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Corporate Heritage: Communication and Impact on Organizations, Stakeholders, and Society

*A Transdisciplinary Research
Perspective*

edited by

Valentina Martino and José Maria Herranz de la Casa



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Contents

Preface	9
<i>Alberto Marinelli</i>	
Corporate Heritage Communication & Social Impact. An Introduction to the Conference and the Book	11
<i>Valentina Martino, José Maria Herranz de la Casa</i>	
The Competitive Capability of the Italian Companies Lies in the Synthesis Between the Values of Industrial Memory and Passion for Innovation	17
<i>Antonio Calabrò</i>	
Consuming Culture, Producing Meaning: University and Enterprise in Dialogue	19
<i>Geraldina Roberti</i>	
I – COMMUNICATING CORPORATE HERITAGE	
1. <i>If the Essential is Invisible to the Eyes.</i> The Value of Corporate Identity and Heritage in a Post-Pandemic Scenario	25
<i>Valentina Martino</i>	
2. Roots for the Future: Heritage, Purpose, and Mind in Italian Centenary Firms	47
<i>Francesca Iandolo, Antonio La Sala, Pietro Vito, Maria Virginia Sirilli</i>	
3. Corporate Heritage as a Catalyst for Engaging Internal Stakeholders. A Case Study of Amarelli Company	69
<i>Paola Gioia, Cecilia Pasquinelli, Maria Rosaria Napolitano, Angelo Riviezzo</i>	

4. The Role of Internal Communication in Shaping Corporate Heritage in Ministries: An Explorative Study of Lithuania and Italy 93
Vytautas Beniušis and Paolo Brescia
5. Corporate Heritage to Celebrate a Company's Centenary: "Gazes that Communicated" ("Miradas que Comunican") from Telefónica 115
Mónica Viñarás Abad, Juan Enrique González Vallés, Raquel Caerols Mateo
- II – COMPANY MUSEUMS AND INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE
6. Company Heritage & Company Lands in Italy, an Exchange of Mutual Values 135
Marco Montemaggi
7. Reviving Fashion Heritage: Corporate Archives, Museums, and Artisan Training as Strategic Tools for Innovation 149
Romana Andò, Samuele Briatore and Juliana Bez Kroeger
8. The Social Role of Corporate Museums: An In-depth Analysis of Spazio Strega and MIMA Museums 165
Clemen D'Avanzo
9. Social Impact of Corporate Museums. The Case Study of Ferrovia-Museo della Stazione di Colonna: when the Time is Suspended 187
Alessia Bellezza, Ludovica Rossotti
10. Communicating the Industrial Heritage of *Metro de Madrid*: A Successful Case-Study in Spain 203
Francisco Cabezuelo-Lorenzo, Sebastiano Russo, José-Antonio López-Martín
11. Moscow's Bread-Baking Plant N. 5 named after Vasilij P. Zotov. History, Architecture, Society, and Urban Planning (1932-2024) 217
David Celetti
- III - CORPORATE PUBLISHING, VIDEO, AND CULTURAL NARRATIVES
12. Narrating Business through Cinema. Industrial Films in Italy between Heritage and Communication 239
Daniele Pozzi

13. Corporate Cinema in Italy: History, Society, and Memory <i>Costantino Coros</i>	259
14. Audiovisual Narratives for the Creation of Community Identity in a Digital Culture: The Case of Vilnius University <i>Andrius Gudauskas</i>	277
15. Business Biographies are the Backbone of Global History <i>Marcelino Elosua</i>	297
IV - CORPORATE HERITAGE AND RESPONSIBILITY	
16. From Philanthropy to Business Ethics: Romeyne Robert Ranieri's Role in the Economy of an Italian Region in the Early 20th Century <i>Vittoria Ferrandino, Serena Potito</i>	317
17. Mapping the Connections between Corporate Museum Performance and Sustainable Development Goals <i>Eleonora Carloni</i>	339
18. Social Reporting from Voluntaristic Approach to EU Mandatory Regulation <i>Stefano Scarcella Prandstraller</i>	365
19. Corporate Management, Place Reputation, and Social Influence on Stakeholders and Communities <i>Mario Riso, Simonetta Pattuglia, Francesco Longarini, Nicola Leone</i>	377
Abstracts	395
Authors	407

4. The Role of Internal Communication in Shaping Corporate Heritage in Ministries: An Explorative Study of Lithuania and Italy

Vytautas Beniušis, Paolo Brescia

4.1. Introduction

This research aims at analysing the concept of *corporate heritage* for public sector (PS) organizations, particularly ministries. In contemporary contexts, corporate heritage is considered as a pivotal element for organizational success, playing a central role in shaping and sustaining organisation's identity. By utilizing historical and authentic resources, such as archives and museums, corporate heritage enables organizations to establish a prominent position within the institutional, cultural, and economic landscape. Over the past decade, several scholars have examined this topic (Martino, 2013; Martino & Lovari, 2016; Napolitano et al., 2018), highlighting its value as a platform for shaping corporate culture and identity. Specifically, corporate heritage fosters meaningful relationships among employees and with external stakeholders, including customers, visitors, business partners, educational institutions, government agencies, and local communities (Martino & Lovari, 2025).

