



## Institutional communication and platformization of organizational identities: an analysis based on the Instagram of a Brazilian Federal Institute of Education

*Comunicação institucional e plataformação de identidades organizacionais: uma análise a partir do Instagram de um Instituto Federal de Educação brasileiro*

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### How to cite:

Thomas, C. S., & Montardo, S. P. (2025). Institutional communication and platformization of organizational identities: an analysis based on the Instagram of a Brazilian Federal Institute of Education. *RAE-IC, Revista de la Asociación Española de Investigación de la Comunicación*, 12(24), raeic122410. <https://doi.org/10.24137/raeic.12.24.10>

**Abstract:**

This article addresses the platformization of organisational identities. It aims to analyse how the organisational identity of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) is exploited in its institutional communication on the Instagram social media platform. The theoretical framework is anchored on studies on platforms (Van Djick et al., 2018), online social media platforms (D'Andrea, 2020), content moderation and social media (Gillespie, 2018), identity (Hall, 2000, 2005; Woodward, 2012), and organisational identity (Morgan, 2011). The research employs a qualitative approach, characterised by an exploratory and descriptive nature, and classified as bibliographic and documentary. The corpus consists of IFRS institutional documents and posts published on the @ifrsofficial Instagram account in 2023. The analytical method is based on Content Analysis (Bardin, 2016). As a result, the analysis of the posts revealed evidence of identity affirmation, corroborated by documents and visually represented in Instagram publication formats, evidencing a platformization of the IFRS's organisational identity. The use of the platform is considered a strategic communication action to disseminate attributes that reinforce the institution's identity.

**Keywords:** organisational identity, Instagram, Federal Institute, social media, platformization.

**Resumo:**

O artigo aborda a plataformação de identidades organizacionais. Objetiva analisar de que forma(s) a identidade organizacional do Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) é explorada em sua comunicação institucional na plataforma de mídia social Instagram. O referencial teórico ancora-se nos estudos sobre plataformas (Van Djick et al., 2018), plataformas on-line de mídias sociais (D'Andrea, 2020); moderação de conteúdo e mídias sociais (Gillespie, 2018); identidade (Hall, 2000, 2005; Woodward, 2012); identidade organizacional (Morgan, 2011). A pesquisa tem abordagem qualitativa, sendo exploratória e descritiva e classificada como bibliográfica e documental. O corpus constitui-se de documentos institucionais do IFRS

e postagens publicadas na conta @ifrsoficial no Instagram no ano de 2023. O método analítico baseia-se na Análise de Conteúdo (Bardin, 2016). Como resultado, a análise das postagens revelou indícios de afirmação identitária, corroborados por documentos, representados visualmente nos formatos de publicação do Instagram, evidenciando uma plataformização da identidade organizacional do IFRS. Considera-se o uso dessa plataforma como uma ação estratégica de comunicação para divulgar atributos que reforçam a identidade da instituição.

**Palavras-chave:** identidade organizacional, Instagram, Instituto Federal, mídias sociais, plataformização.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

An article published in December 2023 by Revista Comunicação Corporativa (Tadeu, 2023), a special publication of the newspaper Valor Econômico, entitled "Social networks become key pieces in communication strategies," indicates that digital platforms are playing an increasingly relevant role in engaging with employees and stakeholders. The article mentions a study by the Brazilian Association of Business Communication (Aberje), which indicates that platforms are currently the most used channels by companies for communicating with the external public and are also among the primary means of communication with employees. According to Aberje, the most popular platforms in the corporate environment are LinkedIn (used by 71% of companies), Instagram (56%), WhatsApp (49%), and YouTube (42%).

In general, the use of these networks has objectives ranging from creating a strong and collaborative organisational culture to expanding the dissemination of products, services, and corporate values, among other purposes. However, as platforms have different characteristics, organisations need to adapt their communication strategies to the particularities of each one and, in some cases, complement them with other channels.

As they provide visibility for the organisation and are accessed by diverse audiences, these platforms have become one of the primary means of communication for public institutions, including educational organisations such as the Brazilian Federal Institutes of Education, Science, and Technology (IFs)<sup>1</sup>. In this context, it is pertinent to expand research analysing the communication process of institutions like the IFs with their audiences through widely used social media platforms, to understand whether this aligns with organisational culture and identity.

