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Development of an effective PR strategy for International Turkic
Culture and Heritage Foundation

Ruslan Asadov, Aysel Osmanli, Ainara Suleimenova

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PROGRAM: MA of Diplomacy and International Affairs

STUDENTS' NAMES: Ruslan Asadov

Aysel Osmanli

Ainara Suleimenova

APPROVED:

Faculty Supervisor: Lala Jumayeva

Organization Supervisor: Leyla Hasanova

Dean of the School: Anar Valiyev

May 20, 2023

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

I have read ADA's policy on plagiarism and certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the content of this paper, entitled *Development of an effective PR strategy for International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation* is all my own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work.

Signed: Ruslan Asadov

Signed: Aysel Osmanli

Signed: Ainara Suleimenova

May 20, 2023

Abstract

This capstone project analyzes the ways of strengthening a PR strategy of a young international organization namely the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation (ITCHF), which operates under the umbrella of a wider international institution such as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The research revealed 3 challenges, which prevent the development of ITCHF's PR strategy – lack of visibility on social media, a limited number of observer-states, and insufficient cooperation with non-Turkic international organizations. Further, the study proposes 3 policy options, which are aimed at overcoming these challenges, namely, changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts, expansion of the number of observer-states, and increasing cooperation with other international organizations. All these policy alternatives were evaluated according to 5 main criteria such as effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility, and flexibility. The analysis identified that the most relevant policy options, which can be implemented in order to enhance the PR strategy of ITCHF and increase its visibility in the international arena are associated with reconsidering the strategy of social media maintenance and enlargement of cooperation with other international organizations.

Keywords: PR strategy, International organization, Social media, Visibility, International cooperation

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACF - African Cultural Fund

ADG - Assistant Director-General

ASEF - Asia-Europe Foundation

BSEC - Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

CCTS - Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

CHwB - Cultural Heritage without Borders

CICA - Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia

ECO - Economic Cooperation Organization

EU - European Union

ICBS - International Committee of the Blue Shield

ICCROM - International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites

IGO - Intergovernmental organization

IO - international organization

IRCICA - Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture

ISESCO - Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ITA - International Turkic Academy

ITCHF - International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation

KazNU - Kazakh National University

OIC - Organization of Islamic Cooperation

OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OTS - Organization of Turkic States

TURKPA - Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States

TURKSOY - International Organization of Turkic Culture

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Turkic peoples with shared ancestors began to see tangible effects in the effort for unification. The formation of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS), presently called as the Organization of Turkic States (Turgynov, 2020), highlights this fact. Turkic cooperation has given benefit to Members both politically and tactically. Strategically, because it fosters deeper ties between the Member States' populations and enables for a wide range of cooperative development projects. Politically, Turkic cooperation has helped Member States work together to address global and regional challenges. In order to accomplish this more effectively, the Organization will keep to coordinate national capacities as necessary. Regional communities may play a vital role in supporting this much-needed global effort. With this knowledge, the current text presents a vision that is based on actual regional requirements while also taking into account global developments (Organization of Turkic States, 2023). Studying the OTS, which is creating new forms of collaboration under the cover of the shared civilization of its member states, is practical. Through the historical method proposed by American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, OTS is evolving its modalities of cooperation under the cover of its member states' shared civilization. States sought alliances with nations that shared aspects of a common culture after the Cold War ended, and politicians and public figures from these nations tended to trust one another precisely because of their closeness and kinship in language, religion, and shared values, according to Huntington's theory. (Huntington, 1996, as cited in Mustafaev 2022, p.106).

OTS is an intergovernmental organization that promotes comprehensive cooperation among Turkic-speaking states. The organization was founded on November 1, 2012, on the basis of the Nakhchivan Agreement, which was signed by the heads of state of Turkic-speaking countries on October 3, 2009, during a summit in Nakhchivan (Ministry of

Energy, 2022). Azerbaijan was one of the organization's four founding members. Currently, the organization has 5 members ranging from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan.

The core goals and tasks of the OTS, in accordance with the Nakhchivan Agreement, are as follows:

“Preserve peace in the region and beyond; organizing activities to tackle transnational crimes, global terror, separatism, and extremism; increasing mutual confidence among members; promoting common views on international affairs; enhancing efficient regional and bilateral collaboration in all spheres of shared interest; and ensuring attractive business and investment conditions; encouraging the interchange of mass media and broader communication; boosting the exchange of legal information and increasing legal connection; enlarging interaction in the fields of education, science, technology, and culture; aiming at comprehensive and balanced economic growth; supporting at extensive and balanced economic improvement, cultural and social development” (Ministry of Energy, 2022).

Since its creation in 2009, the OTS has drawn inspiration from our peoples' shared linguistic, cultural, and historical heritage. This has laid the foundations for the eventual institutionalization of collaboration between its Member States in order for it to advance into a regional organization. The OTS's new name, Organization of Turkic States, reflects the organization's new direction. Within the last few years, the OTS has begun to broaden and deepen its collaborative works in a variety of sectors. The Organization, which is based on the political will of its autonomous and sovereign Member States, is today an increasingly effective platform for collaboration that aims to produce more mutual assistance and solidarity in line with the demands of its members. This ongoing process

needs to be supported by a forward-looking, realistic vision (Organization of Turkic States, 2023).

More than 150 million people now live on the territory of the OTS's member and observer nations. These nations are part of a big and significant geopolitical territory that involves 4,242,362 square kilometers (Mustafaev, 2022).

There are a number of affiliated institutions and organizations that serve different aims in order to boost cooperation among Turkic states ranging from, the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic Speaking Countries (TurkPA), the International Turkic Academy (ITA) and to International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation (ITCHF).

On August 22-23, 2012, the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation's document was signed during the Bishkek Summit. The organization's headquarters is located in Baku. The Foundation helps to preserve, research, and enhance Turkic culture and heritage by sponsoring and funding different activities, initiatives, and programs. To achieve these goals, the organization intends to provide funds for maintaining, protecting, restoring, and boosting culture and heritage; to assist in resolving scientific and technical issues concerning the protection, restoration, and promotion, and to support in addressing scientific and technological issues concerning the protection, restoration, and promotion of Turkic heritage and cultural resources; help in the organization of meetings, seminars, workshops, congresses, and research projects, and also exhibitions; provide assistance in the preparation of electronic and printed scientific periodicals and publications; sponsor competitions, events, tournaments, and other activities (Organization of Turkic States, 2023, ITCHF Charter art. 3).

Although the Foundation works hard to achieve all of these goals, it faces some difficulties in gaining its popularity. In this regard, The International Turkic Culture and

Heritage Foundation is the main target of this capstone project, due to the reason that it is newly founded, and needs to improve its PR strategy.

