
CORPORATE IDENTITY OF SS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The study deals with the research of the corporate identity of universities in Slovakia and abroad, which in its name bear the names of important personalities of Slovak and European History, Ss. Cyril and Methodius. Market players choose as a brand and message holders different kinds of symbols and personalities, educational institutions are not an exception. Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities has gone the way of the spread of Cyril and Methodius tradition, based on their history, traditions and bring elements of Christianity and humanism in teaching and in extracurricular activities. The aim of the research was to determine the extent to which the universities manifest the elements of corporate identity aimed to preserve and spread the message of Ss. Cyril and Methodius. The results have led to defining the common features of identity of these universities.

Keywords: university, educational institution, Ss. Cyril and Methodius, corporate identity

1. Introduction

The image and identity of the university is now an important factor in for its success in the market of educational institutions. Identity is a manifestation of internal values, activities and direction of the university and a positive image of the educational institution represents a significant competitive advantage, which has an impact on the decision to prospective students in choosing the university and represents it externally.

“Due to the overwhelming offer of educational services over demand for them and constantly growing range of competing educational institutions in the public and private sectors it is essential to distinguish the provided product of education” [1] particularly effective communication towards the target audience and building a common identity of educational institution.

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Corporate identity can be defined as “strategically planned idea covering several overreaching areas that in the interaction and the same direction slipped each entity uncommon character, thus distinguishing it from similar entities in the market” [2].

Public relations play an important role in building the corporate identity of the educational institutes. By Pravdová [3], public relations shape positive opinion about the institution, arousing the interest of the target audience of the activities of the institutions, protecting the positive image in case of a crisis.

In the study we are focused on the research of the corporate identity of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities. These universities aim to preserve and honour ethical values and principles, knowledge-based and humanist tradition, in order to achieve fairness, honest human relations, good working atmosphere and thereby increasing the confidence of students, employees and the general public.

These educational institutions provide an education that is of paramount importance for the development of society and represent a comprehensive and permanent process in which new personality is born, the quality is still at a higher level, able to address current as well as future challenges and active approach to life and also respects moral values [4].

There are currently four universities operating in Slovakia, Macedonia and Bulgaria: the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Veliko Turnovo and University of St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje.

2. Research methodology

For research the corporate identity of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities, we used primary research methods: quantitative methods (questioning) and qualitative methods (group interview). Marketing research is the primary method of research in which “a longer-term work, combining several research procedures that apply more stringent procedures for statistical processing, validating and comparing the results obtained from different sources, and that there is a deeper knowledge and contexts” [5].

Before the implementation of the quantitative research in the form of questioning through a questionnaire, we conducted group interviews with a sample of respondents. The aim was to define the characteristics that Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities should have and communicate. The results showed in the actual characteristics of the university as well as the expected behaviour of employees and students that Christian principles are not important and a university bearing the name of Ss. Cyril and Methodius does not have to be a Christian. By contrast the most important characteristics is the spread of education and building a knowledge society which prides itself on cultural values. The message of universities modelled on Ss. Cyril and Methodius, in particular, is the spread of education, teachers who are asserting Cyril and Methodius and principles in teaching and training, students who are practicing

cultural values and moral principles. Individual characteristics of universities, students and staff behaviour, were then used in the quantitative research.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions that were divided into several areas. The last five questions representing bipolar adjectives, where respondents assign to individual claims on a seven-point scale.

After carrying out this research we evaluated the semantic differential method. Semantic differential is a research method aimed at discovering how individuals can perceive concepts. The bottom line is stopped to subjective feelings, which then try to interpret on an objective basis. This is based on an assumption that each respondent has a continuum of attitudes and the respondent's relationship towards this continuum is represented by judgements that are expressed by bipolar adjectives [6]. The semantic differential techniques is an evaluation of qualitative data - attitudes, opinion, assessment status, and other information and pass it on objectified statistics in numeric or verbal rating scales [7].

Respondents were students of all levels of study and employees of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities. Sampling of respondents was conducted with purposive sampling, where respondents are selected according to a predetermined character - a student or employee of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities. In the case of universities in Bulgaria and Macedonia the knowledge of English was required. Questionnaires were distributed electronically. The Questionnaire was completed by 337 respondents together from all four institutions surveyed.

