

CORPORATE CULTURE AS A CONCEPT FOCUSED ON THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Abstract

Current trends in the business environment are creating a new dimension of competitive behavior. In order to succeed, companies must focus on the circular economy. In this context, employees play an important role. They are a source of new innovative solutions, and creators of the corporate culture that influences the company success. The aim of the research is to identify the desired corporate culture using the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument. Based on the results, the clan corporate culture should dominate companies in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that companies focus on employee development, teamwork, and cohesion. Such a trend creates the potential for success, while the impact of corporate culture on how a company approaches issues of efficient use of resources in the form of a circular economy and sustainability is great.

Keywords: circular economy, corporate culture, OCAI, private sector, Slovakia.

JEL Codes: M14, M21.

Introduction

Knowledge, information technology, and innovation are the foundation of every business. In addition to that, every capable entrepreneurial entity should focus its attention not only towards increased efficiency but also towards sustainable economic growth and environmental protection based on the principles of circular economy. The reason for this is the constantly changing business environment, technological progress, and globalization of economies. In this context, companies should create an effective strategy that will help them succeed in a highly competitive environment. When developing a

strategy, it is necessary to consider the corporate culture, which is shaped and represented by people, from the founders of the company to top managers and employees who bring new, innovative ideas. Through their personal and managerial influence, they significantly impact the performance of the company, its competitive advantage, and its success or failure.

It is increasingly confirmed that investing in human capital, i.e., intangible assets of a company, becomes a necessary step to ensure the survival of the company in the market, as well as to implement the overall business

development strategy, in which human resources play a key role (Kucharcíková et al., 2023; Sebestova & Popescu, 2022; Polyakov et al., 2019). Human resources are not only an important part of the company's intangible assets but also a value that consistently grows in the structure of the company's total assets (Urban, 2023; Semiv et al., 2022). The activities of employees, their thoughts, abilities, and skills contribute to key strategies that enable the company to fulfill its visions and goals for the future.

In the context of human resources, the concept of corporate culture is often mentioned, and its creators are the employees themselves. Corporate culture represents a significant element of business management, which, as previous studies (Cumming et al., 2023; Charness & Grieco, 2023; Guiso et al., 2015) have shown, has a considerable impact on their performance. Corporate culture encompasses the fundamental methods of thinking, values, and norms that influence the behavior and actions of everyone in the company (Gorton et al., 2022). It consists of the values of the company, both implicit and explicit, captured by the concept of corporate ideology, which strengthens the relationship between individuals and work and regulates relationships among employees (Roos & Van Eeden, 2008). It gives meaning and purpose to daily work efforts and significantly influences employee activity, as it encourages employees to achieve the best possible results (Vveinhardt & Foktas, 2024; Husted & Allen, 2001).

The aim of the research is to identify the desired level of corporate culture and subsequently determine whether there are changes in employee preferences. Simultaneously, the aim is to evaluate the common features of the concepts of corporate culture and circular economy through the analysis of author keywords appearing in the journals of the Web of Science database (WOS).

Literature review

In relation to investing in human capital and the significance of human resources for business efficiency, it is important to emphasize that these aspects should also consider the principles of the circular economy as the foundation of sustainable economic growth. The circular economy and sustainable growth are becoming the primary pillars of many business strategies, as they contribute to the long-term viability and competitiveness of the company, as well as its image in terms of environmental behavior (Neykov et al., 2020). Research conducted by Walker et al. (2022) examines how companies involved in the circular economy perceive this concept in relation to sustainability. A circular economy that focuses on minimizing waste and maximizing resource utilization can be closely connected to human resources, as employees play a key role in implementing and adhering to these principles in practice. The skills, knowledge, and innovative thinking of employees are crucial for the successful implementation and management of circular business models. This has also been confirmed by the studies of Cvijović (2023), Punia et al. (2023), and Saeed (2019). Sustainable economic growth encompasses not only the financial prosperity of the company but also its positive impact on society and the environment. This aspect should be an integral part of the company's corporate culture and values. Employees who identify with these values and feel that their work contributes to sustainability can be more motivated and loyal to the company (Wang & Huang, 2022). In this way, the principles of the circular economy and sustainability in the context of human resources management become ingrained in the company's corporate culture and strategy, creating the potential to enhance performance and competitiveness in the market. Employees are the ones who put these principles into practice, and therefore, they should be the focal point of every company striving to be

sustainable and successful in today's globalized and dynamic market environment.

For every employee, corporate culture represents the value of identity and the shared spirit of the company they work for, regardless of whether it is in the private or public sector. Every employee should respect and behave according to the corporate culture because it helps employees communicate and collaborate, thereby improving the efficiency of information sharing (Wibisono et al., 2018; Jacobs et al., 2013). Samad et al. (2018) add that the more the corporate culture is shared by employees, the better the performance of the company will be. Furthermore, companies that embrace and share a strong corporate culture promote employee participation and adaptability, leading to greater employee loyalty and motivation, which in turn results in higher corporate performance (Charness & Grieco, 2023). Moreover, when values, norms, and the resulting behavioral patterns in the company are widely shared, the corporate culture becomes strong and significantly influences the functioning of the company (Graham et al., 2022; Gorton et al., 2022; Kotter & Heskett, 2011), its success or failure (Herget, 2023; Owoyemi & Ekwoaba, 2014), competitiveness, social responsibility, innovation, and performance (Danchova, 2018; Krašnicka et al., 2018; Jafari et al., 2013).

