found it was effective to use songs to emphasize training content. Therefore I was inspired to use songs to transmit values and boost the working morale among my employees. There were about 100 people who came to apply for each vacancy at that time. So I wrote this song to reflect the happiness of having work and also to remind myself as a leader to treat my employees nicely. You can see how difficult it was for people in China to find a job at that time.

From then on the founder wrote one song every year or two. A review of the content of the 17 company songs reveals that the core values are richly embedded in the lyrics of the company songs. In addition to core values, other main themes in the company songs include love, family, joy, unity, hope, passion, organizational life, work procedures, work spirit, etc.

4.2. Company songs display full ritual features

The ritual of singing company songs in Zonson exhibits the characteristics of full-rituals which are more powerful than ritual-like activities. Thus it serves as a powerful mechanism for transmitting organizational culture. According to Smith and Stewart [14], "full rituals" are characterized by invariability, formality, symbology and performance expectations (p.116). Full or complete rituals are powerful learning instruments for the organizations; therefore, Smith and Stewart proposed to identify full organizational rituals through the features of rituals.

The following data comprise a representative sample of participants' comments that represent the features of the full ritual.

First, the singing ritual is invariable. It follows a standardized and fixed pattern of performance (See Smith and Stewart [14]). One section leader said, "When I entered this company, the company songs already existed. We never stop singing the company songs, and we sing a different song every day."

Second, the singing ritual is formal. Rituals increase formality by connecting to official forms and rules (See Smith and Stewart [14]). One team leader mentioned, “everyone in every department has to sing the company songs. Every team leader has to lead the singing. We sing a different song from Monday to Friday, but we sing the 5S Song on Saturdays.” Another section leader commented: “When we sing, we all stand in a circle and close to each other.”

Third, the singing ritual is symbolic. A symbol is embedded with meaning that differentiates it from empty routine (See Smith and Stewart [14]). There are some motions accompanied by the lyrics when they sing. For example, they will hold up their hands when they sing honoring or praising God, or they will put hands on each other’s shoulders when they sing songs expressing love or support for each other.

Last, the singing ritual has *performance expectations*. The singing ritual is performed before work every day, and it is also standardized and rule-bound. Therefore, it is easy for the members to predict and follow the behavioral expectation. “During the morning meeting, the team leader will lead a song starting at around 8:00 o'clock for about 5–10 minutes and all the team members are required to participate in singing” (Janie, Section Leader; Hank, Team Leader).

The results from data analysis indicate that the singing ritual in Zonson fulfills the features of a full ritual. The results from the questionnaires also confirm that the singing ritual is effective in shaping Zonson’s company culture.

4.3. The multiple functions of work songs

The ritual of company songs is significant because it serves various and important functions for achieving organizational outcomes. Nine interrelated functions of rituals are defined by Smith and Stewart (2011) including (1) providing meaning; (2) managing anxiety; (3) exemplifying and reinforcing the social order; (4) communicating important values; (5) enhancing group solidarity; (6) including and excluding others; (7) signaling commitment; (8) managing work structures; and (9) prescribing and reinforcing significant events. Surprisingly, company songs in Zonson perform all the functions above. However, analysis of the data indicates that the function of “boosting the spirit” may be more descriptive than the function of “managing anxiety” in this study.

(1) *Provides meaning*

Rituals play a crucial role in reinforcing the values to the members who participate in the ritual performances (See Smith and Stewart [14]). Rituals are not empty activities. “Company songs are not just for us to sing, we need to know the meaning and do it. The content is full of positive energy just like the Bible.” (Hank, Team Leader) Owen, a section leader, also commented: “You will feel ashamed if you are making a mess in your work area since you are singing the song every day about what you should do.”

(2) *Boosts the spirit*

Several of the members mentioned that singing the company songs boosts their spirit and brings joy and hope to them. “You will be more energetic when you sing” (Nina,

Staff). Yvonne, a section leader, said: “Singing company songs helps me to have a better mood.” Another section leader, Luke, also mentioned: “When you sing in the morning, it provokes your spirit, and you believe it will be a good start, a nice day.”

