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The impact of internal communication on the employees at organizations

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, marketing practices in companies are essential for the successful performance of a company. However, despite having an effective internal marketing does not seem to be so urgent in the daily functioning of an organization, it is proved to cause an immense impact on firms and, more specifically, on its internal customers (what is known as the employees). The objective of this paper is to analyse the effects caused by an internal communication system, which is considered an internal marketing tool, on the workforce of a certain firm. For the elaboration of it, the first part of the study will review the literature on these internal practices, underlining the framework of the internal communication (channels, impact, etc.) and its repercussion on the employees. In order to support this theory, the case of a real company will be used and the analysis of its specific internal communication system will be carried out. On the one hand, it is going to make use of the Opinion Barometer, which is an internal statistical tool used by this company for learning and improving the opinion that workers have regarding their workplace and company in general. On the other hand, a survey which will enable us to know the perception employees have about the firm´s communication system and channels has been elaborated. With the empirical data obtained in such specific firm, the aim is to get an outcome in light with the previously presented theory, and as a way of concluding the study, include some implications for the firm.

KEY WORDS

Internal marketing, internal customer orientation, internal marketing processes, internal communication, Volkswagen Navarra, workforce, Opinion barometer, survey.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era of constant development and high competitiveness, organizations are constantly struggling for overcoming obstacles. For this reason, maintaining a committed human capital in a company is crucial (Hernández Gracia, et. al., 2008). Employees' quality, abilities, efficiency and competences, together with the enthusiasm and satisfaction towards their occupation and the organizational loyalty they possess, have a significant influence on an organization´s success. For some of them, the employee is the principal customer to maintain satisfied in order to be able to offer a high-quality product that may cover external expectations and necessities. But others do not put enough attention on their employee´s insights, even knowing that this might finally create a discoured and skeptical workforce.

No matter whether based on a daily synergy or a more formal way of interaction, what is clear is that maintaining a dynamic and strengthened communication system within a firm in an invaluable resource within the scope of all the firms, but that not all use or know how to manage. In this line, this final degree project studies the impact of the communication towards the employees as an internal marketing tool oriented to the internal customers of a known company.

Researches that raise this theory are relatively contemporary, as the marketing and communication itself are in constant change. Surprisingly, many organizations seem to focus on other management mechanisms that might impact directly on the productivity and economic indicators, but that leave apart the current work atmosphere and the employees´ status. For this reason, this topic caught my interest and decided to conduct a study of how does the internal communication function in the firm where I am doing my internship, as well as how is the perception and attitudes of the workforce towards it. In concrete, as the area I am working at is the Communication Department (Human Resources.), the opportunity for developing the work at first hand enables me to obtain all the necessary resources I needed.

The structure of this work facilitates the comprehension of its main objective, that is the analysis of the internal communication system (as part of what is known as an internal marketing process) of a specific firm and its impact on its employees.

First, a literature framework where it can be distinguished several concepts related to the internal marketing, which finally reaches to the point of the internal communication. In this section, different authors specialized in this topic are quoted, and the review of their publications shape the onset of this study. After it, a brief explanation of the objectives behind this project is presented. This section is useful for depicting the focal point of the study before going ahead with the rest of the work, which is limited to the exhaustive analysis of the internal communication that occurs in the firm Volkswagen Navarra S.A. Thus, section 4 is an empirical application where part of the information previously presented is reflected. Taking the real case of Volkswagen Navarra as an object of study, firstly the background of its internal communication is explained, taking advantage of the recent restructuring lived. The restructuring meant renewing the communication channels already in force as well as introducing new ones in line with the current demand. Also in

this part, some premises concerning the Communication department are briefly commented, as a way for informing more generally about this area in the firm. With the aim of applying the theory on this real case and obtaining an empirical result that responds to the previously marked goals, two statistical tools will be used (one of them is already an internal tool of the company and the other consist on a survey that asks about the main goal of this project) and before analysing their results, they will be better explained. Finally, the results obtained will be analysed, as well as the implications for the firm derived from them, which could result of interest for future enhancements in the internal communication system. To end the study, some conclusive ideas about the whole project will be included.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Internal marketing

Internal marketing is considered a relatively new concept, but in the last 20 years, it is becoming more and recurrent in different areas (San Martín, S., 2005). It considers the employees within an organization as internal customers, and studies the relationships that arise between them and the superiors belonging to their work area. It is also defined as a set of tools offered by the marketing to human resource management (Colling and Payne, 1991).

Before further explaining the implications of internal marketing practices on the organization, the development internal marketing has gone through will be briefly explained, so that the confusion about its meaning can be avoided (Rafiq, M. and Ahmed, P. K., 2000).

Its early development stage treated the employee satisfaction and motivation, focusing on internal marketing efforts to improve service quality. From this perspective, the effect of employee satisfaction upon final customer satisfaction was hypothesized. Berry (1981) was among the first authors in using the notion of internal marketing, defining it as the practice of viewing workers as internal customers, and jobs as internal products that satisfy the needs and desires of these internal customers while organizational objectives are being addressed. The assumption that "to have satisfied customers, the firm must also keep its employees satisfied" (George, 1977) also appeared in this stage.

On its second stage, Gönroos (1981) was the main leading role in writing about internal marketing, and this time internal marketing focuses on customer orientation, a concept that gives importance to the interaction of the employee with the customer ("interactive marketing") and its positive impact on the organization´s market opportunity. He went a step further and said that employees will be more motivated for a quality service and customer oriented behaviour by an active marketing-like approach, that is, the use of similar marketing techniques internally.

The third and last stage consisted on broadening the internal marketing concept towards its implementation on management and organizational strategies (Winter, 1985). The role of internal marketing starts to be integrated with overall marketing and human resource management, even including the personnel as a resource for marketing functions (Glassman and McAfee, 1992).

This supposed an innovative managerial implication for the urge of keeping a motivated and satisfied workforce, having a customer orientation, and using internal marketing for the implementation of organizational strategies. Gönroos (1981) added the importance of communicating the organizational strategies and objectives to employees in order to make them aware about their role within the organization. Thus, a supportive senior management and downward communication seemed to be useful for the success of internal marketing and inter-functional coordination.

As employees are oriented towards the marketing of an organization, even in a partial way, it is important for managers to keep them satisfied and motivated because they are seen as the principal link with the final customer (external marketing). The concept of competitive advantage[1] is constantly present in organizations, who know that achieving and maintaining a beneficial atmosphere in a workplace where employees denote a high level of satisfaction for both their job and the company can be a tool that differentiates them among their competitors. The permanence of the employee, then, is vital, and even more if the organization has incurred in costs related to the recruitment, selection, training and motivation of the worker (Phillips and Connell, 2003). That is why, among different alternatives that treat the human resource for building a competitive advantage that creates a differential element, firms and researchers recognize the importance of internal marketing for increasing the commitment of the employees towards the organization and its customers (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Flipo, 1986; Kotler, 1998; Grönroos, 1990; Lings, 2004; Nickles and Wood, 1999; Pitt and Foreman, 1999; Caruana and Calleya, 1998 and Durkin and Bennett, 1999). Committed employees are less likely to renounce and move to another firm, so the current company avoids the costs of a high rotation. Moreover, highly qualified and committed employees require less supervision as they are concerned about the importance of integrating their targets with those of the organization (Gibson, Ivancevich and Donelly, 1994). Organizational commitment links the affective background with the costs related to leaving an organization and the responsibility of remaining in there. In this sense, Meyer and Allen (1993) recognize three components inside the commitment: the identification (the employee accepts the organization mission and have its same beliefs, ideas and purposes), the membership (the employee is willing to remain as a member of the organization), and the loyalty (the employee manifests the compliance and admiration towards the organization through actions channeled to defend it).

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[1] Competitive advantages provide an edge over rivals and an ability to generate greater value for a firm and its shareholders (Computer Business Research.com)

Marketing alone is a broad concept that encloses a set of activities that are externally carried out, with the purpose of reaching the market and its customers, and is very common in a great number of organizations to invest big quantities of money in the development and execution of external marketing strategies, undermining the importance of internal marketing strategies. However, an ineffective management of internal marketing can be devastating for an organization (Davis, 2011), whose success depends on the support of its intangible assets (employees), so the role of internal marketing would be to design certain activities and processes that lead to the satisfaction of employees´ necessities but that, at the same time, consider those of the final customer. Internal marketing makes workers from each level of the organization to know the business, understand the objectives of the company, and develop the capacity and desire to deliver a certified high-quality good or service, always with the presence of the client in mind.

The organizational culture reinforces the commitment of both managers and employees in serving the client, and solid service marketing should prompt in workers a sense of pride and belonging to the organization. For this reason, it is necessary to implement new modifications in the traditional systems of recruitment, selection, hiring, training and rewarding, as well as in the monitoring of the authority delegated from top management to employees (Claudia S. Merlo, 2005). When the structure of the organization is restored, all the employees work to satisfy the internal client (workers, supervisors, managers, and others), and if an error is committed by any component of the chain, this will be notified without any concern, as the main purpose would be to tackle it and revert that negative experience. If the organization possesses a conventional structure, all employees are considered to work to satisfy the superiors.

With the aim of measuring the impact of internal marketing on the results of a firm, Wieseke, *et. al.* (2009) propose the concept of organizational identity (OID), a process from which the organization inspires to the employees a feeling of continuity. These authors verified that the level of organizational identity in employees that worked with consumers predicts in a significant way their performance in sales (Rikketa, 2005).

In conclusion, organizations ought to consider the internal marketing as an instrument that influences the organizational commitment of its workforce, and that this association enables the development of a competitive advantage that can be sustained permanently, enhancing the human resource management and internal communication. Internal marketing and the human resource management share a common objective, which is reaching a workplace where employees stay satisfied and committed, transforming them into a resource that contributes in achieving organizational objectives (Núñez Gorrín, J.M., 2009), unlike the external marketing, which focuses on the satisfaction and loyalty of the external customers. Figure 1 summarizes the differences of these two types of marketing.

Figure 1. Internal and external marketing.
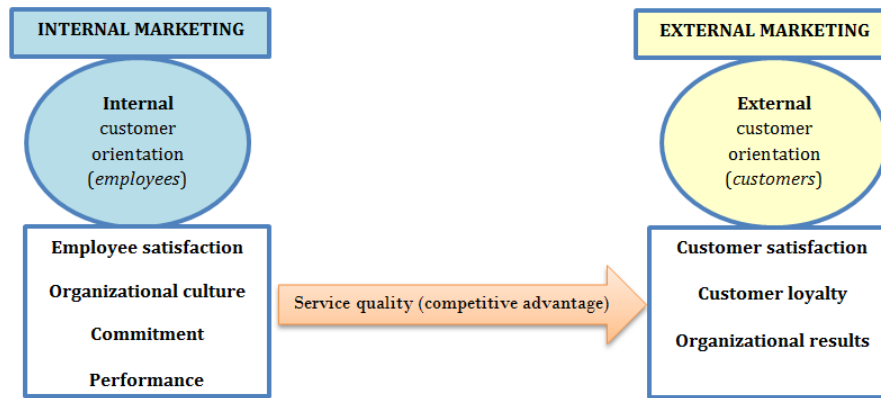
Source: Own elaboration.

2.2. Internal customer orientation

Market orientation, defined as "the organization culture that most effectively creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for customers, and thus, continuous superior performance for the business" (Narver and Slater, 1990) can be closely linked to an organization´s internal customer orientation, which is the management philosophy that provides a systematic framework for managing employees towards a market orientation (Gronroos, 1990). Indeed, the benefits that arise from market orientation practices are believed to be mighty similar to those of internal customer orientation ones (Conduit and Mavondo, 1998). These benefits have been deeply treated in the literature (Greenley, 1995; Slater and Narver, 1996) and empirically tested by US studies suggesting a positive correlation between market orientation and some firms´ performance indicators[2]. Market orientation, as its definition suggests, helps better defining an organization´s strategy which, in turn, can reflect mutually consistent goals, objectives and policies, as well as an effective interdepartmental relationship in order to enhance the overall performance of an organization.