This study focuses on the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) and its official profile on the Instagram platform. The research problem is: How does the platformization of the IFRS's organisational identity occur on Instagram? The objective of the study is to analyse how the IFRS's identity is exploited in its institutional communication via Instagram.

This research employs a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, classified as bibliographic and documentary. The corpus consists of Instagram posts, and Content Analysis is the method of data analysis and interpretation (Bardin, 2016). Studies on platforms and platform society (Van Dijck et al., 2018; Poell et al., 2020); online social media platforms (D'Andrea, 2020); content moderation and social media (Gillespie, 2018); identity (Hall, 2000, 2005; Woodward, 2012), organizational identity (Morgan, 2011), and corporate identity (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997) anchor the theoretical framework.

The article is structured as follows: after the introduction, we describe the fundamental concepts and methodology, then present the results, and finally provide the conclusions and references.

## **2. PLATFORMS, PLATFORMIZATION, AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Poell et al (2020, p. 4) define platforms as “(re)programmable digital infrastructures that facilitate and shape personalized interactions between end users and complementors,

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<sup>1</sup> Note to English version. In Brazil, Institutos Federais (Federal Institutes, or IFs) are public, tuition-free institutions fully maintained by the Federal Government. They are dedicated to education, research, and community engagement, offering programmes at various levels. This approach aims to promote both academic development and professional qualification within a single, comprehensive curriculum.

organized through systematic collection, algorithmic processing, monetization, and data circulation,” that is, a programmable digital architecture designed to organize interactions such as consuming, working, studying, socializing, etc., between users, end users, companies, and public agencies.

As a set of interconnected platforms, digital platform ecosystems define their own dynamics and operating mechanisms embedded in their architecture (Van Dijck et al., 2018), constituting all the activities that occur through them. For this reason, platforms are considered mediators and not just intermediaries (Gillespie, 2018). In their studies on the Platform Society, the authors above highlight how platforms like Airbnb, Uber, and Facebook impact public values such as privacy, security, justice, accessibility, and democratic control.

In the West, the Big 5, Google, Apple, Meta (formerly Facebook), Amazon, and Microsoft, are the platforms that dominate online digital services. According to Van Dijck et al (2018), all platforms depend on this group due to the global connectivity, ubiquity, accessibility, and network effects they operate. It is important to say that public or non-profit platforms also depend on the Big 5.

Regarding platformization, Poell et al. (2020, p. 5), who research software studies, business, and political economy, define it as “the penetration of platform infrastructures, economic processes, and governance structures into different economic sectors and spheres of life.” Moreover, based on the tradition of cultural studies, they conceive this process as “the reorganisation of cultural practices and imaginations around platforms.”

Van Djick et al. (2018) further argue that there is a dispute between private gains and public benefit in a society increasingly using the Internet, with digital platforms bringing personalised benefits and economic gains while putting pressure on collective media and public services. Therefore, reflecting on how public organisation identities are constituted through digital social media platform services in their institutional communication is relevant. This process is referred to in this study as the “platformization of organisational identities.”

In this context, we must differentiate between online platforms and social networking sites (SNS). SNS focus on interactional exchanges, while on online platforms, these exchanges are shaped by material, economic, and political aspects of online connectivity (D'Andrea, 2020). According to Van Dijck et al. (2018), Facebook (now Meta) dominates 80% of the SNS market's data traffic, reaching two billion monthly users by integrating Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Instagram, analysed in this study, is a sectoral platform dominated by Meta: "The Instagram Service is one of Meta's Products, provided to you by Meta Platforms, Inc." (Instagram, 2024).

For Bucher (2018), on social media platforms, programmed sociability refers to the condition whereby social media sites shape sociability through algorithms, encouraging user participation in these spaces. Algorithms impose specific conditions for being together online (leading to interaction), allowing platforms to monetise the resulting data through personalised advertising, for example.

In this regard, Van Dijck (2013) states that connectivity on social media platforms represents a quantifiable form of value, making it subject to manipulation by both human and non-human agents, as well as by the platforms themselves. Furthermore, the principle of popularity is understood within these environments primarily in quantitative terms, encompassing indicators such as approval or disapproval, which may be translated into influence, authority, and reputation.