The importance of corporate heritage is deeply rooted in the consideration that fostering historical and symbolic continuity, organizations can strengthen their corporate culture and identity, in order to increase their reputation and to enhance their markets. Indeed, in an age characterized as the age of social difficulties, ongoing uncertainty and military conflicts, as well as an urgent need to address crises promptly (Opatska et al., 2024) and to tackle global mental health issues affecting organizations (Kalaitzaki et al., 2023; Mottola et al., 2023), entities are increasingly acknowledging the value of revisiting their roots. As Aaker (2004) observes, "any brand, but especially those that are struggling,

can benefit from going back to its roots and identifying what made it special and successful in the first place” (p. 7).

Moreover, according to Urde et al. (2007), every organization, particularly companies, possesses a ‘heritage potential’, derived not merely from corporate longevity as a chronological attribute but from a broader set of prerequisites (Martino & Lovari, 2025). This potential is further supported by a strong reputation grounded in consistent quality, ethical behavior, and adherence to core values, the strategic use of symbolism to reinforce brand identity and a commitment to preserving corporate history through dedicated archival efforts.

4.2. Theoretical framework

4.2.1. The *internal* value of corporate heritage

Beyond the external context, corporate heritage can serve as a pivotal tool for engaging internal stakeholders, fostering a collective sense of belonging and purpose. Despite its potential, research on the integration of corporate heritage into internal communication strategies remains limited. Existing studies suggest that organizations can leverage corporate heritage to enhance employee engagement, motivation, and alignment with organizational goals (Martino, 2013).

Particularly in periods of transformation — such as organizational changes — or significant anniversaries — organizations can have critical opportunities to rediscover and activate corporate heritage as a strategic identity asset (Martino, 2013). In fact, by offering a stabilizing narrative, corporate heritage not only inspires collective action but also facilitates effective change management.

A range of tools — including historical archives, museums, traditional events, personnel celebrations, corporate publishing, storytelling, and symbolic initiatives such as centennials and other anniversaries — play a key role in cultivating organizational memory. In recent years, as organizations navigate an increasingly digitized world, multimedia content has emerged as a prominent corporate heritage tool (Martino & Lovari, 2025). These tools enable employees to better understand the organization’s evolution, connect with its mission, and act as brand ambassadors, thereby strengthening the organization’s external identity.

To emphasise the importance of a comprehensive integration of the whole set of tools and initiatives in the field of corporate heritage,

Martino and Lovari (2025) conducted the research, which introduced a new theoretical framework, the *internal heritage mix*. The objective of this framework is to support both internal and external stakeholders, aligning both on- and offline internal processes pertaining to corporate identity. This approach has the potential to shed light on actual communication scenarios, such as increasing platformization (van Dijk et al., 2019) and convergence (Jenkins et al., 2013). Consequently, the heritage mix functions as a strategic framework for organisations to manage corporate identity, thereby providing a foundation for external positioning and integration.

Furthermore, the effective integration of corporate heritage tools appears to be a critical factor in fostering relationships and connections within the workforce. By bridging the past, present, and future, corporate heritage reinforces a shared identity that not only motivates employees but also empowers them to act as cultural stewards (Mazzei, 2014). This ensures the transmission and sustainability of organizational values across generations, safeguarding the authenticity of corporate identity in an evolving landscape.

In this process, internal communication, which consists of creating, transforming, and spreading information among individuals, groups, and the entire organization (Rogala & Bialowas, 2016, p. 43), plays a crucial role in forming corporate heritage by preserving traditional events, continuously sharing narratives about the organization's past, discussing its identity and common values, and passing on its history to newcomers and future generations, among other things (Maier & Andersen, 2017; Balmer, 2013). Some researchers suggest incorporating the ability to effectively communicate with employees into managers' key performance indicators (KPIs) and their performance evaluation (Delport, Hay-Swemmer & Wilkinson, 2014), considering internal communication as a strategic part of organizational management (Zaumane & Leščevica, 2023; Jakučionienė, 2023; Grunig, 2013), which helps achieve organizational goals. It is argued that when communication is viewed as a core organizational value (Delport et al., 2014), employee productivity increases, internal climate improves, employee loyalty to the organization grows, and the overall organizational performance improves, making it easier to achieve organizational objectives (Verčič et al., 2012). Therefore, proper management of internal communication in this process is particularly important.

