

## Evaluation of The Cross-Cultural Traits Influence on The Behavior of Russian and Chinese Students on The Higher Education Products Market

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### ABSTRACT

Development of academic mobility of students from different countries requires evaluating the influence of their cultural traits on the behavior on the educational products market. The subject of present study is the development of methodic approach towards evaluating the cross-cultural traits influence on students' behavior on the higher education products market. Within the study we developed a model of culture, which reflects the list of cultural values and characteristics of material and institutional values adapted for the educational products market of the universities. We propose a method of constructing a matrix of cross-cultural analysis of the elements, which create the model of culture in the consumers from a certain culture and behavioral traits of students on the higher education market. The developed methodical approach was evaluated on Chinese and Russian students. The results of the study can be used for developing measures for increasing the attractiveness of Russian universities for Chinese consumers.

### KEYWORDS

cross-culture, model of culture, students' behavior,  
educational products market .

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 09 June 2016  
Revised 19 July 2016  
Accepted 22 July 2016

### 1. Introduction

Economics development on the current stage should be based on improving the conditions for reproducing human assets and should occur with simultaneous education modernization as a significant condition of high-quality preparation of working resources, which have to provide proportional development of economics. Current state of the universities requires the solution of a number of problems in order to increase their efficiency and competitiveness.

In the conditions of globalization there is a reduction of inter-country barriers with preservation of cultural traits, which increases the significance of cross-cultural studies of the behavior in consumers on different markets of products and

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products. The established situation is also representative for the higher education products market. Growing inter-country competition defines the need in searching new sources for increasing universities' competitiveness. Consideration of cultural specifics of the education products consumers' behavior might act as one of the factors for increasing universities' international competitiveness. The aim of present study is to develop and validate a methodic approach and inventory for studying the effect of cultural traits on the consumers' behavior on the higher education products market. Cross-cultural studies of Russian and international researchers analyze the relationship of culture and personality, culture influence on consumers' economic behavior in light of different markets of products and services, and the connection of cultural changes with the level of social-economic development. N.M. Lebedeva and A.N. Tatarko state that the connection between cultural values and economic development is versatile and changes with the society evolution (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2007). It is necessary to point out that cross-cultural analysis is often conducted on the joint of different fields of knowledge. V.V. Karacharovskiy, O.I. Shkaraton and G.A. Yastrebov explore cross-cultural interactions in the segment of highly-qualified labor of Russian economics (Karacharovskiy et al., 2014). A.M. Almakaeva analyzes consumers' trust in the contest of cross-cultural studies (Almakaeva, 2014). P.M. Fedorov establishes the influence of various factors on social affirmations of Russians and residents of European countries (Fedorov, 2015). M.S. Yanitskiy and O.A. Braun analyze the specifics of axiological hierarchy of teachers and students in different countries in the cross-cultural context (Yanitskiy & Braun, 2015).

The problems of cross-cultural studies of consumers' behavior are represented in the works of international researchers, such as Agarwal et al., 2010; Cheung et al., 2011; Gelade, 2008; Gesteland, 2012; Harrison, 2006; Hofstede et al., 2002; Solomon, 2012, and others. The field of cross-cultural studies in the context of universities' international competitiveness is addressed in the works of Aghion et. al, 2010; Buela-Casal et. al, 2007; Dill et. al, 2005; Filinov et. al, 2002; Li et. al, 2011; Liu and Cheng, 2005; Mohrman, 2013; Mok, 2014.

During the construction of international university rankings a large number of factors are considered: qualification of scientific-pedagogic employees, efficiency of scientific research activity, level of material-technical foundation development, the amount of attracted international students, etc. Studying the issues of students' mobility is tightly linked to cross-cultural analysis. However, the problems of studying cultural traits' influence on consumers' behavior on higher education products market are still not studied enough; methodical questions of organizing the conduction such studies, including the inventory, have been studied especially insufficiently.

