Folia Oeconomica Stetinensia
Volume 23 (2023) Issue 1
DOI: 10.2478/foli-2023-0007 | 124–143
ISSN (print): 1730-4237 | ISSN (online): 1898-0198
www.wnus.edu.pl/fos

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CORPORATE IDEOLOGIES OF BANKS OPERATING IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

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Received 28.11.2022, Revised 16.03.2023, Accepted 24.03.2023

Abstract

Research background: Corporate ideology is perceived as a set of fundamental beliefs held by company members about how the company and its members should behave in relation to one another and the outside world. In this paper, corporate ideology is treated as the basis for creating an organization's identity and as an extremely important factor in its success.
Purpose: The aim of this paper is to analyze the corporate ideologies of banks operating in the Republic of Croatia, to classify different ideologies, and finally, to determine what kind of identity the surveyed banks communicate through their corporate ideologies.
Research methodology: A comparative and content analysis are applied as qualitative methods of research of an interpretative character.
Results: The corporate ideologies of two of the analyzed banks (ZABA and Erste) are described as social institutionalism, and PBZ's ideology is labeled as social corporatism. Detected corporate ideologies do not serve to build the authenticity of banks' identities.
Novelty: The main novelty of this research is in the methodology of reaching corporate ideologies. Unlike previous works on corporate ideology, in this paper public messages communicated in (digital) media were

the main sources for the analysis of an organization's core values and ideologies resulting from it. Also, a simple framework for the possible classification of different corporate ideologies was provided.

Keywords: core purpose, core values, corporate identity, corporate ideology

JEL classification: L2, G2, M31

Introduction

In the last three decades, both academic and business communities have shown considerable interest in organizational culture and its importance for an organization. Organizational culture is defined as "a set of shared values, goals, attitudes, and practices that characterize an organization" (Daley, 2022). At the moment, there is universal consensus in the academic literature (1) that organizational culture exists, (2) that it plays a key role in shaping behaviour in organizations, and (3) that it has considerable importance in managing an organization's identity (Watkins, 2013).

Organizational culture is a complex concept that consists of several elements: symbols, language, ritual, ideology, and myth (Goll, Zeitz, 1991). In this paper, we will specifically focus on one of these elements, namely, corporate ideology. We will try to provide a framework to analyze and compare the corporate ideology of similar enterprises, namely banks, based on publicly communicated messages in digital media. This specific topic, as well as the methodology of data collection, to our knowledge, has not yet been the subject of academic interest.

In accordance with the previously identified research gap, the first aim of this paper is to provide a specific conceptualization of the term on the theoretical level that is applicable on the operational level as well. We define corporate ideology as a system made up of corporate core values and purpose. Accordingly, we infer that it comprises values and purpose that provide the frame of reference for organizational action. Once we have clearly defined the basic concepts of corporate ideology, a valid and reliable measure of this construct has been developed, which is useful for comparative research. Finally, relying on Mintzberg's model of organizational structure (1989), we treat corporate ideology not only as closely related to the concept of corporate culture, but as the main component of an organization's identity (Stuart, 1999, p. 154). Therefore, the management of corporate ideology, and especially the values and purpose on which it is based, function as an extremely important aspect of the

management of organizational identity. The main assumption is that "if the corporate identity is well managed, then the resulting corporate image will accurately reflect the values, beliefs and strategic direction of the company" (Stuart, 1999, p. 151).

After clarifying the concept of corporate ideology, the second aim of this paper is to test the previously presented construct empirically. To do that, a comparative analysis of the corporate ideologies of three banks with the largest market share in the Republic of Croatia was done. Those are ZABA (Zagrebačka banka), PBZ (Privredna banka Zagreb) and Erste (Erste&Steiermärkische Bank).

The analysis was threefold, in line with the declared conceptualization of the term. First, to reach the organizational values of the three chosen banks, the content analysis of the externally communicated messages was done and based on banks' promotional articles in the Croatian digital media. Second, to reach for the core purpose of the organization, banks' mission statements were consulted. Finally, to describe different banks' ideologies that emanate from their core values and core purposes, a concept of corporate social responsibility was employed and a possible classification of banks' corporate ideology was proposed.

1. Literature review

1.1. Corporate ideology

All relevant pieces of research on ideology start from one of the following assumptions: the first is that there is no generally accepted definition of the phenomenon, and the second is that it is one of the most elusive concepts in the social sciences (Malešević, 2004, p. 29). This paper starts from a value-neutral or functionalist understanding of the concept of ideology that focuses on examining the purpose and contribution of ideology to social life and the life of an organization. In this theoretical perspective, ideology is first and foremost a system of ideas with certain functions such as identification, legitimacy, integration and socialization. From this theoretical perspective, Goll and Zeitz define corporate ideology as "major beliefs and values expressed by top management that provide organizational members with a frame of reference for action" (Goll, Zeitz, 1991, p. 191). According to Ruiz, "a company's ideology can be traced back to its mission statement, philosophy, and code of ethics" (Ruiz, 2022).

