ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AND PERCEPTION OF VALUES IN THE ENTERPRISE – IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH RESULTS

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to present various approaches to organizational identity, with particular reference to the approach of J.M.T. Balmer (2017) and various approaches to values. Moreover, presenting the results of empirical research on the perception of organizational identity by enterprise employees and values in relation to own construct of values oriented towards the functioning of enterprises in their various aspects.

Design/methodology/approach: Theoretical research in the field of organizational identity and values in the enterprise. Conducting own empirical research, also in relation to own value construct, which takes into account various aspects of the company's operation, also relations with the environment. The article is an innovative approach to the presented topic due to the use of author's own value construct in relation to empirical research.

Findings: According to the conducted research, all of the above-mentioned features of the organizational identity of the entities, the respondents are employed in, were considered important. These include: organizational type of the enterprise, purpose(s) of the enterprise/organization, area of activity, geographical scope, ethos and values, market position, management method and employee behaviour, markets and customers served, quality of products and/or services. Moreover, it was shown that all the areas included in the author's value construct are important for the surveyed employees, i.e. customer service, quality, responsibility, teamwork.

Research limitations/implications: Further research will focus on the remaining features of organizational identity by J.M.T. Balmer, also in relation to the analysis of the approach of representatives of different age groups and industry specificity. Moreover, it is worth including the cultural context in future research and indicating, on the basis of a representative sample, how representatives of lower levels of management and the management staff of enterprises approach the aspects discussed in this article. The study has some limitations. The results cannot be generalized because the sample was not selected probabilistically.

Practical implications: The presented original value construct can constitute a set of indications for further diagnosis and modification of the development paths of an economic entity, also in the perspective dimension. Its application can be universal and the research results obtained on its basis may support the targeting of programs to improve the management of various types of business entities, also in the context of shaping their organizational identity.

Social implications: The research presented in the article is part of the research trend that serves to shape attitudes conducive to building awareness of corporate social responsibility in the context of the presented approach to values oriented not only to the development of the enterprise but also to shaping appropriate relations with the environment.

Originality/value: The study showed the perception of organizational identity by company employees in connection with the values identified in author's own construct.
Keywords: organizational identity, employees, values, enterprise.

1. Introduction

According to J. Duraj (2008, p. 90): "changes that take place in the enterprise's environment and in itself" result from globalization processes that are related to the competence and competitiveness of economic entities. Increasing the value of the company's potential should undoubtedly be based on well-established foundations. It is worth looking for them in material resources, but these are not unique. "Referring to the computer analogy, we can say that material resources play the role of "hardware". Intangible resources, on the other hand, constitute something like the "software" of the organization (...). Generally speaking, material resources can be purchased, but intangible resources must be developed" (de Wit, Meyer, 2007, p. 163). An enterprise is more than just its material potential. Its specificity, unique "image" is created by employees. Their intellectual capital, perceived values and attachment to them as well as identification with their workplace give a unique dimension to the company, just as each person is unique, one of a kind. Enterprises that want to be recognizable on the market and build their organizational identity should systematically identify the features and elements of this identity through the prism of the perception of their employees.

The purpose of the considerations presented in the article is to present various approaches to organizational identity, with particular reference to the approach of J.M.T. Balmer (2017). Moreover, another goal is to present the results of empirical research on the perception of value by company employees in relation to their own value construct oriented towards functioning in various aspects.

The article was prepared on the basis of the results of empirical research conducted from April to September 2023 on a group of people employed in the Lubuskie voivodeship.

2. Organizational identity – approaches, features, importance for the functioning of enterprises

There are a lot of approaches to the issue of organizational identity. It is organizational identity that provides the company's brand promise (Balmer, 2012) and is a kind of platform on which it is built and maintained (Balmer, 2001a). In turn, M. Paliderova, A. Bielikova, E. Spuchľakova (2015, p. 288) are of the opinion that: "Organizational identity is a complex view of the organization, which is created by its philosophy, history, management, leadership,

contemporary situation in the organization and its outlook on the future". According to G. Davis, R. Chun, R.V. da Silva, S. Roper (2001), it is interpreted as "the internal image of a particular economic entity and applies only to its employees". This perspective on the issue of organizational identity requires taking into account an important aspect of it, namely building organizational identification by taking various actions that ensure that a particular economic entity is well distinguished from the environment and at the same time maintains internal coherence (Stefański, Czarnota-Bojarska, 2020).