## 2. Methodology

The aim of the study is to evaluate the influence of a culture model on the behavior of Russian and Chinese students-consumers on higher education products market on the basis of the development of uniquely designed methodical inventory. According to the aim, the following tasks have been set in the present study: 1) to create a culture model with regard to the factors that influence the development of higher education products market for two countries – Russia and

China; 2) to develop an inventory for surveying the representatives of different cultures in order to reveal the influence of the culture model on the consumers' behavioral traits on the higher education products market; 3) to conduct the survey among Russian and Chinese students; 4) to qualitatively define the influence of the culture model elements on the behavior on students-consumers on the higher education products market in light of the 7P marketing complex (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical evidence) by constructing the matrices of cross-cultural analysis; 5) to compare the behavior of Russian and Chinese students on higher education products market.

We propose the following hypothesis of the study:

H1: Consumers' behavioral traits on the higher education products market depend on the culture model of a certain country.

H2: Cultural values have a higher effect on students' behavior on higher education products market in comparison with other elements of the cultural model (material and institutional environment).

Within the present study we used J. Moven's (1995) culture model, which includes a list of cultural values, characteristics of material environment (economic development, geographic characteristics, natural resources, technical/scientific level) and institutional environment (legal, political, business, religious and sub-cultural characteristics).

During the culture model construction we used the cultural values classification proposed by M.S. Yanitskiy and O. A. Braun (Yanitskiy & Braun, 2015):

- Values of adaptation (absence of need, material well-being; preservations of power and health; preservation of order and stability in the society);
- Values of socialization (family well-being; good prestigious job; respect of others and social recognition);
- Values of individualization (opportunity for intellectual and creative self-actualization; opportunity to use democratic rights and freedoms; construction of a more humane and tolerant society).

Elements of the institutional environment were evaluated according to the following characteristics: level of governmental regulation of education; level of security in educational institutions; level of political stability in the country; level of religious limitations' influence on the educational products consumption; level of religion influence on the proposition of educational products.

Similar to the institutional environment elements, material environment was assessed with regard to the specifics of educational products market according to the following characteristics: level of educational institutions availability; level of the country's economic development; level of technological and scientific fields development; level of application of modern technologies and equipment in educational institutions; level of interaction of innovation centers and educational institutions. Upon the results of the respondents' interview we constructed the culture model.

In order to define the cultural model influence on the consumers' behavior on higher education products market, the survey included questions, which characterize the preferences of Russian and Chinese students in line with the 7P marketing complex:



- Product: variety of educational programs; presence of joint two-diploma programs; possibility of studying within two (or more) programs simultaneously; presence of student exchange programs; variety in educational levels; presence of a preparative department (for international students);
- Price: conditions of applying and studying on the public entity; price of education; presence of scholarships; price of accommodation and catering; possibility of transferring from paid education to public entity;
- Place of product supply: possibility of distance application in college; college location in regard to students' residence location and city infrastructure; presence of internships and advanced education abroad during education;
- Promotion: informational supply for applicants and employers about the college; convenience and informational sufficiency of the official college Web-site; presence of communication with the college in social networks; presence of events for informing about educational conditions; visibility and memorability of the trademark style (brand) of the college; presence of the reviews from friends, who obtained their education from the considered college;
- People: qualification of scientific-pedagogical employees; university's supply of teaching staff; competency of managers and supervisors of educational programs; quality of technical staff's work;
- Process: variety of forms of education; study schedule; system of knowledge evaluation; teaching technologies;
- Physical evidence: level of comfort of classrooms; college's supply of modern educational equipment; material and technical foundation of the college; state of sport objects and student residences; college's supply of cafeterias, copy centers; presence of medical room on the college grounds; presence of free Wi-Fi in educational buildings, presence of spots selling food.