4.2.2. Corporate Heritage within public sector organizations

In recent years, public sector organizations (PSo) have faced several challenges, including reputational crises at various levels, such as ministries and municipalities level (Lovari & Ducci, 2022). This evolving landscape requires PSo to address and overcome their structural limitations (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019) to effectively engage both internal stakeholders, such as employees, and external stakeholders, including citizens. Challenges such as increasing disinformation, citizen engagement, and digital activism (Badham et al., 2024) exacerbate the need for PSo to rebuild trust and bridge the gaps between institutions and citizens.

The transition to a digital landscape has brought additional challenges, highlighting the difficulty many PSo face in fully understanding and adapting to the specific characteristics of the digital environment. In many instances, this has resulted in a mere digital transfer of offline activities without a critical rethinking of content. In this context, PS communication plays a dual role as both a driver and mediator of change. Effective public communication must not only address the needs of citizens but also empower and encourage participation from both internal representatives of PSo and external stakeholders (Homont et al., 2024). Digital platforms, when used strategically, offer an opportunity to reimagine the relationship between citizens and institutions by adopting a relational approach that fosters dialogue, trust, and the co-creation of public services (Lovari et al., 2020). Despite these opportunities, the shift towards digital platforms underscores the urgency of professionalization and continuous training of public sector employees (D'Ambrosi et al., 2024). To address these issues, organizations must adopt innovative strategies that foster digital literacy, enhance communication, and promote social inclusion.

A possible dimension in which PSo can operate to face these challenges is the integration of corporate heritage tools in their communication strategies. Indeed, while traditionally associated with private organizations, corporate heritage can play a crucial role in PSo also, by providing a stabilizing narrative that reinforces institutional identity, continuity, and legitimacy. PSo can leverage corporate heritage to strengthen their societal role and enhance their long-term societal impact. Indeed, with their long-standing historical continuity, PSo are uniquely positioned to use corporate heritage to enhance employee engagement, promote cultural alignment, and support governance transparency (Reinikainen

& Valentini, 2023). Similar to other organizations, even PSo archives and museums, traditional and celebratory events, employee ceremonies and corporate publications can be effective tools and strategies to strengthen corporate heritage, fostering employee engagement. All these efforts can lay the foundations for medium- to long-term success and for regaining trust not only with internal personnel, but also with citizens. Indeed, a specific effort on corporate heritage can foster greater co-creation and collaboration of PSo with internal and external stakeholders (Lovari & Ducci, 2022). The role of ministries among other PSo is special, as they oversee specific areas of state governance and simultaneously coordinate the work of subordinate institutions. Ministries also play a central role in society, as they are key players within the governmental framework (Christensen et al., 2020). Being responsible for shaping state policy in a specific field (Beniušis, 2024; Marčinskas & Vaškėlis, 2003), they are also tasked with implementing national policies, managing public services, and addressing key societal, economic, and infrastructure issues (Bakaveckas, 2003).

Public policy within a ministry is often shaped by the political party in power, which significantly influences the direction and priorities of its initiatives. The appointed minister, representing the party's interests, assumes a form of 'ownership' over the ministry's management area, granting them authority to shape and implement policies aligned with their political agenda. This aspect underscores the dual function of ministries, both operational and strategic entities in government as well as their strategic mission in the public sector.

4.3. Research methods

To address the outlined challenges, this research aimed to identify how corporate heritage contributes to the organizational identity of ministries in two specific contexts: Italy and Lithuania. The focus was placed on understanding the role of corporate heritage elements within these ministries and how these elements help shape their internal culture and public image.

The research sought to achieve six specific objectives:

1. To identify the type of traditional events and their features which are considered as corporate heritage in Italian and Lithuanian ministries.
2. To identify physical objects of the Ministry which are considered as corporate heritage in particular Lithuanian and Italian ministries.

3. To identify the attitude to corporate publishing policies in both ministries.
4. To disclose internal communication campaigns, training and learning activities which promote corporate values and are aimed at strengthening corporate heritage of the organization.
5. To identify the Ministry's identity in both countries.
6. To find out how corporate heritage could be revitalized in the ministries.

