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Student Engagement in College Related Events

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Student Engagement in College Related Events

By

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A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science in Service Leadership and
Innovation

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Abstract

This qualitative exploratory study looks into motivators of engagement of students in college related events at RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus and how students perceive their sense of belonging to RIT Croatia. Furthermore, this study tries to identify the impact of RIT Croatia's communication channels on the level of engagement in college related events. The data for this study was gained through conducting in-depth, in person interviews with eight randomly sampled sophomore and junior year students of the International Hospitality and Service Management program, with equal representation of males and females per year level.

The findings of this study indicate that students are motivated to attend college related events by a relaxed and positive atmosphere, and for the purpose of socializing and creating relationships with their peers and professors, followed by getting long lasting benefits from networking with business representatives and Alumni. Choosing to attend the events is greatly impacted by the "crowd mentality", students' personalities, quality and diversity of the offer, and clearly conveyed messages of "what's in it for me". When it comes to promoting college related events and increasing level of engagement, the currently used RIT Croatia communication channels are not reaching out to students in a satisfactory manner, and there is a need for adapting the communication to the demands of Generation Z members.

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Introduction

It is generally considered by many people that student years are supposed to be among most memorable years of one's life. It is the rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood; it is the time when young people separate themselves from secure and comfortable surroundings and go into the whole new world. When stepping into that new world of college life, students are facing new academic challenges, but they are also offered the possibility of being engaged in many other aspects of student life.

Engaging in college related events is an integral part of the overall college experience as it builds up the college spirit and a sense of belongingness (Bronner, 2012). College spirit is perceived as an enthusiasm, an identification of oneself with the institution and its traditions through loyalty and participation in cheering, supporting and promoting the institutional values (Bronner, 2012, p. 163). As emphasized by Bronner, "A host of games, rituals, and festivals promote social bonding, cultural growth, and self-development in the process" (2012, p. 192). Thus, engaging in college related events contributes to the development of both personal and professional networking opportunities, which can be of significant influence for further personal and professional development of students upon graduating from the International Hospitality and Service Management program at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus.

Problem Statement and Significance of Study

When considering the aspects of student engagement in college related events, it is important to emphasize that the level of engagement in college related events at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus is decreasing over the past five years. When going into the program, the majority of freshmen students are generally involved in all segments of student life, but as they

move into their sophomore and junior year, there is a general decrease in interest for engaging in college related events of all sorts.

Some argue that one of the most important parts of being a student is to fit into the college community within the first year of studying (Andres, 2004). The initial studying years present a new beginning in life where students, especially those who study outside their hometown, experience unknown freedom which occupies a lot of their time and requires a lot of energy, whereas in their later years of studying, students tend to spend less energy on socializing and more towards achieving academic success which will benefit them in the future (Andres, 2004, p.126).

Current sophomore and junior year students of the International Hospitality and Service Management program are members of the Generation Z. Generation Z, also called the Internet Generation, is a common denominator for people born between 1995 and 2010, thus a generation that is highly influenced by the digital age and the era of internet, which their members were born into (Seemiler & Grace, 2015). Being exposed to digital technology and the Internet all their lives has made members of Generation Z to be more self-reliant and self-sufficient when it comes to seeking information and making decisions (Bányai & Dudás, 2013). The lack of interest for Generation Z students to engage in college related events could merely be a generational issue, but what can RIT Croatia do communication wise in order to better integrate students into the RIT Croatia community by infecting them with college spirit?

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the engagement of sophomore and junior year students of the International Hospitality and Service Management program in college related events at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus. The investigation will help RIT Croatia to understand the underlying factors that determine the level of engagement of sophomore and

junior year students in college related events at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus. Moreover, it will potentially identify effective communication channels for RIT Croatia to increase the engagement of sophomore and junior students in the college related events at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus. The findings of this study might be beneficial to other educational institutions, or any other institutions that are dealing with members of Generation Z as their customers.

Research Questions

The aim of this qualitative research was to answer the following two central questions and sub questions:

RQ1: What motivates students to engage in college related events at the RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus?

- What factors influence students' decisions when it comes to engaging in college related events?
- What kind of college related events attract students?

RQ2: How do students perceive their sense of belonging/engagement to the RIT Croatia community?

- How do students perceive benefits from getting involved in college related events?
- How can RIT Croatia's internal communication motivate students to engage in college related events?

Literature Review

Student engagement in college related events is looked at as an important segment during the time spent on college. It adds value to the experience of studying and it strengthens the connections one has with the chosen institution of higher education, as well as all individuals one

interacts with during studying. Moreover, being involved in multiple aspects of college life can significantly contribute to student's personal and professional development during their studying years and beyond. Majority of current students at undergraduate programs belong to the Generation Z, and it is important for universities to understand the most effective ways to create and retain students' engagement in college life. Having this in mind, it is important to look into existing research to define college spirit, student engagement and its connection to their sense of belonging to the institution.

Definition of College Spirit

College spirit is defined as “an enthusiasm, an identification of oneself with the institution and its traditions through loyalty and participation in cheering, supporting and promoting the institutional values (Bronner, 2012, p. 163). Bronner has defined student college spirit as “a sense of the institution's tradition or legacy and the concept of students taking part in an unbroken chain from the past to the future” (2012, p. 163). More specifically, Bronner (2012) emphasizes stronger feelings associated with college spirit as oppose to high school spirit, meaning that student create stronger bonds by being immersed in the college environment.

Definition of Student Engagement

Student engagement is defined as “the time and energy that students devote to educationally purposeful activities and the extent to which the institution gets students to participate in activities that lead to student success” (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 108). Astin (1999) defines student involvement as “a construct that should not be either mysterious or esoteric. Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates

actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students” (p.518).

Sense of Belonging to College

Researches indicate that personal sense of belonging to the environment within the academic institution of their choice is an important factor connected to positive experience of student life (Freeman, Andreman & Jensen, 2007). Strayhorn emphasizes that “Whether measured in terms of the quantity or quality of meaningful relationships that students develop with others on campus, or the frequency with which college students engage in their own learning, college students’ sense of belonging is important and yields a statistically significant (and sizeable) influence on learning and development outcomes” (2012, p.107).

