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Academic Autonomy in the Contemporary University

ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this article is to show changes in the understanding of academic autonomy and the manifestations of its erosion, by appropriating this value to legitimise the increase in managerial autonomy, discrediting the value of community autonomy and increasingly restricting individual academic autonomy.

Methodology: The article is based on a critical analysis of the literature dealing with the reality of the functioning of autonomy in higher education institutions and materials related to the implementation of contemporary higher education reforms - mainly in Poland.

Findings: Changes in the perception of autonomy, threats to institutional and individual autonomy resulting from the uncritical subordination of transformations of higher education to the new public management concept as well as institutional isomorphism are presented.

Value Added: Attention has also been paid to ignoring the critical discourse on the consequences of too-one-sided transformation of higher education institutions, losing key values, whose carrier is community and individual autonomy – both academic teachers, for whom it is a necessary condition for the development of didactic and scientific creativity, as well as students who only in a situation of feeling are able to take responsibility for their own development.

Recommendations: Individual autonomy and participatory management, which determine creative activity and academic entrepreneurship, should be a particular concern for university managers. It is necessary to undertake research on the autonomy of students as members of the academic community.

Key words: academic autonomy, managerial autonomy, academic community, collegiality

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Introduction

Academic autonomy is now again becoming an important subject of research on higher education¹. Much more often, however, this concept appears as a “figure of speech” or a certain – undefined and universally understood feature of university reality, which is most often referred to by two communities: reformers of higher education and organisations representing higher education institutions, and especially those associating rectors of universities and similar institutions of higher education. The reformers, in their campaigns prior to introducing changes, usually argue that reforms are associated with increased autonomy of higher education institutions. In various comments referring, for example, to the new law being prepared in Poland, called the “Constitution for science”, it is highlighted that the proposed changes “Lead

1. The author uses a broad approach to academic autonomy, including both institutional (community and managerial) autonomy and broadly understood individual autonomy of the academic community members.

to an increase in the autonomy of the higher education institution – on the one hand, regulate their relations with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education based on legality as a supervision criterion, and on the other – to strengthen control over the higher school institution by changing the way the university is managed” (Antonowicz et al., 2006, p. 18). Such an opinion can be read as a sort of oxymoron because it is difficult not to notice the logical opposition of the situation of the simultaneous increase in the autonomy of the higher education institutions and imposing changes in the way they are managed.

It is totally clear that we cannot understand the autonomy of higher education institutions in such categories as the autonomy of organisations is defined on the basis of management sciences. As Prof. Z. Martyniak wrote “... Autonomy refers to the structure, principles, and methods of management as well as the directions of development that cannot be imposed by an external institution.” (Martyniak, 2002). In this synthetic definition referring to the management of an organisation achieving its specific goals, the most striking aspect is the lack of reference to the autonomy of the entities forming the organisation. In the case of a university as a knowledge organisation the identity of which is based on creative research and teaching, it is necessary to simultaneously focus attention on the autonomy of the institution and members of the academic community. Freedom in the process of research, teaching, and learning is a key factor in successfully achieving the goals of such an organisation. In the 2015 Higher Education Development Programme, academic freedom of research and institutional autonomy of the university were recognised as its fundamental and inalienable values (Szostak, 2015, p. 13).

Reading the viewpoints in the discussion on the scope of the higher education institution's autonomy shows that the most important seems to be the question of what should be covered by State regulation, and therefore subject to supervision in accordance with the criterion of legality, and what is the domain of the sole decision of a particular institution? This question should now be supplemented with a second one, related to the scope of subordinating higher education institutions to market regulations. Replacing

the postulate of subordinating universities to state regulations by submitting to market regulations is only an apparent increase in autonomy.

Talking about the autonomy of higher education institutions only in the context of universities as an organisation and their relationship with the administrative or market environment, however, shows a shallow reflection and a significant narrowing of the understanding of the academic autonomy concept. In Poland, this is the aftermath of the period of real socialism, when universities were the last bastion of largely limited institutional freedom within public organisations. The defence of this relative freedom was the overarching goal, and all phenomena and processes of self-organisation, self-realisation, and self-reflection – as the natural and fundamental features of the functioning of academic communities - seemed to be safe under the condition of the higher education institution's autonomy. This phenomenon is also noted by the authors cited above, who highlight that the autonomy of institutions and staff autonomy are considered as complementary pillars. Contemporary research shows, however, that at a university organised according to the new public management concept there has been a clear crack between institutional autonomy and individual autonomy.

Research on academic autonomy revived in the late 20th and early 21st centuries also in other corners of the world. In highly developed countries, they were stimulated by a discussion about autonomy in the context of the higher education institution's economic accountability, as well as its social responsibility (Rybkowski, 2015). In countries such as Poland, emerging from authoritarian regimes, they were associated with the hope of accelerating the development of science and education and giving it a new quality (Dee, Henkin, & Hsin-Hwa Chen, 2000). In many developing countries, the discussion on academic autonomy has emerged in the context of virtual university reality (Thorens, 2006).

Traditions of academic autonomy and the scope of understanding it

The first higher education institutions were modelled on self-governing, professional guild organisations, distinguished by specific relationships of masters and students (Sowa, 2009). From the beginning, they had also drawn institutional models from more experienced knowledge organisations – with different university models coexisting: a student university where professors were employed by students (University of Bologna), professor (University of Paris), and university colleges (Leja, 2013). The oldest universities were different than other schools primarily looking at their independence (especially from the Church). This independence was connected with the freedom of teaching and research in the process of implementing the mission of striving to search for the truth.

The study of higher education institution autonomy clearly shows its different understanding, as well as the stress on a different approach to autonomy in different periods of university development. Krzysztof Leja (2013), following the studies by J. Szczepański (1976, pp. 21–22), highlights that autonomy “can be understood as” independence from state authorities in university administration “(formal autonomy),” independence in proclaiming the results of own research and views “(substantive autonomy)” and “as the right to set criteria for assessing social phenomena from the position of superiority and selflessness, as the right to independently select members of a professor’s corporation (moral autonomy)” (Leja, 2013, p. 45). The above author, following the studies by J. Jabłecka (2007, after: Leja, 2013) also cites the notion of academic autonomy including substantive and moral autonomy. What is striking in these approaches is the lack of perspective on autonomy in the context of political and ideological impact on the university as an institution and on researchers, as well as the pressure of the business community on the limitation of freedom of research and education. Generally, what is striking in the research on academic autonomy is also the favouring of one

social group of the higher education institution - the academic staff, and the omission of students who are full members of the academic community. In recent years, research on the autonomy of the higher education institutions has been increasingly considered in the context of new public management in the context of accountability and responsibility of public organisations. R. Rybkowski, looking at the shortcomings of Polish solutions treating autonomy and accountability separately, writes: "Freedom of operation of higher education institutions is not absolute freedom and is subject to the assessment whether the higher education institution really serves the state and society, or just wastes public money" (Rybkowski, 2015, p. 97). In the context of the distinction in terms of the approaches to autonomy discussed above, it is worth noting that in the period of development of the liberal university a large range of academic freedoms had existed at the Humboldt university since the beginning of the 19th century, with limited autonomy at the institutional level (Leja, 2013). This model was transferred to Poland after the World War I, which was reflected in the freedom of scholars in conducting research, "in the absence of demand from the state for work useful for the country" (Leja, 2013, p. 46). The distancing of the state from conducting science and higher education policy was also visible. After World War II, the autonomy of the higher education institution was, until 1958 (and again in 1968), increasingly limited. It had only been possible to speak of greater independence since 1982, when the law stipulated that "universities are self-governing communities of academic teachers, students, and other school employees ... and are guided by the principles of freedom of science and art." (Leja, 2013, p. 46).

The landmark year for the development of academic autonomy was 1990, when the principle of academic freedom was particularly articulated in the new law. The next stages of reforms (2005, 2011, 2014) resulted in deepening the autonomy of the higher education institution as a public institution, while limiting at the same time the function of collective bodies and introducing external stakeholders (from the economic and social sector) to the advisory and supervision bodies of the higher school institutions. Changes in the last

period clearly indicate a qualitative difference in the meaning of autonomy compared to earlier periods of higher education institution development.

Academic autonomy is a constitutive feature of the university's identity as an organisation. The first authors of the definition of the identity of an organisation based on management sciences, S. Albert and D.A. Whetten (1985, after: M.J. Hatch, M. Schultz, 2010), associated it with the features of the organisation, which its members considered crucial for their organisation, the features that distinguish their organisation from others and were permanent and unchanging over time. Referring this definition to the higher education institution's identity, we can see that both the historical durability of autonomy as a university feature as well as the specificity of its character and vitality in the face of modern transformation, leaves no doubt as to the importance of higher education institution's autonomy for understanding its identity.

Academic autonomy is the freedom of the higher education institution as an institution guaranteeing the freedom of members of the academic community – above all academic teachers and students – as regards the scope of implemented organisational goals, mainly research and education. The higher education institution's identity is based on coupling the freedom of research and education of this community's members with the independence of the university's functioning as an institution. Meanwhile, many studies show that the autonomy of institutions and the autonomy of human resources not only have now separated, but even a negative relationship between the autonomy of institutions and the autonomy of staff is described even in many countries. Dee, J. R., Henkin, A. B., Hsin-Hwa Chen, when analysing contemporary transformations of higher education institutions, note that "As institutions, universities have greater autonomy, while their academic members are able to manage their professional life to a lesser degree" (Dee, Henkin, & Hsin-Hwa Chen, 2000, p. 203). These authors, based on the original research of 22 higher education institutions in Taiwan, found that the autonomy of institutions and staff autonomy are more closely linked at general universities and teacher training colleges than at technical

universities. They also documented the existence of a positive correlation between the level of staff autonomy and the existence of participatory decision-making processes and higher education institution innovation, as well as the frequency of initiatives undertaken by employees (Dee, Henkin, & Hsin-Hwa Chen, 2000, p. 215).

Conditions and pressure limiting academic autonomy and the way it is perceived

From the beginning of their existence, higher education institutions had had specific relationships with the political environment. Both rulers and various social environments (mainly the middle class) associated with their formation and development specific expectations regarding social, economic, and political utility. King Władysław Jagiełło expected that the renewal of the Krakow Academy would, *inter alia*, “contribute to removing the deficiencies of the Kingdom of Poland, contribute to its equalisation with other states” (Baszkiewicz, 1997, p. 31). In contemporary times, however, the nature of these relations with the community is that of strong pressure: political – with a neoliberal, economic orientation and institutional isomorphism, which, combined with technological changes, have changed the understanding of the higher education institution’s identity, and thus the determinants of higher education institution’s autonomy.

Political pressure results from the fact that science, innovation, and higher education have become today one of the most important factors in building the competitive advantage of states and regions. Hence the expectations of measurable achievements, expressed as positions in scientific, educational, or innovation rankings. According to Mats Alvesson, higher education is now credited with the role of building national greatness; being a leading country in worldwide educational rankings is treated as evidence of global economic leadership (Alvesson, 2013). With the increasing pressure on higher education to position the country in global competition, the traditional role

of the higher education institution as a community conducive to intellectual development is losing its importance. As M. Alvesson rightly notes, Critical thinking, the ability to abstract reasoning and reflection, and the ability to communicate – are the traditional ideals of education, and these clearly go beyond improving their position for status related purposes in competition with others and at the expense of others” (2013, p. 93).

A postulate for greater autonomy of higher education institutions also accords with this narrative in which higher education institutions become a tool for positioning the economy. It appears today in the context of looking for ways to increase the reactivity of schools to changes occurring in the external environment. Their effect is the growing differentiation of the requirements for higher education institutions. JR. Dee, AB. Henkin & J. Hsih-Hwa Chen highlight that autonomous institutions are able to respond more flexibly and vividly to changes (2000, p. 203).

The imperialist ambitions of political authorities (striving to build their influence, emphasising the importance and position of the country) materialise in the regulatory sphere. According to M. Geppert & G. Hollinshead (2017), subjecting the higher education system to the requirements of economic and political systems restricts the autonomy of research and teaching. At the same time, it is expected that the position of national science (and also individual higher education institutions) will increase without increasing real investment, only by introducing the principles of free competition. An important role in the implementation of these principles is played by various intermediary organisations: research funding agencies, academic exchange agencies, and above all the evaluation system, which has become a tool for rationalising funding and strengthening competitiveness, rather than supporting units and institutions, and organisational learning – which in fact is what evaluation should be (Prawelska-Skrzypek, 2017).

Theoretically, these regulations build a culture of responsibility – both academics and institutions are responsible for the results. This rhetoric appears to be rational and convincing, but in fact it is imposing performance

indicators that are easy to measure and control, rather than those that reflect the value of actions. This approach has specific substantive consequences, e.g. stiffening the directions of research due to disregarding the emergent nature of research processes - especially in experimental sciences, and also enforces significant changes associated with managing higher education and individual higher education institutions. The thesis on the emergent development of science was already raised in 1951 by M. Polanyi (as cited by: Zmysłony, 2011, p. 156) as an argument against external / central planning in education. In his opinion, "there is no institution capable of predicting the direction in which science can develop further, except for its most trivial aspects". Michał Zawadzki speaks in a similar way, showing that the currently desirable and promoted model of the university as an organisation "in which the knowledge creation process is to be subordinated to the needs of an external customer, can lead to reducing its intervention and critical potential, necessary to initiate positive changes in the environment, including at market level" (Zawadzki, 2014, pp. 130–131).

The transformation of higher education institutions in the neoliberal spirit is progressing on a global scale. These changes have also included the Polish higher education system, which since the mid-1990s has become more and more similar to the system functioning in highly developed countries. Equating requirements for Polish scientists and scientific institutions on the part of public institutions financing higher education, with the requirements for scientists and institutions abroad undoubtedly stimulates a change in behaviour of both academics and higher education institutions. These requirements are a kind of pressure encapsulated by formal standards and procedures. Clarity and transparency of requirements, especially the relative stability of evaluation principles, on the one hand, makes it easier for Polish scientists and scientific institutions to appear in world science – visibility. On the other hand, however, it is a significant limitation of autonomy – which has specific consequences for the development of both academic education and science, and also radically changes the academic culture.

In the documents of the EUA (European University Association), as well as in numerous statements of the rectors of Polish higher education institutions (for example, on the occasion of the current work on the new regulation), attention is primarily drawn to the threats to institutional autonomy resulting from the range of administrative pressure. According to the EUA the autonomy of higher education institutions is “the ability of universities to decide on internal organisation and shaping the internal decision-making process” (European University Association, 2012). The Chairman of the General Council for Higher Education and Science, Prof. Jerzy Woźnicki in October 2017 saying that “From the point of view of autonomy, an academic institution must retain the right to appoint the institution’s authorities ..., create and liquidate the institution’s units, develop study plans and curricula, control costs incurred by the institution ... and human resources policy ...” (Konferencja Programowa NKN, 2017). These statements point to some self-limiting the scope of understanding the essence of the higher education institution’s autonomy, focusing care for academic freedom on matters of institutional autonomy, with a clear emphasis on nurturing independence in the sphere of management. Opinions that highlight the importance of cultivating community autonomy are rare, such as in the continuation of J. Woźnicki’s quotation above, when he also pointed out to the need to balance the position of single and collective bodies. He postulated strengthening the rector’s position but at the same time preserving the principles of self-governance of the academic community represented by the senate (Konferencja Programowa NKN, 2017).

Individual autonomy

The uniqueness of the university as an organisation is based on two features associated with autonomy: individual autonomy as well as the academic community’s autonomy. Contemporary discussions on autonomy usually focus on management independence (within a legally prescribed framework)

and research and teaching independence (within a politically designated neoliberal doctrine). There is no discussion, however, regarding the freedom of the academic community, and especially the individual autonomy of its members, which can be implemented owing to the specificity of the social environment, the way of working and learning at higher education institutions. The complete lack of reflection on the essence and role of the autonomy of students as full members of the academic community is striking.

Ideological formulations regarding academic freedom of research speak of the autonomous choice of the way to come to the truth, express views, proclaim ideas, the right to research initiative, the choice of research methods, setting goals, tasks, and measures necessary for their implementation in the field of research and academic didactics, as well as assessment the scientific value of research (Szostak, 2015, p. 14). However, many authors point to contemporary threats, especially to individual autonomy, caused by external market pressure, which, according to M. Geppert & G. Hollinshead, leads to a crisis of universities' identity (2017). In this context, the authors evoke descriptions of situations when academic teachers are forced to behave in a specific way, justified by the desire to ensure the higher education institution's position in international rankings, the need to achieve the economic results required by the higher education institutions, or to protect their jobs (Geppert & Hollinshead, 2017).

The topic of threats to individual autonomy also appears in American-Chinese studies on the effects of increasing the autonomy of Chinese universities. The authors show beneficial changes related to the increase of the university's flexibility and responsibility, but at the same time they note that this institutional autonomy does not always flow down to the organisation's members. They prove that individual autonomy is limited not only by the government but also by the higher education institution's management (Dee, Henkin, & Hsin-Hwa Chen, 2000). In this context, the example of Great Britain is often cited, where the relationship between institutional and individual autonomy of the university system has been broken in the last

20 years. The decline in the autonomy of academic staff is accompanied by a real increase in the autonomy of universities as institutions (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, & Arnal, 2008).

Individual autonomy is necessary for the implementation of the creative process. It is difficult to talk about it if research has to be focused on research priorities set to a large extent by politicians. In addition, J. Gläser (2016) draws attention to how competitive financing reduces the autonomy of researchers in relation to their scientific communities. The evaluation mechanisms adopted in them favour mainstream research and avoiding risk. As it can be seen, individual autonomy is systemically effectively downgraded – from various sides. On top of that, it is difficult to talk about the implementation of the creative process if a large part of individual working time is absorbed by writing grant applications and endless – and increasingly appropriating attention, encapsulated by sanctions for minor violations – bureaucratic procedures related to the implementation of research projects and teaching processes. So what that it is possible to build a team and implement a project autonomously, if higher education institutions – and thus employees – are assessed for the amount of money obtained for the implementation of projects, and not for the substantive value of the results achieved. A description of such practices, implemented at British higher education institutions and cited by M. Geppert and G. Holinshead, leading to the glorification of financial achievements while depreciating the substantive values should be a warning to all reformers of higher education. This assessment criterion is repeatedly criticised in publications, by using the example of the UK, the Netherlands, and the USA _ i.e. countries with the longest experiences of neoliberal transformation of higher education institutions _ as an expression of extreme economisation destroying the freedom of research, as well as contrary to the sense of scientific activity (Geppert & Hollinshead, 2017; Mucha, 2014).

Monika Kostera (2013, p. 13) draws attention to the erosion of academic freedoms that has been progressing for a long time, saying that "Many of them, such as employment security, internal promotion system, and degrees (above

doctor's degree) permanently acquired by the individual and not assigned to the position, in many western countries no longer exist or are limited".

It is worth returning today to read the texts of Michael Polanyi from the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, devoted, *inter alia*, to the defence of the autonomy of science, recently recalled by Iwo Zmyślony (2011). It is difficult, after the experience of real socialism, to disagree with Polanyi (as cited in: Zmyślony, 2011, p. 155), when he says that central planning in science imposing its goals and ways of achieving them "hinders its development and suppresses the autonomy of researchers". Perhaps, delighted with democracy, we would experience the shock of realising that from the point of view of a particular researcher there is no difference whether the restriction on his or her freedom in choosing the subject of research is due to the fact that the government of the Polish People's Republic decided to launch and finance research on a specific list of nodal problems, or that the research policy of the government of the Republic of Poland includes specific research priorities for the implementation of which research funding agencies set up by that government organise grant competitions. Both in one and the other situation, the choice of one's own research subject (which is a key attribute of academic freedom) is determined by the availability of funds specified in the process of external / central planning of science development. Similarly, to the previous censorship, today there is an evaluation system for scientific activities. If scientific institutions and researchers are evaluated for the positioning of the state, institutions, units, in various international rankings, national and within universities, it means that they will undertake such research and carry it out in such a way as to get the most points and citations. In this situation, there is no need to prohibit anything. Such a control system effectively weakens research sensitivity to problems and research approaches outside the sphere of interest of magazines with the highest Impact Factors. This makes the second attribute of the researcher's individual autonomy – "conducting research in a way independent of any external control", also difficult to implement today. According to Polanyi (as cited in: Zmyślony, 2011, p. 156):

“The only factor that stimulates efficiency is ensuring optimum conditions for independent work of units and clearing communication channels enabling mutual control and coordination”.

The value of student autonomy in the process of academic education and development is pointed out relatively rarely in the literature. K. Leja (2013, p. 37) recalls the opinion of K. Jaspers that “the task of the university is to seek the truth by the community of researchers and students”, which indirectly raises the issue of recognition of subjectivity not only of academic teachers but also students. The subjectivity of students is usually manifested through their participation in collegial bodies. In modern Polish universities, their share in the composition of faculty and senate councils is equal to 20%. The limitation of the scope of authority of the higher education institution’s collegiate bodies, which has been increasing since 2011, also means limiting the students’ influence on the decision-making processes taking place in them. The second area of student influence on the education process is related to the dissemination of student assessments of didactic activities and administrative support for the education process.