When discussing a positive corporate culture in relation to company success, it is most commonly assumed that a strong corporate culture exists. This means that all employees prefer a set of shared, relatively consistent values and behavioral rules that are accepted by the majority of colleagues, ultimately simplifying their management (Gorton & Zentefis, 2023; Hasan, 2022; Kachaňáková, 2010). A purposeful and well-formed corporate culture can lead to employees identifying with the company's goals and corporate life, which can ultimately improve the company's economic indicators (Herget, 2023).

A strong and content-relevant corporate culture is a competitive advantage (Danchova, 2019). According to further research (Matraeva et al., 2018; Galera & Calpena, 2014; Graham et al., 2013), corporate culture can be a source of competitive advantage, especially if it is considered valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and incorporated into strategic management. Such a corporate culture represents a combination of the strategic perspective of the company with the management of human resources, resulting in appropriate behavior from both quality managers and employees (Prange & Pinho, 2017). Therefore, managers pay more attention to the culture within the company and place increasing emphasis on its improvement (Stanford, 2010).

The aim of the research is to identify the desired level of corporate culture and subsequently determine whether there are changes in employee preferences. Simultaneously, the aim is to evaluate the common features of the concepts of corporate culture and circular economy through the analysis of author keywords appearing in the journals of the Web of Science database (WOS).

Methodical approach

There have been different approaches to measuring corporate culture. The research is based on the methodology of Cameron and Quinn (1999), which uses The Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument. Based on the methodology of Cameron and Quinn (1999) corporate culture is studied in a total of six areas throughout the four alternatives as follows:

1. Dominant Characteristics:

- alternative A: The company is a very personal place, similar to a large family. People are often in close contact and share many things.
- alternative B: The company is a very dynamic and entrepreneurial place. People are willing to take risks.

- alternative C: The company is focused on results. The main task is to complete the work. People are very competitive and achieving goals is important.

- alternative D: The company is a controlled and structured place. Formal processes are used to manage people.

2. Organizational Leadership:

- alternative A: Leadership is based on mentoring, facilitation, and support (training, guidance, encouragement).
- alternative B: Leadership is based on entrepreneurship, innovation, and taking risks.
- alternative C: Leadership is focused on effective procedures, aggressiveness, and achieving results.
- alternative D: Leadership is based on cooperation, order, and efficient functioning.

3. Management of Employees:

- alternative A: The management style is based on teamwork, consensus, and a sense of belonging.
- alternative B: The management style is based on risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.
- alternative C: The management style is based on competition, high demands, and goal orientation.
- alternative D: The management style is based on job security, harmony, predictable procedures, and stable relationships.

4. Organization Glue:

- alternative A: The element that holds the company together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to the company is very high.
- alternative B: The element that holds the company together is commitment to innovation and development. Being a leader in the field is the highest priority.
- alternative C: The element that holds the company together is the focus on achieving top goals.

- alternative D: The element that holds the company together is formal rules. Efficient operation of the company is essential.

5. Strategic Emphases:

- alternative A: The company emphasizes employee development, trust, openness, and lasting unity.
- alternative B: The company emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and searching for new opportunities are highly valued.
- alternative C: The company emphasizes competitiveness and success. Achieving long-term goals and a top market position are dominant.
- alternative D: The company emphasizes stability and consistency. Efficiency, control, and smooth operations are important.

6. Criteria of Success:

- alternative A: The company defines success through human resource development, teamwork, employee engagement, and interest.
- alternative B: The company defines success by having unique or the latest products. The product and innovations are in leading positions.
- alternative C: The company defines success through gaining market leadership and defeating competitors. Leading in the competitive market is key.
- alternative D: The company defines success through efficiency. Reliable deliveries, strong logistics, and low-cost production are decisive.

The task of the respondents was to assess the preferred level of corporate culture by distributing 100 points among four alternatives, based on how they believe the company should look in the next 5 to 10 years. Subsequently, following the model of Cameron and Quinn (1999), the overall preferred type of corporate culture for the 5 to 10-year horizon was identified by calculating the average values of the individual scores. The intention of the research was to analyze the development of

employee preferences from 2020 to 2023. This is connected to the main research question:

- Does the perception of corporate culture change over time?

The research used the method of a sociological survey through questionnaires, which are considered the most preferred way of collecting data from respondents, mainly due to the advantage of anonymity. The questionnaires were distributed electronically.

Respondents were addressed using a random sampling method. Employees working in private sector companies were included in the research. Employees working in state and public administration were excluded from the research. In order to ensure diversity in the sample, respondents of different gender, age, and education, were included in the research. A total of 3,803 respondents took part in it, according to Table 1.

Table 1. The composition of the research sample

Factor	Year	2020		2021		2022		2023		Total
	Frequency	Absolute	Relative	Absolute	Relative	Absolute	Relative	Absolute	Relative	
Gender	Male	475	50.00%	658	56.48%	522	54.04%	422	58.45%	2,077
	Female	475	50.00%	507	43.52%	444	45.96%	300	41.55%	1,726
Age	Under 30	273	28.74%	231	19.83%	229	23.71%	189	26.18%	922
	30-40	270	28.42%	337	28.93%	282	29.19%	232	32.13%	1,121
	40-50	244	25.68%	383	32.88%	278	28.78%	182	25.21%	1,087
	50 and more	163	17.16%	214	18.37%	177	18.32%	119	16.48%	673
Education	Lower secondary	162	17.05%	201	17.25%	240	24.84%	169	23.41%	772
	Upper secondary	611	64.32%	675	57.94%	575	59.52%	380	52.63%	2,241
	University education	177	18.63%	289	24.81%	151	15.63%	173	23.96%	790

**Source: developed by the authors.*

Data is processed through the weighted arithmetic mean, confidence interval, and 5% level of significance used in practice. By the Tukey HSD test, the assumption that there exist the differences in the preferences of employees in the area of corporate culture in terms of time is verified. To create a certain idea about the mutual connection of corporate culture and the circular economy, the analysis of key words (author keywords) appearing in the journals of the WOS database is used. WOS as the world's oldest, most widely used, and authoritative database of research publications and citations founded in 1964 is a valuable resource for academic and scientific work (Birkle et al., 2020). Search filters are used to create a database of documents from the WOS Core Collection, namely corporate culture (author keywords) and 1990-2023 (publication years). Subsequently, the SciMAT program is used. It

represents an open-source software tool to perform longitudinal scientific mapping developed by Cobo et al. (2012). Through this program, a partial analysis is used, namely the analysis of keywords.

