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## Russia and China University's students values in the context of mass open online courses

**Abstract.** The topic of online learning is relevant not only in connection with the global trend of learning digitalization and the emergence of new formats, including mass open online courses (MOOCs), but also in the context of the global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic impact, which led to a massive transition of educational organizations to online learning. However, countries are implementing MOOCs unevenly in the context of the digital economy development. The Internet is actively

developing in Russia, and China is one of the world leaders in this area. In this regard, there is a problem of understanding how students in different countries choose MOOCs. The purpose of the article is to identify and compare the values of Russian and Chinese students as a target audience in the MOOC market. The hypothesis was the thesis: since the data on the implementation of MOOCs are asymmetric, especially from the standpoint of value approaches, the values of the student youth influence the choice of courses. The lack of unified methodological approaches to conducting online market research related to MOOCs prompted the development of proprietary research tools. The methodological basis of the research includes the theoretical provisions of marketing 4:0, behaviorism, and value theory. The work is applied online and offline field surveys using Google-form tools, and the following media were chosen for distribution: social networks, messengers and e-mail (Vkontakte, WeChat, the postal service of the national Internet), methods of values comparative analysis, taking into account the cultural aspects of the countries. The author's version of the MOOC classification is presented, and the coordinate-environment profiles of students' values are constructed. The hypothesis about the influence of values on the choice of courses was confirmed. It is revealed that the values of Russian students are egocentric and material, while the values of Chinese students are polycentric, social and aimed at intra-family interaction. The choice of MOOCs is also influenced by the objectives of the training, the expected professional field and guaranteed employment. The study may be of interest for adjusting the marketing strategies of universities in the context of digitalization.

**Keywords:** higher education; digitalization of education; online education; mass open online courses (MOOCs); Chinese economy; Russian economy; online research; marketing research; student values; consumer choice; coordinate-environmental portrait of student values

## Introduction

Nowadays the world is facing the era of global Informatization, computerization and Internetization. That is why information & communication technologies are the engine of innovation in all spheres of society. Moreover, information is becoming a key economic resource, and digital technologies, software products, computer and telecommunications equipment are tightly integrated into the structure of the activities of all economic agents [1, p. 377]. This is especially true in the field of education.

Indeed, as it is quite rightly V. Bochko [2] pointed out, affordable education contributes to social progress and prosperity. Accordingly, the implementation of online education contributes to the improvement of country's sustainable development, self-development of students and their environment. In the long term, it increases the employment opportunities of graduates when involving them in the projects of the University and its partners. In other words, online education is now widely recognized, highly valued, and is absolutely essential for training a diverse and constantly evolving student's youth [3–6].

This is due to the fact that in the XXI century in developed countries, higher education, together with the R&D<sup>1</sup> sector, is becoming the largest sector of the global services market. Thus, according to the WTO [7], in 2019, global trade in services amounted to \$ 13.3 trillion. At the same time, only from 2005 to 2017, the world trade in commercial services increased significantly, broken down by sector:

- Telecommunications, computer and audiovisual services by 13.2 %.
- R&D at 1.4 %.
- Educational services by 0.8 %.

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<sup>1</sup> R&D means Research and Development.

At the same time, one of the fastest growing sectors of the global education market (+23 % annually in the period from 2012 to 2017) is digital education, although its share in the total volume of the educational services sector before the coronavirus pandemic was not large: less than 3 % [8], but already made it up totaled \$ 200 billion in 2019. The market is expected to grow by an average of 8 % annually and reach \$ 375 billion by 2026 [9].

It should be emphasized that in response to the new coronavirus (or SARS-CoV-2), which causes COVID-19 disease, companies around the world are postponing and canceling face-to-face meetings. In this regard, on-the-job training becomes one of the earliest and most problematic areas of business activity. According to McKinsey's observations at the beginning of March 2020, approximately half of full-time programs before June 30, 2020 were postponed or canceled in North America; in some parts of Asia and Europe, this number is as high as 100 % [10].

In certain regions, such as Asia and Russia, where travel and work restrictions were introduced within a few weeks, the nationwide use of digital technology and focus on people who no longer communicate with their colleagues in a shared work place has also created new advantages. Many organizations and companies around of the world use digital learning to expand collaboration between teams that work either remotely or in different time zones, as they take courses together and collaborate online (through video conferences, instant messaging, sharing data and papers, etc.) [4; 10; 11]. That is why the above are good arguments for putting additional emphasis on digital learning in general and its implementation in the system of higher education in particular, because the number of people working and studying remotely due to COVID-19 is still growing worldwide [9; 12].

Many scholars consider that massive open online courses (MOOCs) represent a revolutionary and promising teaching concept [13–16]. It is so because MOOCs have many key features, which are beneficial for many people around of the world.

The analysis of the available literature shows that MOOC research is mainly focused on mathematical, technical and technological, economic theory and pedagogical aspects. For example, in pedagogical research, attention is drawn to the forms and methods of teaching that can be used in the process of various types of distance learning [17]. Technical and technological research focuses on the technical side (for example, the use of certain types of digital technologies and/or training platforms, programming models, etc.) [18]. In mathematical research, the emphasis is on the fact that there are three levels of applications based on learning analytics: (1) descriptive, which describes the situation and gives an answer to the question “What is happening?” and (2) prognostic, which makes a forecast and answers the question “What is most likely to happen?” and (3) prescriptive, which gives recommendations “What should I do?” [19]. Approaches from the standpoint of economic theory are often aimed at analyzing the costs of training using distance technologies in comparison with the costs of traditional education [20].