To examine trends and perceptions using an explorative (Grenness, 2023; Yin, 2014), comparative (Bryman, 2012) and grounded theory approach (Heath & Cowley, 2004; Glasser & Strauss, 1967), two case studies were developed, using several qualitative methods. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for studies involving small participant groups and emphasizes avoiding predefined response categories to allow for flexibility and depth in data collection (Kidd, 2002, p. 126). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method because they allow researchers to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in a nuanced manner. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlight the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research, emphasizing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as key criteria. They argue that semi-structured interviews are effective in meeting these criteria, as they facilitate rapport-building and allow researchers to tailor questions based on interviewee responses. This adaptive approach was particularly valuable in capturing the complex and context-specific aspects of corporate heritage.

The research method consisted of several steps. First, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts directly involved in preserving corporate heritage within the ministries. These individuals were chosen based on their expertise and familiarity with organizational history, internal communication, and human resource policies related to heritage. The interviews provided a foundation for understanding the practices, challenges, and opportunities associated with corporate heritage in both countries. Second, a contextual analysis of internal ministerial documents was carried out based on the documents provided by interviewees. This analysis supplemented the interview data by providing additional insights into how corporate heritage is formally documented, preserved, and communicated within the ministries. These documents included policies, reports, and archival materi-

als that highlighted the ministries' historical evolution and contemporary identity.

The research was conducted over three months, from September to November 2024. It focused on two ministries: the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Lithuania and the Ministry of Defence in Italy. These ministries were selected due to their strategic importance and historical significance. Infrastructure such as railways, airports, and roads, along with military operations and defense strategies, represent critical areas for national development and security. Furthermore, both ministries have a rich history within their respective governmental systems, providing a substantial base for studying corporate heritage and its role in shaping organizational identity.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania oversees strategic areas of public transportation, including roads, railways, maritime, and air transport. Under its jurisdiction are 17 companies, institutions, and enterprises that contribute to the country's transportation infrastructure. The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Italy, on the other hand, is responsible for national security, defense strategy, and military operations. It plays a vital role in Italy's international commitments, including contributions to NATO and EU missions. The Ministry is unique in its authority over the armed forces and its coordination of responses to national emergencies, making it a particularly relevant case for studying corporate heritage.

The qualitative research relied heavily on semi-structured interviews with internal communication and human resource specialists from both ministries. Participants were selected based on their close involvement in initiatives related to preserving corporate heritage. In total, three representatives from Lithuania and two from Italy were interviewed. These individuals were identified as key informants with in-depth knowledge of heritage-related activities and policies in their respective ministries.

To accommodate participants' preferences and schedules, interviews were conducted remotely. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour and took place during a period when both ministries operated under a hybrid working model, allowing employees to work remotely two to three days per week. For the Lithuanian Ministry, all interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy and facilitate detailed analysis. Informants from the Lithuanian ministry were coded with letters A, B, C. Each informant was assigned a specific letter to describe their expressed thoughts while ensuring the anonymity of

the data. However, in the case of the Italian Ministry, recording was not permitted by the interviewees. As a result, interview notes were taken by hand. Informants from the Italian Ministry were coded with letters D, E. To address possible ambiguities in these notes, follow-up questions were posed to clarify participants' responses.

To ensure ethical standards in the research and maintain the anonymity of participants, all transcripts and handwritten notes from each interviewee were securely stored in separate computer files that were inaccessible to anyone, including the co-authors of the article.

4.4. Findings

4.4.1. Perception of corporate heritage in Lithuanian Ministry

After conducting three semi-structured interviews, the traditional events of the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications were identified. These include the annual employee conference in the spring, the sports event in August or early autumn, the anniversary of the Ministry's founding in November, and the Christmas event in December. It was found that two of these events – the sports event and Christmas celebration – have long-standing traditions dating back several decades, while the other two – the employee conference and anniversary of the Ministry's founding celebrations – were introduced during the previous political leadership of the Ministry around 2018-2019 and have continued since.

The employee conference began as an opportunity for departments to present their work, showcasing the activities and projects they are engaged in. Each department would present slides or videos to share their accomplishments. Over time, the format evolved: now, the Ministry's leadership first presents an overview of the Ministry's work, followed by invited speakers who discuss topics of interest and relevance to employees, such as teamwork and personal development.

The initial idea behind the conference was to gather and cheerfully present the work of the Ministry's departments – what activities they are engaged in and what projects they are implementing. <...> The first conference took place in 2019 or 2020 <...> We had a moderator, and each department presented its work – some with slides, others with videos. Therefore, the initial concept of the employee conference changed – now it invites speakers who can captivate our employees with interesting topics, presenting various field-related highlights. [Participant A]

During the anniversary of the Ministry's founding, long-serving employees are honoured, and former long-term employees and former ministers are invited. Commendations are given to employees celebrating 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years of service. These awards are typically presented by the former ministers who hired the employees.

