# Identification and Comparison of Requirements Placed on Brand Managers

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## Abstract

**The purpose of the article:** Building a strong brand is difficult, even when viewing brands as an essential asset of the company is a lasting trend. So for brand managers to succeed in their job roles, they must possess knowledge, skills, and relevant personality traits. The purpose of the author's work was to provide the insight into the offering of brand manager's posts in the Czech Republic and to analyze the collected data with the special interest in finding the answer, whether the employers see a brand manager as a knowledge worker.

**Methodology/methods:** For a successful empirical research, the content analysis method by Berelson was used to study the texts in recruitment advertisements. The statistical verification of results was conducted using the chi-squared test.

**Scientific aim:** The goal of the primary survey was to provide answers to the research questions, which arise from the following research assumption: (1) the set of requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who have skills and personality prerequisites expected for knowledge workers and (2) after the period of economic recession and despite the oncoming recovery, employers do not concede their requirements placed on candidates for the job of Brand Manager.

**Findings:** The results of the actual research project confirmed a fundamental need of excellent communication skills (69.6%), a high degree of creativity (51.8%) and analytical ability (42.9%) of candidates for the position "Brand Manager". During the comparison of the data results gathered in 2007 there were recorded some differences. Statistical verification confirmed the shift of requirements in the group of traits and skills connected to motivation and self-control. The results also showed significant differences in the analysed group of ads for the position of "Brand Manager" and "Product Manager" in almost all groups of psychological requirements.

**Conclusions:** The findings confirmed that employers are looking for workers possessing personal dispositions and skills of knowledge workers. Comparison of frequencies of requirements placed on candidates for the position of "Brand Manager" in 2007 and in 2015 indicates changes, but it does not mean that employers are less demanding. The differences in employers' expectations supported by the set of psychological requirements placed on candidates for the post "Brand Manager" and "Product Manager" inspire the discussion and are the reason for deeper investigation in the role of employees in product management.

**Keywords:** knowledge worker, personality traits, product management, brand manager, skills, trends

**JEL Classification:** D83, M12, M31, M51

## Introduction

Brands are taken as essential intangible assets of companies and enhance the company's market capitalisation, and the value of brands has become an important performance metric for companies. Nevertheless, branding is riskier and less predictable nowadays, as events in the past decade have proven that there are no certainties in the world at large. Among the most significant forces seen by Kotler, Keller (2013) is the consumers' involvement supported by the ability to make their voices be heard and spread quickly when they are not heard by a recipient. Responsibility for making brand decisions every day still rests on shoulders of brand managers in most companies and with the increasing importance of brands in creating the competitive advantage of their companies there is no doubt that, for succeeding in their role, brand managers must have knowledge, dispositional traits and concomitant soft skills that arise from these traits.

Since the complex up-to-date definition of requirements placed on brand managers in Czech or foreign literature has not been found, besides the author's dissertation, the empirical research was conducted. For carrying out the research task, there was applied an interdisciplinary approach, because the theoretical basis exceeds the boundaries of marketing.

## 1. Theoretical Background

Kotler, Keller (2013, p. 35) choose to refer to the definition published on the website of the American Marketing Association, which states that "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." Product management is the part of marketing management and includes the whole range of activities concerning product development and brand management in target markets. Gorchels (2005), similarly to Kotler (2001), classifies brand management under product management, with reference to its being the most usual form of product management in consumer goods companies. Marketing departments can be organized in several different ways. Marketing organization, according to products or brands, is often implemented by companies producing a wide range of products and brands, does not substitute for functional organization, as stated by Kotler, Keller (2013, p. 672), but it rather serves as another layer of management.

Upshaw (1995) called brands "the flags of marketing". Kapferer (1998, p. 189) makes the definition of "brand" referring to the fact that it is widely known that a brand is, at the same time, a symbol, a word, an object and a concept and points out that a real brand management begins with a strategy and a consistent, integrated vision. Its central concept is brand identity (Kapferer, 1998). The second key concept is brand value, see Aaker (2003), who included the relationship between value and brand loyalty. A strong brand identity has both functional and emotional characteristics and consists of three connecting instruments: a clear differentiating brand positioning, a distinct brand personality that gives the brand a face and a consistent brand communication (Floor, 2006). As a result, a brand identity will have both functional and emotional attributes and benefits. These benefits should then match the values and self-image of the target group, as was mentioned by Floor (2006). Internal branding is at least as important to a company as an external branding strategy. A deeper understanding of a brand by all employees is crucial, especially for companies that provide services (Floor, 2006; Keller, 2008).