Both of these definitions explicitly stress the core concepts that constitute corporate ideology. On the one hand, Goll and Zeitz extrapolate values and beliefs as the basic elements of corporate ideology, while Ruiz detects mission statement, philosophy and code of ethics as its essential elements. We find both of these definitions problematic when it comes to the

operational level of analysis. In the first case, the distinction between concepts (values and beliefs) is not quite clear, since values are often defined as enduring beliefs (Rokeach, 1973) or core beliefs (Siegler, 2017). On the other hand, philosophy is a rather vague or complex term, very similar to ideology itself.

In order to develop a valid and reliable measure of corporate ideology that would be useful for comparative research, we decided to rely on the work of Collins and Porras (2002). In their book *Built to Last*, the authors claim that the core ideology comprises of core values and sense of purpose beyond just making money (Collins, Porras, 2002). For the purpose of this paper, we find this 'minimalist' definition of corporate ideology very useful since it comprises two clear concepts that are easy to operationalize since the majority of companies publicly proclaim their corporate values and purpose of their organization.

Until the 1990s, there has been a relatively small number of research papers on corporate ideology, which has also caused the lack of agreement on how to conceptualize and measure it (Goll, Zeitz, 1991). Since then, there has been a few papers on corporate ideology, in which the subject was approached from various aspects, mostly from critical standpoints. Those works were criticizing, e.g., ideology of work/life balance (see Hofmann, Cowan, 2008), property rights ideology in organization's management (see Englander, Kaufman, 2004), and the ideology of maximizing shareholder value (see Lazonick, O'Sullivan, 2000). Goll *et al.* (2001) investigated the links between the composition of top management teams, corporate ideology and firm performance.

Corporate ideology, in addition to its internal function, also serves as a basis for the management of corporate identity. Namely, corporate ideology, along with defining the correct way of behaving within an organization, also functions as a foundation for building the identity of the organization, which then results in a favorable public image. As claimed by Goll and Zeitz, corporate ideology refers to the explicit and publicly expressed values and purpose. It provides legitimation, not only to members of the organization, but to outsiders as well (Goll, Zeitz, 1991). In this theoretical perspective, the exploration of corporate ideologies is treated as a subfield of study of corporate communications (Fox, 2006). In that sense, this paper focuses on corporate ideology as a function in the creation of the favorable public image of an organization, i.e. as a reflection of corporate identity of the same organization.

It seems like lately there is not much literature on corporate ideology, and that, after Collins and Porras and their famous book, this concept went under the radar of academics in the field. Maybe that is so because *ideology* as a concept is more prominent in political science and sociology, or because the terms "identity", "discourse" or "meta-narrative" are more prominent

in the theoretical literature of postmodernism. However, corporate ideology could be a very useful analytical tool. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to bring light onto this concept, to present it as something worth exploring, and to attract interest in this concept.

1.2. Core values and purpose

As was already stated, the concept of corporate ideology that is employed in this paper is the one that defines it as depending on a company's core values as well as its core purpose (Collins, Porras, 2002). According to that, the first the term of corporate values, the one of corporate purpose will be investigated.

According to Rokeach, "value is the long-held belief that a certain way of behaving or being is personally or socially more acceptable or desirable than the opposite way of behaving or being" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). Yohn defines core values as "essential and enduring principles and priorities that prescribe the desired way of thinking and behaviour of all who work in an organization" (Yohn, 2018). According to Bowles, an organization's core values are its main principles. Core values are the few beliefs that owners and employees hold to be true (Bowles, 2019a). Today, practically every organization has a set of core values that ideally function as a company's "operational guidelines" (Collins, Porras, 2002).

The second component of an organization's ideology is its purpose. It is an organization's core reason for being. According to Collins and Porras, the purpose is "the organization's fundamental reasons for existence beyond just making money – a perpetual guiding star on the horizon" which should "not be confused with specific goals or business strategies" (Collins, Porras, 2002, p. 132). It should be something permanent, longstanding that is able to stand the test of time. The purpose should also unanimously answer the following question: Why does your company exist, beyond wanting to make money? It is an underlying purpose beyond making money. As argued by Bowles, "when your purpose is clear and it's communicated effectively throughout all of your marketing and your sales materials, then your customers aren't confused about your decisions either" (Bowles, 2019b). In this paper, we detect the purpose of organizations out of their mission statements. In order to justify this approach, we rely on the definition of a mission statement provided by Inyang (2013). According to Inyang, "the mission statement signifies initial clarity of goals and objectives and gives a sense of purpose and direction in the organization… A mission statement is therefore a brief description of a company's fundamental purpose of existence" (Inyang, 2013).