While the Organisational Culture Assessment Instrument reveals which type of culture dominates within an organization (e.g., clan, hierarchy, etc.), keyword analysis from scientific articles uncovers current research trends and thematic directions within a given field and makes it possible to identify how the concept of culture is linked e.g. to the principles of the circular economy through certain topics. Together, these approaches connect the internal reality of an organization with the current academic discourse. The key terms identified in the literature can help better align organizational culture with contemporary theoretical frameworks, thereby increasing the

depth, relevance, and credibility of organizational culture assessment.

A limitation of the research is that it was conducted only within the territory of Slovakia. On the other hand, more than 3,800 respondents participated in the study. The research sample was large enough to allow the results to be generalized.

It would be interesting to conduct a similar study abroad and compare the results.

Alternatively, the research could be extended to include other concepts that, in addition to the circular model, influence preferences in corporate culture.

Results

Table 2 presents the results of the research in the first area investigated, which were the dominant characteristics.

Table 2. Results achieved in the area of dominant characteristics

Year	Alternative A			Alternative B			Alternative C			Alternative D		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	37.114	35.753	38.474	19.716	18.841	20.591	24.053	23.008	25.097	19.118	18.082	20.154
2021	37.075	35.841	38.308	18.351	17.614	19.088	23.942	23.059	24.824	20.633	19.768	21.498
2022	35.194	33.896	36.491	20.045	19.258	20.831	22.549	21.561	23.537	22.213	21.126	23.300
2023	35.347	33.886	36.807	22.178	21.233	23.122	23.131	22.058	24.203	19.345	18.210	20.480

**Source: developed by the authors.*

From the achieved results presented in Table 2, it is evident that in the years 2020 to 2023, alternative A obtained the highest average rating. The initial results show that opinions about the future direction of corporate culture have not changed year on year. Throughout the entire monitored period, alternative A dominated. Consequently, it can be stated that the respondents clearly expressed a preference for the implementation of the tools associated with alternative A in the future. In relation to the chosen methodology, the respondents expressed a desire for companies to

be a very personal place, like an extended family, where employees share a lot of personal information and features.

The initial results underwent further statistical testing using the Tukey HSD test. Table 3 presents the results obtained. The results indicate that the Tukey HSD test did not confirm the existence of statistically significant differences in the perception of the alternative that obtained the highest average rating. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents perceived alternative A consistently over the years studied.

Table 3. Results of statistical testing in the area of dominant characteristics

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		1.000	0.185	0.319
2021	1.000		0.165	0.302
2022	0.185	0.165		0.999
2023	0.319	0.302	0.999	

**Source: developed by the authors.*

The second area of research, as per the methodology of Cameron and Quinn (1999), focused on organizational leadership. The

results achieved are presented in Table 4. Subsequent statistical testing results are presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Results achieved in the area of organizational leadership

Year	Alternative A			Alternative B			Alternative C			Alternative D		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	29.093	27.852	30.333	27.184	26.052	28.316	15.865	14.937	16.793	27.858	26.646	29.070
2021	31.680	30.496	32.864	26.926	25.850	28.003	11.627	10.918	12.337	29.767	28.620	30.913
2022	29.124	27.950	30.299	25.487	24.412	26.561	14.200	13.367	15.033	31.189	29.856	32.523
2023	28.723	27.417	30.029	27.785	26.492	29.079	14.874	13.789	15.959	28.618	27.270	29.966

**Source: developed by the authors.*

The results in the area of organizational leadership were not unambiguous. The results presented in Table 4 indicate that in 2020 and 2021, alternative A achieved the highest average rating. It can be inferred from the above that the respondents expressed a demand for leadership that generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing. However, in 2022, there was a change. The highest average rating was achieved by alternative D ($\bar{X} = 31.189$). Respondents were

of the opinion that leadership in the organization should focus on exemplifying coordinating, organizing, or ensuring smooth-running efficiency. Moving on to 2023, alternative A once again achieved the highest average rating ($\bar{X} = 28.723$). It is also worth mentioning that in 2023, alternative D also obtained a relatively high average rating ($\bar{X} = 28.618$). The difference between the two was only 0.105 points.

Table 5. Results of statistical testing in the area of organizational leadership

Alternative	Alternative A				Alternative B			
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.012	1.000	0.980		0.988	0.160	0.904
2021	0.012		0.013	0.007	0.988		0.250	0.741
2022	1.000	0.013		0.975	0.160	0.250		0.044
2023	0.980	0.007	0.975		0.904	0.741	0.044	
Alternative	Alternative C				Alternative D			
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.000	0.038	0.454		0.120	0.001	0.864
2021	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.120		0.348	0.609
2022	0.038	0.000		0.746	0.001	0.348		0.041
2023	0.454	0.000	0.746		0.864	0.609	0.041	

**Source: developed by the authors.*

** Statistically significant differences are highlighted.*

From the results of the statistical testing in the area of organizational leadership

presented in Table 5, it is evident that differences in the perception of alternative A

were confirmed, specifically when comparing the results achieved in 2020 with those achieved in 2021. Statistically significant differences are highlighted. Further differences were confirmed when comparing 2021 with the years 2022 and 2023. Additionally, the Tukey HSD test confirmed that there were statistically significant differences in the perception of alternative D when comparing 2020 to 2022, and subsequently when comparing 2022 and 2023. Further differences were observed in the

perception of alternative B and alternative C. These are highlighted in Table 5.