All of the aforementioned characteristics were evaluated within the developed inventory on a Likert scale, where 1 meant "completely disagree", 2 - "disagree", 3 - "cannot answer definitively", 4 - "agree" and 5 - "completely agree". On the basis of the developed methodic inventory, the authors conducted a survey of Chinese and Russian students (the study was conducted in March-April 2015; student sample consisted of 1500, including 750 Russian respondents and 750 Chinese respondents). Based on the results of the survey we constructed cross-cultural analysis matrices (Aleshina, 2011), which show the culture model influence of the behavior of Russian and Chinese students during the choice of educational products.

### 3. Result

Based on the developed methodical inventory, the authors conducted a survey of Chinese and Russian students; its results allowed establishing the significance of cultural values for the respondents (Figure 1).

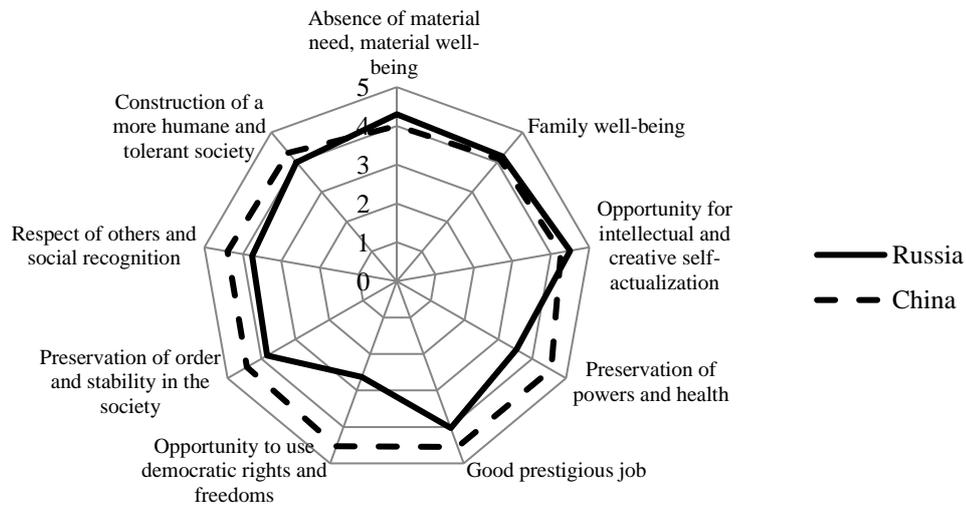


Figure 1. Distribution of average ratings of cultural values in Russian and Chinese students on the Likert scale, 2015 (weighted means, n=1500)

Among the most significant cultural values Russian students list the opportunity for intellectual and creative self-actualization (4.50 points), absence of material need, material well-being (4.30 points), family well-being (4.20 points); Chinese students list preservation of powers and health (4.56 points), good prestigious job (4.55 points) and opportunity to use democratic rights and freedoms (4.53 points). The results of the analysis showed that the most significant split is observed for the possibility to use democratic rights and freedoms. Namely, Russian students perceive their possibilities to use democratic rights and freedoms and an objective reality, contrary to Chinese students, which affected the priorities in values ranking.

Satisfaction by the material environment values in the rankings of Russian and Chinese students is characterized by larger differences in comparison with cultural values (Figure 2).

