NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASIVENESS IN BUSINESS CONTEXT

(Comparison of research in Slovenian and Croatian middle sized organizations)

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ABSTRACT

The article will present results of two studies, one conducted among Slovenian and the other among Croatian middle-sized organizations. An essential part of the analysis will compare the results of both studies. The main goal of the work will be to contribute insight into the links between non-verbal communication and persuasiveness of individuals based on domestic (Slovenian and Croatian) rather than (only) foreign studies. Human resource managers in Slovenian and Croatian middle-sized organizations who participated in our research, believe that nonverbal cues, or the manner of relaying content of speech, have an important influence on persuasiveness of an individual. Despite relatively similar social environments and a great deal of similarities in perceiving certain nonverbal communication cues as important for persuasiveness, we found differences worth further research.

Keywords: nonverbal communication, persuasion, human resource managers, business context

INTRODUCTION

Non-verbal cues are a significant part of face to face communication. Various nonverbal messages transmitted via different channels work together in order to realize a specific function. The paper will be particularly interested on the function of persuasion. Persuasion or persuasiveness is a part of many areas such as marketing and sales, negotiation, politics, diplomacy, employment interviews and others. A review of available literature showed that the foreign-non Slovenian literature covers both, the area of nonverbal communication as a whole, as well as the role of nonverbal communication in the process of persuasion, much better. There are some Slovenian works where the link between nonverbal communication ¹ and the persuasiveness of the individual is discussed. Nevertheless, we find little or no

¹ NVC in further.
scientific work in this field. The article will present results of two studies, one conducted among Slovenian and the other among Croatian medium-sized organizations. An essential part of the analysis will compare the results of both studies. The main goal of the work will be to contribute insight into the links between non-verbal communication and persuasiveness of individuals based on domestic (Slovenian and Croatian) rather than (only) foreign studies.

PERSUASIVENESS AS A FUNCTION AND A GOAL OF NVC

The verbal component is not the only vital component of communication, as the unspoken part contributes to the ultimate meaning of a message as well. Not everyone agrees that verbal communication is only comprised of words, or that NVC is everything except words. For the purpose of this article, we posit that we cannot label every behaviour or action as NVC. We may label a cue as (nonverbal) communication under the condition that the intention of the cue’s source is to relay a message, or that a recipient or an observer attributes meaning to the action, behaviour or cue – in short, when some sort of interpretation is taking place. In order for something to be a message, the behaviour must be intentional and/or interpreted as such by others. This means it must have a social meaning or, in other words, it must demand interpretation. Because many different paths and levels of NVC exist, researchers have split nonverbal messages into different cue systems. Cue systems and channels of relaying messages in NVC are a system of movement cues or kinesics (from kinesis, movement), appearance, vocalics (or paralanguage), contact cues (proxemics and haptics, i.e. touching and physical contact), time, and environment.

In this work, we will focus on the connection between NVC and persuasiveness. For the purposes of this article, we will define persuasiveness as a process in which one person or a group of persons (recipient, target) is subject to intervention (or persuasive communication) from another person or a group of persons (source) in a certain situation (context), where the process of persuasiveness depends on the source (e.g., his or her credibility), the message (argumentation), the target/recipient (e.g., mood), and the context of communication (Petty and Briñol 2008, 53–54). This approach is of interest to us, as we wish to explore the influence of NVC factors on persuasiveness in the context of an organisation, regardless of anticipated goals of the persuasive process (e.g., conclusion of an employment contract, influencing impressions about work performance, suitability for a certain workplace, and so on).
If persuasion is an interpersonal process in which one side aims to influence the other – to accept, start or otherwise realise a behaviour or an opinion – we can assume that success of the persuasion depends on the person carrying it out. If the factor of coercion is not a part of the persuasive process, then we can agree with Mehrabian, who says that, when the persuader and the persuaded are equal in status and power of material influence, different approaches can have a big effect on influencing behaviour (Mehrabian 1972, 150–151). We attempt to influence others in different ways using nonverbal cues such as implying attraction, similarity, intimacy or trust, expressing dominance and power, expressing expectations or breaking others' expectations (Burgoon, Dunbar in Segrin 2002). In connection to the source of communication and his or her communicational effect, Rus and Kocmur (1993, 37) mention physical attractiveness; clothes, accent, pace of speaking, pitch of voice, status indicators; demographic traits, such as race, religion, nationality, gender, social status, values, and attitude of the source towards the target (indifferent, rewarding, punishing).

Aristotle claimed that style is relevant to speaking and that having arguments at one's disposal is not enough; the arguments must be presented in an appropriate manner. He pointed out the manner of presenting arguments as an important factor that affects the impression one makes with speech (Mirić in Dvornik 1989, 165). He also points out different factors that affect persuasiveness and meaning of speech. But as the most effective means to achieve that, he affirms declamation and gesticulation. He continues to address declamation, which he defines as usage of voice in accordance with demands of situation and context. He points out the aspects of volume, intonation, pitch, depth of voice, and rhythm of speech. Strength of voice, harmony, and rhythm of speech are therefore important. He suggests a clear style and a pace of speech suitable to a situation at hand, as well as versatility, and advises against tediousness (Mirić in Dvornik 1989, 165–182).

