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Consumer ethnocentrism on the organic food market in Poland

Marketing i Zarządzanie (d. Problemy Zarządzania, Finansów i Marketingu) nr 2 (48), 11-20

2017

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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Codes JEL: Q13, M31, D10, L66

Keywords: consumer ethnocentrism, organic food market, food marketing, consumer behaviour, Poland

Summary. The article aims to examine the phenomenon of consumer ethnocentrism on the organic food market in Poland. A survey was addressed to Polish consumers. The sample consisted of 1000 inhabitants of Poland aged 15–65. The sample was representative for the general population, regarding: age, sex, education and the size of the city of origin. In a logistic regression model, a series of determinants of the national ethnocentric attitude were tested. We arrived at a model with 6 statistically significant determinants. Almost all of them are psychographic, with the notable exception of consumer age. They include: the importance of area of origin, brand and retailer trust as food characteristics, the importance of quality signs in organic food purchases, and the importance of organic product originating from the same region in which the consumer lives. These determinants increase the likelihood of the ethnocentric orientation apart from brand importance, which has the opposite effect.

Introduction

In general, the concept of ethnocentrism represents the universal proclivity for people to view their own group as the centre of the universe, to interpret other social units from the perspective of their own group, and to reject those who are culturally dissimilar. From the perspective of ethnocentric consumers, purchas-

ing imported products is wrong because it hurts the domestic economy, causes job losses and is unpatriotic. In functional terms, consumer ethnocentrism gives the individual a sense of identity, a feeling of belongingness and a conviction of what purchase behaviour is acceptable (Shimp, Sharma, 1987, p. 280–289). According to Figiel (2004), consumer ethnocentrism is a special form of the country of origin effect. It concerns preferring the purchases of home country products.

This paper aims to examine the phenomenon of consumer ethnocentrism on the organic food market in Poland. In a model of logistic regression, we have identified 6 statistically significant predictors of this attitude.

Literature review

Consumer ethnocentrism measured by the CETSCALE is positively correlated with collectivist tendencies and with patriotic and conservative attitudes but negatively correlated with cultural openness, education, and income (Sharma, Shimp, Shin, 1995). The concept of consumer ethnocentrism is distinct from consumer animosity (Klein, Ettensoe, 1999). Cultural similarity is an important consideration for highly ethnocentric consumers in the evaluation of foreign products (Watson, Wright, 2000). The capability of consumer ethnocentrism in explaining consumer bias in favour of domestic products is dependent both on the country of origin and on the product category (Balabanis, Diamantopoulos, 2004). The impact of ethnocentrism on consumer willingness to buy domestic products is weaker when consumers judge them as being of lower quality or when consumers hold higher conspicuous consumption values (Lu Wang, Xiong Chen, 2004). There are socio-psychological, political, economic and demographic antecedents of consumer ethnocentrism (Shankarmahesh, 2006). There are extremely few studies linking the issue of ethnocentrism with organic food consumption. A notable exception is an article by Pileliene and Liesonis (2014), who distinguish a segment of Lithuanian milk consumers called ‘ethnocentric ecologists’.

It is also worth mentioning some Polish studies concerning the phenomenon of consumer ethnocentrism. Consumers aged 18–30 from the Mazowieckie region in Poland surveyed in 2001 believed that Polish food was cheaper and healthier compared to foreign food (Sajdakowska, 2003). The concept of consumer ethnocentrism may be applied to consumer choices supporting not only national producers, but also regional ones (Rachocka, Sapa, 2009). In a study among 170 inhabitants of the Lubuskie region, the principal motive for preferring Polish food was higher quality, mentioned by 71% of respondents (Snihur, 2010). The preference of Polish food may be related to its association with low prices, eco-friendliness and freshness (Matysik-Pejas, 2010). A survey among 119 inhabitants of the Szczecin region, in particular students, showed no statis-

tically significant of sex, age, size of the city, and self-reported financial situation on the level of consumer ethnocentrism (Ertmańska, 2011). A study among Polish food processing enterprises indicated that emphasising the Polish origin of one's products constituted one of favourite strategic development directions. This option was mentioned by 62.5% of the companies under study, which meant the 4th rank in a set of 15 strategies (Bryła, 2012).

