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Review

of Doctoral Thesis written by **Yi Zhang** “The Influence of culture and individual characteristics on decision-making logic: A case of Chinese immigrant entrepreneur in Poland“

Submitted in 2024, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Supervisors: prof. dr hab. Aldona Glińska – Neweś and prof. Miguel Pereira Lopes

I. FORMAL BASIS OF THE REVIEW

1. This review is submitted in response to the letter of dr hab. Agata Sudolska, prof. UMK, the Chairwoman of the Council of the Scientific Discipline Management and Quality Studies (10.10.2024). This review is based on regulations on Polish science and academic degrees and titles (Law of 20 July 2018 “Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce”, art. 187 p. 1-2). The thesis is submitted within the field of social sciences in the discipline: management and quality studies.
2. I received a printed manuscript of 204 pages (including bibliography and appendices, abstract, table of contents, appendices, lists of tables and figures) that meets formal requirements and can be a basis of my evaluation.

II. GENERAL REMARKS

The thesis “The Influence of Culture and Individual Characteristics on Decision-Making Logic: A Case of Chinese Immigrant Entrepreneur in Poland” was written by Yi Zhang under the supervision of Prof. Aldona Glińska-Neweś and Prof. Miguel Pereira Lopes. It is devoted to a topic important to entrepreneurs, contemporary economies and societies, and social sciences (in this case, especially the discipline of management and quality). The author’s analysis may broaden our knowledge of migrant entrepreneurship and migrant entrepreneurs operating in Poland. Additionally, the author employed an interesting methodological approach.

My assessment of this thesis is positive, as the work meets all the requirements for a doctoral dissertation. Like every study, this thesis also has some weaker points, which I will address in my review to encourage both the development of the Candidate and discussion during the defense.

III. DETAILED REMARKS

In my opinion, the thesis is a mature work that demonstrates the candidate’s knowledge and ability to conduct scientific research. To suggest possible ways of developing the concepts and ideas connected with this thesis, I will not only highlight its strengths but also point out areas that may benefit from improvement.

1. Topic and general structure of the dissertation

For the last fifteen years, most of my research efforts have been devoted to migrant entrepreneurship. Naturally, I find the topic of this dissertation interesting, important, and timely. When I began my studies in the Polish context, there were many studies on migration but none on the entrepreneurial efforts of migrants. The situation has changed since then, but there are still many gaps in the existing scholarship, leaving room for new studies. Many scholars emphasize the need for more research from less commonly studied contexts, such as Poland. Moreover, migration and the entrepreneurial activity of migrants remain topics of growing social and economic importance.

The Candidate chose to focus on the relationships between culture, individual characteristics, and the decision-making logics of migrants (effectuation vs. causation). I believe this topic constitutes an interesting and legitimate field of

investigation for PhD research and is original enough to lead to meaningful and valuable conclusions.

The dissertation is traditionally and logically constructed. It consists of an introduction and seven chapters. It begins with the theoretical background (Chapters 1 and 2), followed by the development of research questions and a description of methods (Chapters 3 and 4), and a presentation of the results of the two stages of the study (Chapters 5 and 6), concluding in Chapter 7.

Regarding the structure, I have some minor remarks. Firstly, there is a visible disproportion in the lengths of the chapters, and the Author could consider merging Chapters 3 and 4. Secondly, the chapter devoted to the national cultures could be slightly more elaborated. I provide more detailed remarks on the content of this chapter later in the review.

The thesis is based on a variety of sources, including both scientific publications (the majority) and reports, statistical data, etc. (a minority of the sources). For the topic of this work, using diverse sources is a good approach. Moreover, the references represent multiple disciplines—primarily management and quality studies, but also sociology, psychology, and economics. While the Candidate draws inspiration from many disciplines, it is important to emphasize that the thesis meets the requirements of the scientific discipline chosen as its primary focus (management and quality studies).

2. Assumptions, goal, research questions and methods

The main goal of the study is defined in the abstract and introduction as: “This research investigates how Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs choose and apply effectual and causal decision-making logic in the process of entrepreneurship in Poland under the influence of their national culture and individual characteristics.” This goal is not further broken down into specific objectives, which, in my opinion, could have been useful for this work, as it would smooth the transition between the main goal and the seven research questions formulated by the Author.

The main goal is well formulated and addresses an important field of study, as well as a significant gap in the existing scholarship. The research questions are also

interesting and well described (they are presented in the introduction and in a separate chapter devoted exclusively to RQs). However, I have some minor concerns about the formulation of certain questions. For example, RQ1a is phrased in a way that resembles a combination of a question and a hypothesis: “How does the related entrepreneurial experience influence the entrepreneurs employing effectual logic compared to novices who tend to use causal logic?”