In the company organization, marketing specialists usually have the role of intermediaries, with the task to understand the customers' needs and spread their voices into other functional departments of the organization. To derive requirements for brand managers is to state their role in the process of strategic brand management, where the strategic, tactical and operative tasks are as follows: (1) identifying and establishing brand positioning, (2) planning and implementing brand marketing programs, (3) measuring and interpreting brand performance, and (4) growing and sustaining brand equity (Keller, 2008). According to the recent research on the intellectual capital by Nguyen *et al.* (2015) brand managers should notably focus on promoting the concept of intellectual, behavioural and sensorial experience of the customer with the brands.

The added value that people can contribute to the organization is emphasized by human capital theory (Schultz, 1961 in Armstrong, 2012). What gives the organization its distinctive character is human capital that represents the combined intelligence, skills, and expertise (Bontis, 1999 in Armstrong, 2012). High level of education and specialist skills combined with the ability to apply skills to identify and solve problems are distinguishing characteristics of knowledge workers (Drucker, 1993). Personal determinants in close relation with performance are dispositional traits which determine how workers fulfil given tasks (Štikar, Rymeš, Riegel, Hoskovec,

2003). Psychological attributes of a personality are usually called personality traits and they are smaller units than competencies.

Experts agree that in case of knowledge workers, it is always necessary to approach activities in the process of recruitment and selection as activities of strategic significance since they mean obtaining sources of intellectual capital (Noe *et al.*, 2010). If referrals and internal talent banks do not offer suitable candidates, the external sources of candidates such as recruitment agencies, newspaper advertisements and online recruitment, when the main types of online recruitment websites are corporate websites, job and agency websites, are used (Armstrong, 2012). Social networking websites are found by employers as a source with a good reach, among which is the largest social business network LinkedIn that is moving to the largest job board with more than 300 million profiles, as it was mentioned by Wroblowská (2016c).

## 2. Objectives and Research Methodology

The goal of the primary survey was to check the situation on the side of job offers for brand managers on the most important career portal and to provide answers to the research questions, which arise from the following research assumption: (1) the set of requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who have skills and personality prerequisites expected for knowledge workers and (2) after the period of economic recession and despite the oncoming recovery, employers do not concede their requirements placed on newly hired workers for the job of Brand Manager.

The methods used in the research project were partly empirical and partly logical. In order to meet the research goal, a comparative method was also used. The method of content analysis by Berelson (1952, in Gavora, 2000) was implemented, which made it possible to use the available job advertisements to collect information regarding the requirements placed on candidates for the position of "Brand Manager" in the Czech Republic. The source of job advertisements was Jobs.cz, the most popular career portal in the Czech Republic, which was already verified by Wroblowská (2011) as a suitable source to fulfil the research goal. If the job had a different title, for example, "Senior Brand Manager" or "Marketing and Brand Manager", the advertisement was not included in the sample.

The data collection took place in the odd weeks from February to April and from June through August 2015. Thus were gathered 86 ads. After removing duplicates, the final sample showed 56 advertisements. The data segments were transferred into an electronic form. The work with the transferred data was applied to a so-called manifest content analysis, according to Plichtová (1996 in Miovský, 2006), that only studies the explicit content of the text. There were analysed the requirements that had cumulated frequency in the analysed sample, which exceeded 3% threshold in the processed data files in 2007 and 2015. On the significance level of 0.1%, 1%, and 5%, it was tested, whether the null hypothesis regarding independence of the analysed variable on the sign representing the year of realization of the content analysis of advertisements can or cannot be rejected. The test criterion was Pearson $\chi^2$ test.

## 3. Results

This paper presents and discusses data and results which are directly related to the paper's goal. Partial results related to requirements for knowledge, specialized skills, and transferable, general competencies, are presented to the experts in the paper which is now under reviewing process, see Wroblowská (2016a). The selected data from herein presented research project that relate to the dispositional traits and the concomitant soft-skills (*e.g.* creativity) of brand managers are also used in the conference paper (Wroblowská, 2016b), nevertheless, its published version is not available yet.