Gillespie (2018) points out that, nowadays, there is so much talk about platforms that it is easy to overlook their continued existence within the broader context of the World Wide Web. Over more than a decade, the diverse interactions with information and people that were once scattered across the web have become concentrated mainly by a limited number of social media platforms controlled by a few major companies. Such platforms are competing for users' attention, but only a small subset in each domain manages to capture the majority of users and public interest.

### **3. ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY: WHO THE ORGANIZATION IS AND HOW IT SEES ITSELF**

Considering the objective of analysing how the organisational identity of the IFRS is explored in institutional communication via Instagram, it is worth revisiting studies on identity, organisational identity, and corporate identity.

One of the leading scholars on the relationship between identity and culture, Hall (2000), indicates that as systems of cultural meaning and representation multiply, they confront a bewildering and changing multiplicity of possible identities, each of which the subject can identify, at least temporarily. Thus, identity is defined historically rather than biologically; the subject assumes different identities at various times, which are not unified around a coherent "self" (Hall, 2005).

Hall (2000) also points out that identity is a social construct imposed on individuals through identification processes that involve creating and excluding the other, or excess: identities are constructed through differences, not outside them. Likewise, Woodward (2012) states that identity is relational and social; it depends on the other and comprises processes of inclusion and exclusion based on perceived differences, which are social markers.

Identity is marked both by differences and by symbols, with an association between the subject's identity and the artefacts they use; thus, "the construction of identity is both symbolic and social" (Woodward, 2012, p. 10). The social and the symbolic refer to two different processes, but both are needed for the construction and maintenance of identities.

Drawing on Hall (2000) and Woodward (2012), we can state that identity emerges historically from the interaction between the individual and society and that people can maintain, modify, or remodel through these relationships. Identity is, therefore, connected to the outcomes of social interaction processes and the social role of the individual or the organisation.

When we apply these concepts to the organisational sphere, we observe that identity relates directly to the organisation's internal vision, the relationships among its

members, their discourses, and their practices. These elements derive their meanings from symbolism, and constructing organisational identity involves using symbols that distinguish one organisation from another.

According to Ravasi (2014), the concept of organisational identity “concerns the beliefs and understandings of members about the most central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics of organisations,” and “culture and cultural heritage are among the most common and powerful references for organisational identity” (Ravasi, 2014, p. 41). In this sense, the author states that one way to analyse an organisation's identity is to distinguish between organisational identity, corporate identity, and organisational identification.

Organisational identity refers to how an organisation is perceived and interpreted internally (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Organisational identity narratives verbally articulate what members consider to be the fundamental, enduring, and distinctive traits and values of the organisation. Corporate identity, on the other hand, refers to how a company communicates itself (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Olins, 1989). It represents the organisational profile resulting from its visual, tangible, and audible expressions. Preferably, organisational identity should verbally articulate the values that corporate identity expresses visually (Rindova & Schultz, 1998); it “should give meaning and consistency to all corporate expressions and communications” (Ravasi, 2014, p. 41). In turn, organisational identification is related to feelings of pride and belonging to an organisational community (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), which explains why people identify with organisations.

According to Ravasi (2014), organisational identity influences identification because people tend to identify more with organisations that share the same values they consider important. Corporate identity, on the other hand, influences identification “as it is linked to unifying symbols that hold people together and make them feel part of a collective entity (e.g., the national flag)” (Ravasi, 2014, p. 43).

In this context, organizational identity refers to how the organization defines and perceives itself, described by Almeida (2008, p. 34) as “the collection of attributes seen

as specific to that organization by its members, not necessarily a common, but [...] maintained by specific groups, which define roles, symbols, policies, rules, and procedures, both formal and informal."

In Morgan's perspective (2011), organisations correspond to small societies that have their own values, rituals, ideologies, cultures, and beliefs. These are highlighted daily to maintain them as rules and improve them according to the organisation's demands. In addition, the process of identity construction is related to the environment in which the organisation operates. It chooses and operates "in environmental fields according to the way in which conceptions of what it is and what it is trying to do are constructed, such as 'being an organization in the computer industry,' 'producing and selling automobiles,' 'being a leader in its field'", acting in relation to these domains through the definitions that are imposed on them, just as "companies in an industry typically develop a language that makes sense to their market, technology, and in relation to other segments that this set of interpretations makes visible" (Morgan, 2011, p. 141).