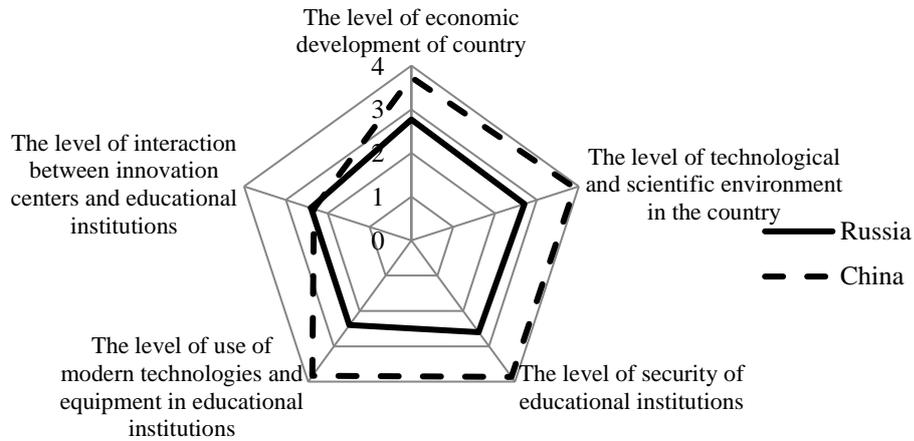


Figure 2. Distribution of the average rankings of the material environment in Russian and Chinese students on the Likert scale, 2015 (weighted means,  $n=1500$ ).

It is necessary to point out that Russian students' satisfaction with material environment elements is significantly lower compared to Chinese students, which affects the culture model development, which, in turn, shapes consumer behavior on higher education products market. To large extent, this situation is explained by higher criticism level in the Russian students' ranking.

Respondents' evaluation of institutional environment show high level of satisfaction by the institutional environment elements in Chinese students (Figure 3).

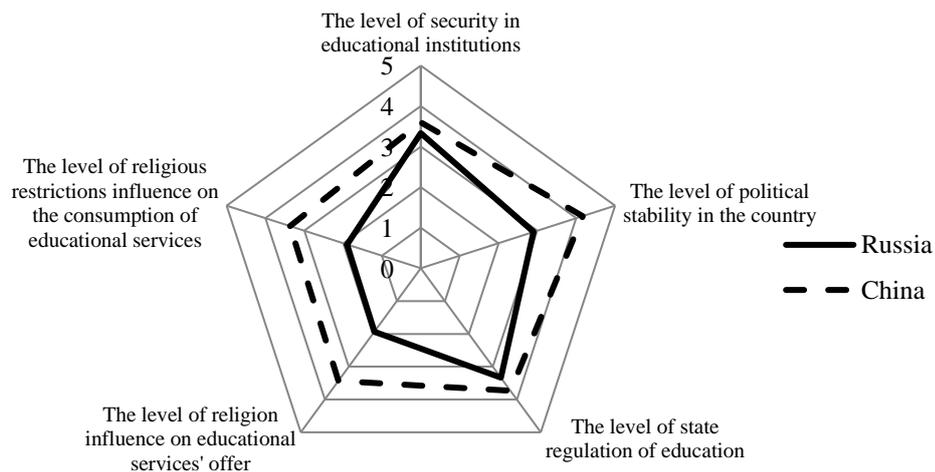


Figure 3. Distribution of average rankings of the institutional environment in Russian and Chinese respondents on the Likert scale, 2015 (weighted means, n=1500).

The largest differences in the respondents' rankings are revealed for such parameters, as level of religion influence on offer and consumption of educational products. The rankings of Russian and Chinese students correspond for such characteristics, as level of governmental regulation of education and level of security in educational institutions, which is especially significant during the choice of college abroad.

In order to confirm the first hypothesis, the authors constructed cross-cultural analysis matrices, based on the results of the survey, which reveal the connection between culture model and consumers' behavior on higher education products market in line with 7P marketing complex (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical evidence) (tables 1,2).

Table 1

Cross-cultural analysis matrix of Russian students' behavior on higher education products market (weighted means, n=750)

Marketing complex	Product	Price	Place	Promotion	People	Process	Physical evidence
Culture model elements							
Values	3,6	3,7	3,9	3,8	4,1	3,9	4,0
Material environment	2,9	3,0	3,2	3,1	3,4	3,2	3,3
Institutional environment	3,0	3,1	3,3	3,3	3,5	3,3	3,4

Cross-cultural analysis matrix demonstrates average level of culture model elements influence on Russian students' behavior on higher education products market (rankings of culture model influence on students' behavior ranges in the interval between 3.6-4.1 points).