The results achieved in the third investigated area, which was the management of employees, were clear (Table 6). Alternative A obtained the highest average rating throughout the entire period studied. Respondents expressed a desire for the future management of employees to focus on teamwork, consensus, and participation.

Table 6. Results achieved in the area of management of employees

Year	Alternative A			Alternative B			Alternative C			Alternative D		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	40.798	39.455	42.141	18.603	17.702	19.505	14.215	13.330	15.099	26.384	25.322	27.447
2021	42.687	41.457	43.916	18.809	18.000	19.617	10.500	9.843	11.158	28.004	26.993	29.015
2022	38.839	37.518	40.159	18.310	17.511	19.108	13.514	12.694	14.335	29.337	28.165	30.510
2023	39.209	37.720	40.699	20.726	19.735	21.717	13.899	12.913	14.885	26.166	24.959	27.374

**Source: developed by the authors.*

Despite the fact that alternative A achieved the highest average rating, the Tukey HSD test confirmed that there were differences in its perception between years. The differences were confirmed when comparing the opinions

of respondents in 2021 with the opinions of respondents in 2022 and 2023. Statistically significant differences are highlighted in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of statistical testing in the area of management of employees

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.167	0.173	0.418
2021	0.167		0.000	0.003
2022	0.173	0.000		0.984
2023	0.418	0.003	0.984	

**Source: developed by the authors.*

** Statistically significant differences are highlighted.*

The fourth area investigated in terms of Cameron and Quinn's (1999) methodology was organization glue. The achieved results are presented in Table 8. The results achieved in the area of organization glue were again unequivocal. The highest average rating was achieved by alternative A, which means that the respondents were of the opinion that loyalty and

mutual trust should be the factor that unites employees in the future. Commitment to the organization should run high.

Despite the fact that alternative A achieved the highest average rating during the entire period studied, the Tukey HSD test confirmed that there were statistically significant differences in the perception of this

alternative when comparing the years 2020 and 2021, as well as when comparing 2021 with the

years 2022 and 2023. Statistically significant differences are highlighted in Table 9.

Table 8. Results achieved in the area of organization glue

Year	Alternative A			Alternative B			Alternative C			Alternative D		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	32.524	31.306	33.743	22.372	21.470	23.273	23.654	22.690	24.617	21.451	20.368	22.533
2021	36.190	34.913	37.466	18.359	17.615	19.102	23.222	22.297	24.147	22.229	21.278	23.180
2022	31.676	30.468	32.884	21.734	20.830	22.638	23.433	22.473	24.392	23.157	22.035	24.280
2023	32.598	31.235	33.962	22.681	21.660	23.703	22.229	21.187	23.270	22.492	21.236	23.748

*Source: developed by the authors.

Table 9. Results of statistical testing in the area of organizational glue

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.000	0.791	1.000
2021	0.000		0.000	0.001
2022	0.791	0.000		0.786
2023	1.000	0.001	0.786	

*Source: developed by the authors.

* Statistically significant differences are highlighted.

The fifth area of research focused on strategic emphases. The achieved results are presented in Table 10, while the results of

subsequent statistical testing can be found in Table 11.

Table 10. Results achieved in the area of strategic emphases

Year	Alternative A			Alternative B			Alternative C			Alternative D		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	33.811	32.579	35.042	22.698	21.735	23.660	21.843	20.879	22.807	21.648	20.649	22.648
2021	36.173	35.023	37.322	20.728	19.979	21.476	20.482	19.642	21.323	22.617	21.653	23.581
2022	31.043	29.885	32.202	22.493	21.620	23.366	21.604	20.693	22.514	24.860	23.739	25.981
2023	32.277	30.894	33.660	24.634	23.562	25.707	22.111	21.023	23.198	20.978	19.879	22.077

*Source: developed by the authors.

Based on the results presented in Table 10, it is evident that alternative A obtained the highest average rating throughout the entire period studied. Respondents expressed the belief that the strategies of private sector

enterprises should prioritize human development, while maintaining high levels of trust, openness, and participation.

Despite the initial research results presented in Table 10 clearly indicating a

preference for alternative A, Tukey's HSD test confirmed that there were differences in perception of this alternative when comparing all the years studied (Table 11). Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents perceived

alternative A differently from year to year. Statistically significant differences were only not confirmed when comparing the opinions of respondents in 2020 with 2023.

Table 11. Results of statistical testing in the area of strategic emphases

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.025	0.009	0.369
2021	0.025		0.000	0.000
2022	0.009	0.000		0.560
2023	0.369	0.000	0.560	

**Source: developed by the authors.*

** Statistically significant differences are highlighted.*

The last area of research, according to the methodology of Cameron and Quinn (1999), focused on the criteria of success. The research results obtained are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Results achieved in the area of criteria of success

Year	Alternative A			Alternative B			Alternative C			Alternative D		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	35.224	33.895	36.552	20.056	19.106	21.007	19.232	18.298	20.165	25.488	24.341	26.636
2021	34.065	32.799	35.331	17.434	16.702	18.167	21.570	20.662	22.478	26.930	25.881	27.980
2022	32.012	30.750	33.275	19.761	18.970	20.552	19.395	18.556	20.235	28.831	27.531	30.132
2023	31.659	30.212	33.106	21.488	20.474	22.501	21.317	20.220	22.415	25.536	24.304	26.768

**Source: developed by the authors.*

The results obtained and presented in Table 12 clearly indicate that the respondents agreed and expressed a preference for the implementation of tools associated with alternative A in the future. Alternative A achieved the highest average rating throughout the entire period under review. In accordance

with the methodology of Cameron and Quinn (1999), it can be inferred that the respondents emphasize the importance of private sector enterprises focusing on development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.

