The Relationship between the Quality of Managers, the Internal Communication Level and the Institutional Visual Identity

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Abstract: This research analyses the relation between the constructs quality of managers and internal communication and the dependent variable belonging to the institutional visual identity within the Faculties of Physical Education and Sport, funded by the State Budget, in Romania. The data within this study come from a research based on the survey method, with a questionnaire-based tool, reprised from the scientific literature and validated through Alpha Cronbach's coefficient, ensuring the internal reliability analysis of each construct: the quality of managers, the internal communication, belonging to the institutional visual identity. The research was carried out on a sample of 261 persons from a population of 452 teaching staff members within the faculties of physical education and sport, funded by the State Budget, in Romania. The research was carried out on two directions: one concerning the correlation between the quality of managers and belonging to the institutional visual identity; and the other concerning the correlation between the internal communication and the same belonging to the institutional visual identity.

Keywords: *quality of managers, internal communication, belonging to the institutional visual identity, teaching staff members, faculties of physical education and sport.*

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1. Introduction

Any higher education establishment “communicates” all the time. All they do - explicitly expressed or not - is a form of communication. The way that the institution introduces itself and the way that it is perceived from the outside make up the identity. The definitions of institutional identity are comprehensive and they suggest that this concept comprises several elements. Baker and Balmer (1997) argue that corporate identity mix comprises the communication and visual communication behaviour. Furthermore, the components of corporate identity mix are featured as a model of corporate identity developed by Melewar and Jenkins (2002). The model breaks down corporate identity in the following fields: communication and visual identity, behaviour (the quality of managers and of employees), corporate culture, and market conditions (Melewar et al., 2006). These four fields may be further broken down into other components. Depending on the various and often complicated definitions, this model confers a clear and harmonious defalcation upon this concept. From the aforementioned aspects, it results that the visual identity (identification) forms, the quality of managers, and the communication represent elements of the corporate identity mix.

1.1. The managers within the higher education establishments

The managers as persons invested with authority and decision-making responsibility regarding the effective use of the main organisational resources (people, material base, money, and time) exercise attributions of planning, organisation, coordination, training, and control, situated at various levels of the ranking pyramid. Taking into account the general features of the responsibilities taken on by managers, scientific literature presents four categories of managers: chief executive officers (CEOs), top managers (Papadakis & Barwise, 2002), middle managers (Ou et al., 2014), and front-line managers (Hasson et al., 2014; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2006). In our study concerning the faculties of physical education and sport in Romania, funded by the State Budget, the CEO is the university president, the top managers are represented by deans, the middle managers are the vice-deans, while the front-line managers are the heads of departments.

1.2. The internal communication

The internal communication is fundamental for the management of an institution and it is important for any (public or private) organisation to

understand the communication with the employees as a critical factor of success (Borca & Baesu, 2014). The internal communication is the foundation of the efficiency and effectiveness within the higher education establishments, because it contributes to positive internal relations, thus enabling the communication between the top managers and the employees. In addition, internal communication may represent a threat to relations within an institution; it may be counterproductive if its level is weak (Berdilă et al., 2019; Welch, 2012).

The main objective of internal communication is to inform the employees about the objectives and policies of the institution and to help them understand their tasks, obligations, and merits within the institution. Internal communication (managers - employees) when open - thus incorporating listening and feedback and facilitating decision-making - constructs and maintains relationships (Mazzei, 2014). Internal communication involves the creation of an atmosphere of respect for all the employees within the institution (Jacobs et al., 2015). Moreover, the employees of the higher education establishments were treated mainly as beneficiaries of internal communication, but they are also expeditors and active agents in the communications of an organisation (Calugher et al., 2019; Frandsen & Johansen, 2011; Iconomescu & Talaghir 2014).

Consequently, in this study, the variable of internal communication may be defined as the exchange of information and ideas between the members of a higher education establishment in order to build trust and open relationships and to create understanding (Vercic et al., 2012).

1.3. The corporate visual identity

Initially, the corporate visual identity concept focused on the logo and on other forms of symbols used by an organisation defined the concept of corporate visual identity as the logo or brand image of the company and all the other visual manifestations of a company's identity (Melewar et al., 2006).