Vocalic cues or an individual’s manner of vocalisation affect the efficiency of persuasiveness. Knapp and Hall (2002, 401) suggest that the speaker decides on the volume, rate, accuracy, and tone of voice based on an estimation of what is the most appropriate for a particular audience in a particular situation, and point out the importance of speech fluency. Fluent speech with little hesitation, shorter reaction time (shorter pause until the start of speech, when the speaker gets a word), variation in tone of voice, and louder and faster speech (it is measured in number of words per minute or length of pauses) has to do with higher
persuasiveness, credibility, competence, and actual success in changing the listeners’ viewpoints (Burgoon v Knapp in Hall 2002, 402). It is also worth mentioning that for each of the above listed items, there is an upper limit of effectiveness; too much of anything (e.g. speech that is too fast) can be equally inefficient as too little of it (e.g. too slow a speech with too many pauses).

To be more persuasive, persuaders may, to a certain degree, control nonverbal cues (for example, positive facial expressions, amount of eye contact, and other cues of immediacy and connection) they exhibit in order to appear more credible and professional (Edinger in Patterson v Robbins 2007, 7). In their research, where they studied how teachers motivate their students to learn, Pogue and Ah Yuh (in Robbins 2007, 4–5), reached a conclusion that immediacy and credibility of the teachers had a positive effect on the students’ comprehension. A teacher’s immediate NVC (communication that diminishes physical or psychological distance) is connected to a positive attitude of the students towards their teacher, a positive attitude towards the content of education, and readiness to work and learn (Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey 1987, 576–578). Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey (1987, 579–580) allege that, according to numerous studies, eye contact, smiling, active posture (movement, gesticulation, nodding, touching), face to face position (as opposed to sitting behind a desk or a similar obstacle – a border between speakers), relaxed body posture, and varied vocalic abilities may have a positive effect on the attitude towards learning.

In their research, Rus and Kocmur (1993, 41–44) came to a finding that participants more positively value those outward traits of behaviour which they perceived as closer to them. Many authors have attempted to explain how and why attractiveness and similarity affect persuasiveness. In accordance with the theory of balance, people are prone to keeping a consistent attitude towards other people or things with certain traits. People are fond of those who give away cues similar to their own, and not of those they recognise as different. Nonverbal cues (from a different perspective) have a role of a factor through which individuals express similarity, stimulate the feeling of attraction, and increase the probability of influence. The appeal of the source affects his or her persuasiveness, regardless of the quality of arguments, expertise or credibility. Nonverbal cues that express physical attractiveness and similarities between the source and the target can have a big impact on persuasiveness (Burgoon, Dunbar and Segrin 2002). More attractive individuals get more offers for help when they need it, their salaries are higher, and they have a bigger chance of
changing listeners' viewpoints than less attractive individuals (Burgoon, Dunbar and Segrin 2002).

One of the studies showed that lawyers who were nonverbally more responsive to their clients gave a stronger impression of expertise, attraction, and trust than those nonverbally unresponsive (Barak, Patkin, and Dell in Robbins 2007, 11). Some researchers were interested in the effect of NVC of political candidates (mostly in television debates) on the outcome of elections (the research was conducted on an election in America). Candidates who were nonverbally – kinetically – more active, especially in the absence of sound, were more persuasive. Smiling and positive facial expressions had a positive influence as well. Appearance also had an impact on the level of competence, integrity, and suitability that constituents attributed to them (Manusov and Jaworski 2006).

Tradesmen who only rely on the verbal component of communication neglect an important tool for shaping and mediating their ideas (Peterson 2005, 143) and thus affect their business success. NVC is most effective when used complementary and in coordination with verbal communication (Peterson 2005, 148). Managing impressions we make on other people is often in the service of persuasion, for example, in a job interview, a relationship between a student and a professor, and in the business world in general. Research has shown that the impression of higher intelligence is affected by numerous cues of NVC, such as more eye contact, a pleasant way of speaking, clear and comprehensible communication, and faster speech (Murphy 2007, 327). In addition to that, in her research, Nora A. Murphy (2007, 332–336), came to a conclusion that the impression of high intelligence correlates with the following cues of NVC: clear articulation, gaze aimed at the interlocutor, an expressive and interesting voice, gesticulation, looking at the conversational partner while speaking or listening, nodding, number of pauses, responsiveness in communication, length of time speaking, and upright posture. Negative correlation occurs with frequent changes of direction of looking and unpleasant voice. Actual intelligence correlates with responsiveness, length of time speaking, the number of uttered words, and looking at the conversational partner while speaking.

A job interview is one of the most common methods used by organisations to attract, find, and choose the most suitable candidates for their job openings (Tsai, Chen, and Chiu 2005, Kristof-Brown, Murray, and Franke 2002). Every interview is a form of two-way communication, taking place between the interview conductor and the interviewee. Some
interviewers rate candidates as better if they perceive them as similar to themselves in race, gender or social background. It has been shown that results of an interview are favourable for candidates who are more attractive, have a normal body weight, and are dressed appropriately. In addition to that, eye contact, smiling and body posture also have an impact. All of the above are a part of an individual’s managing of impressions he or she wishes to make (Encyclopedia of Career Development 2006). Clothes and other aspects of appearance, touching, handshaking, silence, posture, nodding, eye contact, avoiding gaze or keeping it, facial expressions, and gesticulation may emit numerous unintentional messages and affect the communication itself, as well as the relationship between interlocutors (Stewart 2007).