Table 13. Results of statistical testing in the area of criteria of success

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.580	0.004	0.003
2021	0.580		0.106	0.070
2022	0.004	0.106		0.986
2023	0.003	0.070	0.986	

**Source: developed by the authors.*

** Statistically significant differences are highlighted.*

Furthermore, in the area of success of criteria, statistical testing confirmed that there were differences in the perception of the alternative that obtained the highest average rating (alternative A). These differences were confirmed when comparing the opinions of respondents in 2020 versus 2022 and 2023 (Table 13). Based on the results achieved, it can

be concluded that respondents perceived alternative A differently.

According to the methodology of Cameron and Quinn (1999), the achieved results were averaged in the final phase to determine the preferred type of corporate culture for the 5-10 year horizon. The obtained results are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. Results achieved in the area of corporate culture

Year	Clan			Adhocracy			Market			Hierarchy		
	Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval		Mean	Confidence interval	
		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0		-95.0	+95.0
2020	34.760	33.988	35.533	21.771	21.281	22.261	19.810	19.314	20.306	23.658	23.108	24.208
2021	36.311	35.476	37.147	20.101	19.640	20.562	18.557	18.101	19.014	25.030	24.479	25.581
2022	32.981	32.192	33.771	21.305	20.812	21.797	19.116	18.641	19.591	26.598	25.864	27.333
2023	33.302	32.467	34.138	23.249	22.712	23.785	19.593	19.025	20.161	23.856	23.152	24.559

**Source: developed by the authors.*

Based on the results presented in Table 14, it is evident that respondents express a clear preference for the implementation of a clan corporate culture in the future. This type of culture is characterized by team building, joint activities, commitment, empowerment, human development, cohesion, engagement, collective decision-making, long-lasting partnerships and relationships, as well as the role of mentor and coach, and caution in conflicts. Additionally, the results indicate that the clan corporate culture achieved the highest average rating throughout the entire studied period.

Although the initial research results suggest that respondents agreed and preferred the implementation of a clan corporate culture in the future, statistical testing using the Tukey HSD test confirmed that there were differences in preferences among respondents over the years. The achieved results are presented in Table 15. It can be inferred from the above that respondents perceived the clan corporate culture differently. Differences were only not observed when comparing the year 2020 with 2023.

Table 15. Results of statistical testing in the area of corporate culture

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
2020		0.030	0.013	0.100
2021	0.030		0.000	0.000
2022	0.013	0.000		0.958
2023	0.100	0.000	0.958	

**Source: developed by the authors.*

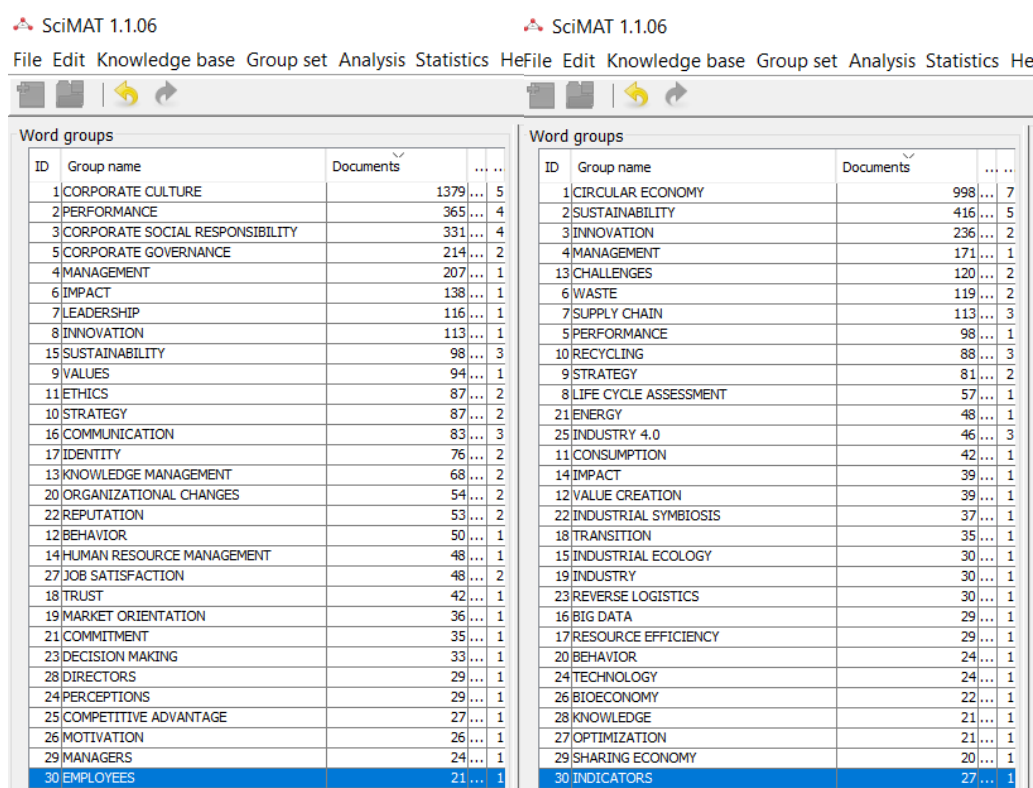
** Statistically significant differences are highlighted.*