According to B. Olszewska and K. Olszewska (2009, pp. 175-176): "The identity of a company is defined as its self-awareness, character, specificity expressed in attitudes and behaviours, in what the company is, what it tries to define when forming its missions. (…) The company's identity, understood as a relatively coherent, internal image of the company, is shaped as a result of the perception and assessment of various forms of its activities, experiences, successes and failures, in the process of changes that the company is undergoing". This, in turn, depends on the level of perception of understanding and remembering, as well as the strengthening of internal coherence represented by employees. This concept must be implemented through communication not only within a particular enterprise but also outside it, organizational behaviour is also important. It is crucial to ensure its harmonization with the organizational structure of the enterprise and changes within it, conditions resulting from taking actions conducive to strengthening the company's position on the market in the form of new expansion activities, or other market conditions (Paliderova, Bielikova, Spuchľakova, 2015). The given issues should also be looked at from a broader perspective. Organizational identity can also be analyzed in relation to the sustainable development of enterprises in the context of globalization processes (Olexova, Chlebikova, 2020). It is worth adding that, as suggested by the research of M.R.Z. Aly, S.A.A.E. Eltanbouly, and R.S. Ebrahim (2023), organizational identity has a positive, direct impact on corporate social responsibility, and by demonstrating appropriate attitudes on the part of top management, it is possible to obtain the commitment of company employees in this area.

According to Ana Čuić Tanković (2020), organizational identity based on solid foundations builds trust and support of various stakeholders and gains an advantage in the business environment, also by attracting highly respected managers to a particular entity. Furthermore, it has a positive impact on the business potential of the organization, its perception by consumers in terms of the quality of products and services, thus contributing to building loyalty, and is also related to the involvement of stakeholders in creating the organizational brand.

The importance and benefits of organizational identity can be evidenced by, among the others (Işık, 2021): its motivational impact on employees who, understanding the features and goals of the organization, show greater support and commitment to its development, shaping attitudes of trust that strengthen the positive behaviour of the environment business as well as the target audience, protecting the brand against competition. This requires an efficient

communication process not only in the intra-organizational dimension but also in terms of contacts with the environment, which should be taken into account from a strategic perspective.

"Typically, key corporate identity traits encompass (but are most certainly no limited to) (Balmer, 2017, p. 1478):

1. an institution's organisational type,
2. its purpose(s),
3. activities,
4. ethos and values,
5. market position,
6. markets and customers served,
7. product and service quality,
8. management and employee behaviours,
9. geographic scope, etc.".

The given list of interdependent features shows that they make the company stand out from other entities operating on the market (Balmer, 2001b; Melewar, 2003), and may also contribute to shaping its competitive advantage. Its sources should be sought in the company's potential, which is based on the most valuable resource – employees. Their satisfaction, according to A. Dewalska-Opitek (2009, p. 32), "depends on the satisfaction of (...) individual and group needs related to the workplace". This is one of the important determinants of subjective treatment of employees and affects the efficiency of the organization and translates into the creation of an appropriate atmosphere in the workplace. So how can we extract the resources hidden inside the company, how can we build the foundations of pro-identity behaviour of the company's employees at all levels based on strong foundations? Values can become this important bond. We should agree with the statement of B. Olszewska and K. Olszewska (2009, p. 176) that: "Building identity is a complex and long-term process, it grows from superior values and is aimed at achieving the vision".