Nonverbal factors which, according to research so far, affect persuasiveness of an individual are maintaining eye contact (Burgoon, Dunbar in Segrin 2002, Remland, S. Martin 2006, Amy Slagell, 2007) – it shows affection, positive attitude, and inclusion in communication, and it increases success of persuasion in comparison to those who avoid eye-contact during persuasion, – certain vocalic traits, and use of space and touch (Burgoon, Dunbar and Segrin 2002, Remland, S. Martin 2006). We communicate with those we consider attractive, friendly, and positive, at a shorter distance. This is also the case with touching, which we use to express affection, sexual interest, and pleasure. Physical closeness is thought to be more persuasive – we allow more attractive individuals to be more intrusive into our personal space, without it affecting their persuasiveness. Other positive effects may be an immediate body posture, forward leaning posture, nodding, keeping eye contact during listening, less hesitation, vocalic variety, relaxed gesticulation, variable facial expressions (Remland 2006), volume, rate of speech, pitch of voice, bodily movement, and upright held head (it gives the impression of dominance, pride, and joy) (Mignault and Chaudhuri in Peterson 2005, 144).

Amy Slagell (2007) makes an important point, which is that it is easier to say what is absolutely to be avoided not to spoil the effects of speech, than it is to give instructions about what is absolutely effective. There are no universal rules. Individual nonverbal cues never work in isolation from other cues or general interaction.
EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Objectives and basic thesis of the article

This paper aims to identify non-verbal communication factors that affect the persuasiveness of the individual. The empirical objectives are:

- To determine which NVC factors individuals (Slovenian and Croatian hrm managers in middle sized organizations) identify as those that have a positive impact on the persuasiveness of the individual and what the main differences (if any) between Croatian and Slovenian hrm managers in middle sized organizations are;
- Analyze how selected demographic characteristics and characteristics of individuals influence the opinion on significance of an individual NVC factor from the point of view of comparison between Croatian and Slovenian hrm managers in middle sized organizations;
- Identify factors that influence opinions on which cues of physical appearance influence the persuasiveness of the individual.

The basic thesis of this paper is that individuals, human resource managers in middle sized organizations, attribute significance to the effect nonverbal cues have on persuasiveness of the individual. Nevertheless we do not expect significant differences between the results of the Slovenian and Croatian research because we expect that relatively similar social environments make perceptions of importance of nonverbal cues comparable.

Methodology

The empirical part of this paper is based on the collection, processing and interpretation of quantitative data generated by an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to Slovenian and Croatian organizations with 50 to 249 employees, with instructions to meet the person who is responsible for the recruitment and employment of new staff in the organization. The target group for questionnaire was determined with existing AJPES's database (for Slovenia) and the register of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce (for Croatia). Before formulating the questionnaire for the purpose of this paper, a pilot study on the impact of NVC factors on persuasiveness of individuals was conducted with a less extensive
questionnaire, which served as a basis for the more extensive questionnaire in which some questions were added, modified or excluded.

Used statistics: descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, measures of correlation, factor analysis.

**Limitations and assumptions**

It is necessary to note certain limitations and assumptions that could affect the results. These are:

- The study is limited to Slovenian and Croatian organizations. Results cannot be generalized to a wider area.
- The study is limited to organizations with 50 to 249 employees, so it cannot be generalized to all organizations.
- Understanding of concepts differs among individuals and can affect the results of the survey.
- It was hypothesized that employees responsible for recruitment or hrm managers, have good professional and experiential knowledge and have, in regard to their experience, formed an opinion, knowledge and awareness of what factors - in addition to formal qualifications - affect the persuasiveness of the individual in a business context (for example an interview for a job).
- There are also limits in literature, since there is almost no specific reference literature on connection between NVC and persuasiveness of the individual in domestic resources. There are a few sources that talk about NVC in general, not specifically about the connection to persuasion, which is our main goal in this article. There are also many improper references about the link between NVC and persuasion, but are useless for this article. They serve only as sources of additional ideas for identifying nonverbal cues of persuasion.
- Given that the theoretical base is drawn down mainly from foreign sources, the question is whether the assumptions of foreign literature can be directly tested in Slovenian environment, but this is something that the present task cannot address.
- Surveys were conducted within a period of 18 months, which could, to some extent, affect the comparability of the results and found similarities / differences.
Introduction of the respondents and the sample

The average number of employees in companies where respondents work was, in the case of the Slovenian study, 172.7, and in the case of the Croatian one, 146.9. It has to be mentioned that some companies deviate from the criteria of medium sized companies with 50 to 249 employees. We have nevertheless used the questionnaires filled in by human resource managers in said companies, because it is possible that there have been changes in number of employees from the moment the data has been entered by individual companies into both databases we used in order to get contact information for the needs of research until the actual execution of the research. The average age of Slovenian companies participating in our research is 27.11 years, while the Croatian companies are, on average, 21.44 years old. Out of 114 of human resource managers from 114 Slovenian research, 88 (or 77.2%) were female, while only 26 (22.8%) were male. 103 (or 71.5%) of human resource managers in Croatian research were female, 41 (or 28.5%) were male. The average age of Slovenian respondents was 41.54, of Croatian 41.58 years.

We wanted to include opinions of human resource managers, so it is favourable that most of the respondents in the Slovenian (66.7%) as well as in the Croatian research (73.0%) hold leading positions, a minority of them works as human resource clerks. If we take a look at positions in the companies according to gender, we can see that men (both in Slovenian and in Croatian companies included in the research) tend to occupy leading positions – owners or managers – 38.5 and 39.0% respectively, while females in leading positions work as heads of service (37.5 and 23.6%).