1.3. Typology of corporate ideologies

As was presented earlier, there is a decent amount of works which stress the importance of corporate ideology and which suggest that ideology affects an organization's identity, strategy, practices, and performance. On the other hand, there are few studies that have measured the concept. As argued by Goll and Zeitz (1991), most studies have been limited to the analysis of ideological themes that are evident in speeches delivered by top corporate managers. They depart from this approach and apply the one which focuses on detecting the general dimensions of top management's beliefs and values. By reviewing the related literature, they identify nine dimensions of corporate ideology, on the basis of which they create a typology of ideology. In our view, this approach and related typology is appropriate for the purposes of Goll and Zeitz's research, which was a cross-sectional survey, in which the top managers of more than 645 companies filled out the questionnaire. However, for the purposes of this research, Goll and Zeitz's typology of corporate ideology is not applicable, since most of the dimensions they employ are out of reach of this research. Namely, this research is limited only to the publicly expressed values and purposes and, since one of the aims of this paper is to determine what kind of identity the surveyed banks communicate through their corporate ideologies, we decided to create a typology of corporate ideologies that is appropriate to this purpose. We argue that the main dimension according to which it is possible to classify corporate ideologies is an organization's attitude towards its social environment, i.e. its understanding of corporate social responsibility. As argued by Kampferer, in the process of managing corporate identity, there is less and less emphasis on visual or graphic elements, the name or symbolism of the brand itself, and the key question becomes what the brand stands for, i.e. what values it promotes (Kapferer, 2002).

The classification of the ideology employed in this paper is based on the work of Klonoski (1991) and Carter and Burrit (2007), who classified both theoretical and practical approaches towards corporate social responsibility. According to Klonoski, it is possible to detect different approaches taken towards determining the responsibilities of business institutions to a broader society. Central to this approach is the way one answers on the fundamental question: "Are corporations social institutions?" (Klonoski, 1991), meaning whether or not they have responsibilities toward their social environment and purpose that will go beyond purely making profit. For the purposes of the subject of this paper, we simplified Klonoski's classification, and reduced it to three main types: 1) fundamentalism, 2) social corporatism, and c) social institutionalism. Fundamentalism holds that corporations do not have special moral or social responsibilities and obligations. If those exist, they are limited to the payment of taxes and

provision of employment. Social corporatism accepts the foundations of fundamentalism – that is, the purpose of business and corporations is the creation of profit – but, it also recognizes and accepts a social aspect to corporate existence and action. Finally, social institutionalism assumes that corporations are social institutions with associated social responsibilities (Klonoski, 1991; Carter, Burrit, 2007). It is worth stressing that these three types are distinct from one another and applicable to a wide variety of organizations. This division also suggests that ideologies have some tendency to fall along a continuum from traditional (fundamentalism) to progressive (social institutionalism). On the other hand, we are aware that this typology is just relatively exhaustive of the entire conceptual space of ideology.

2. Methodology

Before moving on to explaining the research methodology, key operational terms should be clarified. In order to do that, the construct of a corporate or organizational ideology that is employed in this research, as well as its function in managing the corporate or organizational identity can be presented graphically as in Figure 1.

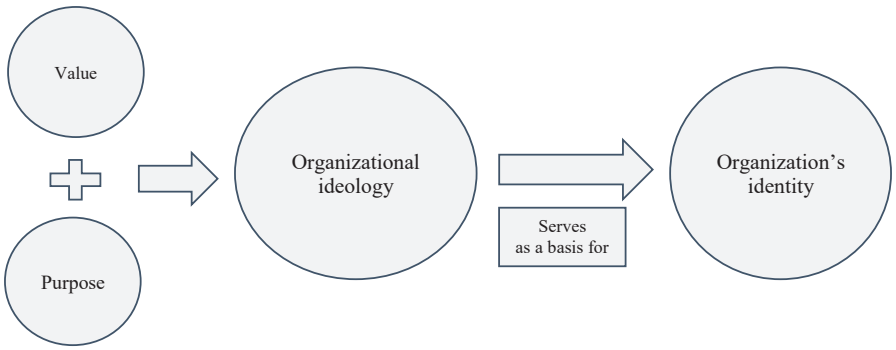


Figure 1. Relation between operational concepts employed in the research

Source: own elaboration.

In order to grasp an organization's identity communicated to the external environment of an organization, an attempt was made to reach for organizational ideology via the proclaimed organizational values hidden in the topics and content of promotional web-articles published in Croatian digital media during 2021. Besides that, the analysis of the corporate ideologies of the three chosen organizations had to rely on exploring their core purposes as well.