3. Concept of values and their importance in the life of an enterprise

The multidisciplinary nature of the category of "values" is evidenced by the fact that they are issues raised by such sciences as social, empirical and humanities. "A person cannot only adopt the attitude of a passive observer towards values, because values attract him, while anti-values repel him", they have not only a quantitative but also a qualitative dimension (Kowalczyk, 2006, pp. 149, 166). According to E. Rudawska, values should be identified "with positive attitudes, the main components of attitudes, motivational and perceptual states that guide behaviour aimed at certain preferred goals or a relationship of ideas and attitudes creating a scale of preferences for undertaken actions; they define what is expected and desirable" (2008,

p. 21). A similar approach to this definition is presented by L.J. Krzyżanowski (1999, p. 205). It is a product of "feelings, beliefs or convictions of an entity: a human individual, a social group, a local, national or other community, a cultural community or a global society about what in the natural and psychosocial-cultural reality is positively assessed and considered desirable and aspired". According to K. Krzakiewicz (2011, p. 103), one of the important elements of management of top-level managers is: "Creating a precisely formulated system of values and a model of organizational behaviour and their uncompromising implementation. The value system is a binding element of the organization, promotes efficient teamwork and ensures effective transfer of knowledge". K. Krzakiewicz (2011, p. 102) states that: "The authority to influence the behaviour of others is currently provided not by the power of the administrative machine, but by generally shared and perceived values" (...). The success of an enterprise is related to the combination of attention to results and interpersonal relations (Blanchard, 2007, p. 224). Their proper shaping requires taking into account various aspects of values, because "they are the driving force behind the behaviour of employees who contribute to achieving the goal and realizing the image of the future" (Blanchard, 2010, p. 105). Learning and understanding the personal values of organization members and the values emphasized in the workplace as well as matching them to each other, influences the development of organizational behaviour at its various levels (Arieli, Sagiv, Roccas, 2020).

It is worth discovering the opinions of employees working in the surveyed enterprises regarding the perception of organizational identity.

4. Methods

In addition to a review of the literature on organizational identity and values, the article also presents the results of own empirical research. To ensure the authenticity of the data, participants were informed that the study was anonymous and would be used only for scientific purposes. They were carried out using a survey questionnaire. Some of the surveys among respondents were conducted online and the rest in paper form. The received surveys were thoroughly verified to check whether the respondents answered the questions in order to obtain completeness of the results. The selection of the research sample was not of a probabilistic nature, but was guided by the fact that employees employed in various entities participated in the survey in terms of: the period of operation of the enterprise/organization on the market, the geographical scope of the enterprise/organization's activity, type of activity, legal form, capital ownership or the size of the enterprise. Moreover, it was also important to differentiate employees based on: gender, length of service in the enterprise/organization, nature of work performed and type of job position.

The study uses empirical research conducted from April to September 2023 on a group of 200 people employed in the Lubuskie voivodeship. The characteristics of the study population have been shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Characteristics of the studied population

Description		Number of indications	Number of indications as a percentage (in %)
Gender of respondents	women	112	44,0
	men	88	56,0
Work experience in the company/organization	Less than 1 year	36	18,0
	From 1 to 5 years	98	49,0
	From 6 to 10 years	33	16,5
	From 11 to 15 years	13	6,5
	From 16 to 20 years	8	4,0
	Over 20 years	12	6,0
Workplace type *	executive	147	73,5
	managerial	57	28,5
The nature of the work performed *	physical work	109	54,5
	mental work	131	65,5

Note: * Some respondents perform both physical and mental work. Moreover, in several cases, employees indicated that they were employed in executive and managerial positions.

Source: own study based on empirical research.

The surveyed respondents were dominated by people whose period of employment in a particular enterprise/organization was from 1 to 5 years (49.0% of respondents). Then, 18.0% were people with an employment period of less than 1 year, 16.5% of respondents had been working for 6 to 10 years and 6.5% for 11 to 15 years. In terms of job position, a larger number of indications concerned employees working in executive positions (73.5%) and 28.5% were people working in managerial positions. 65.5% of respondents perform mental work and 54.5% perform physical work. It should be added that some people perform both types of work.