The average period of employment in the Slovenian research is 19.12 years and, 18.43 years in the Croatian, which, in both cases, represents half of a career path of an individual. Based on the length of the average period of employment we may assume that the respondents acquired enough work experience to help them assess the NVC factors that affect the persuasiveness of an individual in a business context. The majority of the respondents (84.2% in the Slovenian and 72.2% in the Croatian research) have a sociologic education, which is expected since the people we asked to take part in our research are human resource managers, a position where that kind of knowledge is required. 15.8% of the Slovenian and 27.7% of Croatian respondents had naturalistic or technical education. The average length of education
(16.08 years for Slovenian and 15.69 for Croatian respondents) shows that human resource managers in companies included in our research have, on average, a high (university) education (the educational processes in both countries are comparable).

In order to check whether the presence of traits or behaviours the respondents themselves expresses through NVC cues are connected to their opinions about which NVC cues affect the persuasiveness of an individual, we included some statements reflecting traits expressed through NVC cues. We asked the respondents to rate how much an individual trait holds for them, using a Likert scale from 1 (not true) to 5 (absolutely true). Later, we analysed the correlation between the respondent’s chosen traits and their opinions about the effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness. Despite a somewhat different sequence, the most prominent traits were honouring agreements, maintaining eye contact, and a well kept appearance. Other statements (not being late, assessment of own communication skills, use of gesticulation, and assessment of own rhetorical skills) also have a very high average value (above 3.5, meaning definite agreement). Statistically significant differences between the Slovenian and the Croatian respondents were found in three out of seven statements. The Croatian respondents more markedly agree that they make an effort in taking care of their appearance, that they have good rhetorical skills, and that they are successful in communicating with others.

We also wanted to check with which potential factors of persuasiveness the respondents in both researches agree, since the factors were connected to different NVC cues in a persuasive situation, later on in the questionnaire. For this purpose, we listed 11 statements that emphasise a certain trait (responsibility, self-confidence, professionalism, etc). The respondents marked their agreement with the statements on a Likert scale from 1 (I do not agree, at all) to 5 (I agree completely). In Slovenian research, the most prominent traits are the manner of conveying content, confident conduct, expressing interest in the content of the conversation, and a well kept appearance of females. We came upon similar findings in the Croatian research, the difference being that the Croatian respondents rate the impression of professionalism on persuasiveness slightly higher than the Slovenian respondents. Regardless, the difference was not statistically significant. There was only one statistically significant difference (t-test, sig. lower than 0.05) in one out of the eleven statements, namely, on agreement about the impression of self confidence as a factor of persuasiveness – Slovenian respondents rate it higher than the Croatian respondents. Average values in all statements,
regardless of which research we look at, show there was a strong agreement about the chosen potential factors of persuasiveness – they all exceed 3.5, which means definite agreement.

**Opinion about the effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness of an individual**

The main part of the survey sent to mid-sized Slovenian and Croatian companies comprised of 59 statements\(^2\) about the connection or the effect of a certain NVC cue on the persuasiveness of an individual. We analysed the results of both researches to find out whether statistically significant differences between Slovenian and Croatian respondents (human resource managers) exist.

Since we did not expect any crucial, statistically relevant differences, the results were interesting. We found that the Croatian respondents more positively value smiling as a factor of persuasiveness, they also agree with the opinion that an older person is more persuasive than a younger one, and that a person will be more persuasive if he or she speaks formal language. Additionally, the results show that the Croatian human resource managers are more inclined to certain factors of conservative appearance in a business context in comparison with their Slovenian colleagues – they agree more strongly that women wearing very short skirts (above the knee) and showing too much cleavage give the impression of unprofessionalism, that a woman wearing closed shoes or pumps will appear more professional than a woman wearing sandals or mules, that people wearing less jewellery are more persuasive than people wearing a lot of it, that women who wear their long hair bound (into a fig, for example) are more persuasive than women with their hair down, that a man with an earring is less persuasive than a man without one, and that appropriate jewellery for a businessman is a wrist watch and a wedding band, while necklaces or bracelets are excessive.

On the other hand, in comparison with Croatian human resource managers, Slovenian ones attribute greater significance to eye contact in interaction (both consider it highly important), and they show stronger aversion to a closed posture (arms crossed) in a situation where an individual wishes to be persuasive.

\(^2\) The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for 59 statements from this set, for both, the Slovenian and the Croatian research (in some of the following analyses the results will be combined), is 0.92, which is appropriate since the generally accepted norm of acceptable reliability is above 0.6. Cronbach Alpha for 59 statements from this set for the Slovenian research is 0.91, and 0.93 for the Croatian.
Despite the fact that, considering all the NVC cues included in the research, there were not many statistically significant differences between the Slovenian and Croatian human resource managers, our findings point to a certain pattern or a difference in thinking which would be interesting for further research.

Further on, we wanted to find which NVC cues the respondents (both, Slovenian and Croatian Human resource managers in mid-sized companies) perceive as the most or the least significant for persuasiveness of an individual. After comparing respondents from both countries, we excluded cues from this analysis previously found to differ statistically significantly.

