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Preferences Towards Working in Culturally Diverse Teams at Different Stages of the Entrepreneurial Process

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As entrepreneurial teams become prevalent, it is important to study factors related to their creation and effectiveness. The goal of the current research was to analyze preferences towards working in a multicultural team (MCT) versus a single culture team (SCT) at different stages of the entrepreneurial process. The study involved students originating from various cultures with previous experience in both SCTs and MCTs as participants. The preference towards working in a multicultural team was found to be stronger during preliminary stages of an entrepreneurial process. On the other hand, realization and assessment was in turn more strongly related with the preference towards working in a single culture team. The relationship between these preferences and the declared level of previous experience obtained in an MSC, and an SCT was also investigated. Obtained results are used to indicate possible directions for future research.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Team, Team Diversity, Multicultural Teams, Entrepreneurial process.

Preferencje do pracy w zespołach zróżnicowanych kulturowo na różnych etapach procesu przedsiębiorczego

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Zespoły przedsiębiorcze stają się coraz bardziej powszechne, ważne jest zatem zbadanie czynników powiązanych z ich tworzeniem oraz decydujących o ich skuteczności. Celem przedstawionych w artykule badań było przeanalizowanie preferencji wobec pracy w wielokulturowym vs jednokulturowym zespole, na różnych etapach procesu przedsiębiorczego. W badaniu wzięli udział studenci wywodzący się z różnych kultur, mający wcześniejsze doświadczenia w zespołach jednokulturowych i wielokulturowych. Stwierdzono istnienie silniejszej preferencji do pracy w zespole wielokulturowym na wstępnych etapach procesu przedsiębiorczego. Na etapie realizacji i oceny projektu zanotowano z kolei silniejszą preferencję do pracy w zespole osób wywodzących się z jednej kultury. Zbadano również związek między tymi preferencjami a deklarowanym poziomem wcześniejszych doświadczeń uzyskanych w zespołach jedno- i wielokulturowych. Na podstawie uzyskanych wyników wskazano możliwe kierunki przyszłych badań.

Słowa kluczowe: zespół przedsiębiorczy, różnorodność zespołowa, zespoły wielokulturowe, proces przedsiębiorczy.

JEL: F23, L26, M13, M14

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1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship understood as the "processes of discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities" (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000, p. 218) is most frequently described as an attribute of an individual — the entrepreneur, who through the use of their exceptional qualities and competencies can carry out this process. Both the entrepreneurs' traits and their ways of doing business have accumulated a lot of myths (Glinka and Gudkova, 2011; Kuratko, 2008). One of the views that are both dominant and at the same time emphasizing the individual nature of this kind of actions is the perception of the entrepreneur as a "lonely hero" (Kirzner, 1996; Schumpeter, 1934; Zaleśkiewicz, 2004) who independently, sometimes on their own, determines the purpose and the manner of its achievement. Such a concept was previously strongly opposed by Reich (1987), who said that individual projects are not able to compete with projects performed by teams. Later Garner, Shaver, Gatewood and Katz (1994) emphasized that the entrepreneur is more likely to be plural, rather than singular. More contemporary research results seem to confirm this thesis, pointing out among others to a clear relationship between the team-created ventures and success (Loane, Bell and Cunningham, 2014), which is associated with a higher, in comparison with individuals, human capital in an entrepreneurial team (Schjoedt and Kraus, 2009).

The goal of the presented study was to analyze preferences towards working in a multicultural team (MCT) versus a single culture team (SCT) at different stages of the entrepreneurial process. Successful accomplishment of these stages is necessary for the realization of an undertaken entrepreneurial venture. The literature emphasizes that because of the strength with which the teams shape the new business growth, there is an urgent need for research on this topic (Martinze, Yang and Aldrich, 2011; Wright and Vanaelst 2009). One of the trends of research in this area is multicultural and international team diversity, referred to as "an economic asset as well as a social benefit" (Nathan and Lee, 2013, p. 367).

2. Team Entrepreneurial Venture

When considering issues related to entrepreneurial teams, a clear difference must be made between a team and an entrepreneurial team. Using teams in entrepreneurial activity is, of course, nothing new. The literature frequently points to the possibility and even the necessity to exploit the potential of teams managed by an entrepreneur acting as the lead person who has the clearest vision of where the firm should be headed (Kuratko, 2008; Shaver and Scott, 1991). The benefits of teamwork relate to the scope and diversity of skills the use of which not only complements and extends the resources of the team (Church, 1998; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Roberge and Dick, 2010) but also, through synergy, allows for the

multiplication of value to more than the sum of the actions of the individuals involved (Franz, 2012).