This form of student autonomy is, however, extensively criticised and it does not constitute an important value for the whole community or students. The evidence is very low attendance in research – often at a level not surpassing 10% of class participants, which excludes the possibility of relying on the results of student surveys in the process of assessing academic staff. There is definitely a lack of manifestation of activities demonstrating a real recognition of the subjectivity of students in the education process and their ability to take responsibility for their own development. What is dominating is solutions giving students the status of a client who pays and demands high quality of services received, pretending to focus education on satisfying the students’ needs (in the process of developing theoretical and practical competences – sought after on the labour market). In fact, these solutions incapacitate students. They feel relieved of the necessity of their own research, independent study, and taking responsibility for their own

development. The attitude of expecting that they will be taught by someone not only a resource of knowledge and skills, but also independent being and living is becoming dominant.

Last year, at the Faculty where I work, we started implementing Master's seminars preparing students to conduct research in accordance with the Action Research approach. Ten promoters for several months were preparing formally and substantively to change the way seminars were conducted. We got familiar with the experiences of colleagues from foreign universities. We read and discussed numerous studies in this field. Having made extensive consultations, we concluded dozens of agreements with organisations in which student research would be carried out as part of Master's theses. We launched additional seminar dates, as well as additional on-call times devoted to consultations related to research conducted by students. Full of enthusiasm, I started a new seminar and I was a little surprised by the fact that students did not show special enthusiasm for new opportunities to acquire competences enabling them to get to know the problems of the organisation and ways of solving them, and thus increasing their attractiveness on the labour market. They were most interested in the issue of the obligation to attend the seminar and the number of absences allowed. It turned out that almost all my new seminar attendees attended 2 or 3 fields of study at the same time, and most of them additionally work professionally. They implement these studies on a full-time basis, i.e., unlike their colleagues from many highly developed countries, they do not incur any costs related to the tuition fee. Extensive educational and professional activity, however, excludes the possibility of real involvement in personal intellectual development. Conducting research in action requires a great deal of independence and initiative on the part of the student in conducting research, which is very difficult for them, because so far in the process of education they had not been required to meet such requirements, rather they were given knowledge and attempts were made to develop selected skills. Students, as adults, are not required to formal learning after passing the final secondary school exams; in contrast to the

requirement of compulsory school attendance in Poland for young people under 18 years of age. They are undoubtedly autonomous in their decision to study. However, are they, in the light of the above (otherwise common) behaviours fully responsible for their development? Freedom means autonomy in the decision-making process, but also responsibility for self-made decisions. This is characteristic of academic teachers - who are responsible and accountable for the multi-faceted quality of the teaching activities implemented, research conducted (including contribution to the development of science) and for their own development. Students as full members of the academic community should have adequate autonomy expressed in specific rights and connected with assuming responsibility for the quality of their own development. The method of ensuring academic freedom in relation to students, however, prevents the coming into being of real student autonomy.

The situation of students' passivity is also noticed by M. Kostera when she writes that "Contemporary students do not resemble the rebellious and brave elite of the past. They are rather a tired mass of young people, confused and burdened with obligations which are beyond their capabilities, incompatible with their young age associated with development and search. They are often indebted for quite significant sums of money, threatened with unemployment, and expectations are directed towards them that they do not understand or that exceed their capabilities" (Kostera, 2013, p. 13).

Institutional autonomy - community or managerial

The institutional autonomy of the university, defined by the scope of freedom in making decisions concerning it, is clearly distinguished from the autonomy of employees, and on top of that it is often strongly emphasised that it cannot be considered a synonym of collegiality (Santiago et al., 2008). It has a systemic character and its specificity is an important feature of the diversity of different higher education system models (Woźnicki, 2015). Santiago et al.

(2008) referring to the works of R. Berdahl (1990) and McDaniel (1996) point to its two dimensions. At the same time, they recognise that substantive autonomy (identified with collegial autonomy) concerns the institution's right to define academic and research policy, set work standards and principles, curricula, curriculum offers, human resources policy and award degrees, and procedural autonomy refers to the institution's right to define - in principle non-academic spheres such as budgeting, financial management, or non-academic staff (Santiago, et al., 2008).

Actually, the discussion on institutional autonomy has been appropriated by considering the scope of the higher education institution manager's powers (the role of the steering centre) and ways of limiting the impact of collegial bodies on decision-making processes. The research by Krzysztof Leja conducted in 2008 and 2009 shows that in Polish technical universities collegiate bodies still played an important role in decision-making processes. Most of the rectors surveyed believed that "an important task of collegial bodies is to reduce the likelihood of making wrong decisions. ... Rectors notice that the university's autonomy under the Act creates the possibility of strengthening the rector's authority in the university's statute, but only a few take advantage of this possibility." (Leja, 2013, p. 97, p. 102). However, in these studies there were also voices indicating the slackening of decision-making processes due to the need to find a consensus between the interests of various groups represented by collegiate bodies, as well as individual opinions about the need to strengthen the rector's power at the expense of limiting the power of collegial bodies.

Numerous Polish researchers, searching for ways to strengthen the position of Polish higher education and science, as well as fascinated by the concept of the entrepreneurial university are in favour of strengthening the rector's power as a manager. According to K. Leja (2013, p. 153), "The relatively weak power of the rector and strong collegiality make the stimulating activities of the university authorities difficult." The issue of strengthening managerial autonomy at the higher education institution, and in particular

the consequences of such a change in the higher education institution's system, which leads to high managerial autonomy, combined with a significant reduction or even liquidation of collegiate bodies, is worth considering, as there are more and more disturbing reports in this regard. M. Geppert & G. Hollinshead (2017), based on the example of Great Britain, not only show the above-mentioned situations of making academic assessments and decisions to extend employment dependent on the economic results of work (the amount of external funds obtained). First of all, they document the processes of destroying the academic community, the academic ethos, the erosion of trust, the destruction of deserved authority, the destruction of attitudes of mutual cooperation, solidarity, and the emerging attitudes of cunning and cynicism of academics (2017, p. 145). In their opinion, stimulated competitiveness leads to far-reaching individualism, fragmentation of interests, and weakening of intra-academic cooperation (2017, p. 146).

One of the effects of demolishing the academic community at the expense of increasing managerial autonomy is the introduction of radically modified rules of remuneration. As written by M. Geppert & G. Hollinshead in 2016 in British higher education, characterised by an unusually high level of internationalisation and impressive financial results, the average remuneration of vice-chancellors (according to UCU statistics in 2016 – 260,000 pounds, as cited in: Geppert & Hollinshead 2017, p. 138) was 6 times higher than the average academic salary (excluding Professor's). The average salary of the academics in the period from 2009 to 2016 dropped by 14.5% at the same time. In the opinion of the cited authors there is a progressing marginalisation of academic teachers, destruction of authorities, domination of relationships by positions taken in rankings, polarisation of the community, giving special meaning to often unreliable results of student / customer surveys (Geppert & Hollinshead 2017, p. 138-139).

These phenomena are progressing. The consequences of the appropriation of community autonomy by managerial autonomy, which in many cases is transformed into autocratic, technocratic governments, are demon-

strated by mass protests that shocked British universities at the end of 2017. An example is the University of Bath, which has achieved some of the best financial results among British higher education institutions in recent years. An example is that of Prof. Dame Glynis Breakwell, Vice-Chancellor of this university, earning over 450 thousand pounds a year, not only raised protests at this university and demands of her departure. It was also negatively assessed by the financial supervision institution, and – paradoxically – it became a spur for a revival of solidarity within the community (BBC News, 2017a; BBC News, 2017b). Students joined the protests alongside with the employees. There are more and more demands directed against unjustified increases in the salaries of the managerial staff, combined with an increase in fees for education and radical cost cuts (including, inter alia, funds for the salaries of academic teachers). In these discussions, as can be seen in the cited texts from the press, the gigantic salaries of managers are defended only by members of university governing bodies.

Of course, the effects of appropriating the understanding of institutional autonomy to managerial autonomy cannot be reduced only to the above undoubtedly outrageous financial issues and the emergence of a strong opposition between the managerial staff and academic teachers and other members of the community. The subordination of rules within the university's activity to market principles is much more dangerous. These phenomena, combined with competitive funding of research and the uncertainty of employing numerous project employees, lead to the collapse of voluntary cooperation and mutual learning within the academic community. The bureaucratic systems do not perceive these features as organisational values at all.

Łukasz Sułkowski interprets these changes at the cultural level, showing the tension that arises "between formalism, politics, and precision of the culture of control and openness, autonomy and freedom of the culture of trust", while highlighting that "The culture of trust is based on the authority of the professors, while the culture of control makes management authority the source of authority and centrally created regulations" (Sułkowski, 2016, p. 29).

Referring to the changes currently being introduced in Poland to the higher education institution system, one can appeal for the use of experience and research results on changes in the higher education institution system in countries that introduced similar changes over a dozen or several dozen years ago. When making decisions expanding the scope of managerial autonomy, it should be remembered that its increase does not equal the increase in community autonomy, which in the draft of the new law was clearly limited by the introduction of a new unit (The Board of Trustees) as an element in the management structure. The introduction of the Board of Trustees, equipped with important competences, with the dominant participation of external stakeholders, is a manifestation of institutional isomorphism. It is doubtful whether the introduction of one new element in the structure of the organisation will be sufficient to change the way it functions. The introduction of the Board of Trustees is an expression of thinking about the higher education institution and the process of changing organisations in terms of the traditional system approach, when there was a strong belief in the organic nature of systems and the possibility of introducing changes in them through strong stimuli coming from the community. Meanwhile, as N. Luhmann argues, in the light of the concept of the organisation as an autopoiesis, social systems self-produce through communication processes.

Autopoietic processes rely on regular reproduction of meanings by identifying changes that are consistent with the organisation's identity or not. In Luhmann's opinion, social systems of meaning are also autonomous (Luhmann, 1984; *Social Systems*, 1995). The convincing results of Marta Lenartowicz's study show that the university is autopoiesis and behaves like autopoietic systems. External stimuli cause only superficial and temporary changes in them. Real change must be generated from within, it must be caused by a shift within the system's identity (Lenartowicz, 2013). This identity is based on the creative freedom of individuals and voluntary collaboration in conditions that foster critical discourse and reflection. Meanwhile, the latest reform has largely reached for the solution of introducing external economic forces into the

internal structures of the university. The literature indicates that as a result of this type of changes, the university in Anglo-Saxon countries has lost its uniqueness – it is easier to replace it with a more efficiently organised and cheaper business – e.g. corporate academies. It has not been noticed that in many highly developed countries (e.g. in Scandinavia) there has been successful return to independent, collegial forms of management (Kostera, 2012).

In defence of collegiality

The issue of the essence and significance of community autonomy has been supplanted from contemporary discourse on the improvement of higher education. It follows from the studies of K. Leja recalled above, carried out at Polish technical universities between 2008 and 2009 that collegiality was still their important feature, and the respect of this principle declared by the rectors surveyed went beyond statutory requirements. The change in legal regulations of 2011 and 2014 slightly reduced the scope of powers of the higher education institution's senate, and the changes currently discussed go much further in the pursuit of limiting collegiality. Similar trends could also be observed in other countries where, e.g. in Sweden in 2011, collegiate structures were replaced by managerial forms of management and control, which was accompanied by a change in the forms of appointing academic leaders (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). As a result, Swedish universities where the senate does not exist have also ceased to be obliged to maintain faculty councils. Moreover, rectors are currently appointed by the government, after being nominated by boards of trustees. Thus, the previous *primus inter pares* principle had ceased to apply when the rector was chosen by the academic community and enjoyed its trust, because a strong emphasis was placed on his scientific competence. At present, as the cited authors write, "leadership has become a career path and is no longer mainly seen as a temporary service to the academic community" (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016, p. 3).

It is worth returning here to the Polish research conducted by K. Leja and the interview with the former rector of the Warsaw University of Technology, who in the interview cited by the author said, *inter alia*, "After the last term of office, the rector returns to his/her faculty (to the community), which is an important deterrent too far-reaching arbitrariness when making decisions. ... The current legal authorization allows the rector to do something positive, but under the control of the community, which introduces significant restrictions. The danger of creating coterie or creating interest groups is limited" (Leja, 2013, p. 97). K. Sahlin & U. Eriksson-Zetterquist, as cited in: Hasley (1992, 2004) highlight that collegiality is based on mutual listening and communication with each other, and the basic requirement for the functioning of collegiality is trust, knowledge, and continuous dialogue based on cultivating a shared set standards regarding what constitutes good teaching, good knowledge, and the main goals of universities. According to Bennett (1998), they recognise that collegiality is based on a sense of professional community, which should be supported by active collegial activities, such as peer reviews and seminars, through which the community assumes responsibility for the development and quality of research and education (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016, p. 4).

Observing the contemporary reality of Swedish universities, the authors note the disregard for collegiality and a complete lack of support for its development. Reforms focus on supporting managerial competences, intensifying support from consultants, focusing courses for leaders on criticizing collegial forms of decision making, academic leadership, and collegiality rules. The authors show significant differences in the understanding university leadership, which in the collegial system takes place in close collaboration with those who are lead, while in the promoted management system based on new public management – it is a career path, and the leader must create a distance towards those whom he/she leads (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016). They also contest opinions about the weakness of collegiate leadership, arguing that it has a strong leadership base. Moreover, they point

out that the strength of the collegiate system is the loyalty of individuals towards activities and the academic community, as well as openness to criticism, which is not desirable in the managerial system. Referring to the latest research, the authors show that minimising critical voices makes employees choose to be silent, the most gifted ones leave the university or choose “internal exile” or choose the attitudes of “dissociated cynicism” (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016, p. 9). It seems that the next phase of implementing the new school management system in Sweden may take forms known from British reality and described in the earlier part of this text. According to Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist (2016), basing higher education management on the concept of new public management leads to political control of the higher education institution using a mixture of bureaucratic and management principles, while the practice and knowledge of collegiality as well as the ambiguous concept of leadership disappear.

Future, perspectives of academic autonomy

Strong economic and political pressure exerted on higher education today, widespread subordination to the principles of higher education policy management as well as individual higher education institutions, the concept of new public management, causes deep erosion of academic autonomy, strongly changes not only the principles of higher education institution management but also the reality of academic work. According to Ł. Sułkowski (2016), the autonomy of the university identified in the past with the autonomy of institutions and staff, has been significantly reduced in both aspects today, and in the future departure from university autonomy in favour of the corporate system will take place. Piece by piece, however, there are voices that the university’s independence – understood both as institutional autonomy and the preservation of academic freedom – is in the interest of the further development of our culture and civilisation. Academic freedom is indicated at the same time as a guarantor of the freedom of exploration, independent

of political, ideological or business pressure (Thorens, 2006).

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Long-term Development of National Human Capital. Evidence from China and Poland

ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this paper is to present the long-term development of the chosen human capital indices that uncovers and compares the outcome of the national efforts performed by the two culturally distant countries (China and Poland) over the decade. Additionally, paper indicates the areas of further HC progress in both nations.

Methodology: The study was based on measuring human capital with the help of deliberately chosen set of macroeconomic indices (28 items) referring to the nations' capability to create innovations. Analysis was performed for the 2007–2017 years.

Findings: Positive phenomena in the case of human capital development outperform the negative ones in both countries, however, the extent is more remarkable in the case of China. China managed to: improve greatly the pupil-teacher ratio (both in primary and secondary schools), increase secondary and tertiary education enrolment rate along with the rise of the no. of students from abroad. In Poland, the greatest increase was observed in the case of the number of researchers what consequently contributed to the improvement of number of scientific and technical articles and citable documents (h-index).

Value Added: To the best Author's knowledge this is the first paper that compares national human capital development in Poland and China with a set of indices focused on capability to create innovations and adopts longitudinal approach.

Recommendations: Policy-makers in the case of Poland should concentrate on: fostering university/industry research collaboration, improving rank in worldwide QS classification and performing more efforts to attract and retain talents. Moreover, the negative trends should be reversed with regard to: PISA scores and general quality of education system. In turn, Chinese authorities should facilitate better PISA scores and increase the presence of scientific and technical articles.

Key words: human capital, education, innovations, development model, longitudinal study

JEL codes: O14, O15, O57

Introduction

In the knowledge-based economy the most important assets are intangible (Edvinsson & Malone, 1997; Lev, 2001; Stewart, 1997) among which human assets, broadly described as human capital (HC) should be perceived as especially valuable resources and as a key factors for sustainable national competitive advantage (Guenther et al., 2003; Huselid, 1995; Pfeffer, 1994; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Wright, Dunford & Snell, 2001). Nowadays, competitive advantage is defined by the level of technology driven by innovations; hence, considering innovativeness as a crucial factor for the future growth, many

countries have adopted development strategies based on the transformation of economy into an innovation-driven one. This transformation is conditioned upon productivity and utilization of nations' HC (Ederer, Schuler, & Willms, 2007). The industrial upgrading concept which is based on the theory of the global value chain (Porter, 1985; Gurria, 2012) means change from a dominant exportation of low-value-added manufactures to the development of competitive exports of high-value-added products. It is only possible through accumulating technological innovation capabilities by absorbing highly educated labour force into the real economy (He, 2015). The most well-known example is that of South Korea, which, through investment in education and HC in the 70s and 80s, performed industrial upgrading and a successful transformation from economy based on low-value-added to high-value-added exports (Kim, 1997). Emphasis on education and HC is argued to be as one of the most important driving forces for South Korea's technological progress and economic development (Cui, 2010; Shin, 2012). Therefore, nations willing to transform their economies into innovation-driven ones have to link HC and innovation strategies in order to utilize HC as stimulus of innovation (Ederer et al., 2007). Most studies on advanced economies provide a direct positive link between innovations and exporting (Cieślik, Qu & Qu, 2018).

The focus of the paper are the country-level HC advancements that strictly refer to the creation of the innovation capabilities. Consequently, the paper aims to present the long-term development over the last decade of the chosen HC indices that uncovers and compares the outcome of the national efforts performed by the culturally distant, (advanced) emerging economies, which for the purposes of the study, were China and Poland. Moreover, with regard to the practical approach, paper indicates also areas for further HC national progress. Hence, there are two research questions:

RQ1: How has HC developed in China and Poland during the last decade?

RQ2: What are the fields of possible future improvements of HC in China and Poland?

Comparative analysis of the aggregate data has been adopted as a method for this study. Comparing is essential to basic scientific and philosophic inquiries and it has been done for a long time (Deutsch, 1987). There are numerous practical benefits deriving from comparative analysis with regard to the macroeconomic national policies, such as more effective policy making, better administrative arrangements and enhanced development prospect (Caiden, 1989). In the proposed study, HC indices were compared in nations that are politically and culturally different, however both experienced economic shift from the socialist into the market economies characterized by the export-driven orientation. China and Poland were due to numerous reasons. First, a large portion in international trade is shared by China, however, several Authors (e.g. Subramanian, 2011; Nolan, 2012) have already warned in the past that its lag in industrial upgrading is restrictive in terms of future growth. Moreover, Chinese firms, although rapidly growing due to domestic market (especially the large, state-owned enterprises), are not globally competitive and there are neither leading Chinese technologies nor brands present in international markets (with only few exceptions in IT and banking industry). Consequently, China's export is still dominated by low-value-added manufactures. Recent slow-downs (2017 and 2018) in the Chinese spectacular growth throughout the last two decades may suggest a need to transform and diversify the structure of exports (as the leading driver of GDP growth) into the more knowledge-intensive. Similar phenomenon, in terms of not fast as desired exports transformation into more innovative one, is observed in the case of Polish economy, thus in order stay on the sustainable path of development driven by exports Poland should put more efforts into fostering the domestic innovativeness. Therefore, both nations base their growth on exports. Second, according to the recent (2019) issue of Global Innovation index, in the Human capital & research pillar China ranked 25th, whereas Poland 40th what indicates that both nations HC capabilities to create innovations indicate a relatively similar potential to improve. Third, in the

last decades both countries transformed their economies from the closed, socialist system into the market-orientated one focused on foreign trade. Fourth, the existence of cultural differences between the both studied nations makes the proposed comparison additionally interesting and valuable. Without any doubts, culture affects the development of national HC. For example, in China *guanxi*, face saving and Confucian ethos remain important drivers of human behaviour what translates directly on, *inter alia*, the way the students react and are taught. To sum up, China and Poland, although distinct in many economical, societal and political issues, appear to be surprisingly similar in their way of pursuing national goals aimed at boosting HC capabilities. Hence, the proposed comparative analysis adds value by providing essential information about the outcomes of the national policies concerning HC advancements. Consequently, country-specific cultural factors may impact the final outcome of HC development what is the point of interest of the proposed paper.

