

WAYS TO IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN TAROM

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ABSTRACT

Our paper aims to reveal why improving the communication process in passenger air transport can contribute to increasing the efficiency of activity in this field of activity. The objective of the scientific approach taken was to identify some possibilities for improving the organizational communication at the level of the air transport units in Romania, with example on TAROM S.A. The methodology of empirical research on organizational communication in passenger air transport consisted of an exploratory quantitative research carried out in March 2022. We resorted to the quantitative research method from the desire to illustrate, as eloquently as possible, by means of concrete data, the level of professionalism of the internal and external organizational communication in the analyzed entity. As a working tool for quantitative research, we turned to a questionnaire placed in the crowdsourcing system on the link <https://isondaje.ro/sondaj/856544716>. 347 respondents from TAROM (directors and heads of departments, aircrew, technical and execution staff) answered the questions of the questionnaire, representing 26.7% of the total employees of this company. By using the econometric instrumentation provided by the IBM SPSS application, the called research procedure consisted in the quantitative analysis of the data through descriptive statistics methods, the analysis of multiple answers, the categorical analysis of the main components (CATPCA) and the qualitative analysis of the answers recorded. Finally, we validated the hypotheses of our study.

KEYWORDS: *CATPCA, degree of professionalism, empirical research, IBM SPSS application, organizational communication.*

DOI: 10.24818/IMC/2022/05.14

1. INTRODUCTION

In Romania, the year 1920 marks the appearance of the first aeronautical company. On April 25, at the initiative of Nicolae Titulescu and the French Foreign Minister, the *Franco-Romanian Air Navigation Company (CNAFR)* was created. Worldwide, this was the first multinational and transnational airline. Three years later, on the current lands of the "Aurel Vlaicu" Airport, the CNAFR workshops were built, the precursors of the *Aircraft Engine Repair Enterprise (IRMA)* - founded in 1960-1970 - and of *ROMAERO* Băneasa (https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aeritatile_Internationale_Bucuresti_Baneasa_-_Aurel_Vlaicu). The year 1932 marks the emergence of the first Romanian company having as scope of business the air transport, being the precursor of TAROM – S.A. respectively, the *Romanian Airline State Run– LARES*.

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An important step for the development of air transport in the country was the reconstruction of the Baneasa airport (it was severely affected by the aircraft bombings following the 1944 coup d'état). Over the years, the company continued its development and the years that followed marked various important moments: regular flights to other countries, flights to the Middle East and North Africa, but also flights to JFK Airport in America.

However, from the point where the political interference in the management and decision-making activities of the company was achieved, the results began to be worrying: feelings of destabilization, losses, sale of different shares, etc. The bankruptcy attempts of the company are also supported by competing airlines, such as Blue Air or Wizz Air operating low-cost flights. They, over the last years, have inserted in the questionnaires distributed to passengers some direct questions about TAROM, while this should not be allowed.

The situation of the company is not at all favorable, both for reasons coming from inside the company, but also because of pressures coming from the external environment and from people with strong influence. This article aims to analyze the employees' perspective regarding the way in which the organizational communication activities are carried out but also the factors that lead to the unfavorable image of the company towards potential clients.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication is one of the most important existing processes, whether we are talking about interpersonal communication or communication at the organization level. Over time, different definitions and perspectives have been approached by different specialists in the field. Communication can be seen as a complex process, through which a person transmits stimuli in order to produce influence in the behavior of other people (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). At the same time, the communication process was seen as an achievement having a social character (Craig & Knower, 1963). From the perspective of Voyenne (1992) communication occurs with the transmission or identification of information, feelings, ideas that condition our evolution but also our existence.

Looking from a different perspective, other specialists appreciate communication as an exchange of thoughts, emotions, information between people, aiming at harmonizing individual objectives with those at the organization level (Boyaci, 1996), while communication can also be seen as a social interaction, through which certain systems of messages and symbols are used (Gerbner et al., 1996). If we analyze closer times, we see that communication is seen as an essential condition of social order and life (Watzlawick et al., 2011) but also as a process of transmitting and receiving messages through specific channels (States, 2015).

