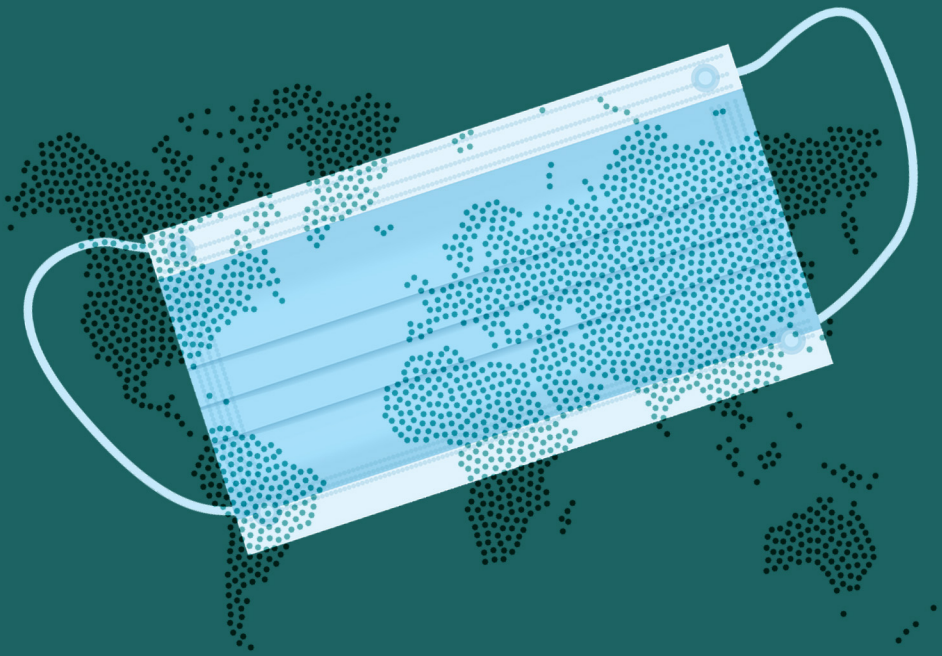
Post-COVID-19 Perspectives *on* International Business

Edited by

Jessica Lichy



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PREFACE

POST-COVID PERSPECTIVES FROM POST-MILLENNIAL GRADUATES FACING NEW CHANGE & CHALLENGES IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

MARC CASTAGNET

When I was first invited to write a few words, I almost declined, then being naturally curious, I decided to explore further and was pleasantly astonished to discover the collection of articles made under the editorial leadership of Jessica Lichy. Faced with the challenges of COVID-19, we often do not give sufficient grace and force to the dynamism, innovation, agility, resilience, creativity, hope and resolve – which are the main drivers of this ebullient, explosive world that is developing, cascading in front of us since the beginning of this pandemic (or earlier). Jessica, thank you for this amazing *tour de force* of curating such diverse articles, prompting us to feel vulnerable and strong, hopeful in times of doubt, highlighting the complexity in human behaviour – with an eye towards improving, discovering and adapting current systems, and managing new ones. Ultimately, this collection highlights the need to find ways for our society to reposition itself; to be more responsible, caring and loving in defining sustainable solutions for the years to come using technology, innovations, and human-centric design.

Here is a selection of key ideas from our writers:

- Healthcare is a precious resource in which we all have a stake. The focus must now be on understanding health in its holistic, interdisciplinary, bio-psychosocial context – for developing and exploiting technologies that support this vision.

- Product positioning for millennials and Generation Z during COVID-19 is extremely complex: it needs to be environmentally friendly, potentially pricier, and digitally present (including influencers) to be attached to certain groups asserting their social identity.

- The increase in home working (a direct consequence of COVID-19) has been made easier by organisations and technology; however, it is increasing loneliness and damaging the mental health of some individuals.

- Be local in a global world; the notion of the 'global village', enhanced by digital technologies and cloud computing, may give the impression of nations coming closer together towards a global consumer culture – yet unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic serve as a reminder of the fragility of mankind. In addition, the consumer's mind is complex and unpredictable. Consumers connect meta-culture/meta-environment, sub-culture/sub-environment and communities to build market perception.

- For greater efficiency in the public sector, there is a need to set up meeting mechanisms and implement action plans at all levels for public bodies. This will enable a concerted and synchronised multiplication of actions for each project, and make the actors at each hierarchical level accountable; this is of utmost importance when huge amounts of public money will be spent during and after COVID-19, in order to maintain and restart economies around the world.

- Youth Participation in Mainland China is starting to actively take part in the Sustainable Development Goals set up by the United Nations; social impact movements and awareness are relatively new and need to be controlled by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party).

It is now time to enjoy reading these chapters, please share your feedback with Jessica!

Introduction

Post-COVID Perspectives from Post-Millennial Graduates facing New Change & Challenges in International Business

Jessica Lichy

The chapters of this book are drawn from research projects undertaken by IDRAC Business School scholars and guest authors. Now graduated and in the world of work, the scholars reflect on their research projects and provide an update on their findings, to discuss the new changes and challenges faced in today's world of work.

Aimed at scholars and practitioners, this book provides pertinent illustrations of a changing society, together with insights into best practice for conducting business beyond borders. The intention is to raise awareness of diverse factors that need to be taken into consideration before venturing into transnational operations. The authors share their insights and advice on a number of aspects of modern-day business and society – framed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The chapters bring together a range of issues that have resonance for managers facing new challenges brought about by the changed environment. The first chapter explores the long-overdue issue of putting 'Health' and 'Care' back into 'Healthcare'. The second chapter looks at the growing problem of sustainable consumption by today's younger consumers. The third chapter discusses the pursuit of loyalty by luxury firms among Gen Y and Gen Z consumers. Similarly, the fourth chapter investigates millennial perceptions of Instagram influencers in the French fashion industry. The fifth chapter makes a detailed analysis of the extent to which COVID-19 is influencing the vision of working from home in France among employers and employees. The sixth chapter provides an overview of why

managers need to rethink standardization versus adaptation of international marketing strategies: post-pandemic views. The seventh chapter examines the difficulties of strategic implementation in public organisations: the case of a metropolitan town hall. The penultimate chapter offers an insight into how to tailor customer experience according to cultural differences in the luxury hospitality industry. The final chapter puts forward a detailed vision of the reality of sustainable action among Chinese youth.

Building resilience and achieving sustainable success requires much more than expanding business operations overseas to reach new clients or customers, with a view to increasing profits – as this book will demonstrate. The chapters of this book draw on diverse aspects of international business to reflect the extent to which today's society is both international and connected, driven by the co-evolution of society and technology. Rapid advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought individuals closer together via virtual platforms. While ICT continue to transform business (economics, markets, industry structure, consumer segmentation), the impact has been perhaps greater on society (jobs, consumer values, consumer behaviour, labour markets) – especially as our world has been reduced to a screen by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Continuing with the themes raised in the two previous volumes (*The Driving Trends of International Business in the 21st Century* and *New Business Models in International Higher Education*), the chapters of this book provide a brick-in-the-wall snapshot of the changing landscape of international business in a global, online society.

Special thanks go to Wendy Leslie at Xceltranslate (xceltranslate@yahoo.com), professional proof-reader and French-English translator, who edited the chapters of this book.

ARTICLE I

COVID-19: TIME TO PUT THE 'HEALTH' AND 'CARE' BACK INTO HEALTHCARE

WENDY LESLIE

Abstract

The COVID-19 virus has rapidly and dramatically impacted the world in literally every area of life: social, economic, political, environmental, behavioural, mental and physical health… provoking deep and far-reaching changes, the full impacts of which remain as yet unknown. It has engendered overwhelming feats of methodological and practical changes within the space of months, which would otherwise have taken years to develop and implement. 2020 has, of course, placed our healthcare systems firmly in the spotlight. This chapter sets out the pressing case for a long-overdue overhaul of our global health systems, presenting themes inductively drawn from qualitative semi-structured interviews of key actors in the healthcare and data sciences sectors which identify the main axes for shaping new transformative models. Healthcare must shift towards preventive, integrated and decentralised care as far as possible: a biopsychosocial interdisciplinary approach combined with, in practice, exploiting data sciences for decentralised provision of care underpinned by centralised multidisciplinary information systems.

Introduction

Little did we know merely a year ago how 2020 would be marked by something as huge and far-reaching as the emergence and spread of COVID-19, bringing global markets to their knees. A phenomenon unprecedented in our lifetimes: over 3 million deaths so far and counting. 2020 is being named the *annus horribilis*, also punctuated by vast forest fires in Australia, Brazil and the USA, flash floods, and deep global

economic downturn due to the pandemic (in October 2020 the IMF forecast a 4.4% global shrink in the economy, the worst contraction since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Global Times, 2020). As such, few things are foreseeable for the future.

2020 has of course firmly placed our global health systems in the spotlight, critically needed and yet demonstrably falling short. For those raising the alarm over decades of cost-cutting, this was a disaster waiting to happen. As an industry in which everyone has a stake, healthcare should be top of political and social agendas, but it has perhaps taken this emergency pandemic state to make it so.

Even before COVID-19, we could predict with confidence that certain critical issues would become increasingly urgent in the coming years: protecting the environment, sustainable development, our changing demography, feeding our growing population, and sustainable healthcare provision have all been firmly among these (and are moreover largely interrelated). Even our most developed healthcare systems in the West have been overburdened for years. This is set to deepen due to factors we know to be inevitable, notably our aging population, and increases in mental health and chronic conditions. And no one knows what implications COVID-19 will have in the longer term. Yet rather than a looming disaster, we must grasp this challenge, coinciding as it does with the increasing sophistication of data science, information system (IS) capacities and fast-paced technological advances, as a driver to overhaul the system. But to do this, we must know what we need from healthcare… and what is not working.

Putting the "health" and the "care" back into healthcare: "Can we collectively take this moment to spark and accelerate the radical changes needed? Can we truly disrupt the way healthcare is organized, distributed and delivered?" (Kimpen, 2020). An overhaul of our existing healthcare systems – indebted, unable to meet our exponential needs and widely mismanaged – is crucial and requires a fundamental change in our approach to health: from "concentrating on reactive care" (McCaman, 2016, Orion Health 2020), towards proactively reducing illness and associated costs: person-centred and value-based models (Outhwaite, 2020). Indeed, we now know that much of our health status is determined by lifestyle choices and behaviours. Even with COVID-19, chronic illnesses have hugely surpassed infectious diseases as the main causes of death in today's world, and the majority of these have significant behavioural and proximal risk components (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020).

Of course, finding data incorporating reliable COVID-19 mortality over time is a challenge today, but we do know that the virus is currently the third leading cause of death in America. More people died in the first 8 months of 2020 in the US than in any of the previous 50 years. Given the numbers (1.8 million reported COVID-19 deaths by 31st December 2020), we can position it among the top 10 leading causes of death worldwide, although non-communicable causes still lead. The UN called the 1 million deaths mark an "agonizing milestone" (UN, 2020), as someone dies of COVID-19 every 16 seconds. Beyond the virus, ischaemic heart disease and stroke are the biggest killers, accounting for 1 in 3 deaths in OECD countries, with cancer accounting for 1 in 4. The United Nations (2018) states that 41 million people die of 'preventable' chronic diseases every year: not forgetting that chronic illness entails not only high mortality but also lengthy treatment, disabilities and reduced quality of life (QoL). Awareness of this is shifting focus from merely treating the problem once it is manifest, to preventive screening and early diagnosis, and promoting healthy lifestyles, to curb the prevalence and severity of certain illnesses. But there is still much progress to be made.

"*I'm one of thousands to have long-term post-Covid symptoms. This crisis won't end with a vaccine*" (Prikash, 2020). It is important here to evoke emerging accounts of "Long Covid": long-term health implications reported by some who have been infected by COVID-19 (CDC, 2020). Only time will tell what Long Covid really entails, but it potentially signifies a crossroads between infection and chronic illness.

Simultaneously, data science techniques and tools are now sophisticated enough for us to derive all sorts of predictive information from data, while information systems are finally powerful enough to meet the needs of complex healthcare systems. As resources are increasingly strained, the advantages of using technology for preventive and curative healthcare are at least threefold: lowered costs, improved efficiency and increased QoL.

And yet, these remain woefully unexploited. The Future Health Index 2019 report (Philips, 2019) found that telehealth is not yet commonplace in healthcare professionals' daily work, with 39% not using it at all. Why is this? Dobbs *et al*. (2015) suggest humans are slow to adapt to change. We moreover base decisions on past experiences, a strategy now failing us in our rapidly changing times. Mannion and Davies (2018) furthermore highlight how healthcare organisations comprise multiple subcultures, which may undermine change due to a silo effect and complex layers of authority and influence.

On the subject of influence, a campaign by *Médecins du Monde* (2016), designed to lower the cost of medicine, bore the slogan "*Alongside real estate and petrol, what is one of the most profitable markets? Sickness!*" While controversial, this nevertheless highlights how the current model may suit certain influential stakeholders. Finally, as far as technology goes, Adler (2015) argues the computing power enabling data to be deployed in real-time has only recently become available. Now it is here, it is undoubtedly where the innovation of tomorrow lies. Although we have been slow to embrace change, COVID-19 arguably has the single merit that it is forcing change to embrace us.

Indeed, although the rising star of big data reached a plateau from 2015 onwards (Turk, 2016) it has come into its own in this pandemic in five ways: 1) predicting individual and community infection risks, 2) predicting patient outcomes, 3) monitoring hospital admissions, 4) identifying chemical/drug combination reactions, and 5) estimating real-time spread and forecasting future spread of the virus (Matthews, 2020).

To resume all this, Herzlinger (2006) describes three kinds of innovation in healthcare which are explored herein: 1) changes to how consumers use healthcare (we argue for preventive and decentralised care); 2) use of technology to develop new products and treatments to improve care (data sciences to screen and model illnesses); and 3) generating new business models for horizontal/vertical integration of healthcare activities (again, decentralised and underpinned by multidisciplinary IS). This chapter therefore sets out a systemic vision englobing all three kinds of innovation. It is structured as follows. It first presents a literature review and overview of the current context of healthcare in concept and in practice, followed by theoretical underpinnings. Then, qualitative research undertaken in the form of semi-structured interviews with actors in healthcare and data sciences sectors is presented, from which themes were inductively identified and developed to propose the main axes of focus for future healthcare models. Themes are discussed with theoretical underpinnings in the discussion section. A final section presents conclusions and recommendations.

Findings shape a new model of healthcare systems: a preventive, integrated, holistic and decentralised approach, fundamentally implemented in practice by data science and information systems (IS).

Literature Review

The Context: a Healthcare System on the Cusp of Change

Our healthcare systems have been in trouble-mode for a while, with change not aligned with the pace of increasing demands. In 2020, the lack of planning for a pandemic led to not only avoidable COVID-19 related deaths, but also deaths from other causes due to resources being funnelled to cope with the strain (Grady, 2020). We have limited supply faced with unlimited demand and the gap is widening (Feber, 2016). This has never been so evident as in 2020, as frontline healthcare workers put their lives at risk working with a highly infectious virus without proper protective equipment. At the time of writing this chapter, a third generally Europe-wide wave is in force, each lockdown motivated by doctors ringing alarm bells at the number of ICU beds being taken by COVID-19 patients (Drewett, 2020). Beyond COVID-19, the OECD paints a stark picture of the challenges facing healthcare systems. Almost one third of adults live with two or more chronic conditions (up by 50% since 2012). Health expenditure has largely outpaced economic growth and will represent 10.2% of GDP in OECD countries by 2030 (OECD, 2019). Moreover, the healthcare system wastes sizeable sums per year on missed prevention opportunities, with 90% of the US 3.5$ trillion health expenditure, for example, spent on chronic and mental health conditions, many of which are preventable (NCCDPHP, 2020). Notwithstanding the fact that we have no idea of the long-term implications of COVID-19. The need to make the system more efficient, and "put the 'health' back into healthcare" (Sturmberg, 2018) cannot be overstated: focusing on keeping people healthy rather than dealing with the significant consequences of illness as far as possible is win-win in health, QoL and economic terms. "*An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*" (Martin, Lomas and Claxton, 2019).

Horizon 2030 (FNI, 2012) is a global project, developed further by healthcare professionals in France, advising on how healthcare systems must evolve by 2030. It highlights the need for analysing emerging needs, reducing hospital admissions through home-based and person-centred care strategies, and a shift away from illness as the sole focus of healthcare (Martin *et al.*, 2019). The project furthermore calls for increased interdisciplinary collaborative work to provide customised and integrated care solutions. It ultimately presents the case for decentralisation of many healthcare activities to streamline hospital operations, geared towards the most urgent and incumbent ailments. The pandemic highlights the advantages of reducing hospital admissions, thereby reducing the phenomenon of hospitals

becoming incubators of infection (the World Health Organization (2020) estimates that hundreds of millions of healthcare-associated infections occur per year).

The Role of Data Science

IBM heralded the need for models enabling "prediction, mitigation, preparation and response" driving disaster preparedness (O'Brien, 2015), models which can compare historical data on illnesses and treatment with specific patient data to support rapid and accurate decision-making. This is the vocation data science must adopt at the heart of the healthcare system: predicting all sorts of health outcomes in real-time, from huge amounts of objectively-generated data which are both generalised (population data) and customised (patient data), stored within one integrated system. Until very recently, this was an overwhelming target.

And yet, the technology is now here (Adler, 2015) with increasing incorporation of data science techniques in all sectors. Exploiting big data analytics in healthcare promises lower costs and improved health outcomes. Health-related data, held, shared and exploited within an integrated IS, will outline the architectural framework and define the majority of processes of our future healthcare systems. Healthcare has always generated huge amounts of data, driven by "record-keeping, compliance and regulatory requirements and patient care" (Raghupathi and Raghupathi, 2014). With the target now being to digitalise all this, the potential to support a wide range of healthcare functions is far-reaching, from real-time and facilitated communication across departments, to support for clinical decision-making (e.g. benchmarking data), disease monitoring and preventive health management in the wider population.

Data science is a field "at the intersection of social sciences, statistics, information and computer science and design" (Berkeley, 2020). In our knowledge- and information-intensive, and increasingly digitalised economies, huge amounts of data are generated. 'Data Science' refers to techniques and technologies which "make it economical to deal with very large datasets (big data) on the extreme end of the scale" (Pearlson and Saunders, 2012). By extreme, while the 'megabyte' we are generally familiar with is equal to 10^6 bytes, big datasets are rather in the order of exabytes ('EB' 10^{18} bytes) and zettabytes ('ZB' 10^{26} bytes), invariably stored in unstructured formats. Coined the 'big data problem', this was far too large for traditional data management tools to store, let alone manipulate. Specialised computers and software tools have only recently

been produced which enable us to store, share, search and analyse our fast-growing accumulations of data in a meaningful way (Adler, 2015).

Information Systems

An organisation's IS is central to nearly every process. It forms the backbone of operations and must reflect organisational strategy. The IS defines in practice how information is managed, organised and used. In healthcare, IS must adhere not only to organisational policies but also to government regulations, especially concerning confidentiality and security of patient information. It must also be designed to a large scale, storing information on millions of patients, in constant use by thousands of employees. This does not mean managers require in-depth knowledge of how their IS is developed or functions abstractly, but they must fundamentally be involved in shaping and understanding what it measures and ensuring its processes are meaningfully aligned to strategy and organisational objectives (Pearlson and Saunders, 2012).

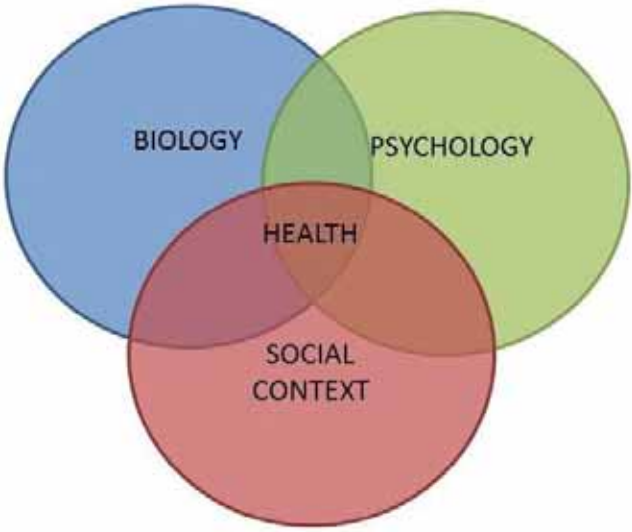
Theoretical Underpinnings

Evidence-based decision-making: Factors such as globalisation, technological advances and the sheer pace of change in today's world are making the use of theoretical decision-making models, based on past phenomena, virtually redundant. Just to scratch the surface of this complexity, how can you possibly predict the future based on a past in which COVID-19 is entirely absent? This, indeed, is a major argument for embracing data science techniques. Dobbs *et al.* (2015) say our tendency to make decisions by extrapolating past experiences to the present is like looking in a rear-view mirror, which was more-or-less fine until recent years as "changes were incremental and somewhat predictable". Not so 2020! At the same time, Dobbs *et al.* (2015) say we are in a "golden age of instant communication and boundless information" and urge a shift towards evidence-based decision-making. The relevance of this in healthcare cannot be overstated. A rise in older people and chronic illnesses, as well as complex comorbidities, new diseases, new treatments, regular changes to policies and processes… our mainstream, traditional models cannot keep up. Exploiting patient information (data analytics) can identify trends and causal relationships as they emerge (on a population scale) and predict and model events and outcomes in real-time (on an individual scale) to support processes and decision-making. Arguably, such a seamless information system could have improved our understanding of COVID-19 to provide

coherent strategy and care more rapidly.

The biopsychosocial model & holistic approach: Healthcare has seen a major shift in theoretical paradigm in the past 30 years. Previously, the traditional biomedical model of health reigned unrivalled. This model views the health of the body separately to the psychological and environmental contexts of the individual (Yuill, Crinson and Duncan, 2010) and the patient is considered in terms of their symptoms and passively treated. However, Engel (1980) proposed the biopsychosocial model of health and illness, wherein interactions between biological, psychological and social factors determine the cause(s), manifestation and outcome of wellness and disease, and cannot thus be considered separately. The biopsychosocial model of health is now the posited model in academia and has led to increasing adoption of a holistic approach to health, whereby the person is seen as a whole, made up of interdependent parts, not merely the reductionist sum of their bodily symptoms, as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Biopsychosocial Model of Health (Engel, 1980)



With the rising prevalence of chronic and mental health conditions, which do not respond as well to medical treatment as do infectious diseases, healthcare systems are experiencing the limits of the biomedical model and realising the significant influence of behavioural and environmental factors

on health, "the wider determinants of illness" (Outhwaite, 2020). Components of illness outcomes are proposed in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Factors Influencing Health Outcomes (Source World Economic Forum 2020)

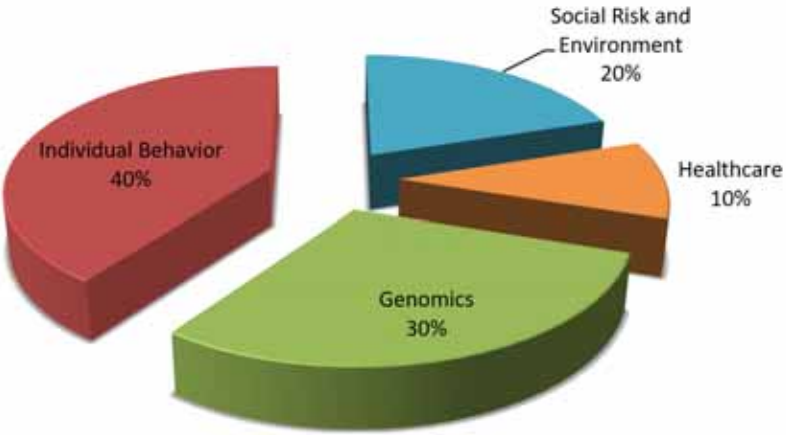


Figure 2 shows how behavioural, social and environmental factors account for 60 per cent of health outcomes. While the biopsychosocial model and holistic approach to health are now mainstream adopted positions in the Western world in theory, this is arguably not entirely true in practice. If it were, our healthcare systems would be investing more in preventive health measures, making individuals veritable *actors* responsible, to a significant extent, for their health status via informed behaviour and lifestyle choices. Indeed, many chronic illnesses should never develop in the first place. Given that we have sophisticated understandings of risk factors for many diseases, and that we now have the powerful technology and data science techniques to predict certain illness outcomes (and will increasingly over time), this is frustrating.

Crucially, truly adopting the biopsychosocial model of health expands the parameters for innovation opportunities exponentially. From a target audience limited to healthcare-related professionals, products and services, this now potentially extends to literally everybody in every area of their lives: from diet, exercise, sexual health behaviour, risk-taking and sleep hygiene patterns, to work, home and social environments. And in our COVID-19 times, to hygiene, social distancing, mental health awareness and beyond.

A Systemic Approach: The holistic approach to healthcare is becoming the dominant mainstream ideology in psychosocial sciences and is part of a much wider shift in perspective. In business, we adopt a "systemic" perspective, defining "transversal" and "interdepartmental" roles and functions. In academia, "multidisciplinary" or "interdisciplinarity" are used to explain phenomena which do not fall neatly in one domain. These are all dimensions of a new world perspective. Often called 'interdisciplinary thinking' (Kosner, 2011), this ideology assumes nothing is a static, independent object; we are rather interested in interrelated, interdependent, ongoingly and reciprocally interacting and influencing *processes* without silos and artificial boundaries. As such, we cannot explore one phenomenon outside of its environment or network. In the present research, we will see how all issues and avenues for opportunity are interconnected, thus the need for a systemic overhaul for effective change.

Systems theory (Adams, 2012) defines a system as a group of components interacting dynamically with an organised purpose, depending on the aim(s) and stake(s). The healthcare system is one of the most complex systems we have, with many stakeholders, disciplines and activities, steeped in regulatory constraints. Therefore, identifying problems and areas for change requires exploring highly complex networks of influence and processes within this system.

Stakeholders & Systems: Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) purports that to measure, understand and navigate a complex universe comprising several actors (stakeholders), we must identify all parties having a potential vested interest in the 'stake'. They may be internal or external, including governmental bodies, political groups, trade associations, trade unions, communities, financiers, suppliers, employees, customers, and indeed competitors (Freeman, 1984). Grasping these links helps target those with influence, and determine, according to stakeholders' interests, how to generate value proposition and develop strategies around the stake, as well as not overlooking certain important factors and risks. Fundamentally, we are all stakeholders in healthcare.

The Agency for Healthcare and Research (2007) divides stakeholders into 4 distinct groups: patients, payers/regulators, service/product providers and manufacturers. While stakeholders can be internal or external, this does not define their degree of influence. For example, the government is external to the healthcare system and yet exerts much influence, in terms of regulations, funding and procedures of accountability.

Table 1: Breakdown of Healthcare Sector Stakeholder Interests (Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2007)

PATIENT	***"Am I getting the best care?"*** - Convenient - Respectful, compassionate - Trusted information provided about choices - Lower out-of-pocket cost	**PAYER**	***"Am I only paying for effective care?"*** - Lower cost - Predictability - Better outcomes
PROVIDER	***"Am I being rewarded for good work?"*** - Better outcomes - Higher reimbursement - Increased volumes - More efficiency - Chance to innovate - Enhanced reputation	**REGULATOR**	***"Am I protecting public health?"*** - Safe and effective products - 2 types of challenge - Not approve drugs later found to be dangerous - Approving drugs in a timely fashion
EMPLOYER	***"Am I getting value for money?"*** - Lower cost - Best care - Satisfied workforce/beneficiaries - Healthy & productive employees	**MANUFACTURER**	***"Am I rewarded for safe and effective products?"*** - Improved patient outcomes - Recouping R&D investments - Fair and transparent coverage process - Clear evidence requirements

Table 1 above illustrates several areas of frustration where the current system is not meeting needs. With long waiting lists (Triggle, 2019), bed shortages and too-early discharges, patients may not feel they get adequate care. Service-providers must continually cut costs and meet increasingly demanding targets (Kutscher, 2014). Employers also face imperatives to cut costs and can see that neither patients nor staff are satisfied. Payers such as health insurance companies are undoubtedly seeing costs increase, which are difficult to pass on (Mathews, 2016). Regulators are seeing regulations

flouted due to overburdening (Triggle, 2019). Manufacturers of pharmaceutical products, medical devices, etc. are also seeing budgets squeezed, with less returns on often heavy R&D investment (Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt, 2015). This has all made for the ticking time bomb of this pandemic (and there may be more): when you constantly increase targets and reduce budgets, the likelihood of error, dissatisfaction and fatalities is heightened.

Data Science in Healthcare: Data science is an interdisciplinary field, spanning mathematics, programming, statistics and domain knowledge (Adler, 2015). It requires conducting sophisticated and systematic analyses to extract insights from data sets to predict future trends and identify strategic opportunities.

Data science is entering every domain but moving much faster in certain industries than others. One could be forgiven for thinking healthcare is a less attractive business sector than finance, say. We are regularly reminded of health budget shortcomings and cost-cutting drives. It is furthermore an extremely complex system, spanning geographic regions, disciplines and structures, from hospitals to hospices to GP clinics. It is a system governed by many regulations and structures of accountability, not ideal for innovation which thrives on flexibility. However, the principle of Jugaad (Radjou, Prabhu and Ahuja, 2012) would beg to differ. Jugaad describes a bottom-up, frugal and flexible approach wherein successful innovators find opportunity in adversity, targeting environments characterized by scarcity of resources, ineffective infrastructure, poor governance, constrained purchasing power, etc. to offer low-cost solutions. New healthcare models can respond to challenges with “better-faster-cheaper” value propositions.

Table 2: Feber's 7 Steps of Big Data in Healthcare Systems (Source: Feber, 2016-bis)

1) SOURCES	Physiological measurements are health data sources.
2) COLLECTION	Regularly monitored, gathered, centralised.
3/4/5) MODELS/ ALGORITHMS/ ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	Analysts feed data into a model they conceive to reflect their understanding of X health phenomenon. Algorithms/AI are based on past data and support the model by: - automatically calculating processes and predicting outcomes - modelling scenarios e.g. epidemic, drug reaction
6) DECISION-MAKING	Data science tools rank options according to effectiveness.
7) PROCESS AUTOMATION	Repetitive processes: orders, scheduling, communiqués…

Table 2 above ultimately demonstrates the central role of people in a system. People define the data sources needed and how they can be meaningfully measured (Pearlson and Saunders, 2012), design models and algorithms, and select appropriate decisions considering options proposed and context. Not forgetting that data is derived from, and applied for, the benefit of humans. Data science therefore does not replace humans, it rather enriches their roles.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 participants in various healthcare and/or data science related professions. In accordance with Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992, in Charmaz, 2001), this qualitative research took an inductive approach, exploring data thematically to identify (rather than confirm/infirm) relevant ideas and concepts.

Research questions directing the semi-structured interview were purposely loose:

- What are the most pressing challenges facing your sector today?
- How has COVID-19 impacted your sector?
- What are the most impactful avenues for innovation?
- How can information technologies, IS infrastructure and data science be used to support healthcare systems?

The aim of these interviews was to identify overarching themes from first-hand sources in various roles and organisations.

Sample

Table 3: List of Respondents

Dmitri Adler	Founder of Data Society, US
Peter Boyd	Business Intelligence & Biomedical professional, FR
Alan Bruce	Key Account Manager, Plant-Based Health, EU/US
Sarah Dick	Account Director, JPA Health Communications, US
Lorraine Mitchell	Senior Commercial Manager, NHS, UK
Michael O'Leary	Occupational Therapist and CEO of Spectronics, AU/NZ
Lee Outhwaite	Financial Director, NHS Derbyshire & Finance Lead for the Derbyshire Sustainability & Transformation Partnership, UK
Jules Puttock	Integrated Care Pharmacist, NHS Lothian, UK
Sandrine Roussillon	Independent Nurse, Cardiac FR

Procedure

Respondents were selected opportunistically through the author's network, inclusion criteria being professional associations with data sciences and/or healthcare. Each respondent was made aware of the purpose of the interview and explicitly agreed to be interviewed, recorded and cited in the scope of this research.

Interviews were recorded using a voice recording tool, then transcriptions typed. Thematic analyses were conducted inductively from transcriptions according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines (familiarise, code,

develop themes, revise). The outcome was a clearly identified set of specific and overarching themes on current issues and opportunities in healthcare. Average interview time was 39 minutes (SD: 32-46 minutes).

Thematic Analysis and Discussion

Rich responses provided first-hand insights into current challenges and opportunities for future developments in healthcare.

Themes

Identified themes are organised and presented according to Table 4 below. It is essential, however, to underline the interconnected nature of themes evoked.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of Interview Transcripts

	COST-CUTTING
1)	PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE
-	New Cost Structures and partnerships
-	Prevention/Screening
-	Efficiency
-	Advancing clinical research
2)	DECENTRALISING CARE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH & INTEGRATED IS
-	Bridging the gap: training and making systems accessible
-	Integrated care systems and partnerships
-	Communication and knowledge-sharing
-	Decentralisation
3)	DATA SCIENCE & IS UNDERPINNING HEALTHCARE
-	Real-time, integrated IS and some automated processes
-	Democratisation of IT
-	Evidence-based decision-making, customised care
-	Innovation
-	Leadership for Change
-	Training
	ETHICS
	COVID-19

1. Cost-Cutting

(CEO Spectronics, ILT) "*costs are skyrocketing and are unsustainable.*"

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*healthcare operates in a different world now where it's business-minded rather than patient-minded. The main issue is cost. Populations grow, communities grow, and systems don't grow because the money isn't there.*"

Unsurprisingly, cost-cutting is a leading strategy driver. The dichotomy is the balance between cost and improving patient outcomes. With strained resources, it is not difficult to understand reluctance to invest financially in new measures which require significant outlay upfront, for an integrated IS, digitalisation, training, service provision, etc. Moreover, redesigning business processes requires taking people away from their functions to dedicate themselves to training and implementation (Champoty, 2006).

(Key Account Manager, Plant-Based Health): "*The tricky thing about the healthcare industry is it's a very long-term sell. The company at the same time has to meet shareholder requirements, which tend to be short-term.*"

This raises the issue of reluctance to enter the healthcare industry because the engagement and R&D investment required for healthcare projects are often long-term, ill-matched to short-term gains strategies of shareholder-led companies.

New Cost Structures & Partnerships

(Key Account Manager, Plant-Based Health): "*focus on long-term partnerships where you add value, provide a service: sharing marketing information, information on clinical studies, developing products and services based on trends in the marketplace*".

New cost structures meaning the initial outlay at least is absorbed should be explored. Bierbaum (2015) describes a vision away from traditional linear and transactional healthcare business relationships, towards "performance partnerships integrating suppliers deeply into the care system" to spread costs and encourage long-term commitment to value creation. Dobbs *et al*. (2015) also argue the need to forge new, more seamless networks of communication: partnerships with information technologists, public health and policy experts, patient advocates and healthcare companies, so that representatives of all stakeholder interests pool their expertise and develop an overarching infrastructure. Financial allocations must be transparent, so

everybody in the system recognises and approves their uses (Outhwaite, 2020).

Prevention/Screening

(CEO Data Society): *"…predicting events: absolutely what will save the most in healthcare costs. Predicting a heart attack or disease. There's a whole host of methods: classification, clustering, network analysis.*"

If data exploitation can focus on preventing ill-health, the value proposition is attractive to individuals in terms of QoL, and for healthcare generally in terms of hospital admission avoidance, economy of resources and reduced treatment costs.

(Key Account Manager, Plant-Based Health): "*Healthy lifestyle choices and how to look after yourself need to be relevant to the individual: things they can achieve in their daily lives. We can understand this by monitoring consumer data.*"

Healthy lifestyle choices which are easy to integrate into daily life are key to uptake and success.

(CEO Spectronics, ILT): "*I see huge potential for personal health monitoring, early diagnosis and intervention. This should curb increasing health costs and increase life expectancy and QoL.*"

COVID-19 track-and-trace mobile applications are obvious examples of population-level health monitoring technologies. Wearables are also increasingly popular. As an example (beyond the common watches tracking heartrate, calories and step count), Intel has created wearable technologies for those genetically at-risk of developing Parkinson's disease. This is a particularly cruel affliction in which up to 80% of the brain's dopamine cells will have been obliterated before any noticeable symptoms manifest. Intel's wearables have a dual purpose: the can both alert the wearer if they are predisposed to the disease long before noticeable symptoms, and feed physiological data into a central hub for analysts to study, hoping to find a cure (Feber, 2016).

Efficiency

(CEO Data Society): "*narrowing down the diagnosis faster, having a physician freer, will increase the number of patients they can see on an hourly basis. It makes us more efficient.*"

Evidently, cost-cutting cannot be indiscriminate and requires systemic changes to streamline the system. An example of a company aiding faster diagnosis and prevention is Counsyl (Myriad Women's Health, 2020), a screening tool which gathers data through genetic testing for, e.g. inherited cancer. If an individual is found to be high-risk, they can elect to have frequent screening, preventive surgery, etc. and this data can be integrated into a centralised healthcare database, reducing prevalence of more serious illness and costly in-hospital treatments. Such data ultimately aid predictive analytics to identify at-risk demographics.

(CEO Data Society): "*Depending on what you know to be statistically true, you can have people who are less qualified, when it isn't a serious illness. Being able to do that triage more effectively will lighten the load.*"

The European Commission (2019) supports this, saying that shifting tasks from doctors to nurses or other healthcare professionals can alleviate cost pressures.

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*then if you are having to be treated and hooked up to machines, those machines programme straight into the central record for future preventive care*".

Respondents broadly evoked the need for a centralized system of information sharing to render the system more dynamic and efficient through communication and feedback, whether this be the healthcare system IS or a partner service-provider.

The CEO of Spectronics, however, raised a word of caution: "C*omputer generated, stored and transmitted patient records. This does little to quell demand, and probably increases it: let's test for everything!*"

Is there an over-reliance on health monitoring the more precise it becomes?

Advancing Clinical Research

D. Adler: "*you can model proteins in a much more predictive way. So, you can have a computer do a simulation, which is a lot cheaper, and narrow the field of things you actually test."*

Predictive modelling of biological processes and drugs will become more mainstream, storing and leveraging the clinical and molecular data we generate (Cattell, Chilukuri and Levy, 2016).

2. Decentralised Care: an Interdisciplinary Approach and Integrated IS

Bridging the Gaps: Training and Making Systems Accessible

(CEO Data Society): "*I saw a big gap between what was actionable, what was used, and what people were trained to do.*"

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*There's a lot to be said for training clinicians to be business managers. But you're then taking that clinician out of their environment, not necessarily something they want to do.*"

There is a problem of tensions between different experts, specialists and employees. Feber (2016) asks what place there can be for data scientists in healthcare systems? Will they be on a par with doctors, despite lack of clinical expertise? Or will doctors have to become data scientists, fundamentally transforming the nature of their vocation? The answers are far from straightforward and yet crucial to the success of a meaningful systemic overhaul.

Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and Partnerships

(Finance Director, NHS UK) "*The NHS has worked in a significantly more integrated way during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has loosened institutional boundaries between NHS institutions, the 240 or so NHS providers, the 200 or so Commission bodies, General Practice and colleagues in Local Government. The challenge for a post COVID-19 health and care system is how this loosening can be put to best effect to deal with a changing profile of disease (more comorbidities and frailty) that may have at their root cause social not medical factors*."