Transitioning into college life requires young individuals to undergo multiple changes impacting their lives; from living arrangements, new friends to new academic environments, and they need to cope with finding their way towards independence and responsibility (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). While many students manage this transition without major problems, others face issues and consequently, many of them drop out of college (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Statistics indicate that the majority of drop outs occur during the first year of college and there are two indicators that should be more examined when it comes to better adjustment to college, and those are the sense of belonging to college and the quality of friendships (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). In his study, Strayhorn (2008) discovered that the majority of students started to feel the sense of belonging to the college solely after joining clubs, various student organizations and participating in college related events. Many students have also indicated that the sense of belonging was their primary goal when deciding to take part in college life (Strayhorn, 2012). Moreover, students who reported “being frequently involved in meaningful

college activities, also tended to report a greater sense of belonging in college” (Strayhorn, 2012, p.111).

Benefits and Importance of Student Engagement in College Life

Engagement of students in college life can be beneficial in multiple levels and it can transcend in importance from college years to work environment later on in life. As pointed out by Walsh (2009) vast opportunities exist on college for meaningful and knowledgeable interaction outside the classroom. However, students often don't take these opportunities seriously and on many occasions students attend these types of events just for the sake of getting extra points (Walsh, 2009). It is suggested by Daniels and Brooker (2014) that creating awareness of their overall student identity is beneficial to students for their engagement at university events and it helps them to shape their attitudes towards their future working environment upon graduating.

When students are involved in college life, they have the opportunity to connect with their peers, to get to know the college environment better and to see themselves more clearly in relation to college community (Strayhorn, 2012). Students involved in college life are oriented towards gaining experiences that would benefit them during their time spent on college, such as gaining new friends, pursuing their personal interests through hobbies and other activities that are not related specifically to the academic part of the studying experience (Holzweiss, Rahn & Wickline, 2007). Moreover, building their own identity through social interactions with other members of the college community is an integral part in the college years for students' development as individuals (Lairio, Puukari & Kouvo, 2013).

Past research also indicates that the level of student engagement varies throughout their year levels. Many studies have been conducted on the topic of retaining freshmen students by

engaging them more into the college environment. Besides retention of freshmen students, the literature indicates some issues that occur during the sophomore year when students often feel lost and question their purpose at college (Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013). Wang and Kennedy-Phillips (2013) have provided a definition of the term “sophomore slump”, which is defined as a stage where students seem to drift through their second year of studying struggling to determine what they really expect out of college (p.541). This particular problem is also connected with sense of belonging to the college environment and the results of their survey have shown that academic self-efficacy and institutional commitment are strong indicators of the level of involvement among second-year students (Wang & Kennedy-Phillips, 2013).

There are numerous reasons as to why a student would drop out of college, and DeWittz, Woolsey and Walsh (2009) mention “finances, poor academic performance, lack of family or social/ emotional encouragement, difficult personal adjustment and integration into the college social and academic community, and/or "fit" with the university, and feelings of isolation and helplessness”(p.20). Andres and Finlay (2003) have described Tinto’s theory of student dropping out of college, which states that students who are more engaged and integrated into the college environment both academically and socially are less likely to drop out of college; this indicates the importance of student integration in the college community.

From the perspective of universities, the social capital that is imbedded in the value of students, faculty and staff should be perceived as a valuable resource and as such, it should be encouraged through various forms of engagement: from classroom, to various college events, in order to use it to their strategic advantage (Swanson, 2008). When properly enhanced and directed, social capital can bring multiple benefits to the university as it can increase retention, enrollment faculty and staff satisfaction, etc. (Swanson, 2008).

Engagement of students in the organization of various college related events can also influence the attendance rate. The Southern Vermont College dealt with low student engagement in college related events by including them in the process of selecting and organizing events of their interest. By doing so, they obtained a significant increase in the number of students attending the events (“Student employees”, 2006).

Current Students as Members of Generation Z

The majority of the current student population at the RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus belongs to Generation Z. Generation Z defines those individuals who are born in the period between 1995 and 2010, thus generations that are highly influenced by the digital age and the era of the internet (Seemiler & Grace, 2015). In order to find a proper way of communicating with students who are members of Generation Z and to motivate them to engage in college life, there is a need for understanding what makes them different.

The main characteristics of Generation Z. Being born with high technology in their hands, Generation Z members are focused on communicating via mobile devices and having easy access to all information (Anderson, 2004). With such a strong influence by modern technology, Generation Z is considered to be smart, open-minded, determined, capable, eager to solve problems and in touch with everything that is going on in the world (Seemiler & Grace, 2015). Having all this in mind, organizations of any type are advised to provide members of Generation Z with shared information and to recognize their ambitions to encourage them in expressing themselves as individuals (Anderson, 2004).

Universities Communicating with Generation Z Students via Online Social Networks

According to Ghosh, Chawla and Mallott (2012), social networks are “interactive Web-based applications that facilitate social interaction in a virtual environment” (p.105). Wandel

(2008) says that “online social networks serve a parallel purpose through Web sites intended to help users meet new people or stay connected with friends and associates. Online social networks are also called "virtual communities" or "profile sites," and the relationship-building capacity of these sites results in more than simplistic social consequences, particularly when it comes to higher education” (p.35). Network participants are exposed to groups focused on the advantages and/or disadvantages of specific colleges, clubs, and professors. Higher education institutions are rapidly realizing that reputation, campus culture, and even enrollment figures may be affected by online social networking.

The social media and social networking became integral means of communication, whether it is sharing information, discussing online or just for mere entertainment (Kaur, 2014). Considering the high level of technology present in the communication style of Generation Z, higher education institutions understand the importance of adjusting their communication style when it comes to their students. Having a lively online community environment is beneficial for student engagement in university studies and college life, as it allows multidimensional communication between students and faculty and staff (Annala, Mákinen, Svárd, et al., 2012).

Universities should find positive ways to use social media for the benefit of their students in establishing relationships, and providing opportunities for them to interact with each other related to their courses and activities (Dalton & Crosby, 2013). Moreover, social media provides a good platform for students to organize themselves in creating various projects, and nowadays, social media provides an entry point for students to be active and to get to know everything about a certain university even before starting their studies (Dalton & Crosby, 2013). This changes the conservative way of communicating with students as it provides students with more independence (Dalton & Crosby, 2013).