Without detracting from the importance of the above-mentioned branches of knowledge and their inherent methodological approaches, we nevertheless believe that an equally important issue, in our opinion, is how students perceive new learning technologies and what values are guided when choosing universities and educational programs in general and MOOCs in particular. It is especially important in the comparative cross-country analysis, are not given sufficient consideration.

At the same time, China has become and still is the world's largest economy, accounting for 16 % of global GDP. McKinsey's modeling shows that by 2040, we can expect an effect of \$ 22 trillion dollars to \$37 trillion dollars (equivalent to about 15–26 % of global GDP) by strengthening the interaction between China and the world such areas as: (1) economic growth as an import destination; (2) liberalization of services; (3) globalization of financial markets; (4) cooperation in global public goods; 5) abundance of technology and innovation [21]. Accordingly, China is also among the world

leaders in the field of innovation in the education system in general and mass online courses in particular [22].

As for Russia, we can point out that despite the fact that Russian universities are also actively developing and using massive open online courses, in general there are not many studies of the MOOCs market and its prospects in Russia [22, p. 175], and there is also a lack of studies of students' values, although, as it is known, values determine consumer choices in different markets [16; 23–26; et al.].

That is why the purpose of this survey was to identify and compare the values of Russian and Chinese University students as the target segment in educational services market within the context of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) implementation.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1 A brief look at the educational system in Russia and in China in the context of digitalization

After the collapse of the USSR and the transition from a centralized education system to a flexible version of the education system, various types of higher educational establishments were formed in Russia, including federal universities, research universities, regional institutes, academies, and others.

As in most developed countries, Russian higher education market consists of private and public institutions, the Ministry of Education and government agencies, educational, consulting and test (rating) companies, etc. [29]. Moreover, at the moment, thanks to digitalization, the structure of the higher educational market in Russia has changed, and the number of players has increased significantly; and we can count at least nine key players in the education market, including: language platforms, Unified State Exam, aggregators, programmers, and so on [8].

This has led to competition between universities on the quality of education not only at the regional level, but also at the international level. Competition between higher education institutions in Russia has increased especially in the context of globalization and digitalization, which is discussed in more detail in our previous studies [27; 28].

Besides, Russia took the second place in the number of universities, included in the World University ranking<sup>2</sup>, the Round University Ranking 2019 (RUR), second only to the United States [30]. In 2021, as follows from THE data, no more than 50 Russian universities are included in this rating and are far from being in the leading positions. The annual leader in this list is only Lomonosov Moscow State University, which is included only in the top 200 ranking of the best universities in the world. The Ural Federal University took the position 201–250 in 2021 [31].

Accordingly, to win the global race for leadership, Russian universities are actively implementing advanced technologies, including online learning in general and MOOCs in particular.

As concerned China, for many decades, Chinese education has relied on a centralized education system, but since 1988 the government has begun to encourage various interpretations of the

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<sup>2</sup> The World University Rankings is the ranking of the best universities in the world. It is a global study and accompanying ranking of the best universities in the world. The rating was developed in 2010 on the basis of the methodology of the British publication Times Higher Education (THE) together with Thomson Reuters (TR) as part of the Global Institutional Profiles Project. The rating is considered one of the most influential global University rankings. The World University Rankings (THE) 2020 includes almost 1,400 universities from 92 countries. // Reference: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com>.

educational program. Consequently, in 2011 the government established an updated and flexible version of the education system.

Nowadays China's higher education system is the largest in the world. It is extensive and diverse, including public and private universities and colleges. The total number of higher educational establishments in China is rapidly approaching 3,000, more than 30 % of which are private. Thus, by May 2017, there were already 2,914 colleges and universities with more than 20 million students in mainland China [32]. The system includes bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs, as well as non-degree programs, and is open to international students. About 30 % of the programs are conducted in English [33].

Education in China is developing rapidly, as is the country's economy as a whole [21]. Local universities are world leaders in the quantity of scientific research papers publications. The best educational institutions in the PRC are already ahead of many world universities rankings. So, Tsinghua University and Peking University are ranked 15th and 23rd in the QS rankings<sup>3</sup>, respectively [33]. PRC's national government has been committed to creating world-class universities and first-class disciplines since 2015, and the “dual first-class course” policy has quickly become a buzzword in Chinese higher education [34–36]. That is why Chinese universities are actively implementing advanced pedagogical and information technologies, including both online learning and MOOCs.

### **1.2 Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) as a socio-economic and technological phenomenon of our time**

The first attempts to create mass distance education were made in the 1970s (in the UK, the Open University), but the global spread of the Internet in the early 1990s made this process more successful around the world [16; 22; 37]. As a continuation of separate open educational resources on the Internet MOOCs have been developed since the beginning of the 2000s by leading world universities and business schools, such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, USA); Stanford University (USA); Harvard University (USA), etc.

Consequently, in 2002 Massachusetts Institute of technology posted freely available materials of all University courses as part of the “MIT Open Course ware project” for which millions of students from all over the world have signed up. In 2008 Cormier and Alexander [16] coined the term “Mass Open Online Courses” and defined it as “open, collective, distributed, continuous network learning”. This was later developed in the new theory (concept) of learning by G. Siemens and S. Downes in 2008. According to this theory, learning is interpreted as a process of creation networks that host people, organizations, libraries, websites, books, databases or any other sources of information [38].

Generally, the term MOOCs is formed from four separate components, such as:

- *Massive*: this type of a course requires a large number of participants.
- *Open*: the course is free and anyone can join it; these courses usually use open source software and free Web 2.0 social services.
- *Online* (electronic or distant, remote): this means that the materials of the course and the results of collaboration are available on the Internet on open access for all participants of the project.

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<sup>3</sup> Since 2010, Quacquarelli Symonds has published a ranking of the best universities in the world called QS World University Rankings, which is also considered one of the leading in this field.