Outhwaite (2020) (interviewed) argues the need for an "expansion of integrated care systems to fulfil the long-cherished hope of joining up health and social care", advocating the need for partnerships between healthcare, social care and industry. But he also recognizes this is easier said than done, and that pharmaceuticals will feel uncertain about where they fit in to "the new structures of holistic care". He proposes that to provide legitimacy to these new structures, there must be legislation to back it up.

Communication and Knowledge-Sharing

(Independent District Nurse, France): "*I have no access to the medical files of my patients. Either they don't exist, or independent nurses are at the end*

of the line, not properly integrated into the system."

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*in terms of cost and making things quicker and easier, if you're talking to people rather than sending pieces of paper, that conversation always gives you more information. There's a great knock-on effect.*"

Interviews evoked the need for better communication and seamless information sharing among and across interdisciplinary teams. So, on the most fundamental level, the digitalisation and centralisation of all health-related data in one repository means faster access, less wastage (paperless system and less duplication), less room for error and better communication among professionals and with patients. Soon- Shiong (in Wicklund, 2014) proposes a system which accompanies people throughout their health in a "life continuum", not only when they are sick.

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*Breaking down silos, looking at what a whole healthcare system can provide a patient. There can be a lot of tension as different departments say they need different information, and it puts a brake on centralising things. Whereas if you had this integrated system anyway, you'd be able to access all that information.*"

Reams and Little (2017) describe how "silo mentality" is disrupting the healthcare system by preventing reforms towards holistic, collaborative care focusing on wellness, lamenting the fact that each specialist unit or department within healthcare has control over certain information with a general reluctance to share. Soon Shiong (in Wicklund, 2014) says rather than technology, it is the fact healthcare is characterised by closed ranks protection of knowledge rather than sharing that is essentially holding the system back. Outhwaite (2020) also recognises that healthcare systems have been historically good at creating and maintaining boundaries and advocates "creating a more porous boundary for information-sharing" going forward.

Decentralisation

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*You can run community services for lower-risk ailments outside of a hospital, cheaper and not necessarily with less experience. This is part of admissions avoidance and home-based person-centred care. This is now a major part of KPIs for palliative care. The machinery can be transported into the person's home, receiving the same care as in a hospice, but they have their own environment for a better death*".

Interviewees evoked patient-centred and home-based care as the preferred choice for many patients, along with a drive to reduce hospital admissions, aligned with the Horizon 2030 vision of decentralised care.

(Biomedical Data Analyst): "*If we lose the ability to fight infection with a high success rate, it will have a huge impact on medicine. The risk-versus-reward dynamic for any form of invasive procedure will be drastically altered. Minor surgery may cease to be minor and elective surgery may disappear entirely. Hospital hygiene practices will need to increase to the point where they become significant operational and financial burdens.*"

(Integrated Care Pharmacist, NHS UK) "*COVID-19 has forced us to develop ways to provide safe and effective healthcare in a remote and non-contact manner. Without IS infrastructure, this could not have been achieved."*

COVID-19 has led to hospitals postponing or cancelling elective and non-urgent interventions to avoid hospital admittance. Rising viral or bacterial infections (for example, due to antibiotic resistance) can quickly lead to increasing cost/resource burdens. So, decentralised care helps to streamline hospital intervention and reduce risk of onsite transmission of infections.

Telehealth and teletherapy: a joint UPMC and KingMed Diagnostics (2016) study over a 3-year period found that, in 1500+ pathology cases submitted for telemedicine consultation, over half resulted in significantly altered treatment plans. In another recent study of remote teletherapy among PTSD patients treated for chronic nightmares (Putois *et al*. 2019), the reduction in nightmare frequency proved to be robust in 4-year follow-ups both before and during the COVID-19 lockdown (Sierro, Leslie and Putois, 2020). Both examples support the widespread conviction among experts that remote consultation facilitates access to specialists and widens the field of medical services while reducing physical attendance at clinics and hospitals. This is also true of screening. With colleagues, the present author validated a remote screening tool to aid diagnosis of child sleep disorders in France. This tool supports paediatricians in their decision-making, provides a non-invasive and cost-effective tool which parents complete, and will ultimately feed into a databank, benchmarking clinical data (Putois *et al*., 2016). The gains in accessibility and cost arguably speak for themselves. Although we must caution against the risk of error in remote diagnoses, for lesser ailments, remote diagnosis and treatment mean less invasive therapy, with hospital beds, budgets and professionals freer for more serious ailments.

3. Data Science & Information Systems Underpinning Healthcare

Real-Time, Centralised IS Infrastructure and some Automated Processes

(CEO Data Society): "*Real-time health alerts.*"

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*There's a bigger role for technology. Not always preventive in the true sense of the word but it would help with admission avoidance. A centralised electronic medical record for every person.*"

Interviews show healthcare professionals also see digitalising past data as prohibitive:

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*What needs to happen is one system be used and all feed into it, but you're talking about 5-10 years of work*!"

(Independent District Nurse, France) "*In theory, these systems already exist. We have apps and digital patient files… but in practice, no one actually uses them. When they are properly developed and used, they will be really useful to share and consult information. I expected a lot from these online systems… I'm still waiting*".

Whether we decide to digitalise past data or not, going forward, we need to establish processes to standardise information entered and ensure rigour. This includes digitalising diagnoses and prescriptions, imagery, laboratory examinations and results, pharmaceutical findings, insurance information and relevant patient data in a central database. Cattell *et al.* (2016) envisage all data captured electronically and flowing between functions in real-time. Optimising data quality is, according to Redman (2016), the single largest data opportunity today.

Democratisation of IT

(CEO Data Society): "*just about any capability you need, whether it is data ingestion, cleaning or analysis or initialization, you can do quickly and for free, the only thing you pay for is time*."

Data tools are open source, available for free, meaning new business models developing IS or data science techniques can emerge without the barrier of costly initial outlay, moreover not passing high costs on to healthcare systems.

(CEO Spectronics, ILT)*: "I visited the local spinal injury unit a year ago. Without exception, every patient was using an iPad.*"

The CEO of Spectronics goes on to explain the evolution of inclusive learning technologies (ILT). Once very costly, some apps and interactive software tools have now become mainstream and free/affordable. He says this evolution is "*as it should be*", providing easier access to healthcare.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making, Customised Care

(CEO Data Society): "*It's more a change in how people make decisions. Use math, more accuracy […] a whole other meta-level of analysis when you can say such-and-such conditions can lead to these specific ailments.*"

Soon Shiong (in Wicklund, 2014) calls this 'clinical decision support': decision-making aided by clinical patient information.

(Biomedical Data Analyst): "*a personalised approach would greatly potentiate the efficacy of deciding on treatment* and *determine which course of treatment would be most effective at targeting specific aspects of a person's illness within the context of their own physiology."*

Minor (2016) corroborates this, stating that today we have the ability to combine several types of personal data (vital signs, sleep, motion trackers, etc.) with knowledge from our genes, physiological characteristics, environments and personal preferences, to gain a deeper insight into, and more accurately predict health outcomes. Dmitri Adler (interviewed) says combining different types of information can provide an unprecedented "meta-level of analysis" of which combinations of conditions are associated with specific health outcomes.

Innovation

(Biomedical Data Analyst): "*transform data from highly complex samples into readable data which can be used to develop diagnostic and therapeutic strategies not possible before.*"

As well as identifying trends to predict events, data provides feedback trends which are much more accurate than anything used before, also identifying causal relationships. Data science and IS essentially capture new value. Adler (2015) quotes General Shinseki, former U.S. Army Chief, saying "*if you don't like change, you'll like irrelevance even less*": in future, systems which do not exploit data may well be side-lined.

Specifically in healthcare, new tools will be developed to centralize data so that paradoxically, an *integrated* care system can be easily *decentralized*: the more we can centrally store information and enter/access it from anywhere, the more we can promote home-based and patient-centred care, reducing physical hospital admission.

Room for two? Large corporations and start-ups

In terms of innovation, the healthcare environment is apt for both established, large players, and smaller start-ups in ongoing negotiation of influence and market share. Tidd *et al*. (2015) explain how innovation activities must be balanced between:

- Exploitation: gaining leverage on knowledge assets, e.g. via R&D investment, favouring established players; and
- Exploration: finding disruptive new opportunities, more suited to entrepreneurial start-ups. Dobbs *et al*. (2015) furthermore claim technology enables businesses to start and gain scale with 'stunning speed' using little capital.

Leadership for Change

(CEO Data Society): "*the challenge is a leadership one: a philosophical challenge, a political challenge inside the organization to say, let's store all this data. The organization has to adopt a culture of experimentation, research and development.*"

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*Clinicians may not be interested in or haven't been told why they need to do something.*"

Many projects fail due to lack of support from senior management (Nayar, 2010). Management must remain focused on the long-term benefits and on being part of the development of IS. They must agree to invest in training and implementation, despite having to take people away from their day jobs.

Training

(CEO Data Society): "*You need somebody who knows how to connect all the dots: I teach people how to connect everything together*."

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*I really think business management administration and technologies should be part of a medical degree.*"

The need for training and support also generates infinite opportunities for new business models. Dmitri Adler (interviewed) understood this when he founded Data Society after identifying the largely unexploited potential for education in data science. Data Society provides a "self-paced and succinct curriculum", aimed at managers and analysts to provide them with the skills necessary to use data effectively in their jobs. He argues that this training need not be time or budget consuming, using real-world data and making training contextually relevant.

4. Ethics

(CEO Data Society): "*The ethical issue is consent.*"

(Senior Commercial Manager, NHS UK): "*We shouldn't get to the stage when we need to have a piece of paper before we're allowed to be compassionate with people.*"

(CEO Spectronics, ILT): "*The issue of saving lives at all costs versus the resulting quality of life remains.*"

Interviews raise a range of ethical issues to be addressed, from confidentiality, to consent, patient experience and QoL.

Like Adler, Minor (2016) evokes the data consent issue: the "difficult reality that everything we do can be derailed if patients do not trust you to protect their privacy". Indeed, to exploit the power of data, we rely on patients contributing their health-related data for their own benefit and that of others. However, with frequent data breeches recounted in the media, and growing awareness of the many ways our actions can be tracked, people are reluctant to share private information. This has been an issue in uptake of track-and-trace initiatives for COVID-19. Of course, without such data, we cannot unlock the potential therein, so ensuring people feel their data will remain secure is vital.

Interviews evoked the dichotomy between huge amounts of impersonal data and the importance of not eclipsing human subjective experience:

(Account Director, JPA Health Communications): "*Finding ways to incorporate patient perspective and truly forcing big data to yield better options for individuals and help the system be more sensitive to individual differences is very important. There is a tension between the hugeness of big data and the specificity of precision medicine, though they are supposed to feed each other. And neither really honours the subjective experience of the*

patient, allowing them to have a voice or narrative."

Pearlson and Saunders (2012) also caution against "the dark side" of big data, saying that such "intense number-crunching" inevitably churns out some false analytics. We must remain mindful not to blindly accept findings but critically analyse and test further where possible. Again, the human behind the machine.

5. COVID-19 as a Driver for Change

Interviewees discussed how COVID-19 has driven rapid change:

(Integrated Care Pharmacist, NHS UK) "*Chemist shops were facing shortages of medicines (mainly due to panic ordering) and lengthy patient queues, whilst juggling issues such as ever-changing COVID-19 guidelines, staff sickness, supply chain problems and personal apprehensiveness of the unknown.*"

Again, the healthcare system was not prepared for the pandemic and this forced through rapid actions both to meet demands and adjust to necessary remote care.

(Integrated Care Pharmacist, NHS UK) "*Working remotely, without uninterrupted access to patient GP notes, inpatient records, blood results, etc., the primary care healthcare system would have been severely impacted. NHS Lothian rapidly increased server capability to provide thousands of NHS key workers remote access to the system. Throughout lockdown, additional features (such as Near Me Consultations) were added to improve the quality of the healthcare system and make it accessible to patients."*

Changes which would otherwise have taken months/years and met resistance have occurred with impressive speed. This is also true of the rapid developments first of testing, and now of a vaccine.

And finally, a summary of how the pandemic has highlighted and/or driven IT capacities:

(CEO Spectronics, ILT) "*The recent pandemic illustrates the many benefits of information systems:*

- *Medical centres can avoid the risk of spreading the coronavirus in their waiting rooms by relying on telemedicine for initial medical assessments and referrals for coronavirus tests;*

- *Many employees avoid infection by working at home on computers;*
- *Many education and training facilities resorted to home-schooling;*
- *Apps were developed which could track people's movements with GPS for contact tracing;*
- *The development of a vaccine has obviously benefited from sharing of research.*

Suffice to say, the impact of coronavirus would be significantly greater had it occurred before these IT systems were taken for granted. It will be interesting to see what of this continues post COVID-19."

Although themes are presented separately for clarity, they are, in reality, inextricable and interrelated.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Due to constraints on time and resources, the study sample size was small and opportunistic. Richer insights would undoubtedly be gained from a wider, more representative sample selected from all areas of healthcare and data sciences sectors. Further research should explore in more depth data science techniques, tools, products and service provision in the fields of predictive analytics, screening and promoting preventive healthcare. Further discussion is also needed on improving *choice* and *customization* in healthcare solutions. It is indeed a huge field.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presents how the COVID-19 pandemic has shone the spotlight on the urgent need to refocus healthcare on decentralised preventive and curative care, underpinned by data science and integrated IS. A heady potential ranging from advancing clinical research at lower costs, to deploying predictive analytics, benchmarking clinical data, to literally mapping a person's health for customised health plans. Soon, arguably, no element of health will remain a mystery.

The research analysed transcripts of semi-structured interviews of healthcare and data science actors. These revealed challenges and opportunities for change in the healthcare sector. These include cost-cutting, silo mentality, leadership and corporate culture, and investing in education and training. Themes are interrelated and show that change must be systemic.

In a rapidly changing environment, one thing is clear: healthcare is a precious resource in which we all have a stake. Focus must now be on understanding health in its holistic, interdisciplinary, biopsychosocial context, and on developing and exploiting technology which supports this vision.

Recommendations

Formulated *a priori* and *a posteriori* according to the literature, clinical experience and qualitative data, this chapter outlines 3 axes for change:

1) *a practical shift towards preventive care*: with the top causes of death being largely preventable, influencing behaviour is arguably the most efficient, low-cost and sustainable way of reducing prevalence of illness. Raising awareness of behavioural components of illness is a significant dimension of this, but so too are screening and vaccination. We have seen from the COVID-19 pandemic that with the right message, the population by-and-large can and will adopt new behaviours for the sake of their own and others' health. We are also seeing that screening and vaccination are the major strategies governments hope will quell the spread. Using data modelling will mean we can better target at-risk populations, reducing costs and increasing accuracy.
2) *Decentralised and interdisciplinary telehealth*: provision of remote telehealth services, for preventive and curative treatment, optimising communication within and across specialist units to provide interdisciplinary, integrated and decentralised healthcare plans customisable to patients' individual needs and contexts. And beyond, towards integrating health and social care services.
3) *developing data science tools and IS*: Developing databases and infrastructures of health information for communication and integration purposes, moreover screening for disorders and tracking risk factors using predictive analytics.

Partnerships: to pool the transversal skills of various experts, and engage long-term commitment to quality, the healthcare system and new business models should now look to form long-term partnerships as opposed to traditional linear product- service-provision.

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ARTICLE II

THE MILLENNIAL CONSUMER: BANE OF THE ENVIRONMENT… OR SOLUTION?

LÉO-PAUL CROVA

Abstract

Given the paucity of research focusing on cleaner consumption from the perspective of millennial consumers, this study provides insights for practitioners, policymakers and scholars by exploring the extent to which students living away from home engage in environmentally-mindful consumption, and obstacles to cleaner consumption. Initial findings confirm that millennials are less pro-environment than the literature would lead us to believe.

Introduction

This study uses the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), which has strong predictive utility for a wide range of human behaviours (Ajzen, 1991), stating that an individual's intention will direct them to perform specific behaviours. Given that the intention to buy eco-friendly products is increasingly influenced by an awareness of environmentally-mindful consumption, and the impact of pervasive technology, this study is designed to investigate evidence of environmentally-mindful consumption, and to identify the obstacles to behaviours associated with cleaner consumption among students. The findings serve to increase our understanding of - and promote - cleaner consumption behaviour changes, and assist practitioners, policymakers and scholars in determining what drives these behaviour changes.

Johns (2006) highlights the importance of *context* when undertaking research, arguing that it is not sufficiently recognized by researchers, who instead often assume "the linear nature of the world they study" (Johns, 2006:387). Set in France, this research focuses on business school students living away from home. France is used as a case study to show how far citizens in Europe are shifting towards environmentally-mindful consumption. The study explores evidence of environmentally-mindful consumption among business students (post-graduate) and identifies obstacles to cleaner consumption. It is useful to gain insight into their behaviour, as this consumer group has increasing commercial worth, and their behavioural traits are an indicator of social and cultural change (Grant, 2004; Kruger and Mostert, 2012). Studies portray these consumers as educated, critical and demanding (Sheriff and Nagesh, 2007), concerned about social causes and activism (Hyllegard *et al*., 2011), and brand conscious (Sahay and Sharma, 2010).

The exit from the family cocoon into higher education is a moment for young adults when their vision of the world is reshaped. Under economic pressure to budget for household purchases, they balance brand-consciousness and price-sensitivity (Chandon *et al*., 2009; Sahay and Sharma, 2010). This becomes a structuring element of social relations. Through their ability to be open-minded, dynamic and to explore new ideas, students experience different lifestyles and consumption patterns. Thus, this leads us to question what influences their consumption, which is the objective of this study.

Literature

Decades of intense economic expansion and the ensuing overuse of natural resources and irresponsible consumption have triggered environmental deterioration worldwide (Chen and Chai, 2010; Tuna and Ozkoçak, 2012). As human behaviour is at the centre of over-consumption (Bonaccorsi, 2015), the promotion of environmentally-mindful consumer behaviour can be considered a pathway towards sustainability. Despite the availability of insights gained from studies of pro-environmental behaviour (see, for example, Steg and Vlek, 2009), largely from household and workplace settings, a key question remains: can these insights be applied to students living away from home? To shed light on this issue, the literature review is divided into two parts in order to explain (i) environmentally-mindful consumption, (ii) the impact of pervasive technology on consumer behaviour.

(i) environmentally-mindful consumption

The proverb '*waste not, want not*' (see Hardie, 1929) reflects consumer aversion to waste; suggesting that "most consumers are mindful of and averse to waste" (Lin and Chang, 2017:106). Students share similar attitudes towards environmental consciousness in terms of factors related to awareness and behaviour, concerns about the environment and willingness to adopt environmentally-mindful consumption (Tuna and Ozkoçak, 2012). Činjarević, Kožo and Berberović (2019) argued that objective collaborative consumption experiences (i.e., costs, savings) are not the only reasons behind consumer participation in the sharing economy and collaborative consumption. Perceived symbolic and hedonic values, along with perceived economic value, are significant contributors to millennials' intentions to engage in environmentally-mindful consumer behaviour. In contrast, perceived social value, such as interaction with others and self-fulfilment (Sweeny and Soutar 2011), is not a predictor.

In the case of France, although French household consumption has increased 3-fold in recent decades, population surveys show growing environmental awareness among consumers, and an evolution in consumer behaviour, particularly concerning waste prevention (see Bigot, Hoibian, and Daudey, 2014). While motivations are often ecological, consumers are also looking to save money and/or better use the objects they need. They are motivated to resell, donate, lend and rent items that they seldom use, especially to save money, earn money, counter rising prices, and maintain quality of life – despite pressures on purchasing power (ADEME, 2018). In prior research exploring environmental awareness, Yu, Yu and Chao (2017) found that university students are more willing to implement climate change adaptation strategies when they are influenced by group consciousness. Investigating eco-friendly consumption among young consumers, Maichum, Parichatnon and Peng (2017) found that environmental concern and environmental attitude had a significant positive influence on purchase intention towards green products, confirming that the environmental attitude has a strong direct influence on purchase intention. Similarly, acknowledging that awareness of eco-friendly products does not always translate into the consumption of eco-friendly products, Solaiman *et al*. (2017) examined young consumers' purchasing behaviour towards the environment-friendly and energy-efficient electronic products market, and found that consumers are most influenced by functional value, then social value, conditional value and corporate image value.

(ii) the impact of pervasive technology on consumer behaviour

Pervasive technology has irreversibly changed consumer behaviour, particularly among young adult consumers, underscoring the need to integrate notions of sustainability into higher education (Palacin-Silva, Seffah and Porras, 2018). Two milestones in innovation have shaped (and continue to shape) consumer behaviour: the Internet, which has enabled rapid distribution of information (Lanteigne and Laforest, 2007) and the availability of smartphones – bringing about a philosophy of consumption, underpinned by digitally-driven business models that support shortening product lifecycles and planned obsolescence (Ertz *et al*., 2019). For example, the smartphone took less than 15 years to transform from a luxury item to an everyday gadget (Bigne, Ruiz, and Sanz, 2005; Parasuraman *et al*., 2017).

A growing body of literature describes how individuals (and society as a whole) have been transformed by the Internet (see, for example, Dutot and Lichy, 2019; Căpăţînă *et al*., in press). Individuals are increasingly required to integrate Internet-enabled solutions into everyday life. Social media channels have grown at an exponential rate since their launch in the early 2000s; their popularity can be attributed to various factors, including fluidity of communication, enlargement of social circles, ergonomics and user-friendliness.

Over time, users have evolved from traditionally passive information receivers to active content co-creators; showing higher involvement in online brand communities than in offline environments (Benedikt and Werner, 2012). The impact of social media content has attracted considerable interest from scholars; Lawlor, Dunne and Rowley (2016) found that young consumers are unaware of the behavioural changes that advertisers seek to bring about in them, such as brand-related, sharing behaviours. As such, they are potentially vulnerable to commercial and other exploitation. Studies have explored the informational influence of consumer reviews on economic behaviour, such as how online reviews increase sales and the impact of critics' reviews, suggesting that patterns of sentiment influence purchasing decisions over and above the numeric ratings online consumer reviews display (Ghose and Ipeirotis, 2006; Filieri and McLeay, 2014). Furthermore, Camacho-Otero, Boks and Pettersen (2019) explored how user-generated online customer reviews enable individuals to discuss various economic factors such as the type of offering, costs and benefits, both monetary and non-monetary, which influence purchasing decisions.

Acknowledging that consumer perceptions are influenced by their online purchasing experiences – i.e., security/privacy, design, reliability/fulfilment and customer service (Shergill and Chen, 2005) – the cultural context also influences how consumers search for information (Căpăţînă *et al*., *in press*). Social relevance is making a difference in the world and is having a dramatic impact on a company's ability to sell products and services. Organizations use online reputation management to better understand customers by analysing their comments on products and services (Klososky, 2011). Social technologies elevate customer expectations, both in terms of pure functionality and quality of the product, and in terms of pricing. The Internet has democratised home delivery services, popularising a fast-paced doorstep-drop mindset. Return policies (e.g., Zalando) are having the adverse effect of incentivising impulse buying, encouraging greater consumption of goods, and wasting substantial time and resources.

Straughan and Roberts (1999) tested the variables across which an individual is more sensitive to environmental issues and responsible consumption. This study singles out the most important variable: *perceived consumer effectiveness* (PCE) – the belief of the individual that their actions can positively influence the outcome of the ecological crisis. This is the sole variable in their paper that shows conclusive proof of being positively correlated with green consumption patterns, alongside being the single strongest predictor of ECCB (ecologically-conscious consumer behaviour). In line with their findings, raising awareness of ecology and ethical consumption is crucial for promoting ethical consumption, and reducing feelings of powerlessness in the face of catastrophe, which can lead to "ecological laziness" (i.e., where an economic agent is aware of unethically consuming, but dismisses the issue using fatalism as an excuse). This chapter puts forward two options facing governments: either they make citizens more responsible through education and awareness campaigns, or they force change by law (e.g., banning plastic straws), subsidising ecologically-responsible companies and taxing others. From the literature, we develop the following research question: "what factors exist which reflect environmentally-mindful consumption among students living away from home, and obstacles to cleaner consumption?"

Methodology

Data collection is underway using a survey designed by Straughan and Roberts (1999) adapted for the digital era (i.e., by adding digital services) in order to assess students' buying intentions and consumer behaviours

towards environmentally-mindful consumption.

Key Findings

A number of pertinent findings can be drawn from the survey (n=168) on millennial consumers: 70% of young consumers (aged 26 or under) actually cook their own evening meal, with 41.4% using their leftovers and only 13.6% either using a delivery app or ordering a take-away. In addition, 67.1% of respondents claim to make a conscious effort to reduce food waste. Furthermore, 65% of respondents only buy clothes when they need them, and 72.1% use public transport. However, 59.2% avoid buying environmentally-friendly products, believing that they are more expensive, 43.7% of whom believe they are of inferior quality. The initial findings infer that the eco-friendly mindset is swayed by price-sensitivity and, surprisingly, by the perception of inferior quality. Nevertheless, we can observe clear steps (e.g., cooking for oneself) towards reducing waste and cleaner consumption (e.g., using public transport and only purchasing clothes out of necessity).

Additional findings from a survey conducted after the first COVID-19 wave have brought to light a number of interesting shifts in opinion, albeit the fact that quite a few answers are consistent with the older survey. First of all, there has been a sharp decrease in customers paying attention to environmentally friendly products when buying groceries, with 40.3% doing so after the first lockdown, compared to 48.2% before. This could be explained by the fall in income induced by the epidemic and lockdown, and the need for people to buy in bulk, which would make them less concerned with quality and ecological concerns. This is consistent with the present findings, as 60.5% of people who avoid buying ecologically friendly products do so because of the higher price tag. Answers to the survey also suggest, counter-intuitively, a fall in the usage of delivery apps (9.7% against 13.9%) and takeaway (9.7% against 15.74%).

As observed before, the eco-friendly mindset is still swayed by the perception of inferior quality and price-sensitivity. However we observe a clear increase in efforts to reduce food waste (80.6% against 67.5%).

Although we can see a fall in price-sensitivity for non-food objects, it would still be reasonable to infer that the increase in price-sensitivity toward ecological products in most cases is a by-product of the ongoing global pandemic and lockdown, limiting household income and therefore food budgets.

The overarching view of the participants is that environmentally sound products are, in general, pricier – but this is changing as a result of the pandemic.

Limitations and Future Research

The study intends to broaden our understanding of environmentally-mindful consumption among millennials, acknowledging the impact of pervasive technology, and the potential obstacles to cleaner consumption, at a single point in time. As consumer trends are constantly evolving, ongoing research is needed to identify emerging trends. Future research could include a wider number of students from various disciplines and higher education institutions, in order to provide a more representative sample of millennials' consumption.

Conclusions

The initial results show that millennials' consumption in France is less pro-environmental than the literature suggests, reflecting perhaps a general *malaise* in the country, or *l'exception française* (the French exception). To encourage people's participation in environmentally-mindful consumption, governments (and retailers) must continue to make consumers in France aware of the environment, by supporting behavioural changes that necessarily take time and by highlighting the financial gains that such change can bring.

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ARTICLE III

THE PURSUIT OF LOYALTY BY LUXURY FIRMS AMONG GENERATION Y (MILLENNIALS) & GENERATION Z CONSUMERS

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Introduction

This chapter draws on the sizeable amount of research which explores generation effect on consumer behaviour. Generation Y & Z consumers are thought to be less loyal than previous generations. This chapter examines the authenticity of this claim and offers insights for understanding Generation Y and Z consumer behaviour, particularly with the purpose of managing luxury brands and developing marketing strategies aimed at younger consumers. To gain such insights, the following sub-sections trace key aspects in seven areas:

1. the concept of luxury
2. generations
3. consumer behaviour theory
4. rational consumer behaviour
5. irrational consumer behaviour
6. consumer personalities
7. digitalisation and E-commerce

Each of these elements plays a significant role in explaining Generation Y & Z consumer behaviour.

The Concept of Luxury

The luxury market has witnessed staggering growth over the past decade. In 2018, the market was estimated to be worth around 1.2 trillion dollars globally, and the future looks even more prosperous (Bain and Company,

2018), underscoring the importance of the luxury market when researching consumer habits and attitudes. Previous research has offered different ideas of what the term 'luxury' actually means. Leading scholars such as Kapferer and Dubois have reached a consensus that for any product and service to be labelled as 'luxurious' it needs to exhibit character traits such as beauty, indulgence and must be enlightening (Wiedmann, *et al*., 2009). Further research indicates that luxury means different things to each consumer depending on numerous factors – such as culture, social status and level of income.

According to Assouly and Bergé (2011), consumers have different motivations, expectations and satisfactions which must be taken into account. Thus, luxury is very subjective: it is experienced differently by everyone, depending on their knowledge, education, or even their mere perception of luxury. Arguably, it can be stated that luxury is different for all consumers, and thereby for each generation. According to Berthon *et al*. (2009), developing a strong classic luxury brand can take a long time, even generations. Thus, luxury companies must strive to keep reinventing themselves in order to appeal to the constantly growing numbers of new buyers.

Generations

Generational differences have been widely explored over the past half-century. Studies have demonstrated distinct differences between all living generations and indicate that organisations may benefit from understanding these differences in order to enhance marketing strategies, in terms of a better awareness of motivations, attitudes and behaviours.

The generations are commonly defined as:

Generation	**Year**
Generation Z	1995-today
Generation Y/Millennials	1977-1995
Generation X	1965-1976
Baby Boomers	1946-1964
Silent Generation	1900-1945

Source: Reeves and Oh, 2007

The Silent Generation & Baby Boomers: These generations date from the turn of the last century. According to McIntosh-Elkins *et al. (*2007), they believe in simplicity and are often referred to as being highly focused on self-actualisation.

Generation X: known to be technology adaptable, flexible and individualistic. Research indicates that this generation is loyal and appreciates a good work-life balance (Elkins *et al.*, 2007). Nevertheless, they are materialistic, competitive and enjoy purchasing luxury articles (Francis and Hoefel, 2019).

Generation Y & Z: Gen Y (hereby referred to as the millennial generation and millennials) have conflicting values and characteristics compared to Generation X. While Generation X demonstrate brand loyalty, millennials are found not to (Gurău, 2012). Prior research concludes that millennials are not brand loyal, due to the widespread availability of price comparison tools online. They are individualistic, environmentally responsible and tech savvy (Gurău, 2012). Furthermore, Ngai and Cho (2012) concluded that the millennial luxury consumer is concerned with public recognition, image and social status. In contrast, Gen Z was born during the technological revolution. As a result, this generation is known to be tech savvy and knowledgeable about digital tools, social networks and virtual realities. The character trait both generations share is that, as consumers, both make luxury purchases in order to gain self-confidence. Research suggests that these generations have lower confidence than previous generations and that they seek self-fulfilment and a 'purpose' (Ngai and Cho, 2012).

Assumption 1: *"The millennial and Gen Z consumer purchases luxury goods to feel better about themselves."*

Consumer Behaviour Theory

Solomon (2011) defines consumer behaviour as "the study of the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires" (Solomon, 2011, p. 33). This definition is coherent with those of other researchers, such as Schiffman *et al.* (2012), who define consumer behaviour as "the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs" (Schiffman *et al*. 2012).

Researchers agree that it is vital for any organisation to understand its consumers in terms of sociology, economics and psychology. These three disciplines combined are also known as consumer behaviour (Solomon, Previte and Russell-Bennet, 2013); thus, a process of selection, purchase, use or disposal of a product and experiences that satisfies a need and/or desire within the consumer. Ongoing academic interest in the field of

consumer behaviour reflects contemporary changes and an evolution in tastes and preferences. Consumer behaviour has changed significantly over the past decades (Schiffman *et al.* 2012). Previously, while consumers had to visit physical stores to buy newspapers, clothing, food and furniture, today's consumers can purchase anything of interest with a click.

Consumers are becoming aware, more informed and more empowered. The modern-day consumer is highly educated and has become a 'mini-expert' of their market of interest. This statement is supported by Schiffman (2012), who states that consumers today have more power over the buying journey than they ever did in previous years. It can also be argued that consumers can use best-price online tools to ensure that they are getting the best possible price on the market. As these price comparison tools most often illustrate the same product across identical or different brands, companies selling them tend to lead the customer to make purchases from different vendors on a regular basis thus making the consumer less loyal to a specific vendor or brand (Schiffman *et al*., 2012).

Another tool that has proven to be vital in consumers' purchasing decisions are 'user reviews'. Consumers are able to review products and/or services that have been graded/reviewed by other buyers. An individual can then click and compare the features of the product to maximise the chances of making the correct purchase (Schiffman, *et al.* 2012). According to Solomon (2011) the digital era has become so huge that in order to gain any understanding of the 21st century consumer, it has to be placed at the top of the list of factors to investigate. Collectively, modern-day consumer behaviour is highly dependent on the digitalisation of the market, especially for the millennial and Gen Z consumer. Furthermore, consumer behaviour is not only dependent on the consumer, but on the corporations that expose the public to advertising online and offline every day. In addition, as the market is changing so rapidly, companies need to constantly prospect and communicate with their clientele. Thus, the consumer also plays an active role in driving change in corporate strategy.

A Rational and Irrational Perspective

In order to gain an understanding of consumer behaviour in more detail, the term has been divided into two sub-headings: *rational* and *irrational* behaviour. Recognised concepts will be presented and assessed, such as the AIDA model and Belk's theory of the extended self. The intention is to explore generational differences in luxury consumption through prior research in this field. Marsden and Littler (1998) developed a theory of the

basic assumptions of consumer behaviour. The theory distinguishes traditional and new perspectives when researching the consumer, as follows:

Traditional perspectives	New perspectives
Determinism	Freedom
Environmentalism	Constitutionalism
Reactive	Proactive
Unchangeability	Changeability
Homeostasis	Heterostasis
Rationality	Irrationality
Objectivity	Subjectivity
Elementalism	Holism
Knowledge	Unknowable

Source: Marsden and Littler (1998, p. 10)

The rational and irrational views take traditional and new perspectives of consumer behaviour into account, enabling us to explore the building blocks of consumer behaviour, thus:

Rational Consumer Behaviour	Irrational Consumer Behaviour
AIDA model	Belk's theory of the extended self
Maslow's hierarchy of needs	

Rational Consumer Behaviour

The AIDA Model (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action): explains the different steps taken by a consumer when buying a product and is a rational model of consumer behaviour. The model has been widely used to describe the decision-making process of consumers**.** Created by Lewis (1898), this model is relevant for capturing the interest of consumers (Hassan and Nadzim, 2015). Attention, interest, desire and action can be achieved through elaborate media advertising. According to Chaffey *et al.* (2009), new media channels have become important tools for reaching millennials. Thus, the AIDA model, dating back to 1898, has been widely criticised by researchers who call for it to be scrapped on the grounds of it being too simplistic and outdated in terms of the modern-day customer journey.

Additionally, several authors have concluded that, due to technological developments, digital advancement and the different motivations of the new generations, the model overlooks the complexity of the buyer's journey in relation to luxury goods. According to Hyder (2018), the digital revolution

requires the AIDA model to be updated.

Nevertheless, the model can act as a guide for marketers in the luxury industry, in terms of clarifying the different stages of consumer behaviour. Given that the market and consumers are changing rapidly, it can act as a framework for luxury companies to ensure that the communication is aligned with the different generations and especially the younger generations of luxury consumers. To this end, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is highly relevant. As the theory aims to research consumer motivations and unconscious desires, its application to luxury consumption is highly relevant.

The hierarchy is divided into 5 different levels of needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation) – where every level needs to be fulfilled in order to proceed to the next.

Physiological Needs

Primary (physiological) (along with secondary (safety)) needs are categorised as basic needs. These include air, food, shelter, warmth, sleep, etc. Research indicates that in order for any individual to seek further advancement in the pyramid, these basic needs must first be met. Thus, they are considered the most fundamental and important needs.

Safety Needs

The second step of the hierarchy of needs includes security, freedom from fear, order, stability, etc. This level of the model is considered less vital than the first. However, it can only be attained once the first level is fulfilled. Furthermore, this level finalises the basic needs and progressively enables the individual to seek greater purpose.

Love and Belonging

When physiological and safety needs are met, the model suggests that a sense of belonging will become essential. An individual might seek family and friendship relations and attempt to feel a sense of belonging within society.

Esteem

When all the previous levels are fulfilled, the model explains that confidence, respect and recognition of performance are sought next.

Self-Actualisation

Once again, when previous levels have been satisfied, the individual might seek to reach the ultimate goals of life on a psychic level. Reaching full potential and engaging in creative activities are examples of this.

This model presents the different needs through a journey of the most basic to a more diffuse concept of self-actualisation: humans are always searching for purpose and keep evolving. This is relevant with regards to luxury consumption. According to Kapferer (2012), luxury consumption should be placed in the upper part of the pyramid or the ultimate level: self-actualisation. However, Ward and Chiari (2008) conclude that luxury need not necessarily only be tied to the ultimate level. Consumption of luxury goods can be found in the 4th level as well (esteem) – these 4 levels do not necessarily need to be fulfilled in order to reach the ultimate level in the context of luxury consumption: the consumer might feel the need to be part of an 'exclusive group' and as such, perceive status to be more important than self-esteem (Ward and Chiari, 2008).

Furthermore, prior research has concluded that individuals with higher incomes tend to spend a high amount of their wages on activities that are placed higher in the pyramid and focus less on what are presented as basic needs. Thus, it can be argued that luxury companies need to focus their marketing activities on enhancing the quality of luxury goods in order to provide greater consumer pleasure derived from using the product/service and enable the consumer to experience a sense of self-actualisation (Ward and Chiari, 2008).

Nevertheless, Denning (2018) criticises the model for being overly simplified and overlooking one of the most fundamental parts of human nature: *collaboration*. Even the most basic needs cannot be fulfilled without any social and collaborative behaviour between humans, i.e., fundamental needs such as procuring food, shelter and water cannot be obtained without forming relationships that can be found in step three of the pyramid (Denning, 2012).

Assumptions made more recently are coherent with the arguments presented by Neher (1991); as early as the 1990s, psychologists and researchers began to find limitations to the model. Socialisation is vital to human existence in the layers of basic needs, therefore there is incoherence in the lower levels of the model. Maslow also fails to mention the importance of being aware of cultural norms, which is crucial for survival.

Irrational Consumer Behaviour

Consumers often use luxury products to differentiate themselves from others, to achieve a sense of being 'unique', and to differentiate themselves from the masses (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Given that luxury consumers simultaneously seek to fit into a certain stereotype to conform to a desired social status, the purchase of luxury goods and services also serves this purpose (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004).

Belk (1975) explores the *extended self* in relation to consumer behaviour or more specifically irrational consumer behaviour. The key findings of his research are as follows:

- We see our possessions as parts of ourselves
- Our possessions are related to our well-being and our lifestyle

This theory is closely related to luxury consumption: individuals tend to perceive luxury items as a part of themselves and their identity.

Belk's theory has been criticised for not recognising the constant changes in today's market, as it is based on the belief that 'we are our possessions', overlooking how the Internet and digital era are amplifying ideas and leading to saturation. In response to critics, Belk (2013) extended the theory, by exploring the digital influence consumers are faced with in the 21st century. It can be argued that his updated research enables a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour.