There are two motivations for undertaking this topic. First, the importance of studying the longitudinal HC development in these countries is relatively underscored by research. Second, understanding how HC develops, especially in the context of (advanced) emerging economies, which both China and Poland are classified as, is crucial for shaping the short and long-term development strategy pursuing to the shift to high-value-added and innovative exports-driven economy.

Therefore, potential contributions of this research are threefold. First, it presents a long-term historical development of original set of national HC measures in the context of (advanced) emerging economies. Second, it identifies specific areas of future improvement which serve as a valuable information for national policy-makers. Third, it performs a non-obvious comparative analysis of the countries from two different cultural backgrounds.

The structure of this paper is the following: Section 1 is introduction, Section 2, divided into the two subsections, provides literature review. Section 3 outlines the methodology, while Section 4 presents results of the study

which is followed by Section 5 pointing to conclusions, suggestions and implications of the paper along with the limitations of the study.

Literature review

HC, innovativeness and development

The term “human capital” was coined by T. W. Schultz and G. S. Becker. They defined it as a set of characteristics, natural talents, predispositions, attitudes, respected values, acquired abilities and knowledge of people (Dorożyński & Dorożyńska, 2011). HC is embodied in skills, knowledge, and expertise that people possess; therefore it serves as an important source of competitive advantage to individuals, organizations and societies (Coleman, 1988; Gimeno et al., 1997). An individual's HC can be defined by knowledge and skills created by schooling, higher education, vocational training and work experiences (De la Fuente & Ciccone, 2002). Undoubtedly, HC and innovations are mutually linked (Marvel & Lumpkin, 2007; Alpkar et al., 2010; Kesting & Ulhøi, 2010), as together they create reinforcing loop of present and future value (Cabrilo & Grubic-Nesic, 2012). Investments in people result in improved individual performance increased organizational productivity and economic development as well as other societal benefits (Lynham & Cunningham, 2006). On the macro level, investment in learning and education leads to economic growth and significant positive outcomes on individual and societal levels (Schultz, 1961; Denison, 1962; Becker, 1976). It is argued that education may improve the level of HC, which is crucial for nations' productivity and innovativeness (Stokey, 1991; Mankiw, Romer, & Weil, 1992), consequently leading to industrial and economic development. Better education improves cognitive skills which foster innovation (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008). Fundamental, early studies by Drucker (1969) proved that investment in HC is crucial for economic development, and leads to country's competitiveness through innovation. Education, measured either by the number of

years of education (Dakhli & de Clercq, 2004) or by the development of the education system on different levels (Vandenbussche, Aghion, & Meghir, 2006) is positively linked to country innovativeness. Recent studies on the role of HC in China and Poland provide essential and practical implications. For instance, Heckman & Yi (2012) argue that education will have significant positive impact on the development and innovativeness of China. Chi (2008) supports the evidence on the indirect role of HC in Chinese economic growth through physical capital investment. Author found that workers with college education play a more important role than those with primary or secondary educations. Weng, Li & Foo (2016) performed a longitudinal analysis of education in China and observed that the rates of returns on education in China have substantially increased during 1989–2011. These growths were mainly due to the effects of institutional reforms. He (2015) presents data relating to the current state of primary, secondary and tertiary education in China with the help of two indices: gross enrolment rate and pupil-teacher ratio. Derived conclusions provide interesting insight into the education system; however neither brings a full picture of Chinese education system nor HC. In addition, data refer to one year only, which is 2010. Study by Ardichvili, Zavyalova & Minina (2011) encompassed a two dimensional analysis of China (along with other BRICs nations) HC indices. First dimension, referred to the study of holistic measures, such as: KEI (Knowledge Economy index, provided by the World Bank) and HDI (Human Development Index) indices, whereas second referred to separate indices, which were: public spending on education, no. of researchers, no. of engineers and scientists, no. of research institutions, no. of students in higher education institutions and accessibility of education. Authors found that China's HDI grew annually at 1,37% on average over the 1980-2011, consequently China today is among countries with an average level of HDI. Data on separate indices refer only to 2006, hence do not show a long-term recent development trends.

With regard to the studies on Polish HC, research by Lin (2018) proved that HC is positively linked with GDP growth. Gugin & Pliszka (2009) pointed

out that the important role in shaping national HC played such institutions as: catholic schools, hospitals and Polish Academy of Sciences. However, brief quantitative analysis of HC was narrowed only to: persons with doctoral and post-doctoral education and no. of pupils and students. Furthermore, the most recent year was 2006. Zdrojewski (2009) studied the level of education in Polish society with regard to the place of living. Similar to the previous studies, analysis related to 2006 only. Vast analysis of the current state of HC in Poland was performed by Czarnik et al. (2011) who studied among others: educational paths, competences, educational levels, trainings, female participation in workforce and educational institutions. Although the study presents plethora of quantitative data with various breakdowns (gender, occupation, place of living etc.), it does not provide historical data thus does not enable to catch the extent of actual HC long-term development.

A growing stream of research can be observed in terms of the impact of country innovation levels on exports. Concerning the outcome of the investments in HC in the form of the export growth driven by innovations the study by Cieřlik, Qu & Qu (2018) found that innovations conducted by Chinese firms increase the export probability. Wei & An (2016) proved that innovation promoted export performance. Additionally, research by Huang, Hu & Liu (2015) revealed that in general innovations improve Chinese exports; however product innovations perform a stronger impact than process innovations. Studies on the link between innovations and export performance among Polish firms provide similar results confirming that innovations increase the probability of exporting (Brodzicki & Ciołek, 2016; Cieřlik, Michałek & Szczygielski, 2016).

To sum up, previous studies employed various measures for HC, however certain shortcomings may be identified which are following: low no. of indices, quantitative nature of indices, lack of qualitative studies, low level of diversification of measures, lack of longitudinal studies on the same set of indices, lack of up-to-date data analysis, restrained comparisons with other nations, insufficient recommendations and limited relation of HC data to nations' innovativeness creation capabilities. Finally, to the best Author's

knowledge there is no paper that compares HC development in Poland and China. Proposed paper fills the gap in most of the above-mentioned fields.

Cultural impact on HC development

Culture can be described as “transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior and the artefacts produced through behavior” (Kroeber & Parsons, 1958). According to Rapport & Overing (2000) culture is composed of “beliefs, norms, assumptions, knowledge, values, or sets of practice that are shared and form a system”. Hofstede (2001) points five dimensions of national culture: individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation.

Culture affects significantly several national HC issues, such as: learning/teaching styles, students' collaboration (Kim & Bonk, 2002; Teng, 2007), motivation (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001; Lim, 2004; Zhu et al., 2008) and participation (Agerup & Busser, 2004; Valiente, 2008), learning achievements (Pearse & Lin, 2007) and perception of new teaching tools, such as e-learning (Volman et al., 2005; Hannon & D'Netto, 2007).

With regard to the learning styles Kim & Bonk (2002) on the sample of on Finish and US students demonstrated that Finnish peers were more reflective and, usually, theoretically driven, in comparison to US students. They, in turn, appeared to be more pragmatic by performing more action and solution-oriented attitude in the process of learning. More social interaction of US students was also observed by Teng (2007) who compared the learning styles of US and Taiwanese students. US students developed closer relations with their classmates what improved a better sense of community and lead to an easier process of making the group decisions. They enjoyed working in groups, as it was a mean to better know their group members what simultaneously acted as a mutual support. Consequently, they experienced greater satisfaction from the

group performance. On the contrary, Taiwanese students were concentrated mostly in building relationships at the expense of working in teams. Hence, the significance of task completion was lower in the case of Taiwanese peers than US students. Different motivation levels can derive from the specific culture. Study by Ramburuth & McCormick (2001) indicated that Asian international students showed a significantly higher use of deep motivation, surface strategies, and achieving strategies, while Australian students demonstrated higher use of deep strategies and surface motivation only. Lim (2004) observed that online American students felt more accomplishment by a greater number of motivation types (course relevancy, course interest, reinforcement and self-efficacy) than Korean students. However, Korean students demonstrated significantly higher score only for learner control. Consequently, American students got more motivated after completing online lessons, possibility of sharing personal thoughts during the class and valued a sense of belonging by being enrolled in classes. With regard to Chinese students, Zhu et al. (2008) observed that Chinese students, with comparison to Flemish students, valued to a greater extent the type of learning that involves understanding, personal change, and development of social skills.

Cultural drivers of participation were studied by Agerup & Busser (2004) who found that the focus of US students was concentrated mainly on the specific deadlines and project requirements, whereas Japanese peers were more involved in the content research and writing papers in a hierarchical relation to a lecturer. Agerup & Busser (2004) studied also the mutual perception of the US and Japanese students. According to Japanese students, their US peers were fast, stressful, and unstructured, while the US students perceived the Japanese ones as conservative and unemotional. Valiente (2008) indicates that non-Western students' participation is fostered by the visual means, such as graphics, sensorial and rhetoric characters and associations. Hence, in the process of thinking and learning by Chinese students, who derive from the Confucian tradition, rehearsing and repeating is a necessary basic step.

Cultural factors, such as parental educational attainment, parental educational expectation, parental involvement and parenting style may also influence the learning achievements. Pearse & Lin (2007) found that academic achievement of Chinese Americans was equal or, in some cases surpassing the achievement of White Americans what justifies that cultural specific approach does impact the learning outcome. Considering the technology development and its implementation in education, Hannon & D'Netto (2007) argue that students from different cultures react differently to the organizational issues and arrangements which were implemented in the online learning technologies. Study by Volman et al. (2005) on Dutch students from two different ethnic backgrounds showed that pupils from an ethnic-minority environment appear to perceive themselves to be less familiar with ICT than peers from the majority population. As a result, the out of school usage of computers for all kinds of writing activities (papers, preparing talks, letters, reports, and e-mails) was lower for the ethnic-minority students. The utilization of computers at school was devoted merely for practicing at the cost of gathering information and preparing talks.

Methodology

China is the most populous nation worldwide. Its total population (1,379 billion inhabitants) exceeds almost 40k-fold total population of Poland. Therefore, due to enormous differences between China and Poland cross-country comparisons of absolute values do not make sense. However, there is a strong need to use relative measures. Employment of the relative indices (instead of the absolute ones) is a possible attempt to conduct a comparative analysis of two distinct economies; however it still possesses some generalization limitations. Nevertheless, for the purposes of providing a broad picture of HC development, the paper adopted the approach which is in line with the global practices of organizations issuing performance reports referring to various issues (e.g. Knowledge Economy Index, Global Innovation Index,

Network Readiness Index). Hence, bearing in mind the limitations, a set of relative measures was created.

Several indices can be adopted to capture HC, such as the level of education, the amount of vocational training, age and relevant management or industry experience (Hinz & Jungbauer-Gans, 1999; Kilkenny, Nalbarte, & Besser, 1999; Guzman & Santos, 2001). The choice of indices used to measure HC depends, *inter alia*, on the aim of the study. Since the paper attempts to analyse the long-term development of HC in terms of boosting the level of nations' innovativeness the combination of three groups of indicators was utilized covering the fields: general education (primary and secondary), universities and business. The research was based on quantitative and qualitative secondary data for the 2007–2017 years. The initial set of measures amounted to 38, however due to the lack of longitudinal data, some of them had to be excluded. The final sample of indicators consisted of 28 in total. Table 1 depicts the details on the methodology.

Table 1. Measures adopted in the study

Measure	Description / question	Source	Years
Education			
Quality of primary education	In your country, how do you assess the quality of primary education*	EOS**	2008–2017
Primary education enrollment rate	Ratio of children of official primary school age (as defined by the national education system) who are enrolled in primary school.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007–2015
Secondary education enrollment rate	Ratio of total secondary enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the secondary education level.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007–2014
Tertiary education enrollment rate	Ratio of total tertiary enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the tertiary education level.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007–2017

Quality of education system	In your country, how well does the education system meet the needs of a competitive economy?*	EOS	2007–2017
Quality of math and science education	In your country, how do you assess the quality of math and science education?*	EOS	2007–2017
Expenditure on education, %	Government operating expenditures in education, including wages and salaries and excluding capital investments in buildings and equipment, as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP).	World Bank	2007–2015
PISA scales in reading, math & science	Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) develops three-yearly surveys that examine 15-year-old students' performance in reading, mathematics, and science.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2009–2015
Pupil-teacher, ratio, primary	The number of pupils enrolled in primary school divided by the number of primary school teachers	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007–2016
Pupil-teacher, ratio, secondary	The number of pupils enrolled in secondary school divided by the number of secondary school teachers	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007–2016
Tertiary inbound mobility	The number of students from abroad studying in a given country, as a percentage of the total tertiary enrolment in that country.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2007–2016
Universities			
QS university ranking	Average score of the top three universities per country.	www.topuniversities.com	2012–2017
Quality of scientific research institutions	In your country, how do you assess the quality of scientific research institutions?*	EOS	2007–2017
Scientific & technical articles, billion PPP\$	The number of scientific and engineering articles published. Article counts are from a set of journals covered by the Science Citation Index (SCI) and the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). Articles are classified by year of publication and assigned to each country/economy on basis of the institutional address(es) listed in the article. The data are reported per billion PPP\$ GDP.	Web of Science, Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI)	2007–2017

Citable documents H-index	The H-index is tabulated from the number of citations received in subsequent years by articles published in a given year, divided by the number of articles published that year.	SCImago	2012–2017
University/industry research collaboration	In your country, to what extent do people collaborate and share ideas in between companies and universities/research institutions?*	EOS	2007–2017
Business			
Extent of staff training	In your country, to what extent do companies invest in training and employee development?*	EOS	2008–2017
Firms offering formal training, %	The percentage of firms offering formal training programs for their permanent, full-time employees.	World Bank	2008–2013
Knowledge-intensive jobs, %	Knowledge-intensive jobs correspond to the International Labour Organization (ILO) aggregate category “Managers, professionals, and technicians,” as provided in the ILOSTAT Database.	International Labour Organization	2007–2017
Reliance on professional management	In your country, who holds senior management positions in companies?***	EOS	2007–2017
Company spending on Research and Development (R&D)	In your country, to what extent do companies invest in research and development (R&D)?*	EOS	2007–2017
Gross expenditure on R&D, %	Total domestic intramural expenditure on R&D during a given period as a percentage of GDP.	World Bank	2007–2017
Researchers	Researchers per million population, full-time equivalence. Postgraduate PhD students (ISCED97 level 6) engaged in R&D are included.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2008–2017
Brain drain****	To what extent does your country retain/attract talented people?*****	EOS	2007–2013
Country capacity to retain talent	To what extent does your country retain talented people?*****	EOS	2014–2017
Country capacity to attract talent	To what extent does your country attract talented people from abroad?*****	EOS	2014–2017

Availability of scientists and engineers	In your country, to what extent are scientists and engineers available?*	EOS	2007–2017
Female participation in the labor force	This measure is the percentage of women aged 15-64 participating in the labor force divided by the percentage of men aged 15–64 participating in the labor force.	UNESCO Institute for Statistics	2008–2017

Notes:

* [1 = extremely poor – among the worst in the world; 7 = excellent – among the best in the world]

** World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey (EOS) captures the opinions of 14 723 business executives in 141 economies. More about the methodology of WEF-EOS see: World Economic Forum (2016, pp. 77–87)

*** [1 = usually relatives or friends without regard to merit; 7 = mostly professional managers chosen for merit and qualifications]

**** Due to methodology change in 2014 category: Brain drain has been divided into the two separate categories: Country capacity to retain talent and Country capacity to attract talent

***** [1 = not at all – the best and brightest leave to pursue opportunities abroad; 7 = to a great extent – the best and brightest stay and pursue opportunities in the country]

Source: own work based on: WEF Executive Opinion Survey, World Bank database, International Labour Organization, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Web of Science, Science Citation Index (SCI), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and SCImago.

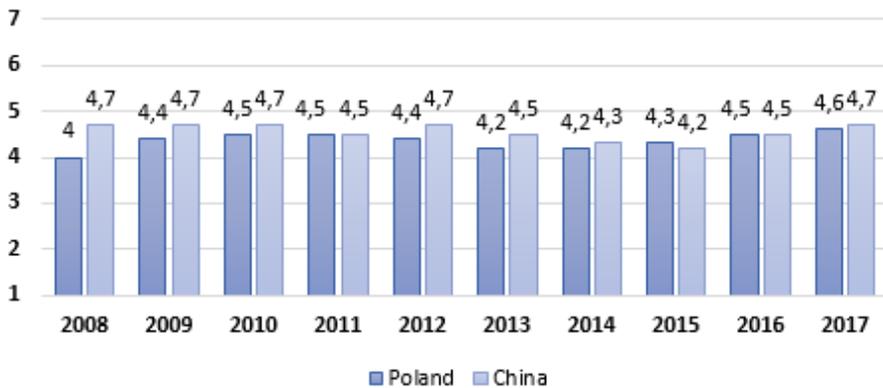
Results

Primary and secondary education

Primary education enrolment rate is high in both countries with the mean values during the 2007–2016 accounting for 95,9% in Poland and 99,5% in China respectively. In all studied years the enrolment rate was higher in China than in Poland – in Poland the lowest rate was 95,0% (2015), whereas in China 98,3% (2013). However, in 2014 the reported rate by the Chinese officials amounted to 100%, while in Poland during the studied period there

was not observed such a high rate. The pupil-teacher ratio in primary school was lower (better) in Poland (mean value 10,2 during 2007–2016) than in China (mean – 14,5). However, in Poland the ratio did not show major improvements throughout the studied period (10,6 in 2007 and 10,8 in 2016), whereas in China the ratio tended to improve by decreasing from 17,7 in 2007 to 13,3 in 2016. Executives in the surveys in all studied years (except 2015) pointed out that the quality of primary education in China is slightly better than in Poland (mean evaluation 4,4 in Poland vs. 4,6 China – Figure 1).

Figure 1. Quality of primary education



Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

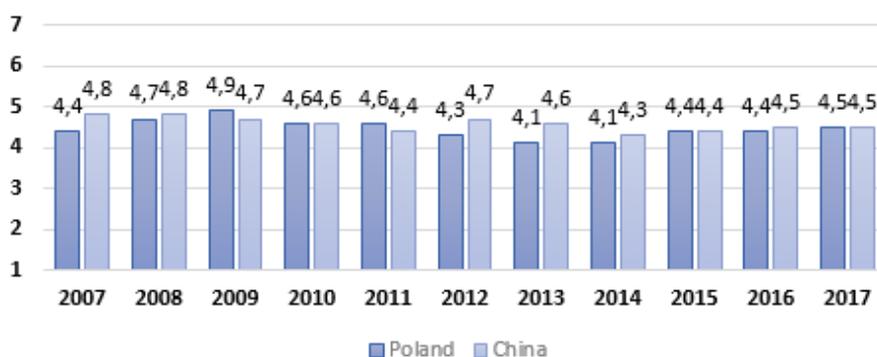
The lowest score for Poland was 4,0 (2008), while for China 4,2 (2015). In Poland the perception of the primary education has improved in 2017 with comparison to 2008 (+15%), while in China the executive opinion remain the same. In general executives evaluate the quality of primary education as good, however with the need to improve, what in terms of Poland is happening at a moderate pace, while in China not.

Secondary education enrolment rate showed major differences in Poland and China. In Poland the mean ratio was even higher than the primary education enrolment rate (99,9%), while in China the ratio average was 83,2%.

Moreover in Poland the indicator did not perform major differences during 2008-2016, while in China there was observed a strong improvement. In 2007 the secondary education enrolment rate was 77,3%, while in 2014 – 94,3%, what was the highest record in the studied period for China. However, highest China score was still below the lowest score in Poland.

The quality of primary and secondary education is partly reflected in the PISA scales in reading, math & science. Available data for 2009, 2012 and 2015 provide an insight into interesting phenomenon. In both nations there was observed an improvement in 2012 in comparison to 2009 (in Poland from 501,1 pts to 520,5 pts (+3,9%), in China from 576,8 to 587,5 (+1,9%)), however data for 2015 suggest a drop in PISA scores for both countries. A major decrease by 12,5% was observed for China, whereas for Poland it was 3,2%. Data prove that pupils from China perform better than the Polish ones. Education of math and science is one of the most important in the mental development of young people. Its evaluation by the surveyed executives has been shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Quality of math and science education



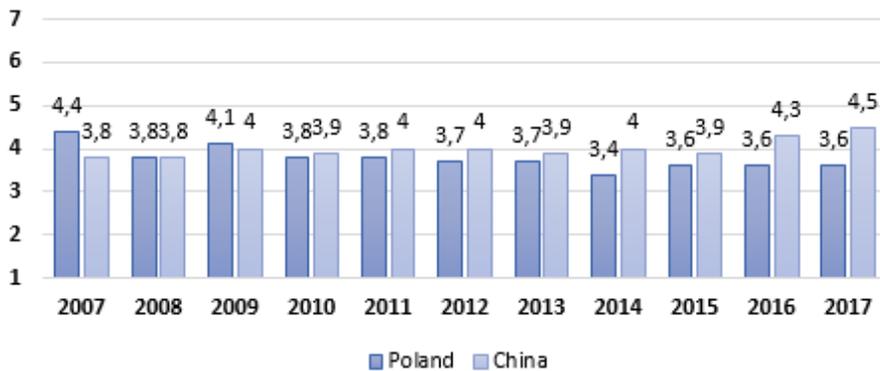
Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

Executives perceive education of math and science as good in both countries but Chinese respondents seem to evaluate it slightly better. The mean

score for China was 4,6, while for Poland 4,5. However, in China the education quality perception has slightly worsened during the period 2007–2017 (by 6,3%), while in Poland there was almost the same score in 2007 and 2017 with only minor changes in the years between.