The research on corporate culture was conducted in Slovakia from 2020 to 2023. Approximately 1000 respondents participated in it annually. The research presented the opinions of employees different gender, age, and education, working in different companies varied in focus, legal form, and size. The aim of the research was to identify the desired level of corporate culture and subsequently determine whether there are changes in employee preferences in corporate culture. The results of initial analyses, conducted using arithmetic mean and confidence interval, showed that employees agreed in individual areas of corporate culture. Alternative A achieved the highest average rating. Based on the results achieved, it can be inferred that the respondents requested the implementation of tools typical for alternative A in the individual areas, which included dominant characteristics, organizational leadership, management of employees, organization glue, strategic emphases, criteria of success. In the area of overall preferred type of corporate culture, the respondents also agreed. They attributed the highest preferences to clan corporate culture, which functions as a culture with internal orientation, shared values and goals, cohesion, and participation (Jones & Madey, 2014). However, despite the agreement among respondents, subsequent statistical testing using mathematical-statistical methods confirmed that there were differences in employee preferences over time, not only in individual areas of corporate culture but also in the examination of the overall preferred type of corporate culture. Despite the statistically significant differences found, the results indicate that respondents clearly attributed the greatest importance to clan corporate culture. Therefore, based on the achieved results, it can be stated that respondents desired a work environment that resembles an extended family, where equal opportunities are created for each employee, as well as diversity in the workplace. Leadership should take the form of mentorship. Leaders

should play the roles of teachers, advisors, or parents. The main values should be rooted in teamwork, participation, communication, and consensus (Jaeger et al., 2017; Demski et al., 2016). Coherence, morale, and the work environment should be given great importance. Success should be understood in relation to the internal environment and care for employees (Übius & Alas, 2009). Loyalty and traditions should bind companies together. Dedication to the company should be high. Emphasis should be placed on the long-term benefit of individual development. Similar conclusions were reached by studies of Balková and Jambal (2023), De Waal et al. (2017), Bauerlein (2009), Carver, and Candela (2008), Zhang, and Liu (2006), Arsenault (2004), according to which clan corporate culture is the culture that should dominate in companies in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that managers emphasize the development of human resources, as employees are the "engine" that sets other resources in motion and determines their utilization. Employees are considered invaluable and irreplaceable assets in terms of achieving long-term goals of a successful company (Betakova et al., 2023; Fejfarová & Urbancová, 2016; Vetráková & Smerek, 2016; Kropivšek et al., 2011). Their usefulness depends on their abilities, qualities, attitudes, as well as the work environment in which they operate. Belias et al. (2015) share the same opinion that employees prefer to work in a friendlier environment characterized by mutual trust and informal relationships among colleagues, where personal ambitions are taken into account and teamwork is rewarded. Our recommendations are also supported by other previous studies (Tri & Thanh, 2022; Zabala et al., 2022; Woo & Kang, 2021), which suggest that the future belongs to companies that pay attention to the issue of effective human resource management, as it is a significant prerequisite for performance growth and ensuring competitiveness of the company.

For a more concrete outline of the concepts of corporate culture and circular economy and their common features, the keywords appearing in the scientific journals of the WOS database were realized to a brief analysis. Within the search of author keywords Corporate culture, the WOS database identified 1,824 documents. After transferring the data to the SciMAT program, the number of items (keywords) was 6,026. Consequently, the data were subjected to merging, in the case of words with the same meaning and

used/usual abbreviations. Based on the occurrences of keywords, the 30 most represented keywords were selected. The same procedure was chosen with the concept of Circular economy model. There were 1,066 documents in the WOS database. The number of items in the SciMAT program was 4,289. Figure 1 provides an overview of the 30 most represented keywords in both cases. For individual keywords, the occurrences of these words are also listed (third column).



ID	Group name	Documents
1	CORPORATE CULTURE	1379 ... 5
2	PERFORMANCE	365 ... 4
3	CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	331 ... 4
5	CORPORATE GOVERNANCE	214 ... 2
4	MANAGEMENT	207 ... 1
6	IMPACT	138 ... 1
7	LEADERSHIP	116 ... 1
8	INNOVATION	113 ... 1
15	SUSTAINABILITY	98 ... 3
9	VALUES	94 ... 1
11	ETHICS	87 ... 2
10	STRATEGY	87 ... 2
16	COMMUNICATION	83 ... 3
17	IDENTITY	76 ... 2
13	KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	68 ... 2
20	ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES	54 ... 2
22	REPUTATION	53 ... 2
12	BEHAVIOR	50 ... 1
14	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	48 ... 1
27	JOB SATISFACTION	48 ... 2
18	TRUST	42 ... 1
19	MARKET ORIENTATION	36 ... 1
21	COMMITMENT	35 ... 1
23	DECISION MAKING	33 ... 1
28	DIRECTORS	29 ... 1
24	PERCEPTIONS	29 ... 1
25	COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	27 ... 1
26	MOTIVATION	26 ... 1
29	MANAGERS	24 ... 1
30	EMPLOYEES	21 ... 1