Cross-cultural analysis matrix of Chinese students' behavior on higher education products market (weighted means, n=750)

Marketing complex	Product	Price	Place	Promotion	People	Process	Physical evidence
Culture model elements							



Values	4,2	4,3	4,3	4,3	4,4	4,2	4,2
Material environment	3,8	3,9	4,0	3,9	4,0	3,8	3,8
Institutional environment	3,9	4,0	4,0	4,0	4,1	3,9	3,9

However, the level of culture model elements on Chinese students' behavior is slightly higher than in Russian students (scores range in the interval between 3.8-4.4 points on the Likert scale); moreover, the influence of cultural values on students' behavior dominates. In our opinion, such situation is defined by the specifics of educational products as the object of research focus.

The hypothesis about the dependence of consumers' behavior on higher education products market from culture model of a certain country has been confirmed completely.

It is interesting to address culture model influence on students' behavior on higher education products market in line with the 7P complex in more detail. As a result of the study, we established that culture model influence on the choice of educational program, education level, possibility to study on two or more programs simultaneously, significance of presence of student exchange programs and preparation department for international students is average in Russian students (weighted means of the scores range between 2.5 and 3.8 points on a five-point scale) and high in Chinese students (weighted means of the scores range between 3.7 and 4.3 points on a five-point scale) (table 3).

Table 3

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for Product), (weighted means, n=1500)

Product	Culture model		Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
	Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China
Wide choice of educational programs	3,8	4,2	3,1	3,8	3,3	3,8	3,3	3,8
Wide choice of education levels (pre-college education, bachelor, master, etc.)	3,7	4,3	3,0	3,9	3,2	4,0	3,2	4,0
Possibility to study on two (or more) educational programs simultaneously	3,5	4,1	2,8	3,8	2,9	3,8	2,9	3,8
Presence of joint two-diploma programs	3,6	4,2	2,9	3,8	3,0	3,8	3,0	3,8

Presence of student exchange programs	3,5	4,1	2,8	3,7	2,9	3,8
Presence of preparation department	3,2	4,2	2,5	3,8	2,6	3,8

Similar patterns were established during the analysis of culture model influence on importance of the possibility to study on public entity basis, low cost of education, insignificant increase of educational products' cost, possibility to transfer from paid education to public entity, presence of scholarships and possibility of receiving them, low cost of living in a students' residence, low cost of meals and meals in student cafeterias and cafes. In Russian students weighted mean scores range from 2.8 to 4.0 points on a five-point scale, and for Chinese students – from 3.7 to 4.5 points (table 4).

Table 4

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for Price), (weighted means, n=1500)

Product	Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
	Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China
Possibility to study on public entity basis (large amount of public entity places on your field of study)	4,0	4,2	3,3	3,8	3,4	3,8
Low cost of education (for students who pay for their education)	3,6	4,1	2,9	3,7	3,0	3,8
Insignificant annual increase of educational products cost (for students who pay for their education)	3,6	4,2	2,9	3,8	3,0	3,9
Possibility to transfer from paid education to public entity (for students who pay for their education)	3,5	4,4	2,8	4,0	2,9	4,1
Presence of scholarships and possibilities to receive them (for students who do not pay for their education)	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,0	3,3	4,1
Low cost of living in a students' residence	3,7	4,5	3,0	4,2	3,1	4,2



Low cost of meals and meals in student cafeterias and cafes	3,8	4,4	3,1	4,0	3,2	4,1
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Analysis of culture model influence on Russian students' behavior concerning the choice of place of educational services provision showed that the influence is insignificant upon almost all positions excluding such characteristics, as college proximity to the city infrastructure. The largest differences in Russian and Chinese students' behavior are observed for the importance of college location in ecologically clean area (weighted means range from 2.9 to 3.6 points in Russian students and from 4.1 to 4.5 points in Chinese students). In our opinion, to high extent it is explained by Russian students' indifference towards this problem (table 5).