The analysis of core values is explained minutely in the following subchapter (2.1), and the analysis of core purposes is based on the mission statements of the chosen research subjects.

To determine whether or not ideologies detected in the analysis of banks' communication with their external environment are aligned with the ideologies communicated through their webpages, reference was made to the previous research conducted by Lacković and Šporčić (2021) in which the banks' websites were the primary source of statements on their values (subchapter 3.4).

All the research and presentation of the research work are based on a comparative analysis, and a content analysis was used as a research method.

It is evident here that in this research only publicly communicated content was taken into account when determining the components of which corporate ideology is consisted. One could argue that by focusing solely on the publicly proclaimed content, one could miss the complete picture or *true* corporate ideology, hidden behind the curtain. To grasp the corporate ideology thoroughly, it would be necessary to analyze documents that are not publicly visible and would probably better reflect a *true* corporate ideology, such as internal acts, annual reports, CSR reports, ESG reports, or to conduct interviews with top management or a survey among employees. However, this was not the intention of this research since it tackles primarily with the work of the corporate communications of chosen banks and their publicly proclaimed identities.

2.1. Core values research methodology

Providing the data

In our research we concentrated on the top 3 banks operating in the Republic of Croatia, according to the largest assets in the period from January 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022, as stated by the Croatian National Bank.[1] The following banks were selected: the Zagrebačka banka p.l.c. (ZABA in the following text), the Privredna banka Zagreb p.l.c. (PBZ in the following text) and the Erste&Steiermärkische Bank p.l.c. (Erste in the following text).

In order to identify the communicated corporate values of those three banks, the content analysis of a media database was used, and the unit of analysis was one web article. The database consisted of web articles, collected from more than 500 Croatian news websites in the year 2021,[2] and it provided access to the vast majority of all organized (not blog) web publishing in Croatia. The original 2021 database, which consisted of 1,311,451 web articles collected by

[1] Source: https://www.hnb.hr/statistika/statisticki-podaci/financijski-sektor/druge-monetarne-financijske-institucije/kreditne-institucije/bankovna-supervizija/pokazatelji-poslovanja-kreditnih-institucija, accessed June 1, 2022.

[2] The authors wish to thank Presscut d.o.o. for providing the database.

a web crawler, was narrowed down to articles regarding banking industries by the keyword search of the database which encompassed "*every mention of a bank in all variants*".

The search resulted in 11,150 web articles in which one of the surveyed banks is mentioned. To scale down the search even further, only those articles that had "promo" stated as the author were taken into account, in other words only those articles written by the bank communication/promotion team. The reason for this limitation was the assumption that "promo" articles are more likely to contain some implicit or explicit corporate values than the regular web news reporting. The obtained number of promo articles was 165.

Promo articles in which banks were only *mentioned* (e.g., promo for festivals and other activities in which the bank is listed as a sponsor) were excluded, so the total score of articles consulted for this research is 29 – 6 articles for ZABA, 11 for PBZ and 12 for Erste. The most important data on those 29 articles (date of publishing, web publisher, headline) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Promotional articles on ZABA, PBZ and Erste in 2021 on Croatian websites

No.	Date	Web publisher	Headline
1	2	3	4
Zagrebačka banka p.l.c.			
1	30.3.2021	jutarnji.hr	Najveći interes za APN kredite u Zabi
2	17.9.2021	jutarnji.hr	Nikad niže kamatne stope za gotovinske kredite u Zabi
3	10.11.2021	Poslovni	Do kraja godine stambeni krediti u Zabi po nižim kamatnim stopama
4	11.11.2021	Poslovni	Do kraja godine stambeni krediti u Zabi po nižim kamatnim stopama
5	25.11.2021	jutarnji.hr	Zaba ponovno nudi odlične kamatne stope na gotovinske kredite
6	8.12.2021	telegram.hr	U MiniPolisu otvorena najmanja poslovnica Zagrebačke banke
Privredna banka Zagreb p.l.c.			
1	23.3.2021	teleskop.hr	PBZ Grupa donirala pola milijuna kuna Odjelu za pedijatriju Opće bolnice u Slavonskom Brodu
2	29.3.2021	jutarnji.hr	PBZ grupa donirala 12.8 milijuna kuna za sanaciju posljedica potresa i pomoć zdravstvenim ustanovama
3	17.7.2021	teleskop.hr	PBZ i Generali najavili održavanje nogometnog kampa za djecu u Hrvatskoj
4	16.9.2021	lider.media	PBZ nositelj certifikata Poslodavac Partner
5	29.9.2021	teleskop.hr	Nova MyWay mobilna aplikacija za korisnike Premium Visa kartica
6	30.9.2021	Poslovni	Premium Visa kartica: Nova MyWay mobilna aplikacija za korisnike
7	1.10.2021	jutarnji.hr	Nova MyWay mobilna aplikacija za korisnike Premium Visa kartica
8	4.10.2021	Story	Nova MyWay mobilna aplikacija za korisnike Premium Visa kartica
9	6.10.2021	jutarnji.hr	PBZ Grupa donirala Dječjem domu Sv. Ana Vinkovci polivalentno igralište za ljepše odrastanje i igru njegovih korisnika