- *Courses*: it is assumed that it has the appropriate structure, the rules of operation and general goals that are necessary for each participant they can take [28–30].

MOOCs have a number of key features that are very useful for many people around the world, including the following [13–16; 22; 37–43; etc.]:

- Global scale and accessibility to all those who are interested in online learning.
- Publicly availability on an open educational platform.
- Submitted exclusively online in electronic format.
- Whole free using.
- Attraction the best teachers from all universities in the world.
- Teacher's dominant role since the teacher becomes only an intermediary or a colleague.
- Presence some elements of traditional education: schedules, schedules, deadlines, exams, etc.
- Having numerous of feedback channels between all elements of the educational system: listener-teacher, listener-listener, teacher-teacher
- Distribution possibility as a digital footprint of students' actions during an online course and having a large amount of training and analytical data generated during the implementation of MOOCs; etc.

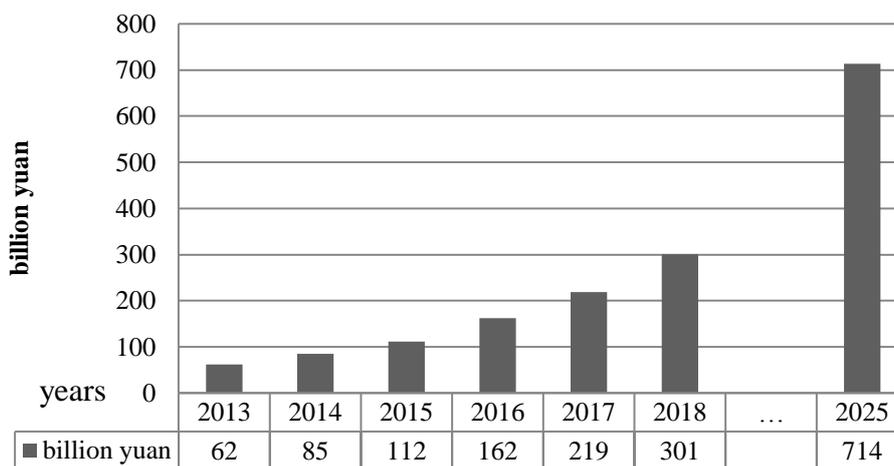
At the moment MOOCs are one of the most advanced forms of distance education implementation by means of Internet Interaction. These forms are actively introduced as a professional skills development tool in Universities and corporate business education. That is why MOOCs have become one of the tools of self-education based on motivation and meta-cognitive competencies [13; 41] globally.

Today there are many kinds of providers and technical tools of MOOCs. For example, the most popular MOOCs providers are such American platforms as Coursera, edX and Udacity, as well as British Future Learn. In many countries there were national online platforms, such as: XuetangX in China (Chuang&Ho, 2016), MiriadaX in Latin America, France Université Numérique (FUN) in France, EduOpen in Italy, SWAYAM in India, National Platform of Open Education (NPOE) in Russia [22; 40]. However, we did not find a unified classification of MOOCs based on their main characteristics

### 1.3 Market development of MOOCs

Today the world faces a rapid increase in the number of MOOCs. In 2014, the MOOCs market increased by \$ 1.13 billion and in 2018 the global MOOC market is estimated at \$ 3.9 billion. According to Markets & Mart research, it is expected that by 2023, its size will increase to \$ 20.8 billion [42].

Especially large differences are expected by regions. Nowadays the key players on MOOCs market are the following. The first are the USA with EdTech market growth of +4.0–4.4 % each year. The second one is Southeast Asia (mostly China and India), showing a faster development of +17 % [43]. Consequently, in China online educational market is successfully growing (fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Growth of Chinese Online Educational Market in 2013–2025, in billions RMB [44]

**Рисунок 1.** Рост китайского рынка онлайн-образования в 2013–2025 годах, в млрд. юаней [44]

The third key player on MOOCs market is Western Europe: \$ 11.7B against \$ 6.8B in 2016 [43].

As for Russia, if in 2016 the online education market grew by 17–25 % [43], the pace of its development is very impressive, since it is growing by 60 % every year [45]. In 2019, the b2c online educational market amounted to 38.6 billion rubles, and by the end of 2023, it is expected to grow to 60 billion rubles [9]. Moreover, thanks to universal remote work in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, in 2020 online education in general and MOOCs in particular became part of the everyday life of many Russian teachers and students. Indeed, according to the HSE<sup>4</sup> experts [46], Russia already has successful practices for integrating MOOCs into university education. For example, the Ural Federal University (UrFU) became the first university in Russia to pass state accreditation of educational programs that include various models for including online courses of partner universities [47].

Taking into account that, first, the global number of students in 2012 was 2 million, second, that in 2017 this number increased to 81 million people [22, p. 174] and, third, we should expect a more general increase in the number of students in the global aspect, we believe that the MOOCs market is still far from saturation or maturity.

#### 1.4 Customers values in higher education

Values are considered differently in different branches of knowledge, because they are by their nature an interdisciplinary category. Thus, sociologists pay attention to the fact that human values are developed under the influence of social institutions [48]. Psychologists often explain the category of “value” (or “values”) through personal significance (importance), value orientations (relationships), as well as assessments, attitudes, norms, ideals, personality orientation, etc. [49]. In Economics the “value” concept is used as a synonym for the concept of “use value” or “consumer’s utility” [50]. However, many scholars emphasize that the real consumer’s behavior is far from rational economic models and in fact correlates between individual value settings and the degree of meeting the demands and needs in specific market goods [25; 26; 51; et al.]. This is also confirmed by our previous research data [52].

<sup>4</sup> HSE means Higher School of Economics, Russia.