However, with regard to entrepreneurial teams, they should not be treated as teams of employees performing activities determined by the leading entrepreneur but as "groups of entrepreneurs with a common goal that can only be achieved by appropriate combinations of individual entrepreneurial action" (Harper, 2008, p. 614). A more detailed definition, taking into account the establishment of a company, was presented by Kamm, Shuman, Seeger and Nurick (1990, p.7): "an entrepreneurial team is two or more individuals who jointly establish a business in which they have an equity (financial) interest. These individuals are present during the prestart-up phase of the firm, before it actually begins making its goods or services available to the market". It is, therefore, a team that jointly develops activities during the entire entrepreneurial process. This process is described in the literature as consisting of particular steps during which specific activities are undertaken. Olson (1986) identified the following stages: identification, design, selection and implementation. Glinka and Gudkova (2011) listed the following stages: the identification of opportunities, defining the concept of the venture, estimating resource needs, sourcing, implementation of the concept, managing a new venture and developing it.

The analyses of the performance of the entrepreneurial ventures set up by teams are very positive. They include rapid development (Conney, 2005) and superior, in relation to companies established by individual entrepreneurs, performance record (Lechler, 2001; Loane et al., 2014; Schjoedt and Kraus, 2009). The literature mentions several factors that influence the achievement of such results by entrepreneurial teams. These include cognitive diversity, essential for creative activities and innovation needed for the early stages of entrepreneurial activity (Drnovsek, Cordon and Murnieks, 2009). Wider networks and information sources facilitate reaching and obtaining the necessary resources (Conney, 2005). At the same time, spreading risk and mutual support become valuable in situations of uncertainty related to the stage of implementation of actions (Lechler, 2001; Schjoedt and Kraus, 2009).

On the other hand, however, the same diversity can become a challenge for the team, especially in situations requiring a high degree of compliance in the field of so-called shared cognition or shared and collective team mental model (Mol, Khapova and Elfring, 2015; Santos, Uitdewilligen and Passos, 2015), necessary for the management and development activities undertaken by a team.

3. Culturally Diverse Entrepreneurial Teams

The previous studies on the demographic diversity of entrepreneurial teams usually focused on the age and gender diversity, while the theme of cultural diversity was investigated less frequently (Zhou and Rosini, 2015).

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Culturally diverse teams are understood as "those whose members come from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, reflecting both surface-level and deep level dissimilarity" (Stahl et al., 2010, p. 442). It is emphasized that this kind of diversity can induce cognitive, educational, or value-related diversity and thereby stimulate creativity (Bouncken, 2004), as well as innovation and the ability to create new products (Nathan and Lee, 2013). Attention is also drawn to a wider social network allowing for the establishment of external international contacts or contacts with representatives of cultural minorities living in the researched area (Bouncken, 2004; Nathan and Lee, 2013). There are also reports indicating that culturally, and internationally diverse entrepreneurial teams may be assessed as more attractive for outside investors (Vogel, Puhan, Shehu, Kilger and Beese, 2014). All this seems to favor the creation of an entrepreneurial venture by culturally diverse entrepreneurial teams.

However, it should be remembered that cultural background can determine not only the perceptions and ways to initiate entrepreneurial activities but also ways to manage and choose the enterprise development strategy (Glinka, 2008; Radziszewska, 2014; Wach, 2015). It is the diversity of patterns and ways of behavior that could lead to interpersonal tensions, conflicts and intergroup biases (Knippenberg, Ginkel and Homan, 2013; Tirmidhi, 2008), which is most often indicated as the main threat to the efficiency of work in culturally diverse entrepreneurial teams. In this context, the need to perform a strategic selection of team members with regard to these demographic attributes in order to avoid a compositional gap is stressed. At the same time, the usefulness of such action and therefore the difference between benefits of diversity and the social cost of it is estimated (Vogel et al., 2014). Evaluation of the usefulness is, of course, subjective and may vary depending on the requirements of the various stages of the entrepreneurial process. Where creativity and innovation are desirable, cultural diversity will be evaluated as useful, and the strength of preferences for working in such a team will be higher. In the case of the stages that require shared cognition necessary for the management and development of activities undertaken by the team, cultural diversity can be assessed as less useful, and the strength of preferences for working in such a team may be lower. Nevertheless, additional mediators in this area may be both prior experience of working in culturally diverse teams and the level of multicultural competencies of team members.

These thoughts mentioned above became the starting point for the authors' own research.