The literature is vast and would allow us to mention dozens of definitions and approaches to communication. However, we must not forget the fact that in many situations this process is not carried out properly or is affected by various external factors. The specialists mention that the vulnerabilities of the communication process (referring here to organizational communication) reside again in great paths: on the one hand, poor training in the field of interrelationship and on the other hand, from the different perceptions that each organization has, in general, in relation to its own image, obviously in relation to the customers' perceptions regarding the company (Popescu & State, 2017).

As we can understand, communication, regardless of the perspective approached, is an extremely important process that must be done correctly, in order for the message to be transmitted correctly; if we relate to a company, it is equally important both the internal and external communication process.

3. RESEARCH METODOLOGY

In the framework of the research, a general analysis of the data was first performed. The starting point was represented by the theoretical research on the notions of communication and the factors that influence this process. The next stage refers to the analysis of data on aeronautical services companies and the way in which they carry out the communication process. This analysis was based on some hypotheses of the research and in order to verify their veracity, the quantitative research was carried out which was completed by 347 respondents.

In order to test the working hypotheses, the following were used: data analysis using descriptive statistics methods, analysis of multiple answers, CATPCA analysis and qualitative analysis of answers.

3.1 Research assumptions

I1 – The communication training of TAROM management is a deficient one, due to the interference of the political factor in the activity of this entity.

I1.1 – The policy interference within the company is the cause that led to the economic and financial results recorded by this company in the last 15 years;

I1.2 – The policy interference within the company disadvantages the company in the market and in the fight with the main competitors on the market.

I2 – The deficiencies recorded at the level of intra- and extra-organizational communication are the result of poor training in the field, but also of favoring a subjective human resources management.

I2.1 – Poor communication with customers is due to the poor preparation of human resources in the field of communication;

I2.2 – The image that the company has in front of its clients is deeply threatened by the lack of professionalism and deontology in the internal promotion of human resources.

The analysis carried out included both general questions and applied questions, having as purpose the analysis of the communication processes and the identification of the deficiencies. We will analyze some of these data, starting with some demographics, in order to create an overview, before testing the working hypotheses.



Figure 1. Demographics - Gender
 Source: processing answers by the author

We can observe by analyzing the gender criterion that there is a higher percentage of female persons. As can be seen in Figure no. 2, from the point of view of the age range, the overwhelming majority falls within the range of 31-40 years.

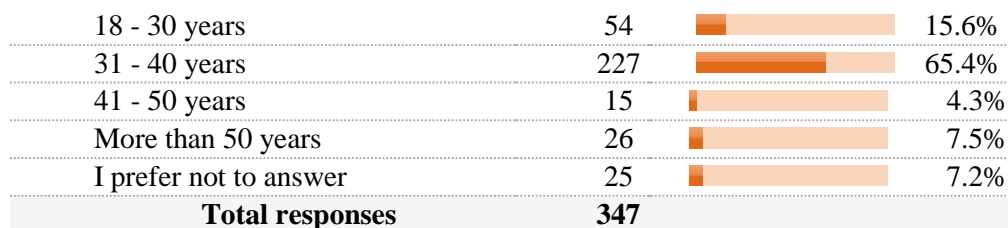


Figure 2. Demographics - Your age

Source: processing of answers by the author

From the point of view of the occupied position, most of the staff are TESA execution staff.