That is why in the marketing system, the “value” category means the customer’s (consumer's) perception or assessment of the ability of a product/service to meet their needs. Moreover, today the values of the buyer or customer (consumer) are one of the central concepts of marketing. This is due to the fact that any market proposal will be successful only if it is of value to the target buyer and brings him satisfaction [23; 24; 53; et al.].

As for student’s values, we should say that scientists mostly discuss off-line standard interviews with students about the course. Analysis showed some understanding of how they perceive the assessment, the real preferences, satisfaction and perceptions of students, their impact on their performance when using different assessment formats, and the assessment of different levels of the cognitive process [54; 55; et al.].

We found some scholars spoke about e-learning at Higher Educational Establishments and the use of computer technology as an effective tool for widening educational opportunities in general [3] and in response to the analysis of the marketing-mix elements in particular [48; 56]. At the same time some scientists discuss the issue of key drivers of students’ and teachers' e-learning satisfaction [45].

However, as we mentioned above, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and online learning (e-learning) are not the same things. The most characteristic features of MOOCs are the following: mass character, heterogeneity, and lack of a mentor, which are completely different from online academic learning. These extreme learning characteristics make it more difficult to develop MOOCs for other online courses [41]. Many researchers also note that one of the most negative aspects of MOOCs is the low completion rate. According to various studies, this ranges from 5 to 15 % [18; 41]. In addition, the assessment of students' satisfaction with online learning using mathematical tools often leads to completely contradictory results [19; 57].

Thus, it is more important to study students’ satisfaction and their perception of the value of MOOCs. However, the results of research in this direction are asymmetric, heterogeneous and ambiguous.

### 1.5 Student’s values in Russia

In Russia the marketing system pays unjustly little attention to the values of University students. Moreover, students' values and marketing at the University are usually recalled when the management of the University has questions related to the purchase and evaluation of the quality of educational services of this University in comparison with the offers of competitors. Some researches consider that in fact the situation is even worse: when the demand for educational products of a University falls, only then does the administration of this University begin to think about the need to research the values of the student audience [58, p. 3].

At the same time, values are a key element of the “value chain” of Michael Porter, which allows to identify the competitive advantage of an economic entity in a particular market and to maximize profits. In relation to the Russian higher education system, strategic analysis in the form of building a “value chain” is not often found in the literature available to us. This can be explained not only by the conservatism of the education system and the slow pace of its changes in the process of reform, but also by the fact that market transformations in the Russian Federation began relatively recently, and the school of “educational marketing” is still being formed. To eliminate the disadvantages associated with individual characteristics of the service as a product, it is necessary to use such a tool as the “value chain of educational services” [59].

As far as Russian students’ values in the context of MOOCs are concerned, we would say that most research papers focus on the technical and pedagogical aspects of the learning process [16; 19;

40 and 57]. There are only scattered data that allow making indirect conclusions concerning the satisfaction of Russian students with the learning process [22; 38 and 59].

### 1.6 Student's values in China

Our research shows that the sources available to us mainly address the following issues: (1) the level of Chinese students' satisfaction with their social integration into the foreign University community and (2) the cross-cultural barriers that Chinese students feel as they become more socially integrated into the University's student community, especially in connection with learning in English [60–62].

As for the value aspects of Chinese students in the process of online learning, we found only that in China the fears that online education can replace the University campus are not so wide spread. Accordingly, with the help of online courses, those, who could not pass the gaokao, get the opportunities for further education (Chinese equivalent of the unified state exam) [63].

Also, some researchers say that MOOCs, due to the distance between the teacher and the student, is a positive phenomenon, since it is a stimulus for the development of independence, self-discipline and subjective initiative for students [64].

### 3. Materials and methods

The scientific basis of our research is represented by the publications of foreign and Russian scientists and practitioners in the field of digital economy, marketing and consumer behavior in general, and in relation to the educational services marketing in the digital economy in particular.

In accordance with the goal – to identify and compare the values of Russian and Chinese students as a target audience in the MOOC market – the research hypothesis was developed. The hypothesis was the thesis: since the data on the implementation of MOOCs are asymmetric, especially from the standpoint of value approaches, the values of the student youth influence the choice of courses.

This study includes several blocks, such as:

1. **Desk Research.** The analysis of the market development of Massive Open Online Courses of higher educational establishments.
2. **Online and off-line survey** of some Russian and Chinese University students on the application of the author's adaptation of the questionnaire by Vera A. Gnevasheva [65], value approaches by Galina V. Astratova [52], and the online research method by Maxim R. Chashchin [65].

In Russia the online survey is based on conducting the questionnaire<sup>5</sup> in the target thematic student groups in the social network VKontakte (<https://vk.com>)<sup>6</sup>, popular among young Russian people. Posting occurred during the period of increased attendance by subscribers of communities

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the questionnaire originally included questions about religion, sexual orientation, and other intimate issues. Although in Russia, students reacted calmly and answered these questions, in China, such questions were tabooed. In this regard, this article provides answers to questions that were common for both Russian and Chinese students.

<sup>6</sup> VKontakte is the Russian social network headquartered in St. Petersburg. The site is available in more than 90 languages. It is especially popular among Russian-speaking users. VKontakte allows users to send messages to each other, create their own pages and communities, share images, tags, audio and video recordings, play browser games. // References: [Electronic resource]. // Access mode: ru.wikipedia.org.

(groups, pages) from 4 to 5 pm, and in the evening (after work) from 9 to 10 pm local time. The hours of the questionnaire placement were determined by the results of a four-month study by Pavel Molyanov, who used a robot to determine the most suitable publication times<sup>7</sup>.