The original theory of the extended self is slightly contradictory when compared to the current market in which dematerialisation is widespread. Indeed, since the digital revolution, consumers have fewer possessions than before – for example, the smartphone serves as a computer, calculator, camera, record player, and so on. Consumers have a strong attachment to technology. It could be argued that luxury companies might benefit from adapting to the technological enhancements by introducing digital tools to support the buying process, as in the case of Burberry's London flagship store. Belk (2013) explores how the consumer becomes dependent on and attached to digital devices, apps and avatars. If the deviant consumer gets attached to the products/services, the brands may achieve a greater rate of repeat purchase. Thus, 'switchers' may become loyal, as will be demonstrated below.

Brand Loyalty

According to Blythe (2008), consumers engaged with a brand will feel a sense of loyalty, to some extent. To illustrate brand loyalty, the notion of a 'leaking bucket' has been developed. This explains how a brand or company is like a leaking bucket; where consumers enter and leave all the time. Thus, companies may seek to refill their buckets with new customers and tend to overlook the ones 'leaking' out. Nevertheless, this concept provides limited answers to how luxury companies can tackle this issue and reduce their loss of customers. To this end, Ehrenberg (1997) conducted research based on the leaky bucket idea and put forward the notion categorising consumers as either *loyal* or *switchers*.

Assumption 2: *"Millennial and Gen Z consumers are less loyal consumers than previous generations."*

It can be argued that an increasing number of consumers in the 21st century are becoming switchers. As stated earlier, prior research suggests that millennials and Gen Z consumers tend to be fairly price-focused and concerned with a brand's digital presence and its environmental attitudes. As a result, it might be that the younger generations tend to switch between brands to ensure that the product/service is aligned with their values.

This aspect raises the dilemma of how a company can convert a generation of switchers into loyal consumers. Branding is primarily built on giving customers a reason to remember a brand, which is defined as "a specific name, symbol or design – or, more usually, some combination of these – that is used to distinguish a particular seller's product" (Doyle and Stern, 2006 p. 164). A common aspect of all successful brands is that the brand satisfies the consumer's psychological needs as well as the products' ability to meet their requirements functionally (Doyle and Stern, 2006). This may be achieved through the use of digitalisation and e-commerce. Furthermore, research suggests that luxury brands may benefit from communicating their values and environmental responsibility, in order to appeal to the younger generations (Curtis, 2015).

Digitalisation and e-Commerce

At the end of the 1990s, there were many critics of new media (Mansell, 2004). Since then, new media has managed to challenge and redefine recognised business models and to deliver a wider range of opportunities through a new set of tactics (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2010). New media

platforms have enabled organisations to reach new markets and communicate directly with consumers worldwide.

While many studies have focused on consumer behaviour related to e-commerce during the past quarter century, limited attention has been given to the luxury market. Previously, luxury goods were mostly marketed to a specific social group and social standing, however the current luxury market has evolved somewhat, in line with the environmental and digital revolution. There is emerging evidence that some companies are attempting to adapt their strategies by increasing their focus on the environment and the digital revolution.

L'Oréal is an example of a high-end cosmetics brand that has implemented online strategies to stand out and evolve. Forbes (2017) states that the retail industry is declining, and that companies need to perform like L'Oréal, in order to remain competitive. Curtis (2015) states that the cosmetic leader has undergone a digital transformation to appeal to younger generations. The company has launched an app called *'makeup genius'* which enables customers to try the products using a virtual mirror – generating over 11 million downloads.

Assumption 3: *"Luxury companies will potentially lose their millennial and Gen Z audience if they do not have a strong digital presence."*

Dennis (2017) argues that luxury brands could lose their millennial audience as a result of a low digital presence. The luxury industry needs to realise that there is a new generation of buyers using online platforms for more than just social media (Dennis, 2017). Moreover, Rolt (2015) argues that an increasing number of young people are purchasing luxury beauty products, as they have increased buying power. Lawson (2017) suggests that the generation growing up surrounded by e-commerce (Gen Z) are fairly price-conscious; consequently, they find the new media platforms useful, to ensure that when purchasing luxury cosmetics, they are offered the product(s) for the lowest price possible. Bearing in mind that the prices are relatively high and that young consumers do not have the confidence to purchase high-end beauty products online, the luxury beauty industry uses YouTubers as a communication tool. Bloggers review products and give advice on how to use them. Many millennials and Gen Z consumers prefer to use YouTube as an educational tool rather than to visit the actual retailer (Dennis, 2017). Fairchild (2014) implies that the luxury industry tends to disregard the digital revolution, as they believe the brand will lose its exclusivity in the long run. However, certain fashion houses that sell high-

end beauty products have recently started to come to terms with the need for a strong digital presence in order to stay competitive.

Brands are looking for ways to make the digital experience more luxurious so that they can communicate their brand image and quality reputation. Okonwo (2009) suggests that there are great challenges for the luxury industry in terms of building an online presence without losing the uniqueness and 'added value' which customers might experience when purchasing a product in retail outlets. Cosmetic brands are mistaken to assume that online distribution is bad for reputation, given that many fashion and beauty houses have successful digital strategies which increase their overall sales. On the other hand, both Fairchild (2014) and Okonwo (2009) are criticised for being out of date and lacking relevance, as the digital landscape and consumer behaviours are constantly changing.

Fashion and beauty brands like Hermes and Chanel have reasons for showing resistance to the concept of e-commerce and digitalisation (Phan, 2011). According to Ritson (2010), there is a clear increase in fake goods being distributed, which harms the brand image as the brand becomes less exclusive. Additionally, a survey released by Marks and Clerk concluded that some 97% of luxury brands are worried that digitalisation will harm their brand image (Klara, 2009). On the other hand, Paton (2017) states that online luxury sales increased by 24% in 2017, which suggests that there is a lot of potential in the online luxury industry.

Consumer Personality

According to Bon and Pras (1984), studies of consumer behaviour tend to focus on individual buyer behaviour and, to a lesser extent, organisational and family buyers. As today's consumers are considered more complex, it can be helpful to research the different consumer roles. This way of viewing the consumer allows a more in-depth understanding of the different motivations and priorities the consumer might be faced with when making a purchasing decision.

Companies use 'persona' to explain consumer behaviour. According to Cintell (2015), businesses benefit greatly from implementing personas in their strategies. There are three main personas that can be considered the most vital:

- User personas
- Customer personas

. Buyer personas

The *user persona* is a diplomatic role. The user will take the perspectives of the end user in relation to the product or services into consideration. The user is created as a tool for assisting the end users and thereby creates added value to the initial product (Cintell, 2015). Arguably, this is one of the most crucial personas for any company which provides a luxury product and/or service. The competition is strong and companies providing luxury goods are reliant on differentiating themselves from their competitors in every way possible (Keller, 2009).

On the one hand, the Internet could be considered a fierce system for creating added value through customer support. Companies may benefit from using online portals by having an increased presence and enabling themselves to ensure that all their customers have a positive buyers' journey experience, even after the product and/or service purchase is finalised. On the other hand, there are several high-end luxury brands that do not recognise the Internet as a platform to support the buyer's journey after sales. Several brands are purposely rejecting online platforms as they believe that it will decrease their exclusivity and damage their brand image. Research suggests that for luxury companies, there is a dilemma of exclusivity vs. accessibility associated with having a strong online presence (Keller, 2009).

The *customer persona* can assist the luxury company in determining what can happen next. The purpose of this persona is to allow the company to create brand loyalty. In other words, the company might seek to discover what can be done to ensure that the customer will keep purchasing items from the same brand. Research suggests that for a customer to become brand loyal, they need to identify with the brand personality in order to feel 'self-expressive' and thereby fit with their image (Liu, *et al.*, 2012). According to Liu *et al.* (2012), brand personality is identified as the relationship between the consumer's idea of a brand's personality and the consumer's own personality.

The *buyer persona* of a brand or a company looks for ways to solve any potential problems that the customer might face when making a purchasing decision. This persona takes all the different stakeholders that influence a buying decision on a large scale into account (Cintell, 2015).

Methodology

This section outlines how the literature discussed above was investigated, focusing on the limitations and proposed techniques (Grix, 2004). The ontological perspective was anti-foundationalist (Grix, 2010), seeking an understanding – in contrast to the foundationalist perspective which seeks an explanation. The research approach is deductive, having introduced theoretical concepts from which three assumptions (or hypotheses) are developed (Wilson, 2014). According to Davies (2007 p. 31) "a hypothesis is a statement, an assertion, often indicating a claimed pattern of cause and effect". These assumptions are tested using a questionnaire to generate quantitative data.

Quantitative data refer to many different types of data, varying from simple measurements of frequency of specific occurrences, to more complex data such as awards, or general scores in reference to the relevant topic (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003). This questionnaire is conducted online to gather insights into millennial and Gen Z consumer behaviour towards luxury goods. Saunders *et al.* (2012) identify quantitative research as collecting objective data and processing the numerical data through an analytical tool. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot was distributed to acquaintances. The pilot was found to be effective for being able to make necessary changes regarding structure and clarity of questions that would positively influence the final questionnaire, and the final response rate.

The luxury industry and its consumers function as the 'anchor' of the investigation, given that prior research suggests that the millennial and Gen Z consumer is different from other generations regarding purchasing behaviour, values and tendencies. As the target respondents are exposed to high email traffic and may not acknowledge a questionnaire, or may perceive it as irrelevant (Wilson, 2014), the questionnaire was distributed via the popular social media platform Facebook.

The questionnaire was designed with 10 questions examining 5 sections. The variables consisted of personal affirmation, digital usage, loyalty and generational differences; 7 questions were measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Saunders *et al.* (2012) identify the Likert-scale as a common measure that allows respondents to rate how strongly the individual agrees or disagrees to a specific question or statement. An example of a measure: "a brand's online presence is important for me to make a luxury purchase". The respondent would answer 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neither',

'agree' or 'strongly agree'. Additionally, the respondent could provide a free text answer in order to gain a deeper understanding about the consumer's perception of luxury. The question added was "give a quick description of what would make a luxury brand attractive to you". The last two questions concerned gender and generational belonging. The generation question was particularly important for revealing the different behaviours of each age cohort.

Respondent Profiles

The table below summarises the data collected. The role of generations is considered vital for future analysis and is thereby introduced first.

Table and Figure: Summary of Respondent Generations

Generations	No. of respondents	Percentage
1900-1945: Silent	2	1.7%
1946-1964: Baby Boomer	15	12.8%
1965-1976: Gen X	48	41%
1977-1995: Millennial	34	29.1%
1996-date: Gen Z	18	15.4%
Total	**117**	**100%**

Gender is included as it gives an indication of which gender purchases the most luxury goods. Arguably, this is highly relevant for future marketing strategies in order to customize these as much as possible to the targeted group.

Table and Figure: Summary of Respondent Gender

Gender	No. of respondents	Percentage
Female	75	64.1%
Male	40	34.2%
Prefer not to say	2	1.7%
Total	**117**	**100%**

Results

Findings of assumption 1: *"The Millennial and Gen Z consumer purchases luxury goods to feel better about themselves."*

To test this assumption, the following questions were formulated:

Question 1: "To what extent would you be comfortable buying a luxury product you saw someone else use?"

This question was aimed at finding out how comfortable the individuals were with looking the same and/or similar to others, focusing on age cohort. The respondents expressed slightly conflicting views in the overall results. Furthermore, the answer options for this question were shuffled on purpose, to arouse intrigue and to avoid the reader sticking to potential answer patterns. The majority of respondents (63.2%) would not have a problem with purchasing a luxury item they saw someone else use. For respondents born between 1900-1976, none stated that they would 'definitely buy it'. This is clearly different from the millennial and Gen Z generation, which in eight instances stated they would 'definitely buy it'.

Question 2: "I am comfortable buying second-hand luxury products."

This statement was aimed at understanding the consumer's attitudes towards second-hand luxury goods. The respondents were very comfortable about buying second-hand luxury products (41% totally agreed and almost 38% agreed), although 15% did not know and the rest disagreed. In other words, this question concluded that most participants were comfortable purchasing second-hand products. This could be explained by a number of factors such as environmental factors and price, which became evident as important factors in the open text question, "please give a quick description of what would make a luxury brand attractive to you".

Question 3: "Under what circumstances would you NOT purchase a luxury product?"

This question was used for the purpose of testing both assumptions 1 and 2, as they provide measures of attitudes towards digitalisation and factors such as self-esteem, which is relevant for assumption 2. The respondents proved to have different perceptions of when they would not purchase a luxury product: 25.6% stated that they would never purchase a luxury product owned by an influencer. Some 23.9% claimed that the factor which would dissuade them from a purchase would be if a friend has the item.

Interestingly, 14.5% would not purchase a product if the brand only had physical stores. The last option for this question was "other", which was created to derive greater insight into what the different generations view as 'deal breakers'. The majority of the respondents (28.3%) chose *other*. The respondents listed reasons such as bad reviews, a brand not being perceived as socially responsible, child labour and general unethical practices. Price also proved to be an important factor for some, as three respondents answered that they would not purchase a luxury item that did not prove to have quality aligned with the price.

Question 4: "Please give a quick description of what would make a luxury brand attractive to you."

This question was designed to obtain information on a deeper level. Interestingly, in relation to assumption 2, there was evidence that the millennial and Gen Z consumer does in fact purchase luxury goods to increase self-image. For several respondents, it was important that the brand was very well known and that it increased the consumer's status and image. One Gen Z respondent wrote: "The brand, my image by wearing it, increases my popularity and shows that I am up-to-date". The majority (47.9%) stated that they would purchase a luxury item from an unknown brand as long as it matched their perception of quality; 22.2% said that they would probably not. Some 17.9% was unsure and 12% stated that they would need to know the brand well before making any purchase. It can be deduced that millennial and Gen Z consumers are ostensibly purchasing luxury products to feel better about themselves.

Findings of assumption 2: "Millennial and Gen Z consumers are less loyal consumers than earlier generations."

Four questions were formulated to test this assumption:

Question 1: "How often do you purchase a luxury item?"

This question had a divided outcome: the majority of respondents (41.9%) stated that they make a luxury purchase once a year. Some 27.4% said they make a luxury purchase once every 6 months; 19.7% stated they never purchase luxury goods; 10.3% said they make a purchase every month; and 0.9% purchase luxury goods weekly. In order to see the generational differences, an in-depth analysis was performed.

Question 2: "Do you enjoy making purchases from the same shop/brand?"

Most respondents do in fact appreciate making purchases from the same shop/brand. This illustrates the consumer's level of loyalty. The mean score shows that the silent generation is the most loyal consumer with a score of 4.0; baby boomers prove to have the lowest mean score, which implies that these respondents are the least brand loyal consumers in this sample. Consequently, assumption 2 ('Millennial and Gen Z consumers are less loyal consumers than earlier generations') is rejected. The results show that millennials and Generation Z do in fact enjoy making purchases from the same shop/brand. Moreover, it was found that the younger generations have conflicting ideas of brand loyalty. Nevertheless, it is evident that millennials and Generation Z demonstrate more brand loyalty than baby boomers.

Findings of assumption 3: "Luxury companies will lose their millennial and Gen Z audience if they do not have a strong digital presence."

Two questions were included in the questionnaire to test this assumption. While one was measured using a 5-point Likert scale, the other was a text answer that yielded opinions from the respondents, and thereby achieved a greater understanding about the habits and attitudes of the different generations.

Question 1: "A brand's online presence is important for me to make a luxury purchase."

This question was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (from one to five). One was classified as "not important" and five as "very important". The majority of the respondents (29.1%) had little preference for a brand online. However, these results overlook generational differences. The results demonstrate that the respondents had conflicting views on this matter. To gain a greater understanding of generational aspect and attitudes, the millennial and Gen Z consumer were analysed further. Millennials and Gen Z consumers seem to prefer brands that have a strong digital presence; with the millennial generation presenting a mean score of 2.79 and Gen Z presenting a mean of 3.55 – thus, there is a significant difference. It can be deduced that digital presence is highly relevant to Gen Z.

Question 2: "What attracts you to a luxury brand?" was designed to further understanding of consumer preference in relation to a luxury company's digital presence. The question was open-ended, and respondents had the opportunity to give a brief explanation of what would make a luxury brand attractive to them.

Six respondents indicated that digital presence was vital for making a brand attractive. Three millennial and three Gen Z respondents found this to be the most important factor in terms of attractiveness. In line with the literature, millennials and Gen Z are more focused on online presence than other generations: younger consumers are very digitally oriented. While the findings confirm generational differences in terms of digital attitudes, the results are less clear cut than anticipated – thus the assumption can neither be approved nor rejected.

Question 3: "Under what circumstances would you NOT purchase a luxury item?"

The available options were as follows:

1. If I see it on social media
2. If an influencer has it
3. If the brand only has physical stores
4. If a friend has it
5. Other

Option 4 was relevant for testing assumption 1. As many as 14.5% stated that a deal breaker would clearly be if a shop only has physical stores. Thus, in relation to the open text question, it seems that consumers enjoy taking time to explore and get to know the brand in the comfort of their own home, before making a purchasing decision. Furthermore, online presence also allows them to compare prices, which respondents have listed as an important factor in buying decisions. Therefore, it can be deduced that this assumption is valid. The results indicate that digital presence is in fact important for millennial and Gen Z consumers when choosing where to make a luxury purchase.

Limitations

The questionnaire has weaknesses owing to the difficulty of measuring responses on a 5-point Likert scale, which weakens the credibility of the results. Furthermore, it was distributed via Facebook alone, and therefore yielded a relatively small sample of 117 respondents. Additionally, many respondents were from Generation X, which means that the sample reflects these respondents predominantly. Future investigation could benefit from researching and analysing millennial and Gen Z consumers exclusively, which might lead to a more representative sample.

Concluding Comments

This chapter confirms that there are clear generational differences when it comes to attitudes, habits and behaviour related to luxury consumption, and offers insights into the behavioural traits of millennial and Gen Z consumers in relation to luxury goods. In line with the literature, millennials and Gen Z consumers are not actually any less loyal than baby boomers. However, the younger generations had a higher focus on the ethical standards of the brands and the image conveyed by that brand. This could potentially explain why millennial and Gen Z consumers will shift and switch brands more frequently. Moreover, it was observed that a brand's digital presence is an important factor influencing millennial and Gen Z consumers in their purchasing decisions. In other words, this emphasises the importance of brands adapting to modern media. Overall, millennial and Gen Z consumers are more concerned about purchasing luxury goods for the purpose of having a strong image and fitting into a certain social group than previous generations.

Accordingly, companies which seek to increase their chances of having loyal millennial and Gen Z consumers will need to have a strong digital presence, including luxury firms.

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ARTICLE IV

THE RELEVANCE OF INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS IN THE FRENCH FASHION INDUSTRY: MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES

NY ANTSA RAVO RAONY

Introduction

The emergence of influence marketing is linked to the advent of the Internet and social media, which have completely changed the way we communicate. Marketers have found a way to use technology to reach more people and generate greater profit. Accordingly, marketing has diversified its objectives – enhancing brand image and increasing reputation – but the final goal remains unchanged: the underlying priority, whether implicit or explicit, is to generate sales. Thus, marketing coupled with digital technology (namely, the Internet and social media) has given rise to digital marketing and, by extension, the emergence of 'influence marketing'.

This marketing approach was already common before the widespread adoption and usage of social media. Marketers have long used celebrities to leverage their influence to promote their products or images in exchange for fees. Today, we are finally seeing the emergence of individuals with less influence than traditional celebrities, but who are just as effective when it comes to promoting a product or corporate image.

Before the advent of social media, an individual's reputation was determined by the intensity of their media exposure in relation to their exceptional abilities. Today, we can say that anyone can become an influencer, through the Internet and especially social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, which form a central aspect of this chapter.

Today, social media are still very novel and are likely to evolve considerably over time. There is therefore a gap in academic knowledge concerning influence marketing, as ongoing studies are underway to investigate the changing landscape of digital user behaviour in relation to influence marketing. At the time of writing, notions of ‘influencers’ and ‘social media’ have been put forward from different research perspectives, including that of companies which use influence marketing, the platforms used for influence marketing, and the consumer's point of view.

Given that the word ‘consumer’ has a very broad definition, this chapter uses a demographic limitation by focusing on the opinions of younger consumers: ‘millennials’, specifically. It is important to obtain millennial consumers' opinions on these new marketing levers as they are very present on Instagram. Moreover, they are aware of traditional marketing channels and are able to circumvent them without the slightest problem. It is widely agreed that they also master the codes of social media since they grew up in this era where these platforms predominate. Thus, investigating millennial perspectives can be interesting, in terms of building a resource base for developing and adapting influence marketing strategies.

To this end, and as a result of the lack of research in this field, this chapter sets out to answer the following research question: “How relevant are Instagram influencers in France for the fashion industry, according to millennials?” The intention is to identify the characteristics and criteria that may support the relevance of an influencer.

The objective therefore is to explore the phenomenon of influencers on the Instagram platform, based on the perspective of millennials in France, and to demonstrate its relevance. The study will allow scholars and practitioners to have a global vision of how millennials feel towards these very influential people on Instagram, bearing in mind that Instagram is a privileged platform for influencers in the fashion industry.

In order to address this issue, it is necessary to draw from the existing literature in order to define and characterize the concepts which are useful for furthering understanding, then identify the different hypotheses that can be formulated. Next, a research approach is put forward: the research strategy and the different methodologies adopted to collect the data necessary for investigating the hypotheses and the research question. Finally, the different results obtained will be discussed and interpreted in light of the hypotheses, assessing each to determine its relevance. The interpretations and results will be used not only to answer the hypotheses,

but also to give an objective answer to the research question.

A Review of the Literature

Influence Marketing

One of the greatest innovations of digital transformation that we have witnessed is *digital marketing*, which refers to the practice of marketing in a digital environment using distribution channels adapted to this environment (Smith, 2011) – and the emergence of social media that transcend communication and marketing beyond borders and physical contact. Digital media have been a godsend for marketers, given that from this innovation a new form of marketing has emerged: *influence marketing*.

Sudha (2017) describes influence marketing as an extension of word-of-mouth marketing which, as its name indicates, is the phenomenon of spreading commercial information (or other) orally. Word-of-mouth has long been considered one of the most effective techniques in advertising approaches used in marketing (Razi *et al*., 2017). Indeed, word-of-mouth is considered more credible than advertising, as it is perceived as 'people like me' recommendations, linking with the idea of accessibility and self-identification (Allsop, 2007). From an entirely different perspective, Hayes (2008) defines influence marketing as the promotion of brands using specific key individuals, opinion leaders, or 'K.O.L.' who exert influence on a population that can potentially become buyers. Alternatively, influence marketing can be seen as a form of product placement because it involves the deliberate integration of brand messages into the editorial content of media (Schneider *et al*., 2005).

Owing to the fact that influence marketing via social media is fairly recent, the defining characteristics are likely to change over time. Audrezeta (2017) argues that influence marketers offer the most effective promotional strategy according to a rating system in which influence marketing scores 7.56 on a 10-point scale compared to other media, such as advertising in magazines (5.36) and celebrity sponsorships (6.84). Research suggests that over time, influence marketing can help brands determine customer needs and market trends, which is important information for getting closer to consumers (Khan, 2017). From the vast field of influence marketing, this chapter focuses on social media. Indeed, influence marketing can take place on other platforms such as blogs for example. The choice to focus on social media is justified by the fact that social media represent important tools for relationship building, due to their role as facilitators and interaction with the

target audience (Allagui, 2016), especially with the possibility of reaching a larger audience in different ways.

Social Media

Boyd (2007) defines social media as web-based services which allow individuals to build a public profile in a limited system and establish a list of other users with whom they share a connection. It can be understood as a revolutionary new communication tool that transcends borders. Currently, there is a multitude of social media available worldwide, with different functionalities and uses – for example Facebook with 2.498 billion users or YouTube with 2 billion users (Statista, 2020). In addition, these platforms allow users to develop and share content on a variety of topics, such as technology, fashion or politics (Niederhoffer, 2007), content that will be consumed by other members of the platform. However, due to the expansive nature of social networking platforms, devices and online consumer behaviours, it is difficult to recognize them all at once (Tuten, 2014). Indeed, each social network has specific traits that require in-depth investigation for each platform. For example, Instagram is very focused on visuals: photo and video content, whereas Twitter is more oriented towards content in the form of personal memos. This implies different communication on the two networks and different effects on users, not to mention other factors that can play a different role for each platform such as the algorithm or the format of the publications.

Social media represent what could be described as a vehicle for personal expression: appropriate tools for the fashion industry with which to engage with the online audience. Furthermore, social media have seen a huge rise in the number of users over the past decade – from 0.97 billion users in 2010 to 3.08 billion in 2020 (Statista, 2020). Felix *et al.*, (2016) highlight the attributes of using social media, including stimulating sales, increasing brand awareness, generating traffic, reducing marketing costs and stimulating interactivity with users on the platforms by encouraging them to publish or share content. It should also be noted that the application of social network marketing is very broad: Hopkins (2015) finds, for example, that salespeople in both B2B and B2C models use relationship-based social network marketing to perform similar tasks in the sales process. Prior research (Ashley, 2015) suggests, for example, that many users expect companies to participate in social media, and to give customers the opportunity to engage in conversation on the platforms.

The Case of Instagram

Due to its intrinsically visual nature, Instagram seems to be the most appropriate platform to conduct this investigation into the relevance of influencers in a marketing strategy and in the fashion industry. The platform offers an excellent opportunity to disseminate new fashion trends (Casaló, 2018) and can facilitate interaction between consumers and online fashion brands (McCormick, 2012). Studies have also shown that users in the 13-34 age group make up more than half of Instagram users, around 70% of the platform's representative population (Statista, 2020). Instagram is the platform most used by influencers because of the sense of immediacy it generates and the creation of communities (Casaló, 2018).

Sheldon (2016) considers Instagram to be one of the fastest growing online platforms where users share their life images with other members, but unfortunately, academic research related to this field is still very limited at the time of writing. Users spend more time on Instagram than on any other network (Sheldon, 2016), suggesting that Instagram is relevant for this investigation into influence marketing.

Social Media & Fashion

The fashion industry encompasses the field of clothing and accessories, from perfumes and cosmetics to watches and jewellery (Guida Helal, 2018). This context was chosen because it is one of the most successful and visible areas of digital production (Duffy, 2015) and therefore conducive to a study focusing on social media, specifically Instagram.

From the work of Kim (2015), Instagram content can be associated with hedonistically motivated speeches, as they correspond to voluntarily pleasing exposed audiences by inspiring positive feelings, such as inciting them to buy, for example. Incitement by purchase and projection obviously manifests itself by giving the illusion to the exposed audience that by wearing the same outfits as the influencers on the network, they can acquire the same social status or simply achieve the same visual appearance as these influencers. From a different perspective, Wolny (2013) defines fashion as a powerful social symbol used to create and communicate personal and group identities that can easily be expanded in a digital environment. Most fashion items become trends through a contagion effect: they are transmitted by recommendation and imitation, in much the same way as an epidemic. Diffusion via social media is therefore advantageous to this sector in particular, especially in France, where the use of social media is high, with

39 million users in January 2020 and where users spend an average of 1.42 hours daily (WeAreSocial /Hootsuite, 2020). Fashion is also a concept that reflects style and material possession (O'Cass, 2004); thus, fashion consumption is influenced by symbols and images, affirming identity and social belonging (Altuna, 2013). These notions are predominant on social media which privilege the sharing and consumption of visual content, now commonplace today.

Research has also demonstrated the intensive use of influence marketing in the beauty and fashion industry on social media (Garland, 2018). Many brands use social media in different ways to sell, build relationships or simply communicate a message (Hair, 2010). Several luxury brands have already recognized the importance of marketing on social media and do not hesitate to use influence marketing as an important part of their marketing activities (Sepp, 2011).

Social Network Influencers

Social network influencers are individuals who own their own brand(s), often better known as 'Personal Branding', and who operate in online environments such as blogs and social media. They have a strong and credible online presence and have the ability to be highly persuasive in their message when communicating with their followers/ subscribers (Freberg, 2013). They are often online celebrities with a large number of followers, on one or more social media platforms and have a significant influence on their followers (Varsamis, 2018). The more followers an individual has, the more likely he or she is to be considered an influencer (Jin, 2014). As a result, consumers perceive people with a large number of followers as more attractive, more reliable and with a fairly high social status (Djafarova, 2017). However, they are not traditional celebrities (in the proper sense of the term), such as famous actors or athletes, nor are their messages considered as traditional advertising either (Abidin, 2016), which makes the study of these individuals even more relevant today, not to mention the fact that very little academic study has been done in this area to date.

Millennials

Millennials are a generational segment of consumers, often considered as a like-minded group of individuals, and more precisely a generational cohort according to Bakewell (2003) who defines them as a unit of individuals who experience similar life events, in this case the widespread adoption of the

Internet and social media. As millennials are now considered the most active population on social media, representing around 70% of Instagram users, it is interesting to focus this investigation on them. Studies have shown that Generation Z and/or millennials connect daily with social media influencers and that this population represents a significant driving force behind online purchases (Smith, 2011).

While Sokolova (2020) defines millennials as Generation Z, a population born after 1995, Helal (2018) thinks they are born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. As noted by Reeves (2008), there is no agreement on the range of years that define millennials. Indeed, several researchers use different age categories and names such as Generation Y, Generation Z or digital natives, for this younger generation. For the purpose of this study, the age range of millennials is between 16 and 34 years of age. Individuals between the ages of 13 and 34 represented about 70% of Instagram users in April 2020 (Statista, 2020). However, as the '13-15 year old' population is beyond the scope of this investigation, it was decided to start the cohort at 16 years old, in line with French law which requires any young person aged over 16 to participate in the 'military census'. It is also from this age that a minor is authorized to apply for emancipation, so that they can be legally assimilated as an adult and perform acts requiring legal majority (Service Public, 2019).

Advertising Exposure

Ganguly (2015) argues that individuals now encounter thousands of ads daily, most of which come from social media. According to Pêtre (2017), the average French citizen is exposed to between 1200 and 2200 ads per day, per individual. When advertising is considered in its broadest sense, the estimate of exposure would rise to 15,000 commercial stimuli per day. It is not surprising, therefore, that this new generation calls upon its peers to obtain information, whether authentic or not, especially since research affirms that information is more credible when it is provided by the influencers, than by an established celebrity (Wiley, 2014) without necessarily establishing the latter's real expertise. Investigating the Instagram platform, Djafarova (2017) found that users consider celebrities as a trustworthy online source of information.

A Demanding Population

It is understood that the large volume and purchasing power of these young consumers makes them an attractive target for many consumer industries (Smith, 2011). As they are subject to an enormous flow of information, their purchasing criteria differ from other age groups, as does their ability to seek information. Brands must therefore defend the values of this generation in order to earn the right to 'own' them as customers (Mangold, 2011). Today, consumers and especially millennials have become aware of traditional marketing techniques and have developed the means to circumvent them. Therefore, brands should increasingly partner with Instagram's influencers to reach their target audience (De Veirman, 2017). Moreover, a study has shown that this new population is fond of trends and tends to base their judgment on values. This implies that brands wanting to reach this target must reach the customer's world and not the other way around (Mangold, 2011).

Djafarova (2017) states that digital personalities have greater persuasive power and credibility because followers are more likely to identify with them. Sukhdial (2002) also states that millennials are more likely to purchase a product approved by someone who matches their self-image. Therein lies a risk, however, because the opposite effect could occur if this audience perceives the sender of the message as non-expert (Goetahals, 1973), even if the notion of expertise is totally different on social media.

Studies have also shown that word-of-mouth is considered more credible than advertising, as it is perceived to have gone through the evaluation of 'people like me' (Allsop *et al*., 2007). This can therefore generate social interaction, which has been described as the illusion of a face-to-face relationship with these influencers and makes consumers more sensitive to their opinions and behaviour (Colliander, 2011). This young population tends to follow the influencers with whom they identify, which is perfectly suited to the Instagram context – and therefore the perceived similarity of followers to influencers that positively affects their trust in the branded positions generated by the influencers (Lou, 2019). Thus, Djafarova (2017) found that Instagram users aspire to the lifestyles of certain celebrities, copying their fashion and makeup styles, job types, choices of restaurants and vacation destinations. In the context of social media, product placement can be particularly persuasive and effective because followers tend to develop a sense of friendship with the influencers they admire, owing to the direct interaction. It should be noted, however, that in most cases this will be a one-sided 'relationship' (Hartmann, 2011).

From this discussion of existing literature, three hypotheses can be put forward relating to French consumers:

Hypothesis 1: Instagram influencers are relevant in the fashion industry because millennials identify with them.

Hypothesis 2: Instagram influencers are relevant in the fashion industry, because millennials trust their opinions and recommendations.

Hypothesis 3: Instagram influencers are relevant in the fashion industry, because millennials consume and appreciate their content.

Methodology

A quantitative approach was developed to obtain inferences. Having examined options for data collection, it became clear that an online survey was the most appropriate for conducting the study. Indeed, there are several advantages and opportunities to using this method. The online survey is highly effective in obtaining objective responses by eliminating any influence and disruptive elements on returns that may be present in face-to-face interviews or surveys (social pressure). Thus, a survey was disseminated to a wide audience via Instagram, being the platform under investigation.

The main question was the relevance of influencers in the fashion industry on Instagram in France, according to the millennials' perspective. Accordingly, three very important points were raised that will be tested to ascertain whether or not, according to millennials, influencers are useful in social media marketing and in the fashion industry. The survey was divided into several sections, so that each section tests a different hypothesis. As such, the data collected serves as an overall assessment of the general perception of millennials towards influencers. Three main criteria were respected for completing the survey: the respondent must be aged between 16-34 years old, reside in France and be present on Instagram.

The survey was distributed via an Instagram account with 9600 followers, and whose audience's interests include: beauty and fashion (74%), lifestyle (66%) and tourism (54%) according to the 'hypeauditor' analysis platform. In order to engage followers and obtain responses, a 'story' was created, adding a link to the survey on the account profile so that anyone who accesses the profile can access the survey. This approach generated 448 views in 24 hours on the platform, yielding 117 responses to the survey, which gives a response rate of about 26% in total.

The results obtained were then analysed, according to the sections outlined earlier. A number of open-ended questions were included throughout the survey to probe respondents' feelings about the topic. For the open-ended questions, it was necessary to code the responses as themes to stay within the scope of the investigation.

Results and Discussion

As the research focuses on a well-defined population – millennials present on Instagram and residents of France – it was necessary to select the respondents for the purpose of obtaining objective results. Thus, around 110 individuals were able to continue answering the questions, while the other participants were returned directly to the end of the survey because they did not meet the sampling criteria.

To begin, the respondents were invited to introduce themselves and express a variety of opinions about their trends in using the Instagram platform, their interest in fashion and what matters most to fashion influencers. Of the 110 responses obtained, 74 people declared themselves to be women (67.3%) and 35 people declared themselves to be men (31.8).

For the second question, participants were asked to indicate the average daily time they spent on Instagram. Thus, 40.9% of users reported spending more than 2 hours per day on Instagram, 38.2% between 1 and 2 hours per day, and 20.9% less than 1 hour per day. As a result, a large majority of respondents (79.1%) spent more than one hour a day on the platform.

As mentioned earlier, being on Instagram does not necessarily imply someone is following influencers. However, not doing so does not prevent them from being exposed to the contents produced by the latter, which allows them in any case to express a favourable or unfavourable opinion concerning the contents, and to be affected in some way by the publications. For this reason, the respondents were asked, ‘Do you follow influencers on your account?’, to which 83.6% of participants answered ‘yes’ and 16.4% answered ‘no’.

In the next question, participants were asked about their interest in fashion, whether it is high or low. Out of the 110 responses obtained, 12.7% were in the ‘very high’ category and 47.3% responded that they had a ‘high’ interest in fashion, 30.9% of the respondents claimed to have a ‘medium’ interest, while the lower categories (i.e., ‘a little’ and ‘not at all’) each gathered 4.5% of respondents’ answers.

Hypothesis 1: Instagram influencers are relevant in the fashion industry because millennials identify with them.

Some 47.7% of respondents said that influencers are a source of inspiration for their looks, and 34.9% said that they are 'someone like me', which indicates that an overwhelming majority of participants consider influencers as their equals and that they remain accessible. It can be deduced that the majority of influencers are seen as peers and not as traditional celebrities, especially since they are better perceived than famous personalities such as those from Hollywood (Djafarova, 2017). As such, influencers are perceived as peers with whom Instagram users can identify.

Next, 50.5% of respondents said that they follow influencers because they share the same style of clothing. When half of the population interviewed claim to follow influencers based on their clothing style, it points to the massive impact of their influence, as well as for the 35.8% of the population who buy their clothes and fashion accessories in the same stores as the influencers. Indeed, Lou (2019) states that young people tend to follow the influencers with whom they identify and will aspire to the same lifestyle by copying their fashion styles, restaurant choices, etc. (Djafarova, 2017).

By simply following a brand on Instagram, an influencer can indirectly influence their audience to follow certain brands. Thus, the question asking participants whether they follow one or more brands because their favourite influencers also follow them obtained 46.8% positive responses. In an attempt to identify with and resemble influencers, millennials adopt similar behaviours; especially since they tend to develop a feeling of friendship with the influencers they admire (Hartmann, 2017). This statement is confirmed by the results where 53.2% report that they trust the influencers more when they feel that these individuals make an effort to interact with their community, even though some feel that they either 'do not want to interact directly with the influencers' (32.1% of respondents) or 'do not get an answer from them' (33% of respondents). Indeed, Djafarova (2017) asserts that the opinions of these personalities have much more influence and are more credible because they are perceived as being more authentic and more accessible. This credibility is well founded since it has been established by someone who is 'like me' (Camahort, 2016).

Moreover, when millennials identify with influencers, they are more likely to buy a product recommended by them – 77.1% of respondents answered 'yes' to this question. Finally, to reinforce the identification argument: 71.6% of respondents think they interact more frequently with influencers

who have the same values as them. For example, one respondent suggested: 'If I can't identify with the influencer or if I don't have the same interests or if our values are not the same, the content in itself doesn't interest me'. Here, what matters is the feeling of accessibility and the impression of developing a certain form of friendship with the influencers, although one-sided, as one respondent articulated, 'simply because it's easier to talk and interact with someone who has the same values as I do'. Other responses alluding to identifying with influencers included 'to support them', and 'to boost them in their job'. This finding suggests that despite the other criteria, millennials can also follow an influencer out of a desire to encourage and support the individual. It is clear that, for millennials, great importance is attached to identifying with influencers – which makes the presence of influencers in the fashion world and on Instagram very relevant today.

> Hypothesis 2: Instagram influencers are relevant in the fashion industry because millennials trust their opinions and recommendations.

Modern-day society is highly exposed to advertising. Individuals encounter thousands of advertising messages daily, and most of these come from social media platforms (Ganguly, 2015) that have become commonplace among younger generations (Gottfried, 2016). The results of the survey reinforce these arguments, with 78.9% of respondents stating that they feel highly exposed to commercial stimuli on social media. As a result, millennials will search for more reliable information since they judge traditional ads as intrusive (De Veirman, 2017) – and this is where influencers play an important role.

