

Identification and Comparison of Requirements Imposed on Brand Managers: Cross-National Study in the U.S.A. and in the Czech Republic

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Abstract

Purpose of the article: The author's interest focuses on human factor of brand managers, as brands and their added value are considered to be among the most important sources of competitive advantage for business in a competitive marketplace. There is no doubt that for succeeding in their job role, brand managers must have knowledge, dispositional traits and concomitant soft skills that arise from these traits. The purpose of the article is to provide the insight into the offering of brand manager posts in the Czech Republic and in the U.S.A. and to analyse the collected data with the special interest in finding the answer whether the employers are searching the brand managers possessing personal dispositions and skills of knowledge workers, and if there is no significant difference in the requirements between the Czech and American recruitment advertisers.

Methodology/methods: For a successful empirical research, the content analysis method by Berelson was used to study the texts in the advertisements publicly available on career portals. The statistical verifications of results were conducted using the chi-square test.

Scientific aim: The goal of the primary survey was to provide the answers to the research questions that arise from the following research assumptions: (1) employers do not publish different requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager in the U.S.A. and in the Czech Republic, (2) the set of requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager in the U.S.A. will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who has skills and personality prerequisites expected from knowledge workers.

Findings: The results of the actual research project confirmed the fundamental need for excellent communication skills (69.0%) and presentation skills (65.5%). Unlike employers in the Czech Republic, the American companies are more interested in people with a high degree of responsibility (41.4%) that is the third highest relative frequency of identified traits. About one third of American advertisements had requirements for the high degree of creativity, conceptual thinking and analytical skills of candidates for the position of Brand Manager. During the comparison of the data results gathered in both countries, there were recorded significant differences practically in all analysed groups of personality traits, behavioural competencies and so-called soft skills. Statistical verification confirmed the shift of requirements in the group of performance prerequisites and abilities, as well as in the group of interpersonal skills and abilities.

Conclusions: Comparison of frequencies of requirements placed on candidates for the position of Brand Manager in the U.S.A. and in the Czech Republic indicated differences, but

it does not mean that the US employers are less demanding. The differences in the employers' expectations supported by a set of psychological requirements placed on candidates for the position of Brand Manager inspire the discussion and are the reason for a deeper investigation of the job roles in product management. The findings indicated that employers are looking for employees possessing personal dispositions and skills of a knowledge worker nevertheless the ability to innovate is not presented in the American job advertisements as often as in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: abilities, brand manager, knowledge worker, personality traits, product management, recruitment advertisement, skills

JEL Classification: D83, M12, M31, M51

Introduction

Nowadays, brands belong to a pool of resources that generate much of the company market value. These are the brand managers who are responsible for everyday tactical manoeuvres in a number of organizations, and in the overwhelming majority of companies, they also manage the building of the assigned brands on a strategic level. The social forces and trends that led to the transformation of most markets in the first decade of the 21st century and which lead companies to create new approaches and practices have a significant impact on their current working conditions. As nothing indicates that the pace of change will slow down, according to Kotler, Keller (2013), there is no doubt that marketers will need to acquire new skills and competences, but they leave it to the readers to know what specific personal qualities they can succeed in. In this situation, there is an opportunity to find out in the form of empirical research what requirements the companies, which face hard competition and have to constantly transform their resources into sustainable competitive advantages, place on their brand managers.

Thanks to the repeatedly validated methodology of analysing the content of recruitment advertisements for the positions of product managers and brand managers in the Czech Republic, the data was collected again from publicly available recruitment ads and analysed by the Berelson method. By choosing the US labour market, the author has pursued two goals, both to verify the situation where brand management and product management have their roots, and to analyse the offer of vacancies in the country where are brand owners at the highest rungs of the ladder of the Interbrand "Best Global Brands" ranking. In the current article, the data obtained by US primary research will be compared with already published results gathered in the same year in the Czech Republic. The analysis will also be used to

complement the view of the brand manager as a knowledge worker, as the author pursues the secondary goal of inspiring the training providers of talented young people and help the talents orientate themselves in the offers of the labour market where the knowledge and ability to acquire, expand, and share knowledge significantly influences the success of the individual, the team and the entire company.

