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## Perceptions of the results of cooperation with rivals – the perspective of Danish, Japanese and Polish companies. Does the cultural background matter?

**Abstract:** Doing business internationally, it is crucial for the companies to contact, cooperate and communicate with foreign partners. There are many differences between partners (companies) coming from different countries and cultures. Sometimes we do not take into account the importance of these aspects and do not consider such differences during the initial stages of cooperation. The authors would like to underline the problem of cultural differences among companies coming from other markets and different parts of the world. The aim of the paper is an attempt to investigate the implications of cooptation for companies coming from three different cultures. The research question is whether the companies coming from relationship-focused societies perceive cooperation with rivals as more important for their success assessed with the use of measures of international competitiveness and internationalization.

The empirical part of the paper shows the research into the results of cooptation for enterprises from three different cultures, conducted among Danish, Japanese and Polish companies. These three cultures are different in the scale which presents the level of partnership's importance (Japan – partnership-focused culture; Poland – middle; Denmark – deal-focused culture). The main result of the presented study shows the differences among companies coming from different cultures in the context of cooptation. Moreover, the results indicate that the cultural context of the researched companies has a bearing on the consequences of their cooptation.

**Keywords:** cultural differences, cooptation, cooperation, Denmark, Japan, Poland.

**JEL codes:** F18; F 23.

## **Introduction**

The increasing competitive pressure and pace of internationalization motivate companies to cooperate with other organizations, thus inducing cooperation among companies of the same industrial background. This allows to achieve a better competitive advantage and a possibility to compete with companies on the international market.

Doing business internationally calls for the communication skills in contacts with foreign partners. What is more, embarking on business operations in an international environment requires appropriate preparation, and the nature of the relationship between foreign partners must also be taken into account. The cultural environment is extremely important here, but this aspect is often overlooked and not sufficiently considered during the initial stages of cooperation. On the one hand, the cultural factors may be the reason for failure in dealing with foreign partners, and on the other hand, they may contribute to a fruitful and effective cooperation. Indeed, ignorance of the culture, values and practices of companies from different cultural backgrounds may cause miscommunication, lack of understanding of certain behaviours, failure to comply with the accepted standards etc. On the other hand, a knowledge of the cultural characteristics of a foreign partner makes it possible to achieve compromises and this is often a key factor in the development of fruitful cooperation. An analysis of the cultural determinants affecting the nature of cooperation should start with a definition of the basic concept of “culture”, and with establishing the elements which create a cultural environment.

## **1. Theoretical background of the study – cooptition and cultural differences**

### ***1.1. Conceptual basis of research into cooptition and its results for companies***

Cooptition, defined as a combination of cooperation and competition, is becoming a more and more popular area of research. More and more frequently one can hear the opinions that this is a promising direction in scientific research and the result of changes in modern management practice [Ketchen, Snow & Hoover 2004, p. 795]. Definitions of this phenomenon have been presented and developed by researchers from different countries, although the leading position goes to experts from Italy, i.e. Dagnino and Padula [2002]. They define cooptition as “an incomplete interest and goal congruence”. They indicated four types of cooptition on the basis of the number of interdependent firms and the level of the value chain: simple dyadic (i.e. alliance – consortiums in the field of R&D – only two

partners), complex dyadic ( i.e. alliances in automobile sectors – many partners, different fields of cooperation – R&D, manufacturing of components), simple network (coopetition among multiple firms at one level in the value chain), and complex network (i.e. Italian industrial districts). The question regarding the results coopetition delivers to companies is still open. Sherer [2003, pp. 325–245] attempts to argue that in order to gain a permanent advantage over rivals it is necessary to mix competition and cooperation. The success of a company can be evaluated on the basis of a number indicators of international competitiveness and the level of the company's internationalization.