Before starting to analyze the reasons for having an inefficient PR strategy in this organization, it is significant to define the strategic role of public relations. “Public Relation is the operation of all communications within the organization and between the organization and its external audiences. The goal is to improve the organization's understanding of its audience, and to manage all the relationships that are vital to the organization. (Oliver, 2007). A PR strategy is important, especially for a young organization, as it is a kind of tool, which is a set of methods that organizations use to move from their current situation to the ultimate goal, which may include gaining popularity. In addition, according to the experts of the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, PR strategies always need to be developed, and it must constantly adapt to the challenges it faces every day. The aim of ITCHF as a newly founded organization is to improve its current PR strategy (From a personal communication with experts, 19 April, 2023).

1.1 Methodology

The methodology part was required in order to determine the number of individuals who are aware of the problem and if the public recognizes its importance. Thus, this section provides detail on the data collection methods, as well as the main limitations and overall structure of the paper.

Three interviews and two identical surveys were conducted in three different languages to gain better understanding of the problem and collect primary data. One interview was conducted with a representative of the Department of Turkology at the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU), while the other two interviewees were workers of the ITCHF. A survey and semi-structured interviews were organized in order to

assess the acknowledgment of people regarding the problem, as well as to learn the opinion of experts. After providing the consent forms to the respondents, the interviews were recorded for transcription and coding, comparison of the collected information with secondary data and survey results, and assessment of all opinions on this issue. Surveys were made in three languages: Azerbaijani, Kazakh and Russian. The sampling group was the population of two Turkic countries such as Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. The survey questions were formed in order to grasp a better understanding of the public's opinion vis-à-vis the existence and functionality of OTS and its affiliated agencies including the ITCHF. The survey consisted of 6 questions (attached in the Appendix), and was distributed via email, social media and etc. Overall 303 people took part in the surveys. The respondents' confidentiality and names were assured during the survey.

The interview questions were as follows:

Questions for the ITCHF representatives:

1. How would you assess the visibility of the organization on social media?
2. What is the expected outcome of the organization in terms of achieving its popularity?
3. How do you think is the ITCHF's PR strategy sufficiently strong? If not, what are the possible obstacles?
4. What needs to be done in order to strengthen the ITCHF's PR strategy?
5. What can you say regarding the Foundation's cooperation with other international organizations?
6. Does the organization have the potential for expansion in terms of Member States and Observers?

Questions for the expert from KazNU:

1. How do you generally assess the level of integration of the Turkic countries today?
Has there been any progress in this direction over the past few years?
2. What can be the reason for the ITCHF's lack of popularity, not only at the global level but among the Turkic states as well?
3. What can you advise the young organization as ITCHF in order to achieve a higher level of recognition and promote the Turkic culture and heritage worldwide?

For a deeper acquaintance with the activities of the Foundation and its current PR strategy, the interviews with the employees of the ITCHF were conducted face-to-face. All the questions were provided with detailed answers. Along with the interview questions, one of the experts also provided his general view regarding the development of social media. The interview with an expert in the field of turkology from KazNU was conducted online via WhatsApp, since the interviewee is in another country. The questions as well as the answers were sent and received in written form. The interviewee preferred to stay anonymous.

In terms of the secondary data, existing literature on the subject matter, including books, academic papers from the university library, and articles, as well as reliable websites and social media accounts of the organization were utilized for this research.

In terms of the limitations of this capstone project, the first limitation is related to the sampling group of the surveys. The aim was to reach out to all age groups in order to see their awareness about OTS and its affiliated agencies including ITCHF, however, the majority (83,1%) of the respondents from Azerbaijan are in the 18-30 age group. Furthermore, a very small number of people over the age of 65 took part in both surveys. The possible reason for this is that people over the age of 65 are not interested in answering surveys or engaging with technology in general. Moreover, since the capstone project

focuses on newly founded organization, we were limited in the amount of secondary data, and previous research on the topic. Finally, because of the busy schedule of the officials and experts, it was hard to reach some of the reputable organizations for our interview part.

This capstone paper consists of five chapters that analyze focal concerns about the policy problem.

Chapter I will propose an introduction, which presents the abstract aspects that hindered in choosing this exact research, as well as the methodology part. Chapter II will distinguish the problem and its main causes. Chapter III will discuss the possible solutions and policy options that are available to ease the issue. Then in Chapter IV, the policy options will be weighed and analyzed in regard to which could be the superlative alternative. Lastly, Chapter V will be focused on what has been found, the general conclusion, and a suggestion on how to resolve the issue that is being faced right now.

CHAPTER 2. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

These days, strong regional cooperation becomes more crucial given the ambiguity of the geopolitical environment on both regional and international levels. Thus, it is essential to maintain and expand bilateral and multilateral collaboration among all Turkic countries, which share common roots (Karin, 2015). The turning point in the rapprochement of the Turkic countries was the establishment of the CCTS (now OTS) in 2009 in Nakhchivan. Since that time, there has been significant progress in the process of Turkic integration, which can be characterized by the publishing of books as well as scientific papers on this topic, but more importantly, the annual meetings of the Presidents of Turkic states within the framework of OTS summits (From personal communication with the expert, 26 March, 2023). Over time, the organization was expanded by establishing new affiliated agencies. Thus, on September 11, 2015, the Astana summit marked the beginning of the functionality of the newly established ITCHF. The main function of the cultural organizations is the “consolidation of the historic and spiritual bonds to the roots and preservation of the unity of friendly Turkic nations,” (Afandiyeva, 2015, p. 35). However, as the most recently formed affiliated organization of OTS, the Foundation faces a challenge, such as not sufficient level of popularity. As both experts from the ITCHF noted being a young organization ITCHF has some shortcomings in its PR strategy, however, despite its age, the ITCHF aims to reach the highest level of popularity both in the fraternal Turkic countries and on the global arena (From personal communication with the experts, 19 April, 2023). Although the issue of Turkic cultural heritage is known at the level of experts, the general public has little understanding of the topic (From personal communication with the expert, 19 April, 2023).

Moreover, the results of the survey, which was conducted within the scope of this work, revealed that only 20,9% percent of the Azerbaijani population and 13,8% of Kazakhstani citizens are familiar with the activities of ITCHF. At the same time, with regard to the activities of another affiliated organization of the OTS in the sphere of culture, which was established roughly 2 decades earlier, TURKSOY, the situation is better. Thus, 38,8% and 23,7% of the population of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, respectively, are familiar with activities of this cultural organization. Furthermore, the survey revealed that OTS itself is more recognizable in Kazakhstan, than ITCHF and TURKSOY, the number is 33,6%, while for Azerbaijan the level of popularity of OTS and TURKSOY is approximately the same and constitutes 35,8%. The survey results illustrate that the level of awareness of the population of the two member states of ITCHF about the organization is not sufficiently high. However, in order to achieve international recognition and be able to promote the Turkic culture and heritage on the global stage the organization must ensure that it has a certain level of credibility first of all among the population of member states.

Hence, in order to fully achieve its objectives, the Foundation needs to create a positive image and reputation, enhance its visibility, and build a trusting relationship with the audience. In other words, in order for an international organization to be able to fully function and fulfill its tasks, it needs to enhance its PR strategy.