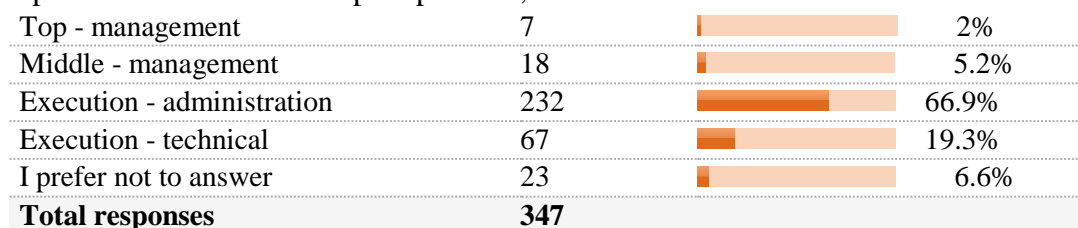


Figure 3. The positions occupied within TAROM by the respondents

Source: processing answers by the author

The following questions are of direct interest for the analysis made reflecting the reality regarding organizational communication and employee training.

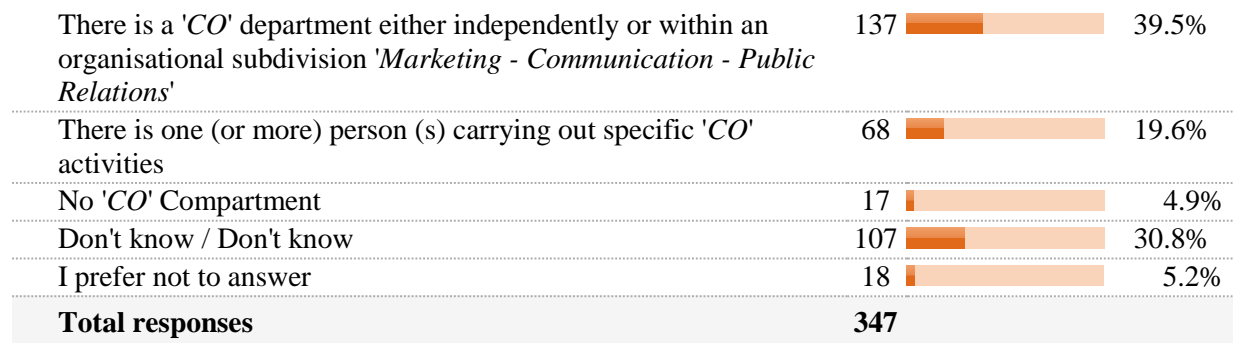


Figure 4. Existence of a compartment on organizational communication

Source: processing answers by the author

As can be seen in the previous figure, only a percentage of almost 40% of employees mention the existence of such a compartment, while almost 20% of them mention the existence of a person or several persons in charge of communication.



Figure 5. Information on the existence or non-existence of a "CO" policy at TAROM level

Source: processing answers by the author

A relevant aspect for the analysis, but with a negative character, is the fact that the majority of the employees do not know information regarding the existence of an organizational communication policy at company level.

Also, regarding the communication process, the following question reveals the opinion of the employees regarding the person/department in charge of the external communication activity of the company.




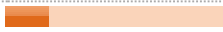



<i>Marketing, Organizational Communication and Customer Relations Department</i>	123		35.1%
Sales Department	1		0.3%
Management Board	0		0%
Manager /General Manager	79		22.6%
External partners (nominated by contest)	2		0.6%
Don't know	126		36%
I prefer not to answer	19		5.4%
Total responses	350		

Figure 6. Information on the responsibilities of the organizational subdivisions within TAROM in the field of external communication

Source: processing answers by the author

As it results from the survey, most of them mention that the Marketing and Communication Department deals with the external organizational communication activity, but this time too, a large percentage of the respondents (36%) do not have relevant information.





Yes	23		6.6%
No	111		32%
I do not know / I do not know what he is referring to	196		56.5%
I prefer not to answer	17		4.9%
Total responses	347		

Figure 7. Involvement of TAROM in Corporate Social Responsibility Programs

Source: processing answers by the author

Regarding the corporate social responsibility programs, the previous chart is more than obvious: most employees have either not been included in such a program or do not know what it is about.