### 3.1 Secondary Data Applied in the Research Project

The discussion regarding the findings will mention available empirical surveys conducted outside, as well as inside of the Czech Republic. When preparing the project of the independent research, no new information from the empirical research was available, which meant to research the human factor in product or brand oriented marketing management in the Czech Republic, apart from those which were already published and applied, see Wroblowská (2011, 2012a, 2012b).

### 3.2 Content Analysis of Requirements Placed on Brand Managers

The sorted data segments from researched advertisement texts are presented in the form of frequency chart in Table 1. At the same time, the table gives the information about the results of the survey conducted by Wroblowská (2011) between 2006 and 2007.

*Table 1.  Requirements applied for a brand manager by advertisers in 2007 and 2015.*

| Group | | 2015 | | 2007 | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | **Brand manager** | | **Brand manager** | |
| **Psychological requirements** | | **Abs. frequency** | **Relative frequency** | **Abs. frequency** | **Relative frequency** |
| A | psychological demands of the job not stated | 0 | 0.0% | 3 | 8.8% |
| **Performance prerequisites and abilities** | | | | | |
| B | independence/able to work independently | 20 | 35.7% | 15 | 44.1% |
| | goal orientation | 13 | 23.2% | 2 | 5.9% |
| | decisiveness/ability to decide quickly | 3 | 5.4% | 0 | 0.0% |
| | systematic approach | 3 | 5.4% | 0 | 0.0% |
| | reasoning ability | 4 | 7.1% | 0 | 0.0% |
| | conceptual thinking | 6 | 10.7% | 4 | 11.8% |
| | analytic thinking/abilities | 24 | 42.9% | 12 | 35.3% |
| | thoroughness, preciseness | 5 | 8.9% | 1 | 2.9% |
| | creativity | 29 | 51.8% | 14 | 41.2% |
| **Interpersonal abilities and skills** | | | | | |
| C | organization and coordination skills | 16 | 28.6% | 10 | 29.4% |
| | team player/team work ability | 15 | 26.8% | 5 | 14.7% |
| | comm. skills /ability to communicate well | 39 | 69.6% | 21 | 61.8% |
| | negotiation abilities (ability to persuade) | 8 | 14.3% | 0 | 0.0% |
| | presentation skills | 23 | 41.1% | 10 | 29.4% |
| | leadership abilities | 3 | 5.4% | 2 | 5.9% |
| **Traits and skills connected to motivation and self-control** | | | | | |
| D | initiative, proactive | 21 | 37.5% | 3 | 8.8% |
| | purposefulness, ability to motivate oneself | 2 | 3.6% | 5 | 14.7% |
| | able to work enthusiastically | 13 | 23.2% | 5 | 14.7% |
| | willing to learn new things, work on oneself | 3 | 5.4% | 1 | 2.9% |
| | ability to succeed | 3 | 5.4% | 0 | 0.0% |
| **Vital capacity and temperament** | | | | | |
| E | dynamic, energetic, vital personality | 7 | 12.5% | 3 | 8.8% |
| | active | 2 | 3.6% | 3 | 8.8% |
| **Conscientiousness, adaptation, prioritizing ability** | | | | | |
| F | prioritizing ability | 1 | 1.8% | 3 | 8.8% |
| | willing to travel | 8 | 14.3% | 1 | 2.9% |
| | flexibility (mos tly time-wise) | 23 | 41.1% | 4 | 11.8% |
| | independence/able to work independently | 20 | 35.7% | 15 | 44.1% |
| | endurance | 6 | 10.7% | 0 | 0.0% |
| | responsibility | 13 | 23.2% | 7 | 20.6% |

*Source: Author own study.*

*Table 2.  Overview of results of brand manager's individual requirement groups testing.*

| The group of tested requirements | | Chi-square value | df | Test result |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| B | performance prerequis ites and abilities | 10.083053780 | 8 | $H_0$ not rejected |
| C | interpersonal abilities and skills | 5.176935031 | 5 | $H_0$ not rejected |
| D | traits and skills connected to motivation and self-control | 11.121693120 | 4 | **$H_0$ rejected** |
| E | vital capacity and temperament | 1.250000000 | 1 | $H_0$ not rejected |
| F | conscientiousness, adaptation, prioritizing ability | 13.991097950 | 5 | **$H_0$ rejected** |

*Source: Author own study.*

In 2015 there were 56 advertisements. In 2007, when applying the same selection rules, the sample of single advertisements reached the number of 34.