The event includes recognition for long-serving employees, a concert, and socializing with the leadership, former ministers, and former colleagues who worked in the Ministry for many years and are now retired. <...> This is a way to honour our former employees and showcase the organization's long-term sustainability. [Participant B]

The sports event is more informal, providing an opportunity for employees to socialize. Occasionally, guest speakers are invited, and the event may take place at institutions affiliated with the Ministry. The event includes sports competitions, and in recent years, employee surveys have been conducted to gather feedback on the event's format and content.

The Christmas event includes awards, with statues representing the values upheld by the ministry. Five awards are presented: Manager of the Year, Newcomer of the Year, and recognitions for fostering continuous improvement, responsibility, and respect and openness. At the beginning of December, an anonymous survey is posted on the Ministry's intranet. The survey lists all Ministry's employees (from the political leadership to regular employees) and encourages active voting for employees based on the previously mentioned nominations.

Nominees are selected by everyone – both the political leadership and employees. After tallying the survey results, we select the colleagues who received the most votes in each nomination. The winner of each nomination is announced only at the festive evening event. [Participant A]

During the interviews, physical objects considered part of the corporate heritage of the Lithuanian Ministry were also identified – the Ministry's library and the meeting hall with portraits and photographs of past ministers with their service dates. The library houses artifacts related to the Ministry, such as souvenirs and gifts received by the leadership, as well as sports awards won by the Ministry's teams. This place is regarded as a cozy space, equipped with a coffee table, bean bags, and a TV. Departments occasionally hold meetings there, and individual employees may use it for relaxation. It also serves as a children's room where mothers can bring their kids.

People gather there to socialize [Participant B]

The space is open and informal. <...> It's a cozy space for socializing.
[Participant A]

The research revealed the attitude toward the corporate publishing policy in the Ministry. It showed that, although no special books, brochures, or video materials documenting the ministry's history are maintained, there are welcome books for newcomers, which introduce the organization's rules and values to incoming members. These so-called welcome books make specific reference to traditional corporate history events.

It mentions traditional celebrations and other social activities offered by the Ministry. It is in this welcome book that employees are encouraged to share their best practices from previous workplaces and suggest ideas for improving existing activities. [Participant A]

The study identified internal communication campaigns, training, and learning activities that promote corporate values and aim to strengthen the organization's corporate heritage. It showed that the Ministry's values, such as responsibility and continuous improvement, as well as traditional events like the Christmas party, are displayed on employees' computer screensavers so that employees can always see and remember them when opening their computers.

As traditional events approach, computer wallpapers are created for all employees, reminding them not to forget and to participate. [Participant B]

The study revealed that the Ministry does not have a single unit responsible for internal communication (IC) management at the ministerial level. Since the IC management function is divided among several departments, this fragmentation creates challenges in developing a cohesive strategy for preserving corporate heritage.

Corporate heritage cultivation requires an owner, and that owner needs the support of a leader or political management. <...> At the moment there is no one owner. [Participant B]

Corporate values are promoted through team-building training sessions held such as the Ministry's sports event, where employees gather

in groups to share experiences and discuss topics such as internal communication and teamwork, or other online or tete-a-tete events. Team-building training typically covers topics like interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and negotiation skills, to promote team spirit and build the team is also seeked via traditional events.

We sit in circles, share experiences, and do team tasks <...> these activities occur at least during two events – the employees’ conference and the employees’ sports event. [Participant A]

The training is of two levels – one type focuses on employees’ professional fields, aimed at developing competencies directly related to their work. The other type of training is team building which is focused on relationships, conflict resolution, and negotiation skills development; these trainings are more about communication. [Participant B]

Political leadership expects department heads to organize at least one training session per year to strengthen organizational culture and team spirit. Department heads are also expected to hold in-person meetings with their teams at least once a month to strengthen team spirit.

Managers from the political leadership are tasked with organizing training sessions for their team members at least once a year to develop their competencies and motivate employees. They are also expected to hold at least one live meeting per week with their team members to foster team spirit. [Participant C]

The Lithuanian Ministry’s identity evolves somewhat with each change in political leadership – every four years, after elections – but there is always something that becomes a part of the Ministry. Interviewees have observed that employees who serve in the Ministry for a long time form close-knit, family-like relationships and want to preserve traditional events such as the sports event, employee conference, etc. Some representatives mentioned a ‘culture of fear’, characterized by excessive caution and reluctance to take initiative, especially among those who have served in the Ministry for a long time. The strong sense of responsibility among employees is also considered part of the Ministry’s identity. The Ministry’s logo is regarded as its most significant symbol, representing its areas of responsibility – the three origami figures (car/ship/plane). This visual symbol is easily recognizable both within the organization and externally and is considered part of the Ministry’s identity. The logo is used in both internal and external documents.