One of the key areas of research was to assess how the specific arguments are implemented in a daily practice of university. Respondents rated the statements on five-point scale, which have been prepared by participants of the group interview. These the following arguments were achieved the highest ratings amongst the participants, in terms of what characteristics / activities should be carried out by the Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities.

There are the following arguments:

- the spread of education, the provision of quality education;
- development and preserve of culture and traditions;
- the spread of Christianity;
- education of students who are raised on moral values and honesty;
- Building a cultural conscious and educated society.

3. The research results

Dissemination of education and the providing of quality education play in the activities of universities an important role (Figure 1a). Altogether, 61% of respondents rated the given activity with higher values of 4-5, where 5 represented the highest value. Average value of 3 was chosen by chose 29.2 % of respondents and only 9.8% the lowest values 1 and 2.

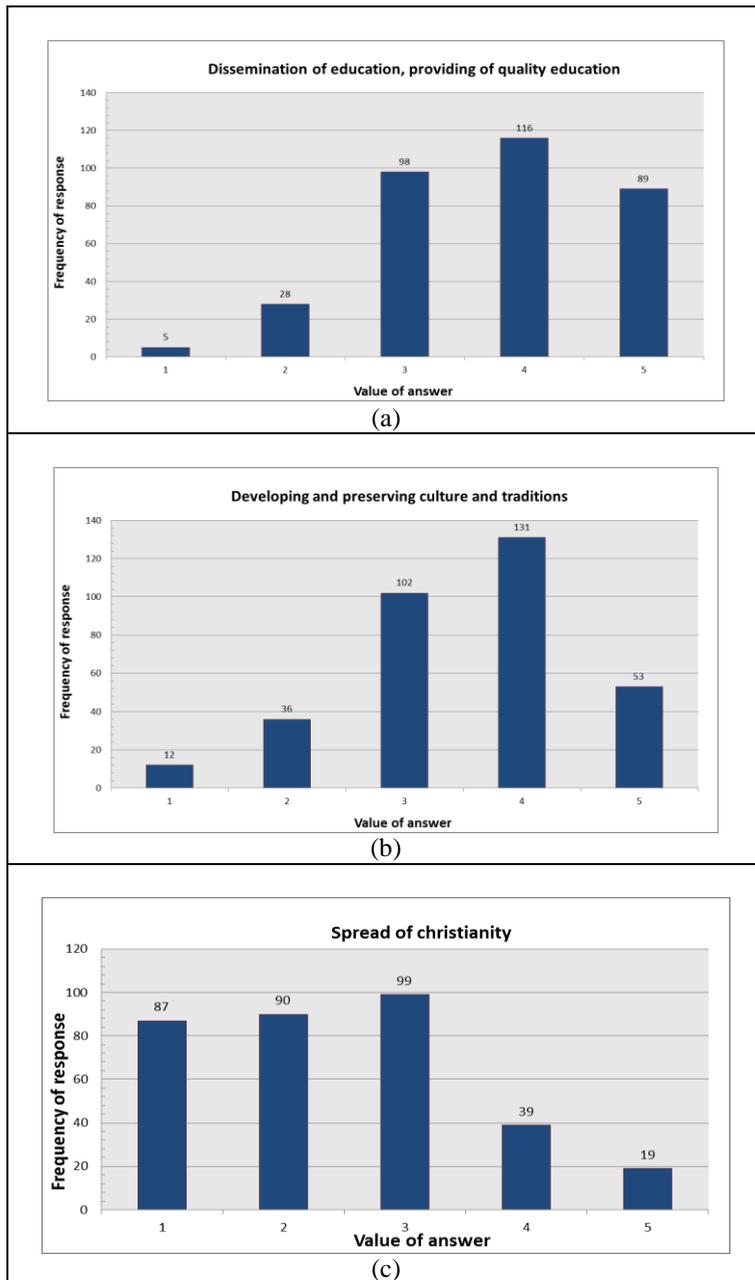


Figure 1. The argument: (a) dissemination of education, providing of quality education; (b) developing and preserving culture and traditions; (c) spread of Christianity.

From the results of Figure 1b, we conclude that the universities are trying in their activities on the development and preservation of culture and traditions, as is apparent from their name and mission. Total 184 of respondents assessed value of the claim 4-5, representing 54.6% of those who responded to the

question. Relatively large group of respondents in number 102 representing 30.5% have the neutral approach on this issue.