Interviews with 400 inhabitants of the Podkarpackie region led to the conclusion that Poles have ethnocentric attitudes in their market choices and the level of consumer ethnocentrism depends on socio-economic characteristics (Szromnik, Wolanin-Jarosz, 2013). Szromnik and Wolanin-Jarosz (2014) presented a conceptual background of the phenomenon of consumer ethnocentrism. Wolanin-Jarosz (2015) assessed the ethnocentric attitudes in 5 countries belonging to the Carpathian Euroregion (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine). Maison and Baran (2014) applied a new scale (SCONET) to measure consumer ethnocentrism in Poland. There is a relatively high efficacy of the use of Polish traits in advertising (Nowacki, 2014). A survey among 444 inhabitants of Poznan, Szczecin and Lublin indicated an impact of age and education on consumer ethnocentrism, while no significant difference between men and women was observed (Nestorowicz, Kaniewska-Sęba, 2014). The most relevant for the explanation of ethnocentrism is age (Wanat, Stefańska, 2014). In a Polish sample of 1000 consumers, the national origin of food was reported as more important by the elderly, by those having tertiary education, by those who provided more positive opinions about family income and among the urban population (Jeznach, Jeżewska-Zychowicz, 2014). Consumer ethnocentrism influences the development of assortment strategies of retail chains, especially in the field of cooperation with Polish food producers and development of Polish food brands (Bilińska-Reformat, 2014) as well as the marketing activities undertaken by the retail chains in Poland (Lubańska, Żak, 2014).

The selection of Polish food on the basis of an increasing consumer conviction of its higher quality and safety, coupled with eating habits and a growth of interest in the values of own culture, may be called 'rational ethnocentrism' (Zabrocki, 2014). According to Olewnicki et al. (2016), the choice of domestic products for mainly rational reasons indicates 'intentional ethnocentrism'. Ethnocentric consumers tend to attribute a higher importance to the ingredients of food products, their nutritional values and a lack of preservatives. They choose Polish food because they perceive it as healthier. They also display different distribution channel behaviours, as they purchase food more often on markets and bazaars (Angowski, Lipowski, 2014). Consumers with a higher level of ethnocentrism declare a relatively higher significance of and attachment to Catholicism, traditionalism and patriotism (Adamczyk, Goryńska-Goldmann,

Gazdecki, 2015). There is a link between the willingness to undertake prosumption activities and the ethnocentric attitudes of Polish consumers (Baruk, 2016).

Material and methods

A survey was addressed to Polish consumers. The sample consisted of 1000 inhabitants of Poland aged 15-65. The sample was representative for the general population, regarding: age, sex, education and the size of the city of origin. The survey was carried out with the use of CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) methodology by a specialised marketing research agency (ARC Rynek i Opinia) in its online panel (epanel.pl). A more detailed description of the research sample characteristics is available in a book (Bryła, 2015a) and in previous articles stemming from this study (Bryła, 2015b; Bryła, 2016). In this article, we focus on those respondents who declared that the Polish origin of organic food products was very important in their shopping decisions (357 respondents) and compare their characteristics, attitudes and opinions with the total sample. For the analysis of our results, we apply descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation and a logistic regression model. Our analyses are conducted in MS Excel and Statistica 12.0.

Results

The level of consumer ethnocentrism on the Polish food market is generally high (tab. 1). 2/3 of conventional (ordinary) food consumers declare that the importance of product originating from Poland is very big or rather big for them. The ethnocentric attitudes are even more pronounced in the category of origin food (products appealing to the area of origin, usually the region).

Table 1

The importance of Polish origin in food purchases

National ethnocentrism	Very big		Rather big		Average		Rather small		None	
	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS
Organic food	100.0	35.7	0	32.7	0	21.4	0	5.2	0	5.0
Origin food	95.2	41.7	4.2	32.3	0.3	20.5	0	2.5	0	3.0
Conventional food	76.2	33.0	14.8	33.0	7.8	25.9	0.8	4.1	0.3	4.0

Note: EOC – ethnocentric organic consumers, TS – total sample

Source: own research.

Organic food falls between conventional and origin food in terms of the level of ethnocentrism. In this study, we focus on the segment of organic food consumers who declared a very high level of consumer ethnocentrism. We call them ethnocentric organic consumers (EOC) and compare them with the total sample (TS). They account for 35.7% of the total sample. It is worth noting that

ethnocentric attitudes usually co-exist for the 3 analysed categories of food products, as among highly ethnocentric organic consumers, as much as 95.2% show an ethnocentric attitude toward origin food and 76.2% to conventional food.