Comparison of Student Engagement in College Life Between USA and Europe

RIT Croatia, located in Croatia, Europe, is a global campus of Rochester Institute of Technology, from Rochester, NY, USA. It is important to understand the cultural differences when it comes to universities and college life between the USA and Europe. In recent decades, universities have shown significant attention to placing students as important stakeholders in their process of getting education at higher educational institutions (Bateson & Taylor, 2004). Students are given opportunities to evaluate and to be treated as consumers when it comes to education and at the same time there have been indicators that students are more reluctant to engage in student life (Bateson & Taylor, 2004). Bateson and Taylor (2004) explore some factors influencing the attitudes of students when it comes to their university experience, such as general student characteristics, student expectations and needs outside the classroom and what do universities do to understand student needs, particularly related to Central and Eastern Europe (Bateson & Taylor, 2004). This examination shows that many students are expecting universities to be technologically savvy, fast in communication and customer-oriented towards their students. Moreover, student mobility has forced universities to think about being more competitive when it comes to supporting the diversified student body (Bateson & Taylor, 2004). While universities in the US have nurtured the idea of students being engaged in multiple levels during their studying years, the European universities had different tradition, which was more conservative and not very open to two-way communication with its students (Bateson & Taylor, 2004).

The level of interest in student life shown by US universities is indicated by the fact that the majority of available research on the topic of college students and student life is related to US universities (McInnis, 2004). The impact of globalization on the way students perceive their student experience is making universities rethink their way of communication and to adapt to the

new generations, and in many cases, universities feel like they are the ones that need to adapt to students rather than the other way around (McInnis, 2004)

Methodology

The methodology that is used in this study is qualitative exploratory, with the purpose of investigating the factors that influence the engagement of students in college related events. The investigation was done in a narrative style through a constructivist philosophical worldview. This specific research method was chosen with the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the participants' views on engagement in college related events (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, it enabled identification of the underlying factors that determine the level of student engagement in college related events, and their sense of belonging to the college community.

Strategy of Inquiry

Strategy of inquiry used for this research study involved conducting in-person, semi-structured, open-ended interviews. This approach was chosen with the purpose of gaining detailed and in-depth information from the participants (Creswell, 2014). The open-ended questions allowed participants to express their thoughts and opinions in details. Participants' wide and detailed answers provided a broader view of the topic of research, which might be critical to the research outcomes (Creswell, 2014).

The questions were concentrated on participants' views on student engagement in college related events and their opinions about the relevance of the events for their college experience. Moreover, the questions looked into how participants are connecting their engagement level with their sense of belonging to the college community, and how they perceive the benefits gained from engaging in non-academic activities while in college.

Target Population and Participants

Participants of this research study were sophomore and junior year students of the International Hospitality and Service Management program (IHSM) at RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus. There are 85 active sophomore and junior year students enrolled in the IHSM program at RIT Croatia, which is the target population for the purpose of this study. Freshmen students were not included as previous experience at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus has shown that students visit college related events quite frequently and in larger numbers during their first year as oppose to upper year levels. Seniors were excluded as previous experience at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus indicated that seniors tend to be less engaged in general, whether it is due to their focus on finishing their undergraduate education, or their general lack of interest for various reasons, which might be an opportunity for further research. Students of the Web and Mobile Computing program were excluded as they generally tend to be less involved in social events and they gravitate more towards socializing primarily among themselves. The sample size for this research study was eight students, equally divided according to the year level and gender. The participants belonged in the age group ranging from 19-21. Due to having direct access to the targeted population, a random sample was determined in which participants were equally represented based upon year level and gender.

The RIT Croatia's official student data base was used for random sampling. In order to get the random sample, all active junior and sophomore year students from the IHSM program were filtered and exported into an excel spreadsheet. Following the export, the targeted population was divided into four separate spreadsheets based on two year levels, and their gender. Once the spreadsheets were made, the Stat Trek Random number generator was used in order to come up with a random sample of the population. Students were then approached and

several of them stated that they are not available or interested for the interview. The process of getting the random sample was repeated by excluding the unavailable candidates from the spreadsheet and redoing the process by using the random number generator. After several takes, eight interviewees, who were willing and able to participate, were selected to be interviewed for this research and their year level and gender are shown in Table 1. By using this method the biased approach to choosing sample was avoided. The interviewees were rewarded for their participation with free vouchers for pizza and soft drinks in one of the restaurants in Dubrovnik.

Table 1. Interviewees as per Year Level and Gender

Interviewees	Year Level	Gender
Interviewee #1	Sophomore	Male
Interviewee #2	Junior	Female
Interviewee #3	Sophomore	Female
Interviewee #4	Sophomore	Female
Interviewee #5	Junior	Female
Interviewee #6	Junior	Male
Interviewee #7	Sophomore	Male
Interviewee #8	Junior	Male

Data Gathering and Analysis

The questions used in the interviews were open-ended questions (see Appendix A for a complete list of questions). Notes were taken to properly collect all answers, and all interviews were audio taped in order to make sure that answers are fully documented (Creswell, 2014). The location where in-person interviews were conducted was RIT Croatia campus, in order to provide a familiar and inviting setting to the participants who are spending much time on campus due to their studying. Potential negative consequences of choosing this location might be that interviewees might consider this location to be too formal, and they might be reluctant to be upfront with their opinion in a setting that is directly tied with the topic of the research. Prior to

doing the interviews, the administration of RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus was notified and asked for approval for the use of their facilities.

All participants were interviewed by the same person in order to ensure the same approach toward conducting the interview. Interview time slots of 30 minutes were used for conducting interviews and the interview timeline was planned according to participants' availability. Proper time management ensured enough time to gather all necessary data from each interviewee. The interviewer introduced herself prior to the beginning of each interview, and explained the purpose of the interview and the interview process, in order to make sure the interviewees completely understand the topic of the interview and feel comfortable being interviewed (Creswell, 2014). As the questions were open-ended to guarantee an opportunity for participants to go in-depth with providing answers, interviewees were also encouraged to ask questions if something was unclear (Creswell, 2014). Providing an informal setting helped the interviewees to open up and speak up freely. The timing for the interviews was chosen related to the academic calendar of RIT Croatia, meaning that interviews did not take place when students had a break or final exams. Considering this, the interviews took place at the beginning of spring semester of the academic year 2016/2017, and all interviews were done within a one month period.

In order to prevent any subjective impressions during the data gathering and analysis, the researcher made sure to transcribe the gathered data promptly after collecting data to maximize the extraction of relevant information. Upon transcribing the interviews, the transcripts were carefully reviewed for several times to make sure all research questions are answered in the collected data. Based on the transcript, the data was coded manually with notes taken throughout the entire process to ensure detailed coding. Prior to interviews, the researcher wrote several

codes that were expected to derive from the answers. After the interviews, all tapes and notes were reviewed for several times, and the researcher manually coded all relevant words and phrases. Following this, the codes were manually grouped in themes and some themes were merged together (See Appendix B for a detailed list of codes). Some codes were left out as they were not relevant to the topic. Some new themes emerged during the coding process.

