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Article

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Requirements for Brand Managers in Ukraine and the Czech Republic: Identification and Comparison

Zuzana Wroblowska

Abstract

Purpose of the article: This paper represents a set of requirements placed on brand managers when they are first approached by recruiters in both Ukraine and the Czech Republic.

Methodology/methods: To conclude a successful empirical research, Berelson's content analysis method was used to study the texts of recruitment advertisements on career portals. Statistical verification of the results was conducted using the Pearson chi-square test.

Scientific aim: The primary goal of the research project was to examine the situation of brand manager positions offered in the researched labour markets and to provide answers to the questions arising from the research assumption: "Employers do not publish different requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager in Ukraine and the Czech Republic".

Findings: The result of the actual research project in Ukraine confirmed a fundamental need for applicants for brand manager positions with work experience in marketing (51.4%), knowledge of marketing (33.8%), and experience in the field of the advertiser company's business (31.1%). The application of information technology was found to be the third most important requirement in Ukraine, at 48.6%, unless the requirements for personality traits and skills were taken into account.

The assumption regarding the matching requirements for brand manager positions in the two countries was rejected on the basis of the statistical verification process. The statistical test confirmed the shift of requirements even for $\alpha = 0.001$ in the tested groups of signs.

Conclusions: The data gained by studying publicly available recruitment adverts in the selected regions of Ukraine provided information on the most frequently published requirements for the required education and professional competencies based on professional knowledge, skills and type and length of experience. Comparison of the relative frequencies of requirements for brand manager positions in Ukraine and the Czech Republic indicated differences.

Keywords: brand manager, knowledge, product management, recruitment advertisement, technical competence, transferable skills

JEL Classification: D83, M12, M31, M51

Introduction

Technological progress in the late nineteenth century outstripped the average consumer's ability to understand products, let alone know their producers personally. In response to this customer uncertainty, firms started to introduce brands in various industries. The pace of brand introduction, sophistication and importance accelerated in the early 1970s, and the digital revolution of the 21st century with cheap mobiles, big data, social media, and global connectivity has further accelerated this process. Nowadays we live in a branded world. Brands belong to a pool of resources that generate much of a company's market value.

Nevertheless, it is still true that brands are taken as imperfect concepts because they are ultimately human creations. It is people with their strengths and failings who bring brands to life and manage them. As such, a brand is only as strong as the weakest personal point within an organisation (Bedbury, 2003). In order for brand managers to succeed in an environment formed by deregulation, information networks, globalization, consumer participation based on awareness and the ability of consumers to spread their voice, and other external forces, brand managers have to possess sufficient knowledge and personal qualities to be able to influence a brand's success in the target market.

The interest of the author focuses on the qualifications, technical competence and professional experience as well as personality traits and behavioural competency of brand managers, because the job attracts both graduates and experienced workers. Ten years ago, the author started to set up and carry out her own long-term research project, the partial outcomes of which will be presented in this paper, as she failed in searching for complex characteristics of the job role of a brand manager in the Czech Republic, where brand managers as well as product managers do not belong to professions

with given qualification standards. This year, empirical research has been conducted in Ukraine using the previously tested Berelson's method of content analysis. This makes it possible to compare the requirements for brand managers in both countries and expand knowledge of the issue so that the under-researched topic will be of interest to researchers and practitioners alike.

1. Theoretical background

The essence of classic marketing, the marketing planning process, and the arrangement of marketing function have been defined and characterised by many authors (McDonald, Wilson, 2012; Kotler, Keller, 2012 and others). Kotler, Keller (2012, p. 28) refer to the definition published on the website of the American Marketing Association which states that "marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." Product management meets the requirement created by empirical approaches to management, which emphasise the necessity of modern process management. Tomek, Vávrová mention Aumayr's definition that "product management is a managerial concept focused on the necessity of a coordination of products and product groups" (Aumayr, 2006 in Tomek, Vávrová, 2009, p. 138). Gorchels (2005) integrates product management with brand management with a reference to it being the most common application of product planning in companies that produce consumer goods. Kotler, Keller (2012) see this relation similarly and they explain that when a company focuses on product categories to manage its brands, adequate resources for all categories must be ensured (Kotler, Keller, 2012, p. 649).