1	2	3	4
10	29.10.2021	jutarnji.hr	PBZ I PROJEKT O2 DRONOM POŠUMILI 10,000 m² OPOŽARENOG PODRUČJA
11	8.11.2021	Poslovni	Novo PBZ digitalno bankarstvo za poslovne subjekte
Erste banka p.l.c.			
1	5.2.2021	Slobodna Dalmacija	Plaćajte režije aplikacijom KEKS Pay – bez naknada!
2	8.2.2021	jutarnji.hr	Još sigurnija kupnja na internetu karticama Erste Card Cluba
3	12.2.2021	fiuman.hr	Plaćajte režije aplikacijom KEKS Pay – bez naknada!
4	12.2.2021	Novi list	Plaćajte režije aplikacijom KEKS Pay – bez naknada!
5	24.5.2021	Story	Erste fragmenti 17: Shvaćena umjetnost
6	24.5.2021	Story	Traže se shvaćeni mladi umjetnici! Pokažite se svijetu, čekamo vas
7	17.6.2021	jutarnji.hr	Značaj svakodnevne fizičke aktivnosti kod djece u razvoju
8	23.7.2021	Story	Ako netko može, to je George. S njim će vaše transakcije biti jednostavnije
9	17.9.2021	lider.media	Erste stambeni krediti – Vjerujte u sebe i u nešto svoje
10	8.11.2021	telegram.hr	Časopisi The Banker i PWM proglasili Erste privatno bankarstvo najboljim u Hrvatskoj
11	9.11.2021	jutarnji.hr	Časopisi The Banker i PWM proglasili Erste privatno bankarstvo najboljim u Hrvatskoj
12	10.11.2021	Slobodna Dalmacija	Časopisi The Banker i PWM proglasili Erste privatno bankarstvo najboljim u Hrvatskoj

Source: the authors' work.

Table 1 shows that there are multiple identical headlines, which means that not all of the articles were unique in their content. The total number of unique articles was 20 – 5 unique articles for ZABA, 8 for PBZ, and 7 for Erste.

It is important to stress that this research concentrated only on articles that where tagged as PROMO because it is considered that this type of content has the greatest potential to serve as a source of communicated corporate ideology. Some other types of mentions of the chosen banks were not taken into account, e.g. stock market analysis articles, because in them there is less room to express corporate ideology or values.

Analysis matrix

The analysis matrix was constructed from the following units of content: Analysis (Yes/No); Bank (ZABA, PBZ or Erste); Topic; Micro topic; Unique (Yes/No); Primary declared corporate value detected; Implicit/Explicit; Example; Secondary corporate values detected.

Operational terms

Primary corporate values are the self-declared corporate values of an organization. Those are the most evident or main corporate values. Their naming in this paper was based on the model of primary corporate values from a previously published research paper (Lacković, Šporčić, 2021). Only one value could be detected as the primary one. Secondary corporate values are also self-declared by the organization, but if those were deemed insufficiently explicit, coders used personal judgment in naming them. Supplemental secondary values are the ones that could have been primary, but are not self-declared by the organization. There was no limit on the number of values that could be detected as secondary.

3. Results

3.1. Organizational values communicated by digital media

In the next section the results of the analysis of organizational or corporate values of the chosen banks are presented graphically, regarding the main topic of the article as well as the primary and secondary corporate values detected in the article, for each of the three chosen banks (ZABA, PBZ, Erste).

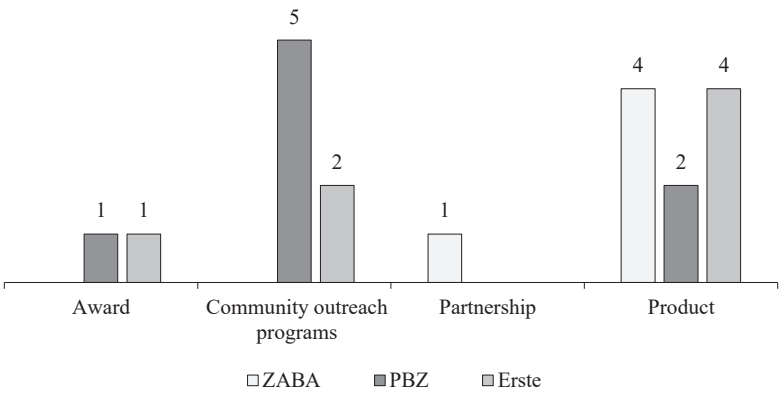


Figure 2. Main topics of the promotional articles of ZABA, PBZ and Erste bank in Croatian digital media

Source: own elaboration.