The result of Figure 1c confirms the results of group interviews, which revealed that Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities may not be necessarily the Christian University. When asked whether the university in its activities spread Christianity, indicated the highest values 4-5 only 17.4% in the number of respondents 58. Up to 177 respondents indicated values 1-2, which represents 52.9% of respondents who answered the question. Neutral approach on this issue attracted 29.6% of the number 99.

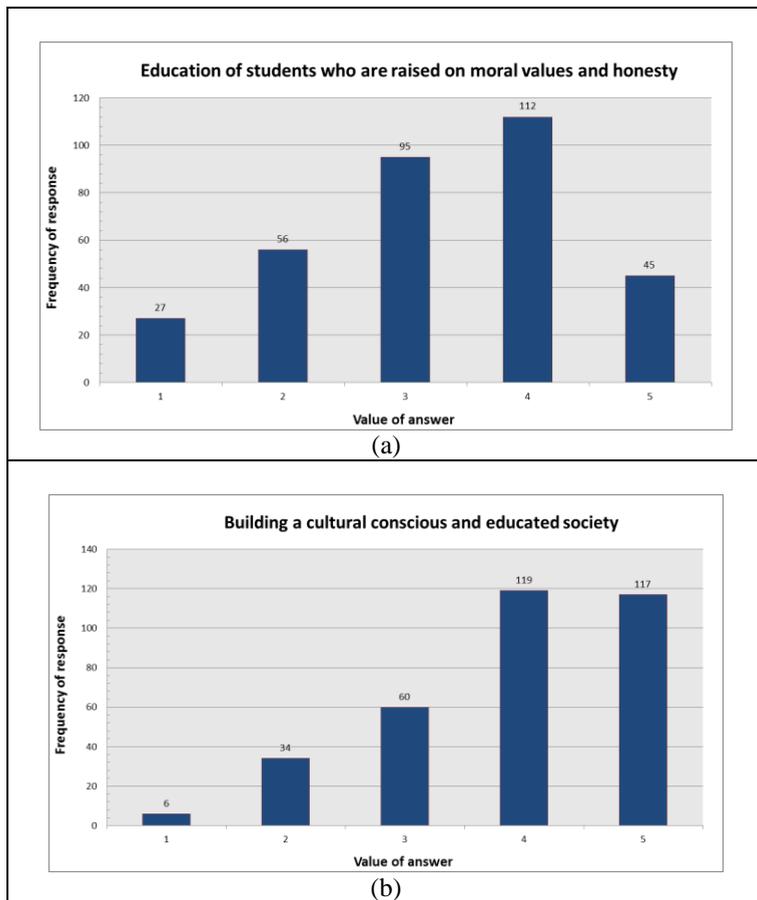


Figure 2. The argument: (a) Education of students who are raised on moral values and honesty; (b) Building a cultural conscious and educated society.

Education of students, who are raised on moral values should be taught to be one of the fundamental characteristics of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities. The research results confirm this fact. In Figure 2a we see that from the total of 335 responses, 46.8% of respondents in the number 157 indicated highest values 4 and 5, 28.4% in the number of 95 respondents has the neutral

approach and 24.8% of respondents in the number 83 indicated the lowest values.

Building a cultural conscious and educated society is a characteristic that marked by the highest values of most respondents (Figure 2b). Altogether, 70.2%, representing the number of 236 respondents. Neutral attitude has 60 respondents, i.e. 17.9%. The remaining 11.9% of respondents indicated the value 1-2, representing the number 40.

Table 1 contains the average values of the characteristics of Cyril and Methodius universities from the perspective of students and employees. Respondents in the five-point scale, consisting of the digits 1-5 have identified the appropriate number that best corresponds to their perception of the arguments at the university. Number 1 was the lowest degree of perception and number 5 the highest level of perception. From Table 1, it follows that to the greatest extent are Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities associated with building a cultural conscious and educated society, with the spread of education and the development and preservation of cultures and traditions. The lowest rating achieved the spread of Christianity.

Table 1. Mean values of Cyril and Methodius universities characteristics.