Indeed, millennials will look for more authentic information because they are wary of traditional marketing techniques (De Veirman, 2017). In the survey, 60.6% of respondents said they trust the advertising messages of influencers more than brand advertising. However, 64.2% of the respondents admitted that influencers are not transparent about their advertising messages all the time. In contrast, 32.1% think they are 'absolutely transparent' and 3.7% think they are never transparent. In addition, 76.1% of the respondents answered that they were not at all concerned about transparency. It is important to note that here we are referring to transparency on advertising content only, and not on the content of influencers in general. These results refute the work of Evans (2017) who states that when influencers admit to endorsing content, their followers recognize the advertising nature and this can generate a negative impact on their intention to share this content. In the criteria that would encourage individuals to trust influencers, three observations are noted. Firstly, 'Authenticity and transparency in the

content' (69.7% of respondents) are highly respected: this refers to influencers who strive to keep a certain image of righteousness and consistency in relation to their commitment. To illustrate this example, a vegan influencer would lose all credibility towards their community if they took action against the values they advocate such as eating meat. This was the case of Arwa Mahdawi who proclaimed herself a vegan activist and was then caught eating meat, which outraged her millions of followers and created much scandal in the press (theguardian.com, 2019). As a second criterion, the 'expertise' of the influencer must be established in order for millennials to trust them (stated by 51.4% of respondents). Indeed, the trust of Instagram users in a given product is shaped by the expertise and knowledge of product influencers (Djafarova, 2017), which confirms the results. Some 33.9% of respondents indicated 'brands that collaborate with the influencer' as a third criterion, knowing that influencers are individuals who are supposed to have a high status to earn credibility (Ennaji, 2018) and therefore be able to work with leading brands. Other responses include the influencer's interest in the environment or the fact that they are close to their community.

52.3% of respondents trust influencers on Instagram as consumers, for several reasons. For example, justifications include 'they are experienced' and 'they are less intrusive than other forms of advertising', thus establishing the importance of their expertise. Other responses include 'because their opinion will always be more honest than that of the brands', which suggests having been overexposed to traditional advertising messages. Some respondents demonstrated objectivity and indifference such as 'it depends on the influencer and whether the approach is genuine or not' and 'it is difficult to know if they are paid for their positive opinions'. Interestingly, the respondents showed more enthusiasm when expressing negativity about their trust in influencers with answers such as 'opinions are often biased' – and also 'I assume that an influencer will recommend this or that product if they have been paid to do so, so even if they don't lie directly, they will mostly focus on the positive points of the product, so in a way lying by omission'.

These comments show the extent to which millennials pay attention to the behaviours adopted by influencers with a view to being able to trust them or not. In line with the results, it is clear that transparency matters a lot to millennials; they increasingly want proof of the authenticity of the products and brands they consume (Chronis, 2012).

However, transparency can be split into two distinct points:

- Transparency in relation to sponsored publications (i.e., the fact of admitting that a publication is of an advertising nature or simply a product placement),
- Transparency in relation to other content, where millennials expect influencers to be providing authentic information when they share content: honest product reviews that are in line with the values they stand for. Millennials today expect influencers to express impartial, transparent, original and reliable content (Mudambi, 2010).

Reactions to product placements are positive when millennials trust influencers: 71.3% of the respondents stated that they are more likely to purchase products promoted by the influencers they follow on Instagram, which implicitly means they trust them. However, despite this trust, 72.2% of the respondents said they would not pay more for a product merely because it is promoted by an influencer; 66.7% believe that influencer-promoted products are not necessarily synonymous with quality, despite the notion that quality prevails over price for millennials (Cheung, 2017).

The reasons given by millennials for a low level of trust in an influencer included ‘because it is an advertisement for the brand’ and ‘sometimes you can just pay them to promote the product’. One respondent stated ‘Scammers … influencers are paid a lot to sponsor and sometimes the product itself is not worth it, but they are interested in selling it to make money’. Another expressed ‘contempt for these individuals because of their lack of transparency about the products they promote’.

In contrast, some positive responses strongly defended influencers, ‘because influencers are often rich and buy only the best products’ and ‘I consider that they are authentic and will avoid lying to their followers’. These statements show that when authenticity is established, millennials trust influencers and are more likely to buy a product that is perceived as a quality product by influencers.

It can be said that millennials will only trust an influencer if the influencer is perceived as authentic and transparent in the content they post. Obviously, it would be detrimental for a company to use influencers who have a reputation for being unreliable or not transparent. The motives of influencers are of great importance to millennials, who have the power to discredit them when authenticity is questionable. For companies, the most credible influencers are those who have gained the trust of millennials. Influencers need to be trustworthy in the eyes of the public to elicit positive reactions from the target audience (Gunawan, 2015).

Hypothesis 3: Instagram influencers are relevant in the fashion industry, because millennials consume and appreciate their content.

Considered as creators of taste (De Veirman, 2017), especially in fashion, influencers are also driven by their ability to create content adapted to their audiences. Owing to their influence and their content, influencers can set new trends and redefine fashion codes, in the same way as the major fashion magazines or designers do (Wolny, 2013). Nevertheless, it is necessary to have the know-how. In the fashion industry, the way the account is displayed, the quality of the photos and the layout of the outfits can create in millennials a desire to engage with the brand, the product or the influencer. Thus, when participants were asked what interested them most in the published content of influencers, responses included 'the information provided in the post' and 'the visual aspect of the post', pronounced by 34.9% of respondents for each item.

Information provided in an Instagram post is represented by written comments and illustrated by photos and videos. Although research affirms that visual content has more influence on purchasing decisions (Sabate, 2014). Wang (2017) demonstrates positive correlations between visually engaging content and consumer impressions of Instagram. However, the informational value of a post will also include the comments posted by followers too, and therefore plays a significant role, since it is known that this has a positive effect on the trust of the influencers' followers (Chen Lou, 2019).

Concerning responses related to respondents' personal interests in Instagram influencers, 21.1% of respondents cited 'advantages' which include benefits such as promotional codes or discounts offered by the influencer, followed by the response 'partnerships with other brands' (5.5% of respondents). Open-ended responses stated 'stories' which are similar to the visual aspect, but also the information provided. Overall, it is the content *per se* that interests millennials the most, in other words the visual value of the post and the informative value – which are generally complementary on Instagram. Indeed, when a photo or video is posted, it is usually followed by a verbal description to illustrate the content or thoughts of the influencer.

Participants were asked what characterized good content on Instagram, and again cited transparency and authenticity of content (43.1% of respondents). Some 33.9% responded 'originality', which affects the influencers' arguments and tends to have positive effects on the consumer's intention to interact with the account and recommend it to peers (Casalo, 2018). Next cited was

the visual/aesthetic aspect by 19.3% of respondents, once again highlighting the significance of the visual content.

Illustrating the impact of good content, 89.9% of respondents said they follow someone on Instagram because they post good content. In addition, 72.5% of respondents said that follow an individual to be inspired by their looks.

When prompted to buy, only 32.1% of respondents indicated a high probability of buying a product promoted and endorsed by an influencer. However, most respondents are willing to try out a new brand if their favourite influencer(s) recommend it, which is noteworthy. These arguments are further reinforced by the fact that 62.4% of respondents said they follow a brand directly if posted by an influencer. This demonstrates the significance of content posted by influencers. As discussed in the literature, these individuals are able to make a product known through persuasive techniques and by generating positive associations through advertising (Djafarova, 2017).

When respondents were asked to give their opinion about the relevance of companies using an influencer to create more adapted content, 78.9% favourable responses were obtained, confirming the bearing of these opinion leaders. Only 16.5% of respondents gave unfavourable opinions; and one participant suggested in the open question: 'Yes, of course – a brand influencer promotes a certain proximity with potential customers and therefore strengthens the marketing'. Thus, consumers are much more likely to consume the products offered by the company, which supports the argument of Audrezeta (2017) who states that one way for brands to exploit the content of influencers is to engage in influence marketing. A process described as highly credible word-of-mouth (Abidin, 2016).

Regarding the notion of purchasing items after seeing them on an influencer, approximately 48.6% of respondents claim to have bought clothes or fashion accessories after seeing an influencer wear them, a figure that is not negligible. Moreover, in the pre-purchase decision-making phase where consumers may face uncertainty: 53.2% of respondents claim to get information from influencers rather than investigating the brand directly. Furthermore, studies confirm the power of influencers by affirming that their opinions are perceived as being more credible than other sources of information (Greller, 2001).

Looking further into the reasons behind this question, some participants indicated that influencers are more reassuring and generally not limited to a single brand, pointing to the diversity of content. One respondent suggested 'because they promote multiple brands and styles', another said 'influencers have more ideas and inspiration – so I identify with them'. Respondents also talked about discovering new brands and outfits through influencers, and content that is relevant to a wider audience, as one participant voiced, 'through the influencer you find the brand of the product'.

However, the arguments concerning respondents who prefer brands (some 46.8%) are still valid since they believe it is easier to trust official product descriptions than to listen to influencers. Some participants say they have more confidence in the accuracy of what brands will tell them. Others already know what to expect and prefer to see the brands directly. One individual stated preferring to see the brand before looking at the influencer, believing 'brands first and influencers second: the brand to see product details and sometimes the suggested opinions on the page, and then see the influencer's opinion'.

It can be construed that influencers are relevant in fashion by their content, if only to incite millennials to follow them on the networks and to recommend other brands to increase their reputation without necessarily focusing influence marketing strategies on buying. However, the company's content is still important: some consumers will prefer to search for product information directly from brands rather than from their peers.

To sum up the data and get a feeling of respondents' views, the overall findings show that, when asked who can be relied on for fashion ideas and recommendations, 48.6% of respondents answered 'influencers'. In second place was 'friends and family' (38.5%), third place was 'traditional celebrities' (8.3%) and last place was 'traditional advertising'. It is therefore obvious that an influencer plays an important role in fashion and that this should not be neglected. The fact that the participants ask their peers – influencers, friends and family, celebrities, ranking traditional advertising in last place – for recommendations implies the importance of the human element in marketing.

Next, when participants were asked whether they have 'more' or 'less' trust in influencers these days, the results showed that 54.1% said they trust influencers less while 45.9% said they trusted them more. In response to the question: 'Do you think it is still useful to use influencers in the fashion industry on Instagram?', some 90.8% of participants answered 'yes'. This

shows that the participants consider Instagram influencers to be very relevant in the fashion industry and this platform has a prolonged existence, given that it is the second most effective promotion strategy (Audrezeta *et al*., 2017).

Above all, it is important to note the visibility influencers can offer to companies, by enabling them to reach new audiences who have already demonstrated trust and loyalty to the influencers they follow. In addition, companies can get closer to their customers and gain a deeper understanding of them through the close relationship influencers maintain with their audience. Over time, influencers can help brands determine customer needs and market trends to get closer to the consumers (Khan, 2017).

It is likely that influence marketing can also lead to cost reductions, given that traditional marketing operations require significant resources (Sammis, 2015). Thus, in the fashion industry, companies must consider the use of influence marketing in light of the potential advantages. It is highly relevant for companies to call upon influencers to reach out to millennials, considering how the latter represent the most active population on Instagram and are a key target for influence marketing (Pophal, 2016).

Conclusion

Acknowledging that influence marketing is an emerging phenomenon and therefore under-researched, this chapter covers different theoretical underpinnings to define terms and concepts, in order to contextualize the investigation. The focus is on furthering the understanding of influence marketing via social media in the context of fashion. The chapter traces the emergence of ‘influencers’, as individuals capable of influencing the perception and vision of their audience. As these are new concepts, the investigation is undertaken from the perspective of millennials, a digital savvy generational cohort representing individuals aged between 16-34 years old.

Data were collected via survey methodology, centring on the Instagram platform and intended for inhabitants of France. The survey was posted on an Instagram account that has over 9000 followers, in the form of a ‘story’. In 24 hours, 117 responses were gathered, from a total of 442 people who saw the message.

The responses indicate the extent to which respondents are involved in the fashion industry, follow influencers on Instagram and spend their time on

the application at least once a day. It was also noted that the 'look' is one of the most important criteria for a fashion influencer according to respondents. Furthermore, millennials tend to adopt behaviours similar to influencers and react positively to influencers when they identify with them. This has more impact when they perceive the influencer as being accessible and interacting with their community.

It is worth noting that millennials are very exposed to advertising messages and now feel a certain mistrust, especially since advertising messages are considered intrusive. Although the majority of millennials tend to trust influencers, many have difficulty accepting them as they think influencers are not always transparent when they recommend fashion products. Two types of transparency were observed: transparency relating to admitting product placement, and transparency associated with posting authentic and honest information. Influencers must conform to the values they advocate on Instagram in order to gain the trust of their audience, since once millennials place their trust in influencers, reactions are more optimistic and generate positive commitment and even sales. Thus, the relevance of influencers is enhanced if their transparency vis-à-vis the information they post is established.

Content also plays a very important role for millennials and influences their behaviour in a significant way. **G**ood visual or verbal content incites millennials to generate actions of commitment towards the influencer, but also towards the brands that sponsor them. As a result, this allows for increased visibility and generates positive reactions from millennials to enhance the brand image and increase awareness. Thus, the relevance of the influencers in relation to their content is verified and confirmed by millennials in the fashion industry and on the Instagram platform.

In general, millennials have a favourable feeling towards influencers despite the fact that 54.1% of respondents said they trust influencers less than other sources. Nevertheless, 90.8% of respondents claim it is useful to refer to these influential individuals in the fashion industry for reasons of visibility, proximity and sales generation. It can be concluded that, today, it is still very relevant to use Instagram influencers in the fashion industry, despite certain criteria that must be met including authenticity and transparency.

Limitations and New Perspectives

To enrich the quantitative nature of the data collected, it would be constructive to undertake qualitative data collection. This would reduce the

issues associated with the survey being anonymous and enable deeper insights to surface, on topics such as the parameters that influence user behaviour including the Instagram algorithm and the exploration page. Despite a positive pilot test, the fact that there were 40 questions may have deterred some people from completing the survey: a shorter survey could be used in future investigations. Ideally, it would be interesting to widen the study by, for example, distributing the survey to an audience of over 10,000 followers, to obtain a much more representative sample and statistical results.

The results and interpretations were developed within the limits of the author's knowledge and experience of the subject. More research is needed by a greater number of scholars to assist companies in formulating influencer marketing strategies. As social media offer multiple contexts of user behaviour, studies can extend beyond the Instagram platform. The idea of opening new perspectives, and furthering understanding is particularly pertinent, especially in light of COVID-19 – which imposes social distancing and therefore places the spotlight yet further on online consumer behaviour.

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ARTICLE V

IS COVID-19 INFLUENCING THE ACCEPTED VISION OF WORKING FROM HOME IN FRANCE?

MATHILDE RABILLOUD
& JEAN-YVES HAMIOT

Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse the extent to which the first COVID-19 lockdown in France influenced the vision of working from home by obliging managers and employees alike to consider telework as part of their organization. The research presented comprises a quantitative survey of 160 respondents working from home. Despite the inherent limits of a convenience sample, the results of the survey suggest that the pandemic-induced requirement to work from home has changed the general vision, as a significant proportion of managers and employees have sought to integrate teleworking into their organization. Working from home is seen as a positive way to overcome monotony, gain more autonomy at work and increase productivity (fewer interruptions). Nevertheless, the risk of feeling isolated is, perhaps unsurprisingly, even more marked during lockdown, especially in situations where the remote worker lives alone.

Working from Home

The concept of working from home is not a new one. As such, the first part of this chapter adopts a historical approach. The following subparagraphs consider the benefits, such as improved employee productivity and organizational performance, as well as difficulties relating to the dispersion of employees, isolation and career consequences. The last subparagraph discusses the need for management to adapt their strategies to accommodate teleworkers.

A Bit of History

Jack M. Nilles (1998) pioneered the concept of teleworking, which is today an emerging mode of work. Nakrošienė *et al.* (2019) define this concept, as "work carried out in a place other than the office (the home, for example) enhanced by the use of information and communication technologies" (ICT). The phenomenon has developed over the years, owing to digitization. In 1973, for the first time, during the oil crisis, some American companies perceived advantages in remote working: reducing expenditure on company premises, more productivity from employees, as they are not wasting time commuting to and from work, better quality of life, etc. Nevertheless, technology was not yet mature enough to make working from home generally feasible. It was only with the invention of the personal computer and the advent of the Internet that working from home became possible.

This research focuses on the work that can be done at home and at the office (Huws, 1997). Of course, not all types of work can be home-based: only activities or missions which are easily measurable and do not require a close relationship with colleagues, the public or managers, can easily be undertaken remotely (De Mazenod, 2011). Indeed, some professions, such as that of a gardener, baker, police officer, etc. are impossible to transform into remote working jobs. Consequently, this can lead to a divide in the population, dividing those who can work from home and those who cannot (Nilles, 1998; Emmenegger *et al.*, 2012). Telework was recognised in French labour law in 2012. It is defined as:

> *"Any form of work organisation in which work that could also have been carried out on the employer's premises is carried out by an employee outside these premises on a voluntary basis using information and communication technologies within the framework of an employment contract or an addendum to it." (Article L1222-9).*

In other words, telework is defined as being any form of work organization in which work which could have been carried out on the employer's premises is instead carried out by the employee outside of those premises (at home, for example) using Information and Communication Technologies either explicitly cited within the employment contract, as an amendment, or on a voluntary basis. In accordance with the law, certain employer obligations have been formulated to prevent potential abuses. For example, they must generally pay for all the costs associated with implementation (the cost of hardware, subscriptions, software and software maintenance, etc.). Employers must also establish a timetable for communicating with their remote worker(s) in order to respect a balance between work and private

life. Finally, they must also inform and give priority to the homeworker if a job offer with equal qualifications and professional skills is available without remote work.

Teleworking also refers to several concepts in the literature such as working from home, working remotely, virtual work, flexible work, telecommuting, etc. The numerous synonyms defining working from home can lead to misunderstanding and potential errors concerning what telework actually is (Allen *et al.*, 2015). As defined above, working from home is characterized by a spatial and temporal dispersion of workers, enabled with ICT (Dumas and Ruiller, 2014). However, working from home is considered to be an alternative working arrangement (Onyemaechi *et al.*, 2018) involving changes within the organization engendering both positive and negative aspects. Thus, the research articles in the literature discuss the pros and cons and the relationship between managers and remote workers, as well as misgivings. They suggest that there is a need for a better understanding of how best to implement homeworking in organizations (Dambrin, 2004). We first look at the benefits highlighted in the literature.

Improved Productivity and Performance

The potential benefits of working from home are varied and can be attractive for both managers and workers (Khalifa and Davison, 2000). Indeed, this form of work gives remote workers a greater degree of autonomy, with the further opportunity of being able to adapt their schedule. Most of the time, it generates better performance due to them being able to concentrate on the task at hand and thus be more productive. Workers are less solicited by colleagues, do not spend time on daily commuting, have less of an impact on the environment and enjoy a better quality of life. The possibility to organize work deadlines around family issues and vice versa can optimize an individual's work-life balance. Additionally, it enables organizations to delegate more tasks to their teleworking employees who are consequently more independent and autonomous when faced with problems.

Moreover, ICT helps companies to develop their competitiveness, notoriety, profitability and productivity. Indeed, over the past thirty years, ICT have been increasingly present in both our daily professional and personal lives (Bloom *et al.*, 2014). The introduction of the personal computer in the 1980s, the mobile phone and laptops 10 years later, and the fact that the prices and sizes of these devices have decreased while speed and bandwidth have increased (Kizza, 2017) have all fuelled this prevalence. Due to digitalization, communication is easier and faster in reaching stakeholders,

while storing information in databases is cheaper. This shift from a manufacturing economy to an information economy has led to an increase in the types of jobs it is possible to do at home. However, the decline of proximity at work is less straightforward. Organizations and employees may, with the increasing trend of employees working from home, face an increasing lack of mutual knowledge, difficulties in communication and identification with the organization.

Dispersion of Employees

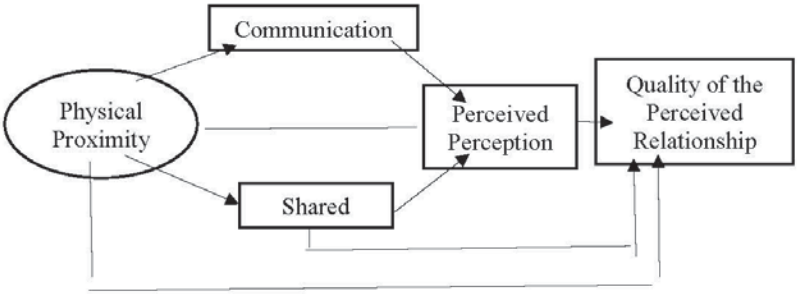
Durnell Cramton (2001) explained how dispersed work commonly leads to a dearth of mutual knowledge, which can be very damaging for the general performance of organizations. This lack of mutual knowledge results from an inability to communicate and retain contextual information, unequal sharing of information, difficulties in communicating and understanding the importance of information, differences in the speed of access to information, and problems in interpreting the meaning of silence.

However, perceived distance is personal and highly subjective, as it depends on the relationship the person has with their colleagues. Hence, proximity and therefore localization evidently influence the perceived distance as well as other aspects. A low level of physical proximity does not necessarily make someone feel distant from others. For this reason, Wilson, O'Leary and Metiu (2008) consider that communication and identification are the most important criteria influencing one's perception of proximity within a company.

Frequent, deep and interactive communication leads colleagues to learn about each other, sharing common values about their company and personal life, and seeking and finding support and help. The remote worker can, in this way, still feel included in decisions made within the team. Organizational identification can be defined as the degree to which a member defines themself using the same attributes which they believe define the organization (Dutton *et al.*, 1994).

Within this context, Wilson, Boyer O'Leary and Metiu (2008) offer the concept of perceived proximity (see Schema 1). This model was created to address the paradox that sometimes we may feel close to someone who is geographically far ("*far-but-close*"). They call this *objective distance*. In contrast, we may feel far from someone who is in the same office as us, which they call *perceived distance*.

Graph N° 1: Model of Perceived Proximity (Source: Boyer O'Leary *et al*. (2014, p. 1125))



These authors demonstrate how employees can build strong social links despite being geographically far from each other, using ICT (Information Communication Technologies). Indeed, the feeling of proximity was identical for all of the 682 'pairs' of colleagues, some working in the same office, some working remotely. In other words, pairs who work far from each other in terms of objective distance and pairs who work close together all feel the same way about their proximity to each other. Moreover, this result also showed that this feeling of proximity to someone is important and significantly influences the professional relationship. Thus, identification and communication both influence the relationship between geographical distance and perceived proximity.

Therefore, the process of identification and communication appears to be a crucial consideration for the manager dealing with remote workers. Management practices may be adapted. However, before tackling this subject, it is necessary to consider the potential consequences of home working on the employee and their career.

The Risk of Isolation and Career Challenges

France is a country in which *presence* remains a general requirement. Working extra hours in the office is appreciated and shows a sign of commitment to the company (Brennan, 2020). In this context, which may engage an over-solicitation of ICT in multi-communication channels, professional duties tend to prevail over one's personal life and lead to difficulties in disconnecting, loss of team spirit, difficulty in personal organization and a risk of isolation (Dumas and Ruiller, 2014).

This can result in another phenomenon already observed in several studies. Working from home tends to negatively influence the professional career of remote workers (Allen *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, because they are not in the office every day, they feel less visible, so they feel they are exposed to fewer professional opportunities (Nakrošienė *et al.*, 2019). Remote workers may feel less trusted in their work and less appreciated, leading to less career opportunities while working from home. The abovementioned specificities and challenges of working from home show that there is a real need for adapted management strategies.

The Need for Adapted Management

Currently, and particularly in France, many organizations are still reluctant to implement telecommuting because they feel that supervisors may lose control over their remote workers. The relationship between manager and subordinate is very important in an organization, but even more so when the two protagonists are not physically close. Indeed, this virtual communication increases the interpretation bias, whereas it also facilitates communication between distant hierarchical levels (Dambrin, 2004).

As explained above, working from home creates a spatial and temporal break from the traditional way of working. This is why leaders and managers need to find new ways to supervise their dispersed teams such as monitoring their teams, providing fast and efficient feedback, and rethinking team building and other ways to strengthen interpersonal relationships among team members and supervisors (DeRosa *et al.*, 2004).

Managers need to adapt their management strategies to accommodate remote workers. They may switch from a controlled and supervised style of management to a reliable and trusting management style focused on monitoring performances. Today, working from home presents a paradox. It is supposed to increase the worker's autonomy and provide a better balance between professional and personal life, but it also risks deteriorating communication with the rest of the team and the manager (Gajendran and Harrison, 2007).

In this context, France has arguably been late in implementing teleworking models. Nevertheless, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has given France an unexpected opportunity to catch up with this phenomenon.

The COVID-19 Pandemic in France

The Coronavirus Disease 2019, commonly called COVID-19, appeared in Wuhan in the Hubei Province of China, at the end of 2019 (Gralinski and Menachery, 2020). The virus spread in this city of more than 11 million inhabitants, geographically located in the centre of China, which is a significant hub for business and transportation in China (Zu *et al.*, 2020).

This virus is a truly global phenomenon as the whole world has experienced the same pandemic and the victims of this virus manifest almost the same characteristics, such as typical respiratory symptoms: lung inflammation, difficulty in breathing and fever (Lu *et al.*, 2020). The spotlight shone on the medical corps over the course of this period (overcrowded hospitals, lack of respiratory machines...) has provoked a lot of stress, as has the dimension of the unknown: the vaccines are still novel and no one knows how the spread of the virus will continue to fluctuate.

At the end of January 2020, 3 cases of Coronavirus were detected in France. Indeed, the virus had arrived in France and started to spread. On 11th February, the World Health Organization (WHO) decided to name this pandemic Coronavirus Disease 2019. On March 16th, 2020 the French Government decided to lock down the entire French population in order to reduce the spread as the number of cases of COVID-19 diagnoses reached 6,633 cases and 148 deaths. Nurseries, primary and secondary schools, and universities closed on March 16th. One day later, on March 17th at midday, the lockdown came into effect. The French population was told to stay at home, with meetings among family and friends being strictly forbidden. Only essential trips were allowed, such as going to the grocery store, going to work if working from home was not possible and for physical activity, for 1 hour, alone. On Saturday, March 21st, all non-essential shops closed, such as bars, restaurants and shopping malls... On this date, the number of cases detected was 14,459 and 562 deaths. The French president, Emmanuel Macron (2020), decided to impose working from home where possible in order to limit the risk of propagating the virus. This first lockdown began on March 17th and ended on May 11th. The survey presented herein was conducted during this period.

According to French Labour Legislation (Article L122-10), in case of exceptional circumstances such as an epidemic or a case of force majeure, the implementation of working remotely can be considered a necessary strategy in order to both continue the activity of the company and guarantee the protection of employees. Therefore, those employees who were able to

work from home would do so.

In France and elsewhere, companies had to organize themselves rapidly to enable remote work where possible, with the aim of decreasing transmission of the virus and reducing the number of deaths. Virtually no one was ready to face this unexpected crisis. Most companies were not equipped for working from home because of a lack of material, ICT training, no VPN… and lockdown led to a brutal disruption of the global economy in various sectors, which had terrible consequences for the economy.

Primary industry, as well as some secondary and tertiary sector activities were not able to work remotely du to the nature of their jobs. This created differences and inequalities within and across the French population. Nevertheless, during lockdown, between 5 and 8 million French people worked from home, representing around one quarter of the French workforce. Additionally, roughly one person in two (more or less 45%) no longer had work, due to unemployment because of reduced activity or medical leave.

Nevertheless, while 29% of employees in the private sector worked remotely in France in 2019, this new way of working was not popular nor commonly adopted. So, COVID-19 provided the chance to work from home for employees of even the most reluctant companies. This forced remote work, due to the pandemic, is arguably a real point of progress in the organization of the workplace. It has given many workers (according to their job) the opportunity of testing working from home. It was, however, rolled out in a rush as hardly anyone was prepared for this new way of working.

Indeed, in terms of lifestyle, the working French population was not ready to face a lockdown crisis entailing 55 days of working remotely from home. This anxiety-provoking situation implied many changes in daily life and even some risks. Hence, the lockdown was enforced, staying home implied isolation, reinforced in situations where ICT did not work well. However, , to compensate for the lack of contact, the used of several means of connection, such as email, WhatsApp groups, visio-conferences… can lead to over-connection and difficulties in finding a balance between personal and professional life. Added to this of course, general difficulties such as sharing one's personal working area with the family or home schooling and looking after children can add further impediments to working from home in good conditions.

In terms of supervision and management, supervising a dispersed team was difficult for most of the managers surveyed. Indeed, due to the distance between team members and the manager, communication was more complex and the risk of micro-managing greater. In contrast, giving the team too much autonomy was also a risk. The threat for a manager in this situation is to lose control over their team. Trust in each member of the team and communication appear to be key success factors (Nilles, 1998). Communication must be very clear, because remote working tends to develop and reinforce interpretation bias, as the two actors cannot see each other's body language and non-verbal cues (Dambrin, 2004). This is why many virtual conferences such as webinars, blogs and conferences have provided support for managers who were not ready, as well as training for those new to the technologies.

Therefore, the review of the literature and the unique aspects of the context created by the lockdown inspired the following research question:

> *Did the COVID-19 lockdown influence the vision of working from home by obliging French managers and employees to consider remote working as part of their work organization?*

The next chapter presents the research design and methodology chosen to address this question.

Study Design and Methodology

Hypotheses

Given the above overview of working from home and the current pandemic situation obliging the French population to continue working from home, hypotheses are formulated in the context of the lockdown period.

One of the most recurrent dangers evoked regularly in research articles is that working from home is closely linked to social and psychological isolation. Concerning remote workers, physical isolation is attributed to physical separation from colleagues (Wang *et al.*, 2020).

Hypothesis 1: Working from home is psychologically isolating.

Secondly, the common aim of working from home, from the perspective of the company, is to increase the productivity of employees and to accommodate a potential work arrangement. Indeed, working from home enables the employee to be more productive during their peak of concentration and to

be less distracted by colleagues (Khalifa and Davison, 2000). Thus, it is interesting to study whether, and the extent to which, remote workers feel more or less productive working from home during lockdown compared to when they work onsite.

Hypothesis 2: Remote working increases workers' productivity and performance.

Some studies have shown that working from home can negatively influence the professional careers of remote workers (Allen, Golden *et al*., 2015). Indeed, because they are not at the office every day, they may feel less visible, so they have fewer professional opportunities (Khalifa, *et al*., 2000, Nakrošienė *et al*., 2019). Remote workers often feel less trusted in their jobs and less appreciated. They may feel they are exposed to less career opportunities while working from home. Thus, it is interesting to see whether, in the long-term, employees working from home while in lockdown think it may negatively impact their professional career.

Hypothesis 3: Working from home negatively impacts the professional career of remote workers

Finally, as set out in the first part above, working from home implies that management strategies must be adapted so that remote workers feel supported and understood. Indeed, flexible management is required (Wilson *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, communication and identification are the main criteria in order to reduce perceived distance and remain close to the remote worker working from home. This is why it is interesting to explore whether, and the extent to which, especially in the lockdown period, remote workers also need an adapted management strategy.

Hypothesis 4: Remote workers need an adapted management strategy

In order to test these hypotheses, a quantitative method is best suited. Indeed, this method is widely used to collect a lot of data which can be converted into statistics and provide trends and conclusions on large samples. The aim of this survey was to prove or disprove the hypotheses based specifically on the lockdown context. The survey was conducted between April 27 and May 11, 2020 the date of the end of the first lockdown in France. Because the sample was located in France, the questionnaire was in French. Indeed, although lockdowns characterized the year 2020 across the globe, the various national lockdowns have not all taken place over the same dates. This research therefore intended to investigate employees (both male and female) already having a prior experience with remote working or

who are currently working remotely. It does not to take into account those who were not able to work remotely (e.g. frontline workers, manufacturing, etc.) because they would have skewed the results. Last but not least, the aim of this survey was to explore whether COVID-19 and the imposed working from home may change the general mentality about working from home and whether managers have adapted to the situation and, overall, how managers and employees have felt about this worrying situation. The questionnaire was sent to relatives first, in a pilot phase. It was then shared via several online channels. It was, in particular, disseminated via the LinkedIn professional network to target as many people as possible, with an added note asking for participation to respond to the survey and specifying the target audience: only those who have either already worked remotely or are currently working remotely.

The Structure of the Questionnaire

The questions asked depended to some extent on previous answers provided. As such, from one participant to another, the survey differed. The survey comprised a mix of closed questions (yes or no answers) and open questions, as well as some for which respondents could choose their answers from a list, add other answers and express themselves.

Indeed, the first difference was found in the first question: "*Have you ever worked remotely before lockdown?*" where possible answers were yes or no. This question was a start in order to know whether respondents are familiar with working remotely, or if it was the first time they have had to deal with working from home. If the answer they gave was "*yes*", the survey continued with deeper questions, asking how often they work remotely. This question offered several possible answers ("*I worked remotely permanently, from 3 to 4 days per week, once a week, 3 times a month, once per month*"). Followed by "*Where do you work remotely?*" generating information regarding the work organization of the remote worker. The questionnaire offers further answers: "*at home, at home in a dedicated room, in a coworking area, at a friend's place, in a café*" and includes "others" if the propositions are not sufficient. Then, the questionnaire asks if they have a dedicated room in their household in which to work.

Thereafter, the questionnaire focuses on hardware: "*Does your company provide you with specific material in order to work remotely (e.g. a computer)?*" This provides details about the company and its attitude regarding working from home. Next, the questionnaire addresses ICT: "*Before lockdown, were you comfortable with ICT such as Google Drive,*

Trello, Zoom, Skype, Teams…?" As explained above, ICT are one of the most important criteria in working from home, it is very difficult to communicate while working remotely without being comfortable with new technologies because the risk of isolation is stronger and because taking part in meetings ensures shared knowledge with colleagues.

The following question asks: "*In your company, and particularly regarding the current sanitary crisis, how is working from home regulated and supervised?"* Working from home is supposed to be regulated in the employment contract of the remote worker or with an amendment to the employment contract. Nevertheless, the question aims to explore whether this is indeed the case or not and further suggests answers: "A *mention on my employment contract, an amendment to my employment contract, a company agreement, an email from my supervisor, my own initiative*". However, an additional "*other*" option provided unexpected answers.

After that, the questionnaire switched back to those who answered no to the initial question "*Have you ever worked from home before the lockdown?"* and asks, "*Are you currently working remotely?"* Answers to this question and the following "*Why aren't you working from home?"* provided an insight into who is currently working from home, who is not, and the reasons for this.

Thereafter, the survey asks, "*How do you feel about working remotely during lockdown?"* It was important to disseminate the survey only one month after the beginning of the lockdown to give respondents the time to take a step back on their situation. It offers a satisfaction scale from 1 (very bad) to 6 (very good) to assess their feelings. The following question was "*How long have you been working remotely?"*, the goal here being to gain a better understanding of their answers to the previous question and moreover, it gives more information about their feelings and their work organization. The questionnaire suggests a few answers: "*Since the beginning of the lockdown, for a few weeks, for a few days*" and an added "*other*" if they want to add the date. Then it again asks how regularly they currently worked remotely, with various propositions ranging from "*one day per week, twice a week, 3 to 4 days per week, or more than 5 days per week*". The frequency of working from home is important, to know whether the respondents are working more than usual, and it is closely linked to the next question: "*how do you organize your daily working life during lockdown?*" Thus, the next question refers to the two previous questions: "*How many hours per day do you work?*". These three questions are connected because the frequency of working from home might lead to a new

work organization and imply more working hours.

Then, the questionnaire focuses on Information Communication Technologies (ICT), asking, "*Does imposed remote work allow you to be familiar with tools you were not used to using before, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype*?". This explores whether imposed remote work helps workers to become familiar with ICT and, with the follow question "*Does ICT help you to feel less lonely?*", whether ICT can reduce or help to overcome loneliness.

Another question focuses on their difficulties. Working from home, potentially with the entire household present, may engender significant problems: "*Currently, are you facing difficulties in working from home?*" In the case of a negative answer, the following question is "*why do you have difficulties working remotely?*" proposing several propositions: "*lack of communication with my colleagues, lack of support from your manager, isolation, lack of work, presence of family members disturbing you, difficulty to disconnect, difficulty using the ICT, no real dissociation between professional and personal life*" with an added "*other*" in order to collect their feedback. In this question and the following, the respondents have the opportunity to choose several propositions. This question may help to improve working from home conditions and understand the difficulties encountered. The next question asks them about the pros of working remotely during lockdown, proposing some ideas: "*fighting boredom, less stress in the job, more autonomy, less solicitations from your team, a better balance between personal and professional life, better performance, no perceived advantage*".

The next question is "*Do you think teleworking could divide the population between employees who can work remotely and those who cannot?*" to find out whether respondents were aware that not everybody can work from home because of their job and it can be potentially divisive and create dichotomy within a company.

The following questions were an attempt to gain feedback on their work organization "*During lockdown, have you established a routine with work habits which you respect?*" followed by "*Currently, does working from home change you daily life and if so, how?*" This gives respondents the opportunity to express themselves and explain the changes working remotely has presented.

As has been discussed in many research articles, one of the greatest fears among employees is that they will not be considered when a new position

opens requiring the same job skills. In the survey, this issue is addressed in the following way: "*In the long-term, do you think working remotely could negatively influence your professional career in your company?*".

In terms of better quality of life, the next question refers to the balance between professional and personal life "*Do you think working from home can positively influence your lifestyle?*"

As the relationship between the manager and the remote worker is essential, especially during a pandemic, this aspect is examined in the following questions "*Do you think working remotely creates mutual trust between you and your manager?*" followed by "*During COVID-19, do you think social distancing between you and your manager has been a good thing?"* These two questions refer to the theory explained in the literature review concerning perceived distance.

Then, the questionnaire separates respondents between those with management tasks and who also report to a manager, and those who have no management tasks. It asks them the following question: "*Do you manage employees and if so, how many?*" The objective here is to understand how the manager positions themself in relation to this imposed remote work and if have they modified their management strategy with the next question "*Have you implemented rituals within your teams in order to maintain a social link?*" Moreover, regarding the type of rituals, the questionnaire suggests some ideas such as creating WhatsApp groups or virtual coffee with a chance to propose other initiatives. Some managers reported having implemented no rituals. They may have chosen to do this for the following reasons "*social contact was maintained through professional discussions, because it would be useless or a lack/waste of time*" Following these previous questions, it appears essential to know "*how managers monitored the performance and progress of their teams*" and the frequency of such monitoring. It provides information about their management but also about their work organization due to the lockdown. The possible answers are diverse such as "*weekly report, daily report with the team, every two days*" and also an open answer in order to add suggestions where the respondent wishes. Furthermore, it seems relevant to ask whether, after lockdown, they would integrate working from home in their team and what are the potential disadvantages noted. The questionnaire suggests several options "*none (cons), lack of communication with the team, confusion about management methods to adopt, lack of control/supervision over the teams, digitalization of contact with the team*". Where the respondent reports that they do not want to integrate remote working in their team, the questionnaire asks why this is

the case and suggests propositions such as "*lack of control, inefficiency of the management, inefficiency of communication tools*".

Concerning the management strategy, it is important to know whether it remained the same before and during the lockdown, whether it was adapted to the imposed remote work "*Since lockdown, my management is more participative, collaborative, directive, delegates more*". This question provides a scale for respondents to grade their satisfaction with the management during the current situation.