4. Own Research

The research presented in the current article had two aims:

- the examination of the preference towards working in multicultural teams (MCT) vs. single culture teams (SCT) in different stages of the entrepreneurial process,

- verification of whether those preferences are related to the level of previous experience obtained in multicultural (MCT) and single culture teams (SCT).

Research Participants

Research participants were 140 full-time students of International Management at the Faculty of Management and Economics of Gdańsk University of Technology (there were 86 women and 51 men, 3 participants did not indicate their sex). Participants of the International Management program originate from different countries. The country that is most represented is Poland. In Table 1, the number of research participants from different countries is presented. The study program is aimed at fostering skills and developing knowledge needed to pursue different career paths including becoming an entrepreneur as well as fulfilling managerial duties in contemporary organizations of different sizes. The structure of courses and classes included in the program creates an opportunity to work in intercultural teams on different assignments, in class activities and projects. The research described in the current paper was conducted at the end of the summer term. Therefore, all students who took part in the research should have at least some experience of working in a multicultural team.

Country of origin	Number of study participants
Poland	103
France	7
Germany	6
Spain	5
Italy	5
China	4
Slovakia	3
Costa Rica	1
Czech Republic	1
Finland	1
Iran	1
Russian Federation	1
Ukraine	1
Total	139[1]

Tab. 1. Number of research participants according to their country of origin. Source: Own elaboration.

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The number of participants originating from particular countries is too small to allow for comprehensive and meaningful comparisons between countries. It should be asserted that this is not the purpose of the current study as the authors want to focus on discovering the preferences and opinions regarding entrepreneurial teams of people who already gained experience in an international and intercultural environment. What is more, study participants were mostly postgraduate students (their mean age was 23.22 years with the standard deviation of 1.94) who need to make an important decision and career choices in the near future. Pursuing an entrepreneurial career in the role of an entrepreneurial team member is one of the options which they might be considering in the near future. Their current and previous experiences might greatly affect this choice.

Research Method and Results

In order to examine participants' preference towards working in a multicultural (MCT) vs. single culture teams (SCT), participants were asked to imagine that they were given an opportunity to work on "a business project" in an either an SCT or an MCT and to assess which of these two kinds of teams would be more effective at its different stages. The following stages were listed: identifying business opportunities, creating a plan of exploiting a business opportunity, gathering necessary resources, appropriate allocation of resources, making decisions about how the project should be managed, managing the realization, assigning responsibilities for the project's realization, making a decision regarding how income/benefits from the project should be used/spent. These stages were, in fact, different stages of the entrepreneurial process defined by Glinka and Gudkova (2011). The authors used the term "business project" in order to provide participants with a clear instruction that would not require additional explanations. In this case, this term refers to an entrepreneurial venture. Respondents provided their answers using a five-point Likert scale where 1 meant "The effectiveness of this action would be definitely higher if performed by a single culture team", 2 meant "The effectiveness of this action would be higher if performed by a single culture team", 3 meant "There would be no difference in the effectiveness between a multicultural and a single culture team", 4 "The effectiveness of this action would be higher if performed by a multicultural team", 5 "The effectiveness of this action would be definitely higher if performed by a multicultural team".

In the statistical analysis of obtained data, the t-Student test for one group was conducted. It was verified whether mean scores indicated preferences for working in an either SCT or an MCT at different stages of the entrepreneurial process. Obtained mean scores were tested against the scale's midpoint that indicated no preference for a particular kind of team. Obtaining a mean score that was significantly higher than 3 indicated

a preference towards work in an MCT at this particular stage whereas scores significantly lower than 3 indicated a preference towards working in an SCT. The results of the statistical analysis are presented in Table 2.

Entrepreneurial process stage	Obtained mean score	t-Student test value	Significance level	Preferences to work in a team
1. Identifying business opportunities	3.88	10.79	$p < 0.001$	MCT
2. Creating a plan of exploiting a business opportunity	3.75	9.88	$p < 0.001$	MCT
3. Gathering necessary resources (people, devices, funds)	3.87	10.12	$p < 0.001$	MCT
4. Appropriate allocation of resources	3.28	3.58	$p < 0.001$	MCT
5. Making decisions about how the project should be managed	2.69	–3.38	$p < 0.001$	SCT
6. Managing the project's realization	2.81	–2.11	$p < 0.05$	SCT
7. Assigning responsibilities for the project's realization	2.74	–3.17	$p < 0.01$	SCT
8. Making a decision regarding how income/ benefits from the project should be used/spent	2.80	–2.35	$p < 0.05$	SCT

Tab. 2. Obtained mean scores and t-Student test values indicating differences between mean scores and the midpoint of the scale (i.e. 3) as a measure of the preference to work in an SCT or an MCT at different stages of entrepreneurial process. Source: Own elaboration.