More recent research has shown that this concept has become increasingly comprehensive and broader. Large-scale studies on corporate visual identity have proven that this concept is far more than a logo or a "uniform". The concept is described as a strategic consequence in a modern institution that includes and awareness of all interested parties within it (Melewar et al., 2006). This is argued by Melewar et al. (2006) who defines this concept as follows: expressly the management of all the ways in which the company introduces itself through its experience and perceptions before all types of audience. The visual identity mix comprises: the name of the

company, the logo or the symbol, the colour scheme, and the type of font (Baker & Balmer, 1997; Popescu & Dorgan, 2017). Melewar and Saunders (1999) believe that there are five elements to a corporate/institutional identity system: name of the institution, acronym and/or symbol, type of font, colours, and slogan. The visual identity in sports faculties may be regarded as the physical, chromatic, graphical, and auditory dimension of these institutions (Petrea et al., 2020). These elements determine an identification and sense of belonging by the employees to the institution/faculty where they work.

2. Methodology

2.1. The variables of the research

For this research, we have used two independent variables and a dependent variable. The first independent variable measures the quality of managers (QM) and the second one measures the internal communication (IC). The dependent variable measures the belonging to institutional visual identity. The independent variable QM refers to the opinion of the research participants concerning the quality of the managers of the faculty where they work. For this variable, we have used five items (Table 1).

Table 1. Items used for measuring the independent variable QM

Variable	Items
Quality of managers (QM)	The managers have clear institutional objectives
	The managers are well-informed concerning the activities within the faculty
	The managers encourage us to learn more about our work
	My manager fails to explain why I have to accomplish my duties
	Generally, the managers accomplish their tasks well

The independent variable IC measures the quality of internal communication in the institution as perceived by the research participants. For this variable, six items were used (Table 2).

Table 2. Items used for measuring the independent variable IC

Variable	Items
Internal Communication (IC)	Generally, there is good cooperation between the faculty departments
	I am well informed about what goes on in my department
	I am well informed about what goes on in my faculty

The communication between our department and the faculty council is good
The communication between our department is good
The communication within the department is good

The dependent variable belonging to the institutional visual identity does not measure design quality, but the identification of the higher education institution's employees with the elements of the IVI (the name of the institution, the logo or the symbol, the slogan, the colour scheme, and the type of font). This type of research is based on the "look and feel" principle for the various elements of the IVI. The dependent variable *belonging to IVI* was measured using eight items (Table 3) (Melewar et al., 2006).

Table 3. Items used for measuring the dependent variable Belonging to IVI

Variable	Items
Belonging to IVI	Our faculty is easily to identifiable through its own IVI
	IVI matches our organisation
	The IVI of our faculty is chaotic
	Everybody in our faculty contributes to the good image of our institution
	Everybody in our faculty observes the IVI rules
	In my opinion, it is important to apply the IVI
	The visual materials of our organisation lack consistency
	Everybody applies the IVI as they see fit

2.2. The research method and tool

This study used the survey method. Currently, the survey method is still one of the most common forms of data collection in the public or private institutions and organisations (Church, 2001). The surveys applied in institutions are very popular for both researchers and managers, because they may be used for a wide array of purposes. The survey method, for instance, may be used for evaluating and tracking down the attitudes and opinions of employees in various periods (Ryan et al, 1999).

This research used personal survey, administered in each higher education establishment (faculty of physical education and sport). The tool consists of a survey reprised and adapted from scientific literature. More precisely, the items were reprised from Van den Bosch et al. (2006), who conducted a similar study on 20 organisations in the Netherlands. All the

answers are measured using the Likert scale model (from 1 = totally disagree, to 5 = totally agree).

2.3. Research objectives

The identifications of the (positive, negative) relations between the quality of managers, internal communication, and belonging to IVI.

2.4. Research hypotheses

In this research, we have assessed whether there is a (positive or negative) correlation between the quality of managers QM, internal communication IC and belonging to IVI. Hence, we have issued the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive correlation between QM and belonging to IVI;

H2: There is a positive correlation between IC and belonging to IVI.

2.5. Research population and sample

The research population includes the tenured teaching staff members within the faculties of Physical education and sport in Romania. We have determined a set of inclusion criteria for the institutions participating in the study. These criteria are as follows: being subsidised by the State Budget; not to represent a specialty (section, department) of another faculty; not to represent a physical education and sport university; to have at least two specialties in the bachelor's studies cycle: accredited physical education and sport and physical therapy. This has resulted in a population of 452 persons. The research sample comprises the teaching staff members (teaching assistants, lecturers, associate professors, and professors) within the faculties of physical education and sport of the following cities: Bacău, Cluj-Napoca, Constanța, Craiova, Galați, Iași, Oradea, Suceava, and Timișoara. Restrictive criteria for the research sample: to be a tenured member of the higher education establishment; to have at least three years of seniority in that institution; not to be a part of management (dean, vice-dean, head of department).