We agree with Rachocka and Sapa (2009) that consumer ethnocentrism may apply not only to the national origin, but also to the region of consumer. Therefore, we also analyse the importance of product originating from the region of consumer (tab. 2), which we call regional ethnocentrism, as opposed to the national (classical) ethnocentrism presented above. This regional ethnocentrism is a special case of the effect of the region of origin (a term used in Bryła 2015a), analogously to the much more commonly studied country-of-origin (COO) effect. In general, the level of regional ethnocentrism is lower than the national ethnocentrism of Polish food consumers. The segment of (nationally) ethnocentric organic consumers is characterised by stronger regional ethnocentrism than the total sample. Among those organic food consumers for whom the Polish origin is very important, almost 2/5 (39.2%) reported that product originating from their own region was very important in their food purchases, whereas 17.5% of all respondents indicated a very big importance of the regional origin of organic food.

Table 2

The importance of product originating from the region of consumer in food purchases

Regional ethnocentrism	Very big		Rather big		Average		Rather small		None	
	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS
Organic food	39.2	17.5	32.8	30.2	14.6	32.4	8.4	10.4	5.0	9.5
Origin food	49.9	25.5	33.1	32.7	9.5	28.0	4.2	7.1	3.4	6.7
Conventional food	23.8	13.4	30.3	26.6	27.7	37.5	9.8	11.3	8.4	11.2

Note: EOC – ethnocentric organic consumers, TS – total sample

Source: own research.

We have conducted a series of analyses to compare the demographic and socio-economic profile of the ethnocentric organic consumers with the full sample. Due to space constraints, we only report selected results. There are slightly more women in the segment of ethnocentric organic consumers than in the total sample (54.1% compared to 50.1%). The EOC tend to be older (mean age: 41.6 years v. 39.2 years in the TS, median: 42 v. 39). There are relatively more households comprising 2 people in the EOC segment (22.4%) than in the TS (19.7%). Rural inhabitants are less common among the EOC (36.4%) than in the TS (39.0%). The same applies to the inhabitants of small towns (up to 20 thousand people) (10.4% v. 12.3%). The EOC are more frequently living in certain regions, especially Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Wielkopolskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie, and they are less common in other ones, in particular Lubelskie,

Podkarpackie and Opolskie. The education level of EOC and the TS is almost identical (differences below 1 percentage point). There are considerably more pensioners among the EOC (13.2%) than in the TS (9.8%), while there are fewer students (10.9% v. 13.7%) and blue-collar workers (30.0% v. 31.8%) in this segment. The self-reported monthly disposable income per household member is slightly higher among the EOC than in the TS (mean: 1477 v. 1450 PLN, median: 1300 v. 1200 PLN). The above data indicate that demographic variables seem to have a limited power in explaining the ethnocentric attitude on the organic food market in Poland but in order to be more precise about their role, we need to conduct some statistical modelling.

Before we move to our logistic regression, let us have a look at an evaluation of selected characteristics of food products in the EOC segment and in the TS (tab. 3). The EOC tend to indicate a very big importance of all analysed characteristics of food products more frequently than the total sample. This may be partly due to the propensity of certain respondents to choose the end of the scale for any survey questions. Therefore, we also need to take into account the distribution of answers in the remaining answer options. For instance, if we combine the categories: very big and rather big, we obtain more interesting results. While the role of price is very similar in the EOC and TS (87.4% and 88.6%), there are big differences for retailer trust (80.2% v. 71.2%), quality signs (77.0% v. 67.8%) and, especially, area of origin (69.8% v. 51.7%).

Table 3

The importance of selected characteristics of food products

Importance	Very big		Rather big		Average		Rather small		None	
	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS	EOC	TS
Price	57.1	49.5	30.3	39.1	11.5	10.2	1.1	1.0	0	0.2
Product appearance	45.7	33.9	36.4	41.3	14.0	20.0	2.5	3.6	1.4	1.2
Retailer trust	44.3	29.3	35.9	41.9	14.3	22.8	4.2	4.2	1.4	1.8
Quality signs	42.3	27.4	34.7	40.4	19.0	26.4	2.8	4.7	1.1	1.1
Area of origin	33.1	20.9	36.7	30.8	22.7	34.6	4.2	9.0	3.4	4.7
Brand	20.2	14.6	33.3	34.8	35.9	39.1	8.1	9.2	2.5	2.3

Note: EOC – ethnocentric organic consumers, TS – total sample

Source: own research.