ID	Group name	Documents
1	CIRCULAR ECONOMY	998 ... 7
2	SUSTAINABILITY	416 ... 5
3	INNOVATION	236 ... 2
4	MANAGEMENT	171 ... 1
13	CHALLENGES	120 ... 2
6	WASTE	119 ... 2
7	SUPPLY CHAIN	113 ... 3
5	PERFORMANCE	98 ... 1
10	RECYCLING	88 ... 3
9	STRATEGY	81 ... 2
8	LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT	57 ... 1
21	ENERGY	48 ... 1
25	INDUSTRY 4.0	46 ... 3
11	CONSUMPTION	42 ... 1
14	IMPACT	39 ... 1
12	VALUE CREATION	39 ... 1
22	INDUSTRIAL SYMBIOSIS	37 ... 1
18	TRANSITION	35 ... 1
15	INDUSTRIAL ECOLOGY	30 ... 1
19	INDUSTRY	30 ... 1
23	REVERSE LOGISTICS	30 ... 1
16	BIG DATA	29 ... 1
17	RESOURCE EFFICIENCY	29 ... 1
20	BEHAVIOR	24 ... 1
24	TECHNOLOGY	24 ... 1
26	BIOECONOMY	22 ... 1
28	KNOWLEDGE	21 ... 1
27	OPTIMIZATION	21 ... 1
29	SHARING ECONOMY	20 ... 1
30	INDICATORS	27 ... 1

Figure 1. Top 30 keywords in case of corporate culture (left) and circular economy (right)

**Source: developed by the authors.*

Based on the essence of corporate culture, the most keywords are formed by the term itself (1,379) followed by the keyword performance (365). It is primarily related to business performance, organizational or financial performance and the investigation of the impact of corporate culture on the

company performance. In connection with corporate culture, the concept of corporate social responsibility (331) is mostly associated, which is a reflection and incorporation of the principles of social responsibility into the company's behaviour models. The keyword sustainability (98)

appears, too. The concept of circular economy does not appear among the keywords, but in connection with sustainability it is possible to find common features. Keywords such as leadership (116), values (94), ethics (87) are typically represented. An important aspect of corporate culture is played by company strategy (87), communication (83) and, of course, key persons in the company who influence the creation and promotion of a certain corporate culture (directors, managers, employees). Within the term circular economy model (used term of circular economy), 998 cases of the keyword itself were recorded. In close connection with the circular economy is keyword sustainability (416), that has its justification for the related focusing of concept. The keywords as innovations (236 occurrences) and waste (119) play a significant role. In connection with the concept of the circular economy, there is a connection mainly to the industry field, specifically to industry 4.0

(46), industry in general (30), industrial ecology (30) or technology (24).

It follows from the above that the connection from the point of view of keywords is relatively strong. The given connection is graphically displayed using the Venn diagram in Figure 2. The results indicate that it is possible to perceive the common keywords of the studied concepts in three levels: “general level” (in the form of keywords as performance, management), “level of influence” (keywords as strategy, impact, value creation, behaviour, knowledge) and “level of sustainability” (in relation to innovation, sustainability). Corporate culture, which is the basic pillar of every company, and the circular economy, which is increasingly coming to the fore, are two areas that are already interconnected. While corporate culture shapes awareness and values that influence employee behaviour, the circular economy provides a framework for sustainable business.

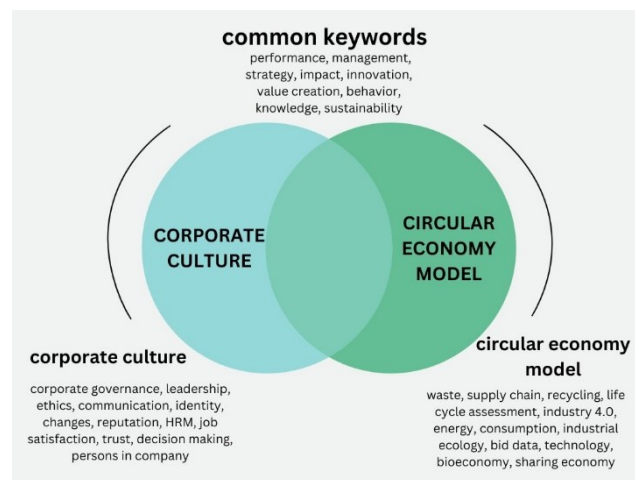


Figure 2. Corporate culture and circular economy model – keywords and their connection

**Source: developed by the authors.*

According to the literature analysis section and keywords we provide a short diagram of how corporate culture interacts with

the circular economy ideas (Figure 3). Corporate culture “encourages” decisions and approaches in line with the circular model.