1. Theoretical Background

The role of marketing is defined and characterised by many authors (McDonald, Wilson, 2012; Kotler, Keller, 2013 and others). Kotler, Keller (2013, p. 35) referred to the definition published on the website of the American Marketing Association which states that "Marketing is the activity, the 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 is the part of marketing management and includes the whole range of activities concerning product development and brand management in target markets.

Kapferer (1998, p. 189) makes the definition of "brand" referring to the fact that it is widely known that, at the same time, a brand is a symbol, a word, an object and a concept and points out that a real brand management begins with a strategy and a consistent, integrated vision. Its central concept is the brand identity (Kapferer, 1998). The second key concept is the brand value, see Aaker (2003), who included the relationship between the value and brand loyalty. A strong brand identity has both functional and emotional characteristics and consists of three connecting instruments: a clear differentiating brand positioning, a distinct brand personality that gives the brand a face, and a consistent brand communication (Floor, 2006). Keller (2013, p. 31) contrasts a product and a brand

defining “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”. Internal branding is at least as important to a company as an external branding strategy. A deeper understanding of a brand by all employees is crucial, especially for companies that provide services (Floor, 2006; Keller, 2008).

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 programs, (3) measuring and interpreting brand performance, and (4) growing and sustaining brand equity (Keller, 2013, p. 58). According to the research on the intellectual capital by Nguyen *et al.* (2015), brand managers should notably focus on promoting the concept of intellectual, behavioural and sensorial experience of a customer with the brands.

Brands are widely accepted as key intangible assets, as stated by Abdolmohammadi (2005 in Nguyen *et al.*, 2015). The set of intangible assets is the intellectual capital which, for the purpose of this article, can be defined, according to Subramaniam, Youndt (2005), as the sum of all the knowledge available to the organization and can be used to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage. Intellectual capital, which is usually divided primarily into structural capital and human capital, was incorporated by Ulrich (1998 in Armstrong, 2012) into a list of competitiveness problems. Ulrich explained that the cause of this difficult issue is the fact that it is difficult to ensure that companies are able to find, adapt, reward and retain human capital in the form of talented individuals whom they need and who can become the engine of a global organization responsive to both their customers as well as the

ever-expanding possibilities of technology. According to Bontis (1999 in Armstrong, 2012), human capital is represented by the skills, intelligence and experience of people, which gives the organization its unique character. Knowledge management and human capital have a close relationship because knowledge is one of the attributes of human capital. High level of education and specialized skills combined with the ability to apply skills to identify and solve problems are distinguishing characteristics of knowledge workers (Drucker, 1993). Knowledge workers are not a homogeneous group. In her list of classifications, Mládková (2008, p. 21) mentioned the original classification KWP where the dimensions are value added to performance by tacit knowledge and so-called golden skills required by the position or necessary for work. She counted autonomy which she interprets as willingness to take the responsibility, creativity, and ability to solve problems among the “golden skills” of knowledge workers.

Personal determinants in close relation with performance are dispositional traits which determine how workers fulfil the given tasks (Štikar *et al.*, 2003). Psychological attributes of a personality are usually called personality traits and they are smaller units than competencies. There are many definitions of competencies. Some of them put more emphasis on attributes, some on behaviour. This paper is based on the approach to competencies as “definitions of skills and behaviours that organizations expect their staff to practice in their work” (Rankin, 2002 in Armstrong, 2012). Noe and his colleagues define competencies as a set of skills, knowledge, and abilities and personal characteristics that enable employees to perform their jobs (Noe *et al.*, 2017, p. 701).