No.	Characteristics of Cyril and Methodius universities	Primer Mean
1.	the spread of education, the provision of quality education	3.76
2.	development and preserve of culture and traditions	3.53
3.	the spread of Christianity	2.44
4.	education of students who are raised on moral values and honesty	3.27
5.	build a cultural conscious and educated society	3.91

To evaluate other parts of the questionnaire, we used the method of semantic differential for each bipolar adjectives grouped into 5 areas:

- *Presentation of the University in the context of core values - belonging to the message of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius* in terms of power of presentation (strong-weak), in terms of interesting content (interesting – not interesting) and in terms of consistency of communication (consistent-inconsistent);
- *The behavior of employees* in terms of moral values (strong-weak), in terms of an enforcement Ss. Cyril and Methodius principles in teaching (active-passive) and in terms of cultural pride (strong-weak);
- *The behavior of students* in terms of moral values (strong-weak), in terms of discipline (disciplined–not disciplined) and in terms of approach to the education and advancement (positive, active-negative, passive);
- *Culture/Activities of universities* in terms of cultural background (strong-weak), offer extra-curricular activities (wide-narrow), in terms of university facilities (modern-deprecated) and finally in terms of developing a culture and traditions (active-passive);

- *Culture/Climate universities* in terms of an overall atmosphere (quiet, friendly atmosphere-tense, hostile atmosphere and positive-negative atmosphere);
- *Spreading the message* in terms of continuity with Ss. Cyril and Methodius (in the University is broadly felt a connection with Ss. Cyril and Methodius - in the university is not felt a connection with Ss. Cyril and Methodius) and in terms of continuity of faith and religion (in the university is broadly felt belief and religion - in the university is not felt faith and religion).

Evaluation of each term respondents identified the seven-point scale. Answers means the extent to which concepts they associate with adjectives. The scale shows which direction the respondent perceived the concept, which is between two opposing adjectives. Answers were evaluated by the arithmetic mean of the responses.

Polarity profile from Figure 3a shows the average values of 2.67 to 4.60 on a seven-point scale. The chart can be revealed that the respondents were mostly moving before average line, so respondents largely indicated positive values from 1 to 4. The best assessment achieved terms with an average value to 3 in the scale, namely the wide range of extra-curricular activities (2.67), positive atmosphere (2.80), quiet, friendly atmosphere (2.81), a strong cultural background (2.90). Values from 3 to 4 on a scale reached most terms (12 terms) - strong moral values of employees (3.04), active developing culture and traditions (3.13), strong presentation universities in the context of core values - belonging to the message of Ss. Cyril and Methodius (3.13), an interesting and consistent presentation of universities in the context of core values - belonging to the message of Ss. Cyril and Methodius (3.23, 3.29), modern equipment of universities (3.27), strong cultural pride of employees (3.41), the active promotion of Cyril and Methodius principles in teaching (3.62), in the university a strong connection is felt with Ss. Cyril and Methodius (3.83), strong moral values of students (3.71), a positive approach to education and student progress (3.94). Beyond average is disciplined student behavior (4.13) and finally the claim that in the university is widely felt belief and religion achieved the worst result (4.60), which confirms previous results that Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities may not be associated with religion, faith and spread of Christianity.

To the chart from Figure 3b belongs a table with polarity profiles (arithmetic mean) from each university, where you can see the differences in perceptions of student and employees from Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities. Values on a scale are ranging from 2.2 to 5.5. The best values achieved in the evaluation of UKF in Nitra evaluating of atmosphere at the university (2.2, 2.5), just behind her UCM in Trnava (2.6, 2.5), followed by UCM in Veliko Turnovo (3.0, 2.9) and UCM Skopje (3.5, 4.0). Conversely the worst rating achieved UCM in Trnava in terms of a connection with Ss. Cyril and Methodius (4.8), the best assessment of these claims reach UCM in Veliko Turnovo (3.0). The most negative assessment in terms of religion and belief has UCM in Skopje (5.5), this is mainly due to the impact of multiculturalism and the two religions at the University. UCM in Trnava also reached a negative rating (5.2), the best score is

at the UKF in Nitra (3.4). In the university in Trnava it felt the least promotion of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and principles in teaching (4.0), the best score in this field had the University of Veliko Turnovo and Nitra (3.3).