Looking for information about the implications of coopetition for the success of a company, one can notice that coopetition provides companies with access to unique and essential resources, including knowledge [Spence, Coles & Harris 2001, pp. 331–352], relationships and networks, while at the same time not depriving the company of the beneficial influence of competitive pressure [Hunt 2007, pp. 274–291]. The size and quality of resources and competences are crucial for increasing the competitive advantage. Thanks to coopetition a company gains the chance to focus on its key area of activity, learn from a business partner, and at the same time, due to their competition, it can improve its competitive potential on the basis of its own experience or even failures. But at the same time joining competition and cooperation also makes it possible to alleviate the threats related to cooperation itself. Despite the positive effects that coopetition can bring, there is still a threat that the partners might want to seize unjustified profits. Another threat is a possibility of transforming a cooperating partner into an even stronger market competitor, and the need to avoid this may lead to a company neglecting its customers, which may unfavorably affect its profitability. The company can lose control over its key activities and resources, including information resources. Robson and Bennet [2000, pp. 193–208] underline that coopetition causes a reduction in sales, profits and eventually in the number of employees.

The perception of the benefits that coopetition provides for companies is mixed and the question regarding the determinants of successful coopetition remains open. Bearing in mind the fact that coopetition is a combination of two completely different strategic behaviours on the part of companies, competition and cooperation, the cultural characteristics of the partners involved in this kind of interaction seem to be of great importance.

## ***1.2. Cultural determinants of effective cooperation***

The term “culture” was for the first time defined by English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, who in his work *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871, described culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”

[Kroeber 2002, p. 152]. To this day Tylor's definition has been widely accepted and frequently quoted.

Another famous anthropologist, Ralph Linton, who studied interactions between an individual, culture and society, described culture as "the configuration of learned behaviour and the results of learned behaviour [...] shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society". According to Linton, culture "refers to the total way of life of any society, not simply to those parts of this way which the society regards as higher or more desirable" [Linton 2000, p. 18].

From the perspective of social sciences, culture is not just art galleries and theatres. Culture refers to everyday activities, chores, interests and problems of a society. Hence there is no society without its culture, and no nation without its national culture. A broad but interesting definition of national culture is that presented by Cateora and Ghauri, which states that national culture concerns the totality of human existence: material, spiritual and intellectual. They identify six main dimensions of national culture: material (technology, economy), social institutions (social organisations, political structures), education (the extent of illiteracy), beliefs (religion, superstitions), aesthetics (arts, folklore, music, drama, dance), and language [Cateora & Ghauri 2000, pp. 109–116].

Cooperation with foreign partners, especially coming from a different cultural group, requires a great deal of commitment, preparation, understanding and tolerance.

Some cultures attach great importance to viewing a business partner as a person, not just a partner with whom one can make a profit. Representatives of relationship-focused societies concentrate strongly on interpersonal ties. They prefer contacts with family, friends and people well known to them, or those who they can trust. They may feel anxious when starting to cooperate with new companies, especially those from abroad. If there is a possibility of getting a recommendation from a bank or other company or institution which is known to a relationship-focused contractor, for example, it is worth doing so. [Gesteland 2001, pp. 19–41]. The Japanese are a highly partner-focused cultural group, where one should be careful about introducing any novelties or changes. First, it is important to create a positive image of the company and the products offered so that the contractors can get to know them well and gain confidence in them. In relationship-focused cultures the business deal plays a supporting role; the person (business partner) is very important there. In Japan a discussion about the business deal or concluding the contract may take place only during the second or even third meeting.