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the reasons for a not sufficiently efficient PR strategy that prevents the organization from increasing awareness and support for its cultural preservation efforts.

2.1. Lack of Visibility on Social Media

One of the main obstacles to the development of a strong PR is the insufficient visibility of the organization's social media accounts. With the development of

digitalization, social media has become a powerful tool. Digital technologies have also affected diplomatic activities, which later became known as “digital diplomacy”. According to the definition provided in Bjola’s and Zaiotti’s (2020) research the concept of “digital diplomacy” means the utilization of social media for diplomatic purposes” (p. 2). As a result, it became noticeable that in recent decades, diplomatic services have begun to introduce virtual embassies, create social networks for communication, launch mobile applications, and so on (Bjola & Manor, 2022). A similar trend can be observed among international organizations (IOs). Many IOs significantly improved their public relations systems over the past few years. For example, such global organizations like the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth Association, and the United Nations (UN) more and more utilize social media as a tool to control their internal and external communications (Bjola & Zaiotti, 2020). The trend toward institutional transparency, as well as increased demands for self-legitimization, encourages IOs to become more public (Ecker-Ehrhardt, 2018). Organizations can use social media platforms to communicate directly with their target audiences and showcase their achievements, thereby enhancing their image. Social media also provides IOs with a channel to receive feedback from their followers, which can help them adjust their narratives and strategies. By leveraging the power of social media, IOs can increase their reach and impact beyond their traditional spheres of influence (Bjola & Zaiotti, 2020). In other words, digital technologies are thought to strengthen political influence for governments and international organizations in ways that they would not otherwise be able to (Bjola & Zaiotti, 2020). For example, the United Nations, the largest international organization, has significantly expanded its presence on social networks to reflect its own image and bolster its legitimacy in the face of criticism from the general public (Weiss, 2009, as cited in Hofferberth, 2020). Overall, social media has become an

important tool for IOs to effectively enhance their image, and expand their influence on the international arena.

With regard to ITCHF, firstly, it is important to dwell on what has been done by the Foundation so far. At the moment, the organization has already begun to integrate digital diplomacy into its PR strategy. As one of the experts from ITCHF pointed out, the Foundation puts effort to be active on social media, and always ensures the presence of media representatives at its events. Moreover, the activities of the organization are covered by both state and non-state media, as well as in social networks (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

The organization possesses its own website, where visitors have a chance to get acquainted with the history of the Foundation, its activities, and news, as well as view the photo gallery. The site is presented in two languages – Azerbaijani and English. At the time of writing this work, the activity of the site was suspended due to active work on its reconstruction. The renovations are aimed at making it even more informational, understandable, and convenient to use. This measure taken by the organization is a positive step at improving the visibility of the organization and is expected to bring the anticipated results in the near future.

Moreover, presently the Foundation actively utilizes social media as a tool for its PR strategy. The ITCHF has accounts on 2 social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. In the social networks, visitors can find out about the latest news of the Foundation and see photo reports from various events, as well as some announcements, congratulatory messages on the holidays of the member-states, and messages of condolence. The posts on both accounts are published regularly, which is an important factor when maintaining pages on social networks.

However, as was pointed out by the expert from the organization, the social media and ways of interaction there are changing every day, which creates a challenge. Since ITCHF is a newly established foundation, its promotion on social media requires time. Also, in the world of the constant flow of different information, it is important to share content, in which people will be interested, which is also not an easy task (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

After the analysis of the subscribers number on both social media accounts of the Foundation, it became clear that the organization still has something to strive for. As noted by the expert, the number of subscribers and views gradually grows, but the organization looks forward to more and strives for it (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

Thus, the number of followers on Facebook is about 2.5 thousand accounts (International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, n.d.-a), and on Twitter, the number is 646 (International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, n.d.-b). However, it is important to note that the Facebook and Twitter pages of the Foundation were launched relatively recently in 2019 and 2022, respectively (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

At the same time, in a similar cultural organization TURKSOY, the number of subscribers on its Facebook and Twitter accounts is about 19 thousand (Uluslararası Türk Kültürü Teşkilatı, n.d.) and 31 thousand people (TÜRKSÖY, n.d.), respectively. Considering the date of the first post on the above-mentioned platforms, these pages have been functioning since 2011. Given the difference in time of establishment, it would be inappropriate to compare the number of followers of these fraternal organizations. However, the numbers are presented to show that the Foundation has its own potential audience that can be reached, and considering how rapidly popularity on social networks

can be achieved these days, it is not necessary to wait for decades to achieve large reach, the development of right strategy and posting engaging content can be sufficient conditions for this (Lee et al., 2018).

Also, it is important to emphasize that the organization does not possess an Instagram account. Being active on a popular platform like Instagram would help reach more people and thus increase the Foundation's visibility on social media. For example, according to a study dedicated to the analysis of the UN Women's social media engagement, Instagram turned out to be the leading platform among such platforms as Twitter and LinkedIn (Maliska, 2017). Moreover, as a rule, the audience of various social media platforms differs from each other (Clark et al., 2017). As a large portion of Instagram users is from 18 to 29 years old (Auxier et al., 2022), the opening of an account on this platform could attract the attention of youth to the activities of the ITCHF. Interaction with different segments of the population, regardless of their age, provides an inclusive policy for the organization, which is also an important factor that forms its reputation. In addition, according to recent studies, YouTube appeared to be the most commonly used online platform with a rapidly growing reach (Auxier et al., 2022). Thus, the absence of an account on YouTube also, to a certain extent, affects the low visibility of the Foundation on social networks.

Another crucial aspect that may affect the effectiveness of utilization of the social media platforms by the organization is the language policy. According to the Charter of ITCHF, the working languages of the Foundation are state/official languages of member-states and English (ITCHF Charter art. 7), meaning, for now, the organization operates in 5 languages. With regard to social media, according to the analysis of the last 50 tweets it can be concluded that the majority of the tweets are delivered in English language. In other social media, the situation is slightly different. The assessment of the last 50 posts on Facebook revealed that a big portion of posts is written in the Azerbaijani language, while

some of them are also translated and presented in the English language. Thus, the dominant position in social media is occupied by Azerbaijani and English languages. Considering the fact that Azerbaijani and Turkish languages belong to the same subgroup of languages (*Contemporary Turkic languages*, n.d.) and that there is a limited number of English-speaking population in the Turkic countries, such language policy may affect the level of recognition of the ITCHF in the Central Asian region. In one of his interviews, Indrajit Banerjee who was the director of the Knowledge Societies Division, which is part of the Information and Communication Sector at UNESCO, stated that due to lack of information available in people's native languages, many people do not utilize the Internet, which has a detrimental effect on its growth (Dimitrov, 2014). That is why, it is important to develop a multi-language approach. Once Foundation gains its recognition among the Turkic countries it will be able to reach global visibility thanks to the common efforts of fraternal countries.