The sample size (volume representativeness) was calculated through a simplified formula (Israel, 1992). The application of the formula for our research (with a population of 452 persons) determines a representative sample in terms of volume of around 213 persons (teaching staff members within the faculties of physical education and sport). Furthermore, scientific literature features Tables of representative samples in terms of size, for finite populations (Taherdoost, 2017). Thus, for a population of 500 units, the

sample size may be: 217 units, with a sampling error of $\pm 5\%$ and a reliability level of 95% or 285 units, with a sampling error of $\pm 5\%$ and a reliability level of 99% (Taherdoost, 2017).

In our study, the sample volume is 261 units from a population of 452 units (teaching staff members within the faculties of physical education and sport, funded by the State Budget, in Romania). The sample account for 57.74% of the population and meets the representativeness criteria, with a sampling error of $\pm 5\%$ and a reliability level above 95%.

3. Research findings

3.1. Variable reliability analysis

In order to assess the internal consistency of the items within each variable, namely the way that these items tend to measure the same thing (the internal reliability analysis of the construct), Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. It was generated using the software SPSS 20 for Windows (Analyse $\rightarrow$ Scale $\rightarrow$ Reliability Analysis). In order to consider a variable (a construct) reliable, Schumacker and Lomax (2004) recommend a threshold of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7, while Malhotra (1996) of 0.6. In addition, George and Mallery (2003) argue as follows: Alpha > 0.9 (excellent), Alpha > 0.8 (good), Alpha > 0.7 (acceptable), Alpha > 0.6 (disputable), Alpha > 0.5 (weak), Alpha < 0.5 (unacceptable) (Petrea et al., 2020).

3.1.1. The dependent variable *Belonging to IVI*

Taking into account the aforementioned aspects, it may be stated that the reliability analysis of the dependent variable *belonging to IVI*, with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.63 (Table 4), is good according to Malhotra (1996) and disputable according to George and Marllery (2003), and Petrea et al. (2020).

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the dependent variable
Belonging to IVI

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.633	.627	8

3.1.2. The independent variables

The reliability analysis of the independent variable *QM - Quality of managers*, with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient 0.82 (Table 5), is good according to both Malhotra (1996) and George and Marllery (2003).

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the variable Quality of managers (QM)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.824	.834	5

The reliability analysis of the independent variable *Internal communication - IC*, with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient 0.90 (Table 6), is good according to Malhotra (1996) and excellent according to George and Marllery (2003), Petrea et al. (2020).

Table 6. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the dependent variable Internal communication (IC)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.633	.627	8

3.2. Hypotheses testing

In testing the hypotheses (confirmed / not confirmed) the first phase was to calculate the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Based on the results in the test, we used Pearson's coefficient (for a normal, parametric distribution of the answers) or Spearman's coefficient (for a non-normal, non-parametric distribution of the answers).

In our research, all three variables have a non-normal distribution of the answers. In other words, the scores for each variable have a significant asymmetry. Consequently, we will use for testing the variables Spearman's correlation coefficient.

Sperman's coefficient is Pearson's correlation coefficient applied to certain scores, after putting them in ascending order for the two variables (that were correlated) individually. The results obtained upon calculating Spearman's correlation coefficient (table 7) may be interpreted based on Cohen's pool (1988).

Table 7. Interpretation of the correlation coefficient

No. Correlation	Correlation coefficient "r"	
	Positive	Negative
1. Low	Between 0.1 and 0.3	Between -0.1 and -0.3
2. Average	Between 0.3 and 0.5	Between -0.3 and -0.5
3. High	Between 0.5 and 1.0	Between -0.5 and -1.0

3.2.1. Testing the hypothesis H1 - There is a positive correlation between the quality of managers (QM) and belonging to IVI.

There is an average positive correlation ($r = 0.466$) between QM in the faculties of physical education and sport and belonging to IVI according to the results within the non-parametric bivariate correlation analysis (Table 8). The significance threshold (p) is lower than 0.01 ($\text{sig.} = 0.000$) which shows a correlation between the two variables. In other words, there is a probability lower than 1% to obtain an r of 0.466 if there were no correlation between the two variables. This aspect allows us to state that the hypothesis H1 is confirmed.

Table 8. Correlation between variables Quality of managers and Belonging to IVI

			QM	Belonging to IVI
Spearman's rho	Independent Variable QM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.466**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	261	261
	Dependent variable Belonging to IVI	Correlation Coefficient	.466**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	261	261

By calculating the non-standardised regression coefficient (B) between the independent variable QM and the dependent variable belonging to IVI, we obtained a value of 0.283 (Table 9). It means that for each increase by a unit of the variable QM, we will determine an increase by 0.28 units of the variable belonging to IVI.