Moreover, in order to present a more comprehensive picture of the respondents, a table was prepared showing the characteristics of the enterprises/organizations in which they are employed. They have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Characteristics of the enterprises/organizations in which the surveyed respondents are employed

Description		Number of indications (in %)
The period of operation of the enterprise/organization on the market	Up to 5 years	16,5
	From 6 to 10 years	18,0
	From 11 to 15 years	12,0
	From 16 to 20 years	11,5
	Over 20 years	42,0
The geographical scope of theenterprise/organization's activity	Local market	31,5
	Regional market	26,5
	Domestic market	41,5
	International market	40,0

Cont. table 2.

| Type of the enterprise/organization's activity	Production	39,5
	Trade	46,5
	Services	46,0
	Others	9,5
Legal form	State-owned enterprise	16,5
	Private enterprise	74,0
	Other form	9,5
Capital ownership	Polish capital	72,0
	Foreign capital	13,0
	Mixed capital with a predominance of foreign	8,0
	Mixed capital with a predominance of Polish	4,0
	Equal share of Polish and foreign capital	3,0
Size of the enterprise/organization	Micro (less than 10 employees)	20,0
	Small (10 to 49 employees)	28,0
	Medium (from 50 to 249 employees)	18,5
	Large (more than 249 employees)	33,5

Source: own study based on empirical research.

The surveyed employees were employed in business entities whose period of operation on the market varied. The largest group were those that had existed for over 20 years – 42.0%. As for the geographical scope, it should be noted that some entities were active not only on one market. There were (41.5%) surveyed entities on the domestic market and 40.0% on the international market. The majority of enterprises were private – 74.0% of entities. In terms of capital ownership, Polish capital dominated (72.0% of entities). The research shows that the majority of respondents are employed in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. They constitute a total of 66.5% of entities, 33.5% of which are large entities.

5. Results

The work environment, with all its diversity of internal and external conditions, requires building the foundations of company stability, which can significantly contribute to shaping organizational identity. Due to the fact that employed employees will decide about the future of the company, it is important to learn their opinions about the company – the workplace. It is worth agreeing with the opinion of C. Szmidt (2007, p. 6) that: "The way of managing human capital in small and medium-sized companies significantly affects the social atmosphere and interpersonal relations in the work environment", which undoubtedly contributes to the creation of mechanisms that unite employees and build their intra-organizational bonds in an economic entity.

An important aspect of the issues discussed in the article was the presentation of respondents' opinions regarding how they perceive the features of organizational identity identified by J.M.T. Balmer (2017) in relation to their workplace. A scale of 0 to 5 points was adopted. Where 0 means "not important at all", 1 point – "of slight importance", 2 points –