Hospitality marketing[3] emphasizes the importance of internal customer orientation for delivering high quality goods and services, as the inclusion of an intrinsically motivated worker in the process provides better results (Lewis, R. C., 1989). This author uses the parallelism of communication with external customers that allows the firm understand their needs and expectations with the importance of maintaining a two-way communication with internal customers (employees), so that workers´ needs and expectations will be also considered and enable them to perform better. The idea behind is that lower-level employees cannot be sensitive about the customer needs unless the management above them does not display the same customer-conscious focus.

As internal customer orientation is also critical for the culture of an organization (Lukas and Maignan, 1996), it would also have an impact on the organizational strategy and interdependency. All employees are considered to be both a supplier and a customer to

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[2] Market orientation and profitability, profitability relative to largest competitor, satisfaction with profit, operating profits, profit and sales ratio, cash flow, return on investment, return on assets relative to competitors, long run financial performance, and new product success.
[3] Marketing efforts directed towards the increase of revenue in the hospitality industry (Learn.org)

other employees within an organization (Gronroos, 1981; Foreman and Money, 1995) and for this reason they must obtain the best possible treatment from those upstream in the chain of production if they are also responsible in providing those downstream the best quality product. By adhering internal customer orientation into the culture of an organization, the potential new employees will better understand and internalize the standards and objectives of their organization (Lukas and Maignan, 1996). Initially, the importance of internal customer orientation highlighted the role of employees in dealing with final customers outside, as employee´s satisfaction and support to the organization was essential to them (Berry 1981).

Market orientation and internal customer orientation together formed part of what is known as internal marketing processes, considered as their antecedent. Gronroos (1990) classifies the internal marketing processes into five different segments, each of them influencing both market and/or internal customer orientation. Figure 2 shows the processes that are part of the internal marketing and that can have both an internal and external orientation.

Figure 2. Internal marketing processes according to Gronroos (1990).
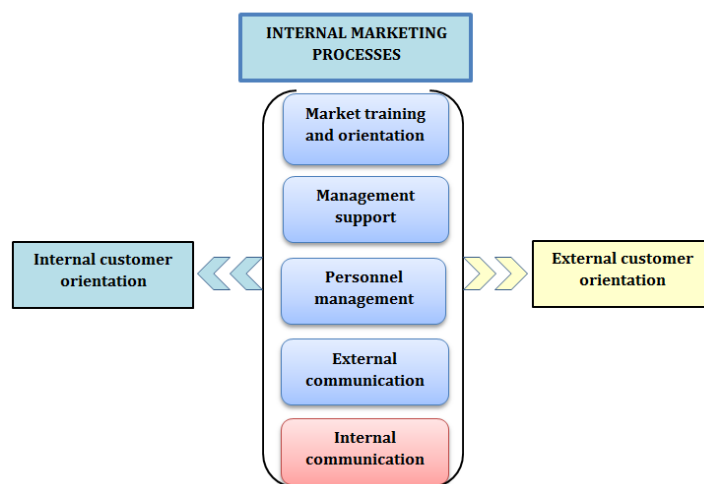
Source: Own elaboration.

The first one, market training and education, defends that it is crucial for the internal and external development of an organization to clarify the concept of market orientation to all the employees, as well as their role within the company. In order to achieve that in an effective way, training programs provide an employee the possibility of developing specialized skills and sensitivity oriented to both the interior and exterior of the organization (Ruekert, 1992).

The second segment, management support, has proved to be a prerequisite for internal customer and market orientation (Webster, 1988; Gronroos, 1990; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Lukas and Maignan, 1996). Senior management has the responsibility of fostering an appropriate climate that encourages and commands employees´ behaviours towards the internal and external market of the organization. Lukas and Maignan (1996), related to this, introduce the importance of organizational leaders as role models that should demonstrate

their dedication to internal customer orientation. Unless employees are continually guided by their superiors about this market idea, they would revert to their former attitudes and behaviors (Gonroos, 1990). Managers in their everyday working practices ought to support the workforce through involving it in the overall organization planning and paying attention to every employee suggestion (Jaworsk and Kohli, 1993; Lux et al., 1996).

Personnel management is also considered an important process inside the internal marketing too, as the manner human resource policies are designed and implemented play a crucial role in the market orientation of an organization (Gonroos, 1990). The rewarding system is an example for it, which is considered to provide the motivation for employees in adopting the proper behaviours and attitudes consistent with market orientation (Ruekert, 1992; Hauser et al., 1996), as well as fostering the effort for providing the best quality in internal customer values (Mohr-Jackson, 1991; Hauser et al., 1996; Lukas and Maignan, 1996). Thus, once achieving their commitment in providing their best effort, it is also important that satisfactory human resource practices worry about retaining and maintaining these employees. According to Gonroos (1990) and Ruekert (1992), it is more profitable for an organization to recruit personnel with an existing engagement to market orientation (or possessing adequate skills for it) than training an employee in order to obtain those abilities.

The last two internal customer processes are related to a concept that will be of principal analysis in this paper: communication. On the one hand, the involvement of the employee on the external communication may encourage them to provide the organization with feedback, which, in turn, strengthens their sense of involvement within the organization and commitment to being market oriented (Gonroos, 1990). If internal workers are not firstly communicated about the purposes of communication campaigns and these are only oriented to the external customer, then employees may become confused and disengaged with the vision and objectives of the organization. Even a more optimal methodology for the involvement of internal workers into the external communication process would be developing communication campaigns in cooperation with those who may be affected by the external communication effort (Piercy, 1995). Intelligence dissemination management[4] ensures that the entire workforce can have access to appropriate information so as to anticipate and to answer in a more creative way to external customer needs (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) and the competitive environment.

It is important for both external and internal communications functions to be aligned or, at least, share the same views. It is easy for internally generated communication to find its way in the exterior of the organization, as well as to the external media reach the perception the workforce has about the company (Smith, L. and Mounter, P., 2008). Nevertheless, the involvement in external communication is not expected to have a significant impact on an employee´s internal customer orientation.

On the contrary, internal communication within a company turns out to have a clear influence on the development of an internal customer and market orientation (Conduit and

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[4] The process of managing the distribution of intelligence information to appropriate consumers, consistent with the conflicting demands of security and usability (Citizendium.org)

Mavondo, 1998). According to Gonroos (1990), employees need internal communication either for receiving information in order to perform their tasks efficiently or for conveying their own requirements (internal customer orientation) and their findings regarding external customer needs (market orientation). The process of management support explained before would be optimized whether a bidirectional communication between managers and employees exist, a fact that will also improve employee´s output because they can receive a direct feedback on how to improve their performance. Communication is facilitated when interdepartmental integration occurs, because information dissemination happens between departments and, thus, there is a greater opportunity for including customer and competitor knowledge in the organization´s routine activities and to be coordinated in creating superior value for both internal and external customers.

Moreover, a good internal communication is more prone to avoid workplaces where tension prevails across departments, so employees will be more willing to share useful information for ensuring both their and customer satisfaction (Jaworksi and Kholi, 1993). Evidence suggests that an organization that does not practice communication can experience worst outcomes as it fosters employees to speculate, listen to the media for information about their company, and distrust their superiors (Hoover, 2005). The lack of information flows can create a contradiction between what employees perceive form their managers and what they see in the social media, ending with a demotivated workforce due to the lack of transparency (Hoover, 2005).

In conclusion, internal communication has both a positive and significant effect on internal customer and market orientation.

2.3. Internal communication as an internal marketing tool

The generation of a convenient and effective internal communication is included into the internal marketing (Merlo, 2005). Establishing an efficient and effective communication process within a company is a key aspect for internal marketing, apart from managing attitudes, capacity, recognition, empowerment, managerial support, information sharing and team formation. There is high evidence in admitting that an effective communication is crucial for the success of organizations, as it influences the ability of managers to engage employees and achieve objectives (Welch and Jackson, 2007).

Nevertheless, employees in many organizations do not feel as if internal communication has caught enough attention (Ruck and Welch, 2012). In fact, according to Chen, Silverthone and Hung (2006), a review of the researches made for many organizations conclude that in many cases employees´ satisfaction with communication practices has not been taken into account. Even most firms correctly communicate about business facts, less than half of firms reported by Tower Watson Consultancy (2010) affirm having an effective internal communication to employees regarding how their performance can affect productivity and final customer satisfaction. Despite internal communication has been proved to be an important role in organizations given the evidence that companies with effective communications strategies are usually successful (Kalla, 2005), an imbalance exists between the perceived importance of internal communication and the real attention and resources allocated to its functioning (Argenti and Forman, 2002; Tourish and Hargie,

2004). Therefore, there is usually a contradiction with the results improvements an optimal internal communication can obtain and the actual disposition of firms for it.

In the same way that traditional marketing deals with the communication directed to external customers, the equivalent for the internal marketing is the internal communication (Gummesson, 1991), and in the same way external marketing selects a market segment and channel for accomplishing its objectives, internal communication inside the internal marketing also needs to clearly define the benefits of working for the organization, so internal customers (employees) will take into account the differentiation and positioning of that organization (Núñez Gorrín, J. M. 2009). In that sense, the communication used inside an organization might be distinguished depending on the internal audience it wants to reach, deciding a suitable style and tone for each segment. Internal communication is essential in providing both employees and managers information for being aware about the firm´s values and organizational goals, as well as in convincing about new practices or philosophies in an era of changes. According to Hoover (2005), a good communication keeps employees engaged and the company moving forward even in a time of crisis.

Thus, internal communication is an internal marketing tool that any company can use through a variety of means, in order to communicate with the people working in there and transmit information regarding the firm, the differentiation and positioning strategy, the characteristics of the internal product, the accounting results, and any information in general that could be used to motivate and satisfy employees. Internal communication helps the employees in distinguishing certain characteristics that makes their organization differentiated from others (Dutton, et al., 1994). As previously indicated, this will result in an employee higher commitment and effort in achieving organizational objectives. When companies grow and become more complex, the simple communication from one manager to the next or from supervisor to employee results insufficient, hence the need of an internal communication system arises.

Hogg, Carter and Dune (1998) verified the fact that internal communication messages can provoke significant changes in the perception employees have about the organization, and that the use of internal marketing can alter the insight of their role and its importance within the company.

Kalla (2002) proposes an integrated internal communication discipline that results to be advantageous if the personnel of an organization are willing to fully enjoy the benefits derived from an internal knowledge sharing. The integrated internal communication disciplines follow Miller´s (1996) model on identifying the cross-section between communication and organizational life[5]. Not only formal communication, but also informal practices happening inside an organization are considered here. In this context, the author states that business communication addresses the communication skills of all employees, management communication the development of the managers´ communication skills and capabilities, that corporate communication focuses on the formal corporate communication, and that organizational communication, for its part, addresses more philosophically and theoretical parts. Despite this paper is concentrating on an internal

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[5] This encloses business, management, corporate and organizational communication.

approach, it is worthy to stress that the four communication disciplines have also an external perspective. The integrated view of internal communication argues that the actions of corporate communication experts, managers, and employees in their formal and informal communication tasks will be guided. The main idea behind the integrated internal communication is that employees receive messages from various levels within an organization, but that the balance ought to be right for them. Otherwise, the communication objective will fail.

Internal communication can be shaped on a plenty of methods for transmitting the message to the inside of an organization. Some of them are publication plans and information centres (Barranco, 2000), presentations and demonstrations, as well as the personal communication, the advertising to external customers, or the advertising produced to the internal customer (Ahmed and Rafiq, 1995). Induction programs at the time of entering in a company, training programs, corporative events and periodic internal communication are considered a good mean for communicating the values of an organization, as well as the electronic newsletter, emails, and online information support (Chong, 2007). The communication channel is important, but it should be verified that the information being delivered throughout the organization is updated and convenient, enclosed in a positive voice, and ….