As seen from the previous graph, the majority (50%) of articles were made with the purpose of promoting banking products (the *Product* category on the graph). The second most prominent

topic was the *Community outreach programs* i.e., donations and organization of events (35%). The third topic by importance is the *Awards* with 10% of the articles, and only ZABA had a *Partnership* related promo article (5%).

From 10 of the detected ZABA corporate values, only two were understood as primary in promotional articles in 2021. The main reason for this is that ZABA used promo articles mostly for the promotion of banking products. Statements such as the one made by Luka Tomašković, director of the ZABA sales network in a promotional article for *jutarnji.hr* ("We have a highly organized system and well-coordinated bankers who can provide our clients with quality and fast processing of requests."[3]) clearly indicate client orientation and organizational efforts on the part of the ZABA to provide for the needs of clients.

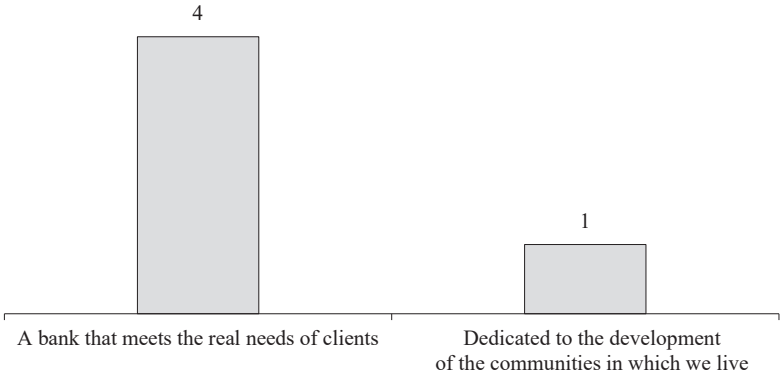


Figure 3. ZABA primary corporate values detected in articles

Source: own elaboration.

The only secondary value that was detected in the ZABA corpus was again *A bank that meets the real needs of clients*, from which we can infer that ZABA, through its promotional articles, wants to communicate its value of being a client-centric organization.

From 9 PBZ corporate values detected in this research, there are 4 detected as primary in the 2021 promotional articles. With a high number of articles on donations and community activities as well as product promotion and awards, there is a diverse mix of communicated values. Statements such as the one in a promotional article on the webpage *jutarnji.hr* ("PBZ is not only a market leader in many areas of banking and advanced technologies, but we are also proud to be a leading financial institution recognized by the public for its continuous and

[3] Source: https://novac.jutarnji.hr/novac/promo/najveci-interes-za-apn-kredite-u-zabi-15061998, published and accessed on March 30, 2021.

numerous humanitarian activities and we hope that our example can motivate others to help the community."[4]) make it clear that PBZ wants to communicate not only their business values and technological excellence, but also their care for the community. PBZ's primary corporate values are shown in Figure 4.

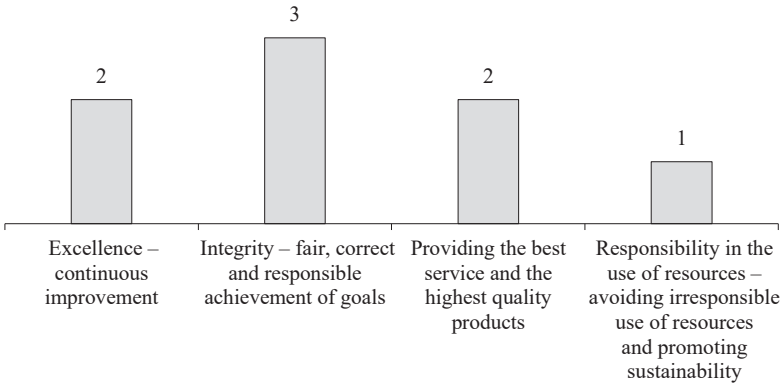


Figure 4. PBZ primary corporate values detected in articles

Source: own elaboration.

Most represented PBZ's secondary values (*Charity*, *Solidarity*) were not mentioned in previous research (Lacković, Šporčić, 2021) as they were not explicitly or implicitly mentioned on official corporate websites. The structure of the secondary values of PBZ is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. PBZ secondary corporate values detected in articles

Source: own elaboration.

[4] Source: https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/potres/pbz-grupa-donirala-12-8-milijuna-kuna-za-sanaciju-posljedica-potresa-i-pomoc-zdravstvenim-ustanovama-15061724, published and accessed on March 29, 2021.