The author adds to the results in Table 1 that the chart does not include requirements for candidate's character and self-perception, because their relative frequency in the assessed advertisement sample did not reach 3% in 2007 and in 2015.

The representation of the characters in some groups under evaluation requirements differs. But
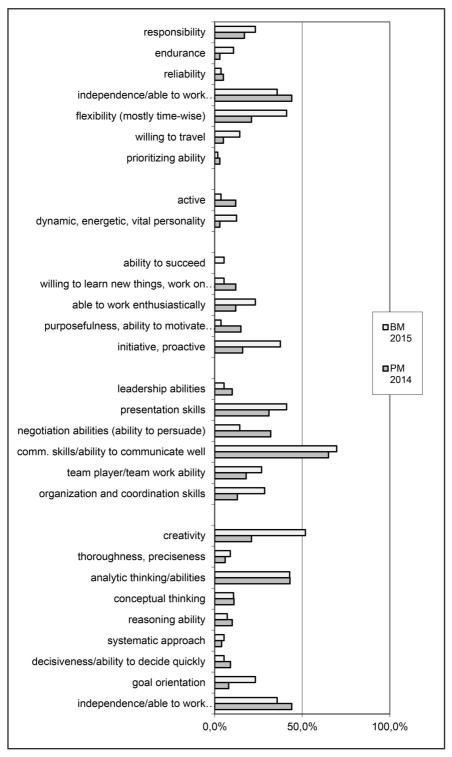
*Figure 1. Comparison of relative frequency of soft skills applied to candidates for positions titled "Brand Managers" and "Product Managers". Source: Author own study.*

with the exception of traits and skills connected to motivation and self-control, which were classified under letter "D" during the data processing and the group marked with "F", the changes in the representation of the requirements in individual groups are statistically insignificant, see Table 2.

A statistically significant difference in the distribution of frequencies of analysed signs was confirmed for &=0.05.

### 3.3 Comparison of Requirements for Candidates in Product Management

Comparison of frequencies of requirements placed on two key role bearers in objective-oriented marketing management – brand managers and product managers – is illustrated by Figure 1.

Without – eaning to get ahead of the discussion, it should be added to the overview of the results that the terms from the field of competencies were found sporadically in 2007 and 2015. With some exception, such as the competency "goal orientation", the advertisers defined psychological requirement using terms regarding dispositional traits.

Figure 1 signals that the representation of individual signs differs in certain evaluated groups of requirements.

A statistically significant difference in the distribution of frequencies of skills, personal dispositions and qualities integrated into groups of psychological requirements was confirmed for &=0.01 and/or &=0.05, as proven by calculations in Table 3.

The comparison of the set of requirements showed significant differences in the analysed groups of advertisements for the positions titled "Brand Manager" (collected in 2015) and "Product Manager" (collected in 2014) in frequencies of skills, personal dispositions and qualities integrated into groups of psychological requirements. A statistical insignificant difference was only confirmed for &=0.001, &=0.01, and &=0.05 in the distribution of requirements for miscellaneous traits connected into the group "F" (the complete product managers' data see in Wroblowská, Ruda, 2015).

Table 4 gives an idea of the procedure of applying the independence test. The test criterion was Pearson $\chi^2$ test. On the significance level of 0.1%, 1% and 5% it was tested, whether the null hypothesis regarding independence of the analysed variables on the sign representing the segment of different positions by the method of the advertisement content analysis can or cannot be rejected.

Table 4 is processed for the group of interpersonal skills, traits, and competencies, which are in Table 3 classified under letter "C". Analysis of the results will be addressed in the next chapter.

## 4. Discussion

The research project, from which one part of the results was presented here, was conducted due to the author's interest in one of bearer's roles of a "brand steward", who is directly responsible for the welfare of a brand. Bedbury (2003) saw brands as imperfect concepts because they are ultimately human creations. It is in people with their strengths and failings who bring brands to life and who manage them, as such, a brand is only as strong as the weakest personal point within an organization (Bedbury, 2003). Based on the findings, it might be argued that a brand value is related to the qualities of brand manager.