From this standpoint, it can be inferred that organisations operate in environments based on their conception of identities, that is, what they are or want to be. For example, an educational institution whose vision is "to be a benchmark in education, science, and technology as a public, free, high-quality institution with a social commitment" (IFRS, 2018, p. 44) acts in relation to this aspect through the meanings attributed to it. Thus, these organisations use platforms and languages that resonate with their audiences and relate to the environmental activities in which they operate, namely education.

### 3.1. INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE IFRS

According to Kunsch (2020), in the field of organisational communication in applied terms, which occurs and is processed in all types of institutions and organisations (public, private, and third sector), different modalities permeate its conception and practices; thus, it is called "integrated organisational communication" (Kunsch, 2020, p. 97).

The mix of integrated organisational communication includes administrative, marketing, internal, and institutional communications. The latter is directly responsible for identity

formation, which involves understanding the institution and sharing its attributes such as mission, vision, values, philosophy, and policies. “Institutional communication seeks to build the credibility of the organisation, with the basic proposal of political and social influence and the creation and consolidation of its personality” (Kunsch, 2020, p. 100).

According to Ravasi (2014), the construction of organisational identities is based on claim-making, a term used by Glynn (2000) to describe the process by which social groups attempt to shape public narratives and policies related to memory and identity through discourse, symbolic actions, or political mobilisation. A claim is a statement, narrative, or position regarding what an organisation is, made by the organisation itself, its leaders, spokespersons, or other members of the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996).

In educational organisations, such as schools, universities, and IFs, the processes of constructing institutional identity and memory are permeated by claim-making dynamics (Glynn, 2000). In these symbolic disputes, different groups —managers, teachers, staff, students, and the external community — claim visibility, recognition, and belonging in institutional narratives.

Institutional communication plays a central role in this process, as it gives shape, visibility, and circulation to the aspects that the organisation decides/needs to represent, selecting which memories are celebrated, which values are projected, and which identities are represented. Campaigns, events, graphic materials, and official speeches thus become means by which specific versions of the past and the institutional mission, among other things, are legitimised over others. In this context, online social media gain even more strength, as these platforms are dynamic spaces for symbolic dispute and public visibility.

Federal Law No. 11,892/2008, the milestone of the identity of Federal Institutes, in its Article 6, mentions among the purposes of the IFs that of offering professional and technological education<sup>2</sup> and training, at all levels and in all modalities, training and qualifying citizens with a view to professional activity in various sectors of the economy,

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<sup>2</sup> Note to English version. In Brazil, the term Educação Profissional e Tecnológica (Professional and Technological Education) is equivalent to Vocational Education and Training (VET) used internationally. However, the expression VET is not employed in the Brazilian context.

with an emphasis on local, regional, and national socioeconomic development (Brazil, 2008). Created as a new institutionality in the Brazilian educational environment (Moraes & Kipnis, 2017), the IFs simultaneously carry a century-old history of activity in the field of professional and technological education and training (EPT) because they integrate, in their multicampus structure, existing technical schools, technical colleges, and polytechnic schools. According to Kipnis (2017), IFs have a century-old history of activity in the field of professional and technological education (EPT). They integrate existing technical schools and new institutions into their multi-campus structure, totalling 685 units distributed across the five Brazilian regions (Brazil, 2024).

In this sense, Fernandes and Tabosa (2018, p. 16) indicate the relevance of furthering studies on the understanding of the IF "as an organisation composed of organisations and a better formalisation of the 'networks' that comprise it, with a view to strengthening the identity of these Federal Institutes and the networks that form them." As part of the federal education system and the Federal Network for Professional, Scientific, and Technological Education (RFEPCT), these institutions have an identity predetermined by legislation, which is also shaped by their context of insertion.

The Institutional Development Plan (PDI) is a key reference for guiding the decisions of the IFs. It serves as a guiding document for their activities to fulfil their mission and achieve strategic objectives. The existence of this document is legally required for all IFs and is updated every four years.