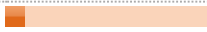

Yes	326		93.9%
No	0		0%
I do not know / I do not know what he is referring to	14		4%
I prefer not to answer	7		2%
Total responses	347		

Figure 8. Existence of customer loyalty programs

Source: processing answers by the author

According to the answers, with a percentage of 94%, within the company there are programs designed to retain clients. However, it is interesting to analyze simultaneously the answers to the following question:








less than 10%	189		54.5%
10% - 30%	132		38%
30% - 50%	3		0.9%
50% - 75%	2		0.6%
more than 75%	0		0%
I don't know if we have any regulars.	19		5.5%
I prefer not to answer	2		0.6%
Total responses	347		

Figure 9. Percentage of the company's loyal customers

Source: processing answers by the author

Although programs meant to retain clients are carried out at the company level, almost 55% of the employees mention a percentage of 10% of the clients as being loyal, while 38% of the respondents appreciate the volume of loyal clients as between 10-30%. Therefore, it follows that loyalty schedules are not effective and, certainly, the gaps in organizational communication are taking their toll, as can be seen in the figure 10.
















Employee integration (orientation)	212		29.9%
On-the-Job Training	241		34%
Workplace integration	223		31.5%
Leadership	1		0.1%
Teambuilding	4		0.6%
Computer science	1		0.1%
Sales and/or negotiation techniques	2		0.3%
Languages	3		0.4%
Online marketing courses	2		0.3%
Other courses	0		0%
Don't know	7		1%
I prefer not to answer	13		1.8%
Total responses	709		

Figure 10. Modalities of internal communication within TAROM

Source: processing answers by the author

As it can be seen, most of the employees participated only in the training and integration courses at the workplace, but also in the employee integration courses.

The last question on which we will turn our attention is the one regarding the opinion of the respondents regarding the factors that negatively influence the activity of the company.

Lack of training and expertise of decision-makers and, in general, human resources in the field of activities specific to the air transport of passengers	59		9.2%
Interventions of influential persons from the political environment, persons with obvious interests in the bankruptcy of the company	163		25.4%
Interest of some political personalities to enrich themselves quickly, determining and/or influencing the sale of assets owned by the Romanian state	159		24.8%





Unfair competition by competing companies (<i>Blue Air</i> and <i>Wizz Air</i>)	157		24.5%
Human resources policy based, as a matter of priority, on the promotion of non-principal relations, favouritism, personal and/or group interests and the like	100		15.6%
Don't know	1		0.2%
I prefer not to answer	2		0.3%
Total responses	641		

Figure 11. Factors that negatively influence the activity of TAROM

Source: processing answers by the author

As we can analyze in the answers, the first 2 variants with the highest percentage of answers are: the intervention of influential persons with the purpose of bankrupting the company, but also the interest of some persons in the political environment to get rich quickly. The reality is not a beautiful one and all these aspects (to which we limit ourselves due to the lack of space) led this analysis and led to the formulation of the working hypotheses.

3.2 Assumption Testing

I1 – The communication training of TAROM management is a deficient one, due to the interference of the political factor in the activity of this entity.

In order to test this hypothesis, we used a mix of quantitative analysis methods: the analysis of the answers to two questions: the first question is the one regarding the factors that negatively influence the activity of TAROM, and the second one aimed to know what would be the respondents' proposals regarding the priorities that the management should adopt in the next 3-5 years in order to improve the communication at intra and extra organizational level, being an open question to free answers.

Table no. 1 shows, in the opinion of the clients, the negative factors that affect the communication process at management level, where we notice that a significant percentage considers the influence of the persons in the political environment, together with the interest of the political personalities to get rich as the main two reasons.