As it is mentioned by Noe *et al.* (2017), knowledge workers are in demand because the companies need their specialized skills and the jobs requiring them are growing. If referrals and internal talent banks do not

offer suitable candidates, the external sources of candidates, such as recruitment agencies, newspaper advertisements and online recruitment, when the main types of online recruitment websites are corporate websites, agency websites and job sites, such as Monster.com and HotJobs.com, are used (Armstrong, 2012; Noe *et al.*, 2017). Social networking websites are found by employers as a source with a good reach, among which is the largest career networking site LinkedIn that is moving to the largest job board with more than 300 million profiles, as it was reported by Wroblowská (2016c). The growing use of iPads and iPods has also opened up a new and rich avenue to get information from employer to applicant (Armstrong, 2012; Noe *et al.*, 2017).

2. Objectives and research methodology

The aim 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 that concerns brand management, human factor and knowledge management. 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. For the purposes of this paper, the analysis is limited to sources of information about personal predispositions and so-called soft skills which are based on the characteristics and capabilities that arise from these traits. The purpose of the analysis is to compare the sets of requirements published on job sites in the United States of America and in the Czech Republic and to answer the following research assumptions: (1) employers do not publish different requirements for candidates for the job of brand manager in the U.S.A. and in the Czech Republic, (2) and the set of requirements for candidates for the job

of brand manager in the U.S.A. will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who has skills and personality prerequisites expected from knowledge workers.

When resolving the issue, an interdisciplinary approach was applied as the understanding of both theoretical background and analysis of the current situation regarding the problem and the tendency of its development required research in multiple professional disciplines. When performing the empirical research itself, the method of content analysis according to Berelson (1952 in Gavora, 2000) was applied. The method is suitable for collecting a lot of information from available recruitment advertisements placed for the candidates for vacant positions in marketing. When researching the advertisements for free vacancies in the three selected states of the U.S.A. (Illinois, New York and California), the main selection criteria of the source of information were its availability and ability to present requirements for candidates and the information about the vacancy in the broadest scope possible. In four weeks in October 2015, the advertisements for positions entitled as "Brand Manager" were gathered from publicly available advertisements on the Monster.com job website. Thus were gathered 60 advertisements. 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 showed 58 advertisements. The data segments were transferred into an electronic form. The data processing was performed in line with the procedure applied in the thesis by Wroblowská (2011) and elaborated on in other papers and the monograph of the author (Wroblowská, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c) which allows for international comparison. The data segments were transferred in an electronic form. The work with the transferred texts was subjected to the so-called manifest content analysis according to Plichtová (1996 in Mioviský, 2006) when only the explicit content of the text is examined.

There were analysed the requirements which the frequency of occurrence exceeded 5% in at least one of the compared data files. On the significance level of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%, it was tested whether the null hypothesis regarding the independence of the analysed variable on the sign representing the country realizing the content analysis of advertisements can or cannot be rejected. The test criterion was Pearson chi-square test.

3. Results

This paper presents and discusses data and results which are directly related to the paper's goal. Partial results related to requirements for knowledge, specialized skills and transferable general competencies will be presented in another paper that is now being revised.

3.1 Secondary data applied in the research project

When preparing the methodology of the independent research, no new information was available from the empirical research which meant to research the human factor of brand managers apart from those which had been published already, see Wroblowska (2011, 2016a, 2016b, 2016d). The career portal Jobs.cz was the source of 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 frequency chart in Table 1. At the same time, the table gives the information about the results of the survey conducted by Wroblowska (2016d) in the Czech Republic. The sample of analysed Czech advertisements consisted of 56 advertisements. In the U.S.A., when applying the same selection rules, the sample of single advertisements reached the number of 58.

Without meaning to get ahead of the discussion, it is evident from Table 1 that the advertisers used terms defining psychological dispositions or traits, as well as terms from the field of competencies (such as leadership) and performance dimensions (such as strong interpersonal skills). Comparison of frequencies of requirements for candidates for the position of "Brand Manager" in the US and in the Czech Republic is illustrated by Figure 1.

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

The statistically significant difference in the distribution of frequencies of analysed requirements was confirmed for $\alpha=0.01$ and $\alpha=0.05$ in all tested groups. The changes in the representation of the requirements in individual groups are statistically insignificant on the level of $\alpha=0.001$ for the group of "interpersonal skills and abilities" classified under letter "I" and for performance prerequisites and abilities, which is the group marked with letter "P". On the significant level of $\alpha=0.001$ the null hypothesis was rejected while testing the third group marked with "O" that join various traits connected to motivation, self-control and other personality dispositions and traits.