(3) *Exemplifies and reinforces the social order*

Repeated rituals help to build shared meanings, generate unity and emphasize them through social involvement (See Smith and Stewart [14]). Company songs recur in many company special events such as Father’s Day and Mother’s Day celebrations. A few songs have the theme of “loving our family.” Zonson is characterized as “a big family.” The founder, General Manager, is like “father” and his wife, Mama Shao, is like “mother” to their employees. “For most of us, Zonson is our second home. Both G.M. and Mama Shao treat us like their children, and we cherish and love this place” (Samuel, Manager). Daniel, another manager, also commented: “Company songs express a lot such as working spirit, team encouragement, how to be a good person, and how to live.”

(4) *Communicates important values*

Company songs transmit important values of the company. “Each song is embedded with the core values when you are thinking of the meaning of the content” (Jimmy, Factory Chief). When responding to the question of what the most effective channel is for transmitting the core values of the company, Luke and Yvonne said they believed it was company songs.

(5) *Enhances group solidarity*

Rituals work as emotional support for social solidarity (See Islam and Zyphur [8]). Some members believe that their company songs play a critical role for increasing group cohesion (Grace, Janie, Daniel, and Jimmy). Gloria and Luke both described how their team members work together when joining the company songs contest or performances for special events. “We were all very excited, fully participating, sang loudly and even shouted for the glory of our team.” Janie, a section leader, mentioned: “Company songs are very influential for group inspiration and unity.”

(6) *Includes & Excludes*

Like many Japanese firms, the company songs differentiate Zonson from others. “I feel our company songs are fantastic. This makes us different from other companies because they do not have company songs. Even if they do have them there will only be one song.” (Nina, Staff). “Our company songs are really good, and the lyrics are full of meaning, just like singing the national anthem for a country. A company should have a company song” (Owen, Section Leader).

(7) *Signals commitment*

Signaling is powerful because it indicates commitment, leading to trust and fellowship (See Dow [3]). The analysis of the open questions on the questionnaires showed the overall atmosphere of the company is family, love, harmony, and unity. “When we sing about our “good factory,” it reminds us that it is not easy to have this job; therefore we should do it wholeheartedly and happily” (Nina, Staff). Gloria and Jimmy also said

that the song “Love Our Family” is so full of meaning; it reminds us that “we are family and everyone should love our family, love our company.”

(8) *Manages work structures*

Zonson started to implement lean management for their production in the year 2008. Rituals can be a good tool to facilitate change for the organization. The founder wrote several songs to help its employees to learn the spirit of lean production and encourage its employees to adapt to the change. “The songs are about what we should do every day, so they remind us all the time” (Nina, Staff). Jimmy, the factory chief, also pointed out:

Before I came here, I knew about 5S, a workplace organizing technique that uses a list of five Japanese words starting with the letter “S,” and my former company talked about 5S every day. I was surprised to hear 5S in the songs when I first came here, and the music is so wonderful. It is a great idea to put 5S in the songs.

(9) *Prescribes and reinforces significant events*

Significant events in the organization can be created and highlighted by rituals. Company songs are not only sung every morning before work, but also sung before major events such as weekly meetings, annual meetings, company anniversaries and festival celebrations. Singing has become a norm in Zonson. Company songs also helped facilitate change when the company tried to change from a traditional work procedure to lean production. Samuel, the Administrative Manager, explained:

It is very difficult to change the predominant working procedure and habits. When we first had the idea of implementing lean production, no one wanted to try it. After trying one year in the 3rd plant, all the production lines were changed to lean production in the year 2011. So our founder wrote the song “2011 Lean Management” it surely boosted our morale to step forward toward the challenge of the big change.

