The role of corruption in consumer culture

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Abstract. This article examines the role of corruption in consumer culture. The concept of "corruption" and its relationship between cultural characteristics and macroeconomic indicators are considered. The relevance of this topic is due to the extremely high degree of its public danger. Keywords: corruption, culture, organization, bribery, collective, development, consumption, indicators.

1 Introduction

The less developed a country is, the higher the level of corruption in it, said Arie Rattner, head of the Center for the Study of Crime, Law and Society, Professor of Sociology and Criminology at the Israeli University of Haifa in the report "Macro- and micro-perspective in explaining corruption: is everything taken into account?", presented at the HSE

The relationship between corruption, cultural characteristics and macroeconomic indicators of the country exists, Arie Rattner found out. In the course of his research, he tried to understand whether certain cultural characteristics of society, moral attitudes can add something to the explanations of corrupt behavior.

2 The main part

It is difficult to overestimate the role of corporate culture in the life of a modern organization, the leaders of successful companies with a strong corporate culture have each come to realize culture as a powerful effective tool for development: - reducing the degree of uncertainty in the team regarding the expectations of its members about their present and future; - providing a sense of predictability, and therefore security by observing and preserving key values and norms that the staff perceives as eternal, transmitted from generation to generation; - creating an atmosphere of a unified team, where each team member is equally important, attached and devoted to the common cause, irreplaceable and inseparable from the team; - showing the perspective of the development of the organization, thereby giving a boost of energy for

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moving forward, etc. In addition to these components, corporate culture also has a powerful anti-corruption potential, which actualizes its role and importance in prevention and preventive measures in this area [1-12].

The economic analysis of corruption began to develop actively in the 1970s, when the neoclassical doctrine based on the principles of individualism and utilitarianism seized methodological leadership. Studies of corruption in the works of neoclassical economists integrate this phenomenon into the general logic of liberal methodology: subjects are trying to find the optimal way to realize their interests in conditions of limited resources (R. Vishny, S. Rose-Ackerman, V. Tanzi, A. Schleifer, etc.). In this case, the behavior of a politician, an official, a businessman has no essential differences: they all try to use the available resource constraints to the greatest advantage for themselves; only some operate with political capital, others — administrative, and others — economic. At the same time, the goals of participants in corrupt transactions are not limited to material benefits alone. The circle of claims of participants in corruption relations includes re-election in elections, retaining a position in the administrative hierarchy, and new business opportunities. High-level bureaucrats build behavior taking into account the influence of a bribe on the organization they represent, its reputation and level of activity [1-7].

In the extensive scientific literature devoted to corruption, the main attention is paid to the problem of the effectiveness of the state - political, economic, administrative and legal factors of corrupt behavior of officials. However, focusing on the causes of bureaucratic bribery often leads to the fact that corruption is portrayed as a "game of one actor", an extortionist official. In reality, corruption is an active interaction of not even two, but at least three parties. At the macrosociological level, these parties are represented by business, the state and society, and in the minds of direct participants in corrupt transactions - by an official, an entrepreneur and an invisible Other figure (a reference group, public opinion), on which the legitimization of any illegal activity is based. In our article we will try to draw the reader's attention to the problems, the relevance of which, in our opinion, will grow not despite, but thanks to the improvement of the economic situation in the country and the streamlining of the work of the state apparatus. We are talking about the little-studied problem of "state capture" in our country and the legitimization of illegal economic activity in the mass consciousness [8-14].

Corruption is widespread in many countries, and as a phenomenon it is an abuse of authority to extract one's own benefit, Rattner said at the international workshop of the HSE Laboratory for Comparative Social Research "Social and Cultural Changes in a Comparative perspective: Values and Modernization". Corruption relations concern everyone who depends on the honesty of people in government structures.

In his research on political corruption, Rattner, referring to the Heidenheimer classification (Heidenheimer, 1989), identifies three types of corruption:
- "white" corruption is corruption that is part of the culture. For example, police bribes in some countries become part of the salaries of employees. This type of corruption is perceived in the culture as practically legal. The government does almost nothing to eradicate this pattern of behavior.
- "gray" corruption is behavior that is illegal, but is perceived almost as legitimate, because no one can do without it. A striking example is political parties that attract illegal funding as part of their election campaign.
- "black" corruption refers to illegal and illegitimate operations behind closed doors, where there are no visible victims and, therefore, no one complains about it.