Table 3 gives an idea of the procedure of applying the independence test. The test criterion was the Pearson chi-square test. On the significance level of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%, it was tested whether the null hypothesis regarding independence of the analysed variables on the sign representing the country offering vacant positions can or cannot be rejected. A statistically significant difference in the distribution of frequencies of skills, personal dispositions and qualities integrated into groups of interpersonal skills and abilities was confirmed for $\alpha=0.01$ and $\alpha=0.05$, as it was proved by calculations in Table 3.

The representation of the individual characters in all tested groups of requirements differs, see Table 2.

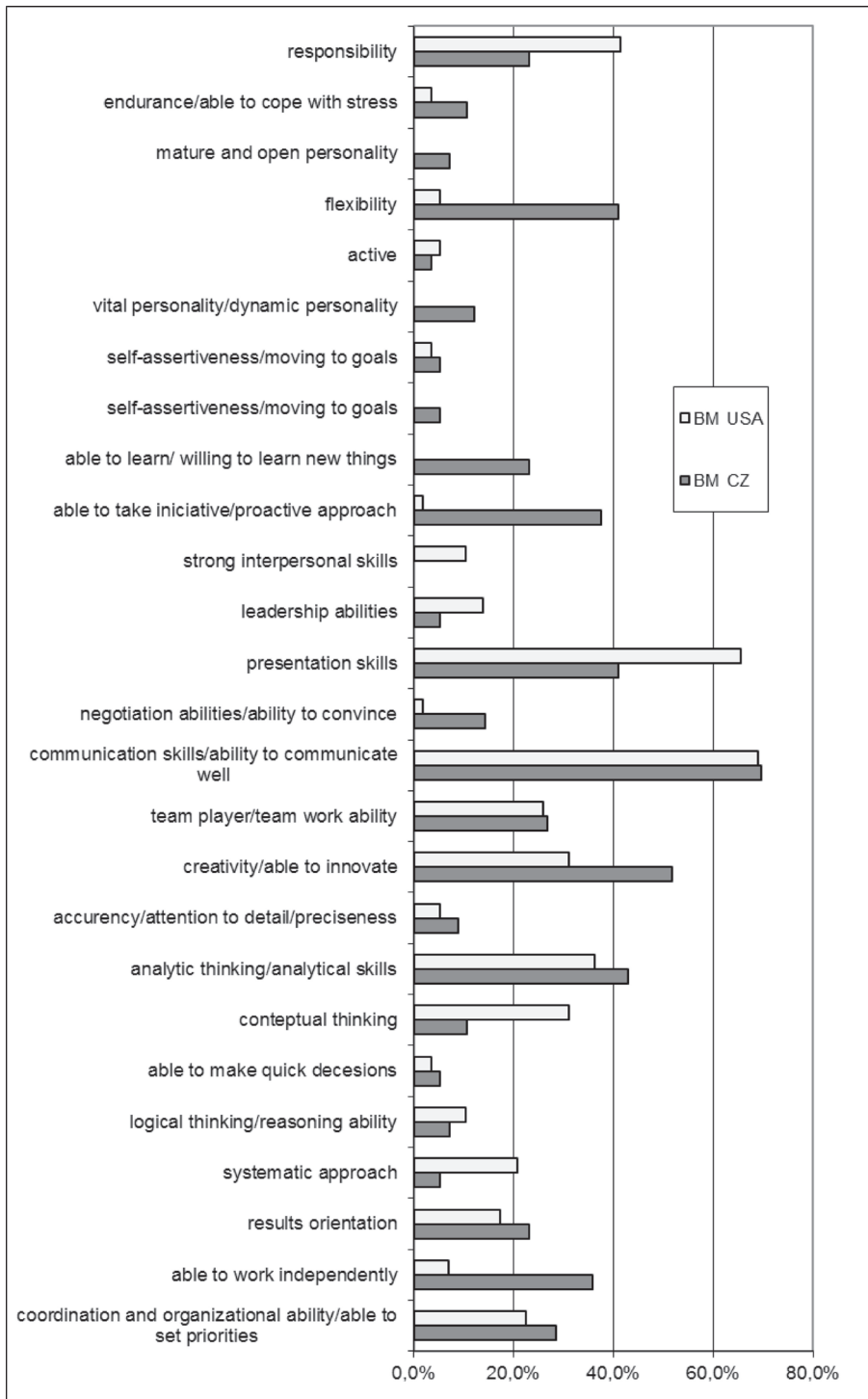


Figure 1. Comparison of relative frequency of dispositional traits and so-called soft skills applied to candidates for the position of “Brand Manager” in the US and in the Czech Republic in 2015.

Source: Author’s own study.

Table 1. Requirements applied to brand managers by advertisers in the US and in the Czech Republic.

Group	Job Requirements Abilities and Skills	Brand Manager CZ		Brand Manager USA	
		Abs. frequency	Relative frequency	Abs. frequency	Relative frequency
P	performance prerequisites and abilities				
1	coordination and organizational ability/able to set priorities	16	28,6%	13	22,4%
2	able to work independently	20	35,7%	4	6,9%
3	goal orientation/results orientation	13	23,2%	10	17,2%
4	systematic approach	3	5,4%	12	20,7%
5	logical thinking/reasoning ability	4	7,1%	6	10,3%
6	able to make quick decisions	3	5,4%	2	3,4%