4.4. The operational mechanism of company songs

Company songs include three reinforcement mechanisms: cognitive capture, affective anchoring and conditioning, and behavioral prescription. As proposed by Smith and Stewart [14], they are effective and influential for cultural prospects of organizations and their members. The empirical finding supports and explains how company songs are carried through these three mechanisms.

Cognitive capture

Cognitive capture suggests a linkage between ritual practice and the communication of cognitive content. Rich content such as important values, cultural elements, and working procedure were embedded in the lyrics. The founder explained:

The 5S principles — translated from Japanese as “sort,” “set in order,” “shine,” “standardize,” and “sustain” — have been widely adopted by manufacturing companies. Music is the best way to help people embed the cognitive content into their brains. I use songs as a strategy, a concept and a way to implement ideas. It is also a kind of embedded advertising. So I advertise values and ideas including 5 S in the songs.

The founder further explained: “My songs are also spiritual and very impassioned and they are all connected with the workplace situation.” This leads to the next operational mechanism.

Affective anchoring and conditioning

Affective anchoring and conditioning suggests a relationship between ritual practice and emotional response. We can see various emotional responses in 4.3 as the researcher mentioned: “Boosting the spirit” is one of the unique functions that Zonson’s company songs serve for its members. More data confirmed that the singing of company songs strongly connected with the emotional responses of the participants. “The music and content are so wonderful, and the songs enter into our hearts as we sing them every day” (Janie, Section Leader). Grace, a member of the staff, explained: “We are not only singing songs, more importantly we are singing about hope, love, and unity. This kind of spirit and atmosphere is among us when we sing.” Nina, also as a staff member mentioned: “Although the songs are not sung by famous singers, we feel different when we sing them. We sometimes experience laughter and sometimes tears, and it’s a memory of our lives here.”

Behavioral prescription

Behavioral prescription suggests a connection between ritual practice and other organizational events. At Zonson, the singing ritual is closely linked with the working routines and other organizational events. For example, Samuel, the Administrative Manager, said: “We sing “Song of 5S” every Saturday morning because we have to make sure all the materials and equipment have been sorted, cleaned and maintained.” Hank maintains that “Company songs are not just for singing but for doing.” According to John, the Factory Chief, “Singing is an excellent learning instrument for the employees. We not only sing before morning meetings, but we also sing before other meetings and company events.” The singing ritual also impacts the life of its employees after work and after leaving the company. Owen said: “Sometimes when we go out to play we sing our company songs as well.” The founder also mentioned:

Once one retired worker called and told me that he still sang the company songs when he felt down at home, and very often he recalls that how great his days were when he worked here, especially singing the company songs together with other coworkers.

In sum, the analysis of interview data showed that company songs in Zonson included three reinforcement mechanisms: cognitive capture, affective anchoring and conditioning, and behavioral prescription.

4.5. Confirmation from the questionnaire results

The questionnaire results show that the average score of 4.26 on a five point Likert Scale (Table 2). The statistics support the analysis result from the documentation and interviews about the ritual of singing company songs in Zonson. Table 2 shows that most respondents also agreed on the functions of company songs, such as boosting the spirit, communicating important values, enhancing group solidarity, and managing work structures. The results confirm the interview result that the ritual of singing company songs is effective for culture learning and has become one of the distinctive characteristics of the case company (Question 1&2, Table 2). The strategy, ritual of singing company songs, was number four for effectively promoting the company culture among the other ten strategies listed in the questionnaire (Section 3, Appendix A).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on the Ritual of Singing Company Songs in the Zonson Sports Corporation ($N = 50$) (5 Point Likert Scale).