Table 5

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for Place), (weighted means, n=1500)

Product	Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
	Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China
Possibility of distance application in college (through intermediate agents)	3,8	4,2	3,1	3,8	3,2	3,9
Presence of internships and advanced education abroad	3,9	4,3	3,2	3,9	3,3	4,0
College location in ecologically clean area	3,6	4,5	2,9	4,1	3,1	4,2
College location in regard to students' permanent residence location	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,1	3,3	4,1
College proximity in regard to students' place of residence during his education	4,0	4,3	3,3	4,0	3,4	4,0
Convenient college location in regard to city infrastructure	4,0	4,4	3,3	4,0	3,4	4,0

It is necessary to point out similar culture model influence on students' preferences in the choice of communication means (presence of necessary information about the college in student's country and city; convenience and informational sufficiency of the official college Web-site; possibility of communication with the college in social networks; presence of events for

informing about educational conditions; visibility and memorability of the trademark style of the college; presence of the reviews from friends, who obtained their education from the considered college), which is more defined by cultural values (weighted means range from 3.6 to 4.4 points) (table 6).

Table 6

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for Promotion), (weighted means, n=1500)

Product	Culture model	Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
		Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China
	Presence of necessary information about the college in student's country (for international students) or region (for Russian applicants and employers)	3,9	4,2	3,2	3,8	3,4	3,9
	Convenient official Web-site of the college	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,0	3,3	4,0
	Possibility of communication with the college in social networks	4,0	4,4	3,3	4,0	3,4	4,1
	Presence of events for informing about educational conditions	3,8	4,2	3,1	3,9	3,2	3,9
	Visibility and memorability of the trademark style of the college	3,6	4,3	2,9	3,9	3,0	4,0
	Good reviews from friends, who obtained their education from that college	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,1	3,3	4,1

High qualification of scientific-pedagogical employees has traditionally provided competitiveness of the educational institutions. The conducted cross-cultural analysis confirmed the established tendencies (table 7).

Table 7

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for People), (weighted means, n=1500)

Staff	Culture model	Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
		Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China



High qualification of scientific-pedagogical employees	4,3	4,5	3,6	4,2	3,7	4,2
University's supply of teaching staff	4,1	4,4	3,4	4,1	3,6	4,1
Competency of managers and supervisors of educational programs	4,1	4,2	3,4	3,9	3,5	3,9
Quality of technical staff's work	3,9	4,2	3,2	3,9	3,3	3,9

In comparison with other elements of the 7P complex, the characteristics of culture model influence on students' preferences concerning the process of product supply is slightly lower (table 8).

Table 8

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for Process), (weighted means, n=1500)

Culture model	Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
	Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China
Process of product supply						
Variety of forms of education	4,0	4,2	3,3	3,8	3,4	3,8
Convenient study schedule	4,1	4,1	3,4	3,8	3,5	3,8
Possibility to adjust study schedule	3,8	4,2	3,1	3,8	3,2	3,9
Convenient system of knowledge evaluation (rating)	3,6	4,3	2,9	3,9	3,0	3,9
Use of modern teaching technologies during the education	3,9	4,3	3,2	3,9	3,3	3,9

A significant role in students' life and preferences belongs to educational (comfortable classrooms, specialized laboratories, etc.) and social infrastructure (housing and utility, public catering and merchandising, sport and recreation, communications, etc.) (table 9).