As happens with the adoption of an external marketing activity, a communication strategy needs an internal communication strategy and a creative strategy elaboration. The former one should start inside the organization, as it is there where the need for communicating arises. However, in some cases, the creative communication strategy is externalized to an advertising agency that works for the organization, and adequately chooses the means and context to transmit the message (Núñez Gorrín, J. M., 2009).
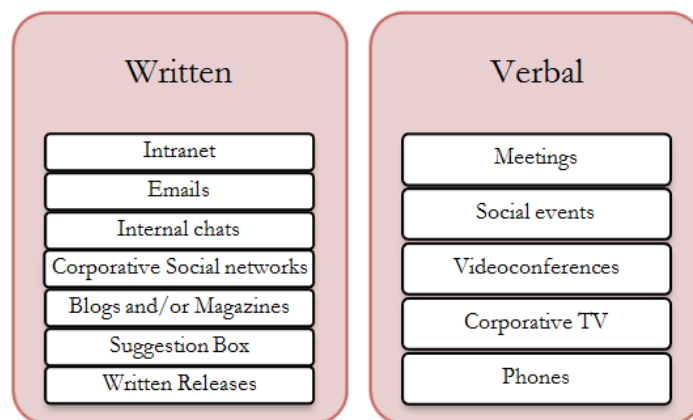
2.4. Internal communication channels

Effective internal communication, then, is crucial for employee engagement and moral, which finally will lead to motivation, loyalty, retention and productivity. Understanding the tools required for a successful communication network within a firm will help managers to influence other people and increase the effectiveness at the workplace (Gerson, 2007). Communication can be understood as a transmission between two parties, called sender and receiver, and in order to transfer certain information and succeed with it, the sender must know well the means, the receiver and its environment (Blundel, 2004). Once having understood the importance of internal communication as a strategy for achieving the organizational objectives and sharing the corporative goals, the next thing to consider will be selecting the most appropriate channel to carry out the communication. Although this paper is going to focus more on corporative communication, known as a downward communication flow, is important to point out that there exists more type of flows, such as upward and horizontal communication. A downward communication is usually an exchange of information that flows from upper managerial levels or leader roles to lower hierarchical level employees. Then, the received feedback from this communication process should clarify the organization leaders the current status of the firm (Downs and Adrian, 2004).

Communication at organization can be written, verbal or gestural (also called non-verbal communication); being the first two types the most reliable ones (gestural communication might imply a more difficult interpretation and prediction). Although there is not an strong conviction about when to use one or another, a general method for communicating when the message carries conveying facts, needs to become part of a permanent life, there is little time urgency and necessity or feedback, and the ideas behind are difficult to explain is to use the written communication. On the other hand, verbal communication can be a better election whether there exist a necessity of conveying emotions and feelings, the message does not need to be permanent, there is bigger time urgency and necessity of feedback, and the ideas are more simple or can be explained in a more easily way. In addition to this, the technological communication channels, despite being a relatively emerging concept at firms, are becoming more and more important for communicating. Through the technological channels (as can be the audio-visuals, chats, internet and the social media) messages can make use of electronic codes, and one of their advantages is that despite not needing a physical connection, the communication is instantaneous and economic, with capacity of reaching as many recipients as one wishes.

There can be found plenty of internal communication channels in the business sector and in today´s globalized and high-tech workplaces, these channels seem to be expanding quickly. As a summarized way of introducing some internal communication channel examples, the EAE Business School (2017) publishes twelve types of channels (figure 3), which can be grouped according to their communication code; written or verbal.

Figure 3. Examples of internal communication channels

Written	Verbal
Intranet	Meetings
Emails	Social events
Internal chats	Videoconferences
Corporative Social networks	Corporative TV
Blogs and/or Magazines	Phones
Suggestion Box	
Written Releases	

Source: Own elaboration from EAE Business School (2017)

➕ Intranet: The intranet is considered one of the most used tools in the corporate communication, as it is a channel that encloses others. It promotes the interactivity and is managed at real time. Its strong point should be boosting the corporate feeling and motivating the employees. However, communicating an important message only through the intranet may not be the best method as the audience may be mostly on the shop floor in a different time zone or speak a different language, and it should be properly designed because, otherwise, nobody will use it.

- Email: Communicating via email is a daily method for managing tasks and communicating processes that need to be registered. It can be both unilateral and bilateral, also including the mass-mails. Email comes in so many different forms; you can send a plain text email, a visual/graphical/info graphic email, a video in an email, etc.

- Internal chats: The availability of an internal chat can streamline the information among co-workers and departments; however, it must be ensured some rules of use. It is also good for reaching remote workers although it can annoy people if overused.

- Corporative social networks: More and more organizations are using social networks for the establishment of personal connections between employees and different departments (something like the social events but in a virtual manner). This digital communication enables the continuous, immediate and flexible exchange of information among the employees and the firm too. However, its implementation can be more expensive than others as it requires the right technology in place.

- Blogs and/or magazines: With internal corporative blogs and magazines, the internal communication can be more effective. Printed or electronic, employee newsletters and magazines are an excellent and engaging communication channel if properly used. Even those who are time-pressured at job can read it coffee breaks, at home, etc. Corporative newsletters and magazines can be challenging to make it relevant to all employees, and sometimes can be seen as biased and not credible.

- Suggestion boxes: Suggestion boxes are another indispensable communication channel, although they might be considered a traditional element. They guarantee the communication, especially that from the employee towards upper levels. However, organizations must look for ways to motivate the employee in order to give their opinion. A good way for doing so is the recognition and reward of good suggestions.

- Written releases: The written releases are becoming more obsolete comparing with the last decades. However, it is an internal channel that must be attended and optimized for guaranteeing its effectiveness. The company must ensure a clear written language and its distribution to reach the highest number of people.

- Meetings: Meetings at group or individual level are a way of maintaining personal contact and opportunity for discussions among employees and work teams within a company. This communicating method is more appropriate than group mailing when the updates are more complicated and require discussion or further explanations, but are ideal when complemented with another channel, for example, an email from the CEO followed by a meeting with your manager.

- Social events: Events are probably the most effective communication channel, and potentially the most expensive. These are useful for establishing personal relations between different department workers and for securing existing relations, and they are also great for motivation and team spirit. Business conventions and dinners, as an example, serve for activating interpersonal and team links.

- Videoconferences: Videoconferences are not only used for communicating with the external customers, but also for multinationals that have teams working in the distance. This type of communication channel shows real people talking about their experiencing, so it adds creativity and entertainment. It also needs for the right technology and noise levels.

- Corporative TV: The corporative television is not the most economic channel but can result in a very effective communication. The television itself does not obtain much feedback, but it can be implemented through different technologies and have its broadcasting inside other internal channels (intranet, blogs…). Corporative TV is mostly used for videos, which come in a variety of forms (from a simple photo collage with captions and music to a professionally shot motion picture).

- Phones: Lastly, firms should not forget about the effectiveness of phones despite being a traditional mean. These, apart from being a channel of control (sales reporting, GPS localization…), are also a way of contact and communication much more personal that can be an email or another written channel, and it is especially useful for workers that need to be in constant connection but constantly move from one place to another.

In conclusion, in order to achieve an effective and efficient internal communication, the organization should adjust the communication channel with the message that is going to be delivered. The key consists on performing a good internal system where the communication channels are standardized so that depending on the characteristics behind the message it will be used the proper mean (Hussein, 2014).
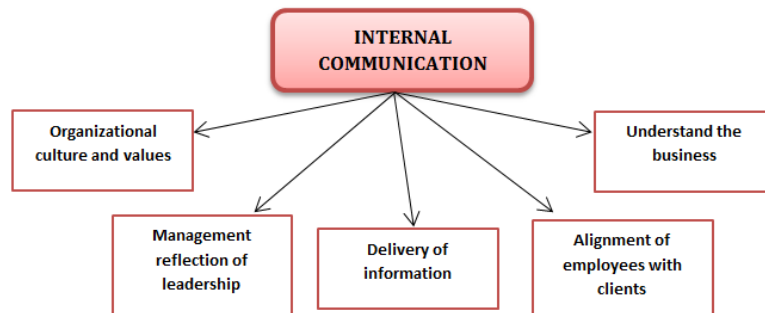
2.5. The impact of an effective internal communication

According to the definition of the consulting firm Watson Wyatt Worldwide, an effective communication is considered to enclose eight different areas within an organization (Yates, K., 2006):

- Education of employees about organizational culture and values
- Help to employees in understanding the business
- Alignment of employees´ actions with customer needs
- Delivery of financial information and objectives to employees
- Information about employees´ total reward programs
- Explanation and promotion of new programs and policies
- Integration of new employees in the organization
- Management exhibition of strong leadership during organizational change

All these domains are highly influential for providing employees the effective information, perspective and motivation that would help them to take the actions in line with the organizational goals. In figure 4 there can be found some examples of the effects delivered by an effective internal communication in any company:

Figure 4. Examples of the scope of an effective internal communication

Source: Own elaboration.

Along this literature review, it has been mentioned that good internal marketing practices, particularly those fomenting an effective internal communication within the workforce of a company, can positively influence on the commitment of the employee with his/her job, the company and in second instance with the willing of fulfilling external customers´ demands.

Apart from the engagement that arises in employees, satisfaction with the work they deal with and the treatment they receive in the workplace is also considered a consequence of good internal communication practices.

Communication is also considered a driver for an organizational climate (the link between employees and the organization), which is crucial for the representation of employees´ standardized beliefs and attitudes about the organization they work for (Welsch and La Van, 1981).

A concept that has not been mentioned yet is the employee turnover[6], an issue for all the organizations as it implies incurring in costs. When an internal communication is effectively attained, the sense of belonging to the organization might indirectly influence in the retention of employees as they feel satisfied and committed to the organization, so the firm would experience lower turnover and resistance (Goodman and Truss, 2006; Guzley, 1992; Sias, 2005; Yates, 2006).

This virtuous circle of information sharing and positive attitude with both their job and the company should end up in better employees´ performance that consequently has an impact on the overall business performance. In fact, "effective communication practices drive employee engagement, commitment, retention, and productivity, which, in turn, translate into enhanced business performance that generates superior financial returns" (Yates, 2006).

In its first investigation program in 2003, Watson Wyatt consulting firm resolved that "effective communication enhances business performance", and proved a strong

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[6] The number of workers that leave the company and are replaced by new ones.

correlation among internal communication, organizational turnover and financial performance. Two years later, this firm conducted a similar research[7] that, apart from confirming conclusions from previous results, showed than effective communication is an outstanding indicator of an organization´s financial performance.

Performance results were grouped in three categories depending on the level of communication effectiveness alive in the companies ("High Communication Effectiveness", "Medium Communication Effectiveness" and "Low Communication Effectiveness"), and found that top-scoring firms categorized in communication effectiveness resulted to have better financial performance and organizational stability.

One of the main findings of this research is that effective communication is a leading indicator of financial performance, and not the other way around, as many times have been thought (saying that successful firms have more financial capacity for investing on internal communication practices). In fact, the research found that the correlation between the firms' in the sample communication effectiveness and their subsequent[8] financial performance was twice as large as the correlation between communication effectiveness and prior´s year financial performance. Higher employee engagement is another result derived from a correlation analysis between employee engagement and a firm´s financial performance, and results showed that highly effective communicators were more than 4.5 times more likely to have highly engaged employees. Lower employee turnover, as said before, is also a good result for indicating the effectiveness of internal communication. The research obtained showed that highly effective communicators were 20% more likely than those companies with low effective communication practices to have a turnover rate lower than that of their competitors.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this paper is to study the effects of the different internal marketing actions on the attitudes (satisfaction, motivation and commitment) of a firm´s workforce, and its repercussion on the attitudes and mood of the workers. Despite the firm being analysed is composed by different departments, the objective of this paper will focus on the production area because it represents the great majority and are usually the most conflicting ones with regard to the communication functioning inside the firm. In concrete, the study focuses on the internal communication system of a firm as a human resource management tool for affecting the organizational atmosphere and, consequently, influencing the internal productivity.