Role of Researcher

Being that researcher's role plays a key part in a qualitative study, the primary goal was to ensure an unbiased approach to collecting and analyzing data. The researcher's interest in this specific topic derived from the fact that she is an RIT Croatia alumna, who graduated from the International Hospitality and Service Management program in Dubrovnik, and she is also an employee of RIT Croatia for the past 12 years. Throughout her work experience that included several different positions, she became very interested in the generational changes and the way students perceive their connection with RIT Croatia. With this interest, came the desire to further explore their mindsets, and possibly to identify new ways that RIT Croatia can communicate with the students to further engage them in RIT Croatia community. The researcher believes that through this study, she will come across some valuable insights that will be of use to her in her future interaction with potential and existing students. Moreover, the same information might be useful to other employees of RIT Croatia for the purpose of enhancing our services to upcoming generations of students.

Due to researcher's long-lasting professional and personal connection with this institution and its students, it was an imperative that she remains objective in the data gathering and analyzing process in order to come up with valuable answers. The long-lasting connection with RIT Croatia on various levels, as well as the knowledge she has about the interviewees, could

have created potential bias towards their views. Moreover, the generational gap and differences between the times when she was a student and nowadays, could have caused some judgmental opinions over what interviewees had to say. The researcher's personal opinion is that the majority of Generation Z members approach belonging to the RIT Croatia community with a certain disconnection and passiveness. At the same time, they are very vocal with their sense of entitlement, but without much effort to invest themselves into anything related to the community. The researcher thinks that younger generations have a tendency to take things for granted. Often times they don't realize the connection between having available resources for improving college days and actually making an effort to utilize those resources on individual basis every student is in charge of making a decision of making the best out of everything offered or staying aside. Due to stated potential bias, during the data collecting and analyzing process, the researcher kept an open mind and avoided neglecting data that do not fit the analysis (Denscombe, 2014). Furthermore, to maximize the genuine outcomes of this study, the researcher utilized interviewing skills such as: being attentive, sensitive to feelings of the interviewees, being non-judgmental, respecting the rights of the interviewees, and allowing them space and time to express their opinions (Denscombe, 2014).

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative research often has limitations in the sense of demonstrating the validity and reliability of collected data (Denscombe, 2014). When it comes to in-person interviews with open-ended questions, it is that much more challenging to come up with reliable data which are not affected by the interviewer. On the other hand, in-person interviews provide in depth information and personal insights that might not be detected otherwise. In order to utilize all benefits of qualitative research and to minimize potential downfalls, the sample was comprised

of equal number of students according to year level and gender. Moreover, the participants were chosen randomly from RIT Croatia data base in order to avoid personal bias based on previous interaction with students. Concerning the research questions, the questions were constructed in a way that motivates participants to express their opinions and views open-mindedly and without constraints. Audio-taping the interviews ensured recording of all data which were coded later on.

Limitations

Possible limitations of this study include students being reluctant to participate in the study for various reasons. Moreover, participants may be insincere or incomplete in providing answers to the asked questions. Some participants may have an inert attitude towards engagement in college related events and thus provide superficial answers. Some participants may be completely unaware of what would actually engage them, so they might give unclear and incomplete answers. The sample of eight students may not be significant in size or in diversity in order to provide data that properly reflects the entire student population of sophomores and juniors at the International Hospitality and Service Management program in Dubrovnik. The fact that engagement in college related events is often encouraged by assigning points by some professors may also be a limiting factor. Current junior year students are not as diversified as some previous generations. The majority of current juniors originate from Dubrovnik and the immediate region, which might significantly impact their perspective on engagement in college related events and the level of belonging to RIT Croatia, due to the fact that they have less need to be heavily involved in the college community. Moreover, some students engage in college related events solely for the purpose of gaining extra points, which might also impede their answers.

Findings

During the data analysis process, the predicted and newly emerged codes were grouped based on relevance and connectivity, and main categories were identified that describe the joint themes from participants' answers (Creswell, 2014). From designated categories, the most relevant ideas that are in common to participants were extracted. Some categories were merged together into the following seven themes.

Motivators of Attending College Related Events

All interviewees emphasized that the biggest motivator of attending college related events is socialization with both peers from all year levels and professors as well. Socialization at college related events enables them to feel more integrated and accepted.

The relaxed and positive atmosphere, especially when it comes to less formal, socializing events like barbeque or holiday auction, is also a very important motivator to all students that were interviewed and it contributes greatly to their participation. Interviewee #8 stated "at these events we get to see the other, more relaxed side of our professors, where they make an effort to talk to us and get to know us even outside of classroom, which I greatly appreciate. I think their presence motivates students to attend as well". Interviewee #3, on the other hand, especially appreciates the approachability of the Dean at the events as this is not common on Croatian state universities where deans and professors are not that approachable. She said that it means a great deal to her when she is able to exchange opinions on some topics with the Dean himself, stating that it makes her feel more appreciated.

Another important motivator of attending college related events was food and beverage, which was indicated by 4 out of 8 Interviewees, who all mentioned that if there is good food and beverage, the attendance is guaranteed. Extra points are stated to be motivators of attendance for

four out of eight students as well. Interviewee #2 commented that extra points mean a great deal to her as they contribute to her application for additional scholarship to decrease tuition. On the other hand, Interviewee #3 said that she is not motivated with extra points as she does not need them academically or scholarship wise. Instead, she is motivated to attend by positive outcomes for the future.

Interviewee #2 thinks that majority of events at RIT Croatia should follow the example of the Career Education Day event where attendance is mandatory, as she thinks only mandatory attendance can motivate people to attend more. Interviewees #5 and #6 disagree and think that putting mandatory attendance can only demotivate student and create a sense of resistance.

Interviewees #3, #4 and #7 indicated that they are greatly motivated by organized guest speakers events and various workshops, because these events provide them with an opportunity to gain more insight into the real business world, and to learn about other people's experiences. Interviewee #7 suggested that guest speakers could consider being more interactive instead of just talking, as he thinks that two-way interaction would encourage more students to attend these events. Interviewee #5 expressed regret for not motivating herself more to attend guest speaker lectures as she is fully aware of all the benefits. However, she contributed her low level of engagement to her slightly introverted personality and she thinks that she would be more motivated if guest speakers are better introduced to students by professors prior to the actual event taking place. Interviewee #7 also emphasized the positive outcomes of organized workshops on various topics with outside partners, where he feels he gained long lasting knowledge and he got certificates of participation as well, which he believes is also a potentially strong motivator of attendance. He strongly suggests that RIT Croatia proceeds with organizing even more interactive workshops with outside partners in the future.