The highest average values – we were interested in statements with values above 3.5, which means definite agreement – can be found in statements that focus on individual aspects of the following groups of factors:

**Time factors, time management in particular:** The respondents believe that a person respecting of a time schedule gives an impression of being responsible (a. v. 4.35). A similar impression is given by a person who notifies the other person(s) in time that she or he will be late (a. v. 4.29). Despite that, they believe that being late makes a person appear unprofessional, regardless of reasons for being late (a. v. 3.82).

**Kinesic cues:** Respondents recognise adaptors as cues of nervousness (a. v. 3.64) which negatively affect persuasiveness, because they associate cues of nervousness with insincerity and thus with a low persuasive power of an individual (a. v. 3.51).

**Contact cues:** Respondents are sensitive to (dis)regard of proxemic zones in which an individual functions and perceive invasions of their personal space as a factor that negatively affects persuasiveness (a. v. 3.97). They value the ritualised touching that occurs at handshaking positively, the handshake has to be firm (a. v. 4.09). The same positive perceptions are not apparent in case of fleeting, non-ritualised touching (a. v. 2.85), be it touching the arm or the shoulder – the only body parts available to almost anyone.

**Vocalic cues:** Respondents perceive having a sense of appropriate communication management, i.e., conversing without interrupting the other person (a. v. 3.90), speech
without fillers (a. v. 3.78), and faltering (a. v. 3.63) as well as melodic, non-monotonous speech (p. v. 3.71) as more persuasive.

**Factors of appearance:** Respondents believe that style of dressing affects the persuasive power of a male, or more precisely, that a man wearing summer clothes with shorts appears less professional that a man wearing long trousers (a. v. 3.79). We found that the respondents are reluctant to express definite agreement with statements that link specific appearance cues with persuasiveness of an individual, but at the same time, they readily agree with statements about the effects of appearance on the persuasiveness of an individual in general. On one hand, these results are surprising, as existing research in this field shows that factors of appearance have a significant impact on persuasiveness. On the other hand, we should not be surprised by the results, as people tend to avoid advocating an opinion that appearance as such is an important factor on the basis of which we attribute competence and other qualities to an individual (it is also socially unacceptable). A more appropriate technique for analysis of how cues of appearance are connected to persuasiveness of an individual may be observation method, which would show actual reactions and behaviours of individuals in the presence of specific cues of appearance, instead of opinions that individuals are willing to share.

We were also interested which statements the respondents agree with the least or with which they expressed definite disagreement (where a.v. is lower than 2.5). They include the following statements addressing individual aspects from the following groups of factors:

**Factors of appearance:** The respondents – human resource managers from Slovenian and Croatian middle sized companies – find total absence of invisible adornment (fragrances) in a business context unacceptable or unpersuasive (a.v. 2.49). They rate a total absence of make-up in a woman similarly (a.v. 2.46). Likewise, they do not find a relaxed, non-formal style of dress to be persuasive. At the same time they do not believe a woman wearing a skirt is more persuasive than a woman wearing pants (a.v. 2.20). The respondents do not agree that suntanned individuals, giving an impression that they take care of their body, are any more persuasive than individuals who are not tanned (a.v. 2.30). They also do not believe that height of an individual (a.v. 2.23), gender (a.v. women 2.08 and a. v. men 2.00), slimness of figure (a.v. 2.02), and skin colour (a.v. 1.89) affect persuasiveness. Thus, in the respondents' opinion, bodily constitution and relatively permanent attributes of appearance do not affect an individual’s persuasiveness. But, as we have previously mentioned, it would be interesting to
gather data on the connection between cues of appearance and persuasiveness of individuals by method of observation. Then we would be able to see how much (if at all) the data gathered by observation differs from the data gathered by a questionnaire.

*Kinesic cues:* Of the kinesic cues, the respondents do not agree that a closed body position with crossed legs has a positive effect on persuasiveness of an individual (p. v. is 2.22).

*Vocalisation:* The respondents do not agree that speaking with an accent (p. v. 2.37), speaking fast (p. v. 2.17), and speaking in a dialect or slang (p. v. 2.11) have a positive effect on the persuasiveness of an individual. Despite the findings of previous research that fast enough speech is effective, we found that the respondents are not fond of fast speech. The problem may lie in the fact that it cannot be determined what is fast enough and what is too fast from the statement in the questionnaire. Speech that is too fast can be perceived equally as ineffective as speech that is too slow.

*Correlation of certain demographical traits and attributes of individuals with their opinions about effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness*

We analysed both researches to determine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between gender, age, length of education, period of employment, presence of NVC cues in the respondents’ own communication, and their opinions about the effects of NVC cues on the persuasiveness of an individual.

First, we checked whether attributing influence to NVC factors on persuasiveness of an individual differs in regards to gender. Based on the result of a t-test we had carried out on sample data about the effects of a certain NVC cue on persuasiveness, we found that there are statistically significant differences between genders in certain statements (sig. is smaller than 0.05) in the Slovenian research. Male respondents attribute stronger effects to relatively permanent factors of appearance (body height, age, skin colour, body slimness, and gender) on persuasiveness than the female respondents. It has to be mentioned that the male respondents attribute stronger persuasiveness to both, males and females, than the female respondents. The male respondents agree more strongly than the females that an individual whose arms are crossed (a sign of a closed, unavailable poise) is persuasive, that fast speech is persuasive and with the opinion that being late, regardless of the reason, is a sign of
unprofessionalism. It is also interesting that the male respondents more strongly agree that a fleeting touch on the arm or the shoulder is a positive encouragement than females, since males are supposedly more sensitive about invasions of their personal space than females. The male respondents are more accepting towards certain cues of less formal appearance as being persuasive, as they statistically significantly more strongly agree with statements about persuasiveness of a less formal style and non-use of fragrances and make-up. On the other hand, the female respondents expect a more formal appearance in the process of persuasion than males. They more strongly agree that a shaven man is more persuasive than a non-shaven one, that a man wearing shorts appears less professional than a man wearing long trousers, and that a woman wearing too short a skirt and a blouse with too deep a cleavage gives an impression of unprofessionalism. The female respondents attribute more effect to eye contact on persuasiveness than the male respondents. Likewise, they also agree more strongly that respecting a set term is a sign of responsibility, and attribute greater importance to sense of communication management (not interrupting the other person), than the male respondents.