According to the IFRS PDI, version for the period 2019-2023, the institution's mission is to offer professional, scientific, and technological education that is inclusive, public, free, and of high quality, promoting the comprehensive training of citizens to face and overcome social, economic, cultural, and environmental inequalities, ensuring the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension, and in line with territorial potentialities and vocations (IFRS, 2018). The document describes that

*the IFs arose from a political intention, resulting from the social and economic context, and were institutionalised through Law No. 11,892 of 2008. The creation of the IFRS brought together educational institutions with a history in professional and technical education (a Federal Centre for Technological Education, a Federal Agrotechnical School,*

*and two schools linked to federal universities), in addition to the creation of new campuses (IFRS, 2018, p. 138).*

The same document states that the institution should use different media, including platforms and social networks, as a means of communicating with its various audiences: “IFRS should ensure the visibility of its actions, both for the external public and for the academic community, through efficient communication, using appropriate websites, social networks, and the various existing communication platforms” (IFRS, 2018, p. 138). Thus, it can be inferred that the use of social media platforms in institutional communication is part of its organisational culture, linked to its identity.

In addition, the use of social media as a communication strategy is provided for in the IFRS Communication Policy, which describes as institutional communication channels (IFRS, 2015, p. 23) “websites, virtual environments on social media, publications (newspapers, magazines, brochures, etc.) and events,” provided that their primary objective is to “interact with strategic audiences.” Furthermore, it indicates that “the coordination of institutional communication is the responsibility of IFRS Communication.”

In this context, social media platforms, within the scope of the Institutes, present themselves as a strategic possibility to expand communication with society. It is assumed that these media allow the institution a certain autonomy to express itself through elements that represent its organisational culture. This highlights its differentials in relation to other organisations, influencing the process of identity formation, affirmation, and credibility with its audiences.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

To analyse how the IFRS leverages its organisational identity on the Instagram platform, the research adopts a qualitative approach and is characterised as exploratory and descriptive. Classified as bibliographic and documentary, it examines publications such as books, dissertations, theses and scientific journals; documents that govern the IFRS's activities, and posts on the Instagram social network. The method of analysis and interpretation of the collected data is based on Content Analysis (Bardin, 2016).

We divided the procedures adopted to investigate the problem and achieve the research objective into stages. The first stage involved examining the IFRS institutional documents available online on the institution's official website ([ifrs.edu.br](http://ifrs.edu.br)). Regarding the documents that guide the IFRS's activities, for this study, we considered the institution's Communication Policy, the 2019-2023 Institutional Development Plan, and the current legislation that guides the functioning of the IFs.

The second stage involved surveying the posts published on the @ifrsoficial Instagram account feed from January to December 2023, the year the institution celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. During this period, there were 98 posts, 26 in reel format and 72 in photo format. From this universe, 35 posts were selected, a number considered sufficiently representative for this analysis. The main selection criterion was the number of interactions (likes) greater than or equal to 1,000, in descending order, starting with the most liked post.

Once identified, the posts most liked by followers were classified into five broad categories, according to theme and institutional content:

- 1) Extension/Community: topics related to Extension activities (international student mobility, sports competitions, events);
- 2) Teaching: related to teaching (promotion of courses, student selection process, practical classes, technical visits);
- 3) Research/Science/Technology: Research, Postgraduate, and Innovation activities (awards, publications, projects);
- 4) Institutional: institutional management activities (interinstitutional meetings, management activities), campus anniversary, EPCT network commemorative dates, tribute to civil servants/professionals;
- 5) Culture/Diversity/Social: references to social issues, dates related to these issues, solidarity actions, cultural and integration events, among others.

Next, aspects of organisational identity represented in the publications of each category were analysed. The following section presents the results of this analysis and how the institution's identity is platformized.

## **5. PLATFORMING OF THE IFRS IDENTITY ON INSTAGRAM: RESULTS**

Instagram is a digital platform owned by Meta Platforms, Inc., launched in 2010 and focused initially on sharing photos via mobile devices (Meta, 2023; Tuten & Solomon, 2020). The services offered and described in its Terms of Use include “all Instagram products, features, apps, services, technologies, and software that we provide to further Instagram’s mission: to strengthen your relationships with the people and things you love” (Instagram, 2024).