Brands are widely accepted as key intangible assets, as stated by Abdolmohammadi

(2005 in Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). Kotler, Keller (2013, p. 35) adopt the definition of a brand from the American Marketing Association – with the “brand” being a name, term, sign, symbol or design or their combination serving to identify products and services of one or more vendors to differentiate them on the market. Keller (2013, p. 31) contrasts a product and a brand, stating, “a product is anything we can offer to the market for attention” and explaining “a brand is therefore more than a product because it can have dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need”. The essence of brand management was defined by Kapferer (1998), an author of the brand identity concept when he underlined the superiority of strategy and a consistent integrated vision. The second key concept is brand value, and Aaker (2003) included the relationship between value and brand loyalty. The creation of brand identity is one of the four steps of the CBBE model (Consumer-based brand equity), in which the manager entrusted with building a powerful brand manages to build a loyal relationship between a consumer and the brand through the determination of brand identity (Keller, 1993 in Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). Kotler, Pfoertsch (2006, p. 3) emphasise that brands fulfil the same purpose in B2B markets as in consumer markets, because “they facilitate the identification of products, services and businesses as well as differentiate them from the competition”.

To derive requirements for brand managers is to state their role in the process of strategic brand management, where the strategic, tactical and operative tasks are as follows: (1) identifying and establishing brand positioning, (2) planning and implementing brand marketing programmes, (3) measuring and interpreting brand performance, and (4) growing and sustaining brand equity (Keller, 2013, p. 58). In their research oriented at methods of brand identity determination, Nguyen and her collaborators (2015) show

that currently brand value must be increased through managing the activities of the customer brand experience instead of intensifying and increasing the number of contacts with the brand. Their findings indicate that the set of main tasks of the brand manager’s job role extends with impacts into the structure of requirements to the executor of this job role. Although the requirements for human factors in brand management organisation are not specified in more detail by Kotler, Keller (2012), its demanding nature can be inferred from the inclination of these authors to using a brand-asset management team to manage brands with support of team work at the highest level of the business organisation hierarchy (Kotler, Keller, 2012, p. 649). The organisational structure and job design of key role bearers affect a number of outcomes; nevertheless, there is no “one best way to design jobs and structure organisation,” as Noe and his collaborators point out, because the organisation needs to create a fit between its environment, competitive strategy, and philosophy on the one hand, with its jobs and organisational design on the other (Noe *et al.*, 2017).

2. Objectives and research methodology

The purpose of the paper is to present and discuss the partial results of the author’s empirical research project and to link them with the knowledge base. The empirical research is designed to review the requirements which are faced by candidates for brand manager positions at the start-up phase of the recruitment process, specifically at the time of the publication of job vacancies.

The aim of the analysis is to compare the sets of requirements published on job sites in Ukraine and the Czech Republic and to answer the following research assumption: employers do not publish different requirements for candidates for the job of brand manager

in Ukraine and the Czech Republic. According to MINFIN (2017), the expected outlook of GDP growth between 2.1% and 2.3% in Ukraine in the period selected for data collection led the author to choose this country for comparison with sets of requirements for Czech brand managers, although there are many different external and internal factors in Ukraine, as mentioned by Sokil, Ubrežiova (2017). For the purpose of this paper, the analysis is limited to sources of information about requirements for work experience and practice, education, technical competence and transferable skills.

When performing the empirical research itself, Berelson's method of content analysis (1952 in Miovský, 2006, p. 118), was applied. The method is suitable for collecting a large amount of information from available recruitment advertisements placed for candidates for vacant positions in marketing. When researching the advertisements for vacancies in the three selected regions of Ukraine (Kiev, Lviv, and Dnipropetrovsk), the main selection criteria for the source of information were its availability and ability to present requirements for candidates and information about the vacancy in the broadest scope possible. In five weeks in April and May 2017, advertisements for positions titled "Brand Manager" were gathered from publicly available advertisements on the Work.ua job website. This gathered 79 adverts. If the position had a different title, such as "Senior Brand Manager", the advertisement was not included in the set. After removing duplicates, the final sample contained 74 adverts. The data processing was performed in line with the procedure applied in the thesis by Wroblowska (2011) and elaborated on in the author's monograph and other scientific papers (Wroblowska, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c), which allows for international comparison. The data segments were transferred in an electronic form. Work with the transferred texts was subjected to so-called manifest content analysis according to Plichtová (1996 in

Miovský, 2006) when only the explicit content of the text is examined. Requirements where the frequency of occurrence exceeded 5% in at least one of the compared data files were analysed. Tests were performed at significance levels of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%, to examine whether the null hypothesis regarding the independence of the analysed variable on the sign representing the country realising the content analysis of recruitment advertisements can or cannot be rejected. The statistical verification of the results was undertaken using test criteria in the Pearson chi-square test according to Řezanková (2007).