The Candidate chose to combine a questionnaire administered to a small sample with fsQCA and qualitative investigation (12 interviews). In my opinion, the study could benefit from a more detailed description of the links between these two approaches.

To sum up, I find that the assumptions, goal, and research questions are coherent, and the choice of methods is appropriate. My overall assessment of the general methodology used in this work is positive. Additional remarks are provided in Section 4 of this review.

3. Literature

The thesis is based on numerous well-selected sources (383). These sources are thematically connected to the dissertation and draw from various disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, including management, psychology, sociology, and regional studies. I have the impression that the Author did an excellent job selecting relevant sources. She avoids random references that are unrelated to the topic of her work—a practice that may seem natural but is, in fact, quite rare. In many works (not only PhD dissertations), Authors often include numerous sources, but the connection to the topic is unclear.

The sources used are of high quality, including publications from reputable journals and well-regarded publishers. Additionally, the Author incorporates reports, statistical data, and studies from various institutions (e.g., the World Bank).

4. Content: merits, theoretical background and scientific value

The dissertation begins with an introduction (pages 11–27), where the Candidate presents the basic elements of the study, including the theoretical background, research questions, methods used, and the structure of the dissertation.

I would describe this introduction as a “short version of the thesis.” On one hand, this is very effective, as it provides the reader with a clear understanding of what to expect in the dissertation. On the other hand, I would suggest focusing more on the key issues that highlight the value of the dissertation and crafting a coherent narrative about the work, rather than a somewhat fragmented text. However, this is the Author's choice, and both approaches are acceptable. The most important aspect is that the introduction provides all the necessary information to the readers.

Chapter 1, “Literature Review on Entrepreneurship and the Entrepreneurial Process,” is devoted primarily to selected types of entrepreneurship and certain elements of the entrepreneurial process. I believe that the title is slightly too broad and does not fully reflect the chapter's content. The content itself is broad but appropriate, creating a solid foundation for the studies the Candidate undertakes. However, some aspects could be presented in a more comprehensive way—for example, subchapter 1.6 on decision-making logics. This subchapter addresses issues central to the thesis, so the analyses should be more elaborated and include more recent discussions on the topic. Currently, only one source from 2023 is cited (which merely confirms earlier findings), while the rest date from 2001–2017. This creates the impression that the topic is not very prominent in recent entrepreneurship studies. During the defense, I would like the Candidate to elaborate on the most recent discussions in the field of entrepreneurial decision-making logics.

Chapter 2 focuses on basic frameworks of national culture used in entrepreneurship and management studies. It reviews classical concepts, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions and Gesteland's cultural model. The chapter also discusses Confucian values and provides a comparison of national cultural dimensions between China and Poland. While this chapter is properly written, as with subchapter 1.6, I would suggest refreshing the sources and presenting a more critical discussion of existing concepts.

Chapter 3 addresses the development of research questions. It summarizes the key findings of previous studies and refers to concepts discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This chapter is relatively short (not much longer than the presentation of RQs in the introduction), and in my opinion, it could either be combined with the theoretical chapters (1 and 2) or merged with Chapter 4, which presents the

methods. In its current form, it is much shorter than the other chapters and does not introduce significantly new information. While the content is important for the overall work, it does not necessarily need to be presented separately. As for the justification of the research questions, I find it appropriate (with minor remarks I have addressed earlier in this review). The research questions are interesting and have the potential to bring new knowledge to the field.