Benefits of Attending College Related Events

When asked about the benefits of being engaged in college related events, all interviewees consider that meeting peers from other sections and year levels is a great benefit. Three out of eight interviewees mentioned that attending events positively contributes to a family-like atmosphere at RIT Croatia. Interviewee #3 commented “through these relationships that are formed outside the classroom, I am gaining friends for life, who might very well be my business partners in the future. I believe this is very significant because if I get to know them well during studying years, I will be better prepared to opportunities that the future brings”. Spending time with professors outside of classroom is considered to be a benefit to all interviewees as well, and it was among first things mentioned by all participants.

Networking with business representatives is stated as a benefit of attending college related events by seven out of eight interviewees. Interviewees #2, #3 and #4, all mentioned Career Education Day as the best example of how events give them business networking opportunities, which might be beneficial for their future careers.

Four out of eight interviewees also stressed the benefits of being in interaction with Alumni through various events. They understand the importance of connectivity and they see how older generations stick together, which makes them appreciate the sense of belonging to an institution even more. Interview #8 said that Alumni Association at RIT Croatia is definitely “light years ahead of other universities in Croatia”.

Three out of eight interviewees mentioned that for them it is very important to get the experience of volunteering in various types of events. Interviewee #3 emphasized that for her the connection with the local community is very important and that she would like to see more events in cooperation with local community. She sees this connection with local community as

beneficial to her because she is not from Dubrovnik and she feels more connected with Dubrovnik through these types of events.

Interviews #4 and #8 believe that attending college related events are beneficial to them because they have the opportunity to develop better communication and interpersonal skills on various levels. They perceive this as important because it enhances general maturing process in communication and it helps them to understand the importance of being engaged for gaining long term benefits both personally and professionally.

Current and Desirable Offer of College Related Events

Six out of eight interviewees think that the current offer of college related events at RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus is very good in general. Five out of eight interviewees compared it to other institutions of higher education and they think it is on a much higher level than at any other university in Croatia and the immediate region. Three out of eight students think that the events are well distributed throughout the entire academic year. However, six out of eight students think that the offer should be diversified on yearly basis to avoid repetitiveness which can demotivate student level of engagement.

Interviewee #4 thinks that the offer is just fine as it is, and that there should be no more events because there is something for everyone's taste, whereas interviewee #5 thinks the offer is boring, repetitive, and that some events are not at the highest level. For example, she believes that Career Education Day either does not have very good company representatives, or the companies are not well presented to students in order to get their attention.

Four out of eight interviews said that student clubs should be more active and that there should be more sports activities organized for students, where they can be physically active and socialize at the same time. Interviewee #3 commented that she is very surprised by the fact that

for an American institution, there are so few active student clubs. She also commented that the process of opening up a student club is lengthy and complicated; she initiated the activation of a tennis club, but by the time she got approval over budget and where they could actually find place to play, she got demotivated and frustrated.

Interviewee #7 said the atmosphere at some events could be better, especially when it comes to communication between freshmen students and professors. He said that the Croatian and regional mindset creates a barrier related to free communication between professors and students, so professors should encourage newly coming students to break down those barriers as soon as possible and to learn how to communicate more openly.

Interviewee #2 made a point by stating that not all events create the same level of interest and that different personalities are attracted to different events. Three out of eight students also commented that the hectic night life is not appealing to their personalities, and therefore they prefer events that are organized in settings that provide opportunities for a quieter, two-way communication and exchanging of ideas, as oppose to partying.

Interviewees #5, #6 and #7 commented that RIT Croatia should maybe organize more events with other Dubrovnik based universities to gain more diversity. Interviewee #5 made a remark that the student body of RIT Croatia is relatively small and meeting the same people on daily basis on campus, and then meeting the same people on events can get boring and demotivating. This is why she would like to see more joint events for the purpose of meeting new people.

Interviewees # 2 and #5 also commented that if the events are somewhat the same every year, at least the venue could be changed from time to time; there were several examples of increased attendance solely due to the fact that an event is held at another venue.

Interviewee #3 also made a comment on the possible impact of timing when it comes to level of engagement. She stated that the majority of events are organized during the weekends which might interfere with personal plans students have, which might involve traveling home, studying or simply resting.

Importance of Influencers in Motivating Students to Attend College Related Events

Importance of influencers among peers was mentioned by five out of eight interviewees, which makes it a very significant factor when it comes to attending college related events. As per interviewees, influencers are strong individuals whose opinion matters to other students. Influencers influence the decisions their peers make with their personal attitudes about events offered and benefits of attending. Interviewees #5 and #6 especially emphasized that they are motivated by their friends to attend. Interview #5 mentioned in several occasions that the so called *crowd mentality* plays the key role in her decision to attend events by saying “if my gang is coming then I’m coming, if not, then no way”.

Interviewee #8 said that events should be promoted by influencers among students and that would greatly contribute to the increase of motivation to attend college related events. Interviewees #3, #8 and #5 said that Student Government members should be more active in becoming influencers. If not all, then they should identify some among themselves who would be willing and able to motivate the student body to attend events. According to interviewee #3, influencers can make a difference in promoting events by being well connected, enthusiastic, accepted by peers and engaged in showcasing the benefits of attending events. Interviewee #8 is an active member of Student Government for three years and he has been actively promoting events among students throughout this entire period. From his experience, this kind of approach is the most effective one as the word of mouth goes a long way, especially in a small community.

He believes that every incoming generation should have some students who will be identified as willing and able to be influencers. On the other hand, he thinks that there are a lot of negative influencers as well, and those are students who have a passive aggressive approach and are looking down on everything. He calls them “complainers” and perceives them as persons who are not satisfied with anything, but are not likely to take any action in order to improve their own experience of college. He believes these kinds of personalities might have a severe negative impact on other students, especially if there are a lot of them in the same generation.

Attending Events in Relation to Sense of Belonging to College

All interviewees associate attending college related events with having a stronger sense of belonging as they fully understand the correlation. Yet, they all have their own individual perceptions and personal interpretations of the intensity of their sense of belonging.

Interviewees #2 and #8 think that a sense of belonging to an institution of higher education is not so rooted in Croatian culture, as opposed to the American culture. Interviewee #2 says that often time’s people feel embarrassed when forced into situations where they have to demonstrate that sense of belonging at certain events. Interviewee #8 thinks that the sense of belonging to an institution can be nurtured gradually and he personally feels an extremely strong sense of belonging that increased gradually throughout the years. Attending college related events enhanced his sense of belonging and pride greatly.