It is also worth noting that the language policy is important not only within the framework of the Foundation's social media but also has an overall effect on other aspects of Turkic integration. Nevertheless, in the modern conditions of globalization, the Turkic world is not the only region that has faced such a problem. As an example, in the "In Science and Technology Options Assessment" workshop held in the European Parliament in 2017, the speakers also expressed particular concern about the EU language policy and noted the socioeconomic consequences of language barriers in the integration of Europe (Foresight, 2017). This opens up opportunities for ITCHF to learn world experience in such matters.

Overall, social media has become an essential tool for international organizations in managing their PR. For now, the presence and maintenance of the social networks of the Foundation have already reached a certain level, however, the ITCHF has great potential in this direction, which still needs to be developed. By leveraging social media effectively,

the ITCHF may improve its visibility and reach, diversify its audience, and as a consequence maximize its overall popularity.

2.2. Limited number of observer states

Another obstacle that limits ITCHF's ability to build an effective public relations strategy and accomplish its objectives effectively is the limited number of observer states.

Historically, an early precursor to the observer status was the United States' experience with the League of Nations, where events at League Headquarters were followed by the United States minister in Berne and the consulate in Geneva. Then the notion of this type of partnership reappeared when Italy and Denmark requested permission to join the UN Conference on International Organization in San Francisco as observers (Mower, 1966). Thus, the concept of an observer state is a practice that has developed on the basis of historical accidents and usage (Mower, 1966) and is now widely used in all international organizations.

The global practice shows that having observer states in an organization can offer several advantages. Firstly, the psychological involvement of an observer state can play an important role. Having observer status allows states to engage in interactions with the organization that tend to stimulate their interest in it, which can lead to greater support. Thus, the observer-state can sense the importance of a specific program or strategy when they join in group discussions, and as a result deliver this information to their government (Mower, 1966). Second, observer states may have the chance to express their ideas and concerns on important issues. This may give them a platform for communication with other members, which may have an impact on the decision-making process (Mower, 1966). Furthermore, the observers may contribute to the development of certain projects by sharing some information and providing their scientific expertise (Chater, 2021). Another

important aspect is the financial contributions. Despite the fact that observer states are not obliged to make financial contributions, the practice shows that they still may do voluntary contributions and provide sponsorship for projects (Mower, 1966, Chater, 2021). Finally, having observer status might be the first step toward joining the group as a full-member state. States can show their dedication to the organization's objectives and ideals by taking part as observers. Moreover, representatives from observer states can learn more about the Organization's operations by monitoring its proceedings through their observer missions, which can influence their decision to receive a full membership (Mower, 1966).

All these benefits of having a large number of observer states can directly and not directly affect the PR strategy of the ITCHF. Thus, for example, the Council of Europe emphasizes the importance of the observer-states and notes that relationships with observer nations provide the Council of Europe a great chance to reach out to new audiences and help the organization's standards and initiatives have a larger effect (Council of Europe, n.d.).

It is important to highlight that in 2015, when the Foundation was established, the President of the organization Gunay Afandiyeva (2015) in one of her articles emphasized the importance of expanding the Foundation through the involvement of other Turkic countries. She mentioned that despite the fact that the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, as a newly formed organization, consists of four Turkic countries, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey, other Turkic countries in the region are no less important for the unity Turkic nations. The President of the Foundation expressed confidence that these countries would join the ITCHF in the future. Further she writes that the global experience shows that if international and regional organizations are effective, they may broaden their horizons and scope to include the economic, political, social, humanitarian, and other fields. These are crucial elements. Overall, she notes that

an organization's future growth is determined by its level of success. To date, the list of observer countries has been expanded by Uzbekistan and Hungary.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the concept of the "Turkic world", which must be interpreted as a cultural concept, rather than a political one, goes beyond the 6 independent Turkic states (Purtaş, 2017). The Turkic people are unique from other peoples who preserve a single homeland and identity since they have not settled in a single location. While one part of the Turkic people settled in the lands of their origin including Siberia and Central Asia, another part has moved to new locations all over the world including Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. That is why it is hard to define the Turkic World precisely because culture transcends national boundaries (Purtaş, 2017). In this regard, membership in the organization should not be limited only to the Turkic countries. The scale of the organization can be increased by the Turkic autonomous regions of the Russian Federation, Gagauzia, as well as other countries from around the world where the Turkic peoples live. As was mentioned by the experts from the Foundation, ITCHF has the potential to expand its relations with other countries, which have Turkic minority groups (From personal communication with the experts, 19 April, 2023).

Moreover, such an expansion policy is in line with the provisions specified in the organization's Charter, namely that the organization must help revive, promote, and grow traditional handicraft and applied art in the areas where Turkic-speaking peoples are settled (ITCHF Charter art. 3, para. 1). Furthermore, similar intentions were expressed in the speech of the President of Azerbaijan in Samarkand at the IX OTS Summit, where Ilham Aliyev noted that the geographical borders of the Turkic world are much wider and that within the framework of the organization, it is necessary to keep in focus issues such as rights, security, and the preservation of the national identity of compatriots who reside

outside the OTS member countries on an ongoing basis (*Speech by Ilham Aliyev at the 9th Summit of Organization of Turkic States, 2022*).

Meanwhile, it is worth noting that some steps in this direction have already been taken. For example, recently during the working visit of the President of the Foundation to Lithuania, meetings were held with the representatives of Turkic nations, namely Tatars and Karaites living in this country, and a number of events aimed at promoting the historical and cultural heritage of the Turks in Lithuania were discussed (International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, 2023a). Moreover, as a result of the working trip to Poland, Memorandums of Understanding were signed with the Jagiellonian (International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, 2023b) and Warsaw Universities (International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, 2023c). According to one of the experts, Memorandums of Understanding lay the foundation for a good relationship, which in turn may lead to these countries becoming members or observers of the organization (From personal communication with the expert, 19 April, 2023).

Thus, it was identified that the limited number of observer countries is one of the factors that affect the international recognition of the organization.

2.3. Insufficient cooperation with non-Turkic international organizations

IOs are essential for fostering international collaboration and tackling common problems. They exist to promote international collaboration and cooperation in a variety of areas, including economic, social, and environmental challenges. In the current globally linked world, it is more crucial than ever for IOs to collaborate to achieve common goals. In this regard these days, there is the growth of inter-organizational partnerships worldwide (Biermann & Koops, 2017). International organizations have been encouraged to collaborate by a number of global trends, including the growth of intergovernmental

organizations (IGOs), the extension of their spheres of influence, and the scale of the challenges they currently face (Biermann & Koops, 2017).