3. Results

This paper presents and discusses data and results which are directly related to the paper's goal. Partial results related to personal predispositions and so-called soft skills which are based on the characteristics and capabilities that arise from these traits will be presented in another scientific paper.

3.1 Secondary data applied in the research project

When preparing the methodology of the independent research, no new information was available from empirical research intended to research the human factor of brand managers apart from those which had been published already, see Wroblowska (2011, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d). The career portal Jobs.cz was the source of the analysed recruitment advertisements in the Czech Republic.

3.2 Content analysis of requirements placed on brand managers

The sorted data segments from the researched advertisement texts are presented in the form of a frequency chart in Table 1. The table also presents information about the results of the survey conducted in the Czech Republic, for details see Wroblowska

Table 1. Employers' requirements for brand managers in Ukraine and the Czech Republic.

Group		Ukraine		CZ	
		Brand Manager		Brand Manager	
	Job Requirements Qualifications and Experience	Abs. frequency	Relative frequency	Abs. frequency	Relative frequency
Q	education, knowledge, business management skills and transferable skills				
T	technical competence, knowledge and skills				
1	business management skills	15	20.3%	0	0.0%
2	knowledge of product/brand management	12	16.2%	4	7.1%
3	knowledge of marketing	25	33.8%	5	8.9%
4	knowledge of project management/preferred knowledge	4	5.4%	4	7.1%
5	knowledge of online media/media industry	5	6.8%	0	0.0%
6	expertise aligned with a company business	8	10.8%	7	12.5%
L	education				
7	university/higher education institution	68	91.9%	53	94.6%
W	general, transferable competencies				
8	advanced level of English language	28	37.8%	45	80.4%
9	driver's licence of Czech category B	0	0.0%	25	44.6%
10	work with internet/PC/proficient in MS Office application	36	48.6%	24	42.9%
R	required practice and work experience				
1	previous sales experience	6	8.1%	5	8.9%
2	professional experience	3	4.1%	22	39.3%
3	work experience in marketing	38	51.4%	25	44.6%
4	experience in the field/preferred experience in the field	23	31.1%	23	41.1%
5	experience with this position at least 1 year	13	17.6%	4	7.1%
6	experience with this position at least 2 years	16	21.6%	14	25.0%
7	experience with this position at least 3 years	5	6.8%	13	23.2%

Source: Author's own study.

Table 2. Overview of the results of individual requirement group testing.

Groups of tested requirements		chi-square value	df	test result
Q	education, technical competence and general skills	68.0580578	9	H_0 rejected
S	strategic and business-oriented thinking	5.7142857	2	H_0 not rejected
R	required practice and work experience	25.6503224	6	H_0 rejected
T	technical competence, knowledge and skills	14.9558695	5	H_0 rejected

Source: Author's own study.

(2016a). The sample of analysed Czech advertisements consisted of 56 advertisements, while in Ukraine, as previously explained, the sample of single advertisements totalled 74, when applying the same selection rules.

Table 2 signals that the representation of individual characters differs in the evaluated groups of requirements.

Table 3 gives an idea of the procedure of applying the independence test. The test criterion was the Pearson chi-square test. This tested at significance levels of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%, whether the null hypothesis regarding the independence of the analysed variables on the sign representing the country which offers vacant positions, can or cannot be

Table 3. Two-dimensional analysis for the group of required practice and work experience.