"of little importance", 3 points – "of average importance", 4 points – "important", 5 points – "very important". The results obtained on the basis of the weighted average have been presented in Figure 1.
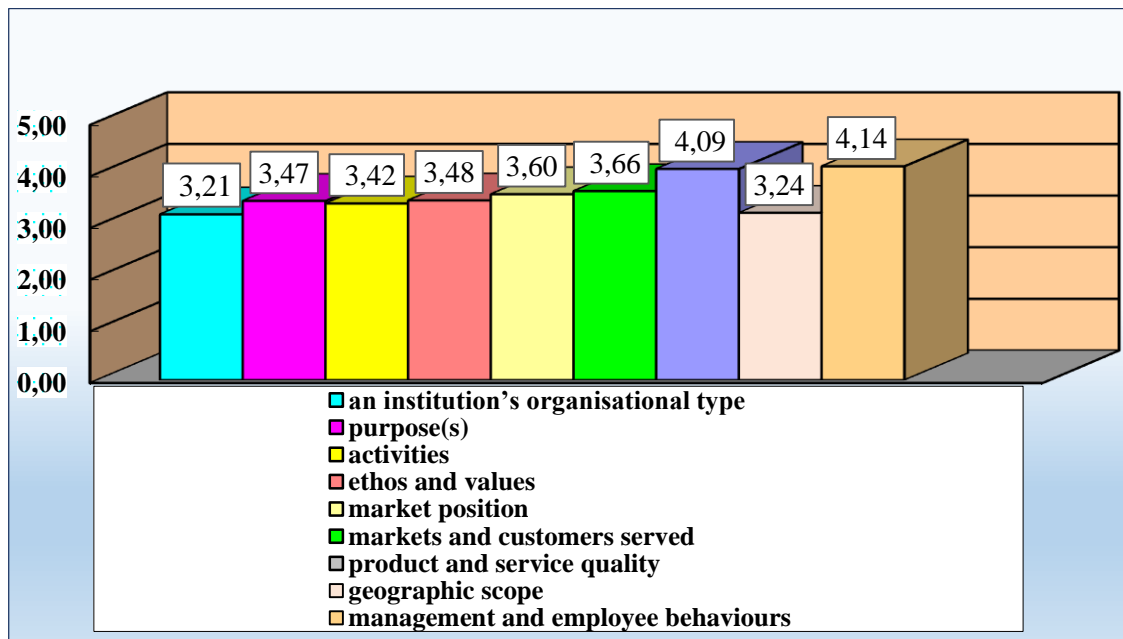
Figure 1. Respondents' opinions regarding areas/elements of the company's functioning that constitute the features of organizational identity.
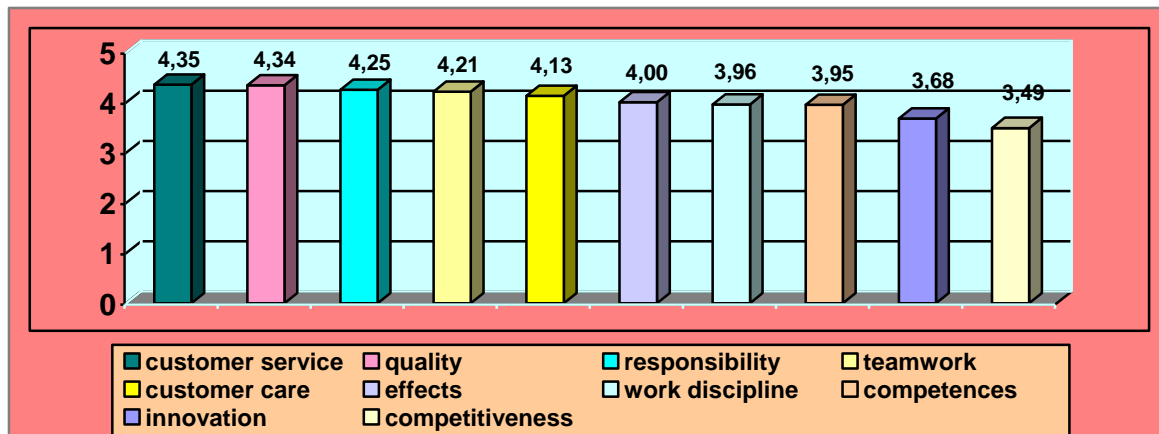
Source: own study based on empirical research.

In the opinion of the surveyed respondents, the most important feature of organizational identity is the way of management and behaviour of employees – 4.14 points. Then, the quality of products and/or services was indicated – 4.09 points. Two features received a similar number of points, i.e. markets and customers served (3.66 points) and market position (3.60 points). Further positions are taken by: ethos and values (3.48 points), purpose(s) of the enterprise/organization (3.47 points), area of activity (3.42 points), geographical scope (3.24 points) and type of enterprise organization (3.21 points). According to the research conducted, all of the above-mentioned features of the organizational identity of the entities in which the respondents are employed were considered important. Their scores range between 3.21 and 4.14 points.

As a result of the conducted research, it was also determined how respondents evaluate areas illustrating values oriented to the sphere of operation of enterprises in their various aspects. It is worth emphasizing that an original approach to the value construct was used.