Having shaped a framework on the literature review that supports the fostering of internal marketing processes such as internal communication as a mean to maintain the satisfaction, motivation and commitment levels within a firm high, the next stage on the analysis aims to apply this to a certain organization. The study presents an example of an internal

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[7] The analysis consisted on 335 participants from 260 U.S and Canadian companies.
[8] Results from one year after.

communication planning which have been recently redesigned with the aim of maintaining an effective and efficient information flow within the organization and its employees. For a better understanding of the general communication framework within this organization, a brief description of each channel will be presented, both of those who have been in force for some time and of those who have just been implemented. In light with this, and as a subsequent objective of the paper, the perception and usefulness of these internal communication channels will be analysed.

In the end, this empirical application will allow us to observe whether an internal customer orientation process, in the form of internal communication, is related to the attitudes and perception workers have about the firm and their job.

4. EMPIRICAL APPLICATION: Volkswagen Navarra

4.1. Volkswagen Navarra S.A.

Volkswagen Navarra, established in Polygon Landaben (Pamplona), is devoted to the production of cars, concretely the Volkswagen Polo model, in an uninterrupted way since 1984. The production system on this firm is based on just in time system, which means that every final product is already sold before leaving the factory facilities. For this reason, the managing of the daily manufacturing lots is crucial, and it allows the production of 1.400 cars per day (one car comes out of the production line every 55 seconds).

The workforce of Volkswagen Navarra is formed by more than 4.500 employees, in addition to around 2.500 workers that work indirectly for the firm as primary or secondary suppliers. According to the Internal Communication Plan (Volkswagen Navarra, 2014), among all the direct workforce of Volkswagen Navarra, 3.597 individuals pertain to the production area (2.130 MOD, 991 MOI or TAS, and 106 Management)[9]. From them, 3.831 are male and 493 females, and the mean age is 45 years old. If we sum all the individuals, direct or indirect, who work for this firm, the amount reaches to more than 7.800 employees.

The performance of the factory is divided in six stages, which at the same time are carried out on six different big workshops that compose the whole production process: Press workshop, Sheet metal workshop, Painting, Engines, Assembly and Final Revision workshop. These, plus the rest of the collateral areas, sum up an area of 1.630.199m^2, equivalent to 221 football fields).

The internal communication system initially counts with a hardship that implies a 77% of the total workforce (MOD) not having access to a computer in their work positions, existing numerous working areas distributed in more than 1.630.199 m^2 of production plant (221 football fields).

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[9] The personnel in this firm are classified in three groups; PEC/TAS (technical-assistant), MOI (indirect labor) or MOD (direct labor).

In economic figures, the factory reached a total benefit of 74,5 million of euros after taxes in 2016, a 22,5% more than in the previous year. The total sales were of 2.911,5 million of euros (an increase of 2,2% with respect to 2015). The 95% of this income belongs to the car sales, while the remaining 5% corresponds to sale of car components and car spare parts. The Volkswagen Polo A05 (the one being produced currently) was the most produced and exported model in Spain, with 296.800 units manufactured in 2016. Additionally, it was the third most sold model in the European market. The prediction for 2017, when it will be joined the production of the current and new model (Volkswagen Polo A05 and A07, respectively), is of 350.000 units.

4.2. Internal communication background

In April 2016, the Communication Department of Volkswagen Navarra conducted a study on the different communication channels in force in order to know the workforce´s opinion about them. Moreover, taking advantage of the recent changes the Communication Department had implemented in 2015, the study was also useful for learning the reception of those reforms by the workers, and not only that, but also for getting certain suggestions regarding the communication channels.

The Department of Communication in the firm launched a new Strategic Communication Plan in 2015 with the objective of improving the former external and internal communication of Volkswagen Navarra. A Strategic Communication Plan is a crucial tool in every organization as a part of the general organizational strategy. Its importance resides in the capacity of transmitting the organization´s strategic vision, objectives, projects and changes; in being the link between external and internal communication; in defining the public objectives and manage each of them in an optimum way; in being an internal marketing element for the organization; and, in addition, being a tool for the managerial change (in the context that it allows changing the labour climate).

The new Strategic Communication Plan aimed to analyse the internal communication, study the effectiveness of the current communication channels, detect the existing problems and optimization points, as well as define new communication methods, whenever it is necessary, adapting to new technological advances in the communication area (communication 2.0). All of that was necessary for changing the perception workers[10] had about the internal communication system, which resulted among the worst valued on a preceding survey. In fact, according to the results obtained in the study, the communication did not approach an approximately 80% of line production workers. Furthermore, new proposals for collaborating with the enhancement of the social climate were considered (achieve employees to be the best ambassadors of the firm).

The planning consisted on the following. Firstly, the new personnel in charge of the communication department revised the results obtained in the workshops (where different responsible gathered and brainstormed) made in year 2012, and from that baseline, analysed what the current situation (year 2015) looked like. In the following stage, they

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[10] In its majority, they were line production workers and their commands, which currently represent the 75% of Volkswagen Navarra´s total workforce.

conducted several interviews with personnel from all areas in the organization with the objective of going in depth in the media analysis and social climate. Next, some new workshops were celebrated in which personnel from the eleven areas of the organization were gathered to discuss the conditions of the communication system and its perception on each area.

The new department heads realized about the need of better defining both the objectives and the channels of the communication system, prioritizing the internal communication, as evidence suggested it needed a noteworthy transformation. Among the most evident communication failures, it was recognized that communication was too much focused on management levels. Moreover, a general belief that information often arrived faster from outsiders was present in many areas. All this together was reflected in a rough social climate, which was not only found out in the survey implemented by the communication department, but also in the 'Opinion Barometer'[11] of that year.

The urgency of a greater communication scope towards certain divisions within the firm (particularly, the production areas) helped to propose some new strategies to be implemented, grouped in three sections inside the new Strategic Communication Plan; the improvement of the current channels, the development of new internal communication methods and the social proposals.

4.2.1. *Improvement of the current communication methods*

Next, the eleven channels that were in force at the time of the strategy implementation will be briefly explained, as well as the improvement changes that were implemented in line with the new Strategic Communication Plan.

Intranet

This internal corporative web page is considered the main internal communication tool inside the firm. Inside it, every employee with access to a computer[12] can gain admission to all the information channels, among many other informative links. Together with the Department of Information and Technology (IT), the communication department ensures that all the new information is uploaded at time, and that all the applications and services work correctly.

Improvements: With the collaboration of the IT department, the navigability and structure of the page (the cover and the photo gallery), were renewed, a new drop-down menu was added, and it allowed a quicker and more immediate management.

Newsletter 'Polo Zoom'

It is a weekly internal one-page (two sides) newsletter where the ultimate firm´s news are published. It also contains interesting information that is directly connected with the

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[11] The 'Opinion Barometer' is an internal tool promoted by Volkswagen Group in all its firms in order to learn and enhance the opinion about the firm and employees´ labour atmosphere, with the objective of becoming the most attractive employer (one of the 2018 Strategy´s).

[12] Only the MOI and TAS employees have access to them, the MOD stands out of it.

workforce; the weekly production data and the results of the weekly audit, the menu and the weather for the whole week, the agenda for the weekend in the city and special extras for the worker (shopping, travelling…). This newsletter is addressed to all the public within the firm, and every Friday many copies are placed in every area in the firm. Additionally, the copies are sent via e-mail and uploaded to the intranet.

Improvements: Due to the great acceptance of this internal communication tool, a new extension of the 'Polo Zoom', called 'Special edition of Polo Zoom', was launched. Thus, apart from having a weekly newsletter, the communication department would publish from time to time an especial edition with deeper information and more profound topics. Its size would be more extensive and the design more specific.

Notices to the Staff

This is considered one of the most urgent communication channels, as every time that is needed, a notice is sent via email to all the internal computer users, uploaded to the intranet, and placed in all the information panels and resting rooms´ boxes. Again, the workers of the line production are not included in the email accessibility, so the physical reading is their only chance to get that message.

Improvements: This was initially under the responsibility of the secretary in the management department that had to do with the releasing notice, who oversaw sending an email to the rest of the management departments (not to the employees in concrete). The communication department realized about the information misleading of this channel, as usually the message did not reach workers from inferior hierarchical levels. For this reason, it took its management and extended its distribution channels throughout the whole factory. Taking advantage of this change, its design was also remodelled, making it more visual and easy to read.

'A Punto' magazine

It is the official magazine of Volkswagen Navarra, which is sent every three months to each employee´s homes. Unlike the rest of the communication channels, the elaboration of the magazine is externalized to a supplier that edits the articles and takes the charge of the design and layout, always under the guidelines of the communication department. As its volume is considerable (55-68 pages), the extension of the articles and quantity of pictures are the greatest among all the channels. In general, it is a channel of general acceptance, especially for the production areas, which may be due to the inclusion of workers in the news. For instance, in every edition, an interview to one MOD is included, where they can talk about any topic, inside or outside the firm (their trajectory within the firm, a receipt…).

Improvements: The communication department decided to change the supplier as they wanted a better design and writing-style. The new editions would take employees into

consideration[13] in a greater extent and use a less technical language, so the approach of the magazine would be more internal customer-oriented.

⬧ Informative panels

This channel has the most public exhibition inside the firm, specifically to the production workers. The reason behind this is that they are all located in the entrance of each production area inside the factory (close to the checking-in points), as well as in the production workers´ resting rooms inside each production area. The panels, apart from being the showcase for other internal communication channels ('Polo Zoom' newsletter, Notices to the Personnel…), are also the place where all the production workers can place an announcement[14].

Improvements: Information panels have been totally renewed after having realized about their deterioration and obsolete image. The communication department visited the factory of Seat Barcelona and simulated their information panels´ shape, replacing the old ones by others with a new format and design. One of the principal improvements was the covering of the panels with a glass window, something that would help to protect the information sheets and the maintenance of a cleaner space. The management of the information flows now will happen to be a duty of the communication department, who apart from emitting information, will also place the papers and replace them when they consider necessary.

⬧ Computers in the resting rooms

As previously stated, computers are available for people working at offices and for many indirect labour employees (that is, for the TAS and MOI), so the rest are leave apart of them. One computer per resting room does not suppose a big communicative impact for the firm, but at least someone working in the production line can check or look for some publications on the intranet. The communication department considered that an improvement here was not feasible.

⬧ Information points at resting rooms

These are similar to the informative panels, as they play the role of a clamping for the rest of the information channels. The information points are shelves with holes for each kind of information sheet. In contrast with the informative panels, the information points provide the possibility of getting an exemplary on their own, apart from offering more information than what the panels can. As happens with the previous channel, no improvements were carried out in the information points.

⬧ Polo League

The Polo League is a physical communication channel in which one intern person prepares a power point presentation, always with the same structure, although the topics rotate every three weeks (called "a cycle"): Firstly, two or three general internal news about some

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[13] As a novelty, a section called "*En primera persona*" was included, where employees are interviewed, and a section called "*Nuestro Tiempo Libre*", where employees share their likes, hobbies and life experiences.
[14] With the previous approval of the Communication Department.

themes regarding the firm (in many occasions, they are the same ones included in the 'Polo Zoom' newsletter); Secondly, a section called "*Good Habits*", where an example about a good conduct inside the workplace is presented, such as how to recycle different materials, avoidance of work accident, etc.; Third, some "hot news" about the factory, Brand and Group; Forth, information about a supplier (with data about the firm itself, employees…), and more importantly, what does it provide to Volkswagen Navarra; Fifth, a section called "*Volkswagen Group´s Route*", where in every presentation a different vehicle pertaining to the Brand is chosen and useful information about it is communicate; Sixth, a section called "*Did you know that…?*" with a brief curious fact regarding the Brand. Lastly, the weekly accumulated production data is attached, with the units of the current Polo produced in Pamplona, Shangai, Uitenhage, Pune and Pekan.

The information to be included in every presentation is initially discussed and approved in a meeting where the intern in charge of the 'Polo League', a supervisor (from the communication department as well) and each workshop´s commands gather. From that meeting, the new topics to be included in the next Polo League cycle are finally chosen. Once the presentation is elaborated, the manager of the communication department needs to approve it, and after this, the manager of the general production department needs to approve it too.