The questionnaire has also been sent to some groups of students by direct e-mail. In China<sup>8</sup> online survey is based on conducting the above-mentioned questionnaire on the target thematic student groups in the popular Chinese network WeChat (<https://wechat.com>)<sup>9</sup> and by means of direct e-mail.

A key component of the online survey procedure was to obtain anonymous answers; it also involved the introduction of question indicators of sincerity (rephrased similar questions, comparison of numerical data in different parts of the questionnaire, etc.).

The advantage of conducting an online survey was the convenience for students to answer questions at a convenient time. The respondents' answers were distributed according to the profiles of values from A1 (personal values) to A4 (values of the category "Country, world") (table 1).

Table 1 / Таблица 1

**Integrated value profiles of University students**

**Объединенный профиль ценностей студентов вузов**

A4 «On-line trainings»	A3 «University»	A2 «Environment» (friends, family)	
		A1 «Personal information»	

In the analysis of responses, consolidated "portraits" (i.e. "profiles") of respondents' responses are formed on the basis of an integrated approach: behavioral, demographic, economic and other characteristics. Data for analysis are entered in the "matrices" or "profiles" of the respondents' answers. Accordingly, generalized value profiles of students were formed. Profiles of Russian students were differentiated by enlarged age groups: 15–19 years old; 20–22 years old; 23–25 years old; over 25 years old. Profiles of Chinese students were differentiated by only one age group: 20–22 years old (100 %). The relative number of responses was calculated as statistic's recommendations [67].

Survey of representative target segment<sup>10</sup> was held in the period from September 2018 to January 2020.

<sup>7</sup> References: [Electronic resource]. // Access mode: <http://molyanov.ru/issledovanie-optimalnoe-vremya-publikacii-postov-v-soobshhestvax-kopirajterov-chast-2/>.

<sup>8</sup> The first author of this article worked for one academic year (from February 2019 till January 2020) in People's Republic of China as a Visiting Professor of the School of Business Administration of the Lanzhou University of Finance and Economics; Lanzhou, PRC. The second author of this article also had a short-term internship in China in 2019 at the same university and participated in a number of interviews with Chinese students.

<sup>9</sup> Wechat is the mobile communication system for the transmission of text and voice messages, developed by the Chinese company Tencent, the first release was released in January 2011. The application is available on iPhone, as well as on phones running Android, BlackBerry, Windows Phone, Symbian and J2ME/S40, there is also a web interface and client for PC (Windows and OS X, which, however, require installation on a smartphone for authentication, with this option available only to users of Android, iOS and Windows Phone as of 2013, Wechat had 300 million registered users; of these, 70 million are outside China. Source: [Electronic resource]. URL: [ru.wikipedia.org](http://ru.wikipedia.org).

<sup>10</sup> The estimated representativeness of the study was 3,250 respondents and was determined on the basis of the recommendations of N.K. Malhotra [66].

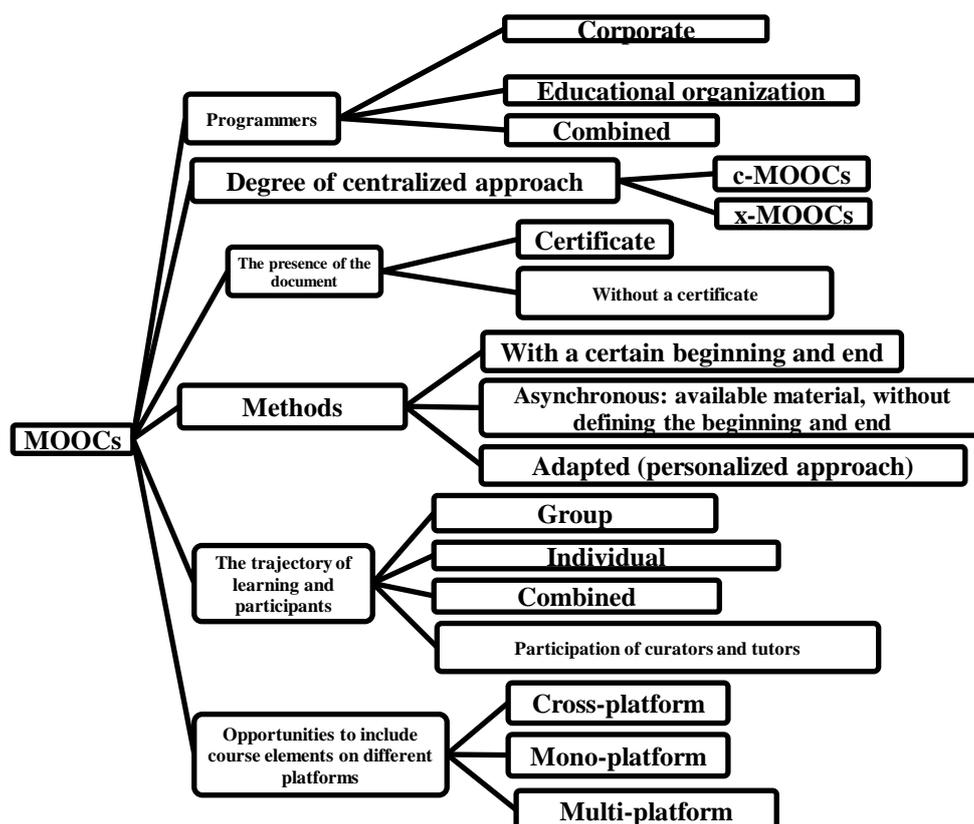
## 4. Results and analysis

### 4.1 Applying Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the system of higher education institutions

Analyzing the models of organizing MOOCs, we can distinguish and stress the main features and differences from traditional education system features, as well as other forms of distance education, such as: concise presentation of the material; knowledge testing; participation of the best teachers; introduction of strict schedules, agendas, deadlines; availability of numerous feedback channels; free or free on condition; mass and global; ease of obtaining a course completion document; etc. As we mentioned above, similar positions on this issue are presented in the works of other authors [16; 22; 37; 38; 41; etc.].