Such an attitude may create a lot of problems for people and companies from deal-focused cultures and dealing with this demands a lot of patience, and sometimes even humility. The primary aim of deal-focused cultures is a quick and efficient transaction. As opposed to relationship-focused cultures, deal-focused cultures have a positive attitude to cooperation with strangers. An example of such a culture is Denmark, where the most important element is transaction, its successful completion and achieving

commercial gain; whereas not much importance is attached to how well they know the partner. Danish people's openness to discussing business with strangers facilitates direct contact with potential partners. They get down to business after only a few minutes of conversation on general subjects during "face to face" meetings. In communicating, the priority is to completely understand each other and the conversation is usually open, honest and straightforward. In deal-focused cultures business is also sometimes conducted on the phone, via the Internet, electronic mail, etc., and no personal meetings or any knowledge of the people are required. Such an approach would seem rather rude to representatives of relationship-focused cultures and could be treated as an insult, because they believe that though it is much easier to buy or sell goods and make a profit it is better to gain trustworthy partners with whom they could also cooperate in many other ways [Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000, p. 41]. Polish culture is a mixture of deal- and relationship-focused values. On the one hand, relationships and trust are important; on the other hand, Polish businessmen seek smooth and effective transactions.

Cultural differences are also noticeable as regards perception and interpretation of the existing rules, customs and accepted norms. This criterion allowed F. Trompenaars and Ch. Hampden-Turner to divide cultures into universal and particular. Representatives of the first group argue that you should always act in accordance with the rules (laws etc.), regardless of the nature of a situation in which a person finds themselves. A person is treated as an anonymous entity.

Cooperation with companies run by universalists is carried out according to strictly defined rules and an adopted plan of action. The contract plays a very important role here and it is treated as a "way of life" and "work done", while in other societies it is treated as a description of the situation and a general framework for future cooperation. From the perspective of a co-operator who is not characterized by universalistic features, a good knowledge of all the rules, as well as skill and patience in their observance are required. Indeed universalists are not often willing to make concessions. On the other hand, knowing the specific rules can help predict the reactions and nature of decisions of the cooperator – a universalist [Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000, p. 48].

In contrast to the above, some cultures believe that certain conduct can, and indeed should, be viewed from the perspective of a specific situation faced by a person. This is because a person is not treated as an anonymous entity (person, institution), but as a friend, sister, wife, child or somebody extremely important. Particularists claim that one should not always act in accordance with the generally accepted principles, especially in situations where this could "harm" close associates. In the event of unforeseen problems, particularists are more inclined to make concessions and renegotiate the contract.

Japan and Poland belong to moderate universal cultures. Many people are inclined towards universalistic solutions, but there is also some consideration for par-

ticular behaviour. A lot depends on the relationship between both parties and the degree of confidence. Denmark is a representative of a universalist culture, where all decisions are made in accordance with the accepted rules and norms of the law. Any deviation from the rules is very rare.

Hierarchy is another cultural factor which influences the nature of the relationship between cooperating parties. In hierarchical cultures, the differences between superiors and subordinates are accepted as a normal phenomenon, necessary for the effective and efficient operation of a business. Hierarchy influences the process of decision-making. In organizations where there are strict hierarchies, decisions are usually taken by individuals occupying the highest positions. It would seem that such an approach would result in very swift decision-making. However, cultures with a high power distance, such as China, Malaysia, Guatemala, Panama, Philippines, Mexico, Venezuela and Japan are also collective societies, where a problem is discussed among the broader public before the final decision is made [Hofstede & Hofstede 2004, p. 75]. This results in prolongation of the time necessary to “work out” the final position. Representatives of such communities very often tend to prefer oral communication, which makes it much easier to introduce some changes. Moreover, even written contracts that have already been concluded and signed are much more frequently renegotiated in these cultures than in individualistic societies (Denmark, Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Germany, etc.). Individualistic cultures are also characterized by a reduced degree of hierarchy. In those cultures, although those who occupy the highest positions in the hierarchy of an organization (company) are not the only ones involved in the decision-taking process, the final decision is formulated individually. A person from such a cultural background has the power to take individual and quick decisions when participating in a business meeting, which is not a common situation in collectivist countries.