On the other hand, the results of a t-test conducted on data from the Croatian research have shown differences between genders (what we were initially interested in, sig. is smaller than 0,05) as well as differences in comparison with the results of the Slovenian gender analysis. Unlike the Slovenian research, the Croatian did not show the male respondents attributing a stronger effect of relatively permanent factors of appearance (body height, age, skin colour, body slimness, and gender) on persuasiveness than the female respondents. We also found that the male respondents (in the Croatian research), unlike their Slovenian colleagues, do not agree that fast speech or crossed arms (closed, unavailable poise) are persuasive. They also do not agree more strongly than the females that being late, regardless of the reason, is a sign of unprofessionalism. Additionally (and, again, unlike their Slovenian colleagues), the male respondents are no more fond of fleeting touch on the arm or shoulder as positive encouragement than the female respondents. This is supported by previous research. All in all, the Croatian research shows that male respondents are fond of only two NVC factors at a higher degree than the females, namely, formal style of clothing (the Slovenian research shows a statistically significant difference between genders in non-formal style of clothing - the males are more fond of it) and the use of dialects and slang in speech. On the other hand, the Croatian female respondents, like their Slovenian female colleagues, expect a more formal appearance in the process of persuasion than the male respondents; they agree with the statement that a shaven man is more persuasive than a non-shaven one, that a tie is a
necessary part of a manager’s wardrobe, that a woman wearing too short a skirt and a blouse
with cleavage gives an impression of unprofessionalism, and that it is more appropriate for a
woman to wear closed shoes in a business setting, as opposed to open shoes or sandals. The
Croatian female respondents also believe that a person of higher body stature is more
persuasive than a shorter person. This is the only relatively permanent factor of appearance
that showed a statistically significant difference between the Croatian female and male
respondents. The results of a t-test on Croatian research data show that the females, more so
than the males, stress the importance of eye contact and a firm handshake, as well as an
appropriate sense of respect for one’s personal space. They also perceived repetitive
movements, such as fixing a tuft of hair or playing with a ring, as signs of nervousness, which
they associate with insincerity and thus consider them less persuasive. The female
respondents from the Croatian research are more sensitive to the posture of a conversational
partner than their male counterparts, meaning they agree (more than the males) that a person
who often changes his or her body posture or position in the chair, gives an impression of
lower confidence and that an upright posture shows a stronger self-confidence. They believe
that a person will appear interested in a conversation if he or she sits slightly leaning forward
but also that the same effect will be achieved if the person is leaning comfortably to the back
of the chair. Among the vocalic cues, the Croatian female human resource managers were,
more than the male ones, favourable of loud, melodic, and formal speech, with as little fillers
and interjections as possible. The Croatian female respondents, more than male ones,
appreciate a sense of proper communication management, because they believe that a person
who does not interrupt appears more polite and well mannered and is thus more persuasive.

In further we wanted to find out whether age, period of employment, and length of education
statistically significantly correlate to opinions about the effects of NVC factors on
persuasiveness of an individual. We did this by looking at correlations between the chosen
variables based on Pearson’s correlation coefficient. In the Slovenian research, we found that
age and period of employment statistically significantly correlate (sig. is equal to or lower
than 0.05, two-way test) with a negligible number of NVC cues (a statistically significant
correlation with age or period of employment was present in only 3 out of 59 cues). There
were more statistically significant correlations present between the length of education and
the opinion about the effects of appearance and adornment – we found a statistically
significant negative correlation with a number of cues from this group of NVC factors,
namely, with the following statements: a woman wearing too short a skirt (above the knee)
and a blouse with a deeper cleavage give an impression of unprofessionalism, a man wearing shorts will appear less professional than a man wearing long trousers, a tie is a crucial piece of wardrobe of any good manager, people who use less jewellery and less imposing jewellery are more persuasive than people who wear more noticeable jewellery and a lot of it, people who wear fragrances in moderation are more persuasive than people who use too much, and men who are shaven are more persuasive than men who are not. The longer the education of the Slovenian respondents, the less importance they attributed to the above-mentioned appearance and adornment cues.

In the Croatian research we found a statistically significant correlation (sig is equal to or lower than 0.05, two-way test) in a negligible amount of NVC cues according to any of the factors taken into account (only 6 out of 59 cues showed a significant correlation with at least one demographic factor taken into account). Therefore, based on the results of the Pearson’s correlation coefficient we cannot say that, in the case of the Croatian research, age, length of education or period of employment affect predispositions for forming opinions about the effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness.