Table 1. Political influence on organisational communication training - Frequencies

<i>Political influence</i>	Responses		% of Cases
	N	Percent	
Lack of training and expertise in the field of activities specific to the passenger air transport	59	9.2	17.0%
Interventions of influential persons from the political environment, persons with obvious interests in the bankruptcy of <i>TAROM</i>	163	25.4	47.0%
Interest of some political personalities to enrich themselves quickly, determining and/or influencing the sale of assets owned by the Romanian state	159	24.8	45.8%
Unfair competition by competitors (<i>Blue Air</i> and <i>Wizz Air</i>)	157	24.5	45.2%
Human resources policy based, as a matter of priority, on the promotion of non-principal relations, favouritism, personal and/or group interests and the like	100	15.6	28.8%
Don't know	1	,2	,3%
I prefer not to answer	2	,3	,6%
Total	641	100.0	184.7%

a. Group

Source: Processing of answers, in IBM SPSS application, performed by the author

Regarding the second question, for reasons related to the limitation of the number of pages, we will not be able to present all the answers, but we mention that they were grouped into three categories: the interference of the political factor in the TAROM management, the management at company level and the organizational communication. There were 16 firm opinions regarding the elimination of the political factor from the managerial and decision-making processes.

In order to support this hypothesis, two secondary working hypotheses were formulated.

I1.1 – The policy interference within the company is the cause that led to the economic and financial results recorded by this company in the last 15 years;

I1.2 – The policy interference within the company disadvantages the company in the market and in the fight with the main competitors on the market.

As previously mentioned, the aspects related to the interference of the political factor within the TAROM management were described in the previous question (no. 21 of the study). The variety of answers represents a reality seen from the outside; the financial results have been described both from an economic point of view, but also personally, with the desire as a reason to highlight the aspects that require capitalization or which are even ignored at present.

The answers were grouped into 3 categories of interest for the performed analysis: *fidelity and responsibility towards the company, improvement of the company's management and improvement of the organizational communication and creation of an own culture at the organization level.*

The assessment of the organizational communication activity within the company requires a clear analysis in order to identify the causes that led to the deficiencies encountered, which is why the second working hypothesis was formulated, accompanied by 2 secondary hypotheses.

I2 – The deficiencies recorded at the level of intra- and extra-organizational communication are the result of poor training in the field, but also of favoring a subjective human resources management.

Following the presentation of the previous information, it is no longer novel that there are deficiencies manifested in the organizational communication process. The current level of training was determined with the help of answers to two other questions: the first training aims at the respondents' participation in corporate social responsibility courses, and the second one refers to the profile of the courses.

Table 2. Within TAROM you occupy a position of * In the last 12 months you have participated in at least one corporate social responsibility program – Crosstabulation

[3] Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...		[11] In the last 12 months you have participated in at least one corporate social responsibility program				Total
		Yes, I do.	No, no, no	I do not know / I do not know what he is referring to	I prefer not to answer	
Top management	Count	5	1	1	0	7
	% within [3]. Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...	71.4%	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Middle management	Count	6	8	3	1	18
	% within [3]. Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...	33.3%	44.4%	16.7%	5.6%	100.0%
Execution - TESA	Count	6	77	140	9	232
	% within [3]. Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...	2.6%	33.2%	60.3%	3.9%	100.0%

[3] Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...		[11] In the last 12 months you have participated in at least one corporate social responsibility program				Total
		Yes, I do.	No, no, no	I do not know / I do not know what he is referring to	I prefer not to answer	
Execution - technical	Count	2	17	44	4	67
	% within [3]. Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...	3.0%	25.4%	65.7%	6.0%	100.0%
I prefer not to answer	Count	4	8	8	3	23
	% within [3]. Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...	17.4%	34.8%	34.8%	13.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	23	111	196	17	347
	% within [3]. Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...	6.6%	32.0%	56.5%	4.9%	100.0%

Source: Processing of answers, in IBM SPSS application, performed by the author

As can be seen in table no. 2, the employees of *TAROM* company fall mainly into two categories: either they did not participate in such courses, or they do not know what it is about. Correlating the questions, we identify an extremely serious problem: a high share of respondents is held by those in top positions and middle management.