To four out of eight interviewees the sense of belonging increased over time through being exposed to a positive atmosphere and interaction with peers and professors, which increased their sense of togetherness. Interviewee #7 felt the same strong sense of belonging from the first day he became an RIT Croatia student. He feels like part of a family and he is looking forward to spending the remaining two years of studying while being equally heavily

involved in all aspects of student life. In addition to overall student life at RIT Croatia, the strong branding of RIT contributed to the maximum sense of belonging to Interviewee #8, and he feels that the constant visual presence of RIT is important and it enhances his feeling of belonging not only to RIT Croatia but to RIT as well. Interviewee #3 thinks that networking and connection with Alumni contributes greatly to her sense of belonging. She said that she likes Dubrovnik as a city, but she would be willing to go study elsewhere; however it would be ideal to bring RIT Croatia with her anywhere she goes, that's how strongly she is connected to the institution. Interviewee #4 shares a similar opinion, and she thinks that attending events is closely connected with the increased sense of belonging that she has, she feels as she is a part of a big and relevant institution, especially when events connect all campuses.

Student #5 on the other hand commented that she is not the kind of personality that can be fascinated by a sense of belonging to an institution; she is more of an introvert and a strong individualist. She goes to events because of her friends and not because it is organized by RIT Croatia. However, she does feel a strong level of engagement when she is in a situation where she needs to defend RIT Croatia from some outsiders who perceive it as not worthy in comparison to state universities. Otherwise, she is very critical over internal quality and in her opinion, the events are not at the top of her list for suggesting improvements as there are other priorities.

Interviewee #8 also mentioned that the strongest reaction when it comes to belonging and defending his choice of studying comes when someone outside of RIT Croatia community comments something like: "that college is just something that you pay for and pass without any effort".

Geographic Origin of Students in Relation to Sense of Belonging to College

During the interviews, the importance of geographic origin of students emerged as an important theme. Four out of the eight interviewees commented that if the majority of students who belong to one generation are from Dubrovnik, they tend to be more focused on their local nucleus rather than on integration with new friends at RIT Croatia. Consequently, local students tend to be less engaged in college related events.

Interviewee #5 noticed that students from Dubrovnik have the tendency to stick together and even if they do attend events they remain a closed group. She is a junior year student and her generation has a lot of students from Dubrovnik. Interviewee #8, who is from Dubrovnik and also a junior, noticed that Dubrovnik students are often separated, not very receptive of others, and disengaged, with a weak sense of belonging to RIT Croatia. He thinks that there is very little RIT Croatia can do to further motivate local students to be more engaged in college related events with the purpose of utilizing resources and creating a sense of belonging. The reasons he states have to do with Dubrovnik being a small and closed community, with somewhat narrow-minded mindsets of being self-sustainable. He believes that local students should be motivated to be engaged from day one, and that RIT Croatia should educate them and demonstrate the benefits and fun aspects of being active in events.

Interviewee # 6, who is from Dubrovnik, stated that he is balancing his local friend and private life with the RIT Croatia friends well, and that he is well integrated on both fronts; however he is sometimes torn between the two groups when he needs to make a decision on what event to attend.

Interviewee #3, who is not from Dubrovnik, thinks that all students who are not from the local community have one thing in common – they are outsiders – and this brings them closer together. Events organized by college enable them to be even closer.

Changes in Level of Engagement Through Year Levels

The level of engagement in college related events is changing and evolving over years. Three out of eight interviewees stated that their level of engagement varied throughout the years of studying; they tended to be more engaged with getting more mature. As they became more engaged they got to know more people and started to feel more confident and outgoing.

Interviewee #4 said that on her freshman year she attended events predominantly due to extra points, whereas now she attends events for herself, as she understands the importance and benefits, and she wants to take advantage of everything that is offered.

Interviewees #2, #3 and #7 are equally engaged from day one as they were always fully aware of positive outcomes, whereas interviewee #5 said that her level of engagement decreased from her freshman to her junior year. This is partially due to her personality, and she also commented that once she got to know everyone she did not feel motivated enough to continue to attend the same events over and over again. She said that her level of engagement started to decrease progressively at her sophomore year. Although her generation and her crowd are passive when it comes to college related events, they never discussed reasons why they no longer attend events.

RIT Croatia Communication Channels as Motivators of Engagement in College Related Events

When asked about RIT Croatia's communication channels in relation to level of engagement in college related events, all eight interviewees said that there is room for improvement. Seven out of eight interviewees had a strong opinion over "All Users" e-mails, stating that they are bombarded with loads of e-mails from various departments on daily basis, and only one interviewee, #6, said he has no issues with receiving that many e-mails.

Interviewees #3 and #4 stated that e-mails are too detailed and too long, which discourages them to read them all. Sometimes they either skip entire e-mails or they just skim through without really paying much attention. Interviewee #3 thinks that e-mails should serve as a backup option for notifying students on events. Interviewee #8 thinks that promoting events through e-mails is counter effective as students might think events are boring and stuck up.

Seven out of eight students had strong positive feelings about promoting events through in-person communication. They think that in-class promotion of events shows more credibility and presents events in a more personable, effective and interesting way. Six out of eight interviewees agreed that sharing personal experience from previous events, and showcasing of benefits of attending would have a big impact on attendance, as oppose to distanced e-mail or social media communication. Interviewee #8 emphasized that events should be presented by their peers (influencers) who can communicate the right message and share their own experiences which might be appealing to students and he connected this again with positive outcomes of word of mouth among peers. Four out of eight students underlined the importance of professors in conveying messages as they perceive professors to be credible and worthy of following. Interviewee #6 thinks that professors have the opportunity to educate students on the importance of attending events. Four out of eight interviewees also pointed out that RIT Croatia should ask for students' input on the offer of events for the future.

When it comes to visuals in the building, interviewees # 3, #7 and #8 think that posters used for promoting events should be more eye-catching. Three out of eight students said that they hardly use RIT Croatia's main web site, except for getting some important documents. Facebook is more important as a mean of communication. Interviewee #7 stated that Student

Government should get more funding to promote events and positive outcomes for students to increase level of understanding of “what’s in it for me”.

Social Media Impact on Students Attendance in College Related Events

Being that having a presence on social media is inevitable when communicating with members of Generation Z, it is important to understand how they perceive existing RIT Croatia communication on social media and what would they like to see more of. Although all interviewees use social media, the research showed that not all of them have the same level of engagement or same expectations from social media interaction.