We were also interested whether there exist statistically significant correlations between the factors the respondents themselves express through NVC cues (time management, appearance, good rhetoric, success in communication, maintaining eye contact, gesticulation, and movement during speech), and their opinions about the effects of NVC factors on persuasiveness of an individual. We found that, in the Slovenian research, the presence of factors and traits in the respondents’ own expression of NVC cues correlates with their opinions about the effects of specific NVC cues on persuasiveness to a larger degree than age, length of education, and period of employment (where correlation is limited mostly to certain cues of appearance and adornment). We found a statistically significant correlation (sig. is equal to or lower than 0.05, two-way test) between respondents’ traits, which show through NVC cues, and 16 statements addressing the following: opinion about the importance of eye-contact, smiling as well as a serious facial expression, gesticulation, nodding, respecting personal space, a firm handshake, a well kept appearance, a tie, modest jewellery in a man, formal speech with no fillers or interjections, respecting aspects of time in communication (respecting set dates, not being late), and rejection of cues of tension and nervousness because of the impression of insincerity. A negative correlation was only found with fast speech.
In the Croatian research we found a statistically significant positive correlation (sig. is equal to or lower than 0.05, two-way test) with respondent’s traits expressed through NVC cues in a much smaller number of statements or NVC cues than in the Slovenian research. We found a positive correlation with the opinion about the importance of a good manager to wear a tie and a negative correlation with the opinion about the importance of gender, skin colour, and body slimness in persuasiveness of an individual. The more characteristic the NVC cues in the Croatian respondents’ own communication were, the less importance they attributed to relatively permanent cues of appearance and body fitness. It would be interesting to explore the correlation further, regardless of the fact that, in general, we did not find that the presence of NVC cues in the respondents’ communication created significant predispositions for forming opinions about the effect of NVC cues on persuasiveness (statistically significant correlation, positive or negative, was only found in five statements).

**Factor analysis**

We had expected that certain common factors of moderation, conservatism, and relaxed informality would have an effect on individuals forming opinions about correlation of appearance and body constitution with persuasiveness of an individual. The analysis of data about the correlation of appearance cues and body constitution with an individual’s persuasiveness is interesting because it reveals a somewhat more detailed insight into perception of appearance cues, seeing as we gathered the data for the two researches with questionnaires, not observation. Further on, by conducting a factor analysis we wanted to identify the common factors that effect forming opinions. We included the data from both researches into the analysis; we analysed 22\(^3\) out of 30 statements about the effect of individual specific NVC cues where no statistically significant difference between the Slovenian and the Croatian research was found. In the continuation of the analysis we found that the variable 'Tattoos on visible places and piercings in the nose or the lip do not affect an individual’s persuasiveness' has negligible values of factor loading so we excluded it from our analysis and repeated the process without it\(^4\).

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\(^3\) Cronbach alpha coefficient for 22 statements used in factor analysis for the Slovenian and Croatian researches is 0.9, which is suitable, considering the general norm of acceptable reliability is above 0.6.

\(^4\) Cronbach alpha coefficient for these 21 statements is 0.91.
Using factor analysis we tried to find out whether there exist certain common factors that can explain forming opinions about the effect of cues of appearance on an individual’s persuasiveness. We found that conducting the analysis with the method of principal axis leads to scores of factor loading and communalities, since the process converges. Based on KMO-statistics – a value of 0.891 which is greater than 0.5 – and the Bartlett test (sig. = 0.000) we estimate that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Since we do not get clear results using a non-rotated solution (multiple variables have strong loading on multiple factors) we conducted an axis rotation. Because we did not find strong correlations between factors, we conducted an orthogonal rotation of factors (VARIMAX) instead of an oblique one. After the rotation, three factors were formed that, together, explain 51.00% of variability in the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable (statement)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A person whose appearance is well kept is more persuasive.</td>
<td>.556</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person will be more persuasive if he or she is dressed formally (e.g. a dress, or trousers, and a shirt).</td>
<td></td>
<td>.535</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man wearing shorts will appear less professional than a man wearing long trousers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A tie is a necessary item of every good manager’s wardrobe.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who wear unimposing jewellery are more persuasive than people who wear very imposing jewellery.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who use fragrances moderately are more persuasive than people who use too much.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who have their fingernails well kept are more persuasive than women whose fingernails are not taken care of.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women whose fingernails are painted in bright colours give the impression of unprofessionalism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who wear moderate amounts of make-up are more persuasive than women wearing excessive make-up.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men with short hair are more persuasive than men with long hair.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaven men are more persuasive than men who are not shaved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A taller person is more persuasive than a shorter person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skin colour of a persuader affects his or her persuasiveness. .716

People who are slim are more persuasive than people who are rounder. .803

Men are more persuasive than women. .833

Women are more persuasive than men. .710

A woman wearing a skirt is more persuasive than a woman wearing pants. .526

A person will be more persuasive if he or she is wearing informal clothes (e.g. jeans and a polo shirt). .505

People who do not wear fragrances are more persuasive than people who use them moderately. .568

Women without make-up are more persuasive than women wearing make-up in moderation. .689

Sun-tanned individuals are more persuasive than the ones that are not, because they give the impression of taking care of their body. .616

Factor of orientation towards formal rules of smartness and moderate use of adornment: The first factor contains a tendency towards rules that hold for general business smartness (e.g. well kept appearance, formal style of dressing, rejection of informal style of dressing, a tie is necessary for a businessman, men’s hair should be short, men should be shaven). The factor also encompasses the factors of appearance which address moderation (in fragrance, make up, and jewellery use) or absence of excessively groomed appearance (for example, women should have their nails taken care of, but without the use of brightly coloured nail polish).