The discussion will first focus on confirming the first and second research assumptions and on comparing the findings with the published studies.

Mládková (2008) in her formulation of so-called Golden Skills of a knowledge worker found independence, a problem-solving ability and creativity to be essential basic prerequisites, which are indispensable, especially in the jobs where tacit knowledge is necessary for creating an added value for customers. While studying Table I, one may mistakenly think that a problem-solving competency did not appear in the requirements. However, it is obvious that the advertisers required the candidate to have qualities, which condition this key competency, such

*Table 3. Overview of results of brand manager's and product manager's individual requirement groups testing.*

| The group of tested requirements | | chi-square value | df | Test result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| B | performance prerequis ites and abilities | 15.544627760 | 8 | **H₀ rejected** |
| C | interpersonal abilities and skills | 11.620029400 | 5 | **H₀ rejected** |
| D | traits and skills connected to motivation and self-control | 14.312699240 | 4 | **H₀ rejected** |
| E | vital capacity and temperament | 7.725714286 | 1 | **H₀ rejected** |
| F | conscientiousness, adaptation, prioritizing ability | 10.164551770 | 6 | H₀ not rejected |

*Source: Author own study.*

*Table 4. Two-dimensional analysis for a group of psychological requirements.*

| OVERALL CONCLUSION: The significance level of 5% rejects the null hypothesis; the probability distribution of the individual characters does not differ in groups ´brand managers´ (2015) and ´product managers´ (2014). | level | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 0,1% | 1% | 5% |
| The hypothesis that the columns and rows are independent of the level | cannot refuse | cannot refuse | refuse |

| | | | | rows | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | columns | 2 |

**TESTED DATA**

A = position and year of data collection

group C = advertiser's requirements

**TEST OF INDEPENDENCE**

| | 2014 PM | 2015 BM | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | A1 | A2 | | | | | | |
| C1 = organization and coordination skills | 13 | 16 | | | | 29 | chi-square | 11,620029 |
| C2 = team work ability | 18 | 15 | | | | 33 | level | 4,04% |
| C3 = communication skills | 65 | 39 | | | | 104 | | |
| C4 = negotiation abilities | 32 | 8 | | | | 40 | | |
| C5 = presentation skills | 31 | 23 | | | | 54 | | |
| C6 = leadership abilities | 10 | 3 | | | | 13 | | |
| | 169 | 104 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 273 | | |

**expected frequency**

| group C | A1 | A2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | 18,0 | 11,0 | | | |
| C2 | 20,4 | 12,6 | | | |
| C3 | 64,4 | 39,6 | | | |
| C4 | 24,8 | 15,2 | | | |
| C5 | 33,4 | 20,6 | | | |
| C6 | 8,0 | 5,0 | | | |

**post hoc - chí-square**

| group C | A1 | A2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | 1,4 | 2,2 | | | |
| C2 | 0,3 | 0,5 | | | |
| C3 | 0,0 | 0,0 | | | |
| C4 | 2,1 | 3,4 | | | |
| C5 | 0,2 | 0,3 | | | |
| C6 | 0,5 | 0,8 | | | |

**adjusted residuals**

| group C | A1 | A2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | -2,0031 | 2,0031 | | | |
| C2 | -0,9285 | 0,9285 | | | |
| C3 | 0,1589 | -0,1589 | | | |
| C4 | 2,5509 | -2,5509 | | | |
| C5 | -0,7598 | 0,7598 | | | |
| C6 | 1,1426 | -1,1426 | | | |

**sign test**

| group C | A1 | A2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | - | + | | | |
| C2 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| C3 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| C4 | ++ | -- | | | |
| C5 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| C6 | 0 | 0 | | | |

*Source: Author own study.*

as analytic thinking, which were among the most frequent requirements for personality dispositions, traits, and behavioural competencies of candidates. These findings support the fulfilment of the first assumption: "the set of requirements for candidates for the job of brand manager will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who have skills and personality prerequisites expected from knowledge workers".