Over time, Instagram has evolved into a robust multimedia ecosystem, allowing users to publish various types of content, such as images, short and long videos, live streams, and temporary posts (Ryan, 2016; Van Dijck, 2013). The platform offers multiple posting formats, including Feed, where permanent photos and videos are published; Stories, which consist of ephemeral content that lasts 24 hours; Reels, short videos with strong visual and audio appeal, aimed at quick and dynamic engagement; and Lives, real-time broadcasts that allow direct interaction with the audience (Meta, 2023).

In addition, Instagram offers features such as direct messaging, integrated shopping resources (Instagram Shopping), augmented reality filters, and analytical tools aimed at commercial profiles and content creators (Instagram Creators, 2023). These services make Instagram not only a social network, but also a platform for marketing, entertainment, and digital identity building (Helmond, 2015; Van Dijck, 2013), which favours the dissemination of audiovisual content.

IFRS opened its official Instagram account in January 2015 and had 72,700 followers by December 2024, when the data for this study was collected. As outlined in its Communication Policy (2015), the coordination of institutional communication is the responsibility of IFRS Communication. Thus, the institution's profile on this social media platform is managed by the Rector's Office Communication Department.

The data collection accounted for 98 posts on the @ifrsoficial profile feed, made between January 2 and December 29, 2023. The analysis focused on 35 of them<sup>3</sup>, containing 1,000 or more likes. Of these posts, 30 were identified in photo format and only five in reels (video) format. We observed that 17, almost half, can be categorised as Extension/Community. The remaining can be organised like this: seven in the Institutional category, six in Teaching, three in Research/Science/Technology, and two in Culture/Diversity.

The Extension/Community category contains the majority of the most liked posts of 2023. The first one we analysed, published in March, has the most interactions, totalling 2,456 likes on the date of data collection. In photo format, it features a carousel with three images of a student who was participating in international student mobility in Canada. It is categorized as Extension/Community because internationalization, to which the Institutional Program for International Student Mobility (PIMEI) is linked, is provided for in the IFRS Extension Policy: "Internationalization refers to all efforts by the Institution to incorporate global perspectives into teaching, research, and extension; to build international and intercultural skills among students, teachers, and technicians; to establish partnerships with communities and institutions abroad" (IFRS, 2018, p. 53).

Another post, from April, with 1,035 likes, addresses the same theme in a carousel of photos of students participating in international mobility in Portugal. Thus, these posts explore an aspect directly related to the organisational identity of the IFRS, as determined by the aforementioned document.

The other posts in this category deal with sports: 15 highlight the IFRS Games and the Games of the Federal Institutes of the Southern Region (JIFSul), three in reel format, and the remaining in photo format. One of them, with 2,095 likes and the second most engagement, shows a carousel with images of the IFRS delegation at the opening of JIFSul 2023, held at the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (IFC).

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<sup>3</sup> The posts were collected and saved in November 2024 and are available in a Google Drive file: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GpQiq1VbCpoFz0BPnKfyfp8FkLJC0DKR>

The IFRS Extension Policy aims to "encourage the development of scientific, artistic-cultural, social, and sports programs, involving students, civil servants, and society" (IFRS, 2018, p. 52). The subject is also related to the Teaching Policy:

*In relation to art, culture, and sports, there is an incentive for activities [...] focused on sports, physical activities, and leisure. The sports teams in traditional team sports (soccer, futsal, volleyball, basketball, handball) are noteworthy, as are individual sports such as chess, table tennis, and athletics* (IFRS, 2018, p. 148).

As we can infer, the promotion of sports is part of the IFRS's identity, according to its guiding documents.

The Institutional category, with seven posts among the most liked in 2023, presents content related to commemorative dates, memory preservation, and management actions. Those referring to commemorative dates congratulate *campuses* that celebrated their anniversary on the day or month of the post, thus valuing both the constitution of the network's identity and the context of insertion, as well as the preservation of institutional memory, as stated by the Communication Policy:

*The preservation of the IFRS's institutional memory allows its history and evolution over time to be visualised, contributing to the consolidation of its identity, the understanding of its role in society and in people's lives, and the sense of belonging among its audiences [...]. It also helps preserve part of the history of technical and professional education in the country and the Federal Network of Professional and Technological Education* (IFRS, 2015, p. 59).