In order to identify selected determinants of consumer ethnocentrism on the organic food market, we decided to run a logistic regression. Our dependent variable was whether the respondent attached a very big importance to the Polish origin of organic food (an answer option chosen by 357 out of 1000 respondents). We started with a wide range of independent variables related to the demographic and socio-economic characteristics as well as selected attitudes to food purchases. Step by step, we eliminated those variables that were not statis-

tically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. As a result of this procedure, we arrived at a model that includes 6 independent variables. In table 4, we provide the odds ratios, lower and upper limits of the 95% confidence interval, and statistical significance for these determinants. Being older, attaching big importance to the area of origin and retailer trust as food characteristics, reporting a high importance of quality signs in organic food purchases and a high importance of organic product originating from the same region in which the consumer lives increase the likelihood of the ethnocentric attitude on the organic food market in Poland, while attaching high importance to the brand has the opposite effect.

Table 4

Selected determinants of the national ethnocentric attitude on the organic food market (logistic regression models)

Variables	Very ethnocentric				Very and rather ethnocentric			
	OR	-95% CL	+95% CL	p	OR	-95% CL	+95% CL	p
Age (years)	1.017	1.007	1.028	0.0014	1.026	1.014	1.038	<0.0001
Origin (a)	1.375	1.169	1.616	0.0001	1.211	1.022	1.436	0.0273
Brand (a)	0.754	0.631	0.900	0.0018	0.834	0.686	1.014	0.0683
Retailer (a)	1.344	1.113	1.622	0.0021	1.376	1.137	1.667	0.0011
Quality (b)	1.280	1.088	1.506	0.0030	1.440	1.214	1.710	<0.0001
Region (c)	1.849	1.573	2.174	<0.0001	2.213	1.866	2.624	<0.0001

Notes: N=1000; OR – odds ratio; CL – confidence level; p – statistical significance level; a – the importance of this food characteristic (1-5 scale), b – the importance of quality signs in organic food purchases (1-5 scale), c – the importance of organic product originating from the same region in which the consumer lives (1-5 scale)

Source: own research.

As a robustness check, we ran a logistic regression with the same independent variables, but with the dependent variable defined as a combination of very ethnocentric and rather ethnocentric consumers ($357 + 327 = 684$ out of the 1000). The results, also reported in table 4, are qualitatively the same. All the independent variables remain statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), though brand is only marginally significant in this second model ($p = 0.068$).

Conclusion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study of consumer ethnocentrism on the organic food market in Poland. After an extensive literature review, we have presented the main findings of our analyses. We have conducted a survey in a representative sample of 1000 Polish consumers. We have identified a segment of ethnocentric organic consumers, which accounted for over 1/3 of the total sample. We have analysed its demographic and socio-economic characteristics as well as selected psychographic variables related to food purchases.

We have proposed a distinction between national and regional ethnocentric orientation, but we have found a strong relationship between these variables. In a model of logistic regression, we have examined the impact of selected consumer characteristics and opinions on the national ethnocentrism on the organic food market. Age and attitudes related to the area of origin, brand, retailer trust and quality signs of food products as well as the regional ethnocentrism turned out to be statistically significant predictors of our dependent variable.

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Our research study was funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education within a Iuventus Plus research grant no. IP 2011 004371 and the National Science Centre within an Opus research grant no. 2015/17/B/HS4/00253.

Etnocentryzm konsumentki na rynku żywności ekologicznej w Polsce

Słowa kluczowe: etnocentryzm konsumentki, rynek żywności ekologicznej, marketing żywności, zachowania konsumentów

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest zbadanie zjawiska etnocentryzmu konsumentki na rynku żywności ekologicznej w Polsce. Badanie ankietowe skierowano do polskich konsumentów. Próba składała się z 1000 mieszkańców Polski w wieku 15–65 lat. Próba była reprezentatywna dla populacji ogólnej pod względem: wieku, płci, wykształcenia i wielkości miasta pochodzenia. W modelu regresji logistycznej przetestowano serię determinant postawy etnocentrycznej na poziomie krajowym. Otrzymano model z sześcioma statystycznie istotnymi determinantami. Prawie wszystkie z nich są psychograficzne, z ważnym wyjątkiem wieku konsumentów. Obejmują one: znaczenie obszaru pochodzenia, marki i zaufania do detalisty jako cechy charakterystyczne żywności, znaczenie oznaczeń jakości w zakupach żywności ekologicznej i znaczenie pochodzenia produktu ekologicznego z tego samego regionu, w którym mieszka konsument. Determinanty te zwiększają prawdopodobieństwo orientacji etnocentrycznej z wyjątkiem znaczenia marki, które ma przeciwny efekt.

Translated by Paweł Bryła

Cytowanie

Bryła, P. (2017). Consumer ethnocentrism on the organic food market in Poland. *Marketing i Zarządzanie*, 2 (48), 11–20. DOI: 10.18276/miz.2017.48-01.