Table no. 2 shows, instead, the profile of the courses attended by the respondents.

Table 3. \$ Courses * T-Function - Crosstabulation

\$ Courses ^a		3) Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...					Total
		<i>Top management</i>	<i>Middle management</i>	<i>Execution - TESA</i>	<i>Execution - technical</i>	I prefer not to answer	
<i>Employee integration (orientation)</i>	Count	4	12	155	33	8	212
	% within \$ Courses	1.9	5,7	73,1	15.6	3.8	
<i>On-the-Job Training</i>	Count	3	15	164	46	13	241
	% within \$ Courses	1,2	6.2	68,0	19,1	5.4	
<i>Workplace integration</i>	Count	3	11	159	42	8	223
	% within \$ Courses	1.3	4,9	71,3	18.8	3.6	
<i>Leadership</i>	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	% within \$ Courses	0.0%	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
<i>Teambuilding</i>	Count	0	1	1	0	2	4
	% within \$ Courses	0.0%	25.0	25.0	0.0	50.0	
<i>Computer science</i>	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	% within \$ Courses	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
<i>Sales/negotiation techniques</i>	Count	0	1	0	0	1	2
	% within \$ Courses	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	
<i>International languages</i>	Count	0	1	1	0	1	3
	% within \$ Courses	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	

\$ Courses ^a		3) Within <i>TAROM</i> you occupy a position of...					Total
		<i>Top management</i>	<i>Middle management</i>	<i>Execution - TESA</i>	<i>Execution - technical</i>	I prefer not to answer	
<i>Online marketing courses</i>	Count	0	1	0	0	1	2
	% within \$ Courses	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	
<i>Don't know</i>	Count	1	0	2	0	4	7
	% within \$ Courses	14.3%	0.0%	28.6%	0.0%	57.1%	
<i>I prefer not to answer</i>	Count	1	0	3	5	4	13
	% within \$ Courses	7.7%	0.0%	23.1%	38.5%	30.8%	
Total	Count	7	18	232	67	23	347

Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

a. Group

Source: Processing of answers, in IBM SPSS application, performed by the author

The data indicate that the persons in management positions participated in courses regarding only the integration of employees, integration and training at the workplace; Curiously, the persons in middle management participated in all the courses organized by the company, by rotation. The TESA execution staff did not participate in courses such as computer science, negotiation or sales techniques, marketing, although they were carried out. The staff doing the technical execution part strictly participated in the necessary courses.

This poor attendance at courses reflects a reason why the share of customer loyalty is low. In this respect, the secondary working hypothesis no. 1 was formulated.

I2.1 – Poor communication with customers is due to the poor preparation of human resources in the field of communication.

In order to test this hypothesis, the answers to 3 questions were analyzed, namely: the existence of customer loyalty programs; the share of loyal customers as well as the main way in which they book tickets. In order to identify the connection between the number of loyal customers and the level of training of employees in the field of organizational communication, they used the variable previously described, namely 'the training courses attended in the last 12 months'.

In this part of the research, we used the categorical analysis of the main components in order to analyze the data and obtain adequate interpretations of the survey.

The internal consistency of the analysis model is modest (Cronbach Alpha = 0.531), the first dimension is fully covered by the studied variables in proportions of 41.565% and 26.77%, respectively, according to the data presented in Table no. 4 so that the values indicate that the proposed model is exploratory.

Table 4. Template Summary

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance Accounted For	
		Total (Eigenvalue)	% of Variance
1	.531	1.663	41,565
2	.088	1,071	26,769
Total	.846^a	2,733	68,334

a. Total Cronbach's Alpha is based on the total Eigenvalue.

Source: Processing of answers, in IBM SPSS application, performed by the author

Given the extremely low percentage of customers considered loyal (30%), we decided that a more in-depth analysis is necessary in order to identify the causes.