However, in the literature available to us, we have not found any classification of MOOCs. In this regard, we have made such an attempt is based on the synthesis of methodical approaches described in surveys of some authors [6–70].

So, we find MOOCs can be classified on the following grounds: course developers, training documentation, methodological approaches, etc. (fig. 2).



*Figure 2. Classification of mass online courses, in the author's interpretation*

*Рисунок 2. Классификация массовых онлайн курсов, в авторской трактовке*

It is of importance to note that the researchers also distinguish such types of MOOCs as **c-MOOCs** (cMOOCs) and **x-MOOCs** (xMOOCs). The essence of **x-MOOC** is its similarity to traditional learning. Within its framework, there is a specific goal, control, curatorship practices, and certification. A different approach is typical for **c-MOOCs**. These courses are based on the equality of the subjects in the educational process, the participants have different goals, they do not apply the practice of a curator; emphasis is given to the interaction of participants [71].

Although MOOCs is a relatively recent educational phenomenon, it attracted considerable interest in the scholar's community around of the world. It is so because MOOCs may influence the activities of pedagogical, organization, scientific and business activities models applied by both individual scholars and universities on the whole [22]. That is why it is necessary to be in search of new pedagogical formats with new digital learning, such as MOOCs [72].

Since 2012, the number of MOOCs is observed to be steadily increasing as well as the number of users registering on these courses. General number of MOOCs available to Internet users provides access to 10 thousand courses related to different areas of knowledge. More than 700 universities globally have joined the movement to create own MOOC. The number of listeners to online courses in 2017 amounted up to about 81 million. Moreover, new online platforms are being created. For example, the most popular MOOCs providers are American platforms Coursera, edX and Udacity, as well as British FutureLearn. Consequently, in many countries there were national online platforms: XuetangX in China [73], MiriadaX in Latin America, France Université Numérique (FUN) in France, EduOpen in Italy, SWAYAM in India, national platform open education (NPOO) in Russia [22; 40].

As far as China is concerned, in 2013 MOOCs became the prevalent topic in China's education landscape. Coursera (founded in April 2012 by Professors from Stanford University) and edX (founded in May 2012 by Professors from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard) partnered up with Chinese Universities, many MOOCs conferences and forums were held<sup>11</sup>. There emerged such local MOOCs platforms as: Kaikeba, TopU.com, XuetangX and Coursera Zone [74].

In 2017, Chinese online provider XuetangX ranked third in the number of listeners (9.3 million), ahead of FutureLearn (7.1 million). In 2019 Chinese open online courses attracted 270 million users with around 15,000 courses. It means that China has built an extensive MOOCs network, offering a wide range of courses in a variety of disciplines [75].

Russian students are among the twenty most active users of Coursera, and their quantity will be increasing as there are courses in Russian. Moreover, a number of Russian universities, such as: Moscow State University, Russian University of National Economy named after G.V. Plekhanov, Baltic Federal University, etc., have started to create their own learning platforms. In Russia the subjects of the courses mostly concentrate on mathematics, information technology, bio-physics, and the Russian language for foreigners and foreign languages for Russians [40].

Globally, the subjects of the MOOCs courses are variable. Courses in computer science and data processing (over 1,800), business (1,400) and social Sciences (600) accounted for the largest share from 2014 to 2017 [22].

We should stress, that MOOCs can also be the elements of marketing promotion of University brands, expanding the influence of emerging and existing schools. Moreover, MOOCs contain opportunities for promotion of best thematic practices in the field, transfer of knowledge, and the involvement of new students in practical activities on the basis of course assignments.

As it is quite rightly pointed out [15; 22; 40; etc.], the rapid spread of MOOCs is taking place not only due to the desire of universities to gain recognition at the international level of the online education market. The ability to monetize their projects has an equally important role to play. Online platforms, for example, Coursera, edX, together with the universities take additional paid certification services; likewise for software it is important to have the authority of a personal assistant in an online course.

According to UNESCO [76] there is already a serious problem around the world: the number of applicants for education significantly exceeds the number of places in educational establishments

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<sup>11</sup>For example, Massive Online Education Forum at Tsinghua University in June 2013.

and according to forecasts in 2025 the number of students in the world will increase from 165 million people by 98 million. That is why MOOCs can become a way out of this situation. At the same time, as we have already noted above, the needs and values of the MOOCs target segment, i.e. students, are practically not under research.

#### 4.2 Coordinate-environment profiles of students' values in Russia and China

In the process of Russian and Chinese students' analysis, we find that cultural aspect in China imposes a restriction on the topic of faith and religion. While 98.2 % (1316 people) of Russian respondents answered of the question of this category. It follows that only 1.8 % of respondents ignored it. They considered the matter too personal to be disclosed.

Analysis of A1 portrait data revealed a difference in values when defining the concept of a good life.

Most Russian students understand it as financial independence, while Chinese students consider it to be family. The financial situation of the students of both countries was assessed as acceptable.

Russian youth tend to earn money due to the long-term deterioration of the real standard of living. The minimum amount of scholarships for bachelor students in the Russian Federation is about 2000 rubles per month (31.81 \$ USD<sup>12</sup>), for masters it is about 4.600 rubles per month (71.54 \$ USD)<sup>13</sup>. This is less than the subsistence minimum established in Russia<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, in Russia, students are forced to look for a part-time job or ask for help from their parents.