To some extent it may seem surprising that good evaluation of the primary education and education of math and science does not go in line with the general evaluation of education system (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Quality of education system



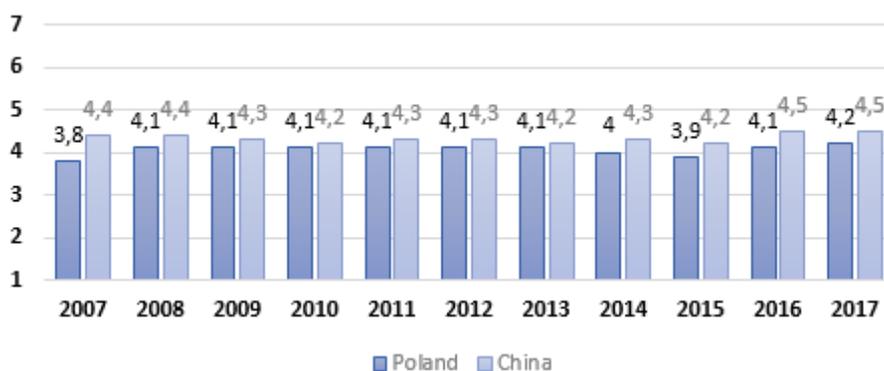
Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

Executives suggest significant deterioration of the quality of education system in Poland during the period 2007–2017 (by 18,2%), while in China there was observed a contradictory trend (rise in the evaluation of the education system by 18,0%). Hence data show that education in Poland has changed its perception from good in 2007 to moderate in 2017, while in China from moderate in 2007 to good in 2017. What it is interesting, also in terms of the value of expenditures on education in relation to GDP – in Poland the ratio was higher and was 4,8% (2015), while in China 1,8% (2009, latest available data for China).

Universities

There can be observed significant differences between Poland and China in terms of the tertiary education enrolment rate which in Poland was 71,2% whereas in China 51,5% (both indicators refer to 2017). The average rate during 2007-2017 amounted to 69,9% in Poland and 33,2% in China. In both countries there was an increase of students enrolled in 2017 with comparison to 2007, however in China it was much greater (124,9% increase vs. 6,4% in Poland). Vast majority of students in both countries are nation's citizens, however the percentage of students from abroad (tertiary inbound mobility) is higher in Poland than in China (2% vs. 0,3%). In China the share of foreign students during the analysed period was relatively stable (0,2% to 0,36%), however in Poland since 2007 the ratio has increased from 0,6% to 3,42% in 2017. Executives asked about the scientific research institutions assess its quality as moderate/good in Poland and good in China (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Quality of scientific research institutions



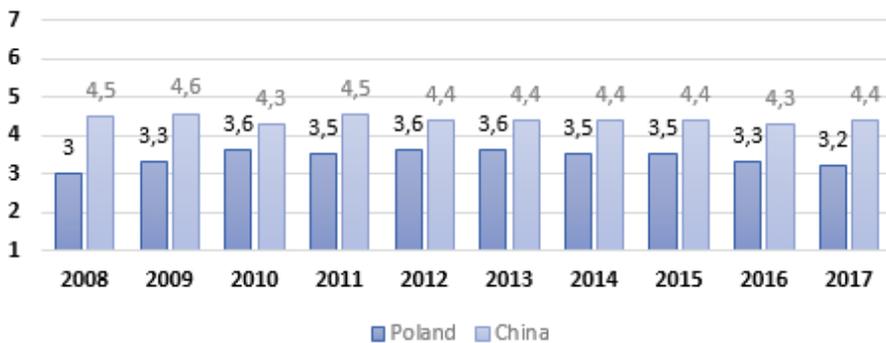
Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

Mean scores for the period 2007–2017 were 4,1 in Poland and 4,3 in China. In Poland there was a 11,1% increase in 2017 in comparison to 2007, while in

China only 2,3%. The number of researchers per million population (full-time equivalence, 2017) is greater in Poland (2528,04) than in China (1234,78), however in both countries there has been observed different increase in terms of the relative number of researchers in 2017 in comparison to 2009 (in Poland 58,5%, in China 4,2%). The number of scientific and engineering articles in relation to 1 billion PPP\$ GDP was also greater in Poland than in China (17,8 vs. 11,7), however the rising trend during the 2008–2017 years, observed in both countries, was much faster in Poland (66,4%) than in China (42,7%). Citable documents H-index performed a better value for China (674) in 2017 than for Poland (456), moreover since the introduction of the index and data availability (2012) both countries improved in that field (Poland by 62,4%, China by 90,9%). In 2017 QS ranking showing the quality of the top three universities in the country performed following values (the lower the better): 34 in China and 501 in Poland. Indicator (introduced in 2012) showed: improvement in China by 27 ranks and deterioration in Poland by 26 ranks.

The quality of scientific research institutions influences the extent to which universities collaborate with the enterprises in conducting common research projects. Results of the survey about the quality of that form of collaboration among the executives have been presented on Figure 5.

Figure 5. University/industry research collaboration



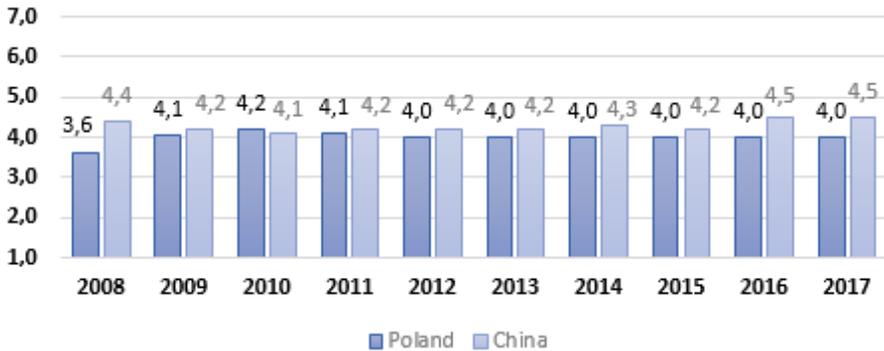
Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

In Poland executives stated that quality of the university/industry research collaboration is moderate with the average score of 3,4 within the 2007–2017 years. At the same time Chinese executives evaluate that quality of the university/industry research collaboration in China higher as in Poland and perceive it as good with the average score of 4,4 within the same studied period. Although Poland has managed to improve its performance in that field by 6,7% (3,0 in 2008 and 3,2 in 2017), still its highest score was lower than China worst score (3,6 vs. 4,3).

Business

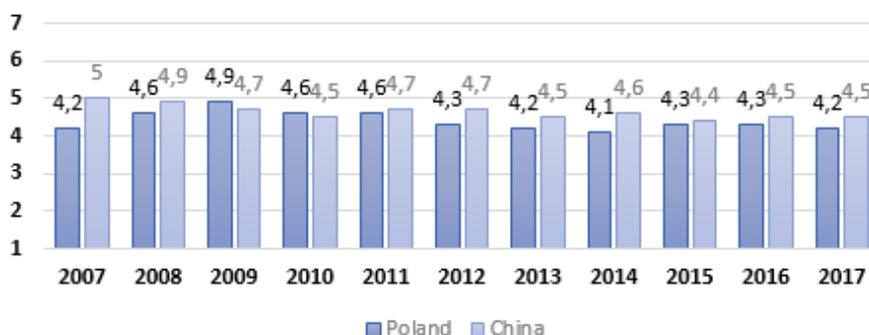
In the knowledge-based economy substantial share of the workforce should perform knowledge-intensive jobs that drive the country competitiveness by offering innovative products and services of high quality. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2017 in Poland 39,0% of jobs available were classified as knowledge-intensive, whereas in China – 16,6%. In addition, in both countries this indicator throughout 2007–2017 has improved (by 6,3 pp. in Poland and 5,8 pp. in China). Knowledge-intensive jobs require constant development by internal or external trainings. The share of companies offering formal training differed significantly between Poland and China (34,6% vs. 79,2% of the total number of firms in 2013). Moreover, in both countries this indicator throughout 2008–2013 has fallen, in Poland by more than 43% (from 60,9% in 2008), whereas in China by 6% (from 84,8%). Share of companies offering formal training is a quantitative measure that should be analysed together with the qualitative data referring to the extent of training (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Extent of staff training



Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

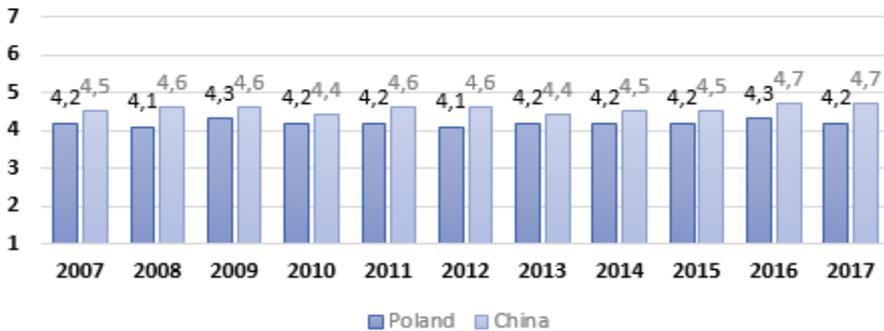
Executives perceive the extent of staff training in both countries as good, mean evaluation during 2008–2017 amounted to 4,0 in Poland and 4,23 in China. Although the share of firms offering formal training was much higher in China than in Poland, in terms of the quality of its training there was not observable such a large difference. Moreover significant decline in the number of companies offering formal training did not correspond with the fall of the training extent. In contrary, in Poland, although the share of enterprises with formal training declined, its perceived extent has actually risen by 10,2% (from 3,63 in 2008 to 4,0 in 2013). One of the aims of the staff training is the answer to the constant need to develop skills of the employees what will benefit the organization in the future by promoting specialists into the higher positions. On the Figure 7 there have been presented the results on survey concerning the fact to which extent senior management positions are hold by professionals chosen for merit and qualifications or by relatives or friends without regard to merit.

Figure 7. Reliance on professional management

Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

Professionals holding management positions is being perceived more fair in China than in Poland (4,5 vs. 4,3), however the gap between the two countries has decreased throughout the 2007–2017 period, due to the improvement of situation in Poland (+7,1%), and deterioration in China (-10%). In China the score in 2007 was very good, whereas in Poland good. However, both countries still have to catch up and put more efforts to eliminate unfair nominations of unprofessional managers without merit and qualifications to hold senior positions. What is interesting, better score in China goes in line with better score in terms of the female participation in the workforce indicator. In China in 2017 the ratio of women to men employed was 0,83 (in 2008 – 0,91), while in Poland the ratio was lower (0,82 – without significant changes throughout the 2008–2017 period. As shown, at the example of scientists and engineers availability, executives perceive the situation as good in both countries (Figure 8).

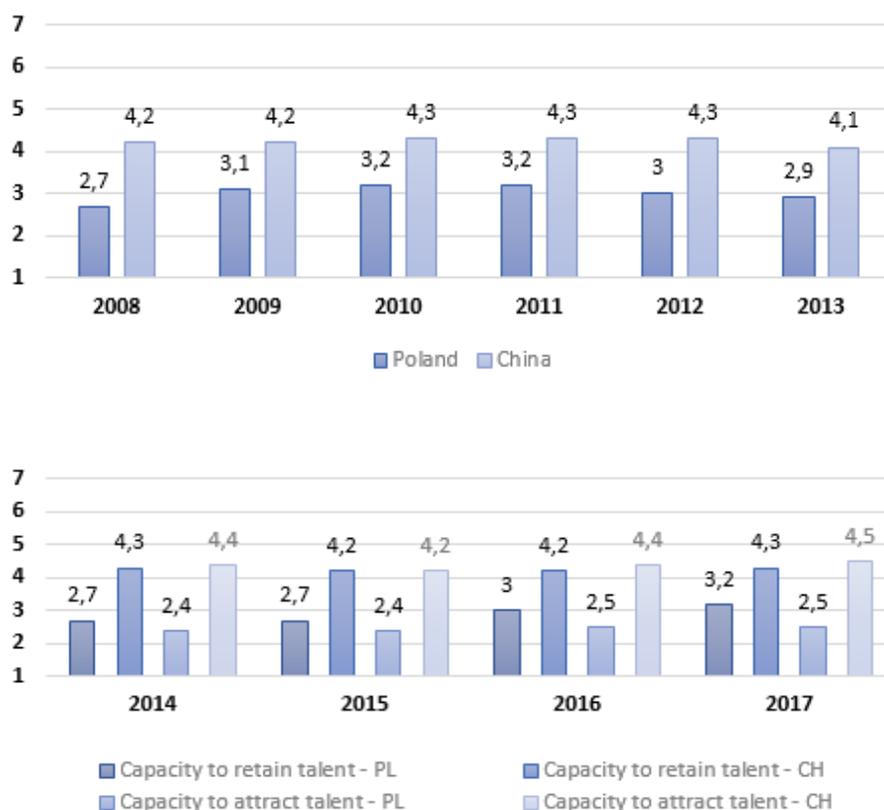
Figure 8. Availability of scientists and engineers



Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

Scientists and engineers are, in the opinion of the surveyed executives, more available in China than in Poland, however the difference is not significant (4,7 vs. 4,2 in 2017). In both countries availability of scientists and engineers does not seem to be a major obstacle, however executives might urge a possible improvement. In general in Poland and China the state of the availability of scientists and engineers is described as good. In China, there has been reported a slight improvement in 2017 with the comparison to 2007 (4,4%), while in Poland not. However, taking into account data concerning the problem of brain drain, Polish executives perceive the problem as insufficient, what shall be interpreted as best and brightest tend to leave the country to pursue opportunities abroad. However, the same indicator in China provides different results – Chinese executives evaluate the phenomenon of brain drain as good (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Brain drain



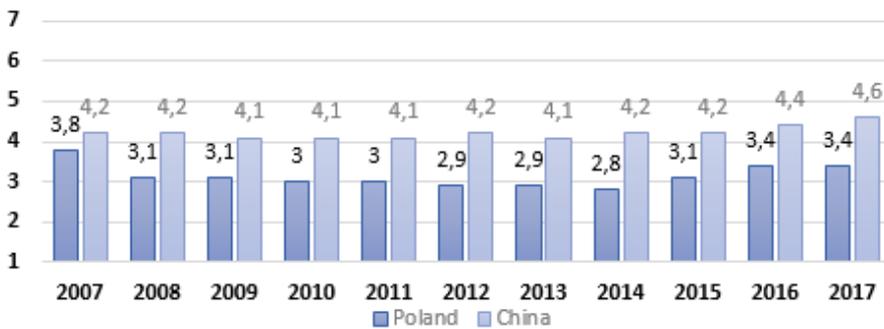
Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

More detailed data on country international flows of talents (2014–2017) suggest low capacity (mean score: 2,7) to retain or attract talents in Poland (with slightly better evaluation of capacity to retain than to attract) and relatively high (mean score: 4,35) in China (with the same trend to score better in retaining than attracting talents).

Gross expenditure on R&D in Poland amounted in 2017 to 1% of GDP, whereas in China this ratio exceeded 2%. Since 2007 in both countries expenditures on R&D in absolute and relative measures have increased, however

the pace of growth was larger in Poland than in China (78% change, from 0,56% to 1% of GDP vs. 51% change, from 1,37% to 2,07% of GDP). Above mentioned macroeconomic hard data cover with the results collected from the questionnaires among executives concerning R&D expenditures on the microeconomic level (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Company spending on R&D



Source: own work based on World Economic Forum Executive Opinion Survey.

Respondents in Poland pointed out that the level of firms' investments in companies is moderate (lowest score: 2,8 in 2014, highest 3,8 in 2007 out of 7), whereas in China as good (lowest score: 4,1 in 2009, highest 4,4 in 2016 out of 7). The mean evaluation of R&D investments in Poland amounted to 3,1, whereas in China 4,2. Moreover, the perception of R&D investments was much stable in China than in Poland. Hard data suggest that in Poland total R&D expenditures have risen, however, according to the survey, employees state a 10,5% deterioration in R&D funding (3,8 in 2007 and 3,4 in 2017). In turn, in China the rise of R&D expenditures at the macroeconomic level is slightly observable in the surveyed executives' opinions (rise from 4,2 in 2007 to 4,6 in 2017).

Conclusions

The Chinese economy is perceived as a special case in the literature of transition economies, showing huge differences in comparison to the nations of the former USSR and Eastern Europe (Salavrakos, 2010). Consequently, the aim of this paper was to compare the longitudinal development of national HC in China and Poland in order to indicate the differences and areas of further advancements in both culturally distant nations. A deliberately chosen set of macroeconomic indices referring to the nations' capability to create innovations was utilized in this research.

With regard to Poland, most indices that have improved during the last decade referred to the university level. No. of researchers was the one with the greatest increase what consequently contributed to the improvement of: no. of scientific & technical articles and citable documents (h-index) as well as tertiary education enrolment rate. Consequently scientific research institutions managed to improve its general quality in the view of surveyed executives. Interestingly, although no. of students from abroad (tertiary inbound mobility) has increased greatly, Poland is still not competitive enough in attracting and retaining talents (brain drain). However, in terms of attracting talents there is observed a stronger improving trend than in the case of retaining. Another two major shortcomings of Polish tertiary education system identified in this study were: university/industry research collaboration and drop in QS ranking. These phenomena should be a matter of greatest interest by the Polish authorities and/or policy-makers, since the above mentioned decreases were accompanied by already low rating/standing in these fields. In terms of university/industry research collaboration Poland not only recorded lowest score (and lower than China) but also decreased it throughout the studied period. Some concerns should arise also in terms of: worsening the scores in PISA exams and lowering the perception of the quality of education system in general. Relatively better picture can be drawn in the business field, where a positive trend in increasing R&D expenditures

was observed, accompanied with the increase of the share of knowledge-intensive jobs in total workforce and improvement of the perception of the extent of staff training provided by firms which as argued by Prais (1995) may foster country's productivity and economic growth.

Considering HC development in China, there may be identified the improvement of the same indices, as in the case of Poland. These were the assessments of quality of: primary education, math and science education, education system, scientific research institutions, extent of staff training and reliance on professional management. However, among major successes of Chinese educational system the following ones should be mentioned: lowering the pupil-teacher ratio (both in primary and secondary schools), increase of the secondary and tertiary education enrolment rate accompanied by the rise of the no. of students from abroad. Especially the total no. of students rose tremendously. This phenomenon is explained by e.g. Li et al. (2011) who argue that due to the transformation of higher education in China access to tertiary education has considerably improved for rural households. As a result, proportion of urban students in higher education admissions decreased, while the share of rural students increased (Gou, 2006; Li et al., 2011). Moreover, Chinese universities improved significantly their score in global QS ranking along with citable documents H-index. In relation to the negative trends observed in HC development there should be stressed PISA scales in reading, maths & science (which was the case in Poland as well) and decrease in the scientific & technical articles (per billion PPP\$). With regard to business side China is transforming its economy towards more innovation-based what is reflected in the increase of proportion of knowledge-intensive jobs boosted by the greater share of R&D expenditures in GDP.

In general and with respect to the limitations of the data comparability possibilities there can be stated that, although the two analysed countries derive from different cultural background, the positive phenomena in the case of HC development outperform the negative ones in both nations. However the extent is more remarkable in the case of China. Nevertheless both China

and Poland should put more efforts to catch up in certain fields (relating to HC) in order to transform its economy towards more innovation-driven one. For China, these are: PISA scores and the presence of scientific & technical articles. Polish authorities should concentrate on: fostering university/industry research collaboration, improving the rank in worldwide QS classification and performing more efforts in attracting and retaining talents.

The study had its limitations, such as a relatively short time analysis and limited set of HC measures. However, in the case of some indicators it would not be possible to extend the time analysis, as these indicators have been introduced shortly or data is missing. Therefore, valuable contribution would provide a primary study based on questionnaire consisting of originally designed set of HC indices. Moreover, further research might also take into account more cross-country comparisons, as e. g. study by Ardichvili et al. (2012) and/or inter-industry insight to point possible shortcomings related to HC in the specific, given industries and not in the entire economy, what may potentially indicate a misleading picture. Especially, desired would be the analysis of the HC level of the export-oriented sectors. Additionally, the paper would significantly contribute by capturing the role of cultural distinctive features that may (not) affect the HC development.