The next question concerns all respondents, managers and non-managers, asking them to describe their manager's management strategy using three adjectives. This is where the anonymous nature of the survey is essential. The questionnaire does not propose any suggestions and leaves respondents to answer freely. The last question asks "*at the end of the lockdown, do you intend to ask your manager if you can continue working from home?*" This question is crucial in order to know whether people have changed their minds about remote working as a result of their experience during COVID-19.

To close this survey, the questionnaire asks basic demographic questions regarding respondents' gender, age group (under 25 years old, 25 - 35 years old, 36 - 45 years old, 46 - 55 years old and 56+ years old). Age may be important in this survey because it could explain why some people may have trouble using digital communication tools or why they are reluctant to work remotely. The composition of their household is also important. Indeed, households comprising only a couple will tend to find it easier to initiate working from home, whereas a family with young children will have to organize childcare and home schooling around their work. One question relates to the number of children and their ages. Of course, infants require more attention than older children and this may impact the efficiency of the employee's performance working remotely during lockdown. The last question explores their seniority within the current company.

Findings and Discussion

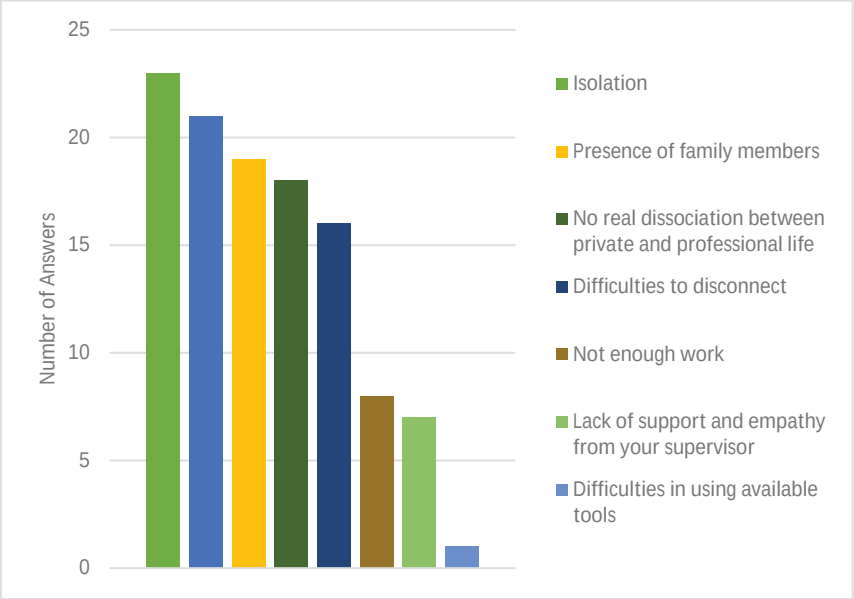
The number of respondents (151 of 160 respondents, or 94.4%) who reported working remotely during the first COVID-19 lockdown was significant. Concerning the eight respondents unable to work remotely, this was due to a reduction in the activity of their company (partial unemployment) and/or because they had to take care of their children who could not attend school. Moreover, of these 160 respondents, 85 reported

having already worked from home prior to the lockdown. This means that 53.1% of the respondents were used to working remotely and therefore potentially knew the difficulties remote workers would face during lockdown. The aim of this survey was to try to explain whether the COVID-19 lockdown changed the global vision of working from home. Now let us discuss the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Working from home psychologically isolates the remote worker

Referring to the satisfaction scale of remote workers during the lockdown, most respondents answered "*very good*" or "*good*" (82 out of 152), around 54% of respondents. However, regarding the first assumption, to the question "*What are the difficulties faced while working remotely during lockdown?*" the most popular answer was "isolation". Out of 151 answers, 47 respondents experienced difficulties working remotely during lockdown, 23 due to isolation and 21 due to lack of communication with colleagues (see Graph n°2).

Graph N° 2: Why do you find it difficult to work remotely?



This question offers the possibility to tick several options. Thus, "*lack of communication with colleagues*" is the second generalized difficulty identified, which respondents feel leads to isolation.

Moreover, it is interesting to know if this feeling is accentuated for someone who was new to working remotely in the lockdown. 49% of respondents had never worked from home before it was imposed. Indeed, where respondents had never experienced working remotely before, and if their first experience of this was during the lockdown, this may explain feelings of loneliness. 75 out of 152, or almost 49.3% of respondents reported never having worked remotely before lockdown. To conclude, the first hypothesis is validated because isolation was one of the most commonly cited disadvantages of working remotely during lockdown.

Hypothesis 2: Working remotely increases the productivity and performance of the worker

Concerning the perceived advantages, several choices were available, and it was possible to choose various options: fighting boredom, less stress concerning professional duties, more autonomy, less solicitation from colleagues/manager and no perceived benefits (see Graph n°3).

Graph N°3: Advantages of Working from Home

The most common answer given was fighting boredom (40%). In fact, during COVID-19 and lockdown people had to stay at home. Going

outdoors was prohibited. Going to the supermarket or to the doctor alone, or practicing outdoor sport alone were allowed, but only once a day. This lockdown implied staying at home all the time. This is why working from home was an opportunity to overcome boredom and 60 respondents out of 150 agreed on this. Next, the second most common answer was "more autonomy". This meant that 39.3% of respondents thought working from home gave them more autonomy in their work. This is one of the biggest advantages of working from home. Nevertheless, we must not neglect the remaining 59 answers. Indeed, autonomy can lead to distant and lonely management. This is why it will be important to look at management strategies during this period. The third common answer was "higher productivity", with 36.6% of respondents reporting that their productivity increased while working from home during lockdown. Indeed, the survey supports the hypothesis that remote working increases the productivity and performance of the worker. "Higher productivity" ranks in the top three advantages of working from home during lockdown.

Hypothesis 3: Working from home negatively influences the professional career of the remote worker

The literature suggests that working from home may negatively influence the worker's professional career because they are less visible, so they tend to have fewer professional opportunities (Nakrošienė *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, for the survey sample, this hypothesis is not supported. Indeed, 75% of the sample answered "no" to the question "*in the long-term, do you think your professional career may be negatively influenced because you are working from home?*" Consequently, this hypothesis is not verified.

Hypothesis 4: Working from home requires an adapted management strategy

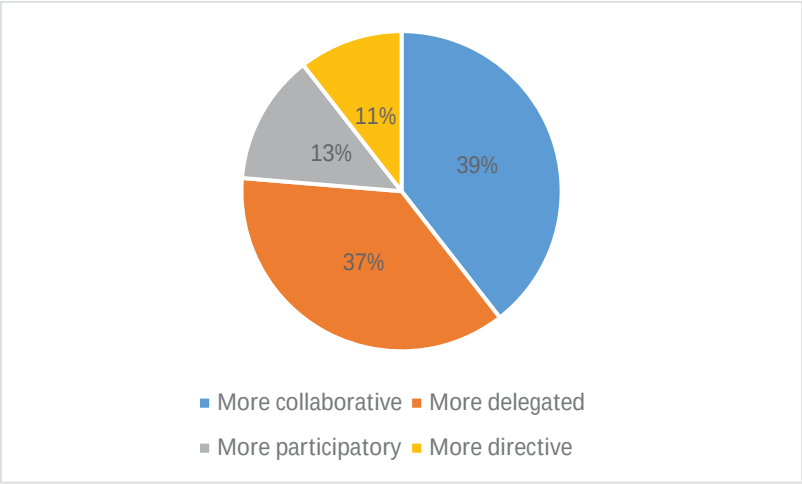
First of all, it is important to observe that of 160 respondents, only 41 managed a team. So only a quarter of respondents (25.6%) was able to answer the subsequent questions. Of those 41, 20 managers reported supervising a team of less than 5 employees and 11 reported supervising a team of between 10 and 20 people, with the remaining 10 supervising between 30 and 100 employees, but this represents the minority of respondents.

One question focuses initially on the possible disadvantages of working remotely while being a manager. The respondents had the possibility of ticking several answers for this question. The most commonly reported cons in working remotely from the manager's perspective is the digitalization of contact with the team, as reported by 31.7% of them. 26.8% of the managers think the lack of communication between a team member and their supervisor is problematic. Nevertheless, 24.4% consider that there is no disadvantage to working remotely for a manager during COVID-19. This is quite interesting because it means that managers could be ready to implement remote work in their organizations. 17.1% of the managers surveyed considered that they felt lost about the management style they should use during this period. This is quite understandable, especially as the managers had never experienced dispersed teams. And 17.1% think the disadvantages of remote working, from the manager's point of view, is the lack of control over the team.

In so far as the adaptation of the management while working remotely seems essential, one may wonder whether, during lockdown, the management strategy was adequately adapted to the situation and to the slowing down of business activity. Out of 41 managers, 31 adapted their management strategy and 10 did not. For those who adapted their strategy, the question: "*Since lockdown, my management is…*" gave respondents the opportunity to choose several answers (see Graph n°8):

- more participative: workers/members in a team are considered in the decision-making
- more collaborative: interaction and collaboration among workers and easing and flexibility of the hierarchy
- more directive: directive and less focused on the relationships between managers and employees
- more delegated: encourages initiative and autonomy of the co-workers

Graph N°4: Different Types of Management during Lockdown



Of 32 managers, 16 declared that their management strategy was more collaborative during this period, which encourages the members of the team to speak up and place the managers at the same level as the rest of the team. 14 answered that their management was good at delegating, which encouraged the team to be flexible with the timetable, for example, and to organize itself in terms of constraints. This type of management style is quite free and encourages the members of the team to require help when they need it. Only 4 managers of the 32 reported a directive management strategy, based on clear directives, with less of a relationship with the team being less present. In this complicated period, a smooth and empathetic management style seems to have dominated.

After asking how the respondent's managers adapted (or did not adapt) their management strategy to the changes, the survey questions the efficiency of this management from their perspective. The scale ranges from 1 (bad/inefficient) to 6 (excellent and highly efficient). According to the graph below, no one scored "1". The most common answer was "4" which can be defined as "My management was quite good during lockdown" concerning 16 managers out of 41 in total. Followed by the answer "5", "My management was very good during lockdown". This shows that managers are quite satisfied with their management and their efficiency during lockdown.

From this insight into respondents' feelings about the efficiency of their supervisors' management strategies, the survey explores the feelings of non-managers and those who are managers but also themselves managed. The question asks the respondents, using three adjectives, to describe their current supervisor's management during this unique period. The aim is for respondents to feel free to answer as they wish. Adjectives were counted and clusters established according to synonyms. This revealed that respondents working remotely felt positively about their supervisors' management strategies. Most defined the management they received with positive qualifiers. Indeed, the most repetitive descriptions were 'good listener' (30 times), 'confident in the future of the team' (29 times), 'benevolent' (repeated 27 times), 'a good communicator' (19 times) and 'an independent manager' (17 times), making them an 'autonomous colleague' and 'empathetic' (14 times). The wide use of the adjective "confident" confirmed the question "*Do you think working from home has created mutual trust between you and your manager?*" Thus, 56.3% of the 151 responds answered that yes, it had created a mutual trust between the remote worker and their manager.

Nevertheless, a minority of respondents did not provide positive feedback about their management during lockdown. Indeed, they described their manager as 'absent' (13 times), 'over controlling' (13 times), 'distant' (11 times) and 'ineffective' (10 times). In spite of this, we can conclude that the management during lockdown was generally perceived positively. The few negative descriptions of the management during this difficult period can perhaps be attributed to a lack of knowledge on how to manage a dispersed team. Let us now analyse the overall results of the survey.

To conclude on the analysis of the survey results, the most significant point was whether, as a result of being obliged to work from home due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the vision of working from home, and whether there will be more uptake of this mode of working among employees, has changed. 61 of the 160 respondents said they intend to ask for permission to continue working from home at least once a week. 38.1% of the sample identified benefits, despite conditions not being optimal (such as the presence of other family members who could disturb them in their work and inadequate communication tools). Furthermore, 69 respondents reported that they intend to ask to work from home if they need to, going forward. This means that 43.1% of respondents perceive advantages to working from home, but they ultimately prefer working onsite. 10% of the sample was entirely convinced about the benefits of remote working and intend to request authorisation to work from home every day. In addition, the

question "*do you think working from home changed your life and if so, how?*" shows that the sample sees advantages in working from home. 59.4% answered "*yes*" for different reasons: less time spent in transport, more spare time (for sport, seeing family, friends, less solicitation and less tiredness). Nevertheless, 3% (5 respondents) reported a very bad experience of working remotely during lockdown and as a result do not intend to ask to continue doing so. This was due to insufficient separation between their personal and professional life.

Discussion

This study is not without limits. First of all, a convenience sample was recruited online (due to the constraints of the lockdown). Secondly, there is not an even gender split in the sample: only 33.1% of respondents were men and 67.5% women. According to Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė and Goštautaitė (2019), women tend to be more willing to work from home to take care of the household and children. Thirdly, as the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown, responses may have been influenced by both outside and personal factors.

The results of the survey suggest that, while the COVID-19 pandemic has been a catastrophe in France and worldwide, it has nevertheless brought about positive changes to working organizations. Remote working has been an emerging phenomenon since 1997 but has not become a French standard of working model. France tends to be late in adopting new technologies. This has inevitably entailed difficulties for working from home in practice. France is also known for its culture of presence, where working additional hours is seen as a demonstration of the employee's dedication to their company. Finally, managers do not adequately know how to manage and monitor tasks in this configuration and working from home today remains decidedly undeveloped.

Nevertheless, owing to rapid change and fear of the unknown caused by the COVID-19 virus, working from home became the new French norm for 55 days, mandatory even. Indeed, the French Government imposed working from home for all (as far as possible) to limit the propagation of the virus. So, whereas most had never worked from home before, 47% of the respondents of the survey now did. By testing working from home for 55 days, people could discover the pros and cons of this way of working, even if the conditions they experienced were not those of ordinary remote working.

The survey shows that working from home was a good way to overcome monotony, gain more autonomy at work, and increase productivity due to fewer interruptions. Nevertheless, the risk of isolation was heightened during lockdown, especially in cases where the remote worker lives alone. The lack of communication and social links, and the lack of dissociation between personal and professional life are the major disadvantages of remote working perceived by the respondents.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic enabled an acceleration of the teleworking trend, imposed by the French Government during lockdown. This is a start and may progress in the years to come. The objective of this chapter was to analyse the extent to which the first COVID-19 lockdown in France influenced the general vision of working from home by requiring managers and employees to consider working from home as part of their work organization. Despite the limits inherent to a convenience sample, the quantitative survey of 160 respondents suggests that the requirement to work from home has changed this general vision, as many managers and employees were satisfied with their experience and intended to include telework in their work organization going forward. Working from home is a good way to overcome boredom, gain more autonomy in one's work and increase productivity (due to fewer solicitations compared to working onsite with colleagues). Nevertheless, the risk of isolation is unsurprisingly heightened during lockdown, especially in cases where the remote worker lives alone. It would now be useful to further explore this phenomenon through additional surveys to see whether (and the extent to which) the results obtained are influenced by the specific and relatively emotional situation of the lockdown.

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ARTICLE VI

RETHINKING STANDARDIZATION VERSUS ADAPTATION OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING STRATEGIES: POST-PANDEMIC VIEWS

SIMON JACQUOT

Abstract

In light of the severe economic strain resulting from COVID-19, it is more important than ever for managers to develop an awareness of "Glocalization" when addressing the issue of standardization versus adaptation of product distribution in international expansion. This chapter explores cultural, environmental and management perspectives, to offer insights into the challenges faced by products and brands when expanding into new markets beyond borders. Above all, it sets out to further our understanding of factors that can influence the local adaptation of a global product in today's fast-changing global online business world.

Introduction

As globalization is increasingly prominent in our lives, companies have to fight harder for market share and to develop competitor advantage (Craig and Douglas, 1996). For marketers, intense globalization has brought about the extensive standardization of the products and brands we buy, sell, and consume worldwide (Levitt, 1983). However, the way in which companies are selling these products and brands to consumers are not always the same everywhere. Depending on factors such as culture, generation, or market context, different marketing approaches are employed. For decades, research has focused either on the internal aspect or the external aspect of marketing a product on a foreign market, generally from the perspective of

managerial implications or consumer behaviour. Both have a major impact on the final result of the marketing strategy and need to be taken into account together.

Globalization does not imply that a product is sold the same way around the globe by local managers. The main idea is 'distinct civilization' (Roberson, 2012), as opposed to a universal phenomenon. Standardization may work up to a certain point, but the question of adaptation needs to be considered when expanding beyond borders. Not every product can be exported, and its message understood around the world. Indeed, "Many of the most notable international product failures have come from a lack of product adaptation" (Kotler, 1986, p.13).

The term 'glocalization' refers to adapting strategy using "micro-marketing" efforts to alter the distribution of a product globally with certain differences for each targeted market (Roberson, 2012). It is defined as 'the idea that in globalization, local conditions must be considered' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). These conditions or adaptations can be carried out in terms of the '4P formula' (McCarthy, 1960) and the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001) – both provide an interesting foundation for understanding how products and brands can be adapted to fit the expectations of consumers in different countries or regions. In addition to the "4P formula", Hofstede's framework provides insights into the general mindset and values of consumers in a specific national context. It offers an overview of the consumers, based on six indexes: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, and Indulgence. This approach can be broadly defined as the 'cultural context'.

When going global, marketers may opt for a standardized strategy for several reasons. In addition to maintaining a consistent product and image on every market, standardization can create considerable economies of scale – on everything from R&D to distribution (Levitt, 1983; Douglass and Craig, 1986). Furthermore, many factors need to be considered when deciding on which elements to standardize and which to adapt. It can be problematic for head-office staff to identify the market characteristics that require local adaptation. Cultural adaptation is usually a top priority, however adaptation needs to be planned in line with the market environment as a whole (Terpstra and Sarathy, 2000), thus acknowledging local regulations, standards, usage, and climate.

Robertson (2012) puts forward the notion that globalization does not go far enough in describing what it implies. The concept of glocalization is more

effective, as it merges time and space into the development of a strategy, highlighting the idea of global availability with local constraints. A vast body of literature puts forward arguments for and against standardization and adaptation, presenting convincing facts and arguments – yet overlooking the option of contingency. This third strategy (Theodosinou and Leonidou, 2003) defends a hybrid mix of standardization and adaptation, as described with the glocalization concept. The rationale is that standardization and adaptation should not be seen as either/or but instead should work together to have a stronger impact. While is it relevant to adapt one part of the marketing strategy, it does not mean that the whole strategy needs to be totally redesigned. A market segment for a product in one country can find other outlets elsewhere (Levitt, 1983) since some products are homogeneous across borders.

Three main factors appear to influence the global success of marketing strategies: environment, culture, and management. This chapter reviews each of these factors to ascertain their significance for marketers and their influence in today's marketplace, evidenced by consumer data.

Insights from Literature

The Environment

International marketing operations often take place in parts of the world that lie outside the jurisdiction of the company's domestic market control – opening opportunities for a set of many variables to interfere and impact the strategy (Onkvisit and Shaw, 2009). Regulations, standards, tastes, and structures are some of the issues that can affect the success of the launch of a product and ultimately the global growth of a company (Akgün *et al*., 2014). To go global, a company needs to understand the rules and characteristics of the market it wants to conquer. In order to understand the various factors that affect the marketplace and influence the '4P formula' (McCarthy, 1960), marketers can dissect and analyse the environment using a PESTEL matrix: Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Environmental and Legal.

Looking at brands and products that most people think are globally standardized, it is possible to realize that many strategies are in fact adapted to fit country-based characteristics (Kotler, 1986) – for example, the Coca-Cola bottle size varies from country-to-country due to habits (Sociological), laws (Legal) and public interests (Political). Such characteristics call for glocalization, as they impact upon the marketing mix (Vrontis *et al*., 2009;

Akgün *et al*., 2014). The tenet 'plan global, act local' (Kotler, 1986) epitomizes this reasoning.

Culture

Culture is the result of what each of us learn and absorb from our local environment; it is what individuals have in common with a community and which influences their reactions (Hofstede, 1980). Culture defines people's social expectations, roles, and orientation. This factor lies at the core of the globalization strategy analysis. It offers deep insights into the daily lives of individuals from a nation or a region. It enables marketers to understand the beliefs, values, and identity of consumers. It provides a context from which managers can build a strategy to reach a target and avoid 'faux pas'.

Culture plays a key role in the acceptance of a product by influencing the social response according to values and standards. Distributing a product on a market requires an understanding of cultural characteristics, not only to advertise the product, but to analyse the whole adaptation of the marketing strategy, an insight that can be tricky due to the complexity and the cost of collecting data (Young and Javalgi, 2007). A culture can also be understood at different levels: continental, country or regional. Even where there may be a dominant culture in the marketplace, demographic and sociological factors can give rise to marketing opportunities for sub-cultures (Van Raaij, 1997). Depending on the product and the segment targeted, subcultures of consumption could be considered by a company when drawing up the marketing strategy but may require extra investment in terms of researching the market (Young and Javalgi, 2007).

The main cultural characteristics of a nation can be pin-pointed and analysed using the dimensions put forward by Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001). Nations provide a reasonable reflection of individuals as a group and can be used to anticipate consumer behaviour at a micro-level since individuals tend to share a common past, language and practices (Soares *et al*., 2007). Hofstede's approach gives a degree of understanding of the general cultural context of a country by evaluating six dimensions that distinguish one nation from another: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation, Indulgence (Hofstede, 2001), described below.

Description of Cultural Dimensions

Cultural Dimension	Characteristics
Indulgence	Indulgence denotes a society that allows human drives related to enjoying life and having pleasure, as opposed to utilitarian, needs and desires – i.e., the degree to which a society recognizes individual desires and impulses and satisfies or contradicts them.
Long-term orientation	Long-term orientation designates the nurturing of virtues oriented toward future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift.
Uncertainty avoidance	Uncertainty avoidance reflects the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.
Masculinity	Masculinity refers to a society in which social gender roles are clearly distinct. Men are assumed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success; women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life.
Individualism	Individualism denotes a society in which the ties between individuals are loose.
Power distance	Power distance symbolises the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

Source: Lichy and Merle (2020)

Even though representing an entire culture based on six dimensions can be questioned in terms of authenticity, this approach offers a basis for cross-culture comparison and a reading of consumer behaviour (Soares *et al.*, 2007). Initially developed for investigating low staff morale by interviewing IBM employees located in 70 countries, Hofstede's dimensions (Hofstede, 2001) have been used ever since as a tool for understanding and comparing cultural context. Marketers and scholars around the world use this approach in their marketing research (Soares *et al.*, 2007) even though it is based on vertical segmentation, and thus ignores differences within a nation and subcultures of consumers in a society with a horizontal segmentation (Van Raaij, 1997).

The inevitable market globalization depicted by Levitt (1983) does not necessarily mean that products are internationally accepted by consumers

everywhere and that cultures are converging into one global consumer culture. Thriving products and brands that have conquered the world include fast-food chains (e.g., Dominos, Burger King, etc.) and retailers (e.g., IKEA, H&M, etc.), not because diversity is disappearing, but because they share a common position. In their marketing strategy, they develop competitor advantage by exporting their culture(s) to foreign markets, appealing to customers (Van Raaij, 1997) by highlighting certain elements of their national, ethnic and/or corporate culture. Not all products or services are distributed on a global scale. For example, although McDonald's marketing is fairly standardized in product range, they respect cultural norms such as no beef-based dishes in India and the sale of beer in France. While Kotler (1986) emphasizes the importance of product adaptation to the culture, not every aspect of the marketing mix may need adapting (Vrontis *et al*., 2009). Some parts of the mix can be adjusted in isolation to achieve a cultural alignment with values, tastes and usages that may differ from country to country.

Management

The strategies developed by marketers for going global can work or fail depending on how they appeal to the targeted market, as well as to the local managers and stakeholders participating in the project and selling the product. The international marketing approach is often used to locate a company in different national markets, as a force to challenge competition (Kashani, 1990), but it is not without risk. When going global, companies must undertake rigorous marketing research and prepare international strategies, embracing local consumer behaviour; tastes and colours, values and norms, aesthetics, and taboos, all have to be understood in order for the foreign company to be accepted and successful in the chosen markets (Young and Javalgi, 2007). Gaining acceptance is vital. Most failing strategies can be linked to local resistance from the headquarters overriding local subsidiaries (Kashani, 1990). In addition, when going global, marketers can experience scepticism from within their own company.

In the global expansion process, environment and culture have equal impact: externally (local customer base) and internally (local stakeholders). It can be difficult for some individuals to try new products/services, change their habits, or accept being managed from afar. Prior to the cultural dimensions being used for marketing purposes, Hofstede’s (2001) work focused on managing human resources beyond borders, with the intention of raising awareness of how to manage across different cultural contexts. This approach is compatible with international marketing studies (Soares *et*

al., 2006) by providing useful insights that can be applied in the design of the marketing mix, for example underscoring the importance of focusing on a local interpretation that a subsidiary could bring (Kashani, 1990), rather than assuming a national 'blanket' approach. Entering an international market requires detailed business intelligence that is effective and timely given its constant evolution (Craig and Douglass, 2005).

Think Global, Act Local

Globalization of companies stems from the great leaps that humanity has made in technological development: ranging anywhere from information technologies to transportation (Yoder *et al*., 2016). These evolutions underpin the concept of the *global village* – i.e., "the idea that the internet, modern travel, and modern ways of doing business make it possible to deal with the whole world as if all areas of it were local" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). However, the global village largely ignores the cultural factor.

To be cost-effective, a strategy should have the smallest possible 'psychic distance'. This concept of distance introduces country-specific and individual-specific gaps between the "sender" and "receiver" that could affect a project (Ambos *et al*., 2019). It establishes that the differences aggregated from the environment, culture, and management, have an impact on the understanding of a market, not simply because they exist, but because they are perceived differently by each of the parties involved. The onus is on the "facilitator" implementing the strategy to have enough background in multinational contexts to build the bridge between "exporter" and "importer" and bring them together (Kashani, 1990; Ambos *et al*., 2019). The concept is both valid for internal acceptance, and for the targeted customers.

The literature suggests that it is counterproductive to imagine the homogeneity of marketing strategies worldwide (Vrontis *et al*., 2009). Marketers need to have a good understanding of the field in which they operate and, more crucially, the flexibility to respond to their target market (Kashani, 1990). The choice between adaptation and standardization is dependent upon many aspects (Van Raaij, 1997) but is not mutually exclusive – since local tactics can be employed to achieve global goals (Vrontis *et al*., 2009).

While it is clear that standardization by definition allows for only one strategy, making it easier to manage from centralized headquarters, adaptation provides a fit-for-purpose approach for many tricky situations and uncommon aspects inherent in a market. Marketers should not assume that

a product which worked on the home market will work beyond borders. Kotler (1986) recommends checking every element of the marketing mix before launching into a foreign market; it is worth assuming that a product needs adaptation in terms of each element of the marketing mix (packaging colours, product sizes, brand name, distribution channels, etc). Van Raaij (1997) looks at communication in an international context and suggests four determinants of standardization: target, topic, environment, and organization. His findings strengthen the need for consideration of local adaptation. A company that does not know its customer preferences, tastes and habits, will encounter difficulties, owing to the 'psychic distance' between the country of the headquarters and the target country (Yoder *et al*., 2016).

In an attempt to ascertain the veracity of the notions raised in the literature discussed above, this chapter collects data to illustrate the divergence of consumer tastes and habits around the world, despite the popular notion of the global convergence of consumer cultures and behaviours supported by Levitt (1983).

The literature gives a broad overview of the potential obstacles for a product or brand going global. Looking at the theoretical background relating to examples of success and failure leads us to draw a number of assumptions that need to be taken into consideration when building an international marketing strategy. These assumptions are derived from the aggregation of research studies. Thus, the overarching view in the literature suggests that it is possible to determine the key difficulties for marketers entering a foreign market, as follows:

(1) Around the world, people do not pay attention to the same indicators that influence consumer product evaluations or buyer decision-making,
(2) Despite the idea of globalization, the global village, and the widespread penetration of technology in people's lives, digital awareness and digital usage are country-specific; the diffusion of digital tools is extremely uneven across the world,
(3) Culture and environment profoundly affect the consumer journey; in each market, consumption habits are different,
(4) There is a generational context in addition to the cultural context that affects the beliefs, attitude, and values of consumers in each market.

While these assumptions are global in outlook, it is reasonable to assume that they are valid for smaller units of analysis such as national, regional, or more local markets. Where there is diversity on a micro-level, it follows that

it will be equal or greater on the global macro-level. Marketers routinely face such obstacles when working on their home market. Analysing different geographic markets does not change the key factors. The difficulties are only greater when going global because marketers must increase the volume of research needed in each market they wish to enter and become familiar with contextual concepts.

In a world of converging digital user behaviour and the influence of KOLs on consumer behaviour, it is reasonable to question the need for standardization. The data gathered suggest that perception, influence, and context are three variables which define how an individual reacts to a product or brand. This information can be used by a company for tailoring marketing efforts to address market differences. Clearly, the choice between adaptation and standardization depends on many factors and causes (Van Raaij, 1997); it is counterproductive to imagine the total homogeneity of marketing strategies globally (Vrontis *et al*., 2009). Marketers need a robust understanding of the market in which they operate and the flexibility to respond to their target market (Kashani, 1990). This notion moderates the idea of an inevitable market globalization with mass standardization (Levitt, 1983), demonstrating that even with a dominant culture, there is a need for local adaptation, related to demographical or sociological factors (Van Raaij, 1997). The claim that nations are a reflection of individuals as a group and can therefore be used to predict consumer behaviour at a micro-level (Soares *et al*., 2007) is not valid; there can be as many differences within a nation as between nations.

Methodology

To investigate the assumptions drawn from the literature concerning standardization versus adaptation, data are collected using survey methodology, with the intention of targeting customers located in different countries. The survey focuses on the impact that the 4Ps (product, price, promotion, place) can have on a brand going global, in order to support the idea of glocalization (adaptation). Collecting data on consumer behaviour will shed light on the factors that influence the need for local adaptation of global products.

The survey was available online, in French and English throughout the month of June 2020. The questions were developed from the literature to give insights into people's habits of consumption, behaviours, and differences in perceptions. Most of the questions were closed (multiple choice) to set a ground for comparison between individuals: giving the

opportunity to see trends and disparities in the results. Open questions were also included to offer participants the opportunity to express an opinion and a self-assessment on perception.

As it was not feasible to collect from every country in the world, the intention was to gather a representative sample to compare responses from different countries. Micro-level differences give a reliable indication for what we can expect to observe at the macro-level. A layer of complexity at any level sets the tone for at least as much complexity on a larger level. The study does not need, therefore, to demonstrate differences based on the countries if it already finds differences in the body of responses. Following data collection, the results were then studied in line with published research and observations of real cases from around the world.

Findings

The survey yielded a total of 121 respondents from 16 different countries, enabling participants to share their insights concerning their consumer/customer journey.

Although it would have been ideal to gather the same number of responses from each country, the majority of respondents were located in France (72%). For this reason, data analysis focused on exploring divergence within France. As stated earlier, it is reasonable to assume that divergence in a national market alone is indicative of equal or greater divergence on a global scale. This observation is also true for the gender split and generation segmentation – which are not equally represented in the sample. It is nevertheless possible to verify the validity of the assumptions discussed earlier.

Overall, the data indicated a certain level of divergence in the perception and behaviours of the consumers/customers. Even under comparable sets of influences, owing to the shared culture or environment, the results generate diverse opinions. Although there appear to be some similarities on consensual views, they are more apparent when compared with the responses from the multiple-choice questions.

In the question on the perception of key influences facing consumers when deciding to buy a product or brand, the responses include quality (82%) and price (80%). These results could be biased, however, by the narrow sample of the survey over-representing France (72%), women (65%), or the 20-30 age group (85%). The choice of a third factor, pleasure (40%), facing consumers when deciding to buy a product or brand, shows diverse results.

While consumers agree on some points, the factors affecting them are far from homogeneous. It leads us to deduce that buyer perception is complex and non-standard: people do not pay attention to the same indicators that can influence their decision-making.

As price and quality represent a major influence on buyer perception, cross-analysis is pertinent, using a question about price as an indicator of quality. For most respondents, price is indeed an indicator of quality (69%), further validating the previous question. For the individuals who answered negatively (31%), the survey gave the opportunity to specify other factors that indicate quality, generally speaking. The other factors can be broadly summarized as the manufacturing processes of the products, underscoring pro-environmental consumer behaviour.

Online shopping platforms emerged as the favourite place to go shopping for 23% of the sample. Taking the sample as a whole, some 64% of respondents buy products online at least once a month. On average, this volume rises to almost two (~ 1.86) products a month all categories combined, but most of the sales seem to be oriented towards clothing (~0.97/month), followed by groceries (~0.59/month) and shoes (~0.32/month). However, the disparity in the results here should not be considered on the average purchases per month, but through the standard deviation ($\sigma = 1.90$), which gives a better idea of how consumption habits are developing. The standard deviation ($\sigma = 1.90$) being greater than half of the average (= 0.93) indicates a strong deviation, therefore a strong disparity in the results. Individuals here have diverse consumer behaviours.

Furthermore, acknowledging that respondents in the sample each own an average of 3.26 connected devices (including laptops, tablets, smartphones, and smartwatches), it is possible to identify behaviour linked to the consumption of social networks and online sales. Looking at the social networks most frequently used by the respondents, Instagram clearly stands out (58%), followed by Facebook (20%) – both of which are part of the Facebook Group. Those results are relevant, given the fact that social networks gain in value with their adoption rate. Users turn to social networks to be able to connect with other people. They seek as much interaction with other users as possible, across diverse communities and the global village. The success of a social network depends on user interaction: fewer users mean less communication, therefore less content.

Although the members of a social media brand community may share the same space for self-expression, it does not necessarily mean that they

engage with brand messages in the same way; for example, only 10% of the respondents pay any attention to brand adverts posted online. The respondents revealed great diversity in their motivations for belonging to a brand community and following brands online.

For nearly two-thirds of the respondents (64%), the main attraction of consuming social networks is for following Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs)/ 'online influencers', who have considerable impact on the way in which consumers evaluate and consume products. Among the respondents who commented on enthusiastically following KOLs, it was evident that these followers are being used in micro-targeting strategies for spreading positive word-of-mouth about the brand. The followers pay considerable attention to the content posted by KOLs, such as reviews, recommendations, and the lifestyles they portray. The respondents commented on how the opinions of KOLs often seem more authentic than brand messages.

Each of the respondents engages with specific online communities where members come together with like-minded others in a 'meeting of minds' which defines who they are in the global online village. The increasing number of users brings greater interaction and diversity in ideas. Such interaction demonstrates the extent to which digital transformation has facilitated the flow of information and communication across the world, bringing together users and KOLs from around the world. The key findings are summarized in the diagram below.

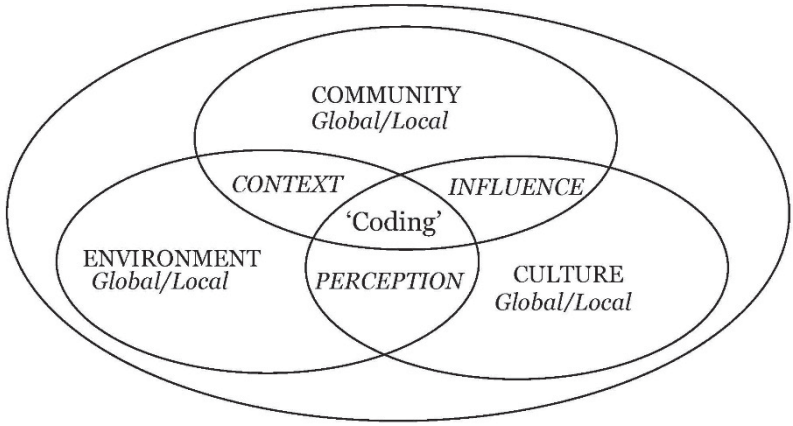

Diagram: Connecting key concepts that generate market difference

Discussion

The data gathered indicated that cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001) can help marketers comprehend the gap between their home market and a foreign market. His framework gives marketers a basis for understanding how people think and interact within society, but it is not a precise tool that is accurate enough to generate a clear analysis of individual consumers. For a clearer vision of the target market, marketers need local insights into consumer culture and subcultures. Subcultures within a market give rise to different communities of consumption (in terms of values, attitudes, and beliefs); both the meta-culture and meta-environment link consumers together through global causes, global treaties, global standards, all of which influence consumer behaviour. The diagram generated from the data collected underscores the importance of identifying context, influence, and perception – in order to further our understanding of the 'coding' of the mind of the consumer.

As outlined in the diagram, influences on consumer decision-making are rooted in what consumers see, hear, and experience – which leads to forming perceptions. Identifying how everyday influences come together in the mind of the consumer requires marketers to pay attention to the tangible and intangible issues which 'code' our thinking. These issues include ascertaining the communities to which the consumer belongs (offline and online), the traits of the home country (language, history, heritage), the consumer's worldview (how the consumer interprets the world around them and its impact) – all of which sets the tone for a 'coding' of minds.

Concerning consumer perceptions, when global influences are blended with 'local readings', consumer behaviour becomes difficult to anticipate. The digital era has reduced distance for communicating, giving the impression of creating a smaller world, but has not diminished 'noise'. It has in fact multiplied the number of contexts for marketers to analyse and understand and resulted in greater competition.

The 'noise' that marketers have to navigate comes from many different contexts, which lie outside the control of marketers. This is where individuals forge perceptions from being in contact with others and their surroundings. The contexts can be understood as an ecosystem in which marketers have to build a consumer/customer journey. Each context is a point of contact with reality; the addition of each point makes it difficult to predict the outcome. Each context can have an impact on the next and can remodel perception on some levels.

A global phenomenon such as a pandemic will dramatically impact outcomes at a country level, especially consumer behaviour, and generate a new market context. COVID-19 is a pertinent illustration of contextual interaction, as the virus disrupts health systems and economies worldwide. This pandemic not only killed people but brought about many important questions that have relevance for the future of globalization. In the contexts discussed earlier in this chapter, the implications are of vast significance; nations explore the options of repatriating companies that have previously relocated beyond borders. Entire industries that were thought unstoppable are now on the verge of collapse (hospitality, travel, entertainment…). Consumers are confused, bombarded with fake news and profiteering scams; they hope never to experience a pandemic again in their lives. The long-term ramifications are unknown, discouraging investments and raising many questions about sustainability, environmental damage, de-globalization etc. Perhaps this chain reaction is a wake-up call to change the way we live? The current situation shows us how the storyline is unpredictable in what it causes and what it creates. Products and brands are challenged by the constant evolutions and need to face them as they appear.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a disaster on many levels, but it has also created many opportunities for R&D around the globe. Even with an economic slow-down, people's minds came together in the 'global village', reducing the 'noise' that marketers have to deal with. Society became a little bit quieter. Individuals had time and space to explore other occupations. The pandemic triggered entrepreneurial thinking around innovations such as the 3D printing industry, for example the *'Freerider Factory – Réserve d'Impression 3D'* (https://3d.freerider-factory.fr specializing in managing 3D printing reserves. This concept was borrowed from military/health stock that was applied to the French 3D printing industry. Here, the contexts aligned, enabling the development of a 'network factory' of over 2400 printers across France. The current context required a solution that was fit-for-purpose to meet new needs: the 3D Printing Reserve was able to help millions of health workers and individuals by printing and organizing the distribution of personal protective equipment.