OVERALL CONCLUSION: At the significance levels of 0.1%, 1%, and 5% we can reject the null hypothesis; the probability distribution of the individual characters does not differ in groups "brand managers (Ukraine)" and "brand managers (CZ)".			level			
			0.1%	1%	5%	
The hypothesis that the columns and rows are independent of the level			refuse	refuse	refuse	
					rows	7
					columns	2
TESTED DATA						
Required practice and work experience advertiser's requirements - group R	BM		test of independence			
	Ukraine	CZ	chi-square	25.650322		
	A1	A2	level	0.025%		
previous sales experience = R1	6	5				11
professional experience = R2	3	22				25
work experience in marketing = R3	38	25				63
experience in the field/preferred experience = R4	23	23				46
experience with this position at least 1 year = R5	13	4				17
experience with this position at least 2 years = R6	16	14				30
experience with this position at least 3 years = R7	5	13				18
	104	106	0	0	0	210
A = position and country of data collection			expected frequency			
Signs of group R	A1	A2				
R1	5.4	5.6				
R2	12.4	12.6				
R3	31.2	31.8				
R4	22.8	23.2				
R5	8.4	8.6				
R6	14.9	15.1				
R7	8.9	9.1				
			post hoc - chi-square			
Signs of group R	A1	A2				
R1	0.1	0.1				
R2	7.1	7.0				
R3	1.5	1.5				
R4	0.0	0.0				
R5	2.5	2.4				
R6	0.1	0.1				
R7	1.7	1.7				
			adjusted residuals			
Signs of group R	A1	A2				
R1	0.3422	-0.3422				
R2	-3.9981	3.9981				
R3	2.0480	-2.0480				
R4	0.0731	-0.0731				
R5	2.3180	-2.3180				
R6	0.4508	-0.4508				
R7	-1.9299	1.9299				
			sign test			
Signs of group R	A1	A2				
R1	0	0				
R2	---	+++				
R3	+	-				
R4	0	0				
R5	+	-				
R6	0	0				
R7	-	+				

Source: Author's own study.