The most liked post in this category is a photo, with 1,584 likes. Published in August, it features a carousel with three photographs of the facades/buildings of the Caxias do Sul, Farroupilha, and Osório *campuses*, which celebrated their anniversaries that month. In January, a post congratulating the Erechim Campus received 1,048 likes. In addition, a post from September 23, with 1,174 likes, displays an image of the commemorative stamp for the 15th anniversary of the Federal Institutes. There is also a post alluding to

Teacher's Day on October 15<sup>4</sup>, with a carousel of photos of teachers working in classrooms and laboratories at the IFRS, which received 1,098 likes.

Another post in this category received 1,274 likes, showing a photo of a group of people, rectors of Federal Institutes and Universities in Rio Grande do Sul, including the rector of the IFRS. According to the caption, the group was participating in a meeting at the Ministry of Education (MEC) in Brasília. It brings up a management issue, demonstrating to the public that the institution is involved in interinstitutional partnerships and with its supporting bodies. It represents a feature of the Network's identity, as the IFRS is part of the federal education system and the RFEPCT, linked to the MEC. "By law, the IFRS is a federal agency linked to the MEC, with administrative, patrimonial, financial, didactic-scientific, and disciplinary autonomy." (IFRS, 2018, p. 41).

In the Teaching category, with six posts, two address the IFRS student selection process. One is in photo format, featuring a carousel with images of places and people from the day of the 2024/1 selection process exams. It has 1,900 likes, making it the third most interacted with post of the year. Another reel (video) format received 1,606 likes, featuring images of the IFRS and students, accompanied by audio with a message from the dean.

The selection exam is a primary method for students to enter the institution's regular courses (technical secondary and higher education levels), and its widespread dissemination to society is important. The PDI states in the item Teaching Policies that:

*IFRS, as an institution that is part of the Brazilian public education network, is committed to contributing to the democratisation and expansion of free public education, seeking to ensure equal access conditions. In this sense, the form of admission to regular courses at IFRS is through a public selection process (IFRS, 2018, p.148).*

Another post in the Teaching category features a photo with overlaid text announcing a new undergraduate course at IFRS, Architecture and Urbanism, at the Rio Grande Campus. The publication received 1,704 likes, ranking fifth in terms of interactions.

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<sup>4</sup> Note to English version. In Brazil, since 1963, 15 October is celebrated as Teachers' Day, a date established by decree to recognise the work and importance of teachers in the educational development of the country.

Information about the creation of new courses brings the public closer to another aspect of the organisation's identity. The PDI, in a chapter dedicated to the schedule of courses and vacancies, states that, considering the purposes of the IFs established in Law 11.892/2008,

*the prospect of implementing new courses from 2019 to 2023 should address the need to develop educational pathways that align with the region's needs, as covered by the IFRS campuses. This approach promotes the principle of verticalization of teaching and improves its quality (IFRS, 2018, p. 167).*

In the Research/Science/Technology category, the three posts refer to awards and participation in scientific events. The first one, dated May 23, is in reel format and captures the announcement of the winning project at the Brazil stage of the Stockholm Junior Water Prize, which was awarded to a student from the Osório Campus. The video had 1,631 likes on the date of collection. The post from August 18, in photo format and with 1,446 likes, shows the same student with her advisor, both holding the flags of Brazil and IFRS. According to the caption, they were travelling to Sweden to represent the country in a new stage of the award. Another photo post, with 1,455 likes, features two images side by side, overlaid with text stating that two IFRS students received the "Carolina Bori - Science & Women" Award from the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC).

Regarding the organizational identity of the IFRS, we can note that the guidelines of its Communication Policy define the dissemination of research and innovation: "The Institute recognizes the importance of democratizing scientific knowledge and, as a public institution, is committed to making the results of research and innovation activities carried out internally or in partnership accessible to the community" (IFRS, 2015, p. 50). This document also stipulates that the IFRS communication channels should reserve space for news about research and initiatives focused on innovation, such as partnerships with funding institutions and the productive sector, postgraduate activities, presentations at events, book launches, and publications of articles in scientific journals.

There are also two posts linked to the Culture/Diversity/Social category, both in photo format. The first, published in July with 1,243 likes, features a carousel with ten images of Festas Juninas<sup>5</sup> held at different campuses of the Institute. The hashtag #tbt in the caption serves as a way of remembering these events. As for organizational identity, in this case, the IFRS Teaching Policies focused on student retention and success are recovered: "In relation to art, culture, and sports, there is an incentive for activities that integrate and develop artistic and sports skills among students, whether in music, dance, theater, or visual arts" (IFRS, 2018, p. 148).