In their research, Lotia and Hardy (2009) provided different perspectives on understanding inter-organizational collaboration. Thus, for some, inter-organizational collaboration is the way to promote a shared competitive advantage, this includes spreading risks, reducing costs, increasing efficiency and flexibility, and combining complementary skills. Another perspective on collaboration is that it assists organizations in managing dependencies and acquiring resources. Thus, collaboration is seen as a means for organizations to access crucial resources such as research and development capabilities, technical and legal expertise, and learning and knowledge opportunities. The next reason which helps to understand the collaboration between organizations in a particular domain is the opportunity for collective problem-solving. According to another point of view, cooperation aids an organization to boost its centrality in the network of the organization, which consequently strengthens the power of the organization. Finally, an inter-organizational collaboration can be considered as a way to increase legitimacy and credibility. Proponents of this opinion believe that collaboration can give legitimacy to an organization, symbolizing compliance with institutional norms, and through membership in respected, prestigious organizations. However, as authors note, there are no certain boundaries between all these perspectives, as a fact they usually overlap with each other. Within the scope of this work, special attention should be paid to the last aspect. The effective collaboration with other well-known IOs may allow ITCHF, as a relatively newly established organization, to gain more international credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the public and potential member states. Moreover, the Foundation may tap into its current networks and reach a wider audience by collaborating with a recognized institution. As

practice shows, collaboration with reputable institutions helps organizations to enhance their visibility and reputation (Joachim, 351).

However, these days the lack of cooperation between international organizations is becoming a popular phenomenon (Biermann & Koops, 2017). Such a problem can also be attributed to the ITCHF.

At the moment, the amount of the Foundation's primary partners is limited. In the first place, there is the OTS, as well as other organizations under the umbrella of the Secretariat of the OTS, such as TURKSOY, TurkPA, and the International Turkic Academy. As one of the experts indicated in the interview, the ITCHF's priority is cooperation with other Turkic organizations, since they all share a common goal, which is the rapprochement of the Turkic world. The organizations organize coordination meetings on annual bases, where they discuss current issues, as well as the implementation of joint initiatives to further strengthen the friendly relations between the Turkic countries in different spheres (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023). In other words, ITCHF has a strong tie with its fraternal organizations.

Such cooperation is based primarily on a similar identity and goals and also meets the provisions noted in the main documents of the OTS (OTS, 2022). However, to boost worldwide recognition and be able to promote the Turkic culture and heritage beyond the scope of Turkic countries it is important to establish cooperation with various international organizations. Despite the fact that the expansion of inter-organizational cooperation is also included in the OTS agenda (OTS, 2022) for now ITCHF cooperation is limited to such organizations as UNESCO, ISESCO (Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), IRCICA (Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture). Considering the growing amount of IOs, there are several prospects for the Foundation's collaboration with other international institutions. The expansion of the cooperation with

different international organizations engaging in the promotion and protection of culture and heritage is on agenda of ITCHF (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

UNESCO is the most recognizable organization in the field of culture today and cooperation with it without doubt enhances the reputation of the Foundation. The two organizations share a common aim of promoting cultural diversity and preserving the cultural heritage. As was mentioned by the expert, the Foundation and the UNESCO National Commissions of TURKSOY's member states have good relations (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023). The activities of the other two organizations such as ISESCO and IRCICA are close to each other, as they are aimed at studying, promoting and preserving Islamic culture and heritage. This is certainly relevant in relation to the Foundation, given that the majority of the population of its member states are Muslims. Nevertheless, the expansion of the geography of inter-organizational cooperation would positively affect the PR of the Foundation and help to increase its global recognition.

Thus, for example, according to the document titled *Turkic World Vision 2040* (OTS, 2021), OTS intends to Strengthen its relations “with UN and its bodies, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and establish new partnership relations with relevant regional institutions including the European Union (EU), Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Visegrád Group” (p.17). The list of organizations covers a wide area of the globe, which is something the Foundation should aim for. In addition, the workers of the organization themselves note that the organization does not limit itself to the Turkic world. The Foundation has an open policy and is interested

in expanding cooperation with non-Turkic international organizations to promote the Turkic heritage abroad (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

After all, according to the information presented, the lack of expanded inter-organizational cooperation is one of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the Foundation's PR strategy. ITCHF may increase its visibility and reputation by collaborating with reputable IOs. The organization may benefit from greater exposure, improved reputation, access to knowledge and resources, and long-lasting partnerships by collaborating with institutions that have credibility and experience in their respective industries. These advantages can aid the Foundation in accomplishing its goals and having a bigger global influence.

In this chapter, an analysis of the reasons that led to the problem that the ITCHF faced today was presented, namely the ineffectiveness of its public relations strategy. These reasons include a lack of visibility on social media, a limited number of observer states, and insufficient cooperation with non-Turkic international organizations.

The next chapter suggests and analyzes possible policy options for each cause.

CHAPTER 3. POLICY OPTIONS

The previous chapter described the main challenges that hinder the development of a strong PR strategy for the ITCHEF. This chapter will propose policy alternatives that can help to overcome those obstacles. As a result, it will be proposed that the challenges of developing an effective PR strategy can be solved by changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts, increasing the cooperation with other IOs, and expansion of the number of observer states.

3.1 Changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts

Firstly, based on world practice, it is proposed not to limit activity in social networks exclusively to the official pages of the organization, but also to encourage the Head of the organization, as well as its workers to actively maintain their accounts on social media, to broaden the global network of the organization.

As Bjola and Zaiotti (2020) suggest in their research the social media community that interacts with IOs is widespread and includes various individuals and groups worldwide, thus forming a global network. This network may consist of internal actors such as secretariats, agencies, foreign delegations, and workers of the IO, and external accounts such as non-governmental organizations, various companies, media representatives, specialists, advocacy groups, and corporate lobbies in countries from all over the globe. The authors note that all these users have an impact on IOs' social media communication practices. Hence, the visibility of the IO in social media can be improved if more actors will be included in its global network.

Furthermore, the former Assistant Director-General (ADG) for External Relations and Public Information at UNESCO Eric Falt noted in one of his interviews that UNESCO will be perceived by the media and Member States as a strong organization if the

organization speaks with several voices. He stressed that the press releases should include not only the name of the CEO but ADGs responsible for various areas. ADG should be more active online and maintain their own blogs (Dimitrov, 2014, p.309).

A positive example of the introduction of digital diplomacy is the innovation of Karen Hughes, former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the US State Department. During the last Bush administration, Hughes abolished the requirement for diplomatic personnel to take permission to appear in the media, including social media. Moreover, visual communication training was offered to every American diplomat abroad (Dimitrov, 2014). Following this example, the Foundation's employees can also receive training in order to learn how to effectively use their social accounts for work purposes.

Secondly, the ITCHF may hire professional PR specialists. As an expert from the Foundation noted, the Turkic world is very dynamic and it is necessary to keep abreast of events, therefore, from time to time there are obstacles in the form of a lack of human resources and time (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023).

PR specialists can build up engaging messaging and branding procedures, as well as utilize an assortment of strategies and approaches to extend brand visibility, reputation, and credibility. They may moreover provide insightful data about the necessities and preferences of the targeted auditory. Also, they have expertise in vital PR disciplines, including media relations, social media management, and event organizing.