According to the A2 profile we continue to reveal the values. According to this data, it was revealed that in the opinion of Russian students, young people have the characteristics of "aggressive initiative cynics". The Chinese students considered their generation "sincere, educated, and hard-working". On the other hand, the Russian students think that older generation is endowed with the qualities of "spiritual, hard-working patriots", and the Chinese representatives think that their older generation is characterized by nobility, spirituality and cynicism. In general, representatives of both countries respect the older generation, but Russian students are characterized by self-criticism.

In the framework of profile A3 it was revealed that the main purpose of teaching students at the University is an interesting job in the future. According to the majority of students, both from Russia and China, the University should guarantee the employment of students.

However, at the moment, in Russia, this issue is a formality, and a diploma is issued as a "life jacket" when diving into a bottomless ocean of market uncertainties and whirlpools of "nepotism", as respondents thought. Moreover, in Russia, in the students' opinion, there is minimal actualized and certified practical base for students' activity during University studying. Also after University graduation students may expect only jobs in the field of sales due to lack of practical experience.

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<sup>12</sup>At the rate of the Russian Federation Central Bank 1 RUB = 62.87 (13.12.2019). If we take into account that at the moment the dollar exchange rate has increased even more, then, accordingly, the scholarship of Russian students in dollar terms will be even less.

<sup>13</sup> For example, the size of the students scholarships of the Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia Boris N. Yeltsin (UrFU) is 3651.48 rubles and of the Ural State University of Economics (USUE) is 5500 rubles (Yekaterinburg, Russia), taking into account the Ural coefficient, 15 %.

<sup>14</sup>The value of the subsistence minimum for the 2nd quarter of 2019 is established by the Order of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the Russian Federation No. 561n of August 09, 2019: per capita 11185 rubles / month. The value of the subsistence minimum for the fourth quarter of 2020 is currently not set. The calculation and approval of the subsistence minimum for the fourth quarter of 2020 is carried out in accordance with the procedure in force until 01.01.2021 (see Federal Law No. 473-FZ of 29.12.2020).

Nevertheless, these circumstances create opportunities for the development of practice-oriented MOOCs courses for the humanitarian directions as well as unemployed people registered in employment centers.

According to table 2 it was revealed that the target segments of students are in a pretty satisfactory condition. That is why we guess that it is possible to conduct classes on the basis of MOOCs. It is of interest to mention, that those Chinese and Russian students prefer combined distance courses with traditional pattern.

**Table 2 / Таблица 2**  
**Summary profile values of students. Category «Online trainings», «A4»**

**Обобщенный профиль ценностей студентов. Категория «онлайн обучение», «A4»**

Name of the question	Variants of answers (respondents could select multiple answers at the same time)	Russia				China
		Age groups				20–22 years (П-2), %
		15–19 years (П-1), %	20–22 years (П-2), %	23–25 years (П-3), %	> 25 years (П-4), %	
Evaluate the level of computer equipment at your university on five point scale (5 – higher point)*v	«1»	2.3	3.8	8.1	6.7	7.0 %
	«2»	4.6	9.1	16.2	13.3	18.0 %
	«3»	19.4	27.2	16.2	33.3	61.0 %
	«4»	35.8	34.5	39.2	20.0	7.0 %
	«5»	37.9	24.5	20.3	26.7	7.0 %
Do you have classes online?	Yes, often	25.6	20.0	12.3	20.0	44.0 %
	Yes, but rarely	36.9	40.9	45.2	40.0	46.0 %
	No lessons, while there is Internet access at the university	35.0	36.5	41.1	33.3	6.0 %
	Our university does not have access to the Internet	2.5	2.6	1.4	6.7	4.0 %
If you had the opportunity of distance learning how would you do it?	Continue to learning on traditional pattern	17.5	43.4	44.6	46.6	16.0 %
	Chose distance learning	20.0	18.8	18.9	6.7	29.0 %
	Try to combine distance courses with the traditional pattern	62.5	37.8	36.5	46.7	55.0 %
	Industrial production	9.4	9.5	10.8	6.7	28.0 %
In what sphere do you work (for students planning to work in the future)?	Agriculture	1.2	0.4	1.4	0	5.0 %
	Medicine	1.9	2.1	2.7	0	8.0 %
	Humanities and social sciences	36.5	36.9	17.6	40.0	23.0 %
	Natural sciences	8.7	5.9	6.8	6.7	5.0 %
	Education	16.8	19.4	29.7	40.0	21.0 %
	Technology	19.5	20.0	27.0	6.7	9.0 %
Others	6.0	5.7	4.1	0	3.0 %	

On the other hand, distance learning involves more time for self-training. In this regard we guess that students (at the period before coronavirus pandemic) were not quite ready for or do not have an idea about distance learning. We should stress, that at the moment it is not practically possible to displace off-line training for a number of professions, for example, doctors, teachers (as it is important to develop communicative properties in them), etc. For engineers it is also very difficult to organize on-line courses, as it is required to show in practice how you can do something on machinery equipment or solve tasks, etc. However, with the development of Information technologies, these issues will be successfully solved, because now there are various robot simulators that allow simulating complex equipment, communication between people, and so on.

Nevertheless, we think that the identified loyalty groups indicate the possibility of developing distance learning, which should fit seamlessly into offline and online environments without compromising the quality of training. The beginning of the formation of the need for additional online courses is evidenced by the examples of entrance tests to the master's degree program of Saint-Petersburg State University ("SPBU"), Higher School of Economics ("HSE"), etc. Educational courses can be held, for example, in "Khan Academy", "Open Education", as well as in the online platforms "EdX", "Coursera", etc.