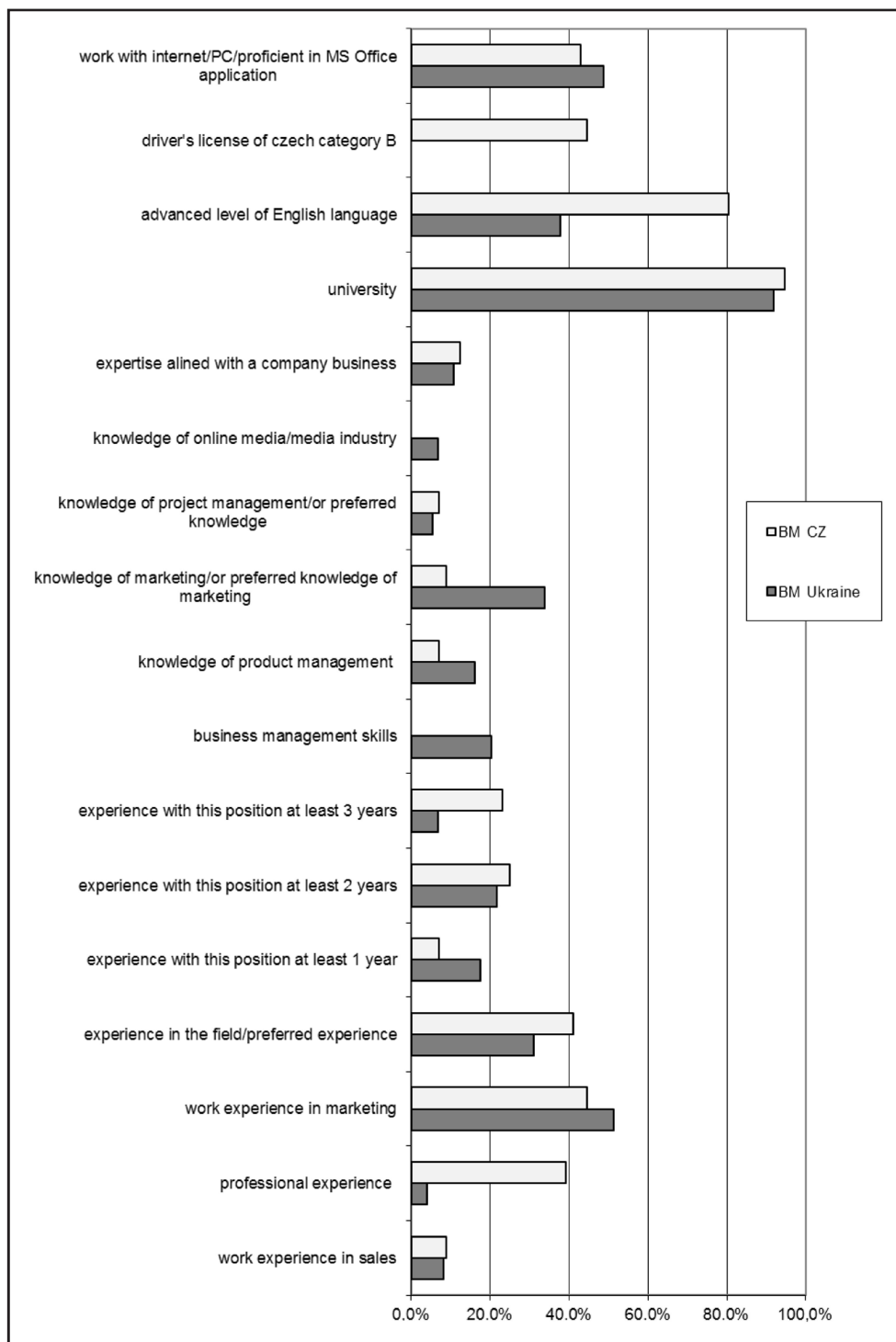


Figure 1. Comparison of the relative frequency of requirements for work experience and qualifications applied to candidates for brand manager positions in Ukraine and the Czech Republic.

Source: Author's own study.

rejected. Table 3 was processed for the group of required practice and work experience that are classified under the letter “R”.

The representation of the individual characters in the tested groups of requirements differs, as illustrated in Table 2.

The statistically significant difference in the distribution of frequencies of the analysed requirements was confirmed for $\alpha = 0.05$ in all tested groups. The changes in the representation of the requirements in individual groups are statistically insignificant even on the level of $\alpha = 0.001$ for the group of “education, knowledge, business management skills and transferable skills” classified under the letter “Q”. At the significance level of $\alpha = 0.001$ and $\alpha = 0.01$, the null hypothesis was not rejected while testing the narrowly specified group marked with “T” that do not include general, transferable skills and university education.

A visual comparison of the frequencies of requirements for candidates for the position of brand manager in Ukraine and the Czech Republic is illustrated in Figure 1.

A statistically significant difference in the distribution of frequencies of requirements integrated into the group marked with “R”, including required practice and work experience, was confirmed for $\alpha = 0.001$, $\alpha = 0.01$, and $\alpha = 0.05$, as is proved by the calculations in Table 3. The analysis of the results will be addressed in the next chapter.

4. Discussion

In the main part of this chapter, the results will be analysed and the degree of fulfilment of the goals will be evaluated and discussed.

The starting point for deriving requirements for brand stewards, who are brand managers in a number of companies, is to state their role in the process of strategic brand management. The expert public has attributed the role of coordinator to brand managers and product managers; nevertheless, the author

found that the role of brand managers as implementer of marketing plans prevails in real practice (Wroblowska, 2011). These findings of the author correspond to the view of Tomek, Vávrová (2009), who point out that the execution in practice may result in different positions in the organisation structure of product management and the staff performing it. But there is no doubt that to succeed in their job role, brand managers must demonstrate behavioural competency, technical competence and general, transferable skills.

Table 1 shows us that the Ukrainian job requirement with the highest frequency of almost 92% – “university degree” – was followed by the requirement for work experience in marketing required by more than 50% of advertisers. The requirement “proficient in MS Office application and/or a good level of work with the Internet” (48.6%) is the third most important in Ukraine. Surprisingly the requirement for an advanced level of English language did not exceed 40% in job advertisements from the selected Ukrainian regions. Recruiters more frequently set requirements relating to non-transferable competences or, to a certain extent, only transferable competences, like business management skills (20.3%), with the above-mentioned exceptions of IT literacy and the requirement for an advanced level of English. In spite of that fact, we can see that knowledge and experience in the field, at least preferred experience in the advertiser’s field are also required.

Sokil, Ubrežiova (2017) have identified lack of knowledge and experience as one of the main threats to Ukraine’s ability to connect its product and service markets with international business. This together with the results illustrated in Table 1, give rise to the following statement. The interest in candidates who have held a brand manager’s post for less than 3 years shows that the Ukrainian labour market does not offer enough sufficiently experienced knowledge workers. Recruiters simply ask for what is realistic.