Interviewee #1 indicated that he does not use Facebook or any other social media platform as the main communication channel. Therefore, he said that RIT Croatia Facebook page means nothing to him in relation to being informed. Interviewee #4, on the other hand, said that she primarily relies at RIT Croatia’s Facebook and Instagram page for information. She is constantly present on social media, but at the same time she would not like to be bombarded with lots of notifications related to RIT Croatia. She thinks that the Facebook page is just fine, but the Instagram account could be better utilized because a lot of young people spend the majority of their time on Instagram, therefore she thinks RIT Croatia should focus more on that specific social media platform . Interviewee #7 believes that the main Facebook page is generic, concentrated solely on the outside stakeholders, and with very little or non-existing interaction with current students. He thinks that should be changed and suggests the use of fun, interactive contests and games with prizes to attract more likes, to keep students engaged and to motivate them to attend events. Interviewees #2, # 3, #7 and #8 also suggest the use of more short and fun videos, as that is the most popular way of promoting on Facebook nowadays. Interviewee #7 also thinks that the Instagram account is underutilized and should be used more in promoting RIT

Croatia student life. Four out of eight interviewees don't pay much attention to RIT Croatia's main Facebook page.

Interviewees #2, #7, #8 and #4 think that creating a separate Facebook page that is dedicated solely to RIT Croatia events might attract more people and get more likes. Interviewee #2 and #7 suggest creating an internal campaign for gaining more likes once this separate group is opened on Facebook. This would ensure that all students who have liked the page get notifications about upcoming events. Internal campaign should be supported by influencers, which again goes back to the importance of in-person communication.

Discussion

The aim of this qualitative, exploratory study was to investigate the motivation of students to be engaged in college related events, as well as students' perception of the sense of belonging to RIT Croatia and their standpoints on how the institution communicates with them internally to enhance their level of engagement.

With the analysis of the data collected, the researcher discovered that some standpoints are in line with the literature that is already published on the topic of student engagement and their sense of belonging to an institution. A good example of conclusion supported by previous research is that all interviewees agree that being engaged in college related events increases their sense of belonging to the institution of higher education as well as their positive experience of student life (Freeman, Andreman & Jensen, 2007). Moreover, the data analysis indicated that all interviewees are aware of the multiple benefits of being active and of taking advantage of various opportunities (Walsh, 2009). Being connected with their peers and getting to know their environment better is also something that is recognized as important by interviewees, which goes

in line with what was written by Strayhorn (2012). These opportunities help students to develop their communication skills and to gain more self-confidence.

What was also interesting from the analysis is the fact that all interviewees mentioned that they greatly appreciate the opportunity to socialize with the professors in a relaxing and positive atmosphere at college events; they perceive this as a very important benefit and something that rarely can be found in Croatian universities. A relaxed and friendly atmosphere is also one of the main motivators of being engaged in events for all interviewees, as it contributes to their sense of belonging which encourages them to keep attending the events. Another factor that was very interesting is the fact that several interviewees mentioned the impact of the “crowd mentality”, meaning that their decision of whether to attend events greatly depends whether other members of their immediate friends circle are attending or not. This is a good indicator of the importance of influencers among peers, which was also mentioned by five interviewees.

When it comes to some main characteristics of Generation Z and their preferred means of communication, six out of eight interviewees stated that the use social media a lot, but are not satisfied with the inert and dry way RIT Croatia is communicating with them via social media. Four interviewees suggested a more interactive, two-way communication with students as main stakeholders, which goes in line with the previous literature that indicated the importance of having a lively online community environment that would allow multidimensional communication between students, faculty and staff (Annala, Mákinen, Svárd, et al., 2012). During the interviews, four interviewees mentioned the need for having a separate RIT Croatia Events Facebook page, and to motivate attendance by creating fun and engaging visual stimuli that would be appealing to newer generations. However, during the interviews one very interesting and unexpected factor emerged, and that is the highly positive impact of in person

communication when it comes to promoting college related events. Although the interviewees belong to Generation Z, the digital generation, for some reason seven out of eight strongly suggested that in person communication in class is greatly appreciated, and if supported by sharing personal experience, it can reach more people and motivate them to attend. The in-person communication can be done by peers and by professor, as they perceive professors as important influencers who can be very successful in demonstrating the benefits of attending events. This particular finding is very interesting and it should definitely be further explored. Further exploration might show the connection with the fact that newer generations are bombarded with visual stimuli via social media, and if they belong to a small and well connected community, maybe they are more appreciative of the in-person communication as something that is opposite to what they are exposed to via social media.

Another interesting finding is aligned with the literature review as well: the difference between how Croatian students and US students perceive and demonstrate their sense of belonging to the university of their choice. Two interviewees made interesting remarks about Croatians being more restrained and not used to showcasing their sense of belonging, which probably has to do with the fact that students in Croatia are not used to being treated as the main stakeholders, unlike US students (Baetson & Taylor, 2004). The mentioned cultural differences are a good segway into the next interesting finding which has to do with the impact of the geographic origin of the students on the level of engagement and sense of belonging to RIT Croatia. This particular factor was expected to arise during the interviews, and it was mentioned by four interviewees. If a critical number of students at a certain generation come from Dubrovnik and the immediate surroundings, then that generation tends to be less involved in college related events and they tend to have less connection with the institution. Those students

tend to leave classes and go back to their local nucleus, without making an effort to establish more in depth contacts with their peers or the institution in general. On the other hand, if a certain enrolled generation has less students from Dubrovnik and immediate region, and more coming from other parts of Croatia and the world, there are indicators that those students might tend to gravitate more towards establishing new relationships and getting that feeling as if they belong, and college related events might serve that purpose. This particular finding should be further explored.

Another important finding is the need for diversifying the offer of college related events. This was underlined by the six out of eight interviewees, even by the ones who have a very positive opinion on the general offer, but they do think things should change to create more interest. This factor should be seriously taken into consideration by RIT Croatia if they would like to increase the level of engagement of students in college related events. Generation Z looks for constant change in the way they are entertained and engaged and there should be more efforts to satisfy their needs being that they are the main stakeholders of RIT Croatia Dubrovnik campus.

Extra points for attending events, given by professors in certain courses, were indicated as a motivator to half of the interviewees, but not as the main factor and not to majority of them. Half of interviewees indicated food and beverage as a very good motivator of attendance, and four of them stated that having more sports activities and interactive fun games would enhance the level of engagement and further strengthen the relationships between students, professors and staff.