7	conceptual thinking	6	10,7%	18	31,0%
8	analytic thinking/analytical skills	24	42,9%	21	36,2%
9	accuracy, attention to detail, preciseness	5	8,9%	3	5,2%
10	creativity/able to innovate	29	51,8%	18	31,0%
I	interpersonal skills and abilities				
1	team player/team work ability	15	26,8%	15	25,9%
2	communication skills/ability to communicate well	39	69,6%	40	69,0%
3	negotiation abilities/ability to convince	8	14,3%	1	1,7%
4	presentation skills	23	41,1%	38	65,5%
5	leadership abilities	3	5,4%	8	13,8%
6	strong interpersonal skills	0	0,0%	6	10,3%
O	other psychological demands and requirements				
	traits and skills connected to motivation and self-control				
1	able to take initiative/proactive approach	21	37,5%	1	1,7%
2	able to work enthusiastically	13	23,2%	0	0,0%
3	able to learn/willing to learn new things	3	5,4%	0	0,0%
4	self-assertiveness	3	5,4%	2	3,4%
	vital capacity and temperament				
5	vital personality/dynamic personality	7	12,5%	0	0,0%
6	active	2	3,6%	3	5,2%
	other psychological demands and requirements				
7	flexibility	23	41,1%	3	5,2%
8	mature and open personality	4	7,1%	0	0,0%
9	endurance/able to cope with stress	6	10,7%	2	3,4%
10	responsibility	13	23,2%	24	41,4%

Source: Author's own study.

Table 2. Overview of results of individual requirement groups testing.

Groups of tested requirements	chi-square value	df	test result
P performance prerequisites and abilities	25,653888	9	H ₀ rejected
I interpersonal abilities and skills	15,539339	5	H ₀ rejected
O other psychological demands and requirements	48,977466	9	H ₀ rejected

Source: Author's own study.

Table 3. Two-dimensional analysis for a group of interpersonal skills and abilities.