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Organizational Identification at a Multinational Company

ABSTRACT

Objective: The present case study investigates to what extent employees working at the Dutch site of an American multinational biotechnology organization identify with this company. According to prior research, organizational identification leads to higher commitment to the organization. Gaining more insight into which factors drive or impede organizational identification can help organizations increase their employees' identification and thus, commitment. Two hypotheses were tested. First, organizational identification was expected to be higher among international employees than Dutch employees. Second, a correlation was expected between organizational identification and organizational commitment.

Methodology: A questionnaire was conducted among 296 employees of the company site. The scale of Edwards and Peccei (2007) was used to measure the construct of organizational identification. Mowday et al.'s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was used to measure the construct of organizational commitment. All data was statistically analyzed with

the software SPSS; an independent samples t-test was performed to test the first hypothesis and a Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to test the second hypothesis.

Findings: Both hypotheses were confirmed. A significant difference was found between international employees ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.05$, $n = 81$) and Dutch employees ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.12$, $n = 215$) regarding organizational identification ($t(293) = -2.03$, $p = .04$, $d = 0.27$). Moreover, a significant positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment ($r(295) = .81$, $p < .001$).

Value Added: Most prior research regarding organizational identification has focused on top-down processes, stressing the roles managers play in developing organizational identification among employees. Scholars have devoted little attention to what factors drive or impede organizational identification in cross-cultural workplaces. Taking on a bottom-up perspective, this study concentrates on the impact of employees' social identities, mainly considering expatriate membership, on the extent of their organizational identification.

Recommendations: In order to increase organizational identification, multinational organizations could: 1) facilitate identity synergy by acknowledging the full portfolio of identities employees seek to enact within organizations, and 2) increase peer identification among employees by initiating group activities that facilitate peer-to-peer interactions, create a sense of community and strongly bond individuals to the organization.

Key words: Organizational Identification, Organizational Commitment, Multinational Organizations, Social Identity Theory, Organizational Commitment Questionnaire

JEL codes: F23 Multinational Firms, International Business, J61 Geographic Labor Mobility, Immigrant Workers, M14 Corporate Culture, Diversity, Social Responsibility

Introduction

According to Holliday (2016), interculturality can be thought of in blocks and threads. Cultural blocks "maintain the notion of national cultures as separate experiences and as the prime units of cultural identity" (Holliday, 2016, p. 319). Threads, to the contrary, constitute ways to share experiences and "extend and carry us across the boundaries that are encouraged by cultural blocks" (Holliday, 2016, p. 320). In order to create a feeling of unity, achieve efficient

communication and enhance productivity, multinational companies need to cross the boundaries of national cultures and emphasize a common feature among their employees. Nowadays, being part of a particular organization often constitutes the only common feature among employees coming from diverse cultural and national backgrounds. Therefore, the cultural thread of organizational identification, i.e. a shared identity, is one that should be considered highly relevant in all companies that operate on a global scale.

In addition to its social relevance, the notion of organizational identification is widely discussed in the academic world. Studies explaining employee-organization relationships often do so from a psychological and sociological perspective (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2001). Other research is concerned with understanding the relationship between organizational identification and employee performance which, as shown by earlier meta-analyses, is moderately positive (Riketta, 2005; van Knippenberg et al., 2002; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

Notwithstanding the existing body of research, some less researched areas of organizational identification deserve to be explored further. Scholars have devoted little attention to exploring what factors drive or impede organizational identification in cross-cultural workplaces. Most prior research has focused on top-down processes, with much less consideration of those which are bottom-up. Research on top-down processes stresses “the roles of the organization, the context, and the interaction between the organization and the members in employee OID¹ development” (He & Brown, 2013, p. 19). This study, to the contrary, approaches organizational identification from a bottom-up perspective; its concentration lies on the perceptions of employees and the impact of employees’ social identities on the extent of their organizational identification.

This case study concerns a multinational biotechnology company of American origin, located worldwide in approximately 40 countries. This study

1. Organizational Identification.

only investigates the perceptions of employees working at the company's location in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Based on a 2015 investigation by the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the number of expats living in the Netherlands varies from 39,000 to 75,000. A considerable part of this group lives and works in the Brainport Eindhoven region, currently Europe's leading innovative region. More than 5000 technology and IT companies can be found in this area, many of which are working on the latest technologies and performing ground-breaking research. The appeal that this region has amongst professionals worldwide is reflected in the workforce of the company that constitutes the current research's environment. As more than 25 different nationalities and cultures are represented at this location, one can assume that employment at the company constitutes one of the only things all employees have in common. Thus, their organizational identification with this company should be considered of great importance. This led to the formulation of the following research question:

To what extent do employees of the Dutch site of a multinational organization consider this organization a part of their identity?

In order to provide an answer to this research question, first the current state of knowledge regarding the topic of organizational identification is presented. Subsequently, the methodology and results of this research are presented. Lastly, the final remarks give insights into the outcome and limitations of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

Current State of Knowledge

First, this paragraph defines the notion of organizational identification and elaborates on the impact it can have on the functioning of an organization. The components of social identity and their impact on the extent of an individual's organizational identification are then discussed. Subsequently, a discussion on the measurement of organizational identification is provided, as well as a clarification of the relationship between organizational identification and

organizational commitment. Lastly, the research questions and hypotheses that flow from this theoretical framework are presented.

Defining Organizational Identification

In recent years, organization theorists have examined the ways people define themselves in terms of their relationships to organizations. From these examinations, several definitions of organizational identification have come forth, with varying scopes. In 1992, Mael & Tetrick defined organizational identification as the “tendency of individuals to perceive themselves and their groups or organizations as intertwined, sharing common qualities and faults, successes and failures, and common destinies” (Mael & Tetrick, 1992, p. 813). The word ‘intertwined’ suggests a large scope of the notion; for organizational identification to exist, the organization must make up a considerable part of an individual’s identity. A more modest definition of the notion was provided by Kreiner & Ashforth (2004), who put forth that organizational identification applies when organizational members “define themselves at least partly in terms of what the organization is thought to represent” (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, Kreiner and Ashforth’s definition of organizational identification is followed.

Numerous scholars have investigated the role organizational identification plays in the functioning of an organization. Several studies have been able to draw valuable conclusions that display organizational identification as essential to the success of many organizations. For instance, strong identification has been linked to “lower employee turnover, lower levels of burnout due to emotional labor, and increases in employee motivation, job satisfaction, and compliance with organizational dictates” (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Cheney, 1983; Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995, as cited in Pratt, 2001, p. 14). Moreover, organizational members who identify with their organizations are “more likely to make decisions and engage in sense making in ways that favor the organization” (Cheney, 1983; Pratt, 2000a, as cited in Pratt, 2001, p. 14).

Though the above-mentioned studies have interrogated the extent of employees' organizational identification and related constructs, the focus lies on the impact organizational identification has on the success of organizations. The point of view and potential gain of the organization are mainly considered. Moreover, identity attributes of employees are not taken into account when measuring the extent of their organizational identification. These studies therefore take on a top-down perspective.

Having defined the notion of organizational identification and its relevance to an organization's functioning, the next section relates the notion to the concept of social identity.

Organizational Identification and Social Identity

As mentioned in the introduction, this research approaches organizational identification from a bottom-up perspective. It does so by considering the components that make up an individual's social identity and the potential impact these components have on the extent of their organizational identification.

The notion of organizational identification is often approached in a psychological and sociological manner by relating it to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (1978). According to this theory, an individual's social identity is the "knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). As an organization can act as a potentially salient social category with which people can develop identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), Social Identity Theory has been widely applied to explain employee-organization relationships.

However, the notion of multiple identities is inherent to Social Identity Theory, as individuals may have as many social identities as they have group memberships. Thus, one of the main concerns in organizational identification is that members identify with "a social identity associated with organizational membership rather than identifying exclusively with a nonorganizational,

subgroup identity" (Pratt, 2001, p. 16). This concern is particularly applicable in today's society; organizations increasingly coordinate activities that span geographical, cultural and organizational boundaries. Cultural differences, for instance, can play a part in the extent of employees' organizational identification. The notion of culture represents "the values, beliefs and assumptions learned in early childhood that distinguish one group of people from another" (Newman & Nollen, 1996, p. 754, as cited in Mukherjee et al., 2012). Nowadays, culture constitutes one of the key issues and most significant challenges in cross-cultural work environments. The research gap in this area is therefore surprising. However, Mukherjee et al. (2012) provide a model of organizational identification for global virtual team members. This model considers how Hofstede's cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance may strengthen or attenuate the organizational identification of virtual team members. The first mentioned dimension may provide useful insights into how culture might influence organizational identification of team members, as it is "perhaps the most distinguishing cultural characteristic in terms of how various societies analyze and process social behaviors" (Mukherjee et al., 2012, p. 531). Individualism-collectivism "affects how an individual evaluates and prioritizes individual goals in relation to collective norms and goals" (Chevrier, 2003; Roth et al., 2011, as cited in Mukherjee et al., 2012, p. 531). The dimension of uncertainty avoidance relates to organizational identification as it "pertains to the degree to which organizational members want to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty in favor of clear goals and operating guidelines" (Mukherjee et al., 2012, p. 531). These cultural components of an individual's social identity are thus believed by the researchers of this study to have an impact on an individual's extent of organizational identification.

Next to cultural and racial diversity, an important distinction that must be made when it comes to organizational identification is between local employees and expatriates, i.e. "highly skilled temporary migrants" (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 295). Numerous studies have argued that the lives of many contemporary expatriates are strongly dominated by their occupation;

“not only did their jobs make them move abroad (often more than once), but their social contacts are frequently work related as well” (Hannerz, 1990; Burgers & Touborg, 2013; Beaverstock, 2005; Fechter, 2007; Nijman, 2007, as cited in Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 296). In a qualitative study, Van Bochove and Engbersen (2015) interviewed 75 expatriates in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. All participants moved to the Netherlands because of their highly skilled jobs with the intention to stay temporarily. The expatriates were questioned on their identification regarding three spheres of life: the economic, political and sociocultural. The study concluded that the 75 expatriates are connected to their organization in the sense that the main reason to move abroad is their job” (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 306). Additionally, their local network of friends “often consists principally of fellow expatriates” (Hannerz, 1990; Fechter, 2007, as cited in Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015, p. 306). These findings raise the assumption that the extent of organizational identification among expatriates is generally higher than among their local counterparts.

This section discussed the components that make up an individual’s social identity, as well as the impact of these components on the extent of an individual’s organizational identification. The next section focuses on the existing operationalizations of the construct of organizational identification.

Measuring Organizational Identification

In order to measure the construct of organizational identification, numerous measurement tools have been created in the past decades. Regarding organizational identification, Cheney’s (1982) Organizational Identification Questionnaire (OIQ), a 25-item scale, constitutes one of the earliest and most well-known operationalizations when it comes to this topic. However, in a more recent review of this questionnaire, Miller et al. (2000) argue that only 12 of the 25 items contribute meaningfully to the scale. Furthermore, these 12 items essentially constitute an affective measure of organiza-

tional commitment, not organizational identification as theorized (Miller et al., 2000). Therefore, Mael and Ashforth (1992) proposed a reformulated model of organizational identification. This 6-item scale reported a Cronbach's alpha of .87 in a questionnaire study of approximately 700 participants (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 110). It has become the main scale used to measure organizational identification.

According to Edwards (2005), however, the scale does not necessarily correspond closely to Mael and Ashforth's original conceptualization of the construct of organizational identification: "their OI scale is based on six items taken directly from a pre-existing scale of Identification with a Psychological Group developed by Mael and Tetrick (1992) and mainly designed to measure the extent to which people feel that they share experiences with their psychological group. Although individuals who identify with an organization may well indicate that they feel that they share experiences with a psychological group, this is not necessarily what the essence of organizational identification consists of" (Edwards, 2005, p. 223). Partly for this reason, Edwards & Peccei (2007) provided a more recent operationalization of the construct of organizational identification. Their 6-item scale is based on the definition of organizational identification as "a psychological linkage between the individual and the organization whereby the individual feels a deep, self-defining affective and cognitive bond with the organization as a social entity" (Edwards & Peccei, 2007, p. 30). Two studies investigating employee attitudes in an NHS mental health Trust in the United Kingdom were carried out by Edwards & Peccei (2007) in order to test the scale. The first study included a sample of 676 respondents whereas the second study included a sample of 768 employees. In both studies, reliability for the overall scale combining all six items was high: the first study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .89 and the second study reported a Cronbach's alpha of .93 (Edwards & Peccei, 2007, p. 44).

The next section discusses the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment, as well as the existing tools to measure organizational commitment.

Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

The notion of organizational identification is closely related to the construct of organizational commitment. Meyer & Allen (1991) conceptualize organizational commitment by describing the three themes it generally reflects: "Affective attachment to the organization, perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, and obligation to remain with the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 64). Despite the close connection and similarities in that both organizational identification and organizational commitment involve a sense of attachment to or resonance with the organization, Mael & Ashforth (1992) theoretically differentiated the two concepts. According to them, organizational identification is self-referential as it reflects "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) of which he or she is a member" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). Organizational commitment, to the contrary, is not self-referential; "it emphasizes an emotional attachment and positive attitude towards the organization, but the self and the organization remain separate entities" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 333). In contrast, organizational identification reflects a perceived "oneness" with the organization, as the "individual's identity and fate become intertwined with those of the organization" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 333).

Though organizational identification and organizational commitment are two distinct constructs, previous studies have shown a correlation between them. Van Knippenberg & Sleebos (2006), for example, distinguished identification from commitment in a questionnaire study, yet found that the two constructs were correlated with $r=0.67$ in a sample of 200 faculty members of a Dutch university. Similarly, Gautam et al. (2004) assessed the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment by making use of Cheney's OIQ and Mowday et al.'s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Mowday et al. define organizational

commitment as a person's: (1) belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) desire to maintain membership (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, as cited in Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 105). The study of Gautam et al. found a correlation of $r=0.80$ between organizational identification and attitudinal organizational commitment (Gautam et al., 2004, p. 310).

Having clarified the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment, the following section discusses the research questions and hypotheses that flow naturally from the current theoretical framework.

Research framework

The previous paragraphs have defined the notion of organizational identification and discussed the existing research on the impact organizational identification has on the functioning of organizations. As several studies have proven this impact to be positive, organizations should consider measurements of the extent of organizational identification among their employees as highly relevant. These assessments can only be carried out within a particular organization, as organizational identification is "a phenomenon that cannot be studied outside the context in which it occurs" (Dasgupta, 2015, p. 151). As a case study can be defined as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 13), the current research will apply the concept of organizational identification to the specific context of the Dutch site of an American multinational. It will do so by investigating the following matter: *To what extent do employees of the Dutch site of a multinational organization consider this organization a part of their identity?*

Two sub-questions are involved in answering this research question. In an attempt to make a small contribution to filling the void in the existing literature, this research examines the relationship between social identity

and organizational identification. To this end, the following sub-question has been formulated: *To what extent does organizational identification differ between Dutch and international employees?* Based on the research of Tsui et al. (1992) and Chattopadhyay (1999) on racial diversity, and the studies of Van Bochove and Engbersen (2015), Hannerz (1990) and Fechter (2007) on identification of expatriates, the following hypothesis has been formulated: *International employees consider the organization to be a part of their identity more so than Dutch employees.*

The second sub-question flows from the literature review regarding the relationship between organizational identification and organizational commitment: *To what extent does a correlation exist between organizational identification and organizational commitment?* Based on the studies of Van Knippenberg & Sleebos (2006) and Gautam et al. (2004), the hypothesis for this question is the following: *A positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment.*

The main research-question and sub-questions could bring valuable findings to light that have both scientific and social relevance. The scientific relevance lies in this study's bottom-up approach; the impact of employees' social identities on the extent of their organizational identification is explored. The social relevance lies in this research' application on a multinational company operating on a global scale. As the current theoretical framework has shown, the extent of organizational identification of employees and its correlation with organizational commitment can be of utter importance to the functioning of multinational companies.

Materials and Methods

This section describes in detail the sample, measures and procedure that were used and followed in the course of this quantitative survey study. Survey studies aim at "describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101). The main data collection

method in surveys is the use of questionnaires. Dörnyei explains the popularity of questionnaires as due to the fact that they are “relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 101/102). Moreover, questionnaires provide quantitative data that allow for statistical analysis. As this study aims to investigate the perceptions of a large group of employees and analyze the statistical behaviour of these perceptions, a questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data.

Sample and procedure

The collection of participants for this study was done through convenience sampling; all participants in the target group were approached with the researcher having no influence on who responds. The only criterion for the participants of this study was to be employed at the Dutch site of this particular multinational organization. After the questionnaire was put together with the software Qualtrics, an invitation to participate in this research was sent through email by the HR department to all 934 employees of the company site. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a general introduction described the purpose of this study (vaguely, so as to not influence the participants), promised confidentiality and anonymity and gave a word of gratitude. The participants were asked to give their informed consent and subsequently directed to the questions of the questionnaire.

The email containing the invitation was sent on the 19th of February, 2020. On the 4th of March, 2020, a reminder was sent stating that the questionnaire could be completed up to and including the 6th of March, 2020. In total, the questionnaire was open for 16 days.

In total, 296 of the 934 employees filled in the questionnaire. This accounts for a response rate of 31.6%. Of these 296 participants, 215 are Dutch and 81 have a non-Dutch nationality. These nationalities include but are not limited to American (n=5), Azerbaijan (n=1), Bangladeshi (n=2), Belgian (n=5), British (n=4),

Croatian (n=1), French (n=3), German (n=5), Indian (n=6), Irish (n=3), Mexican (n=1), Mongolian (n=1), Polish (n=3), Syrian (n=1) and Tunisian (n=2). The majority of the non-Dutch participants has been living in the Netherlands less than 6 month (n=23), between 6 months and 1 year (n=26) or between 10 and 30 years (n=14).

The male/female division of the total sample is 226/65. This was to be expected based on the knowledge that female employees make up around 20% of the location's workforce. However, the male/female division differs strongly between the Dutch and non-Dutch group of employees: the division of the Dutch group is 176/36 while that of the non-Dutch group is 50/29. Ages of the total sample range from 25 to 67, with the average age being approximately 45.² Most participants are either between 25 and 35 years of age (n=66), 35 and 45 years of age (n=77), or 45 and 55 years of age (n=92). Lastly, 133 of the 296 participants have been working at the company between 1 and 5 years. The second largest group has been working there between 5 and 10 years (n=62) and the third largest group between 10 and 20 years (n=53). Lastly, 27 participants have been working at the site between 20 and 30 years.

Measures

In order to measure the construct of organizational identification, the 6-item scale developed by Edwards and Peccei (2007) was used. The current study found this scale to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .89$). Originally, this scale is to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale. However, a study of Benítez Baena et al. (2016) compared the extent of extreme response style, i.e. choosing the extremes of a scale, between Dutch participants and Spanish participants. Results indicated that extreme responding is more common among Spanish than among Dutch, this last group's responses being generally more moderate (Benítez Baena et al., 2016; as cited in Kimmelmeier, 2016, p. 443). As

2. As participants' ages were questioned in groups (1=18-25, 2=25-35, 3=35-45, 4=45-55, 5=55-65, 6=65+), the exact average age cannot be calculated. The group mean amounts to 4.11, hence the average age of 'approximately 45'.

this study's sample consists for the majority of Dutch participants, the use of a 5-point Likert scale could potentially be limiting. Therefore, this study makes use of 7-point Likert scale.

In order to measure the construct of organizational commitment, Mowday et al.'s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) was used. This questionnaire consists of 15 items which are to be answered on a 7-point Likert scale. Though the scale is quite dated, it is the most frequently used scale to measure the construct of organizational commitment and its reliability is well documented; the Cronbach's alpha values lie between .82 and .93 (Mowday et al., 1992, as cited in Kanning & Hill, 2013, p. 12). A more recent validation of the OCQ is provided by Kanning and Hill (2013), who reported a Cronbach's alpha of .87 with a sample of 348 participants in the United States and Canada (Kanning & Hill, 2013, p. 17). After recoding the negatively worded items, the current study found the OCQ to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .80$).

The items in the above-mentioned questionnaires constitute attitudinal questions. According to Dörnyei (2007), these type of questions are used to "find out what people think, covering attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests and values" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102). As this study seeks to examine the perceptions of employees regarding the extent of their organizational identification, attitudinal questions are of utter importance.

Next to these attitudinal questions, some factual questions were included at the end of the questionnaire. These questions are used to "find out certain facts about the respondents, such as demographic characteristics" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102). The participants were asked to fill in the following personal information: gender, age, years worked at the company, nationality and years lived in the Netherlands. When questioning nationality, it is important to take into account the tolerance of multiple nationalities that prevails in the European Union (Kochenov, 2011). As the possibility of participants having more than one nationality exists, two questions were added next to the first question of "What is your nationality?". The second question is the following: "If you have a second nationality, please fill it in here". As it is important for the purpose

of this study to make a distinction between the nationalities of participants, only one nationality was considered for each participant. Therefore, a third question has been formulated: "If you have two nationalities, please fill in here which one you identify with the most."