The degree of collectivism in a culture also involves the position and status of individuals in society. If somebody goes to a “collectivist country” alone, either to look for a business partner or to take part in a previously arranged meeting, they may not be very highly regarded in respect of their position and influence in their country and their company (for example, if the person owns the company). It is rare that a representative from a collectivist culture, such as the Japanese, goes alone to talk to another company, especially a company from another country. However, it sometimes happens that a single representative of a company, often a young person, discusses the conditions of cooperation and at the same time is competent to take individual decisions [Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000, p. 80]. But such situations usually happen in individualistic cultures, such as Denmark, Sweden or Finland.

An important barrier to cooperation between people from different cultural groups is also the use of context in communication, which involves the use of symbols, signs, metaphors and expressions which have a certain specific meaning to a given culture (society). The author of this classification, based on the criterion of

context, is E.T. Hall. On the basis of the degree of context used, he divided cultures into low-context (communicating low-level context), and high-context cultures (communicating high-level context) [Hall 1989, p. 82].

Low-context cultures communicate fairly directly, without the use of a wide variety of symbols, signs and expressions which could be misinterpreted by people from different cultures. The context is not required for the proper understanding of the message, which should include a lot of information, arguments and data. From a practical point of view, for members of low-context cultures “yes” means “yes,” “no” means “no,” and “tomorrow” means “tomorrow”. Low-context societies are characterized by an expression of personality traits; they are individualistic. Low-context cultures include for example the US, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. Poland also reveals a rather low- than high-context culture.

In contrast to the group presented above, high-context cultures are known for encoding the specific message by using multiple metaphors and expressions which are often misinterpreted by people from low-context cultures. The representatives of high-context cultures often use different types of gestures, sometimes incorrectly read by others. In addition, this group is usually characterized by the “concept of face,” which includes honor and respect for the rules adopted by the group.

Some of the most prominent representatives of a high-context culture are the Japanese, often called “poker faced”. They carefully “hide” what they think, they are courteous and extremely grateful, they are not in a hurry, and they hardly ever use the word “no”. To say “no” or to show negative feelings equals “losing face” to the Japanese. On the other hand, to say “yes” means that the Japanese person respects the partner, and therefore the Japanese “hai” (“yes”) is very frequently heard during conversations. But saying “hai” for the Japanese only means that they can hear what is being said or they can understand what is being said, but they do not necessarily agree with it (a similar behaviour can be found in many countries in the Far East) [Zimmerman 1985, pp. 105–110]. Thus, when working with people from high-context cultures one should be extremely cautious and “vigilant” in the interpretation of the words and gestures used. Indeed, it may happen that a “high-context partner” who says “It is a problem” may mean that they do not want to carry on with the talks or even that they do not want to go ahead with the cooperation. A person from another culture would ask “What is the problem?,” “How can we solve it?,” etc., not realizing that for some cultures to say “It is a problem” is to say “no”.

Another area of potential misunderstandings between international business partners is the perception of and the attitude towards time. E.T. Hall divided cultures into monochronic (M-time) cultures and polychronic cultures (P-time). A monochronic culture is characterized by punctuality, accuracy, development plans and their consistent implementation. The lives of such cultures are ordered by classification systems, which are scheduled based on M-time. In other words, most activities in

life and business are subject to planning. The maxim “time is money” plays a crucial role here. Accordingly, the time that was spent on negotiations should yield a specific result in the form of a favourable contract. Schedules and deadlines are usually considered to be rigid and should not be changed at short notice. Conversations are rarely interrupted; they begin and end at the scheduled time. Only one case (thing or problem) is discussed during one meeting (“Do one thing at a time”), due to the linear nature of M-time. The group of monochronic cultures comprises Germans, Austrians, Norwegians, Finns, Swedes, Belgians, Danes, Americans, Canadians, the Swiss, the Dutch, and the Japanese. Poles are also a monochronic culture.