The second photo, posted on June 28, International LGBTQIAP+ Pride Day, has 1,126 likes. It shows a person with his back turned, wrapped in a rainbow flag, and overlaid text highlighting the actions of the IFRS that aim to ensure rights and encourage respect for diversity. In the caption, the reader/user is invited to learn about IFRS actions, including the Gender and Sexuality Study and Research Centres (Nepgs), like the social name internal resolution, and other initiatives developed by the campuses and the Rector's Office, as featured in an article published on the institutional website.

In this context, these posts represent aspects inherent to organisational identity, also based on guiding documents. Created by an ordinance established on each campus, the Nepgs "constitute a proactive and consultative sector that stimulates and promotes teaching, research, and extension actions oriented toward the theme of education for gender and sexuality diversity" (IFRS, 2018, p. 400).

Based on the observation of the verbal and visual content and engagement rates of these publications, we can realise that the Extension/Community category is predominant in the posts for the period analysed and accounts for the publications with the most interactions, exploring aspects of the IFRS organisational identity related to the encouragement of sports practices and international student mobility.

IFRS uses the platform to convey aspects of its identity related to Extension, Teaching, and Research, as well as institutional content and topics related to culture, diversity, and

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<sup>5</sup> Note to English version. In Brazil, Festas Juninas (June Festivals) are traditional celebrations held throughout June to honour Catholic saints—especially Saint John, Saint Anthony, and Saint Peter. Marked by folk music, dancing, typical foods, and rural-themed decorations, these festivals celebrate Brazil's cultural heritage and agrarian traditions.

social actions, through visual representations in the formats available on Instagram services (photos, videos, reels). In all the publications examined, we identified content revealing elements that constitute the IFRS identity linked to institutional documents.

Moreover, the posts with the highest engagement rates may indicate which institutional identity traits are most evident or have the most significant impact on the audience. Examples include opportunities for international exchange, illustrated by images of students at foreign institutions; encouragement of sports, shown in photos and reels featuring student participation in local and regional competitions; the admission process for new students, depicted in photos of candidates taking entrance exams; the launch of new courses, represented by images announcing new higher education programmes; the dissemination of scientific knowledge, portrayed through photos and videos of award-winning research presentations; institutional memory, marked by posts celebrating commemorative dates; and representations of Brazilian culture, such as Festas Juninas.

From this perspective, it is understood that institutional communication through online social media platforms such as Instagram not only disseminates messages but also actively participates in the platformization of organizational identities, that is, the adaptation of the organization's communicational and symbolic practices to the technical and commercial logic of these platforms, shaping the identity of institutions, including those in the field of education.

Institutional communication plays a strategic role in selecting, editing, and disseminating content that publicly shapes the organisation's image. Through commemorative posts, visual campaigns, image curation, and engagement management, the institution selects and performs specific values, memories, and belonging, while adjusting to reach metrics and visibility algorithms.

These visual representations (photos, videos, reels) become contemporary ways of representing the past, recovering memories, affirming identities, and legitimising specific versions of institutional history.

Social media, due to its interactive and public nature, amplifies the reach of these representations and exposes the institution to tensions and reactions. Thus, the content communicated is not neutral. It results from editorial choices that reflect disputes over meaning and belonging.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

This study sought to answer how the platformization of the IFRS organisational identity occurs through Instagram. To this end, 35 posts from 2023 on the @ifrsoficial Instagram account feed were analysed.

It was identified that the process of platformizing the organisation's identity occurs through institutional communication, which visually represents elements of organisational and corporate identity in the formats offered by the platform service. The evidence is corroborated by institutional documents, which form the basis of the identity of this educational organisation.

Considering that the posts were produced and published by the IFRS communication department on its official Instagram account, the use of this platform is understood as a strategic institutional action to disseminate traits to its audiences that reinforce the institution's identity.

It is believed that the analysis raises significant reflections on social media platforms and organisational identities. Exploring this theme contributes to existing studies by promoting new discussions that connect identity processes with platformization, as well as research involving educational institutions and digital environments.

## **6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This work was carried out with the support of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS).

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