In order to first gain the trust of the participants, these demographic questions were left at the end of the questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 111), together with the terminating, open-ended question of "Is there anything you would like to share?". This question, allowing participants to mention information that they feel is necessary for the researcher to know, was placed at the end of the questionnaire so as to ensure that the "other items will not be affected by the potential negative consequences of the open-ended question (for example, the required work can put some people off)" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 112).

After completion of the data collection, all data from the questionnaires were put in the software SPSS, so as to allow statistical analysis. To define whether a significant difference exists between Dutch and non-Dutch employees regarding the extent to which they identify with the company, an independent samples t-test was performed between these two groups. Moreover, to test the second hypothesis of a correlation between organizational identification and organizational commitment, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated.

Results

This section discusses the results of the statistical analysis of the obtained data. First, the descriptive statistics that are relevant to this research are presented. The subsequent section elaborates on the inferential statistics pertaining to the results.

Descriptive Statistics

Tables 1 and 2 show the descriptive statistics of the two constructs determined in the methodology section: organizational identification and

organizational commitment. In both tables, the data is shown as a function of both nationality and gender. This is done because the nationality of the participants (Dutch or non-Dutch) is relevant to the purpose of this study, as well as to show that gender is not evenly distributed among the participants.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Employees' Organizational Identification on a Scale of 1 to 7 and as a Function of Nationality and Gender

	Dutch employees			International employees			Total		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Sex									
Male	4.96	1.14	175	5.31	1.13	50	5.04	1.14	225
Female	4.94	1.10	36	5.18	0.93	29	5.05	1.02	65
Different	-	-	-	4.17	-	1	4.17	-	1
Not specified	4.83	0.60	3	5.50	-	1	5.00	0.59	4
Total	4.96	1.12	214	5.25	1.05	81	5.04	1.11	295

Source: own study.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Employees' Organizational Commitment on a scale of 1 to 7 and as a Function of Nationality and Gender

	Dutch employees			International employees			Total		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Sex									
Male	4.68	0.90	175	4.93	0.88	50	4.74	0.90	225
Female	4.84	0.89	36	4.79	0.96	29	4.82	0.91	65
Different	-	-	-	3.73	-	1	3.73	-	1
Not specified	4.24	1.25	3	5.93	-	1	4.67	1.33	4
Total	4.70	0.90	214	4.88	0.91	81	4.75	0.91	295

Source: own study.

Inferential Statistics

The mean of the total sample regarding the construct of organizational identification is 5.04 ($SD = 1.11$). In order to determine whether international employees differ from Dutch employees regarding the extent to which they identify with the company, an independent samples t -test was carried out. This t -test shows that the 215 Dutch employees ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.12$) and the 81 international employees ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.05$) differ significantly from each other when it comes to the construct of organizational identification ($t(293) = -2.03$, $p = .04$, $d = 0.27$). This suggests that international employees identify with the company to a greater extent compared to Dutch employees. Additionally, an independent samples t -test was carried out to determine whether the two groups differ from each other regarding the extent of their organizational commitment. This t -test shows that international employees ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.91$) do not differ significantly from Dutch employees ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.90$) when it comes to this construct ($t(293) = -1.49$, $p = .14$).

In order to assess the relationship between the constructs of organizational identification ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.11$) and organizational commitment ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.91$), a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. As shown in table 3, results indicate that a significant positive correlation exists between these two constructs ($r(295) = .81$, $p < .001$). This suggests that the higher an employee's organizational identification, the higher his/her organizational commitment, and vice versa.

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Between the Constructs of Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

Variable		Commitment	Identification
Commitment	Pearson Correlation	1	.812**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	295	295

Identification	Pearson Correlation	.812**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	295	295

Source: own study.

Final Remarks

This chapter first concludes this study by summarizing the results and responding to the research questions. Subsequently, the findings of this study are connected to the literature that was discussed in the theoretical framework. Additionally, light is shed on the managerial implications that the results of this study entail. Lastly, the limitations of this study are discussed, as well as suggestions for future research.

Conclusion

This research applied the concept of organizational identification to a specific organizational context by investigating the following matter: *To what extent do employees of the Dutch site of a multinational organization consider this organization a part of their identity?* Table 1 in the previous chapter shows that the mean for organizational identification of the total sample is 5.04 ($SD = 1.11$). Considering the 7-point Likert scale that was used, this is equivalent to the answer option of “somewhat agree” on the six items of the scale of Edwards & Peccei (2007). Employees thus consider the company a part of their identity to a moderate extent.

The first sub-question of this research was the following: *To what extent does organizational identification differ between Dutch and international employees?* The previous chapter concluded that the formulated hypothesis, i.e. *International employees consider the organization to be a part of their identity more so than Dutch employees*, can be confirmed; an independent samples *t*-test shows a significant difference between the two groups, with

international employees ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.05$) obtaining a higher score for organizational identification than Dutch employees ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.12$). As reflected in its effect size ($d = 0.27$), this difference can be considered small, yet significant.

Lastly, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed in order to answer the second sub-question: *To what extent does a correlation exist between organizational identification and organizational commitment?* Table 3 in the previous chapter indicates that the following hypothesis can be confirmed: *A positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment.* A correlation of .81 was found, which suggests that the two constructs are closely related; the higher an employee's organizational identification, the higher his/her organizational commitment, and vice versa.

Organizational Identification and Social Identity

This study contributes to the literature on organizational identification by approaching this topic from a bottom-up perspective. It does so by analyzing the impact that employees' social identities have on the extent of their organizational identification. Specifically, the theoretical framework relates the notion of organizational identification to Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory by considering several social categories that individuals can identify with. An organization can act as such a category for its employees, as organizational identification occurs when employees consider the organization a part of their identity. However, as mentioned earlier, the notion of multiple identities is inherent to Social Identity Theory, as individuals may have as many social identities as they have group memberships. In addition to organizational membership, individuals can derive their identity from cultural, racial and/or expatriate membership. The body of research discussed (Pratt, 2001; Mukherjee et al., 2012; Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015) suggests that the prevalence of these latter memberships in an individual's identity influences

the extent of their organizational identification. Particularly when it comes to the difference between local employees and expatriates, the findings of Van Bochove & Engbersen (2015) raise the assumption that the extent of organizational identification among expatriates is generally higher than among their local counterparts; international employees' social networks in their host country are smaller than those of Dutch employees, leaving Dutch employees with more social categories to identify with. Additionally, expatriates' social networks often consist mainly of other expatriates working at the same organization. As a result, international employees are reminded of their organizational membership more so than Dutch employees (Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015). These findings led to the hypothesis of international employees considering the company to be a part of their identity more so than Dutch employees. Though a small effect size, the mean score of international employees regarding the construct of organizational identification is significantly higher than that of Dutch employees. The former hypothesis is thus confirmed. In light of the existent literature, this was to be expected.

Managerial Implications

What remains though, is the question as to what the implications of this result are for this particular company and similar organizations. Both Dutch and international employees identify with the organization to a moderate extent, with Dutch employees running behind on international employees. As it is presumable that Dutch employees have more group memberships and, as a result, more social identities, the question that needs to be addressed is how organizational identification is influenced by the pursuit of other identities.

Organizational identification research has long focused on a single primary identity, i.e. that of the individual's identification with the organization (Mael & Tetrick, 1992; Pratt, 2001; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Building on this, the most evident implication of this research would be for the company to try and increase the share that this organization occupies in the social identity

of their employees. However, Fombelle et al. (2011) argue against this and encourage the leveraging of employees' multiple identities. The findings of their quantitative survey research show that "the pursuit of other identities in the context of an organization leads to stronger organizational identification, especially if the organizational context simultaneously facilitates the pursuit of these other identities (that is, the member experienced a synergy among the other identities and the organizational identity)" (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 588). In addition, Fombelle et al. conclude that an increase in the perception of identity synergy is positively related to an increase in peer identification: "... enacting important social identities while interacting with other members of the organization increases the individual's feelings of familiarity with - and thus connections to - fellow members of the organization" (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 593). In turn, an increase in peer identification leads to an increase in organizational identification as employees identify with and appreciate the organization more when they become tied to other organizational members (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 593).

The findings of the present study, as well as those of the study of Fombelle et al. (2011), entail several managerial implications. In order to increase organizational identification among both Dutch and international employees, the company should "encourage the incorporation of the members' important identities into that of the organizational to facilitate synergy" (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 599). For example, providing childcare and sports facilities lets employees know that the company understands what is important in their lives and is willing to support their other relevant identities, such as their identity as a parent or sports enthusiast. Furthermore, group activities that facilitate peer-to-peer interactions, encourage relationships, and create a sense of community within the organization, e.g. team building activities, are critical; they allow the organization to transform a naturally existing phenomenon already happening within their organization, i.e. employee interactions, into a means to bond individuals more strongly to the organization (Fombelle et al., 2011, p. 599). It is vital for the multinational organizations of today to

understand that their efforts cannot be centered on the creation of one focal identity amidst their diverse workforce. Rather, managers need to acknowledge the full portfolio of identities their employees seek to enact.

Organizational Identification and Organizational Commitment

As discussed earlier, strong organizational identification among employees has many positive effects on an organization's functioning; it has been linked to "lower employee turnover, lower levels of burnout due to emotional labor, and increases in employee motivation, job satisfaction, and compliance with organizational dictates" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Cheney, 1983; Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1995, as cited in Pratt, 2001). Regarding the outcomes of organizational commitment, Steers (1977) found effects similar to those of organizational identification, as he found the construct to be significantly related to lower employee turnover: "Strong support was found for the proposition that commitment is associated with increases in an employee's desire and intent to remain with an organization" (Steers, 1977, p. 54). A different effect was found by Aryee & Tan (1992), whose findings showed a significant positive correlation between organizational commitment and career commitment. Career commitment is defined here as an individual's affective identification with a series of related jobs in a specific field of work. This identification is expressed through the ability to cope with disappointments in the pursuit of career goals (Aryee & Tan, 1992, p. 289). The positive correlation between the constructs of organizational commitment and career commitment may be explained in terms of an employing organization that provides a climate which promotes the ideals and goals of a specific occupation: "The pursuit of a career role in this occupation in such an organization will heighten one's commitment to the organization and subsequently to one's career" (Hall, Schneider & Nygren, 1970, as cited in Aryee & Tan, 1992, p. 293). More recently, Kaplan & Kaplan (2018) found affective

commitment to have a positive and significant effect on work performance.

The studies mentioned in the theoretical framework (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006; Gautam et al., 2004) led to the hypothesis of a positive correlation between organizational identification and organizational commitment. By having confirmed this hypothesis, this study has provided the organizational identity literature with yet another piece of evidence of the relationship between these two constructs.

However, when it comes to the positive correlation between organizational identification and organizational commitment, it should be noted that the meanings of these two notions are closely related. Though Mael and Ashforth (1992) have theoretically differentiated the two concepts, several definitions of organizational commitment strongly resemble those of organizational identification. This is true in particular for Mowday et al.'s (1979) definition of organizational commitment as a person's: (1) belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, (2) willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, and (3) desire to maintain membership (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, as cited in Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 105). Mainly the first aspect of this definition closely relates to Mael & Tetrick's (1992) definition of organizational identification: "the tendency of individuals to perceive themselves and their groups or organizations as intertwined, sharing common qualities and faults, successes and failures, and common destinies" (Mael & Tetrick, 1992, p. 813). When considering this study's finding of a significant positive correlation between these two constructs, the thin line between their meanings thus needs to be kept in mind.

Managerial Implications

This study has confirmed that a positive correlation exists between organizational identification and organizational commitment among employees of the Dutch site of a multinational company. This suggests that when the company works to increase organizational identification among its employees,

it can expect an increase in organizational commitment as well. Inversely, efforts to increase organizational commitment may simultaneously result in increased organizational identification.

The article discussed several ways organizations can increase organizational identification among employees (i.e. encouraging identity synergy and facilitating peer-to-peer activities). When it comes to organizational commitment, however, few management intervention strategies exist that specifically address increasing this phenomenon. One strategy was developed by Nyhan (1999), who found interpersonal trust, particularly between supervisors and employees, to be key to increasing affective commitment in public organizations. According to Nyhan, three practices are integral to successful trust building interventions in public organizations: "(a) participation in decision making, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) feedback from and to employees" (Nyhan, 1999, p. 64). Similarly, Bhatti et al. (2011) found empirical evidence to support the view that practices like direct employee participation can influence organizational commitment: "Organizations interested in their growth and in a highly committed work force must involve their employees in decision making processes" (Bhatti et al., 2011, p. 22).

Limitations

The implications of this study should be considered in the light of its limitations. First, it is important to note that the mean difference between Dutch ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.12$) and international employees ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.05$) regarding organizational identification is of a relatively small size; just big enough to be considered significant. Moreover, both standard deviations are quite big, implicating a less accurate mean. The small size of the mean difference is reflected in the effect size ($d = 0.27$) which is, although not negligible, considered to be small. Looking back on the literature discussed and the hypothesis that flowed from this, it is fair to say that the difference between the two groups was expected to be of a larger size.

Additionally, the negative formulation of some items in the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire needs to be considered. Though the reliability of this measure has been proven on numerous occasions (see section 3.3), the present study included, several participants found the negative formulations to be a source of confusion. Moreover, recent research has shown the ineffectiveness of reverse worded items as a means of reducing or preventing response bias, particularly acquiescence: "Acquiescence cannot be prevented by reversing, and more errors will be made due to inattention or confusion" (Van Sonderen et al., 2013, p. 6).

Suggestions for Future Research

In general, more research needs to be done into the difference in organizational identification between local and international employees. The present study is one of the few to address the impact cultural differences and expatriate membership have on the extent to which employees identify with their organization. As companies are facing increasingly diverse workforces, expertise of the difference in organizational identification between local and expatriate employees is crucial. Therefore, more scientific insight is needed into the magnitude of this difference, as well as what constitutes the most efficient way to measure organizational identification among employees of multinational organizations. Though the current research has made use of quantitative methods, allowing information to be gained about a large group of people, qualitative methods are worth exploring in the future. Interviews, for instance, would allow a case study to be examined in more detail, shedding light on the underlying perceptions and motives of the research subjects.

Lastly, more experimental research is needed to investigate how organizational identification and organizational commitment can be increased in real-life contexts. As this study has shown, both of these constructs have positive outcomes on the functioning of organizations. Well-founded advice



based on scientific research as to what practical changes managers can make to achieve these positive outcomes, is of utter value.

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Beyond the Subjective Experience of Visual Information in the Modern Media

ABSTRACT

Objective: According to researchers, visibility appeals to the cognitive aspects of image consumption, hence, the nature of information technologies becomes more important than the content itself. Based on this relevance, the article's aim is twofold: when seeking to better understand the phenomenon of visual information to analyse the visual communication experience of public relation professionals who apply visual solutions to achieve a specific effect in their work.

Methodology: A quasi-structured in-depth interview of the experts and the method of interpretive phenomenological analysis were used to gather and process the data of the research.

Findings: The paper presents insights into the interaction between receiver's visual information experience and one's world view. The research revealed that the visual information influences a person's perception and interpretation of a message when it serves as supplement for information alongside text in press, advertisement, etc.

Value Added: Based on the research, the visual information experience was defined as an instantaneous action of giving meaning to personal experience and imagination by finding the intersection of narratives between the image and oneself.

Recommendations: A narrow boundary exists between the stimulation and constriction of the observer's imagination when analysing the visual message. With the help of image communication, a new reality can be created. To reach effective communication, it is recommended to avoid abstract images that allow the observer's imagination to give it whole other meanings than intended by the sender of the message.

Key words: visual culture, visual communication, public relations, modern media, phenomenology

JEL codes: M3, D83

Introduction

The article deals with an effect of individual's subjective experience on their understanding and explanation of visual information.

Although role of visuality traditionally was examined in advertising (e.g. Daly, 2017), currently, much wider range of professionals are interested in visual culture. The attention for visual information from the experts of culture, philosophy, public communication, social psychology, and others indicates that the so-called visual shift is a real phenomenon in our time. Visuals communicate and stimulate the imagination more immediately than words (Tascon, 2019). The domination of visuality is linked to the entrenchment of informational and telecommunication technologies and new opportunities to spread information through images. Visuality consists not only of what an individual sees directly, but also of what they experience in relation with the image, how they feel. In other words, every person has his „internal vision“

which can not necessarily coincide with the visuality expressed externally. Such an intersubjective process becomes a challenge not only for the recipient of the visual information who is being attacked by ads, plaques and other visual solutions, but firstly for the sender who does not have a guaranteed answer how will the message they are communicating will be interpreted when it reaches the recipient's mind.

Here, it is important to highlight that researchers sometimes stand out in discussion about possibility to characterise visual culture. Some of them argue that visual culture does not exist, and we can talk about commonalities of particular societal groups only (Davis, 2011). Nevertheless, other authors state that visual culture is a concept linked with ocularcentrism (e.g. Yun-Qi, 2015), when in the environment filled with media, visuals and audiovisuals it creates contemporary moment and alternative time and space (Parikka, 2018). According to Tascon (2019), „We tend to trust visual images (in the mistaken belief that the camera cannot lie) and to accept their validity and veracity“.

Visuality appeals to the cognitive and phenomenological aspects of image consumption (Tascon, 2019), and it even became a sign of postmodern culture which highlights consumerist society (Rubavičius, 2014; Appignanesi et al., 2007). Thus, the nature of information technologies becomes more important than the content itself (McLuhan, 1994).

Mitchell (1984) was one of the first to talk about the effect of individual's memories, imagination and other subconsciousness factors on the interpretation of visual information, nevertheless, there is still a gap in research on intersubjective experience of visual information. Therefore, in the article, we highlight the interaction between the image and the individual based on the reverse direction of relationship. We discuss the influence of an individual on the visual information. In other words, we are examining how the visual experience of each individual returns, how it manifests through their acts of visual communication and/or products they are creating. In our research, we describe the phenomenon of visual information experience by developing the cultural discourse based on phenomenological research.

The data for the research was gathered through a qualitative analysis – an in-depth interview and processed using methods of interpretational phenomenological analysis.

The paper consists of three main sections: the research theoretical background, the research methodology, and the research results. In the end of the article, the research findings are provided.

Theoretical highlights of visual communication and person's individual experience

In the times of communication technology breakthrough, the studies of visibility are being expanded by experts of not only art, philosophy and psychology but also representatives of fields that conventionally have nothing in common with image creation and sight effect on the viewer – business management, public relations, marketing, social communication and other. The latter communication technologies are exclusively based on visibility and in that way create a new - visual culture that includes all the aspects of commonly treated culture:

„It is more and more clear that the relationship between a man and media or technology in general are created by not only him <...>, they become an individual's mental, symbolic and technical environment. <...> Subjective representation is also becoming very advertising, thus motivating the production and consumption of sights, pictures and images. <...> we live in a time of great technological shift or even progress into a new techno sapiens evolution phase". (Rubavičius, 2010, p. 203).

A great influence for the study of visibility had the theory of visual (pictorial) turn authored by Mitchell (1984). He claimed that visual turn in society's everyday life urges to shift the attention to new aspects of visibility, and visibility in language at first. Mitchell also emphasized the problem of surge of image. He raised such questions as what the relationships of images with verbal language are, how images affect the observer and the world or vice versa, and how the observer and the world affect the images (Mitchell, 1984; 2002).

Mitchell's ideas were supported by Boehm (1994) who suggested a theory of iconic turn. According to him, a strong image is one that makes the portrayed object actually visible, comprehended, starts to exist and comes alive. Strong and affective images make one see that which is not portrait. In general, Boehm talks not about what and how the observer sees, but rather what the image shows, i.e. about the influence and power of the image to manipulate meanings.

Mitchell's and Boehm's ideas of „pictoriality“ and „iconology“ formed a new paradigm shift in Western thinking (2009). Based on the works of Mitchell and Boehm, two dominant directions of visuality discourse have developed. The first one states that in the mind of the consumers, image surpasses the status of sign and medium, that the image is somewhere between the sensual experience, interpersonal and societal relationships and existence. The other one claims that an image has a distinctive value of comprehension. In other words, every observer that is in an intersection point of personal experience and imagination can see and interpret the image differently, convey different ideas of the author of the image.