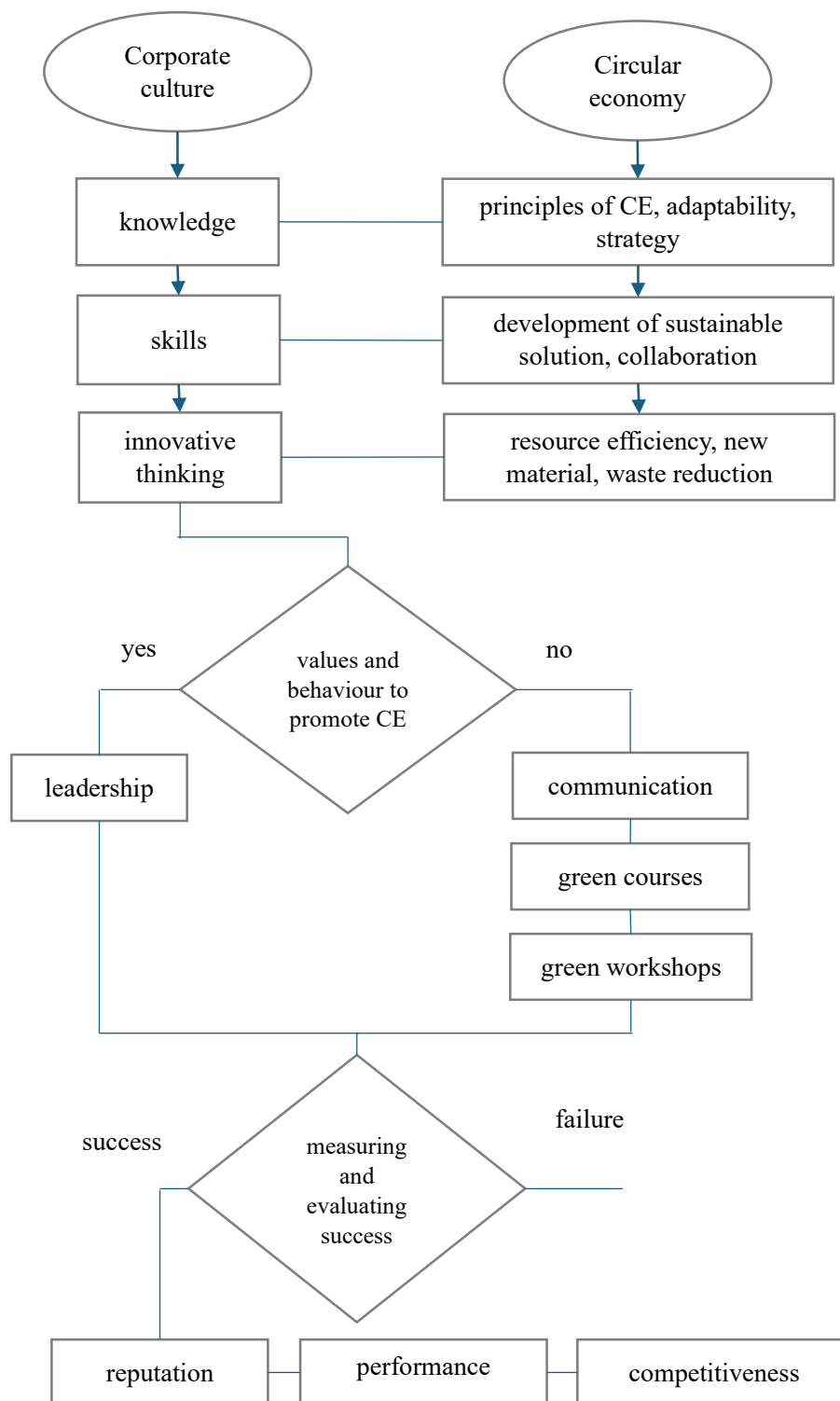


Figure 3. Diagram of how corporate culture interacts with the circular economy ideas

**Source: developed by the authors.*

This interconnectedness results from the key role that employees play in the implementation and adherence to the principles of the circular economy in corporate practice. Competences, knowledge, and innovative thinking of employees are a necessary prerequisite for the successful transformation of business processes towards the principles of the circular economy (Punia et al., 2023). Corporate culture, the foundation of every organization, and the circular economy, an increasingly important concept, are interconnected. Corporate culture shapes employee behaviour by influencing their awareness and values, while the circular economy provides a sustainable business framework. Together, these aspects create a strong foundation for long-term success and sustainability of the organization. Research by Salvioni and Almici (2020) confirms that the circular economy can contribute to the transformation of corporate culture in order to ensure the simultaneous improvement of economic, social and environmental dimensions. Similarly, Lacy et al. (2020), argue that circularity should be embedded in corporate culture to apply the principles of circularity within the company's processes, its products, and services, but also the entire ecosystem of the company. The circular economy, which is perceived as an effort towards an economic model of optimizing the use of resources and minimizing waste, is already fundamentally linked to the management of human resources. Based on the characteristics of individual corporate cultures, it is possible to conclude that it is the clan culture that, by its very nature, fulfils the potential of creating conditions leading to a circular model of the economy. This type of culture is characterized by a high degree of value and goal sharing, creating a team-oriented spirit. Moreover, companies with this culture are action-oriented and embrace change which testifies to their highly flexible nature.

Conclusions

In today's dynamic era of increasing globalization, sustainability, environmental consciousness, innovation, improvement of production processes, and constantly changing business environment, companies need to create an effective strategy that will lead them to success (Vrabcová & Urbancová, 2021; Lizbetinová et al., 2020; Lukác et al., 2021; Acebo & Viltard, 2018; Musova et al., 2018; Teplická et al., 2015). When developing a strategy, it is necessary to consider different economic factors such as costs, efficiency, corporate culture, and others which influences the success of a company's operations (Holub et al., 2021; Minárová et al., 2021; Teplická & Hurná, 2021). The aim of the research was to identify the desired level of corporate culture and subsequently determine whether there are changes in employee preferences. Despite statistical testing confirming the existence of interannual differences, the results indicate that the respondents agreed and attributed the highest importance to clan corporate culture, which should dominate companies in the future. Based on the results achieved, it is recommended managers to place great emphasis on the long-term benefit of developing each employee, cohesion, morale, and the work environment. Teamwork, employee participation, and striving for consensus should be integral to the functioning. High importance should be placed on caring for employees and creating a pleasant work atmosphere where everyone feels good, which is considered a success. In addition to the above, corporate culture can play an important role in how a company approaches to the issues of sustainability and resource efficiency. Since corporate culture changes in line with changes in values and beliefs in society, it can greatly affect multiple aspects in a company. It is possible to state that corporate culture can either support or hinder the implementation of circular economy principles in practice. It is precisely the clan

corporate culture that, by its very nature, can contribute the most to the circular economy implementation. Thereby, it is essential that the values and practices of the company's culture coincide with the principles and goals of the circular economy. This symbiosis is subsequently manifested by a higher level of

environmental responsibility, considers long-term decision-making and consequences for the environment and society, and is sufficiently oriented to adapt to external changes and innovations, which allows the company to achieve higher competitiveness.

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