Table 9

Matrix of Russian and Chinese students' culture model on the behavior on higher education products market (for Physical evidence), (weighted means, n=1500)

Culture model	Values		Material environment		Institutional environment	
	Russia	China	Russia	China	Russia	China
Physical evidence						
Comfortable classrooms in educational buildings	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,1	3,3	4,1
Presence of specialized laboratories with modern equipment	4,1	4,3	3,4	4,0	3,5	4,0
Well-developed material and technical foundation of the college	4,1	4,4	3,4	4,0	3,5	4,1
College's supply of sport objects	3,9	4,5	3,2	4,1	3,3	4,2
Comfortable student residences on the campus territory	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,0	3,3	4,0
Sufficient amount of cafeterias on the college grounds	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,1	3,4	4,1
Sufficient amount of spots selling food on the college grounds	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,1	3,3	4,1
Sufficient amount of copy centers in the educational buildings	3,9	4,2	3,2	3,8	3,4	3,8
Presence of spots selling stationery supplies on the college grounds	3,9	4,4	3,2	4,0	3,3	4,1
Presence of medical room	4,0	2,5	3,3	2,2	3,4	2,2
Free Wi-Fi in educational buildings	4,1	4,5	3,4	4,1	3,5	4,2

It is necessary to point out high culture model influence (especially cultural values) on the importance of free Wi-Fi in educational buildings (weighted means – 4.1-4.5. points) for Russian and Chinese students. Large differences are revealed in the rankings of influence of a culture model of a certain country on the importance of college's supply of sport objects (for Russian students the rankings are 3.2-3.9 points, while for Chinese students – 4.1-4.4 points). High level of healthcare system development in China and mistrust towards Russian



healthcare system, in our opinion, defines low level of significance of medical rooms presence in Russian colleges for Chinese students (weighted means range from 2.2 to 2.5 points along with generally high level of scores).

The hypothesis that cultural values have a larger influence of students' behavior on higher education products market in comparison with other culture model elements (material and institutional environment) has been confirmed completely, which can be explained by the specifics of studied higher education products market.

#### 4. Discussion

On the current stage, the evaluation of cultural values during the construction of culture model is conducted with various methods (Hofstede et al., 2002; Yanitskiy & Braun, 2015; Moven, 1995 and others). The question of the validity of using a certain method with regard of the specifics of the studied market is still being discussed. In present study we used the method of measuring the values by M. Yanitskiy and O. Braun (Yanitskiy & Braun, 2015), which partially considers the specifics of educational products market.

During the evaluation of cultural traits influence of students' behavior on higher education products market in present study we used matrices of compatibility of culture model and students' behavioral traits (cross-cultural marketing matrix) by J. Moven and I. Aleshina (Moven, 1995; Aleshina, 2011). During the construction of the compatibility matrix, matrix completion by the characteristics of consumers' behavior in line with the 7P marketing complex elements remains open to discussion. In present study we attempted to solve this problem.

The directions of further studies within the stated problem of measuring the cross-cultural specifics influence on students' behavior on higher education products market might be related to expanding geographical and national borders of the study and to involving a larger amount of respondents from different countries. Apart from that, it requires a complex approach, which includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods (focus-groups, profound interviews with representative of different culture of the target group, etc.)

#### 5. Conclusion

Within the present study:

1. We developed a methodical approach and inventory for analyzing the influence of cross-cultural traits on students' attitude towards the proposed higher education products in line with the 7P complex (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical evidence).

2. We defined the factors that affect the development and construction of culture models:

- List of cultural values;
- Elements of institutional environment (level of governmental regulation of education; level of security in educational institutions; level of political stability in the country; level of religious limitations' influence on the educational products consumption; level of religion influence on the proposition of educational products);
- Elements of material environment (level of educational institutions availability; level of the country's economic development; level of technological

and scientific fields development; level of application of modern technologies and equipment in educational institutions; level of interaction of innovation centers and educational institutions).

3. We propose a methodical approach and inventory for evaluating culture model elements influence on students' attitude towards the choice of educational products proposed by the university in line with the 7P complex (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical evidence). Based on that, we defined cross-cultural differences in the behavior of Russian and Chinese students on higher education products market, which necessarily have to be considered by Russian universities in order to increase their international competitiveness.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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