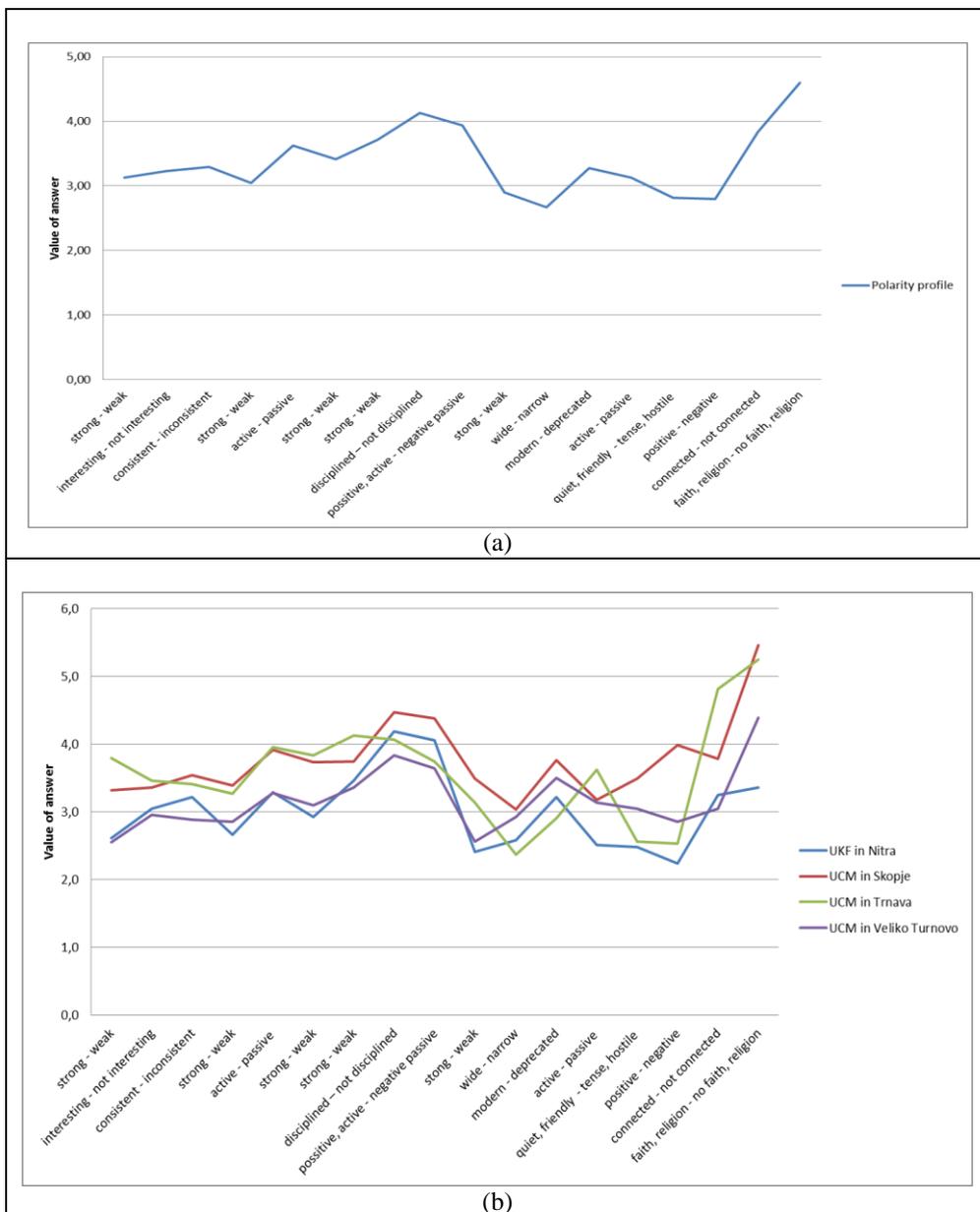


Figure 3. Polarity profile: (a) the entire studied ensemble, (b) of each university.

UCM in Veliko Turnovo and University in Nitra achieved the best results in a strong presentation in the context of core values - the link with Ss. Cyril and Methodius, in these universities it is the utmost feeling that activities undertaken

in relation to brand an educational institution, which is named after Ss. Cyril and Methodius. Best rating in extracurricular activities achieved UCM in Trnava (2.4). In terms of students behaviour the worst rating was reached by UCM in Skopje (4.5, 4.4).

