The Importance of Corporate Culture in Passenger Transport Companies in Slovakia in The Post-Covid Period*

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Abstract

Corporate culture is an important and inseparable part of business activity and an important management tool. It points to the expression of the value relationship between management and employees. It is also gaining prominence in the context of the impact on business performance. A strong corporate culture creates an opportunity to differentiate yourself from the competition and promotes corporate prosperity. Positive relationships are also important to restore the lost psychological comfort not only of managers, but also of subordinates and each other. These were disrupted by the pandemic, which separated many people to the home office for a long time. In this paper, we address this issue in terms of the possibility of consolidating corporate culture in passenger transport companies in Slovakia. In the conditions of the selected company, in the first step we analyse the current level of application of organizational culture through the method of questioning, in the form of a questionnaire. Following the evaluation, we will use the findings in the application of specific opportunities to improve corporate culture, to strengthen interpersonal relationships and increase performance in the company.

Keywords: value relations, corporate culture, interpersonal relationships.

Introduction

Achieving success and prosperity is a priority goal of every single company. Based on this, the overall policy, decisions and activities of the company are reflected; therefore, the corporate culture becomes an important factor. It is about the daily life of the company, conflict resolution, remuneration, motivation, communication, the overall functioning of the company. It is important that employees understand the corporate culture and that managers "live" it. Every company is characterized by the fact that it creates its own corporate culture, which is in a way unique, unmistakable and original. Corporate culture is a broad-spectrum area, an integral part of successful business management and management. Nevertheless, many companies today do not realize the need for a corporate culture and take it for granted. It is important for managers to remember that good leadership, as well as aligning the company's culture, can be a source of success and prosperity. At the same time, it is important that the usual and accepted ways of behaving, which are gradually becoming the norm, contribute to increasing motivation and performance, regardless of the company in which this process takes place. In both manufacturing and non-manufacturing, for-profit or non-profit, there are people, employees and managers everywhere. It is also true that corporate culture can be adopted in small, medium or large. Prystupa et al. (2017) the statement that organizational culture is an important factor influencing knowledge management processes in small companies. Small entities usually have limited resources, both human and financial, to be able to develop advanced

knowledge management systems. The factor of beneficial interpersonal relations is therefore also important in companies providing transport services. The aim of the paper is to analyse the current state of corporate culture in a selected company that provides such services. The result of the analysis are suggestions for improving the corporate culture in the company. To fulfil the goal, we used the theoretical knowledge base of the problem. We also used methods of analysis, synthesis, as well as qualitative and quantitative methods of diagnosing corporate culture. As part of qualitative diagnostics, we focused on obtaining information through in-depth interview and observation. We also analysed the documents provided by the company. As part of quantitative diagnostics, we used the method of questioning, in the form of a questionnaire, based on which we compiled a questionnaire survey. The evaluation of the current state of corporate culture in the company was beneficial for analysis, evaluation and subsequent proposals and recommendations.