In strong contrast to the above, there exist polychronic cultures in which people put less emphasis on punctuality and are not obsessed with time limits. The time of starting negotiations can change by anything between a few minutes and several hours. Polychronic people usually depart from the main point during meetings, which is impossible among monochronic societies. P-time is a non-linear time; everything happens simultaneously and one should be prepared for the representatives of these cultures often doing several things at a time. A high degree of P-time characterizes Latin cultures (the Spanish, Central and South Americans, the Portuguese, Italians), which are often called “mañana” societies. This term may have different meanings, such as “tomorrow” or “the next day” or “the day after tomorrow” or “next week” or “next month”, maybe even “next year”. Saying this word is often accompanied by the “mañana gesture” involving an emotional movement of the shoulders. In Latin America, time is not quantifiable, and the future is uncertain. Everybody should enjoy life. A typical approach is: “We will think and tomorrow we will come back to the matter” or “If we do not have time to do something today, we’re gonna do it tomorrow”. Urgency is barbaric. A negotiator may leave the meeting room because his cousin has come to visit (e.g. in Arab culture). In other countries, such behaviour is unacceptable. In dealing with business partners, the representatives of polychronic cultures spend a great deal of time on the so-called development of interpersonal relations.

## **2. Empirical research into the results of coopetition – perspectives of companies from three different cultures**

### ***2.1. Methodology of the study – variables, studied relationships and research question***

The aim of this paper is to attempt to investigate the implications of coopetition for companies coming from three different national cultures. The research question is whether the companies coming from relationship-focused societies perceive coop-

eration with rivals as more important for their success assessed on the basis of the measures of international competitiveness and internationalization.

For the sake of empirical research the authors used Dagnino and Padula's approach to cooptation [2002, pp. 15–17]. To achieve this aim the authors had to operationalize the relationships under research. Three variables were used to measure the intensity of cooptation: the number of competitors the company cooperated with; the differentiation of cooperative relations with competitors assessed by the number of organizational forms of cooptation; and the number of links in the value chain performed in cooperation with market rivals. International competitiveness of the company was measured by market share and sales profitability in both domestic and foreign markets. This means that the author focused only on one dimension of competitiveness - the competitive position of a firm. The competitive potential and competitive strategy were not taken into account. To evaluate the level of internationalization of the enterprises, three indicators were used: the share of export sales in the total sales of the company, the number of new foreign markets, and the forms of foreign expansion. Table 1 presents the operationalized variables of the research.

**Table 1. Operationalization of research variables**

Variable	Measures and their symbols
Intensity of cooptation	The number of competitors the firm cooperates with
	Differentiation of cooperative relations with market competitors – the number of organizational forms of cooptation
	Differentiation of cooperative relations with market competitors – the number of links in the value chain included in the cooperation with market competitors
International competitiveness of a firm	Relative share in domestic/foreign market
	Sales Profitability in domestic/foreign market compared to key competitor
Internationalization of the company	The share of export sales in total sales of the company
	The number of new foreign markets
	Forms of foreign expansion

## ***2.2. Methodology of the study – method of data collection and characteristics of the sample***

Empirical research into the results of cooptation for enterprises from three different cultures started in May 2009. At first, the research was conducted among Danish companies, the second step was the interviews with Japanese firms which took place in autumn and winter 2009, and the third stage was focused on Polish companies –

the interviews were conducted during the summer of 2010. The method of sampling used, a non-random selection method, was snowball sampling. **Snowball sampling** is a special non-probability method used when the desired sample characteristic is rare and this is the case in this research – cooperation is not as visible and popular as competition or even cooperation with suppliers or clients. The interviews were conducted with managers at a medium or high level or with the owners of the firms. The research tool was a questionnaire which consisted of screening, research-specific, demographic and archive parts. Accepting internationalisation, at least in the form of a commitment to exports, was an essential condition for including a company in the study. To quantify the managers' opinions, a five-degree ordinal scale was used [Green, Tull & Albaum 1988, pp. 305–308], where 1 meant – “definitely not”; 2 – “rather not”; 3 – “difficult to say”; 4 – “rather yes”; 5 – “definitely yes”. The collected data were processed using the STATISTICA 9.0 programme. The method of sample selection clearly indicates that the results of the study cannot be generalized. The results can only indicate possible interdependencies between cooperation, international competitiveness and internationalization of a company.