The analyses showed that for many of the interviewees, the level of engagement changes with years as they mature and begin to understand the benefits of attending. Also, not all students

have the same personalities; some prefer to stay low and not be fully engaged, whereas others might be demotivated by the offer, or some other issues at the college, and get less involved during the years. Personalities also have a big influence over choosing to attend certain events. Some students prefer low key events and choose to attend only those events where they could engage in quiet conversations with peers, professors, business representatives or Alumni for the purpose of benefiting personally and from a professional standpoint, whereas others are more focused on socialization with peers and having fun. All interviewees however, fully comprehended the importance of business networking, but some take advantage of networking during events, whereas others didn't, which again has to do with different personalities and levels of ambition. Some interviewees emphasized that their strongest sense of belonging comes when they need to defend their choice of studying from the outsiders, and this shows a very interesting dynamics of current students still encountering the stigma of private higher education that is existing in Croatia.

Recommendation for Future Studies

This study was limited with numbers of interviewees and focused only on one undergraduate program at RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus. For further research it would be beneficial to include students from the Web and Mobile Computing program, who might have a different standpoint on this topic.

Moreover, the interesting finding about the positive impact of in person communication and influencers when it comes to promoting college related events might be an interesting topic for further research, especially due to the fact that it came from members of Generation Z, who are perceived as a digital generation. The possible explanation for this occurrence is that there is an overload of social media messages, which created a possible need for a change in preferred

communication style with Generation Z currently enrolled at RIT Croatia. This might also be influenced by the fact that RIT Croatia is a small campus, and nurturing a sense of community and family like atmosphere is encouraged at all levels of communication, which in return potentially creates a need for going back to more in-person communication.

Another interesting topic for further research might be the impact of whether students are attending college in their hometown or not, as this might potentially impact the level of engagement in college related events and students' sense of belonging.

Conclusion

When it comes to students of the International Hospitality and Service Management program at RIT Croatia's Dubrovnik campus, it is very important to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding regarding their behavioral habits and expectations when it comes to attending college related events. Sophomore and junior year students belong to the Generation Z and RIT Croatia should look into adapting the offer of college related events to fit the needs of the most prevalent generations on campus. By responding to their needs and suggestions, RIT Croatia will positively impact the students' level of engagement in student life.

Moreover, the new ways of communicating with those students should be identified with the purpose of increasing their sense of belonging to the college. After looking into what are their preferred communication styles, RIT Croatia has a chance to adapt and anticipate instead of being reactive to the lack of interest students sometimes demonstrate.

By motivating students to be more engaged and to understand the benefits of participating in all segments of student life, RIT Croatia would also benefit, as the new generations of students would consequently be more closely connected within RIT Croatia community. The sense of belonging nurtured through student engagement continues even upon

graduation, which is also beneficial to RIT Croatia, as graduates who leave the college with a sense of belonging and satisfaction are likely to promote RIT Croatia to new generations of incoming students.

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Appendix A

Interview questions:

- 1. What is your opinion on the offer of college related events at RIT Croatia?**
 - a) What do you think about their quantity, quality and organization?
 - b) What do you think about the atmosphere at college related events?
- 2. What college related events do you attend and why?**
 - a) How does attending of these events make you feel?
 - b) What are the reasons that you are choosing these specific events?
- 3. What college related events you choose not to attend and why?**
 - a) What would encourage you to attend these events, if anything?
- 4. Please describe your level of engagement in college related events in comparison to your first (and second) year of studying?**
 - a) What impacted the change in level of engagement?
- 5. How would you enhance the level of engagement of students in college related events?**
- 6. What would you like to see more of when it comes to college related events at RIT Croatia? Why would these proposed new events be beneficial to students?**
- 7. What is your opinion about your sense of belonging to RIT Croatia community? What kind of role do you think college related events play in enhancement of your sense of belonging to RIT Croatia community?**
- 8. In your opinion, what are the benefits of participating in college related events at RIT Croatia, both personally and professionally?**
 - a) What are the benefits when it comes to your current perception of student life?
 - b) How would this benefit you for your future?
- 9. What do you think about the internal communication between RIT Croatia and students when it comes to promoting engagement in college related events?**
- 10. What communication channels do you consider the most useful when it comes to reaching to RIT Croatia students to promote college related events and why?**
- 11. In your opinion, what should RIT Croatia do in order to further improve internal communication with the purpose of increasing student engagement in college related events?**

Appendix B

Themes	Codes
Motivators of Attending College Related Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialization with peers • Socialization with professors • Approachability of the Dean • Relaxed atmosphere • Less formal • Positive, family like atmosphere • Food and beverage • Extra points • Guest speakers • Workshops
Benefits from Attending College Related Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating relationships with peers • Getting to know professors • Networking with business representatives • Networking with Alumni • Experience of volunteering • Getting closer to local community • Developing better communication skills • Build confidence
Current and Desirable Offer of College Related Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good in general • Need more diversity • More sports activities • To be less repetitive • Well spread out throughout the year • Student clubs should be more active

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all students have same preferences when it comes to events • More events with other Dubrovnik universities • Venues should be changed • Timing of events
<p>Importance of Influencers in Motivating students to Attend College Related Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated by friends to attend • Crowd mentality • Communicative influencers should interact with others to promote • Professors should serve as influencers as well
<p>Attending Events in Relation to Sense of Belonging to College</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The more they go the stronger the connection is • Sense of belonging to university not a part of Croatian culture • People feel embarrassed to express sense of belonging • Depends on personality • Strongest reaction when they need to defend their choice from outsiders
<p>Geographic Origin of Students in Relation to Sense of Belonging to College</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority from Dubrovnik • They go home, to their local friends • They do not attend as many events • They look down on being identified with the institution • Students from outside Dubrovnik are more integrated and connected

<p>Changes in Level of Engagement Throughout the Year Levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of engagement the same from day one, very high level • Level of engagement increased with maturity and understanding of benefits • Level of engagement decreased due to lack of diversity and other disappointments
<p>RIT Croatia Communication Channels as Motivators of Engagement in College Related Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web site – used just to get some documents • E-mails excessive, cluttering, no one is reading through • In person communication, in class, preferred and welcomed • Bombarded with info from all departments, overload
<p>Social Media Impact on Students Attendance in College Related Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Facebook page just for outside stakeholders • Suggest separated RIT Croatia FB page – more interactive, fun games, videos • More visual stimuli that is appealing to young people • Internal campaign to promote getting more likes