All the means were significantly different from the tested value of 3, which was the scale's midpoint (no significant difference would indicate no preference towards working in either an SCT or an MCT). Research participants' answers indicate their preference towards an MCT during most stages of the entrepreneurial process that involve preparation and planning. The identification of business opportunities ($M = 3.88$), creating a plan ($M = 3.75$), gathering necessary resources ($M = 3.87$) and allocating those resources ($M = 3.28$) were all considered to be significantly more effective when performed by a multicultural team. Interestingly, those stages require cognitive efforts, and their results may be better if different points of view, perspectives and experiences are appropriately utilized. On the other hand, stages of the entrepreneurial process that are more related with the execution and assessment of a plan were predominantly assessed as more effective

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when performed by an SCT. Although making decisions about managing the project (M = 2.69) can be considered as another element of planning stages, it is the one that is chronologically closest to execution stages. The action phase itself (managing the project's realization) was also assessed as more effective when performed by an SCT (M = 2.81). It might be speculated that this score indicates the requirement of unanimity among team members at this stage perceived by research participants. Two final stages of the entrepreneurial process connected with the assessment of team members' responsibilities (M = 2.74) and investing and/or dividing obtained benefits (M = 2.80) were also considered to be more effective when performed by an SCT.

In order to verify the relationship between previous experience obtained in an MCT and an SCT and participants' preferences, which was the second aim of the current research, an additional statistical analysis was conducted. Research participants were asked to assess the level of experience that they gained in an MCT and an SCT. It is almost impossible to develop a single and objective measure of the amount of previous experience among young people who do not have vast professional experience. Therefore, the authors of the current study decided to use separate survey questions in which research participants were asked to declare their level of experience in both an MCT and an SCT. 7-point Likert scale was used for each of these two questions. It was anchored with 1 = "I have no experience at all" and 7 = "I have a lot of experience". The mean scores and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.

	Mean	**SD**
The level of experience in a single culture team	5.86	1.34
The level of experience in a multicultural team	4.77	1.62

Tab. 3. Mean values and standard deviations of the self-assessed level of experience in an SCT and an MCT. Source: Own elaboration.

Students on average declared that they had at least some experience of working in an SCT and an MCT as both of the mean scores are higher than the scale's midpoint. This result is not surprising as the program of their studies involves a substantial amount of teamwork and team projects. It should be noticed that the indicated level of experience obtained in an SCT was higher than the indicated level of experience in an MCT. In order to verify if these two values differed significantly, a paired-samples t-test was conducted which revealed that the level of declared SCT experience was significantly higher than the level of an MCT experience; $t(138) = 6.35$, $p<0.001$. This may be due to the fact that participants were postgraduate students who in majority spent a large part of their previous education studying in their home countries and native languages.

In order to verify the relationship between the declared level of experience obtained in both an SCT and an MCT and preferences towards working in these two kinds of teams at different stages of the entrepreneurial process, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. In Table 4, Pearson's r values are presented for the relationship between the level of declared experience in an SCT and the preference towards an SCT versus an MCT. Please note that due to the scale's design, negative values would indicate that the more experience one declares to have in an SCT, the more she/he displays a preference towards an SCT at a particular stage, whereas a positive value would indicate a positive relationship between the level of experience in an SCT and a preference towards working in an MCT at a particular stage.

	Preferences towards working in an SCT vs an MCT at each of 8 stages of an entrepreneurial project[2]							
	1.	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**
The level of experience in a single culture team	0.02†	0.01†	0.01†	0.12†	0.01†	–0.02†	–0.03†	0.00†

†p nonsignificant

Tab. 4. Values of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the level of experience in an SCT and a preference towards working in an SCT versus an MCT at different stages of the entrepreneurial process. Source: Own elaboration.

None of the correlations was statistically significant, which indicates that there is no relationship between the declared level of experience in an SCT and preferences towards working in an SCT or an MCT. This result is interesting as it seems to be at least partially counterintuitive. One may predict that a higher level of experience in an SCT may be the result of one's stronger preference towards selecting teams of individuals who use the same cultural code in their communication. The obtained results may indicate that this does not have to be the case, at least among study participants. It is, however, important to note that the correlation does not imply causality and further investigation to explain the obtained result indicating the lack of relationship between analyzed variables is needed.

In Table 5, Pearson's r values for the relationship between the level of declared experience in an MCT and the preference towards an SCT versus an MCT are presented. In the case of this relationship, negative values indicate that the more experience participants declare to have in an MCT, the more they show a preference towards an SCT at a particular stage of an entrepreneurial project. Positive values, on the other hand, indicate a positive relationship between the level of experience in an MCT and a preference towards working in an MCT at a chosen stage.