Items	Questions	Mean
1	I think the ritual of singing company songs is effective for shaping the organizational culture.	4.16
2	I think the ritual of singing company songs is one of the characteristics of my company.	4.58
3	I enjoy singing with other organizational members.	4.36
4	I think company songs have become part of my life and I sometimes sing songs by myself at work and after work.	4.12
5	I think company songs help me to understand the values and cultures of my company.	4.26
6	I think company songs help me to understand the Christian faith.	4.08
7	I think company songs inspire me to have a positive attitude toward my work and my life.	4.46
8	I think company songs increase the group consensus and cohesion for the company.	4.26
9	I think company songs increase my understanding and implementation of lean management.	4.06
10	I think company songs increase my creativity toward the performance of company songs in various forms during the celebration events.	4.12
11	I think company songs evoke my affection and bring me lots of joyful memories.	4.34

5. Conclusions and Implications

5.1. Conclusion

Deal and Kennedy [2] asserted that the firm's culture has a significant role on business success and performance. Schein [13] believed that the most critical role for leaders is to create and manage culture. Hence, the leaders' understanding, commitment, and effort to create and manage culture will bring great impact on the success of an organization. Values are the basic beliefs and assumptions of an organization. They are the groundwork of any corporate culture. Workplace rituals are powerful learning mechanisms for core values that uphold organizational culture.

Workplace rituals are values in action. Therefore, any routine or activity which is implanted in core values can be regarded as a workplace ritual (See Erhardt et al. [4]). However, Smith and Stewart [14] proposed that organizations identify full rituals which may be portrayed as standardized, rule-bounded, predictable and repetitive behaviors. They asserted that full rituals are powerful learning instruments for organizations. This study indicated that the ritual of company songs in the Zonson Sports Corporation demonstrated characteristics of full-rituals. Thus it serves as an influential instrument for shaping organizational culture.

The study also showed that company songs performed nine functions of the rituals defined by Smith and Stewart [14] including (1) providing meaning; (2) managing anxiety; (3) exemplifying and reinforcing the social order; (4) communicating important values; (5) enhancing group solidarity; (6) including and excluding others; (7) signaling commitment; (8) managing work structure; and (9) prescribing and reinforcing significant events. Nevertheless, the data indicated that the function of "boosting the spirit" is more descriptive than "managing anxiety" in this study. The ritual of singing company songs is significant and serves various and important functions for achieving organizational outcomes and making the company as a strong culture company.

Smith and Stewart [14] also proposed that rituals may be practiced by three reinforcement mechanisms which include *cognitive capture*, *affective anchoring and conditioning*, and *behavioral prescription*. The study also indicated that music and songs are great instruments for connecting cognitive content, emotional responses and behavioral activities toward the achievement of culture norms. Thus, company songs are effective and influential reinforces of the cultural expectations of the case company and its members.

5.2. Implications

A few implications for leaders and change agents from this study are as follows.

(1) *Leaders' commitment to promote the organizational culture*

Leaders may recognize and recommit to their consequential roles as leaders of the organizational culture of their organizations. Schein [13] claimed that the leadership and the organizational culture were two sides of the same coin. The founder of the case company provides a successful example of dedication to promoting company values and culture in every possible way, including company songs.

(2) *Lead by example*

The results from both the interview and the questionnaire data prove the old saying that “actions speak louder than words.” In the questionnaire, employees were requested to provide scores regarding who had exemplified and practiced the core values of the company. The leaders (founders) received the highest scores and the executives the second highest (Q6 of section one, Appendix A). Moreover, the strategy of “examples from the leadership” was ranked top 3 as an effective strategy for promoting the company culture among other 10 strategies listed in the questionnaire (Q1 of Section 3, Appendix A). Hence, leadership that exemplifies the core values is significant for promoting the core values and company culture.

(3) *Evaluate the effectiveness of the current rituals*

Organizations may evaluate the effectiveness of the current rituals by employing the features, functions, and mechanisms of rituals proposed by Smith and Stewart [14]. Full rituals are more powerful but less frequent than ritual-like activities. Change agents may focus more on full rituals, but continue to be aware of the ritual-like activities which express cultural customs in more available ways.

(4) *Company songs is a good strategy to incorporate ritual reinforcement mechanisms*

The ritual of singing company songs might be considered a good strategy to interrelate the three reinforcement mechanisms which include cognitive capture, affective anchoring and conditioning, and behavioral prescription proposed by Smith and Stewart [14].