The idea behind this communication channel, at first glance, was to reach to the 100% of direct labour (MOD) workers. However, for some reasons, the presentation finishes once the commands attend it.

Improvements: The ultimate objective of this communication channel has not been launched yet, which would imply a subsequent transmission of information from the commands who attended the 'Polo League' to the workers of the line production under their supervision. Nevertheless, this channel was before leaded by the production department, and as its purpose was more communicative than technical, the department of communication took on its management.

TV screens in the canteen

The canteen is a not for-working place inside the factory where every employee visits at least a few times every week. The TV screens located in the canteen reproduce videos made up of photographs, most them pertaining to the last social events celebrated for any corporative reason (employee retirement, anniversaries, special visits to the firms...), which unless they are shown in the canteen, nobody from other areas in the firm could see (except the communication department).

Improvements: Many suggestions pointed out that videos needed to be more frequently renewed (every 1 or 2 days), and that they should last longer (30/40 minutes), which meant a more variety of pictures and appearances in them.

Press releases

Although this channel is an external communication channel, every time that the department contacts with the press for publishing any new, before the external

communication channels publish it, it is responsible for sending via email this same press release to every manager in the firm, as well as for uploading it on the intranet. In this way, the firm itself is responsible for maintaining its workforce up-to-date with the information that can be found later in the external media, before anyone else outside the firm informs about it.

Improvements: Before, not all the computer users received the press release (it was only directed to the executive levels), but after considering that the inclusion of more employees in the awareness of the notice was crucial, the communication department extended the email-sending to all the staff owning a computer (apart from uploading it in the intranet).

✦ Corporative web page

This is also an external resource that can be used by both internal and external customers to read information about the firm. It is usually the most recurrent informative channel for those people that want to take part or is going to take part in the firm, so the communication department must ensure that the page is properly updated and the information is clear and organized. Most of the news released in the official web page are the same ones that are internally communicated, but, in addition to it, information about the history of the firm, the employees and the product is included.

Improvements: The inclusion of the personnel in the web page has been recently empowered with sections like personal interviews, experiences inside the firm, etc. It was considered that the approach of the image of a regular worker in a public communication channel was positive both for the internal and external users.

4.2.2. *Proposal of new communication channels*

Apart from the improvement of the current communication channels, the new Strategic Plan proposed other new communication initiatives after having discussed them in the "workshops":

✦ The new 'App' for the employees

For the first time in a Volkswagen Group factory, the communication department together with the IT department studied the introduction of an application where all the employees of the firm could access downloading it (no matter if they are inside or outside the firm´s facilities[15]). Its principal objective, then, was to ensure that the entire MOD workforce could reach to all the communication flows.

The requirements for obtaining the 'App' were having a mobile phone or tablet with any of the leading operating systems of the market (iOS, Android and Blackberry), and sign in with the username (ID) and password (number of employee) that is used at work, so the application will be for free[16] and directed only to the internal customers of the firm.

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[15] This was one of the main advances in the communication plan, as until this moment, all the internal communication channels were functioning inside the firm.

[16] Although it would require an initial investment, workers do not need to pay anything for getting it.

The advantages of this new channel were diverse. Apart from solving the "lack of communication" problem with many MOD workers, the information could be instantly transmitted through the application, without the necessity of placing papers in the informative panels.

Its contents, at first glance, would be the following:

- Contents generated by the Communication Department: Notice to the Personnel, Press releases, 'Polo Zoom', 'A Punto' magazine (in a pdf format) and an image gallery.
- Participative contents: "Suggestions Box" (where every employee has the possibility of making a suggestion concerning the company and a potential improvement in something) and the E-Board (explained below).
- Other useful contents for reinforcing the utility and commitment of the employees: The entire publication of the Collective Bargaining Agreement in force, the labour calendar, the weekly weather, the weekly menu of the canteen, discount offers for employees …

Implementation stage: The proposal was studied and it was assessed as a cost effective and highly communicative channel, so the project was approved by the General Management and the subsequent stages for its implementation began.

✚ The E-Board

The idea of this communication channel came originally from Volkswagen Argentina, and it consisted on an online buying and selling platform, available for the entire workforce. This was a very innovative proposal that implied the replacement of "paper and adhesive tape" announcements with a more interactive and easy to implement way. As it will be a replication of the Volkswagen Argentina E-Board, it would cost 0 euros.

Implementation: The idea was approved as well, but as the original application was not fully compatible with Volkswagen Navarra standards, its implementation would require the collaboration of I.T.

✚ Interactive panel

These panels consisted on a touch screen that is connected to the internet and that allows, as a normal computer, every employee to access to the intranet as well as other allowed websites. The idea was to locate one panel on each production area; however, in the resting rooms there would not be enough space, so the only possibility was to locate them in the entrances.

Implementation: Due to its high cost (the panel itself plus the development of each hardware) and lacking convenience (neither its location nor the queues that would be created for its use were favourable for the commodity of the firm) this proposal was finally rejected.

Figure 5. Classification of the channels according to the periodicity and audience.
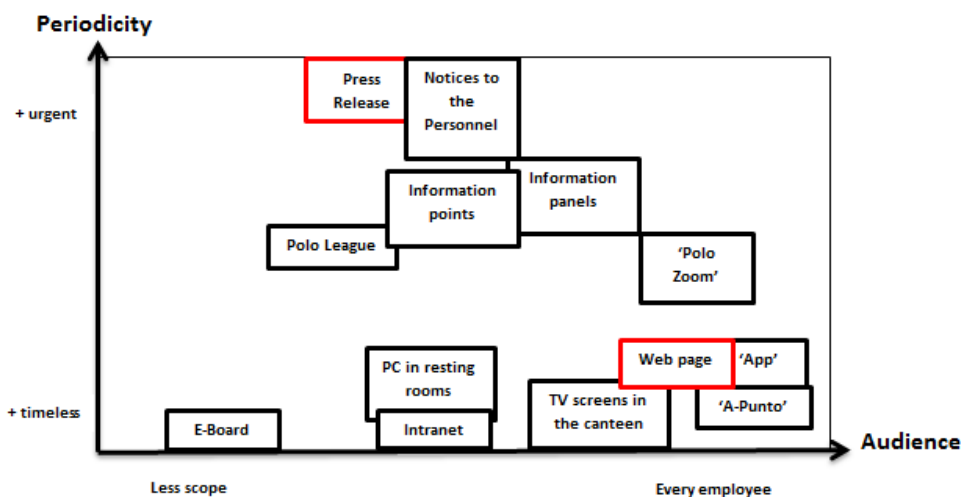
Source: Own elaboration.
The ones in red are external communication channels too.

Figure 5 classifies the already explained internal communication channels according to the periodicity of its use and audience. The urgency refers to the necessity of using the channels whenever something happens that requires it, while the more timeless is the periodicity, the greater the freedom of the channels for functioning. On the other hand, the scope indicates the number of employees that can use the channel.

4.2.3. Social proposals

The firm considered that its communicative role, apart from transmitting the necessary information to the entire workforce, should also get involved in facilitating the participation of employees in diverse social activities outside the firm ("*teamkultur*"[17] + Corporate Social Responsibility). Among the different social proposals, the following ones were offered:

- Clubs

The Communication Department will organize meetings with workers and relatives sharing similar hobbies (sports, music, reading…), as well as invite a professional or known people to give a speech.

- Contests

Music bands, monologues, painting, photography, and similar contests among employees, in order to live a healthy competition doing what people likes the most outside work.

- "Volkswagen Navarra League"

Volkswagen Navarra will organize an internal league, like the regional "*Desafío Empresas*"[18] league, where employees participate in a contest, individually or by teams, and compete in some sports. The possibility of including the suppliers in the League was also proposed.

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[17] Team culture in German.
[18] Once a year, employees pertaining to the most popular firms from Navarre compete in different activities, mostly related to sports.

- ⬇ <u>Activities for the weekend</u>

 The firm will also organize excursions for the weekend, such as exists to the mountain, tours by bicycle, etc.

- ⬇ <u>Visits among workshops</u>

The firm will facilitate organized tours to the different workshops inside the Volkswagen Navarra factory, addressed to internal workers and their relatives, so as to be more aware about the whole production processes carried out there.

The communication department approved the most voted social proposals, which resulted to be the clubs, the "Volkswagen Navarra League" and the visits among workshops. The rest were not going to be implemented.

A year after the starting of the renovations in the Communication Department, a survey recollected the opinion of the new Strategic Plan for communication. From a total of 4.542 workers, 911 individuals made the survey (346 were MOD), thus, the sample considered the real distribution of people throughout the firm[19]. The structure of the survey could be divided in two type of analysis: On the one hand, it focused on the frequency of use of each communication channel, and, on the other hand, the survey focused on the awareness of the last changes carried out by the Communication Departments. The results were the following:

As expected, the MOI and TAS present a greater use of communication channels than the MOD. However, the latter showed a reasonable use, except the Intranet, which stands out for its low utilization. A study of whether a significant relation exists between the work classification and the frequency of use demonstrated that the Notices to the Personnel and the Polo Zoom are highly correlated to MOD workers, in contrast, the intranet is mostly used by the rest (with access to a computer). The 'A Punto' magazine, however, did not show any similar results, as it is equally used by both groups.

With concern to the perception of the last improvements and new communication channel incorporations, the information panels´ renewals were emphasized among all the workers, with no distinction regarding the job. The web page (intranet) changes embraced a lower attention, but a positive one. Despite the 'App' was launched a few months before the survey, it showed a positive acceptance and an average of 77% of the sample was aware of its implementation. Regarding the face-to-face communication channel ('Polo League') the MOD presents a greater welcoming to the initiative, despite its changes are among the worst valued in general, probably because, as it was previously stated, the objective of a top-bottom flow of information is atrophied.

4.3. Premises

Since the beginning of 2015, the implementation of a Communication Strategic Plan brought some good internal communication practices with it. This, together with the

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[19] Moreover, the results obtained overpassed the minimum sample needed according to the *Cochran* formula, which demanded 346 surveys for MOD and 258 for the rest.

collaboration of other departments, allowed the communication department to progress in three aspects: the transmission of information to the workforce, the relationship firm-employee (considering the participation of employees in activities and their sense of commitment to the company), and the external communication (regarding the media and the Navarre society). In the face of aiming to transmit information within the workforce in a faster, more intimate, comfortable and understandable manner, it was decided to both improve 8 of the 9 communication channels in force, and include 2 out of 3 new proposals.

The most claimed one was the 'App', which first release was in January 2016, and supposed a novelty at national and international level within the Volkswagen Group. Furthermore, in February 2017 some additional betterments were included, among them the possibility for every user to upload a suggestion that, later, the Suggestions team from Volkswagen Navarra would revise. The 'App' works faster than when it began functioning, and it is available for more mobile platforms now.

Regarding the deepening in the relationship between the employee and the organization, the Communication Department worked towards the construction of a more participative and committed workforce. Many options were proposed with which the employee could feel the pride of pertaining to Volkswagen Navarra. Among the most remarkable ones, the "*En Primera Persona*" and "*Nuestro Tiempo Libre*" sections in the magazine, the club "*Encuentros en la fábrica*", which gave the employees the opportunity of attending to an informal face-to-face speech of popular characters like Luis Moya[20] and Enrique Martín Monreal[21]. In addition, coinciding with the 50º anniversary of the firm in 2015, an Open Day was organized in which all the workers could visit the factory accompanied by their family and friends (in total, more than 11,700 people assisted).

4.4. Analysis

In order to analyse the objectives of this paper, two statistical tools will be used. One of them, the Opinion Barometer, is an internal tool that collects the opinion of many employees about some topics related to the company, the working atmosphere and their job. Thus, the Opinion Barometer will give us an approach of the level of satisfaction and commitment of the participants regarding the communication and delivery of information inside the firm. In addition to this, and with the aim of completing the analysis, a survey is going to be conducted among the commands of each workshop (in concrete, the workshops where the 'Polo League' is still working).