In today's fast-changing world, adaptation needs to be an ongoing option. This chapter demonstrates how marketers cannot assume market characteristics (Kotler, 1986). Insufficient adaptation, like over-adaptation, runs the risk of losing competitivity to local players. If the product or service cannot be standard and does not function with little adaptations, maybe the market is not worth investing in. Companies have to weigh the gains they can generate by entering a new market, against the efforts required.

Marketing managers need to be able to make swift decisions. The 'agile method' was first introduced in software development, for driving reactivity and adaptability. The approach allows teams to take responsibility for local implementation, working around local constraints to achieve the goals set by executives. The idea is based on an iterative approach that allows for incremental steps to be taken in adaptation. It is best suited for complex problems, fast changing environments, and uncertain results – similar to the situation in which marketers find themselves when going global.

Limitations and Avenues for Developing Future Research

The small sample size used in this enquiry provided a narrow analysis of the standardization versus adaptation debate. While the sample is too restricted to be applied to other age groups or country contexts, it can be assumed that if on a micro-level (national) diversity exists, then diversity on a macro-level (global) can only be equal to or greater than the local level. It is worth bearing in mind that the environment is not stable: over time, indicators of cultural references tend to shift and lose their reliability (Lichy *et al*., 2017), and cross-border movements will remodel communities. Also, the elements explored in this chapter will change with the evolution of contexts.

The ultimate challenge for marketers is to make use of market intelligence and digital technologies, in order to develop the most suitable strategy that enables local needs and wants to be satisfied in line with company goals and consumer expectations. Today's digital era offers numerous opportunities for innovation and data generation, which (when combined) can revolutionize the approach adopted for global marketing. Ongoing research is called for to investigate emerging and future trends in marketing and the implications for future generations of customers/consumers. As underlined in this chapter, the modern-day marketing approach needs to be agile and flexible, to be able to overcome challenges the products and brands will face when going global.

Concluding Comments

The question of standardization versus adaptation in international marketing strategies will remain a subject of high importance to be debated by marketers when preparing to embark upon business beyond borders. In the literature and business cases discussed in this chapter, it seems that there is no miracle step-by-step formula to adopt when developing an international

marketing strategy; at best, marketers are required to identify the key factors that influence the local adaptation of a global product.

Many elements have an incidence on whether a product, service, or brand, will be accepted by a target country. Among them, culture and environment stand out as having a deep impact on an individual's decision-making, in addition to availability and usage of digital technologies. This chapter illustrates the data collected by showing how marketing efforts need to take into account the 'coding' of minds, which interacts with specific contexts and the influences that build our perception. The process is complex and unpredictable.

Regardless of the global competition companies have to navigate, marketers can get lost in the 'noise' of these factors. Every nation has their own laws and regulations that define the frame into which a strategy must fit: marketers are required to follow the rules to launch a product. In addition, each nation has communities of consumption, cultures and subcultures that are not fixed by written rules. Marketers have to understand them as best they can to avoid 'faux pas' and market failure. The complexity of the marketplace runs deeper than developing an understanding of consumer traits. Owing to 'psychic distance', the perception of a same situation can be totally different between the home country of the company and the target market.

The 'coding' of individuals' minds describes how consumer behaviour is shaped by surrounding influences, including offline and online communities, both national and international. While national ties are particularly strong, digital technologies enable consumers to connect with like-minded others in the 'global village'. The global open conversation via social networks, news websites, and marketplaces, allows people to compare their situation and identify with others worldwide. Consumers connect meta-culture /meta-environment, sub-culture/ sub-environment and communities to build market perception.

Given the unpredictability, marketers are advised to use an 'adaptation first' approach. The results of this enquiry confirm that individuals have many different perceptions which cannot be approached in the same way. The 'adaptation first' approach starts with assuming that everything needs to be adapted and should be carefully considered before embarking upon any form of standardization. However, the marketing mix need not be completely redesigned for every market: 'glocalization' of certain elements of the marketing mix may suffice. Marketers must not overlook the feedback

loop from the field (from tastes, to colours, to names, to designs, and even the core concept of product), and then integrate dialogue with subsidiaries into the strategy. Every marketing decision needs to be accepted within the company, as well as in the field. Unpredictability is a challenge when growing a business beyond borders, therefore head-office managers need to consider that local marketers are better equipped to work within their own environment, the headquarters remaining the one with the strategical vision, and the local outposts the implementation experts. At all times, agile, flexible local management is called for. The notion of the 'global village', enhanced by digital technologies and cloud computing, may give the impression of nations coming closer together towards a global consumer culture, but unexpected events such as the COVID-19 pandemic serve as a reminder of the fragility of mankind.

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ARTICLE VII

THE DIFFICULTIES OF STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION IN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS: THE CASE OF A METROPOLITAN TOWN HALL

CAROLE BOUSQUET

Abstract

In recent decades, public organisations have been faced with increasing demands from their various stakeholders (users, elected representatives, central services, local economic actors, etc.). This chapter, which is the result of support and consultancy work within a large public administration, aims to identify the difficulties encountered in the strategic deployment of public policies in local authorities. It is based on a case study of a metropolitan town hall. In a second stage, recommendations are made for ways to support local authorities in order to strengthen the implementation of their strategies. In particular, this communication identifies the existing synchronisation flaws between the designers of the public policies to be deployed and the implementers of these policies, who are not adequately integrated into the design process.

Introduction

The Civil Service is regularly questioned by the user-citizen as well as by governmental, national and international bodies. Indeed, the status and mission of the public service are faced with crises of legitimacy as well as an increase in the demands and needs of users who have become user-customers (France qualité publique, 2004) since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, at that time, Europe was the scene of a vast wave of privatisation of large public service enterprises (Mercier, 2000). Decentralisation was initiated in 1981 (Law No. 82-213), followed in 1984 by the creation of the

status of local authorities and territorial civil servants. The stated aim is to establish greater proximity and better management of communities.

The State thus becomes closer to the citizen (Baguenard, 2004). One of the meta-goals, in the context of a crisis of state legitimacy, is to make savings by transferring State powers to local authorities. It was during this period that the movement of budget cuts began, which took on a new dimension from 2001 onwards with the *Loi Organique relative aux Lois de Finances* (LOLF, Organic Law No. 2001-692). This aims to control State expenditure to ensure better management of public funds. This dynamic was continued in 2007, with the implementation of the General Revision of Public Policies (RGPP). Announced in June 2007 after a Ministerial Council meeting, the general review of public policies is based in particular on the Pébereau report (Pébereau, 2005). It consists of reviewing all public policies in order to determine the modernisation actions and savings that can be made.

Although these measures legally concern the State Civil Service, they do in fact impact on the management of local and regional authorities. Indeed, public structures such as local authorities are, despite decentralisation, strongly linked to the State, particularly through the overall operating budget. As a result, local and regional authorities are obliged to reduce their own budgets, improve their management and implement measures such as not replacing one out of every two civil servants who retire (Cour des Comptes, 2012, p. 809).

Research Question

Even today, Territorial Communities evolve in a context of budgetary and human resource cuts and a desire to strengthen their competences. The reduction in human resources particularly concerns the reduction of staff with civil servant status within the territorial civil service, particularly highlighted by the recent COVID-19 crisis (Grande *et al.*, 2020). This raises the question of the internal organisation of territorial authorities, their functioning and the room for manoeuvre they might have. The aim is to maintain a quality public service despite the strong constraints on the resources that can be mobilised. The quality of their functioning can be legitimately questioned, particularly when it is disrupted by numerous, recurrent dysfunctions which hinder the delivery of a quality public service on the basis of more controlled costs. This requires more effective and efficient deployment of public policies (Goudarzi and Guenoun, 2010).

This chapter aims to identify courses of action to help local authorities to better control and steer the strategic implementation of their public policies.

The objective is to give concrete expression to the operational dimensions of strategic implementation, while respecting the specific characteristics of local authorities. The territorial civil service has three main specificities:

- The status of territorial civil service, which governs the modalities of carrying out the activities;
- An increasing empowerment of the administration in the face of the will of politicians, i.e. elected representatives (Lipsky, 1982; Bezes, 2010);
- Interests that may diverge between the political body and the administrative body (Weber, 1919).

This research investigates the following hypothesis: "the lack of synchronisation of stakeholders in the design and execution of projects is detrimental to the effective and efficient implementation of public policy". Thus, identification of the difficulties encountered by the various stakeholders in the implementation of a public policy represents both explanatory variables and development levers for improving the effective and efficient implementation of public strategies. It first looks at the context of the research, the methodology, and then at the obstacles to deployment and strategic implementation. It then proposes courses of action and tools to promote the strategic implementation of a public policy.

Context of Research

The research field is a local authority: a large town hall [Mairie A] with over 7,000 employees for a population of around 500,000 inhabitants. The research-intervention was carried out over 5 months in the office of the deputy mayors. The main task, which is also the material for this research, was to carry out a diagnosis on the implementation of a cross-cutting public policy on relations with users.

This process concerned the implementation of three tools for modernising the public service:

The Guichet Unique (2001 - partially operational since 2010) is a system enabling users to have a single contact person when they send a request to Town Hall A with a higher quality of response within a reduced timeframe. Implementing this one-stop shop required the introduction of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software and an interactive marketing system, the S.

The Knowledge Base (2001) is an interactive database that complements the Guichet Unique. Accessible to all employees, it is regularly updated by the various departments and enables employees in contact with user-customers to find the answers they require.

The Dossier Unique (2014) was deployed in 2014 with a view to simplifying the procedures for users as much as possible on the basis of "Tell Us Once", a programme set up in Great Britain (Briggs, 2010). Instead of giving the same documents to several different services or directorates several times, users submit all the necessary documents (e.g. identity papers, proof of address, etc.) once, and these are then centralised and accessible to all services.

The challenge of the diagnosis carried out mainly concerned the issue of strategic deployment: in fact, the public policy "Relationship with Users" was initially to be deployed over a 6-month period. Initiated in 2001 with the implementation of the Guichet Unique, it was only partially operational since 2010, and was resumed in 2014 with the Dossier Unique. This public policy has become "bogged down", leading to a loss of human resources (human energy in particular) and financial resources.

Methodology

This research required a rapprochement with the different stakeholders of public organisations to better understand their issues and how they interact. Within this framework, a research-intervention (David, 2000; Savall and Zardet, 2004) method was employed which enables interaction with the actors in the field within the framework of a co-construction of knowledge. This is a constructivist approach (Martinet, 1990), particularly adapted to exploratory research (Wacheux, 1996). Research-intervention makes it possible to involve the actors and to transform the object of research in order to better understand it. This meets two objectives: to produce scientific knowledge and to implement a process of change responding to an explicit need of the organisation (Hatchuel, Masson and Weil, 2002, p. 30). The research-intervention process alternates inductive and deductive phases with phases of immersion in the research field and phases of distancing, stepping back and analysis (Savall, 1975; David, Hatchuel and Laufer, 2000; Plane, 2000). This back-and-forth allows field materials to be collected, which enrich the hypotheses and the testing of these new hypotheses in the field, alternately.

Research-intervention is part of clinical research, of which listening to people is the cornerstone (Moisdon, 1984; Plane, 2000). This research thus involved a 6-month immersion in the research field. A diagnosis was carried

out and a sample of 22 people (management, heads of department and staff), representing the main services of the community, was established, generating 22 semi-directive interviews lasting between one and two hours, exploring the definition of public policy, its deployment, and the dysfunctions encountered in its implementation. This constitutes a case study (Eisenhardt, 1989), its analysis is based on an in-depth diagnosis of dysfunctions evoked with regard to the research theme analysed lexically using a "Segese" expert system developed by the present authors' research laboratory (Zardet and Harbi, 2007).

The diagnostic sample is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Interviews Conducted for Diagnosis

Typology of Actors	**Governance**	**Management and Supervision**	**Employees**
No. of interviews conducted	2	12	9
Professional position	1 elected 1 program director - User relations	1 Directorate for Culture 1 Departmental Directorate for Territories 1 Directorate for Economy, Trade and Crafts (DECA) 1 Information Systems and Technologies Department (DSIT) 1 Directorate for Education 1 Directorate for Children 1 Management of the Multi-Channel Contact Centre 1 Direction des Mairies d'Arrondissements (Department of District Councils) 1 Sports Department 1 Communal Centre for Social Action 1 External Communication Service 1 Mail Service	1 Management Control Officer 1 Project Manager - Sports Department 2 Project Managers - Childhood Department 4 Policy Officers - Town Hall Department 1 Project Manager - User Relations

These 22 interviews represent 17 services interviewed, out of a perimeter of approximately 4,060 employees, for 161 verbatim collected and analysed according to a tree classification into themes and sub-themes concerning strategic implementation. Their frequency of appearance is calculated herein but the approach is mainly qualitative by analysing the lexical field and issues raised by the actors. This enabled identification of the most important dysfunction themes in the framework of the strategic deployment of the "Relationship with Users" public policy in the present research case.

The diagnosis also covers the analysis of exhaustive note-taking of words and gestures during the various exchanges with the organisation's actors on management subjects over the course of the 5-month period of immersion. Some of the exchanges took the form of everyday stories lived and told by the actors in the methodological form of 'storytelling' (Boje, 2001).

Results & Discussion

Thus, 17 departments of Town Hall A were questioned, representing approximately 4,060 staff. Out of this group, it was estimated that 3,500 employees use the S Software, 3,000 employees use the Dossier Unique, and all use the Knowledge Base. As a percentage of the total number of employees in Town Hall A (7,000 employees), 46% are directly concerned by the S Software, 53% by the Knowledge Base, and 40% by the Single File, i.e. 58% of the employees in the community are directly impacted by the "User Relations" Public Policy.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the strategic deployment of a cross-cutting public policy, which affects more than half of the local authority employees, is a determining factor in the sustainability of the organisation, its structure and its actors.

Strategic implementation, a major theme

Table 2 shows the distribution of themes according to the malfunction analysis grid and lexical classification using the research laboratory expert software "Segese". It is interesting to note that the other themes are also dysfunctions which hinder implementation of the strategy (Savall and Zardet, 1987, 2015) through defects in training, communication, working conditions, work organisation and time management.

Table 2: Breakdown of Verbatim by Themes of Dysfunction

Themes of dysfunctions	Number of *verbatim*	Percentage of expression
STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION	86	53%
INTEGRATED TRAINING	23	14%
3C [COMMUNICATION – COORDINATION – CONCERTATION]	20	12%
WORK CONDITIONS	17	11%
WORK ORGANIZATION	12	7%
TIME MANAGEMENT	3	2%
Total	161	100%

This research particularly analyzes the theme of strategic implementation, which accounts for more than 50% of the verbatim on dysfunctions.

The public policy studied - Relationship with Users - involves not only crosscutting measures but also the integration of new innovative measures for the community. These changes have a significant impact on organisational practices that have been in place for many years, suggesting a potential resistance to change expressed by actors.

> *"The resistance of the wider organisation to change and the ability of the organisation to curb innovation has been underestimated". (Governance)*
>
> *"Our only mission is to remove those in the middle, the third-party opponent; it is no use dealing with them." (Management)*
>
> *"To change is to question oneself, but it is easier to conform to a form of monotony in everyday life." (Employees)*

The change in the way the organisation operates has a direct impact on the behaviour of all individuals, imposing this change on them to a greater or lesser extent. While the actors are the indispensable resource for efficient change management (Savall, 1975), they are also the source of the main resistance encountered during the management of an organisational change. This can be explained in particular by the area of discomfort created by new

practices, which are not yet mastered, generating questioning of the skills and investment required from actors in the organisation. While resistance is natural and legitimate (Crozier and Friedberg, 1981), it cannot remain a simple argument of inertia and dysfunction against which the actors would have no room for action.

This chapter puts forward the hypothesis that these potential obstacles can be reduced depending on the ways in which the policy of change is implemented and supported in terms of resources and operational tools. In the following section, the content of the dysfunctions evoked by the stakeholders are analysed in more detail.

Obstacles to the deployment and strategic implementation of public policies

The main obstacles perceived and expressed by the actors are of different natures. The present results revealed the following themes: a strong distinction between the design and implementation of public policy, lack of political support and coordination perceived by the players, defects, or even lack of preparation for the implementation of numerous public policy projects within the services, and finally, inadequacy of the resources and objectives set out for public policy.

Distinction between design of public policy (in particular its tools) and implementation (implementation in the field)

On the one hand, the actors mention a separation between the teams in charge of design and those in charge of implementation. On the other hand, they express a vertical discrepancy (management/staff) which in some cases blocks the implementation of public policy.

> *"There is a completely distinct appropriation of the project between a locomotive that moves forward at a great pace, which designs tools, the Knowledge Base, Software S, and then the field test, which, once the project is received, malfunctions". (Management)*
>
> *"There is a dissociation of the project between design and operation. There is one head which thinks, and the employees who are not at all inclined in the same direction." (Employees)*

This phenomenon is also accentuated by the differences in pace between the various actors in charge of the strategic and operational components of public policy. The question of rhythms is a notion that recurs in more than 50% of the interviews. Indeed, the public policy deployed is generating major changes, and maintaining a sustainable and effective dynamic is complex. Moreover, the policy strategy sometimes focuses on appearances and rapid visible results, to the detriment of real operational efficiency and its implementation constraints. For example, we can take the case of a logo being used to highlight the project at the entrance to town halls even though the operational part is not yet being deployed.

> *"Some steps are botched or skipped for political reasons. For example, we want to put the logo up before training the employees. They are right in terms of political strategy, but there is a gap in time with the professionalisation of administration staff". (Supervision)*
>
> *"I agree with the logo that the elected representative wants to put at the entrance of the town halls, but there must be an added value, to transform this logo into an effective reality, so that tomorrow the employees can also manage mail and e-mail at the first contact. Here, it doesn't yet exist." (Management)*

These asynchronous rhythms can also be explained by a lack of consideration of users in the decision-making process. The distinction between design and operation can be found at the birth of public policy, formalised within a perimeter of restricted actors, elected representatives and administrative management, before being deployed across the whole range of services. Thus, the users of the new tools deployed to achieve the objectives of public policy were not sufficiently consulted upstream in this design process. One of the tools, the Guichet Unique's S software, emerged in the interviews as being one of the most sensitive points of public policy. The tool was judged by the actors (management, supervisors and staff) to be complex, irrelevant, and implying a mastery of IT tools that was not compatible with the qualifications of the staff. This is, moreover, the argument of resistance most frequently used by the actors questioned.

"There was an error of choice at the outset. The S software is a tool for staff who do nothing else all day with limited benefits." (Employees)

"The S software manages the interface, the contact, but the added value of an employee is not so much in the contact as in the delivery of the service." (Supervision)

"The issue of simplification is a fundamental part of the user relationship, but the theoretical construction choices have made this issue too complex." (Management)

Lack of political backing for projects

Lassitude is also linked to managers' impression that there is a lack of support from politicians and management. This lack of sufficiently marked political stakes has two direct consequences: firstly, a heterogeneous appropriation of public policy, whether between services or between the 'designing' and 'implementing' actors; secondly, a feeling of isolation in certain services, the employees of which have the impression that they are not supported by the hierarchy even though implementing public policy requires a great deal of effort on their part.

"If there is no political support from the elected representative, a clearly defined "sponsor" that carries weight, we will never get there."(Management)

"In 2008-2014, this political support was very low. We were referred to the elected representative, but he followed the project more than he promoted it. "(Supervision)

Lack of transversality and conflicts between directorates

It is necessary to recall that the main characteristic of the public policy studied herein is the crosscutting nature of its implementation. Indeed, it is deployed at different levels in all the departments of Town Hall A, and in fact requires close and synchronised cooperation between the different departments and services. This crosscutting approach is generally accepted by all the actors interviewed and is considered necessary. However, its application proves difficult in a context where each department is used to working on its own missions, in an organisation operating in silos.

Moreover, internal conflicts exist between the different departments and services. The operational departments do not have a clear and formalised hierarchical link with a single decision-maker ensuring the coherence of the project. Along the same lines of reasoning, this creates different levels of a given policy depending on the interest each operational department has in the projects, their character and their own issues.

> *"In terms of organisation, I can see an elected representative paralysed between two directors who don't get along. I am obliged to interfere with the administrative organisation, how can I do this? Which director should I defer to? Because the two are at war." (Supervision)*
>
> *"It's one thing for officers to be in a set state of mind, it's another thing for management to soap the board, it's unacceptable." (Management)*

The conflicts between the different directorates and the lack of transversality can also be explained by a lack of preparation prior to the deployment of public policies.

Lack of preparation for the implementation of public policy projects within services

Lack of communication and upstream training is often highlighted in the context of strategic deployment generating inefficiencies. The projects seem to have been deployed without prior information, without consultation and without clarification of the steps necessary for their implementation.

> *"The arrival of the S Software was sudden, without adequate hardware." (Employees)*
>
> *"We weren't sufficiently organised for the implementation of Software S, it went badly." (Management)*

Among these steps considered essential, there is also the question of the means necessary for the strategic deployment of public policy: human, material and financial resources.

Means allocated to the implementation of public policy

Human and financial resources are considered insufficient by most of the services. For all the actors, the problem is to know how to allocate the right

resources to the right areas, according to the requirements of each service. There is a link here with management of resources, particularly human resources, which is generally perceived as being insufficient. Moreover, the public policy studied is not the only policy implemented by the services. There are therefore choices of arbitration, coupled with a more significant reorganisation at regional and departmental levels, notably through the transfer of competences. As public policy was relaunched during the mayor's second term of office, negotiations had to be relaunched in order to maintain an equivalent amount of investment between the second and third terms of office.

"At one point, we had some drastic budget choices to make. We had to fight to maintain a visible part of the project. In particular, we had to convince the mayor to maintain a significant amount of investment in this area." (Management)

"The difficulty is that the 400 users are being asked to change their way of working and their method of working, without any additional means." (Management)

"For the project, there are a lot of innovations to be implemented but which are not financed, therefore not possible." (Employees)

"The budget should be a tool to help the implementation of a policy, but today the trend seems to be reversing". (Management)

Indeed, operational divisions report that they have little or no room for manoeuvre in implementing public policy. They regret lack of support from the support services and the User Relations Management programme, as well as lack of public policy resource contacts within the services. Furthermore, the qualifications and adequacy between training and employment of staff, in the face of changes in organisational practices, are not sufficiently taken into account according to the managers and directors interviewed. Lack of human resources specifically dedicated to public policy is particularly highlighted. However, the most penalising aspect reported is perhaps the lack of steering and stability of existing resources. These resources changed suddenly, during the course of the mandate, and the actors had to renegotiate new resources or, at the very least, maintain existing resources. We are now looking at ways of improving the strategic deployment of public policy.

Managerial Implications

The inadequacy between means and objectives is underlined by the actors as being the main brake on the effectiveness of public policy implementation. However, the "visible" lack of human and financial resources seems to be only the tip of the iceberg. It masks a strong de-synchronisation between the different actors and the absence of a project methodology carried by competent and referent individuals within each service. These reference individuals could be trained in project management, equipped with tools and included in meeting arrangements, making it possible to synchronise the implementation of public policy in order to deploy it more effectively. This principle is similar to that of 'synchronised decentralisation' (Savall and Zardet, 1995, 2005), which consists of moving the act of decision-making to the place where its implementation is to be triggered. Multilying responsibilities and objectives at each hierarchical level involved is recommended. It also seems necessary to orchestrate the involvement of the various stakeholders (elected representatives, directorates, managers and a few employees) in advance of the development of public policy. This makes it possible to anticipate sources of resistance: for example, in the present case study, during the implementation of a new software programme perceived as non-ergonomic and poorly adapted. It also limits the perception that projects are imposed by the hierarchy (political and administrative) and poorly adapted to each service. This perception, according to the respondents' discourse, reduces the motivation and involvement of the different actors.

The main management tool recommended as a result of this diagnosis is the implementation of action plans, such as the priority action plan tool for socio-economic management (Savall and Zardet, 1995, 2005). This tool brings together, in a synoptic document, the strategic axes of public policies to be achieved over the period of a mandate, divided up into half-yearly objectives to contribute to the achievement of these axes. The interest of the priority action plan also lies in the organisation of the half-yearly objectives into concrete actions, to which reference individuals (pilots) are assigned. Finally, it is part of a schedule, allowing for steering both in terms of time and space to access the actors' agendas. The action plans are then disseminated from the decision-making body of the town hall to all the departments and services, in order to inform them all in ‘synchronisation’ of the issues, objectives and deadlines desired by the political body.

Developing these action plans requires a consultation phase, which can take place over several meetings scheduled within a month, and could bring

together the following actors:

- The elected representative of the public policy concerned
- The Director General of Community Services
- The directors of the services concerned with public policy

In the present case study, the main objective of this consultation, which could not be implemented during the study, would be to agree on the priority actions to be implemented regarding the "Relationship with Users" public policy. The second objective would be to make the strategic objectives necessary for deploying the public policy more visible to all its actors, and to reflect together on the obstacles encountered and the possible solutions to reduce these obstacles, as well as on the desired completion date for deploying the public policy.

Subsequently, the various heads of department and general directors could consult with their management to designate staff responsible for priority actions. The fact of designating different "pilots" according to the actions, at different levels of responsibility, makes decentralising decision-making and establishing a more crosscutting operation possible. It also involves employees who otherwise feel neglected during the deployment of public policy, reducing certain sources of resistance. It also has the added advantage of developing these pilots' project management skills.

In view of the political-administrative structure of the local authorities, the findings of this research suggest that the deputy elected representative should be able to exchange feedback and consult with the general directors of the various services concerning priority actions. Indeed, decentralising decision-making powers does not mean "blinding" the decision-makers higher up in the hierarchy, but rather that information and the state of progress of the actions circulate both vertically and transversally. It is particularly important to maintain a continuous link with the elected representative, in accordance with the principle of synchronisation.

Conclusion

The diagnosis carried out within Town Hall A revealed three main types of obstacles to the strategic implementation of public policies (Table 3): temporal obstacles (breathlessness, asynchronous rhythms), human behavioural obstacles (lack of political leadership, communication-coordination-concertation, visibility of the actors carrying the public policy, adequacy of qualifications-jobs for employees) and structural obstacles (silo organisation,

difficulties regarding effective cross-functionality, lack of materialisation of objectives, use of the information system). This analysis is in line with the structure-behaviour theory of socio-economic theory (Savall and Zardet, 1987) and the space-time duo of a change process (Comparini and Roche, 2013; Voyant, Roche and Salmeron, 2016).

Table 3: Obstacles to the Strategic Implementation of Public Policy

Obstacles to the strategic implementation		
Behavioural	Temporal	Structural
. 3C [Communication-Coordination-Concertation] issues including conflicts . Lack of visibility and identification of the actors driving public policy . Qualification and training of employees . Political support and advocacy . …	. Public policy is running out of steam due to delays in its deployment . Asynchronous rhythms . …	. Lack of effective transversality . Absence of clearly defined objectives known to all stakeholders . Isolation of certain services . Instability of resources allocated to public policy . Complex use of the information system

Moreover, these temporal, behavioural and structural defects are detrimental to the involvement and motivation of all the actors.

Finally, the two levels of public organisation (space) - political and administrative - are out of sync (time). At the political level, the consideration of issues essentially concerns political stakes (visibility of the elected representative, re-elections, implementation visible to users). At the administrative level, the issues are organisational in nature (planning, human, material and financial resources, available skills, translating objectives into concrete actions). This creates a breakdown, since individual issues can hinder or oppose the common objective of implementing public policy and ensuring the effectiveness of public services for users. In reality, it is in the de-synchronisation between politics and administration, between management and staff, that the major challenges of improving the strategic deployment of public policies lie. Thus, the decision-making circuit, which

is highly centralised and rigid, seems to prevent effective and efficient deployment of the strategy. This leads, in particular, to a dilution of information between each stratum of the community, which is moreover very compartmentalised at the level of each department.

This chapter highlights the shortcomings and difficulties in the strategic implementation of a public policy based on a case study of a metropolitan town hall, and establishes ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the deployment of these projects. It has also demonstrated how local and regional authorities have internal resources that are poorly mobilised and poorly distributed between the various public policies and services.

Today crucial, this lack of mobilisation and distribution is linked to the lack of synchronisation between the different stakeholders, which partially validates the present research hypothesis "the lack of synchronisation of stakeholders in the design and execution of projects is detrimental to the effective and efficient implementation of a public policy". This research supports the recommendation of setting up meeting mechanisms and implementing action plans at all levels. This should be done to enable a concerted and synchronised roll out of a project's actions, and to make the actors at each hierarchical level accountable.

Future research will extend this analysis to other case studies and test the effectiveness of certain tools and support methods recommended in the context of this chapter. This will enable results to be assessed in terms of effectiveness and efficiency in the deployment of public policies.

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ARTICLE VIII

HOW TO TAILOR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE ACCORDING TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE LUXURY HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

MAXIME LHUILLIER AND FLORENCE GERVAIS

Abstract

Recent contributions to tourism literature have provided descriptive results showing how hotel attributes and customer hospitality experiences can be perceived differently according to the nationalities or languages of customers. However, there is a lack of research studying customers' expectations influenced by their cultural background and values which shape their perceptions of their experience. This chapter, based on sociological concepts related to cultural dimensions, presents an empirical survey on perceptions of luxury hospitality service according to various cultures. The methodology was adapted to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; 123 questionnaires were distributed and collected from social network forums for both expatriates and frequent travellers. The results confirm the hypothesis that customer experience should be tailored according to cultural differences, but also that there are standardised perceptions of certain aspects of luxury hospitality service which are valid across all cultures. Finally, this study provides researchers with future avenues for research.

Introduction

Over recent years, customer experience has become a major topic for most industries and businesses. One way for companies to create added value to their products and services is to improve customer experience. Marketing literature has shown that positive customer experience generates several benefits for companies: first, it fosters high levels of customer engagement and loyalty which create lifetime customer value for both customers and companies (Kuman and Reinartz, 2016; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

Secondly, it generates critical business outcomes for companies such as a positive brand image, which also results in continuous revenue stream (Hu *et al.,* 2019).

As for industry, the hospitality industry is very focused on customer satisfaction. The travel industry and its actors are constantly thinking of new ways to please customers and provide unique experiences, as travellers will show their satisfaction through online reviews, repeated stays at the same hotel or repeated flights with the same airline. However, the hospitality industry, more than other industries, faces significant variations of satisfaction among its customers while providing the same experience to all. This can be explained by the variety of expectations people hold about hospitality experiences and their different dimensions. These expectations are influenced by various factors which define customers' internal and external environment. This goes some way to explaining the complexity of providing unique customer experiences to customers with varied expectations while managing resources efficiently. In order to optimise resource allocation, companies are expressing the need for tools to predict reactions and behaviours relating to customer experiences. The hospitality context, dealing as it does with a wide variety of customers, illustrates this need.

Customer Experience and Tourism Literature

The need for key insights relating to customers' expectations has generated a significant amount of research in the tourism literature. Tourism, and particularly the hospitality field, is an industry where customer experience and its dimensions have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and decisions of repeat purchase. Every actor within this industry creates customer value through their products but aims to deliver unique customer experience for each guest, traveller or customer. In this context, it is useful to understand the extent to which hospitality companies can influence and attract customers to their products. In other words, researchers have conducted various studies to identify which stage of the customer journey is the most critical in terms of impact on customer satisfaction, whether it be pre-purchase, consumption of the goods or service or the post-purchase stage. Identifying critical touch points for hospitality companies such as hotels enables their management to better allocate resources in order to optimise customer satisfaction.

A first interesting study shows how leisure travellers select their destination of choice (Karl *et al.*, 2015). Some 622 interviews were conducted with travellers in order to identify how their final choice of destination varies

compared to their initial preferences. From these interviews, different clusters of destinations are identified with similar characteristics from "easy travel" to "no go" destinations. The findings presented by the authors highlight the fact that initial destination preferences vary significantly from one interviewee to another. This preliminary conclusion is useful for companies within the industry, showing that even if there are existing predispositions for some of the clusters, many choices of destinations are appealing to German tourists. What this means is that with significant efforts on international promotion, some countries would be able to attract tourists and build a travelling customer base. However, it is worth noting that in this case studying German travellers, the final choice of destination was similar for most interviewees. Different factors were identified, all playing a role in the shift of chosen destination from initial idealistic preferences towards a pragmatic final choice. In this in-depth study, the authors suggest that the choice of destination among leisure travellers is not significantly impacted by actions taken by companies, such as hotels, within this industry. These findings are significant because they suggest pre-departure efforts can be limited as they do not influence the choice of destination. Instead, in order to influence decisions to repeat purchases, efforts should focus on the stage of the customer journey where travellers are experiencing the service offered. In the case of hotels or other hospitality venues, pre-purchase marketing actions should be limited to instead target efforts to enhance customer experience. This kind of strategy requires hospitality management and staff to know their customers in order to offer a unique experience. A weakness with this argument, however, is that in this study there is an existing bias in respondents' minds. Identified clusters of destinations result, largely, from the geographical and economical German context. In other words, the fact that Germany, France, Italy and Croatia were preferred destinations is the combined result of their geographical proximity to Germany, as well as the relatively similar cost of living. If a similar study were conducted in South-East Asia or South America, we would evidently observe very different clusters of destinations.

As highlighted previously, customer experience is a critical part of building customer value within the hospitality industry. This industry is composed of various actors, with both common and unique characteristics within a single company such as a hotel. This represents an asset for management, which can choose from different options and opportunities to focus on, in order to promote the quality of the offering displayed to customers on the market. Researchers are breaking hospitality functions down to identify the most relevant and efficient ways to provide guests with unforgettable customer experiences. The premises, which may be a hotel or a restaurant,

are important dimensions of the customer experience (Radojevic *et al.*, 2015), but once these are built, they cannot be easily changed. Therefore, hotel management tends to concentrate on hospitality staff, which is one of the most important assets hospitality actors possess.

The effects of hotel workers' national culture on guest satisfaction were recently studied (Radojevic *et al.*, 2019). The authors conducted an in-depth analysis of 3,488,473 customer ratings made on TripAdvisor's online survey of customer satisfaction to highlight specific cultural dimensions of hotel staff based on Hofstede's research. This specific study is significant because it studies the extent to which hotel workers successfully respond to guests' requests. From this research, Radojevic *et al.* argue that hotel workers who scored low on both Individualism and Indulgence from Hofstede's cultural dimensions were better predisposed for hospitality service. Asian countries and national cultures are considered those which are the best adapted to fulfil hospitality requests according to this study. Implications based on these findings are numerous and merit discussion. By focusing on hotel workers' national culture, this research overlooks the more complex issue of the composition of guests in hotels and travellers in a country. A criticism with this argument, then, is that the authors assume that every hotel studied is receiving the same proportion of national and international guests. In other words, it may be interesting to study the extent to which a culture will tend to have a positive attitude towards its peers, or whether, on the contrary, certain national cultures have higher expectations when staying in their country of origin.

Indeed, researchers have conducted studies on the effects of specific actions of service on customer satisfaction. Hospitality workers are seen as social individuals, best practices are shown by leading team members such as managers and assimilated by hotel workers who replicate the same models for guests. Maintaining positive interactions with guests is one way to enhance customer experience and generates customer engagement. A study was conducted on the effect of hotel employees smiling on customer satisfaction (Woo and Chan, 2020). The hospitality service model promoting smiling and positive attitude is widely accepted as best practice for cultural reasons, but also for its positive effect on guests in the West. The authors of this study aimed to explore whether a similar phenomenon would be observed for ethnic Chinese millennials. The findings of this study suggest that a positive reaction occurs during interactions between staff and guests, which confirms the assumptions made by Western hospitality actors. However, the authors argue that this does not go so far as to generate customer engagement in situations where guests are already in a negative

mindset due to an inconvenience during their stay. This understanding highlights the limitations of attitudinal best practices, as it shows that a smile will enhance an already positive attitude but is not an ultimate tool to create customer engagement and positive customer experience.

Service with a smile should be considered as an aspect of basic hospitality along with immaculate presentation and communication. Tourism science aims to identify other tangible ways to either promote positive customer experience or turn negative customer experiences into positive ones. Simple practices, which are applicable to every guest but create a unique feeling for each, have been studied (Tassiello *et al.*, 2018). One reason for discontent among hotel guests is lack of personal touch, and this phenomenon is increasing as technologies enable hospitality companies to reach thousands of potential guests at the same time both online and offline. Large hotels display printed messages for guests where the guest's name is the only detail modified. The authors analysed the effect of handwritten messages on negative online ratings, their findings suggest that handwriting plays a significant role in reducing negative online reviews. What this means is that such practices help to trigger customer satisfaction and furthermore help reduce the impact of negative aspects of customer experience in a hotel.

Researchers have tried to identify these underlying components of guest satisfaction. Hu *et al.*, 2019 offer a critical understanding of motives for re-patronage. The findings of this study suggest that as tangible hotel attributes weigh less as guests become familiar with a hotel, other aspects of customer experience become increasingly influential for guests. The quality of service is identified as playing a major role in this phenomenon. This highlights the importance of quality of service, hospitality service is an intangible dimension of customer experience in the hospitality industry. Like empathy, the quality of service is perceived differently from one customer to another and becomes a regular topic developed by researchers because of this. There are numerous ways to customise customer experience, which will all have different consequences. Turning negative customer experiences into positive ones at specific stages of the customer journey has also been studied (Lui *et al.*, 2018).

Hotel guests have unique and common characteristics influenced by their environment. Luxury hospitality is no different and must focus on critical guest expectations. A recent study by Hu *et al.* (2019) provides insight into how impactful hospitality service is in the luxury hotels sector. Researchers compared 27,864 customer experiences of hotels in New York. These reviews encompass every hotel type from 1-star to 5-star ratings, then

various themes are identified, and the authors compare the frequency of each topic cited in both positive and negative reviews for differently rated hotels. This study highlights critical customer experience-related topics for luxury hotels. Severe service failure is the most frequently cited item among negative reviews for 5-star hotels. This is significant as, once again, it reveals how important and influential hospitality service is for customer experience and satisfaction.

Hotel guest characteristics have been studied regarding their level of loyalty and familiarity with hotels, but other characteristics also merit investigation to verify whether the perceptions of different types of travellers influence their expectations.