The practice of hiring PR specialists is not an innovation to the IOs. As Dimitrov (2014) notes in his study, in the course of its PR reform, UNESCO has attracted more public relations specialists. Few new professional communicators were hired, most of whom have experience in social media.

Third, changing the style of language on the organization's social media may increase engagement. At the moment, the Foundation's publications have an official style that can be difficult to perceive, so it is suggested that a more informal style be used in their publications. The informality of communication is one of the social media's most important developments for IOs, as IOs have historically been cautious and restrained in their external communication. (Bjola & Zaiotti, 2020). Diplomats are typically required to maintain a certain amount of etiquette but the Twitter goes beyond acceptable behavior. In the digital age, providing information in informal ways on social media is allowed as long as the message is smart and direct (Cornut, 2019, as cited in Bjola & Zaiotti, 2020).

Also, it is important to note that according to the results of the survey, 76% of Kazakhstani citizens and 68% of Azerbaijani respondents answered that they are willing to learn more about Turkic culture and heritage. In this regard, the Foundation can diversify its content with informative posts about Turkic history, culture, and heritage. This will help raise public awareness of the topic, as well as increase public interest in the activities of the organization. Moreover, the ITCHF may post interactive content. Based on the analysis of UNESCO's social media accounts, the specialized agency of the UN often posts questions to the audience on various topics. This scheme allows it to increase engagement and also creates an opportunity to communicate with the public.

Another step to overcoming the lack of visibility in social media is to post some important news firstly in Twitter. This is how UNESCO's important social media breakthrough happened (Bjola & Zaiotti, 2020). In 2011 instead of usual press releases the organization announced the important news regarding Machu Picchu on its Twitter and then informed the media agencies. It was the first occasion that news agencies like Reuters and Agence France-Presse cited a tweet from UNESCO rather than a press statement.

Furthermore, according to the statistics presented on the website of the global socially-led creative agency, “We Are Social” YouTube is the second world’s most-used social platform after Facebook, and Instagram is placed in the fourth position following WhatsApp. In this regard, ITCHF should not limit itself to Twitter and Facebook, but expand its presence on YouTube and Instagram. This step may help to diversify the organization’s audience. As the expert noted ITCHF’s aim is to increase awareness about Turkic cultural heritage not only among experts but also across different audiences of different ages (From personal communication with expert, 19 April, 2023). Moreover, this will open an opportunity for the Foundation to post interviews, videos, and reels (short videos in Instagram), which complies with the provision represented in “Turkic World Vision 2040”, which calls for the preparation of educational videos regarding general Turkic literature, history, values, geography, culture, and traditions using innovative and contemporary methods (OTS, 2021). The videos can be accompanied by subtitles in all official languages of the organization, which partially solves the problem of language policy.

In terms of language, it is recommended to keep the balance between the official languages of the organization. For example, UNESCO manages its social media accounts in six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish to ensure that its messages reach a global audience. Posting in different languages will bring in new audiences. Considering the location of the organization, the predominance of the Azerbaijani language is acceptable, as well as English as the international language, but it is nevertheless worth posting at least one post every week in other official languages.

Moreover, since the problem of language policy is not limited to the Foundation, but is also relevant to the OTS itself, the organization could organize free language courses in Turkic languages both in the member countries of the organization and abroad in order to

motivate people to learn and use multiple Turkic languages. Such an approach is utilized by the EU. The EU has deemed language acquisition a key priority and finances several programs and projects in this area as part of its efforts to foster mobility and intercultural understanding. Every European citizen should thus be able to use two other languages in addition to their native one as one of the goals of the EU's language policy (EU, 2017).

3.2 Expansion of the number of observer-states

As noted by the staff of the Foundation, the organization has the potential to expand by increasing the number of participating countries and observers (From personal communication with experts, 19 April, 2023).

As was pointed out earlier in this work the concept of the Turkic World is not solely limited to the independent Turkic states. There are many Turkic nations aside from Azerbaijanis, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Turks, and Uzbeks. The majority of them are settled within the borders of the Russian Federation. Thus, such federal subjects of Russia as the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Altai, Yakutia, the Republic of Tuva, the Republic of Khakassia, and the Republic of Chuvashia are potential members of ITCHF. In addition, there is an Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia in Moldova. Participation in ITCHF for these Turkic communities is of special importance, as their culture and heritage, and in some cases, the very extinction of the nation is most endangered. An example may be the Telengits, a Turkic nation residing in Altai, which was last registered as a separate nation in the course of the Russian population census in 2002, and at that time the number was 2399 people (Federal State Statistics Service, 2002). This is just one example, however, the number of endangered Turkic ethnic groups is increasing.

Moreover, the Foundation may involve and collaborate with a number of experts in the field whose research is focused on the investigation of the kinship of the Turks with other nations. This will allow the organization to attract new member states and expand its geography. For example, according to some academicians Japanese, Korean, Manchu-Tungusic, Mongolic, and Turkic languages share common roots (Vovin, 1999). Moreover, A. Akhmetov (2011) in his book “Eurasia Code: On the Threshold of the Fifth Civilization”, argues that Native Americans and Turks have the same origin. Such knowledge will give a chance for the ITCHF to attract and establish its relations with different countries all around the world and conduct studies and various events on the promotion of Turkic culture.

Furthermore, it is advised for the organization to not solely concentrate on the cooperation with governments of different countries but also cooperate with educational institutions around the world to increase the awareness of youth about the activities of the organization. As was revealed in the survey small number of youngsters are familiar with OTS and its affiliated organizations. The cooperation of ITCHF with foreign schools and universities may include holding various introductory presentations, round tables, exhibitions, and contests. In the contemporary world, youth is the engine of progress and in many countries, which promote the policy of inclusiveness, the opinion and ideas of young people are highly taken into account in making some political decisions. Thus, such involvement of youth in the activities of ITHFC may lay down a base for future membership of the participating countries.

3.3 Increasing cooperation with other international organizations

In terms of the challenge associated with the lack of cooperation with organizations beyond the OTS system, it is recommended to create a database of IOs that share some similar objectives with ITCHF and establish contacts with these organizations.

Downie (2022) in his research regarding the cooperation among IOs emphasized that when organizations have a common objective, either in the form of a general aim or a specific target established through an institution, it is more probable for them to engage in collaborative efforts. The author proposes that such partnership between actors can be expressed in various forms, including the exchange of information and resources like expertise or staff. At times, it may require more significant efforts, such as joint planning and decision-making, and implementing actions together. This may lead to the establishment of formal treaties and joint bodies, or less formal measures such as Memorandums of Understanding or the adoption of shared definitions or principles. As an example, he provides the case of the joint effort of IOs in order to achieve a common goal within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite the fact that ITCHF's goal is narrow and focuses on the promotion of Turkic culture and heritage, still there is an opportunity for collaboration with IOs that also aim to preserve the cultural heritage. The list of such IOs is not limited to UNESCO, there are some smaller organizations such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB), etc. The establishment of such a network opens an opportunity for ITCHF to enhance its reputation and legitimacy by illustrating a willingness to put joint effort towards a shared goal, as well as increase the level of recognition of ITCHF among different IOs. Moreover, cooperation with regional IOs in the sphere of culture, such as the African Cultural Fund (ACF), Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), and Nordic Culture Fund would allow ITCHF to increase awareness of populations all around the world regarding its activities.