The company builds its potential based on the potential of its employees, which is shaped through the prism of the values they perceive. It is necessary to look at how representatives of the surveyed entities relate to areas that create a certain reference to the hierarchy of values. It is also important to look from the perspective of to what extent the particular values are shared by the management staff and whether there is convergence of views in this respect between management and lower-level employees?

The surveyed respondents commented on which of the given areas reflect the values that are important to them in the company/organization. A scale of 0 to 5 points was used, where 0 means "not important at all", 1 point – "of slight importance", 2 points – "of little importance", 3 points – "of average importance", 4 points – "important", 5 points – "very important". The obtained calculations have been presented in Figure 2.


Figure 2. Perception of areas illustrating values important for employees of enterprises/organizations – original approach to the value construct.

Source: own study based on empirical research.

As a result of the research, it was found that all the given areas are important for the surveyed employees. What makes us optimistic is that the representatives of enterprises assigned points (using a weighted average), which eventually results ranging from 3.49 to 4.35. It was decided that the most important area illustrating important values is customer service. In second place is quality, which received a very similar number of points. The next positions are taken by: responsibility, teamwork. As a result of the research, it was found that competitiveness received the lowest number of points – 3.49 points.

Due to the fact that values act as integrating elements, in the sense that they are common to all or most members of the organization, it is worth taking a closer look at whether the values assessed by respondents are consistent with the expectations of the management staff? In response to this question, respondents expressed their opinions, which have been shown in Figure 3.
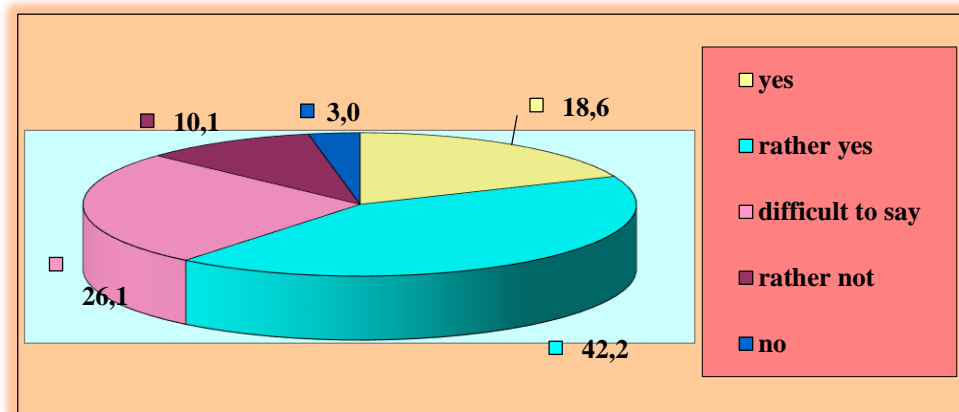
Figure 3. Convergence of the areas of significant values given by respondents with the expectations of the management staff.

Source: own study based on empirical research.

Based on the respondents' opinions, it was found that 60.8% of respondents perceived the convergence of their views on values with the expectations of the management staff, as the answer was yes (18.6%) or rather yes (42.2%). 26.1% of respondents have no opinion on this matter. 10.1% of respondents chose the answer rather not and only 3.0% chose the answer no.

It is worth remembering that the perception and creation of an authentic organizational identity requires participation in a continuous dialogue process of entities involved in shaping the actual image of the company (Theunissen, 2014), which means the participation of both management staff and lower-level employees as well as representatives of various age groups.

Due to the limited scope of presentation of the obtained results, no further in-depth analyzes were presented regarding the existing relationships between the assessment of identity features and the perceived values related to one's own construct.