Table 9. Simple regression between variables Quality of managers and Belonging to IVI

Model Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	95.0% Reliability Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error			Sig.	Lower band	Upper band
(Constant)	2.755	.151		18.251	.000	2.457 3.053	
QM	.283	.038	.472	7.545	.000	.209 .358	

3.2.2. Testing the hypothesis H2 - There is a positive correlation between the internal communication (IC) and belonging to IVI (Petrea et al., 2020).

There is an average positive correlation ($r = 0.472$) between IC in the faculties of physical education and sport and belonging to IVI according to the results within the non-parametric bivariate correlation analysis (Table 10). The significance threshold (p) is lower than 0.01 ($\text{sig.} = 0.000$) which shows a correlation between the two variables. In other words, there is a probability lower than 1% to obtain an r of 0.472 if there were no correlation between the two variables. This aspect allows us to state that the hypothesis H2 is confirmed.

Table 10. Correlation between variables Internal communication and Belonging to IVI

			IC	Belonging to IVI
Spearman's rho	Independent Variable IC	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.466**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	261	261
	Dependent variable Belonging to IVI	Correlation Coefficient	.472**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	261	261

By calculating the non-standardised regression coefficient (B) between the independent variable *IC* and the dependent variable belonging to IVI, we obtained a value of 0.275 (Table 11). It means that for each increase by a unit of the variable *IC*, we will determine an increase by 0.27 units of the variable belonging to IVI (Petrea et al., 2020).

Table 11. Simple regression between variables Internal communication and Belonging to IVI

Model Coefficients	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Reliability Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error				Lower band	Upper band
(Constant)	2.829	.138		20.568	.000	2.558	3.100
IC	.275	.035	.482	7.761	.000	.205	.344

4. Discussions

In the study conducted by Van den Bosch et al. (2006) in 20 private companies in the Netherlands, on a sample of 686 persons, they obtained different results from those within our research. More precisely, the quality of managers was not found to have a positive effect on belonging to IVI ($r=0.08$); furthermore, the good internal communication had no positive effect on belonging to IVI ($r=0.09$). In our study, the correlation between the variable QM and belonging to IVI is averagely positive ($r=0.46$), on a two-tailed significance test, at a probability level of 0.001 or lower ($\text{sig.}=,000$), namely a statistically significant correlation. In addition, the non-standardised regression coefficient (B) between the two variables is 0.28, which means that for each increase by a unit of the variable QM, we will determine an increase by 0.28 units of the variable belonging to IVI.

The correlation between the variable IC and belonging to IVI is averagely positive ($r=0.47$), on a two-tailed significance test, at a probability level of 0.001 or lower ($\text{sig.}=,000$), meaning a statistically significant correlation. In addition, the non-standardised regression coefficient (B) between the two variables is 0.27, which means that for each increase by a unit of the variable IC, we will determine an increase by 0.27 units of the variable belonging to IVI. IC is an important and determining factor in ensuring the satisfaction of the employees (Jacobs et al., 2015) and also for obtaining organisational success (Borca & Baesu, 2014; Vercic et al, 2012; Welch, 2012). This studies showing the IC effect on the satisfaction of the employees at the workplace, as well as the effect on obtaining organisational success determine us to rely on our own findings concerning the positive effect of IC and QM on belonging to visual identity elements (name, logo, colour, type of font, slogan).

Romanian higher education entities are, organizationally speaking, rather remote from current marketing trends. Universities, perennial institutions meant to further civilization must align to modern processes of social transformation, where individuals continuously seek new survival and adaptation techniques, based on the ever-changing variables imposed by the environment.

5. Conclusions

In the organizations covered by the study, the quality of managers (deans, vice-deans and heads of departments) has a positive influence on the belonging of employees (the teaching staff members) to the institutional visual identity of the faculty. Any increase in the quality of managers will

thus determine an increase in the employees' institutional sense of belonging. Statistically, the correlation has average intensity, $r = 0.46$ and the regression has a 1 to 0.28 ratio. An increase in the quality of managers by a unit will thus determine an increase by 0.28 units of the employees' belonging to the visual identity of the institution.

In Romania, within the Faculties of Physical Education and Sport, funded by the State Budget, internal communication (between managers and employees, as well as between employees) influences positively the employees' belonging to the institutional visual identity of the faculty. Any increase in internal communication will determine an increase in the employees' institutional sense of belonging. Statistically, the correlation has average intensity, $r = 0.47$ and the regression has a 1 to 0.27 ratio. An increase in internal communication by a unit will thus determine an increase by 0.27 units of the employees' belonging to the visual identity of the institution.

A strong sense of belonging to the institutional visual identity is directly determined by the quality of managers hired by the higher education establishment, as well as by the internal communication level within each faculty.

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