Hotels in general characterise travellers according to two distinct categories that impact both the purpose of their stay and their expectations. For the most part, hotel guests are travelling and purchasing hotel services for leisure, but business travellers represent a significant proportion of hotel customers. Their relationship with hotels is different compared to that of leisure travellers. Some who travel to a different city or country for a specific reason may choose the hotel for a one-time stay. However, most business travellers do not directly choose the hotel they stay in, the company they work for will initially book a first stay in a luxury hotel and if they are satisfied with the hotel features and quality of service, their company will negotiate business rates which are often lower than rates offered to leisure travellers. The reason for this difference is that business travellers will invariably stay regularly in the same hotel up to several days per week and for hotel management, business travellers represent a profitable source of revenue. As the motives for their stay are different from those of leisure travellers, their expectations will differ as well, most will only spend a night in a hotel after business meetings and will often continue working from their hotel room. As business travellers are an interesting opportunity for hotels, researchers have studied the specificities of business trips, which shape business travellers' expectations and mindsets when staying in a hotel. Radojevic *et al.* (2018) analysed 1.6 million customer reviews of hotels of various star classifications located across the world and compared reviews given by business and leisure travellers. Several aspects of this study are highly relevant to understand how critical business travellers are for luxury hotels. The authors first present the proportion of leisure and business guests per hotel star classification which reveals that proportionally, 4- and 5-star hotels receive more business travellers than leisure travellers. This means that a higher percentage of business travellers stay in luxury hotels compared to leisure hotels. This can be easily explained as business

travellers tend to be highly educated individuals who are accountable for major matters within their companies. As such, these companies are conscious that their directors require a higher level of comfort when they are away from home in order to cope with any stress they may experience. A further reason is the importance of companies' public and corporate image: employees and the companies they represent will be judged on the type of hotel they stay in. Business meetings with potential customers or partners lead to more casual discussions, and a company wishing to diffuse a clean image inspiring trust and professionalism (such as audit and consultancy companies) should align this image from top management decisions to the hotels in which its employees stay. The multilevel analysis conducted in this study suggested that business travellers tend to leave lower reviews than leisure travellers. The present authors intend to account for this overall tendency among business travellers to give lower ratings compared to leisure travellers. Business travellers with high incomes are likely to have a more extensive experience of luxury hotels than average leisure travellers. Therefore, their standards and expectations will be higher. However, this is not the only reason identified in this study. This pivotal research demonstrates that perception is a determining factor of overall satisfaction.

The literature on customer experience from a tourism perspective reveals crucial implications for the industry. Critical touch points impacting customer satisfaction are essentially triggered by on-site actions rather than pre-departure actions. Hotel worker characteristics can shape customer experience. However, hotels must focus on training their employees rather than hiring the most naturally adapted to hospitality service. Luxury hotels attract individuals with higher expectations, who seek quality of service and empathy when differentiating luxury hotel offerings. Expectations are personal to each guest and the characteristics which shape their perception are mainly influenced by external rather than internal factors. Furthermore, it was shown that external and individual factors compose customers' environments. Therefore, to reach a higher level of customer experience customisation, research should also focus on what factors influence customers' environments. Societal and cultural aspects of each individual impact their perception when reviewing their customer experience and overall satisfaction.

The Cultural Background of Hotel Guests

Culture as a key component of an individuals' environment is a complex concept which can be understood in various ways and applied to different fields. The word "culture" is defined in the Oxford English dictionary as

"the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group". This definition implies that elements of culture are universal concepts such as art or beliefs which differ according to a specific group, elements of culture create unity for a group of individuals and create a culture to which individuals genuinely believe they belong. From this perspective, it is important to highlight how business can be very much likened to culture. Culture influences how business is conducted around the world, marketing actions adapt to their target as culturally similar individuals who consume goods and services differently from another marketing target or culture.

Researchers and authors including Hofstede and Hall have defined elements of culture as cultural dimensions, and their research has been pivotal for current researchers, organisations and companies in order to better understand individuals. Hofstede is considered by many as one of the founding fathers of intercultural research and its components. As developed previously, his research highlighted attitudinal cultural dimensions which can be measured in various countries. His findings are pivotal to understanding how societies' norms are established and how individuals perceive their role in their society. In this research, Hofstede (2011) provides an overview of his research, based on other studies as well as his own experiences, which led to the development of the widely used Hofstede model of six dimensions of national cultures. These dimensions are: Power Distance (large versus small), Uncertainty Avoidance (strong versus weak), Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity. Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Normative Orientation, Indulgence versus Restraint. A definition of these dimensions is available on Hofstede's website: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/.

Other researchers have focused on issues encountered during intercultural interactions and communication. Edward T. Hall is a pioneer of such research. He based his studies on observations of how people from different cultures behave regarding different aspects of life and society. In each of his three books published between 1966-1983, he developed detailed cultural dimensions, particularly regarding the notion of time, space and context, which are still used by academics and organisations for intercultural communication purposes.

The cultural dimension of High and Low Context is clearly summarized in Kitter's review of Hall's empirical studies (Kittler *and al.*, 2011). Context is defined as "'knit together' with information and thus inextricably associated

with the meaning of a message". In other words, the idea of context is linked to any intangible information revolving around individuals, in their environment, which provides verbal communication with additional elements. Information can "be understood as elements of meaning that are explicitly transmitted by the sender and need no preprograming beyond the common code of transmission (language)". Information refers to elements of meaning which are entirely based on the sender's mindset, knowledge and feelings.

Space and the notion of time and its perception are two other fundamental concepts for cultures and the organisation of its people. Hall's research shows how the perception of time and space are relative, and their use in society varies across cultures (Hall, 1983). These major breakthroughs in cross-cultural research improve our understanding of differences in behaviours during intercultural interactions.

Another way to look at cultural differences is to try to group cultures that share similar responses to cultural dimensions. Several researchers have tried to identify cultural clusters. However, with different goals and different methodologies, their studies have produced different clusters, so there is no coherence. A meta-analysis reviewing eight studies, their methodology and findings, aiming to categorise countries and cultures into specific clusters, compares and criticises literature on cultural clusters between 1991 and 2002 (Vanderstraeten and Matthyssens, 2008). This literature review is based on another research article by Ronen and Shenkar (1985) which was at the time the most notable research paper reviewing cultural clusters and making useful recommendations on the methodology to use to this end. The authors acknowledge the high academic value of the previous literature review as several modern classifications were based on their recommendations. This research is pivotal because it reveals significant sources of disagreement between researchers on this matter. What this shows is that two research goals exist for any research aiming to create cultural clusters: either researchers are looking for implications related to "best Human Resources practices" or to "best International Marketing decisions". This finding is critical as it justifies disagreements discussed previously in this article. Diverse goals require diverse methodologies, indeed for human resource practices, focus on the relationship between cultural dimensions and leadership values within organisations and using data from managers is relevant. However, researchers focusing on international marketing decision-making tools will base their research on larger samples and place an emphasis on cultural dimensions. The key implication drawn from this literature review is that

research papers with a high academic value should be used as the knowledge base and selected according to the purpose of the current study. The most recent "culture-clustering" project was conducted by several researchers on the relationship between national culture and desirable leadership attributes (House *et al.*, 2004). This pivotal research was led by the Globe Project organisation, founded in 1991, and conducted empirical studies in 62 countries sending a questionnaire to 17,000 managers. Their goal was to verify a potential correlation between cultural dimensions and expectations of what leadership should be, and their initial assumption suggested that unique cultural dimensions would lead to unique expectations. The authors used nine specific cultural dimensions to verify their impact on leadership expectations. From the collected data, they identified patterns in which respondents from different countries had similar expectations about leadership. Their findings suggested the existence of 10 cultural clusters around the world as follows (see Figure 2): Anglo, Confucian Asia, Eastern Europe, Germanic Europe, Latin America, Latin Europe, Middle East, Nordic Europe, Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. This research demonstrates how cultural dimensions influence individual perceptions and expectations, it also highlights the contrast between value and practice scores of leadership attributes. While this study is ground-breaking for Human Resources departments, this project does not contribute as much as it could have to literature aiming to identify cultural clusters. Some clusters identified by the authors are relevant, such as the European clusters, Anglo and Latin America. However, while the Asian clusters might be justified regarding leadership attributes, they do not highlight the strong cultural differences existing on this continent such as those between China and Japan. Two other limitations are the limited size of the sample - 62 countries - and the fact that only managers were interviewed. Having a greater diversity of status among respondents could have provided greater insight into what the members of a specific culture expected in terms of leadership.

Concerning the purpose of the present research, identifying various common perceptions such as cultural clusters has several benefits: cultural clusters enables us "to name, display, summarise, predict and seek an explanation" (Ronen and Shenkar, 1985). The ability to predict phenomena such as the perception and satisfaction of customer experience in the hospitality industry is a critical asset when studying cultural clusters as levers for international marketing decisions.

Hypotheses

Based on the above literature review from marketing, sociology and tourism science, as well as the characteristics set out in the scope of this research, an empirical study will be conducted in order to verify the following hypothesis:

H1: Some aspects of customer experience related to the luxury hospitality industry should be designed according to cultural clusters.

As mentioned in the literature, cultural dimensions significantly influence hotel guests' perceived experience. Research has shown how relevant cultural clusters encompass common cultural values generating similar attitudes and behaviours towards hotel attributes such as customer service. Based on these theories, we expect hotel guests from common cultural clusters to be equally sensitive to different aspects of customer service in a hotel. An analysis of the data collected during the present empirical study should highlight trends pertaining to different aspects of hospitality customer experience. In other words, triggering common cultural dimensions should generate equal levels of satisfaction towards customer experience among hotel guests from the same cultural cluster.

H2: Some aspects of customer experience related to the luxury hospitality industry should be designed according to a luxury hospitality standards model.

Luxury hospitality has gained popularity over time and due to the intensification of competition among actors of the industry, staying in luxury hotels has become more accessible to a wider range of individuals. Hospitality practices have also been standardised around the world based on different traditional models. Nowadays, the basics of hospitality service are taught similarly around the world. Based on this, the homogenisation of practices may have assumed a homogenisation of guests' expectations. This hypothesis will be confirmed if the data provided by respondents of this empirical study identify one universal trend for hospitality service preferences regardless of cultural clusters and other guest characteristics. Therefore, enhancing customer experience in luxury hotels could be achieved through universal practices which generate equal levels of satisfaction among all respondents regardless of cultural clusters.

Methodology

This research article initially aims to verify the potential correlation between cultural clusters and guest satisfaction in luxury hotels and secondly, to identify levers of satisfaction regarding customer experience for hotel guests belonging to various cultural clusters. This study is motivated by several theories developed in the literature as well as wishing to address the current gap in the research in this regard.

Previous literature focusing on the effects of culture, nationality or language on customer satisfaction chose an approach wherein the variable was identified from online platforms such as TripAdvisor and customer databases. However, a weakness of this approach was highlighted in the above literature review (Liu *et al.*, 2017) as gaps exist between individuals' nationalities, passports, or the languages they use online and the actual cultural values which define their perceptions. Therefore, the approach of the present study will be based on respondents' perceptions and their personal opinions on this matter. The question of nationality and nationalities is openly asked among respondents. However, regarding culture, a model of cultural clusters was created for this study. Based on several authors' models, see Figures 2 and 3 (Ronen and Shenkar,1985; House *et al.*, 2004), the following synthesis of cultural clusters was created herein to answer the question: "With which culture do you identify?":

The Cultural Clusters Classification Model used for this study

Cultural Clusters		
Anglo-Saxon	Arab	Caribbean
Germanic	Indosphere (i.e., Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi)	Japan
Latin America	Latin Europe (i.e., France, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain)	Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Greenland)
Pacific	Sinosphere (i.e., Chinese)	Slav
South-East Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	

When developing this model, the main objective was to cover as many cultures as possible and avoid situations wherein respondents either hesitate between several clusters which would be non-inclusive or do not know where to position themselves and would need a "None of the above" option.

This justifies why we can find cultures summarised by one country such as Japan. In their model, House *et al.* (2004) include Japan in the "Confucian Asia" cluster along with China, Hong-Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, which is an accurate conceptualisation in the case of leadership values. However, for various reasons relating to culture, such as history and politics, Japanese as well as Chinese individuals may not be pleased to be categorised in this way. Another situation is where one cluster is based on a country while encompassing more than one country. "Indosphere" and "Sinosphere" respectively refer to Indian and Chinese cultures. Both countries, due to Asian history, have a continental influence which is perceived beyond their traditional borders. This is why additional countries or specifications are included within their definition. Finally, in the cases of "Caribbean" and "Pacific", even if both have reduced spheres of influence, they must be considered as they create unique perceptions among individuals.

Finally, this study aims to use specific cultural dimensions to identify levers of satisfaction for hotel guests from various cultural backgrounds. The review of sociology literature was based on the contributions of two authors (Hall, 1966, 1976, 1983; Hofstede, 2011) which identify nine relevant cultural dimensions. However, four of Hofstede's cultural dimensions were not selected for this study for the following reasons. *"Uncertainty avoidance"* is not included because, from the hospitality industry perspective, uncertainty and the potential stress engendered by this should never be perceived by hotel guests. As one of the basics of luxury hospitality, a critical mission of hotel staff is to ensure guests do not worry about any aspect of their hotel stay. Staff and managers oversee the smooth running of operations, discreetly coping with highly stressful situations while displaying nothing but solutions and indicators of control to guests. *"Individualism versus collectivism"* is not included because the organisation of luxury hotels is directly correlated with individualist values with few common areas and rooms which are designed to offer maximal space to individual guests. The right to privacy is strongly upheld in luxury hotels as some areas are restricted to specific guests. *"Masculinity versus femininity"* is not included because the hospitality industry business is about caring and therefore oriented towards feminine values. *"Long-term versus short-term orientation"* because luxury hospitality aims to encourage living in the present moment by creating a form of "planned hedonism" therefore emphasizing a short-term orientation.

Five cultural dimensions are used for their relevance to the luxury hospitality context. Depending on the culture of the respondents, these cultural dimensions will highlight unconscious tendencies and preferences regarding customer service and hotel attributes in a hospitality context.

"*Sensitivity to space"* is chosen first, since strategic choices related to space are made by hotel management. Spacious rooms are a sign of comfort and a luxurious environment. However, spaces of similar dimensions could be perceived and appreciated differently according to individuals' cultures and backgrounds, thereby impacting their satisfaction and customer experience. Hotel staff who are aware of these characteristics can stress different features that will be perceived positively by guests. The *"High or low context communication*" dimension is selected as communication is a key component of hospitality service. Indeed, hotel staff are the main point of contact for guests to express their feelings regarding customer experience. Social interactions and the way they are conducted will be remembered by guests and impact their perceived experience. Communication will influence how comfortable guests feel during their stay, either being a source of stress and disturbance, or a key success factor in providing guests with temporary accommodation which should be perceived as akin to a "second home". Depending on guests' culture, we expect components of this cultural dimension to indicate trends regarding communication between guests and hotel staff. *"Monochronic versus polychronic conception of time"* is chosen as luxury hospitality service must be delivered in a timely manner. This is a common corporate value shared by human resources departments. The amount of time guests spend in the hotel is limited, and guests must rely entirely on staff members to obtain requested items or information. Assessing guests' perception of time will allow staff to better prioritize tasks and share information related to time with guests in a more appropriate manner. *"High or low power distance"* is selected, as the call for social differentiation is a powerful motivation for purchasing luxury products. The hospitality industry has developed several tools to make guests aware of their special status in a hotel, such as membership cards or VIP status. Social status, record of stays, financial capacity, or relations to the hospitality industry are all factors which will impact the service they will receive. Understanding how guests perceive these special treatments is relevant in order to provide them with a personalised service. It enables staff to either adopt distant politeness or make guests as comfortable as possible regardless of their social status. And the fifth dimension included is *"Indulgence versus restraint"*. Being able to anticipate guests' reactions to different behaviours is an asset for hotel staff, it can be used to avoid awkward situations and encounters or to identify specific ways in which to connect with guests and personalise their stay. Of particular interest is an understanding of what "a happy guest" or a "happy employee" means in the different cultural clusters.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data required for this study, the choice to develop and use an appropriate personalised survey was made for several reasons. These primarily related to the cultural dimensions assessed and the need to categorise standardised opinions and compare them in order to address the research questions. The questionnaire developed aims to trigger cultural dimensions through the perception of hospitality service and some of its components. Components of cultural dimensions were correlated with real-life hospitality situations directly involving guests' cultural values and perception. Additionally, each option was correlated with the appropriate degree related to the cultural dimension studied.

Based on the research requirements, a sample of respondents was selected from which to collect data in the form of answers to the questionnaire developed. During this process, numerous factors were taken into consideration as follows. An empirical study of this kind requires a large sample composed of many respondents in order to obtain credible data from which relevant implications can be drawn. Initially, this questionnaire was supposed to be distributed to as many hotel guests as possible in Sydney, Australia over the course of a few weeks. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hotels around the world were closed and strict travel restrictions were implemented. Therefore, it was decided that, to obtain enough data, this questionnaire would be published online targeting relevant populations around the world. Additionally, the study of cultures and their expectations regarding hospitality service requires respondents from various cultural backgrounds. With this aim in mind, reaching whole communities seemed an insightful method and a way to reach online communities is to join groups and forums online on social networks. Finally, the ideal respondents should be familiar with hospitality and travel experiences as well as having a cultural awareness. Accordingly, the chosen sample which matched all criteria such as "individuals who have travelled and are aware of their own culture" were identified as "frequent travellers and expatriates". The survey was made available to expatriates and frequent travellers gathering online on Facebook groups such as "WORLWIDE TRAVEL" with 108,449 members or "Indians in Sydney" with 81,825 members (See Appendix 1). To obtain additional responses, the survey was also shared with the author's personal network as well as on Facebook survey sharing groups such as "Research Participation - Dissertation, Thesis, PhD, Survey Sharing" with 33,233 members.

Results

In total, 123 respondents completed the survey, which is a reasonable response rate to identify potential trends from the data. In an initial illustration, the data collected will be presented according to demographic variables to clearly represent the studied sample:

Figure 1: Graphic Representation of the Study Sample According to Gender

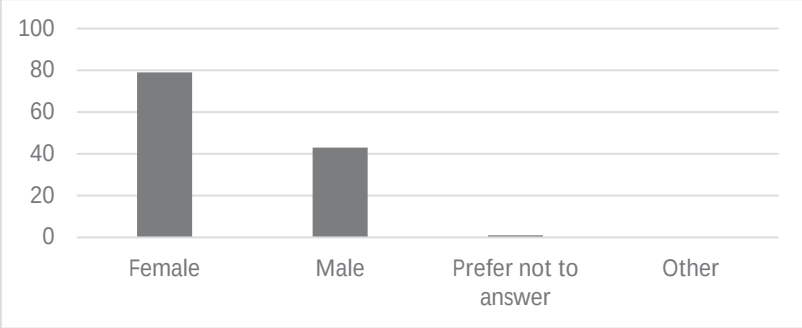
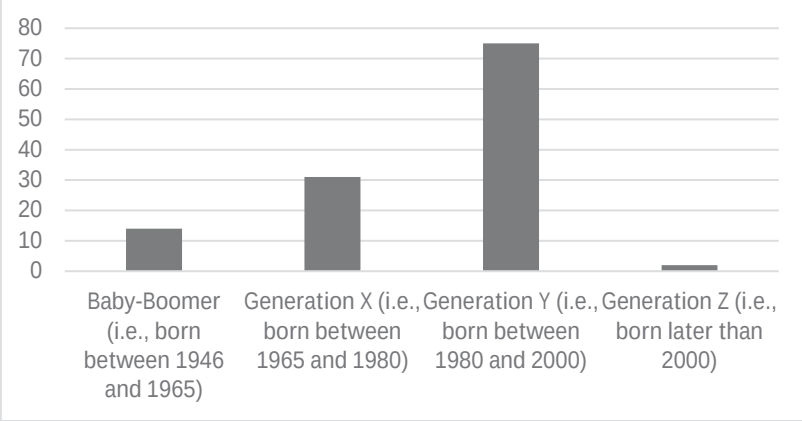


Figure 1 displays the proportions of gender among respondents, with both genders reasonably represented in the study sample. Potential trends based on gender will be acceptable with 64.2% of females and 35% of males.

Figure 2: Graphic Representation of the Studied Sample According to Generation



Additionally, respondents' ages are well spread across the different generations as can be seen from Figure 2. 61% of respondents from Generation Y may highlight relevant trends regarding this generation's preferences regarding hospitality service. However, only 2 respondents represent Generation Z which is an insufficient number for obtaining relevant results for this generation.

Figure 3: Graphic Representation of the Study Sample According to Purpose of Stay

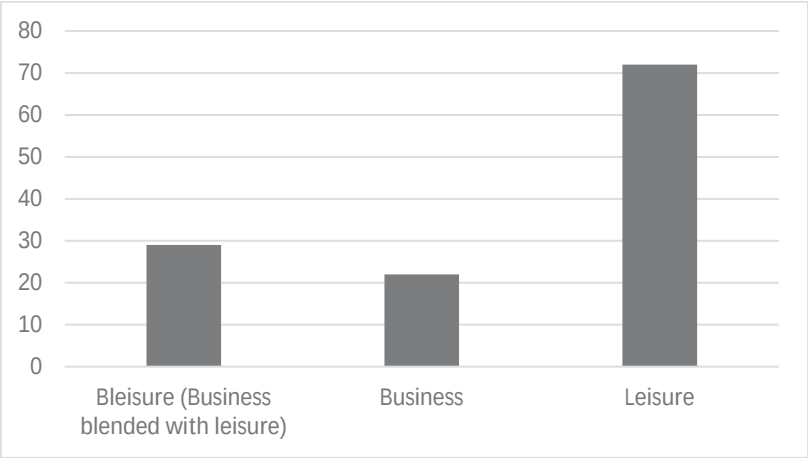


Figure 3 highlights the usual purpose of stay in a luxury hotel among respondents. Leisure guests are dominant in this sample with 58.5%, Business guests as well as Bleisure guests represent reasonable proportions of the sample and their data can be explored.

Table 1 displays the most significant variable upon which main results will be based. The present sample represents 12 of the 14 cultural clusters identified, which is satisfactory in order to conduct a deeper analysis of the results. However, the absence of respondents from Pacific and Sinosphere cultures highlights limitations of this study which will be discussed later. Nevertheless, three dominant cultural clusters compose this sample: Latin Europe 25.2%, Anglo-Saxon 23.6% and Indosphere 18.7% will reveal significant trends through the analysis of survey responses on hospitality service. Additionally, to a lesser extent, Germanic, Slav and Scandinavian cultures are well represented in this sample. The remaining cultural clusters having respondent numbers not exceeding 3 will have less significant implications, their analysis will depend on potentially relevant data. The demographic data representing respondents' nationalities is displayed in

Appendix 2.

Table 1: Representation of the Sample According to Cultural Cluster

Culture	Number of respondents
Latin Europe (i.e., France, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain)	31
Anglo-Saxon	29
Indosphere (i.e., Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi)	23
South-East Asia	11
Germanic	9
Slav	6
Scandinavian (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Greenland)	5
Latin America	3
Sub-Saharan Africa	2
Caribbean	2
Arab	1
Japan	1
Total	123

To assess potential trends in common perceptions among cultural clusters, an analysis of the data was conducted. As presented previously, the survey, composed of 15 questions regarding hospitality service, assesses five cultural dimensions within three questions for each dimension, exploring three unique components of these dimensions. Results showed a wide range of responses and, to visualise relevant data, the mean values for the number of respondents and the proportion related to the entire cultural cluster was calculated for each degree of each cultural dimension. Therefore, key tendencies were highlighted for each cultural dimension and cultural cluster as displayed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Model used to illustrate trends about one cultural dimension within one cultural cluster

Cultural Dimension degree	Mean no. of respondents	Mean proportion (in %)
Low Degree	Mean no. of responses correlated with Low Degree	Proportion related to cultural cluster
Average	Mean no. of responses correlated with Average Degree	Proportion related to cultural cluster
High Degree	Mean no. of responses correlated with High Degree	Proportion related to cultural cluster
Total	Total no. of respondents by cultural cluster	100 %

The following part presents relevant trends among cultural clusters before focusing on common trends.

Independent Trends

Latin Europe

Of the initial sample, 31 subjects belonging to the Latin European culture completed and returned the questionnaire. Their responses were processed and summarised for each cultural dimension.

Table 3: Summary representation of Latin European trends according to Context

Cultural Dimension degree	Mean no. of respondents	Mean proportion (in %)
Low-Context	11	34.41
Average	14	46.24
High-Context	6	19.35
Total	31	100

Table 3 shows a tendency among Latin European respondents for Average to Low use of Context regarding hospitality service (see Kitter *et al.'s* (2011) definition above). This trend can be observed among other cultural clusters, however it is relevant to notice the significantly low trend for High context.

Table 4: Comparative Representation of High-Context Trends among Cultural Clusters

Cultural Cluster	Indosphere	Latin Europe	Anglo-Saxon	South East Asia	Germanic	Scandinavian	Slav
Mean proportion of High Context degree (in %)	17.39	19.35	21.84	24.24	25.93	26.67	27.78

Indeed, Latin Europe ranks 2nd from last in terms of use of High-Context as shown in Table 4. Secondly, Latin European respondents indicated another tendency that is worth noting regarding Monochronic-Polychronic Time. Indeed, of the 31 Latin European respondents, over half (56.99%) indicated a tendency for Monochronic perception of time.

Anglo-Saxon

Anglo-Saxon respondents accounted for 23.56% of the studied population and indicated trends and relevant indicators for two cultural dimensions. The data suggested a strong emphasis placed on cultural dimensions such as the perception of time and space. Similar to Latin Europeans, 42.53% of Anglo-Saxons showed signs of Monochronic perception of time and 73.56% provided answers correlated with Average to Monochronic perception of time. Regarding the perception of space, which is illustrated by Proxemics, no significant trends emerged in the responses from Anglo-Saxon respondents.

Indosphere

In total, 23 respondents from the Indosphere cultural cluster responded to the survey. However, although this culture ranks 3rd in terms of response rate, the variety of responses on cultural dimensions is worthy of note. The only relevant trend shown in the data is illustrated by perception of time as shown in Table 5, which suggests a moderate tendency for Monochronic perception of time.

Table 5: Summary Representation of Indosphere Trends regarding Time

Cultural Dimension degree	Mean no. of respondents	Mean proportion (in %)
Monochronic Time	10	44,93
Average	6	24,64
Polychronic Time	7	30,43
Total	23	100

The absence of additional trends should equally be highlighted for the implications of this. It seems that this cultural cluster encompasses varied opinions and attitudes potentially shaped by different external factors.

South East Asia

The previously discussed phenomenon is furthermore illustrated by South East Asian respondents. No trend for any cultural value was indicated by the data, which is a unique case in this entire study. This strengthens indications made both in the literature and during this study about the complexity of culturally categorising this part of the world. However, a moderate trend (42.42%) towards Polychronic perception of time is suggested by the data, which is also unique so far for the South-East Asia cluster.

Germanic

The most remarkable result to emerge from the data concerns Germanic respondents who account for 7.3% of the study sample. Respondents belonging to this culture indicated well-defined trends for every cultural dimension. Such results can be interpreted in order to create a standard Germanic profile compiling relevant tendencies and expectations. Indeed, the data suggests that hotel guests from this culture place emphasis on a low use of Context in communication (44.44%), a Monochronic perception of time (44.44%), and a high tendency towards “Vast” Proxemics (59.26%) as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Summary Representation of Germanic Trends regarding Proxemics

Cultural Dimension degree	Mean no. of respondents	Mean proportion (in %)
Close Proxemics	2	22,22
Average	1,7	18,52
Vast Proxemics	5,3	59,26
Total	9	100

Additionally, Germanic culture suggests a significantly low degree of Power Distance (see Table 7) and an emphasis placed on Indulgent values (74.07%).

Table 7: Summary Representation of Germanic Trends regarding Power Distance

Cultural Dimension degree	Mean no. of respondents	Mean proportion (in %)
Low Power Distance	5	55,56
Average	2	22,22
High Power Distance	2	22,22
Total	9	100

Slav

The significantly reduced size of this cultural cluster (6 respondents) limits the significance of any potential trends identified. However, Slav respondents demonstrated relevant trends. Table 8 illustrates the only cultural cluster other than South East Asia to place emphasis on a Polychronic perception of time.

Table 8: Summary Representation of Slav Trends regarding Perception of Time

Cultural Dimension degree	Mean no. of respondents	Mean proportion (in %)
Monochronic Time	2	33,33
Average	1	16,67
Polychronic Time	3	50,00
Total	6	100

Common Trends

Power Distance

An independent analysis of each cultural cluster highlighted relevant trends regarding hospitality service through cultural dimensions. However, a comparative analysis of cultural dimensions between cultural clusters suggests additional findings.

Table 9: Comparative Representation of Low Power Distance Trends among Cultural Clusters

Cultural Cluster	Slav	Indosphere	South East Asia	Anglo-Saxon	Latin Europe	Scandinavian	Germanic
Mean proportion of Low Power Distance degree (in %)	22.22	36.23	45.45	48.28	49.46	53.33	55.56

Table 9 ranks degrees of Low Power Distance among the cultural clusters studied. It is worth noting that even if this trend is global, there are significant variations between Germanic and Slav cultural clusters. Scandinavian and Germanic cultures indicate a strong dominance of Low Power Distance values regarding hospitality service. In contrast, Slav culture indicates the lowest degree of Low Power Distance followed by the Indosphere cultural cluster which highlights a comparative trend regardless of the absence of independent tendencies.

Indulgence – Restraint

This cultural dimension illustrates the strongest trends for one degree of a cultural dimension as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Comparative Representation of Indulgence Trends among Cultural Clusters

Cultural Cluster	Slav	Germanic	South East Asia	Latin Europe	Indosphere	Scandinavian	Anglo-Saxon
Mean proportion of Indulgence degree (in %)	61.11	74.07	78.79	79.57	82.61	86.67	88.51

However, it is interesting to note that Slav culture ranks last again on this dimension, as it does for Power Distance, which provides insight into their perception and experience of hospitality service. In contrast, Scandinavian culture ranks high on both Power Distance and Indulgence, which suggests opposing perceptions to Slav culture.

Proxemics

Like Indulgence, Proxemics perception indicates a common trend for "Vast" Proxemics among cultures as illustrated in Table 11. This phenomenon, as for other common trends, may suggest standardised expectations among cultures regarding hospitality service, which will be discussed. This effect is moderated for Indosphere, Scandinavian and South East Asian culture clusters.

Table 11: Comparative Representation of "Vast" Proxemics Trends among Cultural Clusters

Cultural Cluster	South East Asia	Indosphere	Scandinavian	Anglo-Saxon	Latin Europe	Slav	Germanic
Mean proportion of "Vast" Proxemics degree (in %)	27.27	39.13	40	42.53	48.39	55.56	59.26

Discussion

These analyses generally revealed correlations between cultural clusters, their cultural dimensions and expectations regarding customer experience in a luxury hospitality context. Critically, the single most significant results occurred within the Germanic cultural cluster. The collection and analysis of the data highlights strong trends shared within this culture. To enhance their customer experience, hotel staff should focus on providing these guests with well-defined information relating to any aspect of their stay. Respecting schedules will also contribute towards building customer satisfaction: giving tangible information to Germanic guests will reassure them of the smooth running of operations. Indications of times should always be respected and given honestly to these guests. This culture has shown a preference towards "Vast" Proxemics which can be used by staff during interactions with them, insisting on the size of a room or the pool area, reassuring these guests about the accessibility of hotel facilities will increase their satisfaction and trust in the hotel. Nevertheless, staff members should not try to connect too directly with Germanic guests as they place emphasis on work and the responsibilities associated. A professional attitude will be preferred when interacting with Germanic guests, this can be in contrast with the low degree of Power Distance however, it simply implies that there is no need to insist on the benefits Germanic guests enjoy and compare them to other guests: these guests do not feel the need to be special or above others. However, they expect things to be done professionally and on time. On a different level, Scandinavian guests share this significantly low level of Power Distance. However, in their case, this is combined with high Indulgence values which suggests hotel staff should try their best to interact on the same level as Scandinavian guests. More than simply not acknowledging a particular social status, it is suggested rather to connect on a more personal level with Scandinavians. Their curiosity and appeal for different but casual environments will enable staff members to create personal bonds with these guests.

Although the results highlighted in this study contrast with the perception of time for Latin European and Indosphere cultures (contradicting commonly expected behaviours), this implies that, as for other cultures, schedules should be respected. Applying the findings on Slav culture is typical of widely accepted cultural values related to this population. Their expectations are comparatively low compared with other cultures as is illustrated by the Polychronic perception of time. In order to enhance Slav individuals' customer experience in luxury hotels, staff members should focus on their attitudes and try to use similar communication tools and

attitudes to mirror those of Slav guests. The relationship between these guests and staff should always remain professional. Creating boundaries between the guest and the staff member is an efficient way to acknowledge their particular social status, which will be appreciated. External signs of satisfaction may be rare for Slav guests; however, professional interactions and respect of intimacy will create a positive customer experience.

These findings confirm **H1: "Some aspects of customer experience related to the luxury hospitality industry should be designed according to cultural cluster."**

However, this study has shown common phenomena regarding hospitality service. Indeed, universal practices related to luxury hospitality characteristics are commonly accepted among cultures. Primarily, cultural clusters tend to prefer a High use of Context in communication. This can be explained by the common need for clarity among guests. As discussed previously, hotel guests purchase a room and included services for a given period of time. Therefore, it is understandable that guests expect to be explicitly given relevant information which could be useful for them. In doing so, guests will not have to contact staff members to obtain information which would consume some of their limited time in the hotel, time which could be used for leisure or work instead. Interestingly, Indulgence and Low Power Distance values seem commonly accepted by guests even in the luxury segment. This strengthens concepts already developed by hotel management as all guests should be treated as VIPs and staff members should try their best to get to know guests, ask questions, notice the "golden nuggets" given by a guest during a conversation which will be used to surprise that guest at the end of the day. Guests of superior social status are satisfied with the tangible benefits of being a loyal guest or having higher financial resources, therefore a genuine and constant service, yet exceptions enhance their customer experience. Finally, "Vast" Proxemics were shown to be a common perception among cultures. More spacious rooms imply higher prices, large sized hotels imply success of hotel management, therefore guests' perceptions can be easily triggered by promoting tangible hotel features such as a high rooftop bar or an underground Olympic pool.

These findings confirm **H2: "Some aspects of customer experience related to the luxury hospitality industry should be designed according to a luxury hospitality standards model."**

Yet, some cultural clusters showed no trends for specific items relating to customer service. Indosphere and South East Asia, geographically close, are

composed of numerous subcultures each having a strong influence on people's opinions, attitudes and behaviours in these societies. This suggests that staff should not make assumptions concerning expectations. It is better to get to know the guest through observations or casual interactions. Based on these, each staff member should adapt their customer service to assumptions made over time.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this study succeeds in demonstrating expected implications, it is plausible that a few limitations may have influenced the results obtained. Limitations reveal the complexity of collecting data from cultural groups. Indeed, the absence of Sinosphere, Arab and Japanese respondents reduces the scope of wider implications. These cultures are of real interest, as they have strong distinguishing features which deeply differentiates them from other cultures. However, data collection was limited by several factors. Chinese individuals do not have access to Facebook as easily as other cultures and attempts to share the survey on Facebook groups comprising Japanese and Arab culture members were refused and signalled by group administrators.

Another limitation of this study is the absence of data relating to the destinations of respondents, the locations of hotels in which they have stayed would provide additional explanatory content. Consequently, cultural distance was not measured as its role in moderating such phenomena was developed in the literature (Huang and Crotts, 2019). Furthermore, it is implied that staff must make assumptions regarding the guest's culture: this is a difficult task and practice is required to optimise this approach. Assumptions should always be supported by tangible elements confirming them, as globalisation and increased immigration makes this far from straightforward. Finally, regarding collection and analysis of the data, it is assumed that more complex mathematical tools would have highlighted additional trends and results. Additionally, a more complex questionnaire developed by several researchers would likely generate better results and response rate.

Regarding future research, further experimental investigations are needed to develop a stronger model of cultural clusters. This is a fundamental issue for future research as a well-developed model could be applied for other industries and fields of research. Secondly, this study's results highlighted a phenomenon of standardisation of customer expectations in the luxury hospitality industry. An important matter to investigate for future studies

would be the causes of this phenomenon, whether other industries are involved and what this means about business practices and consumer behaviour. Studying its effects, and therefore whether it is external factors which standardise customer expectations worldwide can enable business practices to be changed accordingly. Or perhaps it is rather the case that industries standardise their practices with the aim of optimising processes based on existing research, and this impacts guests' expectations.

Conclusions

This study was developed and conducted with the initial aim of providing hotel management and staff members with tangible insights regarding customer satisfaction and levers depending on the cultural background of the customers. The hospitality and tourism industry may well be the fields wherein the most intercultural interactions occur. The findings presented should help hotel managers to provide key satisfaction levers to their staff. Hotel staff gather several times a day to share relevant information about the smooth running of operations. Future arrivals are discussed and ways to enhance customer experience are shared among hotel teams. Team leaders will be able to use this study's findings to share the best practices to enhance customer experience. Different hotel attributes to highlight, how to communicate with these guests and how familiar staff members should interact with them are all axes, which will contribute towards customising every customer experience.

Appendix 1: List of Facebook Groups Used to Obtain Respondents

Group Name	No. of members
All About Singapore – Expats	43.3K
Bali Expats	57.5K
Expats Germany	5.8K
Expats in China	9.4K
Expats in Colombia	14.6K
Expats in Italy	12.5K
Expats in Nigeria	9.3K
Expats in the Netherlands	39.7K
Foreigners in Brazil	9.5K
Indians in Sydney	82.1K
Les Français en Australie	51.0K
Muslims in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Australia	41.6K
Research Participation - Dissertation, Thesis, PhD, Survey Sharing	33.3K
Russian Travel, Culture and Literature Club	8.4K
South Asian Community of Australia	8.4K
Survey Sharing 2020	22.0K
WORLDWIDE TRAVEL	108.4K

Appendix 2: Detailed Nationalities from Studied Sample

Nationality	Number of respondents
French	21
Indian	16
British	14
American	12
NA	3
Australian	3
Filipino	3
German	3
Indian	2
Singaporean	2
Mexican	2
Canadian	2
Swedish	2
Dutch	2
Irish	2
Belgian	2
Russian	2
French	2
South African	2
Brazilian	2
Vietnamese	2
American	2
Indonesian	2
Greek	1
French-Australian	1
Polish	1
British-German	1
South African	1
Croatian	1
Australian	1
Macedonian	1
French-American	1
Malaysian	1
Slovakian	1
Malaysian	1

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ARTICLE IX

INSIGHTS INTO CHINESE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE ACTION

INÈS CASTAGNET

Introduction

In the last few years, the topic of sustainable development has gained international traction. China is heavily investing in national and international implementation structures, mutual partnerships, and jointly determined outcomes towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Domestic implementation mechanisms have included 43 government departments with plans to strengthen inter-sector policy coordination and relevant laws and regulations. China's 13th Five Year Plan (FYP) included the SDG and positioning towards a more sustainable future. Considerable overlap exists between prioritized areas for implementation in the 13th FYP, the SDG, and issues of biodiversity. The upcoming 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties at the Convention of Biodiversity (COP15 CBD) covers biodiversity, governance, conservation, biosafety, ecosystem approach, sustainable use, impact assessment and international negotiations as core tenets (UN Biodiversity Conference IISD, 2021). China's policy agenda and implementation have shifted focus to bring environmental concerns to the forefront, alongside economic and social issues. Therefore, though all three key pillars of environment, social and economic SDG are taken into account in this review, there is a stronger emphasis on environmental features.

Sustainable Development is defined as "development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Burtland and World Commission on Environment Development, 1987; Qin and Hou, 2018: 56; Khun, 2018: 361). The SDG are complex, multifaceted, and far-reaching and are centred on three key pillars of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development (Xue *et al*., 2018: 150; Khun, 2018: 361). Therefore, for China to achieve the 2030 SDG requires the country to take a multi-stakeholder

approach and establish national, regional, and global partnerships.