The Ministry's logo is considered ours. It has integrated quite nicely, and I believe it will remain for a long time. [Participant A]

Our logo is unquestionably a part of our identity. If we asked anyone in the Ministry, they would say the same. [Participant B]

4.4.2. Perception of corporate heritage in Italian Ministry

After conducting two semi-structured interviews, the traditional events organized by the Italian Ministry of Defence were disclosed.

Celebratory events organised by the Ministry and the armed forces throughout the year serve to reinforce the sense of belonging to the institution, foster a sense of shared identity among both civilian and military employees, and cultivate a sense of 'national identity' among those who work within the Ministry. These events are specifically dedicated to honoring the Ministry's employees, both military and civilian, and often feature the active participation of the minister. During these occasions, employees are recognized through distinctions or awards, highlighting their contributions and achievements. Additionally, each branch of the armed forces under the Ministry organizes its own personnel day during the year, emphasizing their unique identity and traditions. Of particular significance is Civilian Personnel Day, which receives special attention and involvement from the minister. The minister's participation in these events underscores the importance of civilian employees within the Ministry, sending a powerful and inclusive message.

Civilians have to feel 'part of the team' in the same way as the military, there is no difference, except in the oath that military personnel take, in which they swear to serve even at the cost of their own lives. [Participant D]

The Ministry places significant emphasis on these gatherings, recognizing their capacity to reinforce commitment to national service and underscore the continuity of Italy's defence heritage. These events are designed to honour distinguished service and acknowledge the dedication of personnel. Indeed, to honour personnel reflects its commitment to maintaining and enhancing a deeply rooted heritage.

During the year, the Ministry also promotes *sports and cultural activities* to encourage employees to get together and enjoy themselves, organising tournaments, competitions and artistic events.

Furthermore, the Ministry celebrates the Day of the Tricolour (*Giorno del Tricolore*), an Italian national holiday observed annually on January 7th. This occasion commemorates the proclamation of the Italian flag (*il Tricolore*) as the national flag, emphasizing the significance of this historical symbol within the organization.

The *centennial celebrations* of the armed forces are also very important, serving as opportunities to commemorate the longevity of the various branches of the Ministry.

The Italian Ministry of Defence is home to a range of physical objects considered parts of the corporate heritage, such as museums, archives, and historical collections, that illustrate the rich heritage of its armed forces. Key examples include the Italian Air Force Historical Museum (*Museo Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare*) at *Vigna di Valle*, which houses aircraft, engines, and artifacts that trace the evolution of Italian aviation from its origins to the modern era. The museum also features restored historical planes and interactive exhibits, preserving the Air Force's legacy and engaging visitors with immersive experiences. Another important institution is the *Museo Storico dell'Arma dei Carabinieri* in Rome, which highlights the contributions of the *Carabinieri* military police force. Furthermore, the Italian Naval Museum (*Museo Tecnico Navale* in La Spezia) showcases the history of the Italian Navy through a collection of ship models, historical flags, and navigation equipment. These museums, along with archives like the Historical Archives of the Italian Army, preserve documents, photographs, and records critical to understanding Italy's military history and heritage. Besides this, some significant halls of the Ministry are dedicated to ministers of the past or military heroes, with commemorative pictures or plaques.

The Ministry of Defence in Italy engages in corporate publishing as a way to document, celebrate, and share the activities, history, and achievements of the Italian armed forces. Through various publications, including 15 magazines, several reports, historical volumes, technical manuals, and commemorative editions, the Ministry provides valuable resources that detail military operations, advancements, and the evolving role of the armed forces in national and international contexts. Magazines such as '*ID*', '*Rivista Militare*' and '*Rivista Aeronautica*' offer insights into recent developments, innovations, and perspectives from defence experts. These magazines also inform readers about traditional and historical events, as well as recent activities within the Ministry.

These publications not only serve an educational purpose but also reinforce the institutional identity and values of the Ministry of Defence.

Internal communication, which promotes corporate values and is aimed at strengthening corporate heritage within the Ministry of Defence, is structured through various channels and approaches, designed to reinforce institutional cohesion and information dissemination. An example of offline internal communication strategy is symbolically embodied in daily 'flag-raising ceremonies', a ritual that serves as a foundational moment for departmental unity.