At the beginning of the discussion of the second assumption is the statement that some differences were noted. The "ability to communicate well" was confirmed on the top position in the group of requirements for dispositional traits and concomitant soft skills. The increase in the number of advertisements requiring "the ability to motivate oneself", "be proactive", and purposefulness influences the result of statistical verification in the group marked with D. The requirement formulated as "initiative or proactive personality of the applicant" is far more often stated in advertisements in 2015, as compared to 2007. Initiative and social awareness, according to Manolova, Brush (2002 in Hollensen, 2011), along with a proactive approach, innovativeness and commitment to bear the risk, are the qualities needed for searching for market opportunities. At the same

time, it is appropriate to cite Armstrong (2012), who warns that in stating one's personal traits, such as determination and initiative in the advertisements, is important not to overdo it, as the candidates may not even be able to admit that they do not possess them. On the other hand, the possession of these qualities by brand managers is beneficial for them in performing their job roles and focusing on identifying these features is important. Comparison of frequencies of requirements in the last group "F" shows an unexpected increase of employers' interest in attracting flexible persons. Willingness to travel was required much more often, too.

The comparison of the set of requirements, as you can see on Figure 1, showed differences. The statistical verification confirmed the differences in all groups of requirements, with the exception of group "F", and it is necessary to add that, for the above-mentioned group "D", the chi-square test confirmed the shift for &=0.05 and for &=0.01. At this point, it should be noted that during the same testing procedures in 2007 (see the dissertation by Wroblowská, 2011) were found no significance differences at any level in sets of psychological between brand managers and product managers.

Since the complex up-to-date definition of requirements placed on brand managers in Czech or foreign literature has not been found yet, for better understanding the research results, there have been studied the papers of Loveland *et al.*, (2015) focusing on evaluating the differences between marketers (465 respondents) and non-marketers samples. Their data strongly suggests that the dispositional traits and the concomitant soft skills that arise from these traits are important to/for a long-term success in marketing. For example, their findings show that marketing managers differ from non-marketers in the "openness to experience", which is the key competency needed for a market orientation. This is the fact worthy of attention, because openness is a source trait in the Big Five Model (Nakonečný, 1998) and is related to intelligence, divergent thinking and creativity. Being creative and able to think analytically is the condition for the competency of "problem-solving ability", as was explained (Wroblowská, 2016b) in comparison with findings mentioned by Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006, in Noe *et al.*, 2010).

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of the paper was to present partial results of independent research focused on the human factor in brand management. The study in the field of secondary yielded a knowledge base, which was used in the discussion, connecting both already formulated opinions of experts and available empirical findings with the study's results.

The results of the research project confirmed a fundamental need of outstanding communication skills for the applicants for the position "Brand Manager" in 2015. The same requirement dominated in advertisements in 2007, when the economy of the Czech Republic was also in the phase of boom. If the requirements belonging to hard skills aren't evaluated, creativity has the second highest rel. frequency (51,8%), the third – analytic thinking (42,9%) and the fourth is flexibility (41,1%).

It is obvious that employers seek flexible candidates with analytical ability and with the ability to use creative thinking. The research proved the expectation that the set of requirements for candidates for the job of Brand Manager will confirm that a brand manager is one of the workers who have skills and personality prerequisites expected for knowledge workers.

As some statistically significant differences between data from 2007 and 2015 were noted, the author decided to conduct the comparison of actual requirements for brand managers with those placed on product managers. Surprisingly, the results showed significant differences in the analysed group of ads for the positions titled "Brand Manager" (collected in 2015) and "Product Manager" (collected in 2014) in almost all groups of psychological requirements, when comparing the sets of soft skills and personality traits. Differences in employers' expectations supported by the set of psychological requirements suggested that the candidates for the key work roles in product and/or brand oriented marketing organization inspire the discussion and are the reason for deeper investigation. The scope for future research may be extended by studying the selection process in companies using their internal data.

One of the limitations is the fact that the research was conducted only in the area of the Czech labour market. The author carries out the research on the online recruitment in the USA, where the concept of brand management has its roots, and it is expected that, subsequent to its completion, it will be possible to examine the issue of human resources in product management in a new context.

In conclusion, the author believes that the research findings will provide the basis for future hypotheses and that the research can contribute to the clarification of differences and that the study will inspire researchers to conduct the additional investigations in this area.

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