Now the discussion will focus on confirming the research assumption and on comparing the findings with published studies. When testing the group classified under the letter “Q” concerning education, knowledge, business management skills and transferable skills for brand manager positions in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, the Pearson chi-square test confirmed the differences at the levels of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%. However, it has to be pointed out that the statistical verification process confirmed the difference only for $\alpha = 0.01$ and $\alpha = 0.05$ in the tested set of requirements in a narrowly defined group of requirements, where transferable competencies and the degree of education were excluded. The reason for this difference lies in two facts. Many recruiters in the Czech Republic accepted a lower level of education than at least Bachelor Degree for brand manager candidates (more than 30%). In contrast the second highest frequency of requirements in the Czech Republic was for an advanced knowledge of the English language. This means that Czech advertisers were more demanding concerning the English language, as Table 1 illustrates. Visual comparison of the requirements, as seen in Figure 1, shows yet another difference between the findings from Ukraine and the Czech Republic. The statistical verification confirmed the differences in the group of required practice and work experience (“R”) at the level of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%. There is no objective explanation for these results. As the proposal of a type of brand manager position by Wroblowska (2011) is not publicly available, the author hopes the outcomes in the form of a set of requirements asked of candidates for brand manager positions will improve the current state of knowledge of the addressed problem, which is characterised by an absence of complex and classified information.

The findings indicate that in Ukraine there are better opportunities for brand managers with a shorter length of practice in the position of brand manager, provided they possess

transferable competences and business management skills and are able to demonstrate knowledge of marketing and work experience in marketing.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to present the partial results of an independent research study, the long-term objective of which was to gather and analyse information about the requirements that are asked of candidates for the posts of brand managers and product managers. The article was focused on the human factor in product management, specifically with the role of a brand manager performing tasks related to the building of a strong brand position on the market in a world that is globalising, but not yet globalised. The primary research aim is to identify and discuss differences in requirements for brand managers in Ukraine and the Czech Republic. In addressing the issue, an interdisciplinary approach was applied as knowledge of the theoretical background and analysis of the current state of the issue and the tendency of its development was required to conduct the research over several fields of study.

This paper represents a set of requirements asked of brand managers when they are first approached by advertisers in Ukraine and the Czech Republic. The primary goal of the research project was to explore the idea that employers do not publish different requirements for the job of brand manager in Ukraine and the Czech Republic. In order to meet the scientific aim, Berelson’s content analysis was used to study the texts of recruitment adverts. The sets of requirements for practice and work experience, technical competence and transferable skills supplemented with requirements for education were subject to analysis.

The result of the actual research project in Ukraine confirmed a fundamental need for applicants for brand manager posts to

have work experience in marketing (51.4%), knowledge of marketing (33.8%), and experience in the field of the advertiser company's business (31.1%). More than 90% of Ukrainian advertisers required brand managers to have a university education. The application of information technology, at 48.6%, was found to be the third most important requirement in Ukraine, as the requirements for personality traits and so-called soft skills were not taken into account.

The assumption regarding the matching requirements for the positions of brand manager in Ukraine and the Czech Republic was rejected. After applying the test of independence, in which the test criterion of chi-square distribution was chosen, there were differences in the group of "required practice and work experience" and also in the group of requirements concerning education, knowledge and so-called hard skills confirmed for $\alpha = 0.001$, $\alpha = 0.01$, and $\alpha = 0.05$.

A limitation is the fact that the research was conducted only for five weeks in the selected geographical regions of Ukraine, as the author was mainly concerned with analysing the comparable data sets. The size of the Czech labour market is too small for obtaining a bigger amount of advertisements for one specialized position during a short

period of time. That is why the author has not compared recruitment adverts from various industries in this paper; there is a scope to do so in future study searching the labour markets in bigger economics than the Czech Republic.

This paper is the first attempt to study the issue in the country where highly skilled workers try to find new workplace, because, in connection with the war in the eastern regions, there is a migration flow to the west. Both theoretical and practical part of the study is an interesting topic for further discussion, not only in an academic field, but also in practice. The article can inspire professional training providers for future brand managers in Ukraine and the Czech Republic and at the same time it helps make the orientation of brand manager job applicants easier.

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