An under-researched stakeholder is the youth and youth participation. They represent future leaders, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and citizens. In China, 227 million youths represent 17% of the population. There is therefore compelling engagement potential for issues of sustainability, safe environment, and lifestyle practices. This chapter seeks to understand how youth participation (YP) in China plays a role in China's national and international ambitions to achieve the global SDG. Each topic is traced in turn in the review of the literature.

Literature

China in Context: Challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals

Government Implementation and Institutional Capacities

The sheer size and scope of China's territory and population make widespread implementation of the SDG difficult. China's challenges are far-reaching, such as: reducing the high-level dependency on coal, implementing green policies and reforms across diverse economic contexts and locations, the relations between central and subnational governments and fostering comparative advantages through multi-stakeholder interactions (Khun, 2018: 379-384). Systems of regulation are therefore diverse; established by many different entities in different phases with separate rules and regulations. As a result, implementation of SDG in China may suffer from a lack of resources and coordination capacity (Xue *et al*., 2018: 151), along with insufficient and ineffective regulatory bodies (Wong, 2005: 45), and lack of financial, organizational, technical, human and political capacity (Rooij *et al*., 2016: 6). It is challenging to balance economic growth with environmental concerns (Khun, 2018: 379).

Public Knowledge and Awareness

Some scholars argue that China's national and international ambitions, are not disseminated in civic society. There is a low regard and concern for environmental issues among the Chinese public (Lee, 2005; Wong, 2005: 40-45). This is caused by lack of environmental knowledge and education, prioritizing social or economic issues instead, and due to top-down environmental protection and management strategy – all of which discourage civil participation resulting from the firm belief of government

reliance and the small number of platforms available for public participation. Environmental protection is ranked 5th on the "Public's rank-ordered list of national development goals" after economic development, science and technological advancement, controlling population growth and social justice (Wong, 2005: 42; Lee, 2005: 45). More recent literature, however, argues that in the last decade, issues of pollution and health have come to the forefront. The public has gradually become aware of environmental protection and the concept of sustainable development (Li *et al*., 2018). The dominance of environmental discussion within the framework of sustainable development is noticeable in literature. When comparing the indicators of social, environment, and economic development of the 6th FYP (1981-1985) to the 11th FYP (2006-2010), it was found that "indicators measuring economic growth decreased from 60.7% to 22.7%; by contrast, the indicators of social development, environment and education increased dramatically from 39.3% to 77.3%" (Hu, Yan, and Lu, cited in Xue *et al*., 2018:153).

Xue *et al*. (2018) further compare how the focus of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) FYP has evolved from economic growth as the only key pillar to "mutual coordination and inclusion of environment, economy and society" in successive plans towards a green economy in the last 13th FYP (Xue *et al*., 2018:155). The SDG are used as inspiration to promote an overall healthier China, which characterizes the "shift in the country's concentration towards coordinated development of a health-based economy from a previous pursuit of rapid economic growth" (Tan *et al*., 2018:2).

China in Context: Youth Participation

Multi-Stakeholder Approach

The literature shows that an initiative as far-reaching as the SDG cannot be achieved by the CCP alone. National governance, together with local governments, should establish mechanisms of environmental protection, engage in market promotion, and encourage public participation (Zhang and Wen, 2008; 1258). Political leadership needs to pay attention to a variety of different stakeholders, which contribute to the 2030 sustainability agenda, such as the private sector, non-profit, and international corporations like the UN (Khun, 2018). The focus of this chapter is on youth as the primary unit of analysis. Owing to the lack of literature connecting YP, SDG and China simultaneously, this next section seeks first to understand the parameters and relevance of YP in China.

In 2018, the World Youth Report (2018) on the 2030 Agenda highlighted how the long-term success of SDG is "largely contingent upon how well youth development efforts are integrated into the policies, plans and actions adopted to bring about their realization" (World Youth Report, 2018), and that achievement of the SDG will require coordination "across policy sectors and frameworks, but vertically among community, local, national, regional and global authorities, together with civil society stakeholders, including youth" (ibid). YP is defined as a process of social inclusion (Head, 2011:541-542), which involves not only young people but also requires active engagement and real influence in decision-making and institutional settings (Checkoway, 2011). It is a process of involving young people in decisions, rights and institutions that affect their everyday lives. The latest UN World Youth Report bracket YP between the ages of 14-28 years old (World Youth Report, 2018), however the youngest group of participants included in this paper are 5 year olds. This chapter thus brackets YP in the range of 5-28 years old.

Benefits and Challenges of Youth Participation

YP can have numerous benefits for the development, competencies, and wellbeing of the individual and has positive effects for organizations, communities, and the wider society (Hart, 1992; Head, 2011; Narksompong and Limjirakan, 2015:174; Wong *et al*., 2010). Individually, the youth can gain a sense of responsibility, social cooperation, critical reflection skills (Hart, 1992:41), freedom of expression, well-being, autonomy and satisfying developmental needs (Wong *et al*., 2010:101). At an organizational and societal level, it upholds children's rights, improves services, decision-making, enhances the democratic process (Sinclair, 2004: 108), as well as developing social resources and networks (Law and Xu, 2013: 149). However, in the Chinese context, this may threaten the CCP's authoritarian style of government. The authoritarian logic of regulatory pluralism for new, environmentally driven actors is a double-sided coin in China, shifting between support and restriction (Rooij *et al*., 2016). On the one hand, central-local officials value new actors who can help collect new information and enforce the law. On the other hand, there is a danger that environmental activism could spiral into a broader political complaint (ibid.). At present, the participation of different stakeholders is often part of 'invited spaces' of the CCP, whereby opportunities to participate are structured and owned by the CCP.

Official and Non-Official Channels of Youth Participation in China

Similar invited spaces can be viewed with official channels of YP that are structured and owned by the CCP. Programs such as the Red Army Youth, as well as multiple mobilization movements including "the New Cultural Movement in 1919, support for the CCP during the resistance war against Japan of 1937 to 1945 and Civil War between the CCP and the Nationalist Party from 1945 to 1953…" (Johnson *et al*., 2007: 352-353) have been invited to spaces for YP. The purpose of YP was primarily political, to strengthen the CCP's rule, strengthen national independence, and to achieve national unity (Ngai *et al*., 2001: 652-653; Law, 2013: 147; Ngai 1994: 91). More recently, YP has been carried out through organizations such as the Communist Youth Party (CYP), and the Communist Youth League (CYL) (Ngai *et al*., 2001: 654; Law, 2013: 145). The CYL is the most intensive body that advises the CPP on youth policy formulation and provides spaces for young people to express their opinions.

Although the CCP and the CYL emphasize the importance of democracy, free discourse, and information to improve streamlining of youth policy (Ngai *et al*., 2001: 654), in reality, this does not happen. YP within CYL organizations have had little engagement with students, are integrated in an unfavourable manner in society, remain unresponsive to student welfare, and take on a supervisory role (Tsimonis, 2018). This is often attributed to the fact that the government rarely takes opportunities for participation of young people seriously and that there are few organizational arrangements to do so (Head, 2011: 542-545). However, it is important to note that other factors, such as individual personal capacities, development, socio-economic background, and interest, also play a role. Although the CYL may not be a suitable medium for YP, they do help students with political career development (Law, 2013: 147).

The rise of the Internet and e-participation has opened up a new space for YP, which promotes the inclusion of a wider group of stakeholders, disseminates information, and facilitates a new form of public engagement (He, 2016; Liu, 2011; Wang, 2018: 117). The Internet provides youth with resources and opportunities to gain access to information and engage in topics and social issues that are otherwise not accessible through government led platforms. Accessibility, information and communication, however, are regulated by the Chinese government (He, 2016: 199; Zheng and Wu, 2005: 518) and therefore, not as free as they may appear. Internet participation is, thus, an invited space of regulatory authoritarianism.

The SDG however, and more specifically environmental issues, are considered as less politically sensitive and are often debated in Chinese media, by NGOs and online (He, 2016: 195). While this may be the case, when YP is brought into the mix, most literature on YP and the Internet in China has been surrounded by the popular discourse of political participation (Wang *et al*., 2018: 115-136; Wang and Shi, 2018; Pathak-Shelat and Bhatia, 2019). Online collective action is still regarded as a risk because it is prohibited by the State (Wang *et al*., 2018: 131). Though contribution to the SDG in China can be said to contribute to political action, it avoids being labelled in this way to avert governmental resistance. YP towards achieving the SDG generally occurs through organizations and businesses for purposes of education and extended support of the CCP in their national and international ambitions, rather than taking a political stance. These are typically considered as "safe" activities. This is because any organization or business addressing SDG issues undergo a lengthy process of approval by the State, where their activities continue to be scrutinized even when they have been established (Wang and Shi, 2018: 521). It remains to be seen how the CCP can retain its State dominance and societal stability, whilst creating space for new actors and different stakeholders to participate in the undertaking of the SDG. Even though official channels of YP remain minimal, the Internet provides various online spaces in which YP can participate. These are often mediated through other stakeholders such as NGOs, commercial businesses, and international businesses. Little academic research, however, has been conducted on how non-State stakeholders facilitate YP towards the SDG. The case studies highlighted in this chapter serve as a tool to bridge this gap in literature.

Theoretical Frameworks

Prior research suggests that youth participatory methods are localized between the power dimension of youth and adults (Cahill and Dadvand, 2018: 245; Hart, 1992: 8-10; Shier, 2001: 112-115; Sinclair, 2004; White, 2010; Wong *et al*., 2010: 103) – and are context, task, and individual dependent (Cahill and Dadvand, 2018: 244; Shier, 2001: 110; Sinclair, 2004). The *Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment* (TYPE) framework determines how different adult-youth collaboration can influence a project/organization, and lead to empowerment (Wong *et al*., 2010). Youth-adult power dynamics and relationships are split into three participation types: adult-driven, shared control, and youth-driven (ibid). Adult-driven participation is defined as *Vessel* and *Symbolic* participation. The youth are fixed in a dominant power hierarchy of adults, where they

have very little input, participation, or opportunity for co-learning with adults. The imbalance of power and authority can limit YP and empowerment. On the other hand, adult driven participation can be an important catalyst for dialogue and contribute to skills and resources that the youth may need in order to succeed or take part in the process of participation (ibid, 107). When youth-driven participation is *independent* and *autonomous*, adults are still involved by creating a space and making resources available for the youth, so that the youth can implement and conceptualize their own projects. They are able to address their own needs, and their participation operates without consent or guidance from adults (ibid, 109-110). The most optimal level of engagement is the youth-adult shared control, which is defined as *pluralistic.* This is where the most empowerment can occur: adults can serve as enablers to resources, social capital, primary sources and positive reinforcement so that shared decision-making can take place. The degree of engagement, however, is dependent on the social context and is a complex process that constantly differs according to different levels of activity/organization, public versus private decisions, time spans, and the diverse body of youth involvement (Sinclair, 2004: 109).

Though this model outlines adult and youth coordination and cooperation as being optimal, whether this is feasible remains to be seen. Depending on the context/situation, solely adult- or youth-driven, may in fact be more appropriate. There may even be a coexistence of different types of participation within one project. The model overlooks this detail. Furthermore, Wong *et al*. (2010) do not define and conceptualize the terms "empowerment" and "control" (Cahill and Dadvand, 2018:245). Being a central term within the TYPE pyramid, this work defines empowerment as being when people are able to represent themselves and their interests in a way that increases their autonomy and self-determination as individuals and as a wider community. In a broader sense, power dynamics also exist in the societal collaboration of internal and external stakeholders, such as between governments, private enterprises, NGOs, and so on. Therefore, when exploring how YP plays a role in the SDG in China, institutional and societal, organizational, and individual contexts are taken into account.

Jans and Backer's (2002) youth work and social participation model takes individual context and organization features into account when looking at YP in different organizations/initiatives in China. Institutional frameworks and socio-cultural perspectives of this model will not be included. This is because looking at how institutional frameworks and socio-cultural perspectives in China influence YP requires a top-down perspective – and therefore does not address the research question in seeking to understand

how YP plays a role in achieving the SDG, which takes a bottom-up approach. Furthermore, the previous sections of this essay have already covered macro-social contexts by highlighting government implementation and institutions, public knowledge, and awareness of the SDG as well as governmental and non-official contexts of YP in China.

Jans and Backer (2002) look at individual context through how a *challenge* (participation incentive), *connection* (to stakeholders), and *capacity* (to make a difference) (CCC) drive the youth to actively participate in society. The dynamic balance between these three dimensions makes participation more meaningful. It determines in which circumstances/initiatives the youth are (or not) driven to participate. The CCC take a bottom-up approach to youth participation to shed light on youth experiences outside of adult-centric influences on youth participation.

In addition, Jans and Backer (2002) explore organizational contexts to understand how the YP operates. This includes specific circumstances of participation initiatives. Initiatives are typically embedded in concrete projects and planning processes within an organizing body. These include "external or internal participation, direct and indirect participation and participation through structures and/or through more spontaneous bonds and channels" (ibid., 7). Internal participation refers to the youth and youth organization, contributing and interacting with each other to help shape developments within youth projects. External participation refers to the youth and youth organization going beyond their own circle into the wider public domain and society so that they interact with local or global developments. Direct participation refers to the interaction between the youth and youth organization, and other actors involved without the help of intermediaries. Indirect participation is when actors mediate youth participation between the youth and other actors. Each initiative looks at a balance between direct and indirect forms of participation. Whilst concrete projects can take a highly structured approach, with pre-structured channels and clear representatives, spontaneous projects may take an unstructured approach where the youth and other actors are not regulated beforehand (ibid., 8-10). Lastly, participation can be seen as both a process and a product where an interplay of both is optimal for stimulating YP. Whilst the process of participation creates a sense of connection, concrete results can be useful for stimulating further action and a sense of achievement.

A limitation of this model is that it does not delineate the parameters of how the categories ought to be investigated in a given context. For example, which tools are needed to measure the CCC. The same applies to the

organizational configuration.

Methodology

To address the research question, three case studies are examined, based on entities that meet the following criteria: a) a non-governmental entity b) aspects of SDG as a focus of their work, c) inclusion of both national and international activities/stakeholders within the organization, d) having a clear mission that includes YP, and e) active in the last 12 months. Official governmental channels of SDG YP are excluded from this study because of inaccessibility of information. The case studies provide contemporary, pertinent and bottom-up examples of SDG orientated YP in China, which has not yet been investigated within an academic framework. The case studies thus aim to tackle this gap in the literature.

Case Studies

Goal Blue (Goalblue为蓝, 2021) is a non-profit NGO that aims to cultivate a mindset change towards sustainable consumption and health practices. They rely on both international (France, Switzerland, US) and national donors who also have climate change and sustainability-related interests. Goal Blue has promoted the "Good For Earth Good For Me" (GEGM) youth campaign which focuses on youth sustainability leadership in China by addressing topics of sustainable products and services, plant-based dietary consumption, and re-usable products (ibid). Their campaign has engaged over 50 million people online. The NGO has been able to provide their current and future plans for the campaign (Youth Leadership Proposal, 2020), data on Generation Z (2020), their youth leadership proposal, and a three-year report (2019) of how their efforts of social impact, through their different campaigns, have been measured. The target youth include college students and international school students.

Tommy Hendriks (Sustainability Portfolio, 2021) is a commercial international shareholder company which, in addition to providing consultancy services, is dedicated to undertaking youth-targeted sustainable development projects by combining music and the arts. They hold large-scale events, exhibitions, and festivals. High school and college students are involved through initiatives such as Tianjin Youth City Forest (TYCF) (2017-2019), and the Great Wall SDG conference (2019) at the Yin Yang Music Festival (YYMF). Additionally, Hendriks is working on a China Eco Youth Strategy (CEYS) to educate and involve the youth to be "aware of biodiversity and

the steps they can take to conserve and use them sustainably" (CEYS Summary, 2020), which is one of China's national 2020 goals. However, due to COVID-19 this initiative is on hold. Each event has specific goals that pertain to the SDG.

WildBound is an independent company, which is privately and donor-funded. They educate the youth through educational K-12 school programs, national and international expeditions, experiential leading, advocacy, arts, and literary events (WildBound, 2019). By associating experiential projects with schools, scientists, policymakers, and other stakeholders, they work towards innovating and promoting environmentally conscious policies and shed light on issues such as sustainable tourism, polar conservation, and biodiversity. Their aim is to nurture next-generation climate and sustainability leaders with transformative and interdisciplinary educational experiences, and by providing access to relevant resources/databases, that will inspire long-term conservation and change (Journey with Us | Exploration | WildBound, 2019).

Information about YP was gathered by surveying online platforms, namely the website of each case study and WeChat platforms. To gain insights, multiple interviews per organization were conducted with the CEOs and senior staff of each. The Jans and Backer and TYPE pyramid, were used to establish boundaries for the investigation, findings and analyses of the case studies. The Jans and Backers model was used to highlight the findings, whilst the TYPE pyramid was used to analyse the findings. The models are also exploratory in nature, allowing for open-ended answers.

Limitations

YP is context-dependent, founded on existing institutions, values, and societal structures. Accordingly, the case studies are based in large metropolitan areas in China (Shanghai, Tianjin, Beijing). China is a vast country with a diverse population; therefore, the findings and analysis cannot be generalized and are not representative of the wider Chinese context. At present, however, there is almost no data available on YP and the SDG in other parts of China. Additionally, the three case studies vary between local businesses, international businesses, and non-profit organizations. There is a need for cross-case analysis across more organizations and businesses to develop a more accurate picture of YP towards SDG ambitions in China. Their different statuses and governance structures may have deeper implications for the possibilities and restrictions of YP participation towards the SDG. Another limitation is that Jans and Backer and the TYPE empowerment

theory adopt an adult-centric framing of YP. Furthermore, there was little access to accounts and testimonials of the youth participating within the case studies for more direct youth accounts to be included in the chapter. Furthermore, Jan and de Backer and the TYPE framework are based on western conceptions of YP. Whilst their work bridges the gap by providing contextual information (about China's SDG intuitions and implementation mechanisms in China, and YP and YP mediums in China), future research is needed to take into account how Chinese cultural and societal structures play a role in the (youth) participatory sphere and structures. This could be achieved by including institutional frameworks, and social and cultural perceptions of Jan and de Backer's framework, which are outside the scope of this paper.

Lastly, the theory only focuses on participation as face-to-face interaction within a project. However, in the 21st century the Internet has become a place of frequent interaction with the youth and taken a more dominant role in participation. The case studies all represent facets of online youth communication and participation. Other popular platforms – such as Bilibili, Weibo, and Tiktok – should be included for analysis. Especially since research suggests that WeChat is declining in popularity amongst those born later than the 2000s (WeChat Revenue and Usage Statistics (2020), 2020). Future research should include a framework and analysis of YP on sustainability in the online sphere.

Findings

Challenge, Capacity, Connection

Challenge

In all three cases, the overarching '*challenge'*, which incites the youth to participate, is taking part in tackling sustainability, climate change, and biodiversity challenges in China. For example, Goal Blue aims to tackle the "severity of climate change, unsustainable land uses/deforestation, and loss of biodiversity" (Youth Leadership Proposal, 2020). Tommy Hendriks raises awareness about sustainability and sustainable development through the challenge of restoring China's biodiversity. WildBound focuses on sustainable tourism, polar conservation, and biodiversity. These larger topics are then usually broken down into "sub-challenges," which are smaller topics of interest. These topics of interest are then combined with other youth interests such as music, the arts, celebrities, excursions, adding an additional incentive to participate. In 2019, for example, Goal Blue, in

partnership with the China Midi rock music festival, promoted "one day a week, Meatless Happiness," plant-based food was introduced at the music festival and rock bands promoted the program (GoalBlue 3-Year Report, 2019). Youth with interests in music and food are introduced to the topic of smart eating and sustainable agriculture. In Hendriks, the specific "challenge" is determined by a survey where the majority of the youths expressed interest in ecology and sustainability music festivals, followed by forest planning and action to save endangered species (CEYS Summary, 2020). At WildBound, Sub-Topics have typically been divided into different learning strands of K-12 school programs, and national and international expeditions. Participants also have to complete modules at school, produce a report, or organize another activity in which they can showcase lessons learnt. The "challenge" in WildBound is an approach that combines theoretical learning with experiential and action-based projects on one of the main topics. The initiatives of youth participation are far-reaching and diverse.

Capacity

The youth 'challenge' blends with the *capacity* for the youth to feel like they are making a genuine difference through their efforts. As a result of the lack of sufficient access to accounts and testimonials of youth participants themselves, the capacity of the youth can be determined by the skills that the youth possess and by asking the case-study organizations about youth capacities, and how they help facilitate action. According to the volunteer head at Goal Blue, the majority of the participants are still in high school or are freshmen, so they still need to be trained/inducted (小岛 (Isla) 2020, personal communication, May 11). Additionally, Hendriks made a similar remark that when the youth were invited to steer initiatives and events, it became an inconvenience, and worked against productivity as there were too many conflicting opinions and not enough knowledge about the issues at hand. However, Goal Blue has found that they spend most of their free time on online entertainment such as short videos, music, social media and playing games. They also found that the top 3 values of Generation Z are a strong environmental focus, self-driving action, and strong social responsibility (小岛 (Isla) 2020, personal communication, May 11; GoalBlue 3-Year Report, 2019). This indicates that there is existing knowledge of Internet use and awareness about the topic of sustainability and biodiversity in China. This is fundamental to the youth having the potential and capacity to participate.

However, the youth can make a difference through their interaction in online spaces. For example, by signing Goal Blue's 1 million petition as part of the GEGM campaign or engaging online and group chat spaces in the monthly topics and challenges (Goalblue为蓝, 2021). In Tommy Hendriks, the youth are able to make a difference by volunteering their time, attending events, and participating in online dialogue through the Tommy Hendricks WeChat page. At events, volunteers are screened for their capacities as they must speak English, be able to work in a multicultural setting, have an interest in EDM and display an understanding about and passion for sustainability (Blair, 2020, personal communication, May 14). Their activities, however, are limited to selling tickets, translating, setting up yoga/meditation sessions, stage support, photography, picking up trash, selling reusable cups, etc. At WildBound, the capacities of the youth are gradually developed by accessibility to resources such as content, experience, location, mentors, teachers, practitioners, and scientists. All activities, learning programs, and exhibitions are structured by "learning objectives" to ensure participants gain skills and capacities (Himalayas, 2020; WildBound Bhutan Program Overview, 2020; WildBound Beijing Program for MSB_Aug18. Beijing, 2019). The goals of their programs are for the students to create their own projects and engage with the learned material and experiences in a practical way. Some students then feel like they have the capacity, after the program ends, to make a difference by creating their own electives in school curricula, high school students going on to teach middle school students, organizing photo exhibitions, hosting a debate between young students and scientists to talk about whether Antarctica should be exploited, create their own projects, talking to organizations, speaking at conferences and so on (Song Q, 2020, personal communication, May 30).

Connection

The youth at these organizations are *connected* through their interests and the 'challenge'. They are also connected and supported by online communities and offline communities. For example, Goal Blue has created a community through its online Goal Blue Angel account, fanbase groups, and connected them through different topics and interests. Here, youth are able to chat, share videos, access information, join different fan groups, and are able to volunteer with people across the whole of China. Offline connections also develop through events such as the Midi Music Festival, Youth Has You, The Big Band, and Produce Camp (Youth Leadership Proposal, 2020). Offline events are unfortunately pending due to the status of COVID-19. In

these online and offline spaces, the youth are able to work together and with adults on the "challenge"." With Tommy Hendriks, the youth are connected around their YYMF and TYCF events and participating in online dialogue through the Tommy Hendricks WeChat page. Most of the volunteers tend to already be involved in other networks of sustainability themselves. For example, one volunteer interviewed was also involved with an organization called Young Sustainable Impact in Shanghai. Another Volunteer, in her own time, translates articles and writes about sustainable and social impact (Blair, 2020, personal communication, May 14). At WildBound, the youth are connected by the programs and activities in which they take part. For example, in K12 programs, they are able to learn together and go on field trips together. Similarly, in expeditions, the youth learn about and experience topics such as climate change (Antarctica), environmental challenges (Nepal), happiness and sustainability (Bhutan) together. Through these experiences, they are connected to teachers, mentors, new cultures and communities, organizations, scientists, and other research professionals. Furthermore, the youth are also able to reach out and connect online by publishing their own webpages, blogs, content, updating a social media site, commenting and contributing to online forums, reading online, and so on (Song Q, 2020, personal communication, May 30).

The Youth within Organizational Configurations

The *"connection"* extends beyond the individuals in a program or event within the organizations themselves by extending to the larger national public domain, and in the case of WildBound, internationally. The youths and the organizations, therefore, take part in *external participation.* Youths and the initiatives are additionally supported and connected by a larger network of national and global partnerships that Goal Blue, Tommy Hendriks and WildBound have with other organizations. Goal Blue's GEGM, for example, is partnered with the World Resources Institute, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, CDP, WildBound, China Dialogue, and Sina Gongyi (ibid). In turn, these partnerships address national, regional, and international (sustainable and environmental) concerns of their own (ibid). Within Hendriks, events are made possible by partners such as the YYMF, local government, East China Normal University, China Biodiversity Conservation, and Green Development Foundation, Crazy Lotus, MTD Landscape (Press Realease City Forest TianJin, 2019; WildBound Bhutan Program Overview, 2020). WildBound has numerous partnerships depending on expedition location and K-12 education programs, which are tailored to the interests of the youth. The youth are able

to interact with these partners. For example, in the Nepal expedition, partner institutions included the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Himalayan Climate Initiative, Environment and Public Health Organization, UN house, Photo.circle Nepal, International Mountain Museum, and Drishti Kathmandu (Himalayas, 2020).

However, while the youth have access to a broad range of resources, the extent to which they get to participate with these external partnerships and partner institutions (with the expectation of WildBound) directly is either not mentioned or is limited. It is usually mediated by the principal organization (WildBound, Hendriks, Goal Blue), and therefore considered as *indirect participation* with external stakeholders. There is, however, *direct participation* between a) the youth-case study organization and b) the youth-youth within these organizations. Most direct participation occurs through online channels. Direct youth-youth participation in Goal Blue comes in the form of sharing content of related topics within social media platforms such as WeChat, Billibilli (2020), Weibo (微博, 2020), TikTok, and Youdao. For example, high school students share information and pictures of their textbooks or TV shows in the Goal Blue fanbase group of their own accord. Other instances include sharing and creating articles, videos, or online games that are without interference from Goal Blue or other organizations that act as intermediaries (May M, 2020, personal communication, April 26; 小岛 (Isla) 2020, personal communication, May 11). Direct youth-youth participation within Hendriks occurs in a similar manner through WeChat, though significantly less than in Goal Blue. This is because Goal Blue has specific pre-structured channels of WeChat communication through their fanbase groups, whilst Hendriks does not. Youth case study organization interactions occur through the participation and facilitation of different programs, initiatives, and participation activities. For example, GEGM, World Earth Day, World Wildlife Day (Goal Blue), TYCF and YYMF (Hendriks). WildBound-youth and youth-youth participation in WildBound occurs throughout the experiential programs and learning modules. This also sometimes continues after programs have been completed when the youth set up their own projects and initiatives.

Youth *Internal participation*, intended to shape development within organizations, however, is not prevalent. The youth act as participants, representatives, and facilitators of information and do not directly steer any developments of programs or initiatives. As previously mentioned, the head of fan base operations in Goal Blue, explains that it is relatively rare for

volunteers and the fanbase group to come up with their own ideas and initiatives. According to Isla (2020) Goal Blue struggles to find participants to contribute to particular tasks such as article writing and content creation. One exception is when youth-youth interaction in the environment protection fanbase group brought out their own KTV social interaction game app so that youths could unite in a room to sing together on Chinese Youth Day on May 4th (ibid). Here internal and direct participation occurs. Similarly, in Hendrik's organization, the youth do not steer any initiatives, make any decisions, or organize any events themselves. Events are organized instead through a core-team and pre-structured tasks for the youth. This will be elaborated further in the following paragraph. At WildBound, however, internal and external participation are frequently mixed. The youth may combine external participation with external actors (such as scientists affiliated with the Ministry of environment, representatives from affiliate partners, facilitators based in international communities (such as those demonstrated in Nepal) with internal participation if they choose to continue to develop their own projects or initiatives once their program/expedition has been completed.

Internal-external participation and direct-indirect participation channels are shaped over time by *structured approaches* in an organization. All organizations take a pre-structured approach towards youth participation in their initiatives, programs, and events over an *unstructured approach.* This is facilitated by a pre-structured governance structure, pre-structured roles, and pre-structured ways of communication and organization. Goal Blue's youth activities are governed by a group of adults that consists of 6 board members and 20 advisories, Chief of Operations, project director, program manager, communication manager, accountant, administration and bookkeeper, program officer, and social media and membership officer (May M 2020, personal communication, June 7). Initiatives and programs have a set timeline of events, activities, partnerships, target groups, channels of communication, and focus topics (Youth Leadership Proposal, 2020). An exception, where *unstructured*, spontaneous action has taken place was the making of the interactive KTV app. Hendriks also takes a pre-structured approach because events such as the YYMF SDG Conference and the TYCF are all recurring events. Youth participation is clearly outlined beforehand with assigned roles such as selling tickets, translating, providing stage support, picking up trash, planting trees, to name a few. It can be argued, however, that the setting of youth coming together in festivals and events can lead to *unstructured approaches* of communication, sharing ideas, and coming together, all in the name of sustainability. For both Goal Blue and Hendriks, primary forms of communication and promotion,

namely through WeChat, are also structured into groups according to event/topic. At WildBound, pre-structured channels of participation are needed to organize exploration trips and K-12 educational programs that are regulated in terms of location, partnerships, learning objectives, and content. This is made possible through advisors, a core team of 3-5 people, approximately 15 part-time employees, and international facilitators. Structured approaches are primarily for organizational purposes. However, the exploration trips and the K-12 educational programs are also *unstructured* as teachers and students (adult and youth) are able to customize the programs by deciding together where they go, what the program will offer and which topic will be studied based on their interests (Song Q, 2020, personal communication, May 30).

A predetermined structure often ensures that a predetermined *product* is reached. Goal Blue's goal (*product)* is to reach 1 million signatures for the petition in which the youth in China agrees to commit to being a responsible consumer (Goalblue为蓝, 2021). Additionally, the GEGM efforts throughout the year will be showcased by the youth to the CBD COP15. Hendrik's product is successfully completing and organizing the TYCF and YYMF SDG conference. Other goal-orientated projects, such as the development of the CEYS, serve to strive as the next steps to achieve concrete results in the future. Other future events include continuing the youth city forest. WildBound's goal (product) is to create next-generation earth citizens and leaders through their educational programs. The goals of their programs are for the students to create their own projects and engage with the learned material and experiences in a practical way. Future goals include creating a biodiversity program that combines an online curriculum and expeditions to Brazil and Indonesia to learn about forest and biodiversity issues. The program is currently pending because of COVID-19.

Emphasis within the case study organizations is placed on the process, i.e. how they reach set goals. The overarching process of involvement is to raise awareness and educate the youth about their behaviours and how to behave in more environmentally conscious and sustainable ways. This is achieved through the sharing of information, events, and engaging the youth to participate. This relates back to the larger "challenge," which incites the youth to participate. In Goal Blue, the process is about raising awareness of ecological biodiversity and protection through their fanbase groups and different online and offline activities to increase the awareness and involvement of the youth. In Hendriks, the process of planting trees, dancing, helping out, listening to music, and being educated together is what

creates a meaningful community of people. At WildBound, the process is about exposing the youth to natural environments, along with practical and theoretical knowledge in their courses. The process is open-ended, allowing the youth to decide for themselves the next course of action.

Discussion

Participation at Goal Blue can be categorized as *adult-driven* because youths are not making decisions and implementing projects themselves within the organization. It is rare for volunteers and the fanbase group to come up with their own ideas and initiatives. While the youth take the initiative to participate, join a fan group, share and disseminate information, they are not actually contributing to the organizational process. The youth, however, are not entirely passive due to their online and offline participatory activities, where they are given opportunities to voice their ideas to Goal Blue and the wider national society. They are able to choose which topics they want to follow through the different fanbase groups and choose how they engage with the monthly topics of GEGM. For example, for 3rd March 2020 'wildlife day', youths had the option to record their sustainable lifestyle behaviours online, such as eating plant-based meals or refusing to use plastic for two weeks. In this sense, the youth have both a voice and an active participatory role. Additionally, Goal Blue welcomes and advocates any youth who wish to make extra contributions or start their own projects. The KTV app, for example, is an excellent example of *youth-driven autonomous participation* where adults have provided an enabling environment for the youth, but the decision-making and implementation was solely organized by the youth. Whilst the TYPE pyramid model suggests that adult-driven and youth-driven participation offers little youth empowerment, this may not be the case. The youth are empowered by being educated and increasing their awareness on sustainable topics. Having various online platforms for discussion gives the youth a voice. It is a good starting point for more youth-driven action as well as youth-adult participation as the tools and knowledge are accessible and provided.

At Hendriks, events are organized by a core team and supporting organizations, consisting only of adults. At the TYCF, although the youth are given a space to co-learn and participate, they are not able to contribute their own ideas and make decisions. Their interest and opinions on the topic and method of participation were only asked in a survey. Additionally, youths are given opportunities to voice their opinions and ideas to decision-makers during events, but they do not have much decision-making power

themselves. For example, at the YYMF, the youth are given pre-structured tasks for organizational purposes and are given little space to take control of the event, contribute their own ideas, and participate in the issues of sustainable development. They are rather listeners and bystanders; and therefore follow *adult-driven participation.* Youth empowerment is, consequently, relatively low. In the CEYS, however, Hendrik's mission expands to motivate Chinese youth to perform biodiversity conservation actions and sustainable practices in their own lives (CEYS Summary, 2020). This provides an opportunity for *youth-adult pluralistic participation.*

At WildBound, adults take the leading role in organizing K-12 educational programs as well as expeditions, poetry month, conferences, interaction with stakeholders, etc. However, this is often based on the demand of the youth and schools and the topics in which they are interested. On the organizational level, youth participation is still *adult-driven* even though the youth have a voice and participate in the broad content guidelines. During expeditions and learning programs, participation is *adult-youth driven* because the youth have both a voice and active participatory role in the activities. This is because their primary goal is to create their own projects to showcase their learning at the end. They are able to interact with a variety of stakeholders outside of WildBound and with other youths, which shape their interest, research, and participation in the selected topics. Sometimes, the youth then go on to teach middle school students, organize photo exhibitions, host a debate between young students and scientists, create their own projects, talk to organizations, and speak at conferences. This is an example of *independent* and *autonomous youth driven participation* because the youth are still sustained by WildBound to help set up these projects, but the youth have the most control and an active role in organization and execution. The interplay between shared control, adult control, and youth control creates an environment where youth participation is sustained and supported by the resources of adults in terms of organization, social capital and positive reinforcement, but the youth still have the opportunity to make individual or shared decisions. The youth therefore become empowered.

Youth participation in China plays a role in the SDG through NGOs. Overall, the organizations provide access to resources, information, and incentives for the youth to participate in SDG issues. Youth empowerment occurs through education and participation. The findings and analysis suggest that youth participation plays both an active and passive role in China’s national and international ambitions towards the SDG. In the future, adults will need to continue to provide resources and spaces within their

organizations to ensure youth participation. In order for this to be maximized, one may want to take Shier's model of youth participation (Shier, 2001). Shier's model highlights the fact that adults must take positive, initiative/organizational localized action to ensure that the youth can express their views openly and confidently and have the ability to share power and responsibility for decisions within a project (ibid, 112). He offers practical steps that adults can use to adapt their behaviour and mindset for making children more involved, regardless of task and cultural, organizational, and institutional context.

Youth participation in NGOs also plays a role in educating the youth. They create a breeding ground for youth to gain access to resources, knowledge, and information about issues regarding the SDG. Environmental and Sustainability education mostly falls outside of the normal school curricula and is presented in a way that is exciting and fun for the youths by adding extra incentives such as music, arts, expeditions, engaging with celebrities, etc. Additionally, because initiatives involve online participation, the youth have tools to access information, take part in online sharing, dialogue, and action. Future research should include a framework and analysis of youth participation on sustainability in the online sphere. By educating the youth, the case study organizations contribute to creating China's future leaders who are able to tackle environmental and sustainable issues themselves in the future. Youth participation is, therefore, a long-term investment and plays a role in China's national long-term ambitions for the SDG.

Youth participation plays a role in China's national and international SDG ambitions by taking a multi-stakeholder approach to tackling the SDG. It marks a parallel with China's development path and strategy to create win-win results and joint development. The multi-stakeholder approach occurs in two ways. Firstly, the case study organizations make use of national, regional, and international partnerships to help execute and support the content, education, and information dissemination of their campaigns, events, and expeditions. Secondly, because organizations are all non-governmental, they receive no funding or support from the government. As a result, both Goal Blue and Wildbound rely primarily on international donors and grants. International donors are often supporters and advocates of sustainable development. While both Goal Blue and WildBound confirmed their international donors, not all names were disclosed. International partnerships are thus also used for funding and support.

Lastly, youth participation and the organizations in which participation occurs play a role in China's national and international ambitions of

achieving the SDG through cultivating partnerships and creating spaces of multi-stakeholder dialogue and action. WildBound held a conference in 2018 where international stakeholders from the tourism sector, artists, and scientists came together to discuss responsible consumption and sustainable palm oil (Youth Leadership Proposal, 2020). One of Goal Blue's GEGM programs is for the youth to participate in the next COP15. The "COP15 will give China a great opportunity to demonstrate its determination and confidence in environmental protection, green development and biodiversity conservation… With the power of youth, China will show the world its desire, attitude, action, and influence in building an ecological civilization" (ibid). A youth forum in the convention offers an opportunity for the Chinese youth to showcase to the world their leading power in topics of sustainable products and services, smart eating through a plant-based dietary consumption, blue ocean and sustainable agriculture.

Concluding Comments

This chapter has explored how youth participation in China plays a role in China's national and international ambitions to achieve the SDG. Four conclusions have been reached. 1) YP plays both an active and passive role in China's national and international ambitions for the SDG. 2) YP cultivates future leaders and is a long-term investment that plays a role in China's national long-term ambitions for the SDG. 3) YP plays a role in China's national and international SDG ambitions by taking a multi-stakeholder approach to tackling the SDG. This mirrors the CCP's national and international approach to the SDG. 4) YP plays a role in China's national and international ambitions to achieve the SDG through cultivating partnerships and creating spaces of multi-stakeholder dialogue and action. These findings contribute to academic research that seeks to bridge the lacuna of youth participation, SDG, and China in academic literature.

To gain a more comprehensive overview of youth participation and the SDG in China, future research should include more investigation into youth participation in other provinces and regions. Additionally, there is a need for cross-case analysis across more organizations and businesses to develop a more accurate picture of YP towards SDG ambitions in China. Future research should also include more first-hand testimonials of youth participation so that the youth can be understood without adult-centric framing of how participation occurs. In the future, adults will need to continue to provide resources and spaces within their organizations to ensure youth participation. More research should be done on how adults can

maximize creating facilitative and productive spaces to allow for shared adult-youth control. Lastly, with the rise of the Internet in the 21st century, the Internet has become a place of frequent interaction with the youth and taken a more dominant role in participation. Future research should include a framework and analysis of YP on sustainability in the online sphere.

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