In turn, Jameson (1998) distinguishes two characteristics of visuality culture. Those are i) the transformation of reality into images, and ii) the fragmentation of time into many continuous, eternal now. According to Ap-pignanesi et al. (2007), the modern time of visual culture can be recognized by three features: reproduction of original creations, aura of consumers and image consumption. Thus, the modern times have one special exclusivity compared to the culture features that were dominant in earlier times – a sceptical approach to universal truth as images allow everyone to create one's own, separate truth, one's own reality. Due to this reason, the world of every person in the postmodern culture is subjective. New possibilities of consumption and products, rapid rhythm of style change, development of the media and technology culture are but a few characteristics that lead to situations where not only individuals but also the society do not distinguish reality from illusion. Desires and aims are stimulated by images and concrete

consumption locations that cause direct physical excitement and aesthetic pleasure (Guogis, Rakšnys, 2014). If popular culture were treated as a medium for socialization and dominant of visuality, it could be stated that image is manipulating human emotions. The boundaries between art and entertainment, culture and consumerism disappear. The terms are mostly dictated by the media as the formulated images affect the nature of communication more and more. Visual literacy becomes relevant – the idea that an image can be „read” (Vidauskytė, 2014). It seems that in this situation, the main creator of visual communication and guarantor of effectiveness is not the sender of the message but its recipient. The user interaction with visual in a process of communication is highlighted by Tascon (2019), whereas Brown (2010) goes on talking about visual consumer’s „inner layer of the world”.

In this context, it is natural that creators and consumers of visual communication run into challenges that in earlier times would raise questions about one’s sanity. One of the challenges is the inability to give an answer to the question: which is more real – the reality or its image. Creations of cinema, internet, television and photography, their digital and cinematography reproductions are not only images where one is invited to look at. It is an environment of a human living. The screen becomes a peculiar environment and everyday existence in the world, a psychosocial medium. Seeing becomes inseparable from sight and comprehension while our personal experiences become a basis that influence the value of what is seen. According to Yun-Qi (2015) who discuss the influence of occularcentrism on the visual culture, sight can be equated to mind gaze, i.e. gaze that leads to truth and knowledge. Undoubtedly, the content of visual message or the colour, form or design of the image are the main factors that influence the effectiveness of communication. The main moment – the percept – lies deep inside every one of us. Thus, pictorial artifacts should be comprehended as only the means of communication. Returning to the thought that nothing is real and every phenomenon is what we personally experience it to be and the world as no other meaning except for the one that we give it (Hoffman, 2011),

it has to be acknowledged that consciousness cannot experience images in ways other than how the images are shown to us or how they look to us.

Here it can be stated that image along with consciousness is always situative. Hence, only the analysis of a subject and experience give the opportunity to come closer to the analysed phenomenon. The problem of comprehension is examined through phenomenological approach with good reason. A phenomenological method which allows to eliminate the need to react to prejudice and stereotypes allows to concentrate the attention to the essence of the subject, which is why it is especially favourable when analysing questions of art and aesthetics.

From a phenomenological perspective, the value of images is not influenced by images that exist or have existed but rather the fact that they allow new shapes emerge. There are no equal experiences and even if a person tries to conceptualize and generalize them, it remains relative (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). Through images, the individual sees not what reality looks like, but what it could look like. In other words, picture, image and reality become one in the mind of individual subject when the observed sight as an artifact becomes invisible to the observer but creates meaning by waking his imagination and inspiring change or abstention from change initiation.

Based on the discussed approach, the experience of „world participants“ or „observers of reality“ cannot be evaluated in categories of „correct“ sight, value or other ranking categories. However, the experience of some individuals, when the view observed wakes imagination and creative initiative, transforms into generation of new pictures and images which in turn influences other individuals. The research we present in this article is exactly about that.

Research methodology

The phenomenon of visual experience requires a specific research instrument. When modeling the research, analysis of the methodological literature revealed that the essential task of research of such nature should not be the

interest in the quantitative parameters of the phenomenon (if such parameters can even be defined at all) by invoking statistical and other calculation methods but rather the examination of image „participant’s” emotions, senses, experience interpretation, behavior and other qualitative categories. Taking on this approach, qualitative research has the required characteristics as it is defined as systematic, unstructured analysis of an individual, group or situation in an attempt to understand the researched phenomenon in a natural environment (Hochman, 2014; Manovich, 2016). The methodology of qualitative research is based on the philosophical paradigm of phenomena, explained in an individualistic approach which is one of the main sources of image comprehension. The research relies on an assumption that the dominance of visibility is a phenomenon which is intersubjective on its own. Due to this essential reason, phenomenological analysis was chosen as the strategy of the research, the main goal of which was to reveal the individual experiences in an attempt to define the phenomenon.

Research method. The research invoked Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is an analysis method for qualitative data which analyses phenomenologically focused approach to personal interpretations of experience. Using the method, the attention is focused on an individual experience rather than on what is common. The choice of IPA was influenced by fairly concrete procedure of the analysis, room for interpretations of the researcher and adaptation for further research and interpretation of the changes of the phenomenon (Smith, 1996). When using IPA, the existence of difference between what really takes place and what the subject understands is acknowledged (Osborne, Smith, 2007). Returning to the arguments presented in the theoretical part of the article that validate the approach that individual’s subjective view of the image is influenced by their own baggage of experiences and this view does not necessarily coincide with the view of the author, it is confirmed once more that IPA is a method appropriate for defining the phenomenon of visual communication. The method is interpretive because the research is carried out as a dynamic process of collaboration

between two or more people. The role of the researcher is also specific as it is namely his own internal attitude and personal comprehension of the phenomenon that allows to provide the examined phenomenon with a new tone or meaning in the end of the interpretational process.

Research participants. The research participants were invited according to their work field and communication experience. Experts were sought out who would represent both the sender and the recipient of visual information. Such choice was influenced by the expectation that an expert has competences of visual communication literacy which makes the biggest influence on the opportunity to universally interpret the units of visual information. The criteria for the selection of respondents were as follows:

- daily work is in public communication, public relations, or advertising;
- at least ten years of work experience in the field;
- acknowledged as professional in the international market;
- reached exceptional results in his/her professional work.

Finally, five experts were chosen for the interview. Selection of a small group was methodologically significant decision because the phenomenological interview for data analysis is based on an ideographic principle (in-depth analysis of each case), hence, the participants of the research were supposed to represent a perspective, not a population. Legal protection of personal data was implemented when analysing research results, thus, the data that could help identify the respondents are not given in the paper. Table 1 gives only a general information about interview participants.

Table 1. Participants of the research

No.	Code	Gender	Age	Work specifics	Work experience in communication
1.	R1	F	41	Head of an advertising and marketing agency, an author of books for children	15 years

2.	R2	M	36	Head of the public communication department in a business organization	12 years
3.	R3	F	52	Partner in a public relations agency, PR consultant	26 years
4.	R4	F	49	Coach in the area of trademarks and company image management, head of marketing department in a business organization	24 years
5.	R5	M	43	Author of documentary films and books, publisher, photographer	22 years

Source: compiled by authors.

Data gathering method. For this interview, an in-depth non-structured interview was chosen where only the introductory and essential questions were prepared in advance and only the general topics for discussion are given. Such interview allows to reach a desired depth of discussion and relation with respondent through unplanned questions and reactions. Non-structured interview allows to ensure the main principles of IPA: to analyze the comprehension of the phenomenon; examine the meaning given to the analyzed experience; remember that the both the respondent and the researcher are making interpretations; distinguish differences and only then look for similarities, the generalization of which provide the results of the research.

Research process. Before the meeting, the participants of the research were provided with an extended presentation of the goals and tasks of the research. The interviews took place in an environment acceptable to the respondents. At the start of the research, the interviewees were presented with context material: advertisements from the press, illustrated text messages on the news, trailers of culture events etc. Firstly, the respondents were asked to evaluate the visual impression and effect of the information received, later they were invited to think how concrete image-impression meanings and interpretations form, what personal associations the image raises or what percept it creates. Due to the researched experts being

well prepared to speak about the possibilities of the effect of visuality and to define their own personal visual experience both through emotion and content interpretation prisms, in the end of the discussion they were asked to formulate a substantive definition of image experience.

Research ethics. The questions of the interview were formulated in a way that they would reveal the respondents' experience in a relation with the object rather than dictate the researcher's attitude to the researched phenomenon. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, their names were encoded.

Process of research result analysis. All interviews were analyzed as separate and independent from one another. When generalizing, the similarities between answers were grouped into common topics, based on which the phenomenological definition of visual information experience was formed and possible benefit for visual culture and communication science and practice fields was defined and structured.

Research limitations. When applying the conclusions of the research in practice, it is necessary to take into consideration that the audience of public communication and in turn visual communication is very broad and varied. Due to this reason, the insights of the interviewees reflect only the characteristics of a specific audience's experience.

Research results

During the analysis of the interview results, topics similar in content were combined and main ideas were highlighted. Table 2 presents the results of the research. As can be seen, main groups of topics that define subjective visual information experience emerged, which are: aesthetic function, stimulation of imagination, giving a meaning to personal experience, self-analysis and reflection, function of emotion stimulation and enframing the present.

Table 2. Research results

Main theme	Subtheme	Grounding statements
Aesthetic function	Importance of aesthetics, image attractiveness	"For me, the positive emotion stimulated by an aesthetical image is the most important", "I cannot read information in a background of a deterrent image", "Attractive image subconsciously makes you get closer to the object", "Harmony of image and the direct message [...]", "Nice presentation attracts"
	Attention to detail	"It is very important to notice the details", "Second plan images also speak"
Stimulation of imagination	Creation of scenarios	"Constructs a possible past and probable future of the image in one's mind"
	Illusional seeing	"[...] I sometimes fantasize away"; "opportunity for ingenuity"; "power of imagination"; "[...] what they, having little or no experience can see in the images and what they think is depicted"
	Novelty	"New forms and solutions are needed"
Giving a meaning to personal experience	Original development of the idea	"Not only the sender engages in creative decisions of the thought to be spread but also the recipient creatively develops the idea further"
	Attained experience and emotions	"Feels like I have done, tried and experienced it already"; "Places one has seen, scenarios lived allow to better understand the essence and content of the message being sent"; "Recognizability is like a cyphered text, the key of which is personal knowledge and experience"; "Bigger intrigue is caused by emotions that were already experienced rather than the opportunity of a new discovery"; "We are caught by what we have already experienced"
	Importance of associations	"Through associations, the recipient's consciousness can be directed in a particular direction of image analysis"; "Information deciphering takes place by connecting the objects and comparing them to something"

Self-analysis and reflection	Specificity	"[...] in my head, I simplify the image and give myself a logical and clear purpose for the image"; "Selection of information [...]"
	Self-projection	"In that way, we are able to see ourselves and project the situation that is most acceptable to us in the given message"; "[...] impersonate the depicted character"; "in image analysis, the person is really analyzing himself"
	Giving meaning to outlook	"Personal system of values is reflected"; "Society's view, way of thinking, understanding of the meaning of life. All of this reflects in the experience of visual information"
	Self-reflection	"Envisioning possible actions and self-recognition in the context of visual communication"
	Interaction of consciousness and subconsciousness	"The message communicated does not have any effect in itself. The meaning is created by the participant himself through understanding of how much the information presented is important to him"; "You cannot understand the information, not be interested, forget it, but everything stays in the subconsciousness"; "[...] the inevitability of analysis, at least subconsciously"
Function of emotion stimulation	Positive emotions	"The image makes you want to feel safe and sound"; "Raise your emotions by looking at the situations with humour"; "Can raise different variations of emotions"
	Formation of expectations	"Experiences become expectations"; "And effect of positive perspective can be created which will stimulate coming closer to the object communicated"
	Emotion stimulation	"[...] indifference is also an emotion"; "Not all emotions stimulate to take action in the perspective of information sent"
	Evocation of attention	"Non-standard solutions, unexpected objects or faces, drama, challenges, brave presentation of visual information works the best"; "Image needs drama and conflict [...]"
	Necessity of an intrigue	"The element of surprise makes one see something more"

Enframing of the present	Relevant environment	"The comprehension of the message is inseparable from the environment"; "[...] interaction of activity executed at the time"
	Mood of the moment	"Information received while in different moods will dictate different comprehension"; "Depends on the emotion the person feels at the time"; "Interpretation depends on the moment, and the emotion being experienced"
	Self-recognition	"We see and experience what we are in a visual message"; "[...] we evaluate it depending on what we think we are"; "only notices the information that is relevant at the given moment"
	Social effect	Illusions and attitudes can be quickly breached by arguments of a person nearby

Source: compiled by authors.

In the end, the interviewees were asked to define a subjective visual information experience. According to the experts, the visual information experience could be understood as:

- Intrigue caused by the image that has a critical influence on acquiring the information.
- Setting of a possible truth about verbal information.
- Awareness based on a visual element of surprise.
- Hunting for information truth acceptable to oneself.
- Interaction between the seeing and the seen.

Summarizing, a person's visual information experience can be defined as an instantaneous action of giving meaning to individual experience and imagination by finding the intersection of narratives between the image and oneself.

Conclusions

Visual information experience can be evaluated in two ways. On the one hand, visual experience is individual, therefore the initiator is not able to exactly prognosticate what each and every person sees or can see in the visual

message. On the other hand, the results of the research revealed specific features of image comprehension common to all the respondents, based on which the effectiveness of visual communication can be expected. Due to the seeing of reality being inseparable from critical thinking, the skills of which are formed by the culture and general environment of the time, we can see similar moments when interpreting the visual information despite seeing and understanding the world differently.

The aspect of personal experience is one of the most important factors of visual communication effectiveness. The results of the interview revealed that the recognized objects, images seen, or scenarios lived before stimulate the individual to accept the information more actively. This allows to confirm that the images are only granted meaning by the observer.

The interpretation of the image seen by the individual reflects not only their personal system of values but also societal norms. Due to this reason, when creating a relationship with the audience through visual means, one should rely on solutions that allow to broaden the space in which information receiver would recognize himself and their environment. By originally changing the image that is recognizable by the audience, one can create images of reality that form new attitudes and provisions about the reality in the observer's consciousness. This means that with the help of image communication, a new reality can be created.

The research has also shown that there is some sort of contradiction between the content and shape of image. In other words, aesthetic function of the image often becomes more important than the essence of the visual message. A narrow boundary exists between the stimulation and constriction of the observer's imagination when analyzing the visual message. To reach effective communication, it is recommended to avoid abstract images that allow the observer's imagination to give it whole other meanings than intended by the sender of the message.

Based on the research, the visual information experience can be defined as an instantaneous action of giving meaning to personal experience and imagination by finding the intersection of narratives between the image and oneself.

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YouTube Vloggers as Brand Influencers on Consumer Purchase Behaviour

ABSTRACT

Objective: The increasing influence of YouTube vloggers on consumer purchase behaviour and the specificity of the vloggers – viewers/subscribers relationship are under-researched. Addressing this gap in knowledge, this paper explores the role of vloggers as brand influencers on consumer (their viewers) purchase behaviour. It aims to investigate the interaction between vloggers and viewers/subscribers in terms of brand awareness and consumers' purchase behaviour.

Methodology: A mixed-method approach (often connected with netnography) incorporated non-participant observation of vloggers' activities and vloggers-viewers interactions within selected popular vlogs, supported by an online survey with both vloggers and viewers.

Findings: We have observed specific brand endorsements and experiences, depending on the vloggers' context, leading to both positive and negative feedback. This interaction and the consistently positive perception of reasons behind the vloggers' choice of the endorsed brands underpin the credibility of the vloggers – viewers/subscribers relationship.

Value added: Our results show not only the significance of vloggers as brand influencers, providing their audiences information perceived as trustworthy and convincing in terms of purchase recommendations but also explore the factors affecting this process.

Recommendations: This research directed our attention into the viewer-viewer interaction on the vlogs platforms. It is a very dynamic and challenging (difficult to control) part of vlog marketing activities (including various eWOM aspects) which can be very influential in the analysed context and stays a task for the future research.

Key words: YouTube vloggers, vlog, brand, consumer behaviour, purchase behaviour

JEL codes: M31, M37

Introduction

Social media has become a communication channel attracting advertising and product information by many organisations (Edosomwan et al., 2011; Leitch & Merlot, 2018; Zhang, Luo, & Boncella, 2020 ; Sułkowski & Kaczorowska-Spychalska, 2018). YouTube is currently the second most accessed social media website, following Facebook (Statista, 2019). Some YouTube

uploaders (also known as vloggers, YouTubers or content creators) interact in a structured way with their audiences becoming well known in the YouTube community. These vloggers (for video bloggers) influence their audience to engage with marketing activities, not only to promote themselves but also the brands they endorse.

Understanding the role of vloggers as brand influencers is important for marketers who wish to develop a relationship with consumers via social media (in this case YouTube). The role of vloggers as brand influencers from the perspective of consumer behaviour is thus an important academic endeavour and is the aim of this paper. We address both vloggers as brand influencers and viewers/subscribers as consumers. We investigate factors influencing vloggers' marketing engagement and viewers' trust towards them. We analyse the impact of the vloggers' marketing activity supporting the endorsed brand/product on their viewers' brand awareness, purchase decisions and level of satisfaction after purchasing the recommended brands/products/services.

This introduction is followed by the literature review discussing the current state of the field of vloggers as brand influencers and explaining the gap in knowledge that we address. Then the methodology provides information concerning the approach and research procedure. The findings and discussion section presents the results of the research and contextualises them within the literature. Further interpretation and practical implications appear in the conclusions, which is followed by the limitations.

Literature review

YouTube Vloggers as brand influencers

While consumers have always valued others' opinions, the growing popularity of social media has intensified the effect of peer recommendations as it has empowered consumers to share their opinions and experiences broadly. This is word-of-mouth influencing in the digital era (Rybczewska,

Sparks, & Sułkowski, 2020, pp. 102-123). De Veirman et al. (2017) suggest that online platforms and social networks directly influence the consumer-brand relationship. Social media, which is all about building relationships and enabling conversations within the marketplace (Booth & Matic, 2011; Heinonen, 2011), creates a platform for this engagement. The launch of YouTube in 2005, promoting the sharing of video content, provided opportunities for video-blogging (vlogging) to large audiences (Wiseman, 2014). Through social media activities opinion leaders/influencers can engage with and stimulate the attitudes, decisions, and behaviours of their audience/followers (Watts & Dodds, 2007; Lyons & Henderson, 2005). Strong social relationships have been formed between users/followers through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as well as YouTube (Hwang & Zhang, 2018). These parasocial relationships are psychological associations that the audience builds unilaterally with the performers (here vloggers), and their feelings reflect a real social relationship i.e. they are 'followers' (Dibble et al., 2016).

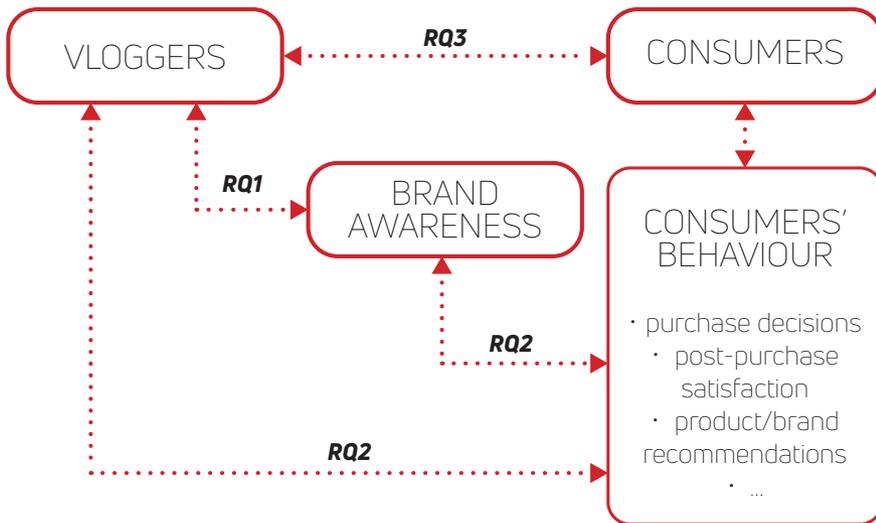
YouTube vloggers can be perceived as modern market mavens i.e. individuals who have information about many kinds of products, places, markets, and initiate discussions with consumers responding their requests (Feick & Price, 1987). Mavens are 'super-diffusers' of product information and stand as one of the most important groups of consumers to target with product and service information and particularly new product offerings. They are credible, objective and hence risk-reducing sources of product information as they introduce new ideas and norms to other consumers and hold considerably sway over their behaviours (Cleveland & Bartikowski, 2018). Firms can communicate marketing messages directly to influential consumers who in turn disseminate this information via frequent interactions with other consumers that seek and trust their advice about shopping and buying (Geissler & Edison 2005; Puspa & Kühl, 2006).

Vlogging entails various dynamics which contribute to the credibility of vloggers to their viewers. Vlogs are online publishing; anyone with web access and simple video production tools (a computer, camera, or a cell

phone with video capabilities) can create and post content (Molyneaux et al., 2008). Most vlogs are created by individuals or groups and focus on personal themes (Nardi et al., 2004). The use of video as a communication mode facilitates the process of personal identification, allows the reading of emotional expressions, aids with speech perception and enables viewers to read signals that express intimacy and power (Bruce, 1996). User generated content could contribute to stronger and quicker development of trust. This raises issues around eWOM, product and brand influence and endorsement (Jin & Phua, 2014). Therefore our first research question is:

RQ1: What is the role of vloggers as brand influencers?

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Source: own study.