In 9 of the Erste corporate values there are 4 which are detected as primary in the 2021 promotional articles. With more than half of the articles being used in the promotion of banking products, it is no surprise that *Innovation* and *Customer care* were present as the primary values. The structure of Erste bank's primary corporate values is shown in Figure 6.

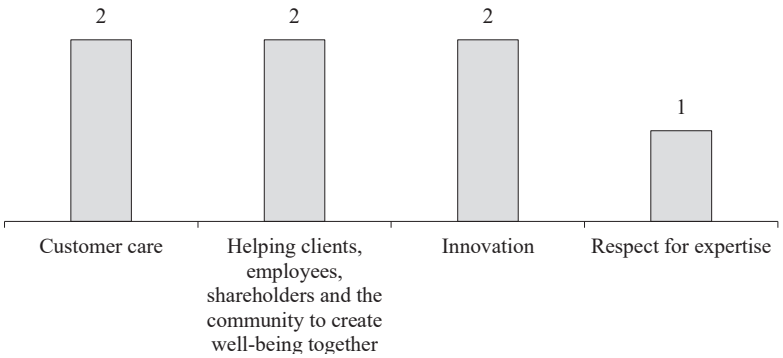


Figure 6. Erste primary corporate values detected in articles

Source: own elaboration.

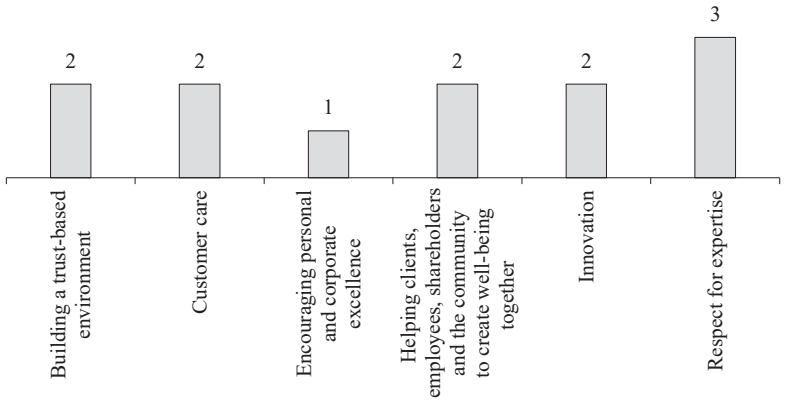


Figure 7. Erste secondary corporate values detected in articles

Source: own elaboration.

With statements such as the one on the webpage *jutarnji.hr* ("All of the above contributes to better security and improved user experience."[5]) it is clear that dedication to innovation and

[5] Source: https://www.jutarnji.hr/promo/jos-sigurnija-kupnja-na-internetu-karticama-erste-card-cluba-15048828, published and accessed on February 8, 2021.

clients are top values for Erste bank, which was also evident in the detected secondary corporate values, shown in Figure 7.

3.2. Banks' organizational purpose

As was already stated, organizational purpose is an organization's core reason for existing and it answers the question of why does a company exist beyond making money. Since none of the three analyzed banks provides a purpose statement, mission statements were taken into account in order to reach for the companies purposes. Those statements are shown in the table below.

Table 2. Mission statement and organizational purpose of ZABA, PBZ and Erste bank

Bank	Mission statement	Organizational purpose – why does it exist?
Zagrebačka banka	We the employees of Zagrebačka banka, as part of the UniCredit Group, are committed to creating new value for our clients. As a leading Croatian bank and European group, we are dedicated to the development of the communities in which we live, and we make our bank a stimulating place to work (ZABA, n.d.)	to create new values for **clients** to develop **communities** to encourage its **employees**
Privredna banka Zagreb	Our mission is to use, permanently and effectively, all available resources for the continuous progress of our business in all its parts, from human capital, technology to business processes (PBZ, n.d.)	to improve its **business –** human resources, technology, business processes
Erste banka	We encourage and help our clients, employees, shareholders and the social community in the joint creation of well-being (Erste bank, n.d.)	to create wellbeing for **employees**, **shareholders** and the **community**

Source: own elaboration.

As we can see, the three banks stress rather different purposes for their existence. Also, they state different key stakeholders. While ZABA and Erste mention employees and communities, PBZ is focused merely on different aspects of its business.

3.3. Banks' ideologies

In the following table core values, core purposes and ideologies of the analyzed banks are presented schematically. Values identified in subchapter 3.1. are named as one abstract noun or a noun phrase consisted of abstract noun plus a modifier. Secondary values are given in parentheses. Core purposes are renamed in the same fashion by replacing verbs with abstract nouns.