It is obvious that a society with a high degree of corruption incurs serious transaction costs in the form of inefficient allocation of resources, financial flows, budget spending; loss of taxes; growth of social inequality; inefficient activity of the state apparatus and increasing distrust of the authorities, as well as a number of other problems that hinder socio-economic
development. Of course, there are strict regulatory requirements in Russian society that play an important role in establishing mechanisms to deter and prevent unfair business behavior, but the regulatory framework alone is not enough to counter corruption at all levels [7-16].

Most of the proposed explanations of corruption are political or economic, while cultural factors of corrupt behavior have been studied little and are rarely taken into account. In the existing scientific literature, three approaches to the relationship between culture and corruption can be distinguished.

According to the first of them, corruption itself is a culture (business or organizational) and should be analyzed from the point of view of symbols, myths, customs, beliefs and basic values reproduced within the business community or organization. A representative of this approach is R. Klitgaard, who defines the culture of corruption as an organizational culture characterized by cynicism and loss of common sense [17]. Some features of the corruption culture are characteristic, apparently, for the majority of Russian state institutions, especially the lower echelon of power. It is characteristic, for example, that 40% of the surveyed civil servants of Nizhny Novgorod themselves note such features of the local administration as bribery (41.7%) and bureaucracy (44.4%) [18-25].

The second approach goes back to the structural functionalism of T. Parsons and R. Merton. Within its framework, corruption is a temporary state, a dysfunction in a culture understood as a system of values, norms and attitudes shared by members of the community. It becomes possible in a situation of anomie, negative attitude or indifference of a significant part of the community to social norms generated by the conflict between the elements of the value system. In particular, anomie occurs when symbols of success (for example, material) are extolled in society, allegedly common to the entire population as a whole, while the current norms and rules restrict or completely eliminate access to legal means of achieving these values for a significant part of the population [19]. From this point of view, the promotion of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial behavior among civil servants with a decrease in control over their activities in the early 1990s, and the lack of legislative support for many transactions between administrations and businesses has led to the fact that the rules violated in this case have become, not without reason, considered as "imperfect and outdated", i.e. as rules whose observance is not a moral duty [3-7].

The same approach, in particular, can be attributed to the theory of incompatible norms proposed to explain corruption by W. Raisman [20]. From the point of view of the latter, myth systems are created in society that contain too idealistic norms, so agents develop their own operational norms, which they are guided by. These norms may deviate from the myths propagated in the system, turning into criminal "corruption" or into a natural "cooperation of business and government", depending on the chosen angle of view. Fluctuations in the frequency of acts of corruption in Raisman explains that the benefits expected from corrupt transactions depend on the number of individuals involved in them, and we must agree with him - in the sense that the moral costs of the transaction are close to zero if the whole society participates in it as a third party (another figure legitimizing or condemning the behavior of the parties), and she herself is inscribed in the system of distribution of additional income within a state institution. The legitimization of corruption networks occurs due to the recognition of existing norms as imperfect or unfair [21-25].

Within the framework of the third approach, corruption is interpreted not as a temporary, painful condition, but as a phenomenon constantly reproduced by cultural tradition, based on permanent, stable features of national culture. This view became possible in the 1970s due to the discovery, first in the Third World countries, and then in Western countries, of an informal economy closely related to local customs and values (research by K. Hart). In their attempts to identify the influence of culture on the level of corruption, researchers began to resort to those dimensions of culture that were developed within the framework of cross-
When investigating corruption, scientists most often use two main approaches. The first of them is aimed at studying public opinion about corruption in a country or region. It is used in mass and expert surveys: respondents express a personal assessment of the prevalence of corruption in their region and corruption schemes visible to them. This approach is often criticized by experts, because such an assessment is mainly subjective, although to some extent it may reflect the real situation with corruption in the country or region. The results of these surveys are published annually by the World Bank and the non-governmental international anti-corruption organization Transparency International.

The second approach to the study of corruption is based on voluntary confessions of respondents about involvement in corruption schemes.

Most of the works investigating corruption use a descriptive approach and are limited to ranking countries or regions by the level of corruption. Figure 1 shows the degree of corruption in 31 European countries and the United States in 2010. The indicator "10" indicates the lowest level of corruption, which Denmark, Finland and Sweden can boast of. The highest level of corruption is in Romania, Bulgaria and Greece [1-20].

The average level of corruption in the EU countries was 6.2. In the USA, this indicator is 7.1.