Theoretical background of the problem

The term culture has an important meaning and is part of everyday life, and its use has different meanings. It represents a significant advantage for companies as such but also in relation to the competition. Vydrova (2012), who states that many companies are able to identify their key competitive advantage, most of them are not, also confirms this. Generally, these companies can identify their key knowledge in the two main areas, which are knowledge workers and company culture. In general, in our environment, a person who attends theatre, concerts, is interested in classical music, classical literature and behaves culturally is considered "cultural". Those who do not meet these criteria are referred to as non-cultural. The term "culture" is a word of Latin origin, it is derived from the word "colere" - "cultum", and has several meanings, such as cultivating, nurturing, cultivating, caring, respecting, respecting. Attempts to precisely define and define the concept of culture have lasted for more than a century. The main reason for the differentiation of the concept of culture is considered the increase in anthropology and inconsistency in defining the basic characteristics. Thus, the existence of more than two hundred definitions of culture is mentioned in the professional literature, and none of these definitions has a pure form (Dvorský, 2016). The beginnings of culture date back to the period when the first theories began to form, which emphasize the importance of psychological and social factors in the existence of the company. The works of C. Alderfer, E. May, A. Maslow already describe certain features and aspects of corporate culture, even though these authors did not name it that way. According to the author Kachaňáková (2010), the history of the term corporate culture is connected with the name of M. Tulius Cicero, who referred to philosophy as the "culture of the spirit", through which he linked the term to the term human education. The very first scientific definition of corporate culture can be considered the definition first mentioned by EB Tylor in 1871: "Culture and civilization is a complex whole that includes faith, knowledge, law, art, customs, morals, and other customs and abilities which are adopted by man as a member of society."(Kachaňáková, 2010) Geert Hofsfede (1983) argues that the relationship between management and national cultures has not been so obvious in the past. In Europe and the United States, the idea prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s that management was something universal. In companies, distance and strength are considered important parameters of culture. Businesses are culturally dependent and the symbols in them have a great meaning, a sense of people. The culture in the company is very strongly influenced by what we have learned in the family, at school, in the work environment. In the context of management, the first mentions of corporate culture appear in the 60s of the last century or even older. The term has been more widely used since the 1970s, becoming popular in the early 1980s. Thus, it can be stated that the 70's and 80's represent an increased interest in the field of corporate culture. The growing attention to the cultural aspects of the company was accompanied mainly by the economic growth of Japan. It is also referred to in the literature as the "Japanese Economic Miracle." Based on this, questions arose about the effectiveness of management techniques, which aroused interest in the philosophy of Japanese companies and how to manage them (Lukášová, 2010). The authors Bednárová et al. (2012), according to them, the greatest expansion of corporate culture was recorded in the 80s and 90s of the last century. During this period, managers, various consulting firms and researchers began publishing a number of articles on corporate culture. People got the impression that something new had emerged that is still unexplored. In fact, corporate culture was known much earlier. According to the above-mentioned Taylor, and thus his "Taylor theory", enterprise as a system was the basis for the study of enterprise culture. In 1922, author Nicklish had a different opinion. According to "Nicklish's theory", the basis is considered man, as well as his role in the integration of corporate elements that create the atmosphere of the company. He argues that capital is not considered the basis of the company, but the "spirit of work". Another scientist who deals with corporate culture was Ulrich. The year 1968 is the year when he published a book in which he emphasized not only the social, material, communicative category of the company, but also the value dimension. He argued that the decisions of the people working in the company are influenced by the notion of value, so when examining the culture of the company, it is necessary to evaluate all the processes, circumstances and actions related to the company as a whole. The need to explore corporate culture only became the focus of Waterman and Peters' research work, which explored the secrets of corporate success. This research led them to the culture of the company. The research was based on a "microbase", i.e. between companies. Next on the "macro base", i.e. within the country. An "intellectual exploration" followed, comparing the cultures of two or more countries. The authors Bednárová et al. (2012) supplement Hofstede's 1991 statement that intellectual research began by comparing Japanese and American culture. Finally, "international comparison", which is the fourth area of research. As stated by the author Kachaňáková (2010), with whom the authors Bednárová et al., Lukášová et al. and many more. E. Schein is also considered the founder of the most widely used model presenting the structure of