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	Preferences towards working in an SCT vs. an MCT at each of 8 stages of the entrepreneurial process[3]							
	1.	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**
The level of experience in a multicultural team	0.03†	0.06†	0.06†	0.02†	0.21**	0.08†	0.10†	0.08†

**p significant at 0.05, †p nonsignificant

Tab. 5. Values of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the level of experience in an MCT and a preference towards working in an SCT versus an MCT at different stages of the entrepreneurial process. Source: Own elaboration.

In contrast to statistically non-significant results obtained when the relationship between preferences for a particular team and the declared level of experience in an SCT was analyzed, one significant result was obtained in the current analysis. A positive, significant at the 0.05 level, weak, albeit significant correlation between the declared level of experience obtained in an MCT and a preference towards working in an MCT during the stage in which decisions about how the venture should be managed was revealed. This result is particularly important as it pertains to a stage of the entrepreneurial process which was considered by participants as more effectively performed by a single culture team. Again, due to the fact that the current result is correlational, no causality of effects can be implied. On the one hand, experience obtained in an MCT may increase one's preference towards this category of teams in regard to decisions about the realization. On the other hand, one's convictions about greater effectiveness of an MCT at that stage may make an individual more likely to join an MCT and/or less likely to leave such a team when it faces difficulties inherent in every entrepreneurial venture. In that case, an individual would have more opportunities of obtaining MCT experience. It is equally plausible that the relationship between these two variables is reciprocal. Whichever the case, it can be asserted that an increase in the level of one of these variables is positively related to changes in the level of the second one. This result can be viewed in a positive light as it indicates that actions can be taken in order to increase the strength of people's conviction about certain qualities of entrepreneurial teams.

5. Summary, Future Directions and Study Limitations

The current study adds to the existing body of knowledge related to entrepreneurial teams and their effectiveness. In the authors' opinion, two important contributions are offered by the research described in this paper. The first one pertains to demonstrating that preferences towards an MCT versus an SCT may differ across different stages of the entrepreneurial pro-

cess. As one usually cannot transfer from one team to another at different stages of a single entrepreneurial venture, it can be speculated that different approaches to such ventures may result in different team preferences. One of such approaches that received a lot of attention is the effectuation model (Sarasvathy, 2009). It should be verified whether people adopting one of these two approaches may be more inclined to prefer an MCT or an SCT. This speculation might be perceived as an interesting theoretical proposition that requires empirical investigation.

The second contribution of current results is related with the fact that study participants were recruited from a specific group of people who decided to study in a multicultural environment. Their experiences can make them more or less willing to join multicultural entrepreneurial teams, which is particularly important if we consider contemporary world issues. In global and European politics and international relations, streams of both increased cooperation (i.e. new trade deals and creating opportunities for international business) and disintegration (i.e. Brexit and immigrant crisis aftermath) can be observed. Knowledge regarding the way in which young people with cross-cultural experiences perceive strengths and weaknesses of multicultural entrepreneurial teams just before the beginning of their professional careers creates an opportunity to design and shape appropriate educational practices. The obtained result which proves that there is a positive relationship between the level of declared MCT experience and the strength of conviction that an MCT is effective when it comes to making decision about managing an entrepreneurial venture is optimistic. Its particular importance stems from the fact that this stage of the entrepreneurial process was described by participants as the one that is, among all stages, most effective when performed by an SCT. As previously mentioned, the nature of this positive correlation also calls for further investigation.

The current study also has important limitations, of which the authors are aware. First of all, the authors asked participants to imagine themselves in a situation when they had an opportunity to join a preferred team. Study participants were only employing cognitive processes and were not asked to make an actual choice resulting from joining an existing group. Creating an experiment that would verify their real choices can increase the reliability of obtained results. What is more, it was not verified if there are individual differences in the importance assigned to particular stages of the entrepreneurial process. As previously mentioned, different approaches to this process may result in a different perception of the significance of sequential stages, which may, in turn, have its effect on preferences towards a particular kind of team. On the one hand, these limitations affect the possibility of generalizing the obtained result, but on the other, they also seem to be a promising area of further empirical investigation.

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Endnotes

1 One study participant did not indicate her/his country of origin.

2 Numbers from 1 to 8 refer to previously described eight stages of entrepreneurial projects defined by Glinka and Gudkova (2011).

3 These numbers refer to previously described eight stages of entrepreneurial projects defined by Glinka and Gudkova (2011).

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