OVERALL CONCLUSION: At the significance levels of 1% and 5% we reject the null hypothesis; the probability distribution of the individual characters doesn't differ in groups 'USA' and 'CZ'.		level				
		0.1%	1%	5%		
The hypothesis that the columns and rows are independent of the level		cannot refuse	refuse	refuse		
				rows	6	
				columns	2	
TESTED DATA						
Interpersonal abilities and skills advertiser's requirements - group I				test of independence		
		BM CZ	BM USA	chi-square level	15,539339	
		A1	A2		0,83%	
team player/team work ability = I1		15	15		30	
ability to communicate well/comm. skills = I2		39	40		79	
negotiation abilities/ability to convince = I3		8	1		9	
presentation skills = I4		23	38		61	
leadership abilities = I5		3	8		11	
strong interpersonal skills = I6		0	6		6	
		88	108	0	0	0
						196
A = position and country of data collection						
		expected frequency				
signs of group I		A1	A2			
I1		13,5	16,5			
I2		35,5	43,5			
I3		4,0	5,0			
I4		27,4	33,6			
I5		4,9	6,1			
I6		2,7	3,3			
post hoc - chi-square						
signs of group I		A1	A2			
I1		0,2	0,1			
I2		0,4	0,3			
I3		3,9	3,2			
I4		0,7	0,6			
I5		0,8	0,6			
I6		2,7	2,2			
adjusted residuals						
signs of group I		A1	A2			
I1		0,6105	-0,6105			
I2		1,0337	-1,0337			
I3		2,7164	-2,7164			
I4		-1,3609	1,3609			
I5		-1,2097	1,2097			
I6		-2,2457	2,2457			
sign test						
signs of group I		A1	A2			
I1		0	0			
I2		0	0			
I3		++	--			
I4		0	0			
I5		0	0			
I6		-	+			

Source: Author's own study.

Table 3 is processed for the group of interpersonal skills and abilities that are classified under letter “I”. Analysis of the results will be addressed in the next chapter.

4. Discussion findings and recommendations

In the main part of this chapter, the results will be analysed and the degree of fulfilment of the research assumptions and objectives will be evaluated and discussed. The requirement for the candidate’s ability to communicate well formulated as possessing communication skills in some advertisements reaches the highest frequency in both countries. The Top requirement is followed by the requirement for presentation skills when the analysis shows that more than two thirds of American employers are looking for brand managers with this quality, while in the Czech Republic it is a less important requirement.

The requirement for the “ability to communicate well” is in line with business practices. In a company organization, marketing specialists usually have the role of an intermediary with the task to understand the customers’ needs and spread their voice into other functional departments of the organization. Brand managers usually do not have formal authority in the organization so they have to make the full use of their behavioural competency in fulfilling their work tasks. Although they have the role of coordinators as much as product managers, their tasks are more diverse than expected, see, for example, Keller (2013), and the implementation role prevails over coordinating role in almost all job tasks of a brand manager, which was proved by Wroblowska (2011) for business practices in the Czech Republic.

Now, the discussion will focus on confirming the first and the second research assumption and on comparing the findings with the published studies. At the beginning of the

discussion of the first assumption is the statement that the differences were noted, see Table 2. When testing group “I”, the Pearson chi-square test confirmed the differences on the level of 1% and 5%. However it has to be pointed out that in almost 10% of the US advertisements, the presentation of the requirements for abilities and interpersonal skills was simplified by the requirement of strong interpersonal skills, which is the expression of a concrete performance dimension. In the Czech advertisements, the requirement with this formulation did not exist at all. Advertisers in the Czech Republic demanded specific skills and competencies, such as to be able to persuade, to listen, etc. In addition, the consistent approach to the methodology described in Chapter 2 has contributed to the rejection of the null hypothesis as the investigator cannot divide the published information segment into partial characters in data operations.

The visual comparison of the requirements, as you can see in Figure 1, showed yet another difference between the findings from the US and from the Czech Republic. The statistical verification confirmed the differences in the group of performance prerequisites (“P”) and also in the group marked with letter “O”, it means “other psychological demands and requirements”. As we can see in Figure 1, the requirement formulated as “initiative or proactive personality of the applicant” is far more often stated in advertisements in Czech Republic, as compared to the U.S.A. It is appropriate to cite Armstrong (2012), who warns that in stating one’s personal traits, such as determination and initiative, is important not to overdo it in the advertisements, as the candidates may not even be able to admit that they do not possess them. On the other hand, the possession of qualities like proactive approach by brand managers is beneficial for them in performing their job roles, therefore focusing on identifying these features is important. The frequency of occurrence of the requirements