corporate culture, while the elements of corporate culture are divided into three basic levels. These levels are artefacts, value-norms-standards and basic assumptions. Various authors have created a number of "types of corporate culture", but most authors as well as Kachaňáková (2010) agree and consider the typology according to "T." to be the most important. Deal and Kennedy, who define" analytical-project "culture," process "culture, all or nothing culture and bread and games "culture". This typology dates from 1982. According to the author Lukášová (2010), the division according to „R. Harrison and British author Ch. Handy ", who divide culture into: culture of" power", culture of" role ", culture of" performance "and culture of "persons ". This typology was first mentioned in 1972 and is the oldest. Slovak authors Bednárová et al. (2012) published a book entitled "Intellectual Management and Corporate Culture". In their publications, they state that all companies have a certain type of corporate culture, regardless of their form, size, focus and goals. The company culture is represented by the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and customs that make the company a whole. The publications also provide a definition of corporate culture, which is considered more complex: "Corporate culture is behaviour, values that help to create a psychological and social environment of the company, which is formed by experience, expectations, values, philosophy of the company. They are manifested by interaction with the environment and internal functioning and image. „On the contrary, the Czech authors Cejthamr and Dědina (2010) published a book entitled "Management and Organizational Behaviour ". The authors argue that the concept of corporate culture stems from a general understanding of culture. Unlike the Slovak author Bednárová, they created a relatively simple definition of corporate culture, which reads: "Corporate culture is a set of values, customs, attitudes and trust that form the conditions of action and thinking within the company." Based on these two definitions of corporate culture, it is clear that the definitions can be of different complexity. The Czech authors Bělohlávek et al. (2001) describe in their publication "Management" the corporate culture of different countries. According to them, differences in the corporate culture of different nations in the late 1970s attracted attention. Authors Cerovic et al. (2006) point to the fact that the corporate culture is a system of rituals, behaviour patterns, norms and values shared by the majority of employees in a company. The application of Japanese management to European or American conditions fails; this method of leadership only works in Japan. The reason is a different cultural tradition. The "Japanese corporate culture" is characterized by the fact that a Japanese worker is used to working in difficult conditions, for low pay. His motivation is duty. Their rituals and prayers are ridiculous for Europeans. Cultural roots are rooted in history. Current research suggests, as claimed by Miah et al. (2007), that a Japanese parent company culture tends to have a much stronger influence with Japanese companies operating in Japan. Japanese parent company culture tends to have less influence than the South Asian national culture in shaping the HRM styles and practices in Japanese subsidiaries / joint ventures operating in South Asia. While some South Asian firms are in the initial stages of learning about participatory HRM from foreign companies, most still tend to maintain their national culture and traditional ways in the operating systems of their organizations. Vandenhoven et al. (1994) report in their publication that Japanese culture is normally considered to engage groupness and perseverance. In the subsidiaries that Japanese companies set up in Europe, much of that culture prevails. Characteristics of these companies are consensus decision-making (nemawashi), continuous improvement (kaizen), regular change of president, strong informal communication, loyalty to employees, and lack of written long-term plans. In the case of the "German corporate culture", the emphasis is on accuracy, discipline, strict compliance with laws and standards. Seriousness is valued, and humour is undesirable. The exception is the Germans living in the south of the country, who are cheerful and do not reject humour. Teamwork, democratic employee management and participation characterize the „British corporate culture". The work environment is friendly; humour is an integral part. According to dress, behaviour and language, people are assigned to a certain social class. Planning is considered important, but it is seldom followed. He considers the "French corporate culture" to be important logical and mathematical systems. As for the work environment, everyone fights for himself or herself, using expressive skills and contacts. In the case of the "corporate culture of Italy", Italians are considered masters of improvisation. I do not understand much of the point of planning and in practical life; they tend to follow the current situation. They know how to combine incompatible duties. They are friendly, warm, and sensitive to colleagues and business partners. They hate arrogance. They have no problem changing the daily schedule. The gradual removal of national barriers eliminates differences between national corporate cultures. It is indisputable that corporate culture has a positive impact in many respects, but recent research also points to certain negative impacts of the so-called elitist cultures. As Bussmann et al. (2018), Results showed that hierarchical-elitist cultures increase the susceptibility to corruption and impede the preventive effect of single anti-corruption measures.

Survey and Results

We can state that the company in question is one of the largest carriers in the field of suburban transport in the Slovak Republic. It focuses exclusively on the performance of bus transport. Its dominant feature is the provision of suburban, urban, long-distance, international and occasional transport, which is characterized by tour transport, which is concentrated in the summer season, and the performance of contracted transport is realized. The structure of employees is shown in Figure 1.

Fig 1. Employee structure

Corporate culture audit

As part of the analysis of the current state, we identified important characteristics using selected methods when using layout materials. We focused on the analysis of the current state of corporate culture in the company, which will result in a questionnaire survey addressed to employees of the company. To obtain the necessary information, we used qualitative diagnostics of corporate culture carried out in the form of in-depth interviews, observation and analysis of documents, as well as qualitative diagnostics, which was carried out through a questionnaire.