Factor of stereotypisation: The second factor contains statements that address the effect of relatively permanent factors of appearance on persuasiveness of an individual (i.e. the effects of gender, body type, and age) and gender related rules of smartness (e.g. a skirt is more suitable for a woman than pants).

Factor of informality and tendency towards natural: The third factor comprises of statements about informal aspects of appearance (informal style of dressing, sun-tanned skin) and original or natural appearance (e.g. non-use of fragrance and make-up) as a factor of persuasiveness of an individual.
CONCLUSION

Considering the fact that we had expected there would be no fundamental, statistically significant differences between the Slovenian and the Croatian respondents, the results were quite interesting. We found, among other things, that the Croatian respondents value smile as a factor of persuasiveness of an individual in a business context more than the Slovenian respondents. The results also show that the Croatian human resource managers in middle-sized companies included in our research are statistically significantly fonder of certain aspects of conservatism of appearance in a business context. Meanwhile, the Slovenian human resource managers included in our research are more rejecting of closed body position as appropriate in a situation where an individual wishes to be persuasive. Despite few statistically significant differences between the Slovenian and the Croatian human resource managers in our research, the slightly pronounced conservatism of Croatian respondents shows that there may exist a certain pattern of thinking that differs according to a wider social environment of the business context of communication and would be interesting for further research.

We wanted to find to which NVC cues the human resource managers in our research attribute the most importance in persuasiveness, regardless of whether they are Slovenian or Croatian. The highest average values were found in certain cues of time management, kinesic cues, contact cues, and vocalic cues of NVC. It was also found that the respondents are reluctant to express explicit agreement about connecting specific cues of appearance with persuasiveness of an individual. This response is not too surprising considering that people tend to avoid explicit agreement with opinions that appearance as such is an important factor even, or especially, in a business context. This is, after all, socially unacceptable. Therefore, to analyse the connection between appearance cues and persuasiveness of an individual, observation may be a more appropriate method.

In the result analysis we were interested in correlations of certain demographical traits and attributes of individuals with their opinions about the effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness. When determining statistically significant differences in attributing effects of factors of NVC cues on persuasiveness in relation to gender, we came to an interesting finding; the male respondents in Slovenian research attribute more importance to relatively permanent factors
of appearance, like height, skin colour, slimness, and gender, than the female respondents (the Croatian research showed no such difference). On the other hand, the Slovenian female respondents expect a more formal appearance than the male respondents (we came to a similar finding in the case of Croatian female respondents). The analysis of results of the Croatian research showed, among other things that, out of all aspects of formal smartness, the Croatian male respondents only value a formal style of dressing more than the females. The Croatian female respondents are more sensitive to certain vocalic traits than their male counterparts.

Further on, we wanted to find whether age, period of employment, and length of education of an individual statistically significantly correlated with opinions about the effects of NVC factors on persuasiveness of an individual. There are very few statistically significant correlations, so we cannot say that age, length of education, and period of employment form predispositions for forming opinions about the effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness. The only exception may be a correlation between the length of education and the opinion about the effects of appearance and adornment in the Slovenian research. It may be interesting to research in more detail why the correlations between the length of education and certain appearance cues are negative.

Determining statistically significant correlations between cues that the respondents express through signs of non-verbal communication and their opinion about the effects of NVC factors on an individual’s persuasiveness showed that there were many more significant correlations in the Slovenian research. This points to a possibility that existence of NVC cues in communication of human resource managers in Slovenian middle sized companies presents a stronger predisposition for forming opinions about the effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness than in their Croatian colleagues.

Factor analysis, used to determine whether certain common factors affect forming opinions about the connection of appearance and body constitution to persuasiveness of an individual, has yielded three factors of influence: factor of orientation towards formal rules of smartness and moderation in use of adornment, which expresses a tendency towards rules that hold for general business smartness and the factors of appearance which talk about moderation or lack of excessive smartness of appearance; factor of stereotypisation, which encompasses statements expressing effects of relatively permanent factors of appearance on persuasiveness.
and gender related rules of smartness; *factor of informality*, expressing informal aspects of appearance and originality or natural appearance as a factor of persuasiveness.

Human resource managers in Slovenian and Croatian middle-sized companies who participated in our research, believe that NVC factors, or the manner of relaying content of speech, have an important influence on persuasiveness of an individual. Despite relatively similar social environments and a great deal of similarities in perceiving certain NVC cues as important for persuasiveness, we found differences worth further research.

**Possibilities for further research**

The possibilities for further research on the subject of effects of NVC cues on persuasiveness of an individual exist in the following areas:

- It may be interesting to analyse reasons why people avoid expressing definite agreement with the opinion that appearance as such is an important factor based on which we attribute competence and other qualities to an individual, or which specific factors affect persuasiveness of an individual.

- Furthermore, it may be worth researching opinions of individuals about the effects of NVC cues in relation to gender, especially about the effects of appearance cues on persuasiveness and to find out what is the cause of differences in gender. This is where the two researches differed the most.

- A more detailed analysis is needed on the subject of similarities between the persuader and the persuaded or the effects of individual’s traits on forming opinions about NVC cues in the process of persuasion. It may be useful to expand that set of questions in the questionnaire used in our research.

- The aspect of conservativism in thinking and behaviour of an individual in relation to responding to cues of NVC is also worth further research.

**REFERENCES**