Fig. 1. The degree of corruption in European countries and the United States in 2010.

The most commonly used parameters for measuring culture proposed by Geert Hofstede are collectivism - individualism, power distance, masculinity, avoidance of uncertainty, Confucian dynamism.

The dimension of "collectivism - individualism" is defined by him as an orientation towards collectivistic values, or a measure in which a person's life decisions are determined by the group to which he relates himself (family, circle of friends, colleagues). In collectivistic cultures, people, both working in the private sector and in the public service,
tend to violate laws and formal rules in cases where they contradict, from their point of view, traditional norms and values [10].

The “power distance” is understood as a measure of the agreement of the least well-off people with the status and power with the fact that power is unevenly distributed [11]. In cultures with a high power distance, subordinates' dependence on leadership takes the form of paternalism, in which subordinates receive support in return for loyalty. Such systems favor the development of corruption in the form of nepotism and favoritism. The desire to demonstrate loyalty as an absolute condition for success does not allow subordinates to be critical of the corrupt behavior of the leadership. Representatives of cultures with a high power distance are more tolerant of corruption than representatives of countries with a low power distance [12].

The masculinity–femininity dimension is a measure of orientation towards material success and personal achievements, as opposed to concern for the quality of life and the desire to maintain warm, harmonious relationships with others. The study by B. Hastid and some other researchers [13] confirms the trivial, in general, assumption that readiness for a corrupt transaction is motivated by the desire for material enrichment. However, J. Cohen, W. Lauri and D. Sharp believe that masculinity cannot by itself become a factor contributing to corruption [14]. Perhaps the strong orientation of the culture towards material success reduces sensitivity to the ethical side of the business [15] and thereby facilitates the conclusion of a transaction for both parties.

"Avoidance of uncertainty” is understood as the degree of anxiety and the experience of danger in an unfamiliar or uncertain situation. In cases where one or another outcome seems equally likely, a corrupt transaction can be considered as a means of reducing uncertainty [16]. At the personal level, the avoidance of uncertainty is associated with intolerance to contradictory information and, according to S. Vitell, S. Nwashukwu and J. Barnes, reduces sensitivity to ethical dilemmas of business [17]. However, as J. J. observes. Lamsdorf, avoiding uncertainty can also have the opposite effect, strengthening the determination of third parties to fight corruption [18].

There is also no common opinion among researchers of corruption and business ethics about long–term or short–term orientation - another dimension of culture, called “Confucian dynamism” by G. Hofsted. Some believe that long-term orientation should reduce the tendency to join corruption networks and increase sensitivity to the ethical side of economic activity [19], others believe that this variable does not affect the level of corruption in any way [20]. It can be assumed that the orientation of the partners of a corrupt transaction on long-term relationships and their concern for the future should increase in direct dependence on the rank of the official and the size of the business.

Arie Rattner gave explanations of the reasons for the spread of corruption proposed by various scientists, based on the economic and political characteristics of different countries. One explanation comes from the fact that in less developed countries, the resource economy and the monopoly of power contribute to the growth of corruption.

Another explanation for the existence of the possibility of corruption is a combination of a high level of criminality and the lack of formal and informal control over citizens by the authorities.

The third aspect is cultural. Corruption exists in a certain culture and tends to certain groups and sectors. According to Rattner, scientists often underestimate the role of culture, and therefore this aspect is not always taken into account. Culture is important for a deep understanding of the origins of corruption within a particular country.

Some authors believe that corruption can play not only a negative, but also a positive role. Thus, the positive role of corruption can be seen in the promotion of innovation, in the development of high and nanotechnology.
Nevertheless, an official, lobbying, from his point of view, very effective certain projects, can veto other equally significant projects. In the nineties of the last century, it was believed that if officials were given bribes, they would work more intensively, and bribe-takers would be able to bypass bureaucratic obstacles. And this was also seen as a positive role of corruption in the development of the economy. However, the consequence of corruption is a violation of the rule of law, the rule of law, moral and ethical standards.

3 Conclusion

Thus, recognizing the reality of the existence of corruption, realizing that it is an evil that is very difficult to cope with, the state should fight corruption and strive to minimize its consequences. But to fight corruption, it is not enough to boost the economy and strengthen control bodies, it is necessary to study the "third party" of corruption transactions, i.e., the "ordinary Russian person", the norms and values of mass consciousness that legitimize informal economic behavior.

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