Forging ahead in cross-cultural communication

With dozens of examples from around the world, this highly readable book tackles the challenges of 21st-century communication.

If writing about it makes it so, then authors Silvia Cambié and Yang-May Ooi have reordered the paradigm of strategic communication for the 21st century with their book *International Communications Strategy*. And not a moment too soon.

For all the talk about change in the communication professions, not enough has been written to challenge or recast the orthodoxy of top-down, controlled messaging and traditional media utilization that have served communicators well for decades, but which have now been rapidly altered by the new realities of globalization, technology and new patterns of audience behavior. Subtitled “Developments in Cross-Cultural Communications, PR and Social Media,” this ambitious book tries to redefine the new landscape in these three distinct areas, all within 200 pages. That it succeeds is perhaps its greatest strength; that it attempts such a big agenda in a 200-page volume is a potential weakness.

The book is divided into two sections: international communication and the role of social media. Extensively researched from scores of personal sources and the current literature, the chapters offer highly readable narratives, descriptive case studies and well-conceived bullet-point summaries.

The book truly lives up to the “international” in its title. The authors state at the beginning: “Change is still happening. It is drawing everybody closer to other parts of the world. And it is making us realize that we need to look at them in a different way. We can no longer expect people in other cultures to adopt the way we think and communicate.” We’ve heard that before, but this book takes us beyond the platitude and gives dozens of provocative illustrations—Goldman Sachs in China, HSBC in India, Brazilian aerospace conglomerate Embraer, Al Jazeera and more—all followed by practical checklists for monitoring trends, developing cultural proficiency, studying communication styles and widening your horizon.

In the second part, “The Role of Social Media in International Communications,” the book seems to change course. Certainly all it says about social media reinforces many of the global themes laid out earlier. The examples are of great interest and are truly international—showing that social media may be more alive and well in developing rather than developed countries. But the communication professional hoping to use social media tactically will still have to search out a hands-on tutorial. Nevertheless, in aggregate, the authors demonstrate that social media now rule the day and communicators discount or avoid it at their professional peril.