Besides, a survey will ask questions regarding the usefulness and valuation of each internal communication channel, as well as the general opinion of the current communication system. The reason behind surveying the commands and not all the line production workers (MOD) is that it would imply a less complicated process of delivery and collection of information, as it would require allocating part of their free-time in answering the survey. Moreover, the commands, apart from representing a smaller proportion of the workforce (thus, the required sample is much smaller), are the intermediaries between the

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[20] Ex-copilot of the Volkswagen MotorSports.
[21] Osasuna football team´s previous trainer.

line production workers and the managers. For this reason, their perception about the communication functioning inside the firm is essential for the analysis.

4.4.1. Opinion Barometer (2016)

As explained before, the Opinion Barometer (*Stimmungsbarometer* in German) is a tool promoted by the Group in all its Volkswagen firms in order to promote and improve the level of wellness about the firm and the general work environment of its employees. Through this tool, employees can express their agreement or disagreement about the proposed issues. This initiative started in 2008 as a tool for achieving one of the four strategic objectives of Volkswagen Navarra: being the best employer. In the 2016 edition, a new questionnaire was developed, formed by a total of 22 questions grouped in four blocks called "Our organizational unit", "Our collaboration", "My job"; and "Me in the company". This structure ensured a better revision of the results and facilitated the measures to be taken afterwards depending on the area and subject to be solved. The 2016 Opinion Barometer encompassed a total participation rate of 72.2% (the highest one occurred in 2012 with a 91%).

As the objective of this project has to do with the status (satisfaction, motivation and commitment) of the production employees concerning the internal communication system, only 8 questions will be considered. In concrete, each question has the possibility of being graded with five choices of assessment; "Totally agree", "Agree in a great extent", "Only partly agree", "Disagree in a great extent" and "Totally disagree".

At the time of publishing the results obtained in the Opinion Barometer, the firm makes use of the Stiba(M), a standardized computer program for the whole conglomerate. Four months after the survey, the employees and responsible of each area analyse the results, and the methodology is straightforward. If, for each of the blocks, the orange and red fields sum up a 30% or more from the total, then it must be considered some measures for alleviating the detected lack. If that deficit is not improved in a time, then it would be recommended the implementation of specific measures.

From the Stiba(M) data, the firm publishes the first three agreement level's rate for each of the questions, divided by areas, as well as the average obtained on each block. In this way, it is more manageable to detect any imminent defect. Table 1 shows the questions rescued among the 22 that are going to be analysed in this study:

Table 1. Selected questions from the Opinion Barometer

	QUESTION	EXPLANATION
1	**In my organizational unit, I count with the necessary information and communication means for accomplishing my job.**	Do I have the necessary means (materials, information, personal capacity, etc.) to carry out my tasks? Does the information flow correctly from the proper transmitter to the right addressee?
2	**In my organizational unit, the necessary knowledge and experiences are communicated in order to perform my tasks.**	My co-workers or superiors share their knowledge and experiences among the rest of the employees. This question is not only aimed at each organizational unit, but to rest of the workers that collaborates with it and with who is necessary a sharing of information.

3	The atmosphere at work allows me to give a frank and sincere opinion whenever it is necessary.	Can I address critical issues with my co-workers and superiors? Do you and your colleagues maintain an open and sincere communication? Could you describe the culture of the error and opinion in your organizational unit?
4	My direct superior has an exemplary and convincing managerial style.	Do your superior and/or co-workers motivate you in favour of the common objectives? Do you understand your superior´s decisions? Do you support your superior when he/she is in doubt?
5	My job motivates me.	Do you like your job and feel identified with it? Are you proud of the product/service that comes from your job? Do you have positive experiences in your job?
6	I feel a personal appreciation for the tasks I perform.	I receive clear signs of appreciation for my performance. My commitment and technical capabilities are recognized in my day-to-day work. I receive comments that help to improve my daily tasks.
7	For me, Volkswagen Navarra is a good employer.	How is the general relation that you have with the firm? Would you recommend your relatives and friends to work in the firm?
8	Volkswagen Navarra has a positive image among the public in general and among its clients.	Do the products and services help the firm to generate a good reputation? Do you think that the customers are satisfied with the firm?

Source: Own elaboration.

From a total of 2.280 participants, only the production areas (plus the department of Logistics) will be considered. Table 2 shows the respondents distributed by workshops.

Table 2. Respondents by areas of the 2016 Opinion Barometer

Location / Area	Total	Participants	Participation ratio (%)
Volkswagen Navarra	4.397	2.280	51,85
Production total	3.555	1.594	44,84
Engines workshop	556	312	56,12
Press workshop	143	88	61,54
Sheet metal workshop	590	335	56,78
Assembly workshop	1.354	364	26,88
Final revision workshop	291	179	61,51
Painting workshop	564	288	51,06
Logistics	185	108	58,38

Source: Own elaboration

4.4.2. The survey

Another tool for studying the perception of workers within the factory, a survey has been conducted among the different workshop´s commands. As previously said, the factory is composed by seven workshops, but the commands of four[22] of them will be the ones answering the survey. In total, 74 commands work at these workshops, and the needed sample for achieving a significant result is of 63 answers (the formula below explains it).

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[22] Engines workshop (10 commands), logistics workshop (6 commands), sheet metal workshop (21 commands), press workshop (2 commands) and assembly workshop (35 commands).

$$n = \frac{N * Z_a^2 * p * q}{d^2 * (N - 1) + Z_a^2 * p * q}$$

Where:

N: size of the population= 74

Z_a: confidence level= 1.96 (from a 95%)

d: maximum permissible error value (5%)

p: proportion of individuals who have the study characteristic in the population= 0.5

q: proportion of individuals who do not have the study characteristic in the population= 0.5

The complete survey is included in the Annexed, which is composed by seven questions. Six of them ask in a scale grade of 0-10 for rating, while the last question asks for a suggestion regarding the internal communication of the firm that could help employees in having a more satisfactory job. Question 1 asks to value how much do they know about each internal channel, question 2 is about how often do they consult them, question 3 asks to indicate the grade of appealing of each channel, the fourth question is about the experience they already have in searching for information, and question 5 asks to indicate the probability of using them for next occasions. The sixth question presents four assertions and the respondents must indicate their degree of agreement. The first assertion states that the internal communication is essential for knowing the last news happening in the firm, the second one refers to whether they consider that the internal communication system keeps them informed, the third statement wonders if there exist a clear communication of the firm`s general objectives, and, lastly, there is an assertion asking if they think the internal communication system at the company has improved in the last two years.

In total 68 answers were collected, thus, the needed sample is more than fulfilled. One of them belongs to the press workshop, 20 to sheet metal, 9 to engines, 33 to assembly and 5 to logistics. From them, an 85.3% are men and 14.7% women, being the average age 45.4 years old. The 80.9% of the respondents answered having an indefinite contract, being the rest eventual. Regarding their highest educational level, most of the answers refer to Vocational Training (41.2%) and University degree (35.3%), while a 5.9% have the Bachelor and an 8.8% a Master or Second Degree cycle.

5. RESULTS

5.1. The Opinion Barometer

The results obtained in the Opinion Barometer are depicted in Figure 7. As said, the database gets rid of the disagreement ratings for each question, so that the objective of interpreting the acceptance for each question in every production (plus painting and logistics) workshop is intuitive.

Figure 7. Level of agreement (%) for each of the selected question in the Opinion Barometer (2016)
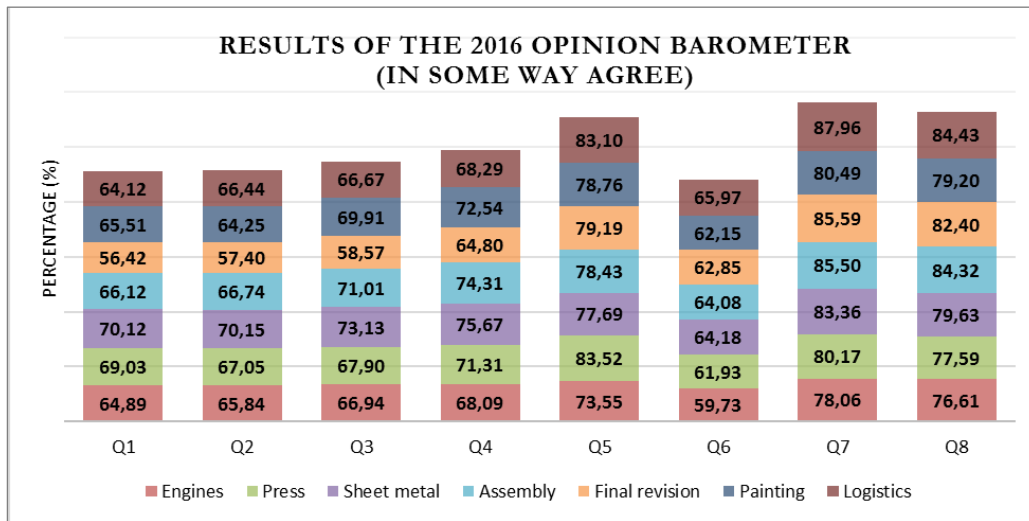
Source: Own elaboration from data of the Opinion Barometer (2016)

At first glance, the first two questions (Q1 and Q2) obtain a very similar agreement rate, and this is not a coincidence. Both questions (“*In my organizational unit, I count with the necessary information and communication means in order to do my job*” and “*In my organizational unit, the necessary knowledge and experiences are communicated in order to perform my tasks*”, respectively) denote a similar mark as they belong to the same block in the Barometer. These two statements assess how the communication and/or information system is valued on each workshop, question 1 focusing on the information and communication resources and question 2 on the necessary communication of knowledge and experiences. Sheet metal workshop is the one with the highest agreement level in both, and the only one that does not need to consider improving their information means and communication defaults. One of the two most uninhabited workshops, Press, also obtains a high agreement (63, 03%). Final Revision scores the lowest agreement levels in both questions.

Q3 and Q4 also pertain to the same block, called “Our collaboration”, but the results are not as like as before. Question 3 refers to whether the atmosphere at work allows its employees to communicate a frank and sincere opinion as long as they consider it appropriate, while question 4 asks about the managerial style of their direct superior. As in the previous questions, Final Revision obtains the worst results among all the workshops, and the Sheet metal workshop the best ones. Every workshop scores a higher rate in question 4, so they value their direct superior´s managerial style as an exemplary and convincing one, while in general do not consider their job atmosphere (in terms of a proper place where to address critical issues and maintain an open and sincere communication) that convenient.

With questions 5 and 6, opinions are more diverse because that block, as its own name indicates (“My job”), denotes subjective and personal assessment. Question 5 (“*My job motivates me*”) scores a much better reaction than the next one among the respondents. Thus, participants like their jobs and feel identified with it in a high degree, and consider having positive experiences at their work. In this aspect, the workshop scoring the highest result is not the same that has been so far, Sheet metal, which gets the second lowest result. Press workshop together with Logistics agrees with this assertion the most, the two

smallest workshops (in terms of people) among all the production area. On the other side, Engines (with a 73.55%) obtains the worst outcome. The scarce average acceptance range of Q6 ("*I feel a personal appreciation for the tasks I perform*") indicates the need of a closer and more constructive communication exchange about the daily work, being Engines again the workshop with the lowest agreement.

Finally, two questions asking about how does the individual feel as a part of Volkswagen Navarra are quoted. In here, employees demonstrate the greatest rate of agreement among all the questions asked in the Barometer. In concrete, Q7 accrues the best agreement rates in six out of seven workshops, being Press and Engines the exceptions. This subject does not require any measure; the perception at Engines gives the lowest results one more time. Question 8 inquiries about the external image the firm projects, a fact that is more closely related to the external rather than internal communication, but still of high interest.

In a way of supporting the already explained, it has been calculated the average score obtained for each of the eight questions and, subsequently, extracted the deviation of every workshop with respect to the average on each question. Figures 8-16 depict this fact, and it can be seen where does the firm need to focus more with respect to each Block. Final Revision notably deviates from the average in the first Block (Figures 8 and 9) referring to the information and communication means and knowledge sharing. In contrast, Sheet metal exceeds the average for both questions.