(5) *Integrating rituals in other organizational events*

Last but not least, integrating rituals in other organizational events can create a greater effect on the culture expectations, just as the company songs in Zonson did when they intergraded into other meetings and major events. Company songs became a distinctive characteristic of its culture and collective experience that differentiates the company from others and contributed to the company as a strong cultural organization.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Results

Descriptive Statistics on the Company Culture and the Ritual of Singing Company Songs in Zonson Sports Corporation ($N = 50$) (5 Point Likert Scale)

Items	Questions	Mean
Section One : The Recognition of Company Core Values		
1	I understand the core value of the company is “honoring God” and it means doing things that will honor or please God.	4.46
2	I understand the core value of the company is “benefiting people” and it means doing things that are helpful to people.	4.48
3	I understand the core value of the company is “being faithful” and it means honesty and integrity.	4.48
4	I understand the core value of the company is “justice” and it means doing the right things.	4.56
5	I agree with the core values of my company.	4.48
6	I think the leaders (president, general manager) of the company establish, exemplify and practice the core values of the company.	4.56
7	I think the executives (vice general manager, managers, and factory chiefs) of the company exemplify and practice the core values of the company.	3.88
8	I think mid-level executives (assistant managers, section leaders) of the company exemplify and practice the core values of the company.	3.66
9	I think primary supervisors (team leaders) of the company exemplify and practiced the core values of the company.	3.62
10	I think the staff members and workers of the company exemplify and practice the core values of the company.	3.40
Section Two : The Recognition of Organizational Culture		
1	I know that my company integrates Christian Philosophy with its business management.	4.50
2	I think my company accepts employees from different religious backgrounds.	4.28
3	I participate in the Christian related activities which are included in the work or meetings such as Bible reading, prayers, singing and book reading.	4.12

4	I participate in the Christian related activities which are held outside of work such as morning prayer meeting and Bible readings, Zonson Family Fellowship and other special meetings.	3.84
5	I agree with the company culture that taking and giving bribes is forbidden.	4.42
6	I can follow the principle of not taking and giving bribes at work.	4.60
7	I agree with the company culture of integrity.	4.44
8	I can follow the principle of integrity at work.	4.48
9	I agree with the company culture of complying with the regulations.	4.54
10	I can follow the principle of complying the regulations.	4.60
Section Three : The Strategies and the Effectiveness of Promoting the Company Culture		
1	I think the examples from the leadership are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.22
2	I think the company songs are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.16
3	I think the official meetings, such as weekly assemblies, executive meetings, cadre meetings, error shooting meetings are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	3.84
4	I think the celebrations for special events, such as Company Anniversary, Mother's Day, Father's Day, oon Festival, Lantern Festival, etc., are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.40
5	I think the Annual Meetings are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.12
6	I think the Inspiration Camps are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.14
7	I think the Character Education Program is effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.30
8	I think the Zonson Family Fellowship is effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.14
9	I think Bible Study and Prayer Meeting are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	3.86
10	I think the promotion, reward and punishment systems are effective in promoting the core values and company culture.	4.14

Section Four : The Company Songs		
1	I think the ritual of singing company songs is one of the characteristics of my company.	4.58
2	I enjoy singing with other organizational members.	4.36
3	I think company songs have become part of my life, and I sometimes sing songs by myself at work and after work.	4.12
4	I think company songs help me to understand the values and culture of my company.	4.26
5	I think company songs help me to understand the Christian faith.	4.08
6	I think company songs inspire me to have a positive attitude toward my work and my life.	4.46
7	I think company songs increase the group consensus and cohesion of the company.	4.26
8	I think company songs increase my understanding and implementation of lean management.	4.06
9	I think company songs increase my creativity toward the performance of company songs in various forms during the celebration events.	4.12
10	I think company songs evoke my affection and bring me lots of joyful memories.	4.34

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