6. Discussion

It is necessary to agree with the statement of B. Sadowska and A. Lulek (2020) that "(...) the attitude and behaviour of each manager seems crucial in the context of effectively influencing employee motivation". This is facilitated by the sharing of common values, which, as empirical research shows, has been achieved to a high degree. This is evidenced by the fact that 60.8% of respondents see the convergence of their views on values with the expectations of the management staff, as the answer was yes (18.6%) or rather yes (42.2%). Let the opinion of Piwowar-Sulej K. and Mroziewski R. (2020, p. 35) be the voice in the discussion on the role and importance of values in an enterprise: "Because of values, employees feel united, get more involved and, as a result, their potential, passions, and talents can be taken advantage of to the fullest". Undertaking research on organizational identity in the context of perceiving value in

an enterprise is part of the current and undertaking research topic of recent times. This is due to the fact that, according to J. Moczydłowska (2021, p. 3), key organizational competencies in conditions of permanent change include, among the others, "(...) the ability to manage relationships with employees by building their commitment and loyalty". A.K. Koźmiński, D. Jemielniak, D. Latusek-Jurczak, A. Pikos (2023, p. 87) write about the importance of "(...) mutual acceptance or even emotional involvement between the organization (i.e., in practice, its management) and its participants". In their opinion, the internal social balance achieved in this way is a specific exchange of intangible values. Organizational identity influences the perception of the brand by employees and its formation depends on basic values, organizational culture or organizational behaviour, visual presentation of the company as well as aspects related to the process of communicating outside and inside the company. It is worth adding that it also affects the level of job satisfaction (Gilani, 2019), which in the presented own research can be related to the degree of convergence of the perception of value by management staff and lower-level employees. The common challenge of values is certainly an important determinant that unites the "entire complex" organism of the enterprise. The awareness of a similar view of the company and areas illustrating values such as customer service and care, teamwork, quality or competences can create important foundations on which the pillars of the company can be based not only here and now but also in the future.

7. Summary

It is worth agreeing with the statement that: "Firms should develop human resource systems that help underpin and reinforce employees' beliefs in their CI" (Pavez, Kendall, Laszlo, 2021, p. 23).

The article presents various approaches to organizational identity. Particular attention was paid to the J.M.T. Balmer approach (2017), who distinguished its key features. He included: the organizational type of a particular institution, its purpose(s) of operation, area of activity, ethos and values, market position, markets and customers served, quality of product and services, management methods and employee behavior, and the geographical scope of the business entity. Moreover, the author's own construct of values was presented. This approach was considered interesting and important from the point of view of the topic discussed, among the others, due to the important role that values and their perception can play in shaping the pro-identity attitudes and behaviours of enterprise employees. According to the conducted research, all of the above-mentioned features of the organizational identity of the entities in which the respondents are employed were considered important. Their scores range from 3.21 to 4.14 points (the adopted scale is from 0 to 5 points).

In terms of perceiving areas illustrating important values crucial for employees of enterprises/organizations, reference was made to the author's approach to the value construct. It includes elements such as: quality, competence, teamwork. It was found that the obtained results range from 3.49 to 4.35 (a scale from 0 to 5 points was also used here). Moreover, based on the opinions of the surveyed respondents, it was found that 60.8% saw the convergence of their views on values with the expectations of the management staff. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with K. Rogoziński (2012, p. 194) that the direct bond and source of group identity are shared values.

There are, of course, some limitations to this study. Despite the fact that the participants represented various enterprises, organizations, and various industries in the Lubuskie voivodeship, the results cannot be generalized because the sample was not selected probabilistically. However, this work has already expanded knowledge of the perception of organizational identity by company employees, which is extremely important in times of turbulent changes in the environment. An important advantage of the article is also the presentation of own empirical research based on the author's value construct, which is oriented not only on aspects related to management in the enterprise, but can also be applied to relations with the environment, in relation to building relationships with consumers.

The results of empirical research are optimistic, which can indicate a high awareness of enterprise employees in terms of shaping organizational identity in the entities where they are employed. Further research will focus on the remaining features of organizational identity identified by J.M.T. Balmer, also in relation to the analysis of the approach of representatives of different age groups and industry specificity. Moreover, it is worth including the cultural context in future research and demonstrating, on the basis of a representative sample, how representatives of lower levels of management and the management staff of enterprises approach the aspects discussed in this article.

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