The researched Danish companies are participants of the ICTNORCOM cluster<sup>1</sup> – with 27 entities. The companies are participants of the cluster located around Aalborg, one of the main cities in North Jutland, which comprises companies operating in the ICT industry. The Japanese firms are formal partners within the Kansai Front Runner Project Neo Cluster Japan in the Kansai region – with 15 entities. The enterprises operate in a sector of industry dedicated to futuristic products, for example robots. The Polish firms are representatives of the Printing and Advertising Cluster in Leszno, one of the main cities in Wielkopolska region in western Poland. All the companies (14 entities) operate in what can be referred to as the creative sector.

### 3. Research results

The studied companies come from three different cultural environments. Denmark, Japan and Poland differ considerably in terms of their cultural characteristics. It is interesting therefore to find out if the cultural differences determine their perception of the results of cooperation with rivals. When comparing the opinions of Danish, Japanese and Polish companies, a nonparametric analysis of the Kruskal-Wallis variance was used as the basic statistical technique. The test is more effective than median-based tests. It is used in the case of many distributions, i.e. in a situa-

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<sup>1</sup> Cluster is an organizational form of cooperation. The concept of a cluster was presented i.e. in PUER in 2007 [Gorynia, Jankowska & Owczarzak 2007, pp. 5–28].

tion where differences between more than two independent measurement groups expressed in ranked order are analysed [Francuz & Mackiewicz 2006, pp. 449]. The Kruskal-Wallis test is an extension of the Mann-Whitney U test to more than two independent samples. Its additional advantage is independence of the normal empirical distribution which is required in parametric tests. Therefore, if the analysed populations do not have a normal distribution (which in fact is the basic criterion of using the Anov procedure), then the Kruskal-Wallis test is used.

**Table 2. Results of cooperation – perceptions of Danish, Polish and Japanese firms**  
[n = 56, p = 0.05]

Specification	Kruskal-Wallis test and the significance level of the results in differences and similarities
The company increased its market share in the domestic market	H = 0.506 p = 0.7765
The company improved its sales profitability in the domestic market	H = 0.276 p = 0.8712
The company increased its market share in the foreign market/markets	H = 17.378 p = 0.0002
The company improved its sales profitability in the foreign market/markets.	H = 16.794 p = 0.0002
The share of exports in total sales increased	H = 18.640 p = 0.0001
The company enlarged its market portfolio by entering foreign markets which had not been considered before	H = 21.781 p = 0.0000
The company implemented more capital intensive and risky forms of foreign expansion other than exports	H = 24.297 p = 0.0000

Within the conducted test the differences in distributions as regards the independent variable “the country of origin of the company” were checked (Table 2). The answers to the questions concerning the results of cooperation provided by companies were the feature which was studied (the dependent variable). A comparison between the values of the Kruskal-Wallis H results and the critical value in the statistical table of the chi-square distribution for  $k - 1 = 3 - 1 = 2$  degrees of freedom and  $p = 0.05$ , which equals 5.991, showed that there were statistically significant differences for 5 out of 7 results of cooperation with rivals specified in the questionnaire. The calculated values of the H statistics were outside the critical range ( $H < 5.991$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis  $H_0$  cannot be accepted. Such a result indicates that the cultural context of the companies researched has a bearing on the consequences of their cooperation. There is also the question of whether companies coming from relationship-focused societies perceive cooperation with rivals as being of greater importance for their international competitiveness and internation-

alization. According to the characteristics of national culture, Japanese companies are supposed to be more optimistic about the results of cooperation between rivals, Danish businesses are expected to have a much less positive perception of cooperation with competitors, and Polish firms are likely to be somewhere in between.