Such cooperation does not necessarily require tremendous funding, as at the early stages organizations may limit their interaction on conducting joint online meetings. In addition, in collaboration with other IOs ITCHEF can organize online conferences for scientists and researchers from different parts of the world (From personal communication with expert, 26 March, 2023). Such events will provide a platform for experts to discuss the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage and share opinions on how this goal may be achieved. Such actions may give a chance for IOs to get a greater awareness about each other and create a base for future joint big projects.

CHAPTER 4. EVALUATION OF POLICY ALTERNATIVES

As a continuation of Chapter 3, in this section, each policy option will be examined and evaluated based on 5 criteria ranging from effectiveness, efficiency, equity, flexibility, to feasibility. Regarding these criteria, this capstone project will provide an exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of the policy options, and find the most suitable alternative.

Changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts is one of the possible options that can help to solve the current problem regarding PR strategy in ITCHF. This policy option meets the effectiveness criteria. According to the results of the surveys, Foundation has a lack of visibility in social media. It is obvious that after a few years of its existence, social media quickly gained popularity, and it is important to catch the rhythm of social media in order to fully benefit from its existence. By changing the current strategy of the Foundation, it can increase and create more attraction among the population.

Sharing ideas by involving all the workers of the ITCHF will help to deal with visibility issues. ITCHF has many goals to achieve among its members, and it is somehow difficult to deal with all the issues at the same time. Based on this aspect, if the Foundation hires a PR specialist regarding its social media usage, it may give quite effective results, which is expected, and reason for that is that PR experts can help businesses increase brand visibility, reputation, and credibility by using their knowledge, connections, and resources to navigate the media environment and acquire media coverage and endorsements. Furthermore, increasing the number of social media accounts will create more awareness in terms of the Foundation's activities. In order to widen its audience and produce informative videos on Turkic history and culture ITCHF may accomplish this goal by increasing its digital presence on YouTube and Instagram. Today almost all social

platforms have wide audiences, which will have an effect on dealing with the Foundation's popularity issue.

As for the efficiency criteria, the suggested policy option is sufficiently efficient. In terms hiring a PR specialist for maintaining the Foundation's social media accounts, this does not require a high cost from the organization. Using the right tools and choice of social media the ITCHF can create thousands of followers in a very short time

And once it is implemented it will have long-term advantages. Generally, this option mostly covers social impact. For example, if the ITCHF can diversify its content with informative posts about Turkic history, culture, and heritage, it will lead to increase public awareness and engagement. It can also post interactive content, similar to UNESCO's social media accounts.

Moreover, UNESCO manages its social media accounts in six official languages to reach a global audience if the same approach will be utilized by the organization with the predominance of Azerbaijani and English, using different languages from time to time will attract new audiences.

This policy alternative is equitable in terms of sharing the cost and benefits. As mentioned above, changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts will not be a burden. However, when it comes to benefits, as a result of the implementation of this option, benefits such as the potential to build widespread awareness of the issue as well as public interest in the projects undertaken by the organization will be shared among all workers, member countries, and observer states.

While comparing the social media activities of other international organizations, ranging from UN, EU, TURKSOY, to UNESCO it can be seen that there is a legal base for implementing this policy alternative, and by this, it meets the criteria of feasibility.

Finally, the strategy of using social media accounts may change over time and it is totally possible to change and improve them every time based on the current needs of audiences and trends of social platforms.

Regarding the effectiveness of this policy option, which is the *expansion of the number of observers states*, it can be stated that if the ITCHF supports this, it may result in a more effective and efficient implementation process. Having a greater number of member and observer states can boost the Foundation's external and internal situation since the participation in ITCHF for Turkic nations, such as the Republic of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Altai, Yakutia, Tuva, Khakassia, and Chuvashia, is of special importance as their culture and heritage are most endangered.

The efficiency criteria of the proposed alternative depend on both costs and benefits. Regarding to the cost aspect it will be costly both in time and money. Since expanding the number of members will take time and require additional costs. However, when it comes to social impact pros side outweigh the cons. If the ITCHF can manage to work with educational institutions across the world to raise youth awareness of its operations, the people, particularly the young generation, and the Foundation itself will benefit the most from this option.

As a consequence of the policy option, the ITCHF will bear the burden in terms of time and money while also being the major advantage of this alternative since attracting other nations will assist to fix the Foundation's popularity problem, and will allow the ITCHF to attract and create contacts with many nations all over the world, as well as conduct studies and various activities promoting Turkic culture. Additionally, it will benefit from the new member countries and their populations. So, in essence, the suggested alternative meets the equity criteria as well.

While implementing the expansion of the number of members, there may not be a suitable legal, political, or administrative framework. The reason for that can be different. Since the ITCHF strategy is mainly based on collaboration with Turkic states, the acceptance of non-Turkic states may somehow create some challenges for the feasibility aspect.

Lastly, once this alternative is provided, it is not flexible enough to be improved or changed in a short time, since expanding the number of members and observers is a timely process.

Another policy alternative that is suggested is *increasing cooperation with other IOs*. From the standpoint of effectiveness, this option will be effective if the ITCHF does not confine itself to the OTS and attempts to collaborate with IOs that also aim to preserve cultural heritage, such as ICCROM, ICOMOS, ICBS, and CHwB, in order to enhance its reputation and legitimacy and raise awareness of its activities. The poll revealed that respondents are less familiar of the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation's activities than other associated organizations, but they are eager to learn more about the Foundation. As a result of this policy implementation, the Foundation's efforts will be known not only in the Turkic States but also in many other regions of the world.

When it comes to efficiency this option, like the first one, collaboration with other IOs do not always need a large amount of money, since they may first limit their contact to holding joint online sessions. The only thing that needs to be done is to engage the organizations which share clear mutual interests and objectives with ITCHF. However, it will have a social impact on both targeted groups. For instance, if the formation of such a network happens it will provide a chance for ITCHF to improve its reputation and legitimacy by demonstrating its ability to work together toward a common objective, as well as boost the degree of recognition of ITCHF among other IOs.

Regarding equity, this option is preferred since, as a result of its implementation, mostly ITCHF and other organizations will be the main beneficiaries of the suggested alternative. And in terms of the cost aspect, it is noted that this option will not require huge funding, but the cost will still be shared among the organizations as it is mutual cooperation.

Increasing the number of interactions with other international organizations is also feasible, due to the fact that there are no certain obstacles to this option ranging from administrative, political, and legal that may create challenges during the implementation process.

Finally, this option is always open to new developments and can be flexible based on the ITCHS and other organizations' mutual goals and interests.

The table below prescribes and summarizes all of the considered policy solutions based on five criteria.