Figure 8. Differences with Q1 average
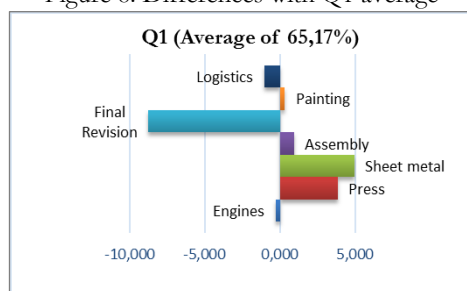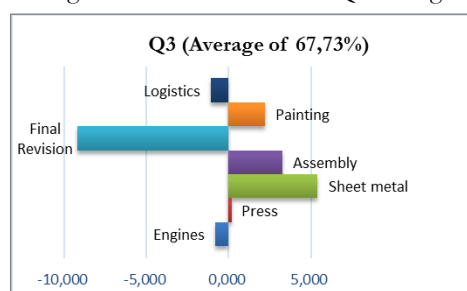
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 9. Differences with Q2 average
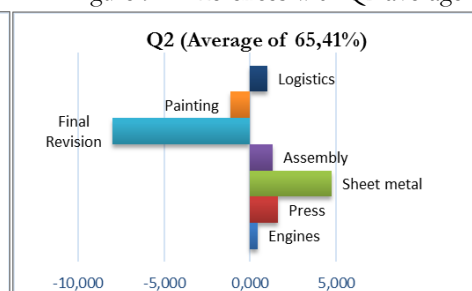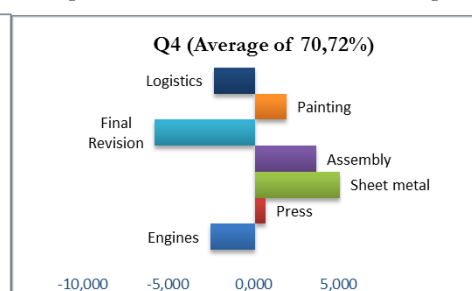
Source: Own elaboration

Similar results are depicted by Figures 10 and 11, referring to the atmosphere at work and convincing style of the employees' superior. In comparison with the previous results, especially in Q4, the averages have increased. While Painting, this time, gets better results than the average, the Press workshop is no longer so favoured.

Figure 10. Differences with Q3 average
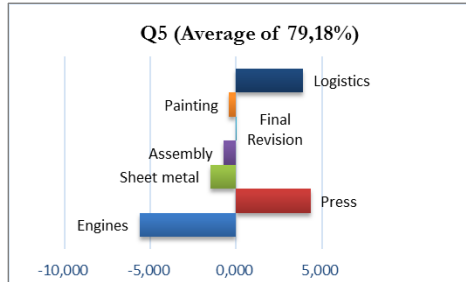
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 11. Differences with Q4 average
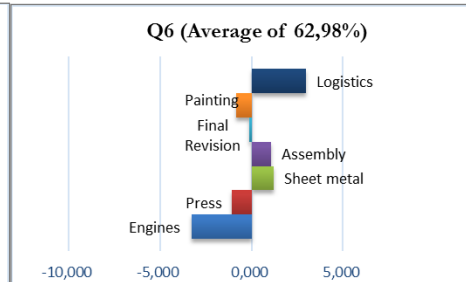
Source: Own elaboration

Figure 12 shows the averages for the questions asking for the motivation and feeling of appreciation in their jobs, and now the patterns of the workshops change. The area that moves further away from the mean in a negative way is Engines, while Logistics and obtain better results than the average in both. The lowest agreement average obtained is in Q6 (Figure 13), nevertheless, apart from Press (where there are results better that the average regarding motivation), results do not differ much with respect to the mean.

Figure 12. Differences with Q5 average   Figure 13. Differences with Q6 average

Source: Own elaboration   Source: Own elaboration

Lastly, with the highest averages, Figures 14 and 15 show the questions belonging to the Block "Me in the company", and it is curious how the behavior of the results of each workshop with respect to the mean does not vary much from one question to another. Engines, one more time, deviates negatively form the average in both, followed by Press. Logistics, on the other side, is again blunting positively form the average, but the novelty here is that Assembly and Final Revision (two workshops that are very close to each other) exceed the average.
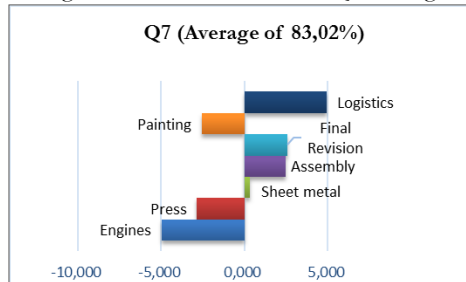
Figure 12. Differences with Q5 average   Figure 12. Differences with Q5 average
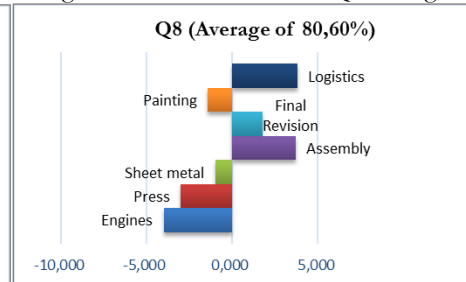
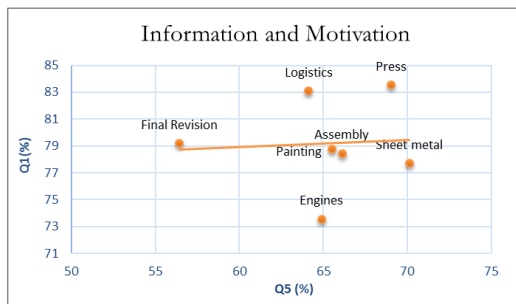Source: Own elaboration   Source: Own elaboration

A valuable way for judging whether access to greater information and communication means is correlated with employees´ opinions regarding their motivation and commitment at work could be displaying a scatter plot which, on the one hand, correlated Q1 and Q5 (motivation) and, on the other hand, Q1 and Q7 (commitment). Although the expectations, following the line of this project, would be to find a positive correlation for both cases, Figures 14 and 15 do not depict any significant conclusion. Perhaps the correlation between the information and motivation in the workshops may have a positive sign (0,066), but it is too weak for following our objective. In contrast, the result obtained from the correlation of information and commitment is completely removed from the reality of the presented theory, as it seems that the more informed the workshops feel, the
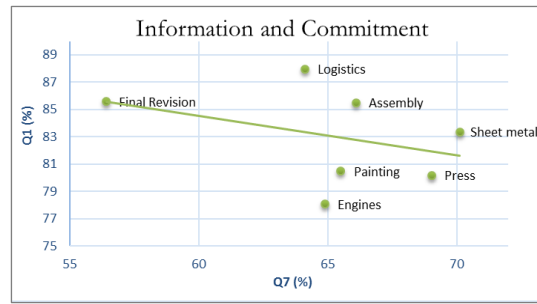
lower is their commitment with the company. However, again, the correlation coefficient (-0,369) is not strong enough for making any judgement.

Figure 14. Scatter plot of questions 1 and 5.

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 15. Scatter plot of questions 1 and 7.

Source: Own elaboration

5.2. The opinion of the respondents

The results have been treated with the statistical program SPSS (see the Annexed), and these are the interpretations derived from them.

The first two questions in the survey asked about the degree of knowledge towards each channel and the frequency of their use (figure 16). The average obtained on each question depict that the most acknowledged channels are the Polo Zoom newsletter and the 'A Punto' magazine, while the most used channel is the Intranet (with a more remarkable result than the obtained with the previous averages).

Figure 16. Results from questions 1 and 2.
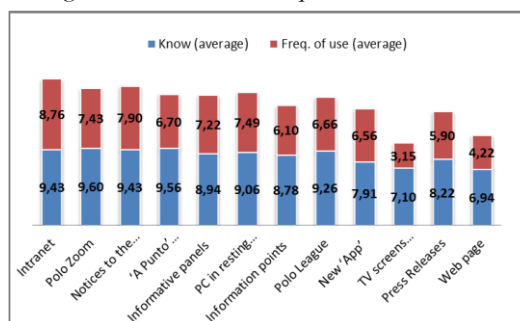
Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the new 'App', it seems that despite being a recent internal communication channel it is fairly known among the employees. However, its frequency of use and experience of using are still upgradeable.

The notable lack of knowledge about one of the two external communication channels is interesting, which also obtains a low average regarding its frequency use. Nevertheless, in this last regard, the TV screens in the canteen are the one obtaining the worst average. Despite the TV screens get an average of 7,10 in the first question (considering that not all the interviewed visit the canteen, is not that low), is by far the least attractive communication channel, the one obtaining the worst average experience of use, and its probability of being use for information is the lowest.

Figure 17. Result from question 3.
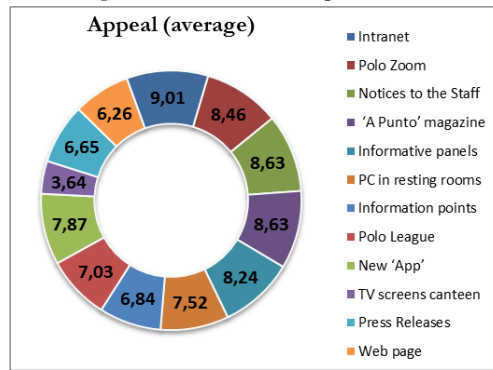
Source: Own elaboration.

The intranet appears to be the most gratifying internal channels. It is the most attractive mean for getting information inside the firm, and gets the highest score concerning the employees' experience in searching information through it. Moreover, as expected, the probability of using it in the next occasions is the highest among all (see figure 17).

Figure 18. Results from questions 4 and 5.
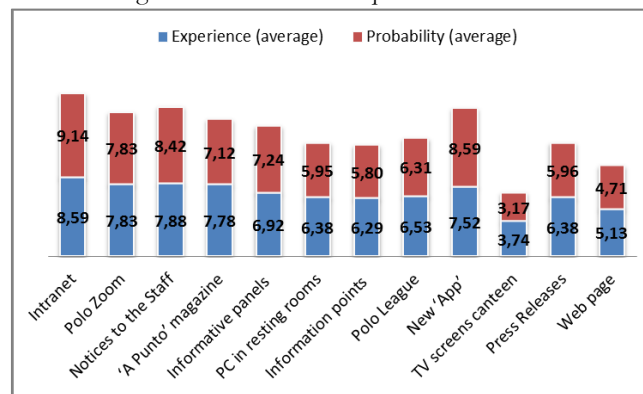
Source: Own elaboration

Results from figure 18 concerning the 'App' might indicate that, as it is a relatively new internal channel, the experience in using it so far does not score a level as high as the probability in using it in next occasions. In other words, it seems that the 'App' needs some more time for getting totally installed in the internal communication system but that workers expect to use it in future occasions.

The great majority of the respondents agree with the fact that the internal communication is essential for keeping an informed workforce (see figure 19) and that it has improved in the last two years. Nevertheless, a much lower average score is obtained in the statement referring to whether employees are firstly informed inside the firm or outside. This means that many of them think that the information reaches at first hand by the external media, and then by the internal channels. Moreover, there is a low average agreement with regard to the statement asserting that there is a clear communication of the firm´s objectives among the workforce.

Figure 19. Results from question 6.
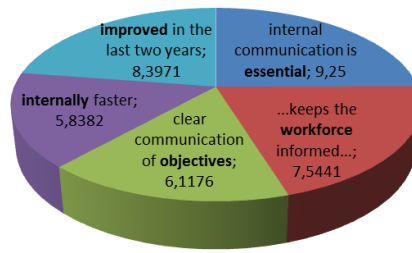
Source: Own elaboration

A variance analysis of a factor (ANOVA) has been conducted for comparing the five opinions obtained in question 6 with respect to the workshop each respondent belongs to (the results are shown in Table 3).

Table 3. ANOVA for Question 6 and workshops.