Table 5. What is the percentage of TAROM's loyal customers

		Category after Discretization ^c	Frequency
Valid	less than 10% ^b	1	189
	10% - 30%	2	132
	30% - 50%	3	3
	50% - 75%	4	2
	I don't know if we have any regulars.	5	19
	I'd rather not answer.	6	2
	Total		347

a. Optimal Scaling Level: Ordinal.

b. Mode.

c. Grouping (6 categories, normal).

Source: Processing of answers, in IBM SPSS application, performed by the author

The vector graphic representation that signifies the studied vector variables (*loyal customers*, *booking modality* and *CSR courses*) highlights the way of associating the 4 variables. The cloud of points in the figure indicates the dispersion of the recorded answers. The way of grouping the vectors that define the 4 variables details very suggestively the degree of association between them, as shown in the *component loadings* image of data processing: the angle formed by the two vectors that analyze the existence of customers loyal to *TAROM* ("*are there customer loyalty programs?*" and, respectively, "*what is the percentage of loyal customers?*") indicated that the two vectors/variables are located in close proximity, at a short distance from each other, and this positioning signifies an association. At the same time, the vectors formed by the variables that analyze the priority way in which the clients book their flight tickets and the respondents' participation in CSR courses are located in an orthogonal position compared to those who analyze the existence of loyal clients. This way of placing vectors signifies the absence of association between variables or, in other words, the variables are independent. In the same vein, the size of the vectors explains the variance of the variables analyzed.

Therefore, we come to the conclusion that the participation of employees in the responsibility courses and the way the tickets are booked by the clients does not contribute decisively to their loyalty. What we can say for sure is that the poor training in the field of organizational communication of TAROM employees is a negative factor in the loyalty process.

I2.2 – The image that the company has in front of its clients is deeply threatened by the lack of professionalism and deontology in the internal promotion of human resources.

The poor preparation of the employees in the field of communication, either at intra or extra organizational level, manifested by the limitations presented, leads to an extremely low level of the portfolio of loyal customers, this being directly reflected in the economic results of the company.

The customers' perception of the company is correctly perceived by the respondents who propose a series of measures aimed at improving (if not significantly enhancing) the image. We mention here some of these:

- the mix of reasonable costs and the satisfaction of expectations lead to customer loyalty;
- increasing the responsibility of employees towards the image of the company, in front of customers, will lead to the loyalty of employees towards the company;
- earning customers' respect for the employed human resource, by developing and training it;
- developing a system through which customers will be assessed, in relation to the way in which employees communicate with them;
- with the ultimate aim of improving communication with customers, trainings and team-building must be organized periodically;

- establishing a feedback system, including dissatisfactions, complaints or suggestions from customers;
- organizing events in which clients are given the opportunity to discuss with the company's employees, to discover its objectives in order to improve specific activities.

Although some of the company's employees do not consider urgent the activity of improving the organizational communication, following the study undertaken, we consider more than necessary rapid improvements.

Thought our analysis, we tested the initial hypotheses and we demonstrated their validation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Through this article we aimed to analyze the main deficiencies encountered in the intra and extra-organizational communication processes of TAROM. The analysis was carried out based on quantitative research, a questionnaire that was distributed and completed by 347 respondents.

Following the analyses carried out statistically, but also through the analysis of the answers provided, we noticed serious aspects related to the organization of the company: most of the respondents do not know if there is an internal communication policy; training courses are not carried out at management level with topics related to the improvement of organizational communication. Although there are customer loyalty programs, their success rate is low, most of the respondents considering that the percentage of loyal customers is below 30%. At the same time, an unforgettable aspect is the one related to the factors that negatively impact the company's activity, the most selected answers being: the intervention of influential persons with the purpose of bankrupting the company, but also the interest of some persons in the political environment to get rich quickly.

We consider that it is imperative to take measures to improve the activity, but also to implement new strategies and measures designed to retain customers, but also to attract new ones (measures proposed in the previous sub-chapter).

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