Whether or not cooperation with rivals is considered to be a factor contributing to the success of a company can be substantiated by the existence of a statistically significant and positive correlation between indicators of the intensity of cooperation and indicators of international competitiveness and internationalization. The indicators are presented in Table 1. In order to evaluate any correlation, Kendall's tau correlation coefficient was used. In the case of Danish, Japanese and Polish companies there are positive and statistically significant correlation coefficients between the number of areas of cooperation with rivals and some indicators of international competitiveness and internationalization of companies. The calculations for Danish companies reveal that there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between the number of areas of cooperation and an increase in the domestic market share. The case of Polish companies shows positive and statistically significant correlations between the number of areas of cooperation and an increase in domestic market share and sales profitability on the domestic market. The Japanese data confirm the existence of positive and statistically significant correlations between the number of areas of cooperation and an increase in domestic market share and

**Table 3. Results of cooperation – numbers of areas**

Specification	Number of areas of cooperation		
	Danish companies	Japanese companies	Polish companies
The company increased its market share in the domestic market	0.260	0.433	0.459
The company improved its sales profitability in the domestic market	0.107	0.423	0.345
The company increased its market share in foreign market/markets	0.220	0.430	0.284
The company improved its sales profitability in foreign market/markets.	0.103	0.347	0.077
The share of exports in total sales increased	0.156	0.553	0.145
The company enlarged its market portfolio by entering foreign markets which had not been considered before	0.084	0.196	0.145
The company implemented more capital intensive and risky forms of foreign expansion other than exports	0.217	0.462	0.206

sales profitability on the domestic market, an increase in the share of exports in total sales, and the implementation of more capital intensive and risky forms of foreign expansion other than exports. Considering the results of the statistical analysis obtained by using the Kendall's tau correlation coefficients, the most optimistic are Japanese companies, second in the ranking are Polish firms, and third position goes to Danish companies.

## Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to investigate the implications of cooptation for companies coming from three different national cultures. The authors tried to answer the question whether the companies coming from relationship-focused societies perceive cooperation with rivals as more important for their success assessed on the basis of the measures of international competitiveness and internationalization. The companies which participated in the research come from quite different cultural environments – Denmark, Japan and Poland and differ considerably in terms of their cultural characteristics. To check if there are some significant differences in the opinions of the three groups of enterprises, the authors used Kruskal-Wallis test. The analysis revealed that there were statistically significant differences for 5 out of the 7 results of cooperation with rivals specified in the questionnaire. Differences in the cultural background are reflected in the opinions of respondents divided into groups according to their “nationality”.

Japanese companies operate within relationship-focused societies and are perceived as entities accepting and even favoring cooperation. Danish firms come from deal-focused context and this may mean a less enthusiastic attitude towards cooperation. Polish companies are somewhere between the Japanese and Danish enterprises. The analysis of correlation between indicators of the intensity of cooptation and indicators of international competitiveness and internationalization with the use of tau Kendall correlation coefficient confirmed to some extent the expectations of the authors. In the case of Japanese companies there exists a significant and positive correlation between the number of areas of cooptation the company is involved in and three of four indicators of competitiveness as well as two out of three measures of the level of internationalization. In the case of Danish companies the positive and significant correlation is visible only in one case – between the number of the areas of cooptation and one measure of competitiveness. According to the results, cooperation with rivals helped Danish firms to increase their share in the domestic market. Polish firms are as it turned out less optimistic than Japanese but more enthusiastic than Danish enterprises. There exists a positive and statistically significant correlation between the number of areas of cooptation and two indica-

tors of competitiveness – the increase of market share in the domestic market and the increase of sales profitability in the domestic market.

Summing up, the authors conclude that in the case of the companies under the research the cultural background matters. The “level” of enthusiasm about changes cooperation brings for the companies’ international competitiveness and internationalization goes in line with their cultural background.

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