The first research question is presented in our conceptual model addressing the mutual relationships between vloggers and viewers from the perspective of brand awareness and consumers' purchase behaviour (Figure 1). While conceptually we perceive vloggers' activities as the potential

source of brand awareness, we note that particular brands offer cooperation/endorsement to the chosen, already known, vloggers. Therefore we present this as a two-way relationship.

YouTube vloggers and consumer behaviour

There is general research on various aspects of brand equity (Anselmsson et al., 2016; Rybaczewska et al., 2020; Swoboda et al., 2013) and brand influencing on social media (e.g. Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Kavanaugh et al., 2006; Thakur, 2018), but research dedicated to YouTube vloggers as brand influencers is limited. Lee & Watkins (2016) examine how YouTube vloggers influence consumer perceptions of luxury brands but suggest that further exploration is needed. They note the significance of vloggers influencing consumer perceptions but also show why the context of analysis needs to be broadened. This paper contributes towards that.

Vloggers are opinion leaders (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012) providing 'a new communication channel for brands'. Opinion leaders are 'Individuals with wide sets of personal connections' (Weimann, 1994) with 'connective communication tissue' to their audiences (Nisbet & Kotcher, 2009) and building an influential voice and meaningful engagement with their audiences (Burgess & Green, 2018). These studies though focus primarily on the communication elements while the effects of the communication remain underexplored. In this paper we address the vloggers' influence on their audience's (purchase) behaviour (Fig 1) and thus our second research question is: *RQ2: How do vloggers influence consumers' (purchase) behaviour?*

While the purchase behaviour of consumers being viewers/subscribers can be influenced directly by the vloggers through their activities and indirectly by brand awareness (the mediator here) we placed RQ2 twice in the created conceptual model (Figure 1). Sometimes suggestions of the consumers/viewers/subscribers decide the vlogs content and therefore these relationships are captured as two-way ones.

YouTube vloggers as a credible source of information about brands and products

Market mavens influence other consumers' purchase decisions through interpersonal communication of general marketplace information (Stokburger-Sauer & Hoyer, 2007). YouTube vloggers present information to their viewers on brands they (apparently) have already consumed; portraying the image of genuine user opinions. They are known to the public and their identification is based upon elements such as admiration, association, or recognition (Kutthakaptan & Chokesamritpol, 2013). YouTube as a highly commercial platform based on content shared by the vlogger denotes that honesty and authenticity are appreciated and even demanded by the consumers. Due to the visual nature of the delivery of the content, the personality of the vlogger and body language are cues that viewers are interested in. Vloggers may be regarded as celebrities by their viewers/subscribers and thus their endorsements are considered as credible sources in generating positive eWOM regarding particular products and services (Spry et al., 2011; Boyd et al., 2014; Dwivedi et al., 2014). A two-way interpersonal relationship of vloggers with viewers is possible through the comments section, which acts to build credibility and trustworthiness. Most vloggers present themselves as regular persons with interests/passions that can be shared with the viewers (e.g. beauty, fashion) rather than someone of high status and wealth. Our goal is to investigate online activities and mutual interactions to identify the methods making vloggers-viewers/subscribers relationships credible and positioning the vloggers as a credible source of information for their audience (Fig 1). Consequently our third research question is:

RQ3: How do vloggers gain their credibility as a source of information about the brands and products?

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was adopted. The core of our research procedure was the qualitative non-participant observation of the real life activities and interactions between selected vloggers and their viewers (May – June 2018). To capture the broad perspective of YouTube vloggers we identified the vlog categories attracting many subscribers and among these categories we searched for vloggers involved in brands endorsement; dynamic interaction in terms of the viewers’ feedback was also another criteria while choosing the vlogs. Six popular vlog categories were chosen (Table 1), all activities were transcribed and the analysis was conducted from the perspectives of both vloggers and viewers. Analysis took the form of coding and theme development using Miles and Huberman’s reduction logic and cross-cases matrix approach (Huberman & Miles, 1994), based on the primary information contextualised within the secondary sources.

Table 1. Investigated vlogs – overall picture

Identifier	Type of vlog	Number of subscribers	Endorsed Brand/Product	Number of views and comments
Vlogger A	Beauty and Fashion	108K	Revlon superstay foundation	36760 views and 222 comments
Vlogger B	Travel	2.02M	Egypt	84256 views and 108 comments
Vlogger C	Parenting	1.82M	Hello Fresh	277059 views and 1781 comments
Vlogger D	How-to/ Tutorial	112K	Magic Eraser	13692 views and 106 comments
Vlogger E	Product, unboxing, product reviews	2.83M	Not specified	539000 views and 3373 comments
Vlogger F	Fitness	1.79M	Gymshark	452000 views and 632 comments

Source: own study.

Qualitative analysis was underpinned by the investigation of quantitative data gathered through online surveys targeted at both vloggers and viewers. The vloggers' email addresses were obtained from the most popular YouTube channels (the 'About' section within their YouTube pages) and viewers' email addresses were drawn from the researchers' personal contacts (followed by snowball sampling). Emails including the project description, participant's consent form and survey link were then sent directly from Bristol Online Survey. We asked the respondents (both vloggers and viewers) about their YouTube activity and chosen aspects of their consumer behaviour; vloggers and viewers questionnaires varied. The response rate among the viewers was far higher than among the vloggers (85% and 39% respectively). Finally we conducted an analysis of 85 questionnaires fulfilled by the viewers (58 females, 26 males, 1 undisclosed; the dominant age group was 21 – 25) and 28 of those submitted by vloggers (17 females, 11 males, 1 undisclosed; the dominant age group was 26 - 30).

The overall goal of this approach was to benefit from advantages of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bell et al., 2018) and to be able to contextualise the real-life qualitative data with the quantitative data concerning not only the viewers' but also vloggers' perspective.

Findings and Discussion

Non-participant vlogs observation

Qualitative data and analysis focused on the content vloggers post and the feedback they receive. Vlogs content is analysed according to three themes: brand/product endorsement recognition, endorsed brand/product experience, endorsed brand/product details (Table 2).

Table 2. Non-participant observation themes – selected results

Theme	Observation	
brand/product endorsement recognition	- Vlog title	'Revlon colorstay foundation' (vlogger A) 'Cleaning hacks using a magic eraser' (vlogger D)
	- Vlog introduction	'Today we are doing the Revlon colorstay foundation' (vlogger A) '...If you guys are a little bit familiar with Gymshark...' (vlogger F)
	- Announcing sponsors	(@experienceEgypt) as the sponsor of the vlog (vlogger B) Hello fresh as 'our friends' (vlogger C)
endorsed brand/product experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - applying make-up foundation on face while vlogging (vlogger A); - visiting different tourist sites and discovering the Egypt culture through food and interacting with local people (vlogger B); - providing a history of using Hello Fresh in their home and demonstrating - one recipe using the ingredients sent to them (vlogger C); - using the Magic eraser product around home (vlogger D); - unboxing several brands but spending more time on her favourite brands (vlogger E); - wearing Gym Shark clothing in the vlog and having more collections that she has reviewed, directing viewers to links on the description box (vlogger F) 	
endorsed brand/product details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'I have actually got a discount code so hit the link in the description box, use the discount code jamienikki30 and you'll get thirty dollars off your first week of Hello Fresh.' (vlogger C); - 'I am going to show you a few of my favourites, a lot of these I have already done a full review on, I will put the links in the description box below. This is all happening on the second of July online. I will leave all the timings the sale will go live in all time zones. I will give a huge thank you to anybody who chooses to shop through my links in the description box or on my Instagram page. Remember if you do that, you are choosing to support your girl' (vlogger F) 	

Source: own study.

Vloggers included endorsed brands/products in the vlog title (e.g. vlogger A: 'Revlon colorstay foundation', vlogger D: 'Cleaning hacks using a magic eraser') or the introduction (e.g. vlogger A 'Today we are doing the Revlon

colorstay foundation', vlogger F '...If you guys are a little bit familiar with Gymshark...'). Vloggers willingly announce their sponsors. Vlogger B highlights Egypt only as a destination on the title of the video but mentions the sponsor at the beginning of the vlog (@experienceEgypt). Vlogger C does not mention anything related to the brand on the title, but details of the brand are mentioned later in the video (he thanks Hello Fresh for sponsoring, referring to the brand as 'our friends'). This corresponds with the regulations requiring product placement recognition.

The endorsed brands/products experience theme exposed various approaches towards sampling and presenting the brand/products. All these approaches aim to present the brand/product experience in an attractive and innovative way, possible thanks to the particular social media channel (here YouTube). At the same time vloggers try to keep the experience adequate to the type of product/brand endorsed and consistent with the overall image of the vlogger, vlog and the product/brand. Experience is also presented in a way that is as reliable as possible e.g. often by contextualising it within the real-life circumstances (application while creating a vlog, real home environment etc.).

The third theme i.e. endorsed brand/product details revealed how vloggers provide information to their audience. Also in that context, details are aimed to be interesting and engaging. Above all, vloggers are trying to encourage the viewers to follow them i.e. to use/buy the endorsed brands/products and often provide the exact and specific recommendations how to do it. Vlogger A provides details of all the products she used in the vlog including other products used that are not being endorsed directly in the vlog (including the brand details, market descriptions, sellers' details etc.). Vlogger B emphasises the travel destination and contextualises the sponsors within the places presented. Vlogger C provides details of the brand on the description box including the discount code that the viewers can use. Vlogger D provides links to the products she has been using while cleaning around her home. These details are provided in the description box. Vlogger E has unboxed 21 different products in this vlog and has included the links on the description

box. Vlogger F also includes sale details including the sale prices, the time the sale opens in all different time zones. Being an online retailer the vlogger mentions an affiliate link on the description box and on her Instagram page.

According to our analysis of the viewers' perspective (Table 3) the most dynamic and brand related interaction took place in the context of Vlogger A (specific questions and comments (mostly positive but also negative) were observed e.g. 'Where can I get the Revlon foundation?', 'How much is this foundation?', 'I have heard good things about this foundation. I use Black Opal but definitely going to try this one.', 'I tried this and got rid of it, I prefer Maybelline Fit-Me... This just seem to sit on the skin for me and did not feel skin-like.') and Vlogger F (both positive (52%) and negative (18%) comments were observed e.g. 'Just bought so many things through your link. So excited to get these babies in the mail!!', 'Gymshark is always out of stock of everything I'm sick of them. But love you girl!'). Some vloggers tried to get viewers to share their feedback online but it very seldom or never addressed the endorsed brands (e.g. Vlogger C with only 4% of comments mentioning the Hello Fresh brand, still often in the negative context i.e. 'I love you guys but please enough with the HelloFresh promos already. It is like every day. It's a bit too much').

Table 3. The viewers' comments – overall picture

Identifier	Endorsed brand-related comments		Comments unrelated to the endorsed brands		Neutral/ Difficult to say
	positive	negative	positive	negative	
Vlogger A	45.9%	11.2%	17.3%	0.0%	25.6%
Vlogger B	40.6%	0.0%	34.4%	0.0%	25.0%
Vlogger C	3.5%	0.4%	89.5%	4.4%	2.2%
Vlogger D	62.0%	0.0%	6.0%	0.0%	32.0%
Vlogger E	53.0%	0.0%	47.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Vlogger F	52.0%	18.0%	15.0%	10.0%	5.0%

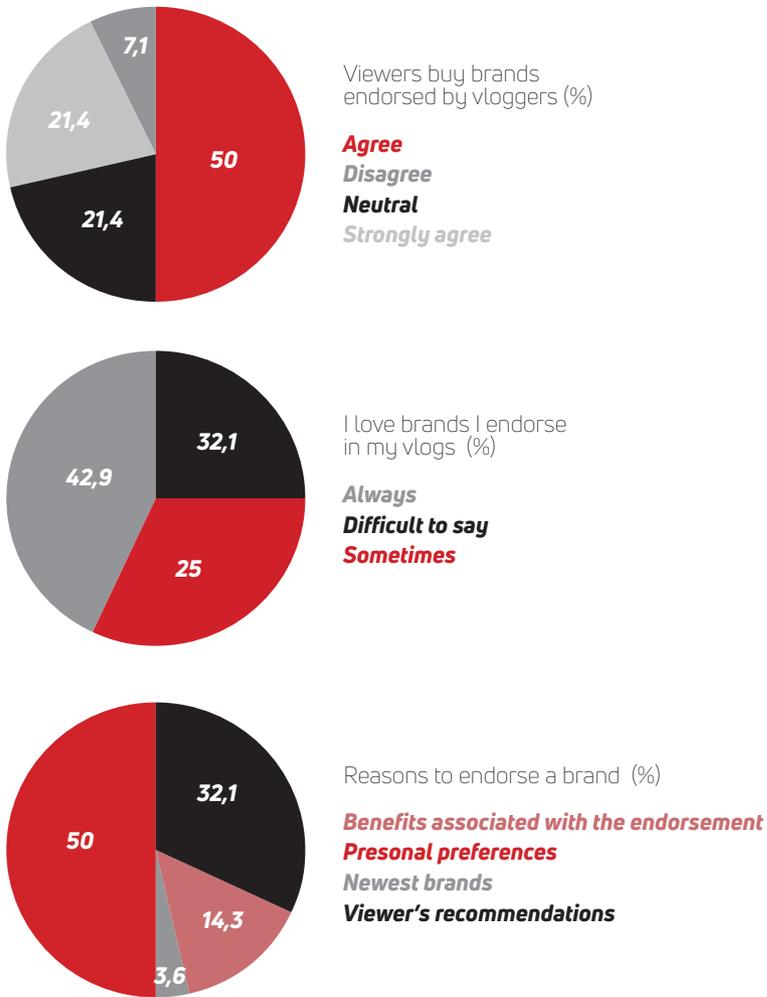
Source: own study.

Our findings confirm that the level of the viewers' engagement varies, evolves in numerous directions and is difficult for the vloggers to 'control'/address. It proves, though, the credibility and lack of censor of the online interaction. All the studied comments confirm the relationship aspects of the social media (Booth & Matic, 2011) and widen the understanding of vloggers specificity as opinion leaders (Uzunoğlu & Kip, 2014; Vivek et al., 2012).

Quantitative online survey

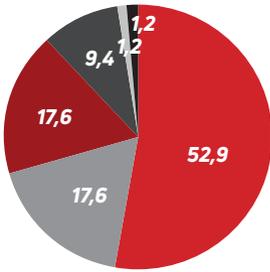
When vloggers were asked about their reasons to endorse a brand, 50% of them stated that their main motivation resulted from personal preferences and 32% emphasised viewers' recommendations (Figure 2). Benefits associated with the endorsement were chosen as the third reason (32% of respondents) and 'newest brands' were the last choice (3%). This corresponds with 42% of vloggers admitting that they love the brand they endorse (no one states that they rarely or never love the brand they endorse). Importantly for the focus of this paper, 57% of vloggers agree/strongly agree with the statement that viewers buy the brands/products endorsed by the vloggers (50% and 7% respectively). At the same time only 43% of vloggers disagreed or strongly disagreed with that (in both cases equally 21%).

Figure 2. Vloggers' perspective - chosen aspects



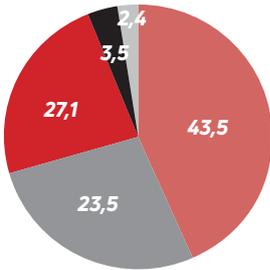
Source: own study.

Figure 3. Viewers' perspective – overall picture



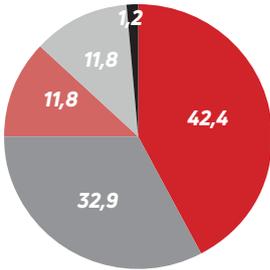
How was your perception of the endorsed brands different after watching a vlog? (%)

- Much more positive**
- More positive**
- Much more negative**
- More negative**
- The same**
- Difficult to say**



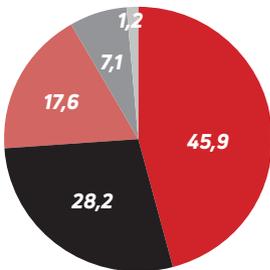
Do you buy products endorsed by vloggers? (%)

- Always**
- Sometimes**
- Rarely**
- Never**
- Never thought of it**



Vloggers love brands they endorse (%)

- Strongly agree**
- Agree**
- Neutral**
- Disagree**
- Strongly disagree**



How likely are you to recommend the brands endorsed by vloggers (%)

- Very likely**
- Likely**
- Unlikely**
- Very unlikely**
- Difficult to say**

Source: own study.

This was supported by the viewers (Figure 3) since only 2% of them have never thought of buying the brands/products endorsed by the vloggers. Additionally only 27% of the viewers have never bought the endorsed brands/products. At the same time 71% of the viewers do buy the endorsed brands/products always, sometimes or rarely. Moreover, the vast majority of viewers (64%) declares that they are likely or very likely to recommend the brands endorsed by the vloggers to their friends or family and only 8% of them states that they are unlikely or very unlikely to do that. In terms of the trustworthiness of vloggers it is important to note that over 54% of viewers agree or strongly agree with the statement that vloggers love brands they endorse and 33% of them have a neutral opinion. At the same time only 13% of viewers disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. Meaningfully, the vast majority of viewers (71%) admit that after watching a vlog they perceive the endorsed brand/product in a more/much more positive way, only 18% of them perceive it in the same way and 2% of viewers perceive it in a more/much more negative way (in both cases equally 1%).

Quantitative findings add another dimension and details to the aspects of admiration, association and recognition investigated by Kutthakaptan & Chokesamritpol (2013). They direct the attention into the perception of the motivation to endorse a brand contextualised within the personal circumstances of the vloggers and particular brand experience (while creating the content). Our results concerning the purchase decision aspects support the consumer-brand relationship building through social media discussed by De Veirman et al. (2017). Both research stages show that the real-life and declarative findings are consistent in the investigated field and correspond with the perception of vloggers as modern market mavens (Cleveland & Bartikowski, 2018).

Conclusions

Vloggers provide various information to their viewers (including those concerning the endorsed brands) in a specific and innovative way of short You-

Tube videos oriented towards mutual interaction (following their audiences' recommendations), which is appreciated by their viewers and underpins the overall credibility of the vloggers-viewers/subscribers relationship. Vloggers create a particular platform where subscribers come to their opinions based on their favourite vlogger's view contextualised within the feedback of other subscribers (as discussed by Spry et al., 2011, all eWOM aspects play their role here). Additionally their own recommendations and feedback are taken into consideration while creating the vlogs content in the future. Therefore the viewers-vloggers relationship becomes two-way and gains credibility (RQ3). The type of content was observed as being dependent on the vlogger's interests/vlogs category. This leads to important practical implications since not only the specific target group can be reached this way, but also the trustworthiness and power of the shared information is underpinned (RQ2 and RQ3). It corresponds also with the business practice to reach the specific vloggers as brand influencers (depending on such criteria like: the vlog category/type, popularity etc.).

Potential benefits of the vlogger-viewer two-way communication (RQ3) can be undermined though by a 'noise' connected with the real-life circumstances (e.g. when vlogger C's partner was unwell the comments shifted to wishing her well and the brand message was 'overlooked'). Therefore, despite the meaningful results from both viewers' and vloggers' perspectives suggesting close relatedness between the vlogs content/vloggers' recommendations and purchase behaviour of their audience (RQ2), there are business risks to be taken into consideration by marketers. It raises also doubts around ad-hoc decisions of brands to engage vloggers to their marketing activities – their personal circumstances are increasingly powerful from the point of view of the final results of their brand endorsement (in both positive and negative context).

Vloggers used different triggers to engage their viewers (e.g. discount codes, give-aways, a demonstration on how to use products, reviews ranging from positive to negative reviews). Our findings show that the power of all these depends on the vlog popularity and reputation i.e. credibility built

through the two-way interaction, allowing both positive and negative feedback and the perception of the motivation to endorse a specific brand for genuine reasons (RQ3). The possibility of capturing and sharing the innovative way of experiencing the brand (e.g. unboxing) positively affects not only the vlog attractiveness but also the interaction dynamics (RQ1 and RQ3). At the same time lots of details and specific instructions (how to, tutorials vlog here) increase the positive and brand-related feedback (RQ1). Taking into consideration the effects of this interaction and feedback on the credibility and therefore power of the vloggers' recommendations (RQ2) all these would be suggested as criteria for marketers while choosing the vlog to endorse a brand.

Limitations and Future Research

While our intention was to maximise the benefits of the mixed-method approach we acknowledge the limitations of the conducted research. Due to the practicalities and feasibility we were not able to analyse more than 6 vlogs while the non-participant observation. Quantitative data served here only as the context for the qualitative investigation. The wider group of respondents during the both stages of the study is planned in the future.

Furthermore, conducted research directed our attention into the view-viewer interaction on the vlogs platforms. It is a very dynamic and challenging (difficult to control) part of vlog marketing activities (including various eWOM aspects) which can be very influential in the analysed context and is still underexplored. It stays a task for the future research.

Conflict of Interest Statement

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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