This ceremony not only provides a physical setting for distributing important information but also reinforces identity markers, cultural values, and the collective mission of the department. [Participant D]

In parallel, the Ministry has maintained a longstanding commitment to online internal communication through its *intranet* system, which has been active for many years. The intranet functions as a comprehensive platform for centralized communication, offering easy access to useful resources, updates about the Ministry and even departmental directives.

Together, these offline and online communication methods reflect a holistic approach to internal communication, ensuring both the accessibility of real-time information and the reinforcement of shared identity within the Ministry of Defence. [Participant E]

The identity of Italy's Ministry of Defence is deeply rooted in the concept of *service to the country* reflecting a commitment to national defense and public service that extends beyond military operations alone. Derived from the insights of our privileged witnesses, this identity is based on two fundamental principles: *defending the country* and *being of service to all*. These dual commitments form a cohesive identity rooted in duty, resilience, and a dedication to both protection and public service. Through this combined mission, the Ministry of Defence positions itself not only as a defender of national sovereignty but also as an enduring institution that upholds the well-being of all citizens, reinforcing the Ministry's identity as both a protector of security and a servant to the nation, embodying values that transcend the military sphere.

The Ministry places a strong emphasis on fostering a strong sense of identity and belonging among its members through structured traditions and rituals. By promoting internal heritage learning, through various elements, including heraldry, ceremonial practices, and historical story-

telling the Ministry aims to enhance resilience, and a sense of purpose among its personnel. This approach contributes to a strong and cohesive identity that is both internally recognized and externally projected, conveying an image of unity and honor.

Only by comprehending the Ministry's legacy of service, sacrifice and resilience can employees truly understand their own role as integral components of a long-standing mission. This, as a consequence, serves to deepen their commitment to the organisation's objectives and the nation they serve. Corporate heritage thus functions as a foundational anchor for employees, shaping their values and aligning their personal aspirations with the Ministry's overarching mission.

4.4.3. Comparison of the two cases

The study revealed that both ministries share similarities, but also exhibit differences in the aspects analyzed. Below is a comparison of the two cases based on the research questions:

1. *Traditional events in both ministries.* Both the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Italian Ministry of Defence place significant value on traditional events. However, the Lithuanian Ministry is more flexible in initiating new events, which often evolve into traditions over time, typically supported by the Ministry's political leadership (e.g., the Employees' Conference, Ministry Founding Celebration). In contrast, the Italian Ministry of Defence tends to uphold long standing annual traditions, some of which have been celebrated for decades. This reflects the Ministry's strict hierarchy and organizational culture, which may limit the creation of new traditions.
2. *Corporate Heritage and Physical Artifacts.* Both ministries maintain physical artifacts that embody their corporate heritage and help preserve the Ministry's identity, such as libraries, museums, and historical collections. While some heritage items are similar — such as portraits or photographs of past ministers or other important figures for the organisation's heritage — there are notable differences. For example, the Lithuanian Ministry's library, considered part of its corporate heritage, serves as a relaxing and informal meeting space and even highlights the sporting achievements of Ministry employees. In contrast, the Italian Ministry of Defence's corporate heritage focuses on traditional historical preservation, with museums and collections primarily dedicated to educational purposes.

3. *Corporate Publishing Policies.* The Italian Ministry of Defence publishes several regular corporate magazines that inform readers about traditional and historical events, as well as recent activities within the Ministry. The Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications does not produce a similar magazine, but it provides newcomers with a welcome book that introduces key Ministry rules and traditional events. The Italian Ministry of Defence does not have an equivalent publication for onboarding.

4. *Internal Communication Campaigns and Activities to Promote Corporate Values.*

The approach to internal communication campaigns, training, and learning activities aimed at promoting corporate values differs between the two institutions, largely due to varying levels of flexibility. In the

ITALY		LITHUANIA
Ministry of Defence (<i>Ministero della Difesa</i>)	The name of the Ministry	Ministry of Transport and Communications (<i>Susisiekimo ministerija</i>)
4 February 1947	Date of foundation	11 November 1918
The internal communication is managed by the Communication Office of Defense (<i>Ufficio Comunicazione Difesa</i>), an office of direct collaboration with the Minister.	Department responsible for internal communication	The internal communication is managed by two departments within the ministry – the Human Resources Division and the Organization Management Department.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intranet - Internal Bulletins & Digital Platforms for personnel communication - Traditional annual events - Publications & Events aimed at transparency and engagement 	Organization of corporate and internal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intranet - E-mails - Information displayed on employees' computer screensavers - Traditional annual events (in-person) - Team building trainings sessions (in-person) - Ministry's hour with the political team of the Ministry (online)

Table 4.1. Ministries and Their Internal Communication Management. Source: created by authors based on interviews data.

Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, corporate values are actively promoted by political leadership, which encourages department heads to organize regular team-building activities and special events to strengthen and reinforce these values. In contrast, the Italian Ministry of Defence reinforces corporate values through daily routines, such as flag-raising ceremonies and oaths of allegiance, without special events dedicated to strengthening corporate values.

5. *Ministries' Identity.* For the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry's logo is regarded as its most significant symbol, representing its areas of responsibility (car, ship, plane). The Ministry's identity evolves with each change in political leadership — typically every four years after elections — but certain elements remain integral to its character. Long-serving employees develop close-knit, family-like relationships, which are regarded as part of the Ministry's identity. Traditional events, such as the annual sports day and employee conference, also contribute to shaping the Ministry's enduring culture. In the Italian Ministry of Defence, the Ministry's mission statement — 'Defending the Country' and 'Being of service to all' — is viewed as the most important element of its identity. The identity of the Italian Ministry is preserved among its members through established structured traditions and rituals. This ethos, firmly grounded in Italian military culture, is reflected in elements such as heraldry, ceremonial activities, and historical narratives.
6. *Proposals for Revitalizing Corporate Heritage in the Ministries.* For both ministries, developing podcasts and interactive online exhibitions about their history could not only engage staff but also enhance their brand appeal to external audiences. Organizing on-site exhibitions featuring historical images from different periods, including both recent decades and earlier times, would foster employees' pride in the organization and strengthen institutional memory. Additionally, inviting staff members to share ideas on preserving corporate heritage and improving internal communication could promote greater involvement and innovation. Hosting annual strategic sessions focused on organizational values would encourage employees to reflect on how well these values are upheld and identify areas for improvement.

4.5. Final considerations

This study, based on the *internal heritage mix* framework, exposed by Martino and Lovari (2025) highlights different approaches to corporate heritage within the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communication and the Italian Ministry of Defence. It underscores the significance of corporate heritage in shaping organizational identity and fostering internal employee engagement.

In the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communication, corporate heritage is preserved through traditional events, consistent branding, and initiatives fostering corporate values, such as specialized training and team-building exercises. The integration of corporate values into everyday practices, like displaying them on employees' screens, reflects a practical and continuous effort to maintain organizational identity. However, the fragmented management of internal communication across multiple departments and not having one responsible unit for internal communication management at ministerial level creates challenges in establishing a cohesive strategy for heritage preservation and employee involvement. Addressing this structural issue could enhance the Ministry's ability to foster a unified corporate culture.

In the Italian Ministry of Defence, corporate heritage is recognized as a strategic asset that reinforces organizational identity and belonging. The representatives of the Ministry define corporate heritage as a tool to integrate digital and traditional initiatives, bridging historical elements with modern communication methods. This dual approach provides employees with a comprehensive experience that strengthens their connection to the Ministry's mission and values. This unified and strategic approach can effectively integrate heritage into organizational practices, offering valuable lessons also for other organizations (both in public and private sector) in addressing societal challenges and fostering stronger employee engagement.

Furthermore, the study highlights the critical and multifaceted role of internal communication in shaping an organization's identity and value. As pointed out by the research, by fostering open and effective communication channels, organizations can nurture strong relationships among their employees, creating a shared sense of purpose and belonging. Indeed, as other studies have observed, employees and managers are primary stakeholders in establishing and strengthening corporate identity. Communication contexts, tools, and experiences, therefore, underscore

the need to value internal relationships as a fundamental platform for heritage management strategies, rooted in the organization's culture and identity. Moreover, this research suggests that training programs on corporate heritage management in the public sector could play a crucial role in enhancing internal communication and reinforcing employees' sense of belonging and institutional identity.

This research may have certain limitations. Notably, the differences in the roles and activities of the two ministries inevitably influence the analysis and shape the perspectives of interviewees, potentially introducing interpretative biases. Furthermore, employees may be reluctant to openly discuss internal communication practices or corporate heritage-related issues within their respective ministries.

Future studies could expand the scope of this research by incorporating additional case studies of ministries. Another approach would be to analyze communication strategies in shaping corporate heritage at all levels of government (i.e., national, regional, and local).

The study shows that internal communication (IC) strategies act as a bridge, aligning internal values with external perceptions of the organisation, such as reputation and brand image. Thereby, if IC is managed responsibly, with concrete aims, it strengthens a sense of belonging of employees and helps preserve the corporate heritage, the mission and durability of the organisation.

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