4. Evaluation of quantitative research of the universities identity

We can comprehensively assess the evaluation of corporate identity of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities as a positive one. The average of responses was mostly before average line of the seven-point scale starting from a value of 2.2. In the conduct of students and spread the message of universities had a negative assessment, which ranged from the average limit to value 5.5.

In the presentation of the university in the context of core values and belonging to the reference of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities achieve value just below the average line had the worst results UCM in Trnava. University presentation was assessed in terms of power of presentation (2.6 to 3.8), interesting content (3.0-3.5) and consistency of communication (2.9 to 3.5).

The behaviour of employees has made a positive assessment from 2.7 to 4.0, the worst result just before the average line was UCM in Trnava.

Students' behaviour has emerged as a factor that negatively affects the identity of the university bearing the name of St. Cyril and Methodius. The worst rating in this area reached UCM in Skopje, which may be due to difference and cultures of students and teachers who are active at the university.

Corporate culture of universities reached in the evaluation of students and employees of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities also have good results. The research focused on the following areas: strong cultural background (2.4 to 3.5), a wide range of extracurricular activities (2.4 to 3.0), modern equipment universities (2.9 to 3.5), active development of culture and traditions (2.5-3.6).

Religion and faith is the utmost felt at UKF in Nitra (2.2), as well as links with the Ss. Cyril and Methodius (3.2), where the University itself and the city of Nitra are very closely linked with Christianity and preserving the message to the Ss. Cyril and Methodius. UCM in Veliko Turnovo achieved the best results in relation to the activities associated with Ss. Cyril and Methodius (3.0). The university has built on its bookstore, gift shop with promotional items, a museum. The overall atmosphere of the university consider all universities for the positive and friendly, results achieved values from 2.2 to 4.0, where the worst result, exactly at the average line achieved was the UCM in Skopje.

Research has confirmed the fact that Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities should not teach or be associated with Christianity, even though the public can create these associations.

5. Evaluation for UCM in Trnava

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava achieved the best rating in the offer of extracurricular activities (2.4), in a friendly and positive

atmosphere at the university (2.6, 2.5) and in the modern facilities of the university (2.9). By contrast, the UCM in Trnava is lagging behind a number of universities in a number of areas. This is mainly the presentation of the university in the context of the core values and belonging to the reference of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Cyril and Methodius, in terms of power of presentation (3.8), interesting content (3.5), consistency of communication (3.4), the promotion of Cyril and Methodius in teaching principles (4.0), the cultural values of employees and students (3.3, 4.1), the cultural background and development of the culture and traditions of the University (3.1, 3.6), the positive attitude of students to education and advancement (3.7). Rating behind the average line were in disciplined student behaviour (4.1), the strong moral values of students (4.1), in conjunction with Ss. Cyril and Methodius in activities of the university (4.8) and the dissemination of faith and religion at the university (5.2).

6. Building a common identity for Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities

Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities in Slovakia, Bulgaria and Macedonia are educational institutions that follow the message of the Thessalonians brothers, who are a source of education, culture, devotion and Slavonic community. Name of the organization, its brand and logo reflects the values that the Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities want to communicate.

On the basis of the research we formulate the basic characteristics of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities, which should be communicated towards internal and external public.

The common denominator of Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities in daily activities is:

- Dissemination of education, providing quality education through its faculties, departments and institutes necessary to ensure reproduction of the intellectual elite;
- Building a cultural conscious and educated society by educated skilled professionals who will spread their knowledge further, like Ss. Cyril and Methodius during their mission, thus ensuring the independence and development of the country;
- Development and preservation of culture and traditions message to their culture and traditions and pride in their origin country, faith.

7. Conclusion

The research results will be used to strengthen the corporate identity of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, to ensure consistent communication and building a common identity of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius universities in Slovakia and even abroad.

Ss. Cyril and Methodius is a brand that bears the name of many institutions in Slovakia and European countries. It represents the marketing brand of several European universities. Their integration, mutual communication, collaboration and building a common identity of these universities, the brand Ss. Cyril and Methodius as the name of the educational institution has the opportunity to reach beyond the borders of Europe and achieved a global dimension.

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