for flexibility and responsibility in the compared files is surprisingly different. The Czech advertisers appeal primarily to the willingness to adapt to the employer's time requirements, the American advertisers point to this type of flexibility to a lesser extent. Table 1 also illustrates that requirements of group "P" are very important for employers. About 20% of advertisements in both countries demonstrate the importance of goal orientation. The question is how ambitious the goals of brand manager's job are. Steenkamp (2017), who has studied global brands for over 25 years on six continents, points out that the stewards of global brands have a set of skills and knowledge that sets them apart from the typical corporate marketer. The position titled "Global Brand Manager" has occurred only once in the US advertisements, but some of American advertisers are owners of strong world-wide spread brands so we can make assumption of challenging goals for their brand stewards.

Mládková (2008) in her formulation of so-called golden skills of a knowledge worker found the ability to work independently, a problem-solving ability and creativity to be essential basic prerequisites which are indispensable, especially, in the jobs where tacit knowledge is necessary for creating the added value for customers. One may mistakenly think that a problem-solving ability did not appear in the requirements, when studying Table 1. While searching in primary data files, it was found that the frequency of the occurrence of this ability was lower than 5%. However, it is obvious that the US advertisers require the candidate to have qualities which condition this key competency of knowledge workers, such as conceptual thinking (31.0%) and analytic thinking (36.2%), which was among the most frequent requirements for personality dispositions, traits, and behavioural competencies of candidates. Concerning the competency "creativity" the US employers prefer the candidates with creativity more often expressed as ability to

innovate (31.0%), nevertheless the ability to innovate is not presented in the American job advertisements as often as in the Czech Republic, where creativity has the second highest relative frequency (50.0%). These findings support the fulfilment of the second assumption: "the set of requirements for candidates for the position of Brand Manager in the US will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who have skills and personality prerequisites expected from knowledge workers".

5. Conclusion

This paper deals with the specific issues that were examined by empirical research project. Its long-term objective was to gather and analyse information about the requirements that are imposed on candidates for the positions of "Brand Manager" and "Product Manager", as brand managers, as well as product managers, have an important role in striving for competitiveness.

The purpose of this paper was to present the partial results focused on the dispositional traits and concomitant soft skills of brand managers. It represents sets of requirements that are placed of them in the first phase of acquiring potential job seekers in the USA and in the Czech Republic, compares them and discusses their consistency with information which derives from the study of secondary sources. While addressing the issues, an interdisciplinary approach was applied as the knowledge of a theoretical background and the analysis of the current state of issue and the tendency of its development required to conduct the research in the several fields of study. In order to meet the scientific aim, the content analysis by Berelson was used to study the text in recruitment advertisements.

The results of the research project confirmed the fundamental need of outstanding communication skills for the applicants for the position titled "Brand Manager" in

2015. The same requirement dominated in advertisements in the USA (69.0%) and in the Czech Republic (69.6%). The American employers seek candidates with the analytical ability, with the ability to use creative and logical thinking and possessing a high degree of responsibility, nevertheless the ability to innovate is not presented in American job advertisements as often as in the Czech Republic. The research proved the expectation that a set of requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who possess skills and personality prerequisites of a knowledge worker. The findings, that were not expected, showed significant differences in the analysed groups in the US and Czech advertisements for the position of Brand Manager, in all groups of personality traits and so called soft skills.

The limitation is the fact that the presented data are not organised according to the industry or field of advertisers. The research was conducted only for four weeks in the selected geographical regions of the USA due to the fact that the author was mainly

concerned with analysing the comparable data sets and 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.

This study is the first attempt to study the issue in the country where brand management has had its roots and compare the findings obtained in the USA with the Czech data. It opens a space for other discussion concerning the brand manager's job role and its demands for a brand manager to achieve the marketing excellence in the future. At present, the author is collecting the data from the career portals in Ukraine and in the order to achieve a deeper international analysis of the issues.

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