Solutions & criteria	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Equity	Feasibility	Flexibility
Changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts	+	+	+	+	+
Expansion of the number of observer-states	+	+	+	-	-
Increasing cooperation with other international organizations	+	+	+	+	+

Overall, in Chapter 3, three policy options were suggested to tackle challenges associated with improving the current PR strategy of the International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation. The policies that are introduced in the paper are: changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts; expanding the number of observer states; and increasing cooperation with other international organizations. Further, in Chapter 4, all proposed alternatives were examined based on five criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility or implementability, and flexibility or improvability. As a result of this examination, two policy options, changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts and increasing cooperation with other international organizations, are preferred as the most recommended ones to implement immediately in the PR strategy mechanism of the Foundation. The reason for that is that there are no direct and huge barriers in terms of financial, legal, etc. that can slow down or prevent the implementation process. In addition, it is clear from the table that these two options meet all the evaluation criteria required for implementation.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim of study

The aim of this capstone project was to determine the main challenges to the development of the PR strategy of a young international organization, namely the ITCHF, as well as to propose possible policy options that will help to cope with existing problems and to identify the best solution through analyzing these policy alternatives based on five criteria such as effectiveness, efficiency, equity, feasibility, and flexibility. First, the research revealed that the lack of visibility of ITCHF on social media is one of the main obstacles that prevent its global popularity. The absence of accounts on such popular social networks as Instagram and YouTube, lack of engaging content, as well as difficulties caused by the language policy of the organization, affect the level of recognition of the organization in social media. Secondly, it was identified that the limited number of observer states is another problem, which limits the development of ITCHF's PR strategy. Currently, there are 4 member-states: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Türkiye, as well as 2 observers: Hungary and Uzbekistan. As the Turkic nations are scattered around the world the Foundation has the potential for expansion, which may strengthen its reputation and increase its recognition in the global arena. Third, insufficient cooperation with non-Turkic international organizations is another factor, which affects the efficiency of the Foundation's PR strategy. The joint projects with other IOs may increase the legitimacy of the ITCHF in front of the public, as well as help it to promote Turkic culture and heritage in the different regions beyond the Turkic World. Although the organization is working and taking some steps to improve its PR strategy, the current actions are not enough. In this regard, in this work, solutions were proposed to overcome the problems described above. First of all, to address the problem related to visibility in social networks it was proposed to change the strategy of social media maintenance. The next policy alternative was the

expansion of number of observer-states at the expense of other countries, who have a Turkic population or share a common history with Turkic peoples. Finally, it was suggested to increase cooperation with various IOs around the globe, who share similar objectives with ITCHF.

Furthermore, to determine which policy options should be chosen to implement by the ITCHF in order to enhance its PR strategy, all three policy alternatives were assessed based on the five criteria mentioned earlier. As a result, two of the solutions were chosen as the most important and effective ways to address the issue: changing the strategy of maintaining social media accounts and increasing cooperation with other international organizations.

To conclude, the main goal of this capstone project was to analyze the case of ITCHF – a young organization, which faces difficulties in developing its PR strategy, examine the current situation, identify main obstacles, offer some policy alternatives for existing challenges based on the opinion of experts, secondary sources and world practice, evaluate each policy option, and suggest the most feasible one.

Recommendations

Here is a set of recommendations, which is based on the analysis of the global experience regarding PR strategy, and will help to cope with the existing challenges:

1. Active involvement of the Head of the Foundation, as well as the other employees, in maintaining their own social networks, where they may share news and own observations regarding the activities of the organization, and more general topics.

2. Hire qualified PR specialists. Employing experts will enable ITCHF to benefit from their knowledge, connections, and resources. PR professionals can help navigate the

complex world of journalists, influencers, and bloggers as they are well versed in the media environment.

3. Open accounts on Instagram and YouTube. This will allow to broaden the audience of the Foundation.

4. Collaborate with experts in the field of turkology. Involving experts in the work of an organization can facilitate the decision-making process and yield new insights.

5. Use all official languages of the organization in its social media posts.

6. Establish free Turkic language courses for public in member countries of the organization. This will reduce the language barrier within the Turkic nations and help to promote Turkic culture around the globe.

7. Create list of IOs, which share similar objectives with ITCHF and initiate holding joint online meetings, conferences. This step will give the organizations an opportunity to get acquainted with each other and lay the foundation for future joint project.

Concluding Remarks

In the current situation of geopolitical turbulence, it is increasingly important for Turkic countries, which share common cultural roots, to maintain and strengthen their cooperation. The establishment of the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS), now known as the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), in 2009 in Nakhchivan was a pivotal moment in bringing these countries closer together. Since then, there has been significant progress towards Turkic integration. The organization has expanded with the opening of new affiliated organizations. ITCHF is the most recently formed affiliated agency of OTS, which aims at the preservation and promotion of rich Turkic culture and heritage. As it is known, cultural diplomacy, as a tool of soft power, is an effective method of establishment of strong, multilateral relations among the states. In this regard, it is of

high importance for the Foundation to develop an efficient PR strategy that will help to achieve its objectives, deliver the message of the organization to the global arena, increase its reputation and popularity, and strengthen relations among member states of the organization. ITCHF as a young organization has great potential for further expansion, which needs to be developed, and this work was aimed to develop a strategy for the fulfillment of this task.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions for the ITCHF representatives:

1. How would you assess the visibility of the organization on social media?
2. What is the expected outcome of the organization in terms of achieving its popularity?
3. How do you think is the ITCHF's PR strategy sufficiently strong? If not, what are the possible obstacles?
4. What needs to be done in order to strengthen the ITCHF's PR strategy?
5. What can you say regarding the Foundation's cooperation with other international organizations?
6. Does the organization have the potential for expansion in terms of Member States and Observers?

Questions for the in-depth expert interviews:

- 1 How do you generally assess the level of integration of the Turkic countries today?
Has there been any progress in this direction over the past few years?
- 2 What can be the reason for the ITCHF's lack of popularity, not only at the global level, but among the Turkic states as well?
- 3 What can you advise to the young organization as ITCHF in order to achieve a higher level of recognition and promote the Turkic culture and heritage worldwide?

SURVEY QUESTIONS in English language

1. Your age:
 - A) 18-30
 - B) 31-50

- C) 51-65
 - D) 66 and over
2. Are you familiar with the activities of the Organization of Turkic States?
- A) Yes
 - B) No
3. Are you familiar with the activities of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY)?
- A) Yes
 - B) No
4. Are you familiar with the activities of the International Foundation for Turkic Culture and Heritage (ITCHF)? (if not, please proceed to question 6)
- A) Yes
 - B) No
5. In which country is the ITCHF located?
- A) Azerbaijan
 - B) Kazakhstan
 - C) Kyrgyzstan
 - D) Türkiye
6. Would you like to learn more about Turkic culture and heritage?
- A) Yes
 - B) No
 - C) I am not sure