Based on the company's internal material, the company's product / service is the provision of suburban bus transport, urban bus transport, long-distance, i.e. domestic transport and tour transport. Another product is the shipping card, which provides a number of benefits upon purchase. For example, getting a discount on travel, cashless payment, and discounts in selected stores. The transport card can be recharged in the e-shop. An important product is the Cyklobus - these are buses that are equipped with special holders and trailers for transporting bicycles. Sale of seats and travel tickets - seats and travel tickets can be purchased at selected points of sale. Furthermore, there are LCD monitors in the buses and Wi-Fi - constant modernization ensures that the buses are equipped with air conditioning, Wi-Fi connection, are less noisy and more comfortable. UBIAN follows - it is a popular mobile and web application that is used to search for departure times not only of buses, but also of trains and public transport. Last but not least, it is Passenger Awareness - passengers have access to traffic information mainly through notice and book timetables, information boards on the web, information boards, through social networks and the UBIAN product. The services in the client centres provide processing of transport cards, credit recharging, verification and processing of transport cards for students and pupils, issuing of ID cards, sale of tickets and seats, acceptance of complaints and information about timetables.

The architecture of the building and the equipment give an older impression. According to the company's internal material, the building consists of two floors. There are offices on the first floor. Office equipment varies depending on the job position. There is also a so-called "Historical room", which is a smaller "museum" of society in which historical artefacts and objects are located. The company also provides various benefits. In addition, Ok bonus cards are one of the most up-to-date - they represent special electronic vouchers. There is a sum of € 200 on the vouchers. This bonus can only be used in selected stores. Holiday meal vouchers - each employee received a € 8 meal voucher for each day of the holiday.

The company uses various forms of promotion and promotional materials for its promotion. This external promotion (print advertising, carrier's website, social networks, leaflets, brochures) contain various information about the company. The company also uses posters and stickers for the rear trunks of buses for its promotion. For its employees, it mainly uses the company's periodical called NewsBus, which provides regular information about employees, the company and various newsletters. The business card also includes the name of the competent person, job title, mobile contact, e-mail contact, company headquarters and website.

Correspondence is regulated based on internal company guidelines according to the instructions of the general director of the company. The company uses the prescribed forms for written communication. If they are filled in, it is necessary to state the title first, then the first name and surname. A clear stylization and rules of Slovak orthography are needed.

The company logo is perceived as a basic element used for visual communication with the company's clients. It is well

classifiable and identifiable for the target group. The company logo must be displayed on all promotional items, documents, company clothing and the like. It is necessary to use a single logo. The company logo exists in two variants - basic and additional variant.

In addition to the logo, the company also uses corporate "mascots" for its representation, who are supposed to look funny and cheerful. Several mascots are shown in Figure 2.

Fig 2. Corporate "mascots"

The company's corporate colours are red and blue, which are part of the above-mentioned logo. The basic font is also used in connection with the company's corporate colours. In the case of marketing communication, it is recommended to use the font "TitilliumText". The additional font "Market Felt" is used for refinement, which is used in case of differentiation With regard to business clothing, the employer provides client centre employees with clothing uppers that ensure that their affiliation with the employer is obvious. It is the duty of the client centre employee to start work properly organized. The minimum standard is a one-color-pale blue women's blouse with the company logo and a blue scarf. Driver's garments are used exclusively for business purposes. It is also the duty of the driver to get to work properly organized. The minimum standard is a one-color-pale blue shirt, containing the logo, a one-color-pale blue polo shirt, containing the logo, and long-dark-one-color trousers. Additional components of clothing uppers include a tie, sweater, vest and windbreaker. It is necessary that the garment uppers are marked with a visible applique. Other employees, as well as THP employees, should dress appropriately, appropriate to the job classification and the work they perform. This group of employees does not have a work uniform, but it is excluded to wear shorts and sportswear.

The company tells various stories - stories - about the present or the past, which come mainly from the drivers. Various articles related to this area are also published on the website The company's annual habit is to organize New Year's meetings for employees - the beginning of the year. New Year's cabbage is also organized. Congratulations on the life and work anniversaries that employees have made are regularly published in the company's periodical "NewsBus". It is the custom of the company to participate in various competitions. The company regularly organizes an "Open Day", and employees are provided with a voucher for refreshments during the event. The company also organizes joint activities for the best employees, which can be for example, training in safe driving and driving skills - "Skid School". The company also seeks to involve employees in sustainable mobility programs, as exemplified by the "To Work on a Bike" event, which supports non-motorized transport.