Chapter 4 describes the methods used to study migrant entrepreneurs. The Candidate conducted two studies: the first involved a questionnaire and fsQCA, and the second consisted of interviews with 12 Chinese migrants running businesses in Poland. I find this methodological choice interesting, especially considering the challenges often faced when studying migrants. The sample size for quantitative data collection is not very large, but this is quite normal for this field. Both studies are well described, and the descriptions demonstrate the Candidate's ability to design and execute empirical research. It is also worth noting that fsQCA is a relatively new and increasingly fashionable method, with few studies on migration employing this approach. In this sense, the Candidate has chosen an original method to study an important topic. However, I would suggest a more detailed explanation of the links between the two studies. On page 77, the Candidate mentions that using two different approaches helps overcome potential limitations. While I agree with this, it is not entirely clear how the two studies are connected—for instance, is fsQCA the basis for the qualitative study, or are they linked in another way? I would like the Candidate to clarify this during the defense.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the results of the two studies. Chapter 5 focuses on the first study, which explored the impact of three cultural dimensions selected by the Candidate (individualism, long-term orientation, uncertainty avoidance), along with the experience and risk perception of entrepreneurs, on their preferences for decision-making logic (effectuation vs. causation). The results are clearly presented, and the analysis is thorough. The use of fsQCA allowed for interesting interpretations and demonstrated the complex interactions influencing decision-making logic. The Candidate first presents the results and then provides answers to the research questions related to the first study.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the second study, which is qualitative and based on 12 interviews. The results are presented in a typical qualitative manner, with the narrative supported by interview quotes. This makes the presentation smooth and easy to follow. This part of the research examines entrepreneurial decision-making logic at different stages of the entrepreneurial process (early vs. mature). The Candidate presents interesting and complex shifts between the two major decision-making logics.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, serves as a conclusion and provides a concise summary of the study's results as presented in Chapters 5 and 6. While the chapter is clear and effectively summarizes the main findings, I believe it would benefit from explicitly highlighting migrant entrepreneurs in subchapter 7.1. Although this focus may seem obvious, readers who start with the last chapter might interpret the results as being more general.

Chapter 7 also identifies the study's limitations and offers recommendations for future research.

In conclusion, it is evident that this study provides new insights into migrant entrepreneurship in the Polish context. In particular, it sheds light on the entrepreneurial activities of Chinese migrants and the decision-making logics they employ. Despite some areas for improvement, which I have mentioned in Section 4 of this review, I would like to emphasize that the Candidate demonstrates substantial knowledge of the study's topic and effectively designs and executes empirical research. The results are both interesting and valuable, expanding our understanding of the factors influencing migrant entrepreneurs' decisions. Overall, my impression is highly positive, and I have no doubts that the Candidate has presented a valuable piece of work.

5. Language and formal side of the dissertation

The language and formal aspects of the doctoral dissertation are not primary criteria for its evaluation, but they do influence the overall perception of the thesis. This thesis is properly prepared, and some minor mistakes do not affect the overall impression. The message of the thesis is clear, and it is delivered in a very good form. Not only is the text well-prepared, but the figures and tables are also appropriately done. The bibliography is well-organized, and I appreciate the

Candidate's effort to ensure coherence in this part. Overall, I find the formal aspects of the dissertation to be well-prepared.

To sum up, the doctoral dissertation written by Yi Zhang fully deserves a positive assessment. It has many strengths that support this opinion, for example:

- An interesting and important topic; this topic is also, to some extent, novel and original, as it is relatively rarely addressed in the Polish context.
- Very good knowledge of the scholarship on migrant entrepreneurship.
- An interesting and original choice of methods.
- The ability to design and execute an empirical study and to describe results in a clear way.

This thesis also has some weaker points, such as structural weaknesses (e.g., disproportions between chapters) and limited use of the most recent scholarship in some parts of the theoretical framework presentation. However, I am fully convinced that, in the case of this dissertation, the strengths prevail.

IV. CONCLUSION - WNIOSEK KOŃCOWY

Taking all requirements of Polish law into consideration, I can positively assess this dissertation. This doctoral dissertation meets the requirements for a PhD project. The author demonstrates sufficient theoretical knowledge in the fields of migration, immigrant entrepreneurship, and studies of national cultures. She shows the ability to conduct research and uses a variety of sources in her study, drawing from management and quality studies, as well as other disciplines. The thesis presents an original solution to an important scientific problem. Taking all the arguments presented in this review into account, I put forward a motion to admit Ms. Yi Zhang to the public defense of her thesis, written in the field of management and quality studies.

Biorąc pod uwagę wymogi ustawowe wskazane w punkcie I niniejszej opinii stwierdzam, że przedstawiona do oceny rozprawa może zostać pozytywnie oceniona

i spełnia wymogi stawiane pracom doktorskim. Autorka wykazuje się znajomością koncepcji teoretycznych związanych z migracjami, przedsiębiorczością migrantów, a także koncepcjami kultur narodowych. Pokazuje również umiejętność prowadzenia badań empirycznych wykorzystując przy tym interesujące metody. Dodatkowo, w swojej pracy sięga po różnorodne źródła (wychodzą poza dyscyplinę nauki o zarządzaniu jakości). Przedstawiona praca stanowi oryginalne rozwiązanie ważnego problemu naukowego. Biorąc zatem pod uwagę powyższe, a także argumenty przedstawione przeze mnie w recenzji, wnioskuję o dopuszczenie mgr Yi Zhang do publicznej obrony pracy doktorskiej.



Beata Glinka