Accordingly, the experience of the global pandemic in 2020 showed that universities were forced to adapt to the new reality in the neither shortest possible time, having practical experience, nor theoretical and methodological preparation for the conditions of the pandemic. This experience has led to the following positive developments of education digitalization [77–80]:

- Free access to MOOCs, up-to-date training materials and case studies.
- Increase in the number of paid and free offers for professional development programs in the online training mode, webinars for various categories of students.
- Methodological support for the management, application and evaluation of the quality of digital tools in the educational process.
- Conducting online surveys among the management and teaching staff of universities with the subsequent open publication of analytical reports and reports in order to predict possible outcomes from the coronacrisis.
- Open publication of case studies of a number of universities from different countries in order to obtain an international response to the pandemic.
- Creation of discussion platforms and informal groups of students, teachers and system administrators of higher education institutions on various web platforms, allowing them to discuss current issues of digital education; and others.

Accordingly, the results of the survey in the form of Russia and China coordinate-environmental profiles of students confirm our idea that the generalization of approaches to the understanding sustainable development of university are based on the integration of the online and offline environments, such as: the disclosure of information on sustainable development strategies of higher educational establishments, technological basis, work with social networks, the creation and deployment of online courses on MOOCs platforms, creation of average profiles of students based on surveys in social networks.

Our results are consistent with the research of other authors on the problem of consumer behavior in different countries [11; 27; 50; 51; 61; etc.] and choice in the markets of higher education services [24; 34; 39; 48; 54; 60; etc.], the system of values in the market of services [23; 25; 49; 55; etc.], as well as the issues related to the use of online courses in the educational process and digital marketing [14–16; 22; 45; 56; etc.].

## Conclusions

In modern times of global Informatization the implementation of online education contributes to the improvement of countries and Universities sustainable development, because competition in the global market rises very quickly.

The authors used desk research, on-line and off-line survey in order to study the Russia and China University students' values as target segment in educational services market in the context of MOOC implementation. The paper presents the authors' interpretation of the application method

technology of the target segment online survey through social networks, making posts in student groups, posting relevant publications at the time of peak attendance of virtual student communities in social networks.

In accordance with the goal – to identify and compare the values of Russian and Chinese students as a target audience in the MOOC market – the research hypothesis was developed. The hypothesis was the thesis: since the data on the implementation of MOOCs are asymmetric, especially from the standpoint of value approaches, the values of the student youth influence the choice of courses. Our hypothesis was fully confirmed.

The novelty of the research lies in the generalization of approaches to understanding the sustainable development of the University in the digital economy based on the integration of the following blocks of on-line and off-line environments: strategies for sustainable development of higher educational establishments, technological base, work with social networks, creation and deployment of online courses on MOOCs platforms, creation of averaged profiles of students based on surveys in social networks. The paper provides the survey results of Russian and Chinese students in the form of coordinate and environmental profiles, including parameters to determine the average level of their focus on sustainable development of universities.

Finally, it reveals the results of surveys of students of higher educational establishments of Russia and China in the form of coordinate-environmental profiles of students, which included parameters to determine the average level of their focus on sustainable development.

This research may be of interest not only to universities and developers of MOOCs in order to adjust marketing strategies, but also to government agencies in implementing policies in the field of education, science and digitalization of the economy.

Our work has not only theoretical and methodological importance, but also it has a practical value, as it allows economic entities to competently manage the ways of university's sustainable development. That is why we are sure that further research should be carried out in the direction of studying the ways of development and increasing the competitiveness of universities in the digital economy.

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## **Ценности студентов российских и китайских вузов в контексте массовых открытых онлайн-курсов**

**Аннотация.** Тема онлайн обучения актуальна не только в связи с мировым трендом цифровизации обучения и появлением новых форматов, включая массовые открытые онлайн-курсы (MOOK), но и в контексте влияния глобальной пандемии SARS-CoV-2, обусловившей массовый переход образовательных организаций на онлайн-обучение. Однако страны неравномерно внедряют MOOK в условиях развития цифровой экономики. Интернет активно развивается в России, и Китай является одним из мировых лидеров в этой сфере. В данной связи возникает проблема понимания того, как студенческая молодежь в разных странах выбирает MOOK. Целью статьи явилось выявление и сравнительный анализ ценностей

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студентов России и Китая как целевой аудитории на рынке MOOK. Гипотезой явился тезис: поскольку данные о реализации MOOK асимметричны, особенно с позиций ценностных подходов, то ценности студенческой молодежи оказывают влияние на выбор курсов. Отсутствие единых методологических подходов к проведению онлайн-маркетинговых исследований, связанных с MOOK, побудило разработать авторские инструменты исследования. Методологическая база исследования включает теоретические положения маркетинга 4.0, бихевиоризма, ценностной теории. В работе применены онлайн и офлайн полевые опросы с использованием инструментов Google-формы, в качестве среды для распространения были выбраны: социальные сети, мессенджеры и электронная почта («ВКонтакте», «WeChat», почтовый сервис национального Интернета), методы сравнительного анализа ценностей с учетом культурологических аспектов стран. Представлен авторский вариант классификации MOOK, построены координатно-средовые профили ценностей студентов. Подтвердилась гипотеза о влиянии ценностей на выбор курсов. Выявлено, что ценности российских студентов эгоцентричны и материальны, в то время как ценности китайских студентов полицентричны, социальны и направлены на внутрисемейное взаимодействие. На выбор MOOK также влияют цели обучения, предполагаемая профессиональная сфера и гарантированная занятость. Исследование может представлять интерес для корректировки маркетинговых стратегий университетов в условиях цифровизации.

**Ключевые слова:** высшее образование; цифровизация образования; онлайн-образование; массовые открытые онлайн-курсы (MOOK); экономика Китая; экономика России; онлайн-исследования; маркетинговые исследования; ценности студентов; потребительский выбор; координатно-средовой портрет ценностей студентов

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