Ceremonial events and awards ceremonies include the "Accident-Free Ride" event, which recognizes drivers who have travelled a number of kilometres without an accident. It is also awarded the "Most Skillful Driver Award". Based on an internal interview, we can say that the company considers the greeting on arrival / departure as well as a business meeting to be a ritual.

After a thorough consultation with a marketing specialist, we found out that the term "hero" of the company is not foreign at all. The company considers employees to be "corporate heroes" who have been driving for many years without an accident. Working in the same position for years, there is something extraordinary in one company today. Therefore, the company highly values the responsible approach, loyalty and perseverance of its employees. Twice a year, the company rewards drivers who travel without a car with a financial reward and a gold clasp. Some drivers have been driving without a road accident for forty years, and have driven two million kilometres without a car accident, and such people are considered corporate heroes.

In order to evaluate the corporate culture of the company in question, they carried out a questionnaire survey. We focused on the internal evaluation of corporate culture by employees. The structure of the questionnaire consists of 22 questions. The questionnaire contains 21 closed questions, one of which is open so that the employee can express his personal opinion. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part consists of identification data, the second part is focused on the analysis of the corporate culture in the company. To obtain the necessary data, we used quantitative diagnostics performed in the form of a questionnaire method, which is used to obtain a number of answers from selected respondents in a relatively short period. The time horizon for completing the questionnaire was two weeks, from 03. 03. 2021 - 17. 03. 2021, the reason is that the drivers work on two shifts. We created the questionnaire through the Google questionnaire and serves to obtain a variety of views, attitudes related to corporate culture. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, it can be stated that corporate culture has its narrow place in the field of communication. Therefore, we recommend the company to hold regular discussions on problematic topics and to solve problems that would be the content of the working

meeting. The survey also revealed that there is a lack of discussion on various problematic topics. Therefore, we suggest that companies hold regular workshops at least once a month to discuss them. In order to make the meeting as effective as possible for the employer and the employee, we designed its course in several steps. The first step in an effective meeting is to determine the topic to be discussed. It is also important to write a list of participants in the meeting, drawing up a meeting program. It is necessary to inform employees by e-mail or telephone about the time, date, local and duration of the meeting and to keep them informed about the meeting program.

To ensure better, better and more significant promotion of the company, we propose to repair the company logo or replace it with a new one, which will have strong colours. According to the analysis, the company organizes a number of social events organized for employees. Nevertheless, employees would take more of these social events to strengthen relationships and teamwork in the workplace. This would strengthen friendships and make employees more willing to meet in their leisure time outside the company in which they work. Among the events / events based on employee proposals, we suggest that the company regularly organize an "International Children's Day", which would take place in early June, i.e. in the warm summer months. It would include a varied program for employees' children, as well as a sports activity for employees in the form of a football tournament. On the contrary, in the winter months, the company could organize an event called "Employee Ball", which would be attended by employees with families, including the company's management. Refreshments, buffets and a rich program would be provided. The representative event would be the organization of "Historic Bus Rides". While such a bus could transfer the company's employees, the drivers would play the role of a passenger and not a driver.

Conclusion

The possibilities for companies to return to the original regime after the Covid19 pandemic represent the whole spectrum, from economic recovery to the improvement of psychosocial aspects. In this context, we focused on the impact of corporate culture, knowing that it is an important determinant of a company's performance and benefits. This creates "added value" that differentiates the company from the competition and helps to succeed and continue to grow. However, it is often neglected in practice, so we pointed out its content and opportunities for improvement. Corporate culture has a significant impact on all aspects of business management. All management activities are culturally dependent, because their activities are related not only to decisions about material objects, but also to the work of values and symbols that are important to people. Due to the assumptions and values, the corporate culture influences the system of management decisions and thus affects the activities of the entire business entity.

Acknowledgment

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