		Sum of squares	gl	Quadratic mean	F	Sig.
6.1- ESSENTIAL	Between groups	7,651	4	1,913	0,618	0,652
	Within groups	195,099	63	3,097		
	Total	202,75	67			
6.2- KEEPS INFORMED	Between groups	20,948	4	5,237	1,634	0,177
	Within groups	201,92	63	3,205		
	Total	222,868	67			
6.3- COMMUNICATION OF OBJECTIVES	Between groups	28,153	4	7,038	1,426	0,236
	Within groups	310,906	63	4,935		
	Total	339,059	67			
6.4- INTERNALLY FASTER	Between groups	77,188	4	19,297	2,854	0,031
	Within groups	426,033	63	6,762		
	Total	503,221	67			
6.5- IMPROVED	Between groups	10,578	4	2,645	0,97	0,43
	Within groups	171,701	63	2,725		
	Total	182,279	67			

Source: Own elaboration

The statistical test aims to compare whether the answer of the employees differ depending on which production area they work at, so that the null hypothesis states that answers to the level of agreement and which workshop they belong to do not differ. The hypothesis to be proved in the ANOVA of a factor is that the population averages are the same, and the numerator of the statistic is the F, with a significance level of 5%. Among these five assertions, only one null hypotheses is rejected; in concrete, the statement of "*The information reaches internally faster than with the external media*" (6.4). Since the value of its critical level (0.031) is less than 0.05, we decide to reject the hypothesis of equal means and conclude that employees' opinion whether they are firstly informed about the events concerning the firm internally rather than externally differ depending on the area they work at. Repairing at the average level of acceptance answered by each workshop (figure 20), it is presumed the disparities among the opinions of the areas, being the Logistic workshop the one scoring the lowest level of agreement while the Steel workshop obtains the highest average. The rest seem to value the fact of being communicated at first hand by the internal media similarly.

Figure 20. Level of agreement to the tested question scored by
workshops
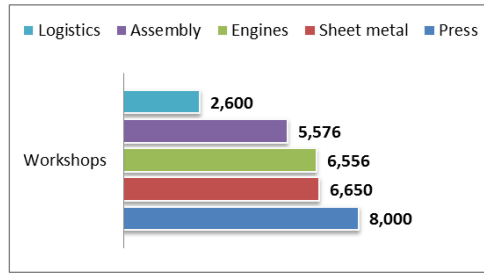
Source: Own elaboration

In line with the novelty of introducing the 'App' as an internal communication channel for the first time, it would be interesting to analyse its status within the workforce. In order to do so, it has been made a bivariate correlation with the age as the explanatory variable, and conduct four correlation analysis with answers in questions 2 (frequency of use), 3 (appeal), 4 (experience of use) and 5 (probability of use in next occasions). Results, which are also posted in the Annexed, show the correlation hypothesis with Peason coefficient[23] at a significant level of 5%.

The first hypothesis is rejected with a critical level of 0.016 (<5%), and the Peason coefficient (-0.294) indicates that the frequency of approaching the 'App' for searching information is negatively correlated with the age.

		AGE	Freq. APP
AGE	Peason corr.	1	-0,294
	Sig. (bilateral)		0,016
Freq. APP	Peason corr.	-0,294	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,016	

Secondly, regarding the appealing of the 'App', the obtained critical level (0.033) reveals that the hypothesis is also rejected. With a Peason coefficient of -0.262, the negative correlation implies that as employees get older, their opinion about the appealing of the 'App' as an internal communication source worsens.

		AGE	Appealing APP
AGE	Peason corr.	1	-0,262
	Sig. (bilateral)		0,033
Appealing APP	Peason corr.	-0,262	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,033	

The same hypothesis outcome, but with an even stronger rejection level (the critical value is of 0.005<1%), is obtained for the fourth question in the survey, indicating that the experience of workers in searching information via 'App' deteriorates with the age of the respondents.

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[23] It is a measure of the linear association between two variables. The values of the correlation coefficient range from-1 to 1. The coefficient sign indicates the direction of the relationship and its absolute value indicates the force. The higher values indicate that the relationship is closer (Escuela Superior de Informática).

		AGE	Exp. APP
AGE	Peason corr.	1	-0,355
	Sig. (bilateral)		0,005
Exp. APP	Peason corr.	-0,355	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,005	

However, the hypothesis made for the fifth question (*Next time you need information, what is your probability of using the following internal communication channels?*) does not show any eloquent correlation with the age as the obtained significant value is 0.250 (the null hypothesis is not rejected). Thus, it seems that the probability of approaching the 'App' in future occasions do not differ with the age of the workers.

		AGE	Prob. APP
AGE	Peason corr.	1	-0,145
	Sig. (bilateral)		0,250
Prob. APP	Peason corr.	-0,145	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	0,250	

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIRM

Considering the results obtained, some considerations might be of interest for the firm. In line with the results obtained in the Opinion Barometer´s first block, the firm should focus on creating a more transparent and communicative atmosphere at each workshop´s organizational unit, not only delivered from the Communication Department. This might involve including other specific communication measures on each workshop that will facilitate a closer and more transparent exchange of information, which, in turn, could improve employees' daily performance.

Thus, a recommendation for the firm is to rehabilitate an existing internal communication channel, the Polo League, and redirect it towards the achievement of its initial objectives. In fact, a suggestion received in the survey (question 7) stated that "the Polo League is a good communication channel but it is not properly used", because the reality is that, although it is a well-known channel throughout the commands, its current frequency of use and appealing is fairly low. A reflection of the importance of improving the communication within the workshops, is that Press and Sheet metal score the highest rates in the Opinion Barometer´s section (Q1 and Q2) asking about the communication operation on each organizational unit, and at the same time are the ones getting the highest level of agreement about whether the information reaches internally faster than with the external media (Figure 12).

Employees value Volkswagen Navarra as a good employer that has a good external image and reputation, a fact that can be considered as a symptom of commitment and pride of belonging. However, the firm might consider designing a more effective transmission of its organizational objectives and make sure that it reaches clear to the entire workforce. A good way of doing so could be using the TV screens in the canteen as a method for

spreading the organizational culture among workers, with reproductions of photos and videos showing the company's strategies and objectives in a motivational way. One of the suggestions received from the survey was that "in the TV screens from the canteen they never show things form Volkswagen Navarra", and it has been seen how they obtain the worst results in the survey. Thus, the firm must contemplate enhancing the purpose of this communication channel, or otherwise, think about eliminating it.

To all this, the firm ought to continue relying on the intranet as its principal communication source, as well as developing the Polo Zoom newsletter due to its positive acceptance among the workforce.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The development of this project has contributed in reaffirming the worthiness of keeping a favourable communication flow inside a business, something that is closely related to the effort and performance of employees at their job. There is plenty of information that supports the external marketing practices for increasing the productivity of firms, either to increase sales, enhance the image of the firm, or keep customers satisfied and loyal to the product/service delivered.

However, it cannot be forgotten the importance of internal marketing practices in organizations, where the employees' (also known as internal customers) satisfaction and motivation is managed as a direct factor that influence the organization´s general performance. In this line, this paper presents a relatively recent literature referring to the internal marketing, which consists on processes aimed at keeping a gratified workforce with the objective of delivering a high-quality product. The internal marketing makes every worker aware of the functioning of the business they are working at, helps them in understanding the general organizational objectives and boosts them to accomplish their tasks effectively. Enterprises that count with a satisfied working atmosphere and maintain its employees motivated are considered to be competitively advantageous due to their potential capacity of producing a high-quality product and/or service. That is why, nowadays, more and more firms worry about the status of their employees and appropriate internal practices to keep them satisfied.

Within these internal marketing processes, as Grönroos (1990) indicates, we find the internal communication as an internal marketing tool for influencing the state of employees at the workplace. The way in which the communication system functions in a firm is crucial for the motivation and commitment of workers, as the more transparency and information they receive, the higher their feeling of appreciation and recognition perceived from the company, and consequently, a better performance and results will be obtained. Ensuring that employees are informed by the firm before the external media approaches them, as well as including them in the internal communication system functioning, are examples of good internal communication practices that positively impact on the behaviour of the workforce. Evidence suggests that companies that do not consider the internal communication as a crucial mechanism within their business obtain worst outcomes as employees are more prone to speculate, trust more in the external media and distrust their superiors at the workplace.

As companies grow and become more complex, the way the communication is internally managed raises its importance, and the rigid hierarchical communication flow is not enough for maintaining all the employees properly informed. In this line, the diversity of the channels used to deliver the desired information is becoming more and more extensive, and, in this paper, they have been classified as written, verbal and gestural. Although there is not a specific conviction on when to use one channel or another, in general, more formal messages are delivered through written communication while a more informal delivery is done verbally.

With the aim of evidencing this conviction empirically, it has been analysed the internal communication of a real Navarre company. This case is based on the Volkswagen Navarra company´s communication network and the channels used to deliver information throughout its employees. In the thread that in year 2015 Volkswagen Navarra entered a new Strategic Communication Plan, this paper describes the measures introduced for improving the scope of the internal communication channels in force, as well as the implementation of new ones (being the 'App' for the employees the most remarkable one). On the one hand, it has been taken advantage of an internal statistical tool called the Opinion Barometer, annually used for learning the general opinion of the workforce in many aspects. On the other hand, a survey has been conducted among the commands of the production area (the most affluent sector in the firm), since their job implies being intermediaries between the senior officials and the line production workers. With the results collected from each tool, it has been obtained an approximate perception of workers (allocated by workshops) about their feeling of motivation and commitment towards the organization, as well as their judgement of the internal communication channels used by the firm.

From the Opinion Barometer poll, it can be intuited that, although a high rate of the workforce considers their job motivating and they feel proud of the product/service delivered from their performance at work, there is not such a great agreement regarding the personal acknowledgement and recognition of the tasks they execute on their organizational units. Therefore, a recommendation for the firm might be to start using again the talks of the Polo League in order to create a more direct and transparent communication flow to enhance the specific issues raised at each organizational unit. This would be particularly convenient in the Final Revision and Engines, as these turn out to be the workshops that are farthest away from the averages obtained in each of the eight questions analysed in the Opinion Barometer.

Through the survey, it has been possible to appreciate that a large majority of the respondents value the improvement happened in the communication system in the last two years, and an even greater part consider the internal communication an essential fact to learn about the last events happening in the firm. With the SPSS statistical program, it has been possible to analyse the correlation between the age of the respondents and the 'App', and results show that there exist significant negative interactions among the two. In short, as employees get older, the frequency of use and experience in using the 'App' as a communication channel decreases. However, the analysis points out that there might exist an optimistic future for the 'App', as the probability of using it in the next occasions does

not obtain any significant result in line with the age. Besides, as it is a relatively newly introduced channel, it is true that the Communication Department must continue working on its implementation and wait for a general better acceptance.

The intranet, as expected, becomes the most used and gratifying communication channel in average, so that the entire organization must ensure to keep it updated and accessible to the greatest possible workers. As the employees that work in the first line of production do not own a computer, and as it would imply a costly investment to increment the number of computers in the resting rooms, the Communication Department must be aware of this segment and continue developing other channels, such as the newsletter and magazine, and make sure that the Notices to the Staff and Press Releases reach the greatest number of employees before any other external agent communicates.

Finally, the firm might consider designing a more effective strategy for transmitting its organizational objectives throughout the entire workforce, and not just limit it to the people working at non-production jobs. A measure that could be applicable to this is redirecting what it is broadcasted on the canteen´s TV screens towards the organizational culture. Thus, at the same time, the usefulness of this communication channel might improve the dissatisfactory scores obtained in the survey.

With all this, although its elaboration has not been straightforward, this project has some limitations at the time of answering the objective initially set. At first, it was planned to conduct a broader survey addressed to the whole line-production workforce with questions that literally asked about their opinion regarding the communication system inside the factory, and how it affects their status at work. Nevertheless, for different reasons, this survey was not accepted by who has this competency and I needed to find other resources for conducting an empirical analysis. The results obtained by the Opinion Barometer and the delimited survey has been useful for concluding the paper, however, this constraint have prevented to give an exhaustive answer to the principal objective: the study of the direct effects of the internal communication on the motivation and satisfaction of the employees at firms.

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