Table 3. Structure of banks' ideologies

Bank	Core values	Core purposes	Ideology
ZABA	clients' satisfaction, community development	– creation of new values for clients, – community development, – employees encouragement	social institutionalism
PBZ	excellence, integrity, responsibility and sustainability (clients' satisfaction, employees care, charity, solidarity)	business improvement – human resources, technology, business processes	social corporatism
Erste	customer care, wellbeing, innovation, expertise (reliability, excellence)	creation of wellbeing for employees, shareholders and the community	social institutionalism

Source: own elaboration.

It is evident from Table 3 that the core values and core purposes of two banks (ZABA and Erste) are quite complementary since through both concepts they prioritize commitment to the wellbeing of clients, employees and community. On the other hand, PBZ follows the same pattern when it comes to values, but departs from this pattern when it comes to the core purpose, which prioritizes commitment to its business. With respect to these results, we classify the corporate ideologies of ZABA and Erste as social institutionalist, and the corporate ideology of PBZ as social corporatist. To put it differently, the corporate ideologies of Zaba and Erste are comprised of core values and sense of purpose beyond just making money, while the corporate ideology of PBZ accepts the foundations of fundamentalism – the purpose of business and corporations is the creation of profit – but it also recognizes and accepts a social aspect to corporate existence and action.

3.4. A comparison of organizational values communicated via banks' webpages and values communicated via digital media

In the following table the values communicated via banks' webpages will be presented schematically. The data is taken from the previous research on the organizational values of Croatian banks (Lacković, Šporčić, 2021).

Table 4. ZABA, PBZ and Erste values

Zaba values	PBZ values	Erste values
1	2	3
Ethics and respect	Providing the best service and the highest quality products	Helping clients, employees, shareholders and the community to create well-being together
A bank that meets the real needs of clients	Your satisfaction is our ultimate goal	Encouraging personal and corporate excellence

1	2	3
Dedicated to the development of the communities in which we live	Integrity – fair, correct and responsible achievement of goals	Nurturing attitudes, values and knowledge that make Erste employees and leaders special
We make the bank a stimulating place to work in	Excellence – continuous improvement	Finding a balance between default and flexibility
Justice – Prohibition of discrimination based on sex, age, race, political affiliation or trade union activity	Transparency – conscious and autonomous choice of clients	Building a trust-based environment
Transparency	Respect for the cultural diversity of individuals	Respect for expertise
Respect – values, feelings and moral views	Equality of rights regardless of gender, racial, religious, political, linguistic or intellectual diversity and age differences	Collegiality and compassion
Reciprocity	The value of the individual – encouraging dialogue and listening to each individual	Innovation
Freedom of action	Responsibility in the use of resources – avoiding irresponsible use of resources and promoting sustainability	Customer care
Confidence		

Source: Lacković, Šporčić (2021).

If one looks at the table above, and compares it with the data presented in subchapter 3.1, one can come to several conclusions. ZABA concentrates its promotional efforts on direct business goals, and communicates only two out of ten self-proclaimed corporate values. On the other hand, PBZ mostly focuses on promoting its charity and solidarity through donations and like activities. PBZ is the only bank analyzed in this paper that communicates corporate values that were not self-proclaimed on their website. Erste, like ZABA, concentrates its efforts on clients and products.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to analyze the corporate ideologies of banks operating in the Republic of Croatia while treating corporate ideology as the basis for creating an organization's identity. Hence, we focused on values and purposes which identify a corporation vis-a-vis other corporations.

Based on the content analysis of promotional web articles which we have described above, we can conclude that the top three banks in Croatia do not communicate proclaimed values

enough. Hence, there is a discrepancy between the officially declared values and purposes on banks' webpages and the content they communicate in promotional web articles.

Furthermore, since all of the three banks follow the same pattern when choosing the values to which they will be dedicated (client – employee – community), we can conclude that their corporate ideologies do not function as the generators of authenticity of their identities. The banking industry as a whole is conservative in its communication and veering from the norm is not an obvious choice. That said, none of the analyzed banks stood out from the others, and all three had *generic* corporate values, proclaimed on their websites (Lacković, Šporčić, 2021) and communicated in promotional web articles.

Authors of promotional articles have yet to find out what makes them stand out from each other and other banks on the market.

Furthermore, the conclusion on banks' ideologies presented here is limited on communicated corporate ideologies, and does not say much about the possible hidden ideology. This limitation of the present research also opens up possibilities for future ones – it would definitely be worth investigating to what extent the communicated corporate ideologies reflect the true ideology, are internal stakeholders (e.g. company's workers) aware of true corporate ideology, are corporate ideologies activated, i.e. whether the actions of banks reflect their values and missions? All of these questions are yet to be tackled.

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Citation

Lacković, S., Baralić, M., Šporčić, M. (2023). A Comparative Analysis of the Corporate Ideologies of Banks Operating in the Republic of Croatia. *Folia Oeconomica Stetinensia*, *23*(1), 124–143. DOI: 10.2478/foli-2023-0007.