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ETHNOCENTRIC ATTITUDES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION IN POLAND

Abstract: The article presents the essence of consumers' ethnocentric attitudes and their purchasing decisions, which affect the development of sustainable consumption. The definition of ethnocentric attitudes and sustainable consumption presented in the article has several common features which characterise consumers' shopping behaviours. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office concerning foreign trade in 2014, Polish consumers do not purchase domestic products only, but they largely buy imported products. Limited purchasing of domestic products often leads to the abandonment of their production and undermines sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption is characterised by balance between production, purchasing, consumption and simultaneous appropriate waste management.

The main aim of this article is to demonstrate common features of consumers' ethnocentric attitudes and sustainable consumption and to present these issues on the basis of selected data of the Central Statistical Office.

Keywords: sustainable consumption, ethnocentric attitudes, consumer, unemployment, consumption.

JEL codes: E21, J11, M30.

INTRODUCTION

Around the world ethnocentric attitudes are at different stages of advancement. In comparison with other countries, Poland exhibits increasing ethnocentric tendencies [Szromik, Figiel, 1997]. The study by Sharma, Shimp & Shin [Alsughayir, 2013] proved that highly developed countries were characterised not only by high consumer patriotism but also by developed sustainable consumption. It shows that ethnocentric attitudes favour the creation of sustainable consumption and have considerable influence on the development of domestic market. When consumers buy domestic products, there are numerous indirect benefits – they support domestic producers, protect people's jobs and facilitate domestic economy [Mookerjee, Mothersbaugh & Hawkins, 2010]. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office concerning foreign trade in 2014, Polish sellers did not sell many domestic products. It may have been caused by the fact that consumers were not sufficiently informed about goods offered on the domestic market. Making consumers aware of the fact that individual Polish products were produced not only in an eco-friendly way but also that they are particularly healthy [Stanaszek, Tędziągolska, 2011] may increase the sales. However, it is not easy to achieve this goal. Eco-friendly food products are much more expensive and the way they are presented does not appeal to potential consumers. On the other hand, electronic goods made in Poland are not trusted much because usually they are not well recognised on the market. In Poland we can distinguish two groups of consumers who do not always pay attention to the country of origin of a product. The first group is interested in the quality and price of a product. The other group consists of consumers who are guided only by the price of a product.

In Poland sustainable consumption and ethnocentric attitudes tend to be developing, but they are different than in highly developed countries. One of sustainable consumption criteria is the relation between production, consumption, segregation of waste and maximum reduction of environmental pollution. This sustainability can be maintained due to consumers' attitude to particular products and their awareness of the country of origin of a product. The concept of

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sustainable consumption is reflected in many forward-looking strategies¹⁰, policies¹¹, sector development programmes¹² and other strategic documents¹³, which give prospect for the future in Poland.

The article discusses the theoretical and descriptive problem of consumers' ethnocentric attitudes and their influence on the development of sustainable consumption. The study is based on data of the Central Statistical Office concerning foreign trade. The problem was verified by analysis of reference publications and by means of induction and deduction.

Ethnocentric attitudes vs sustainable consumption

At present there are few publications concerning consumer ethnocentrism because the interest in this aspect of consumption began only a short time ago. Consumer ethnocentrism is interpreted as the moral duty to purchase products of domestic origin and it is popular in countries with strong economy, which is appreciated by their citizens [Shimp, Sharma, 1987].

The concept of ethnocentric attitudes is defined in different ways, depending on a particular author's approach. According to A. Figiel, consumer ethnocentrism can be defined as a sense of belonging to an ethnic group, patriotism, national awareness, cultural traditionalism, a sense of superiority over other social groups or xenophobia [Figiel, 2004]. Other authors define this concept as valuation of objects, people and behaviours by projecting the values of one's own environment, with noticeable affirmation of one's own culture and depreciation of foreign cultures [Szromik, Wolanin-Jarosz, 2013]. These definitions may be accepted or rejected but as such they have a lot of positive qualities. For a long time highly developed countries have been using the approach to ethnocentrism to support the national economy and reduce unemployment. In Poland the interest in consumer ethnocentrism began only in the 1990s, after the collapse of communism. The appearance of free market changed purchasers' attitude to imported products, which had not been available in Poland. At present consumers make their own decisions about what they want to buy and it is difficult to encourage them to purchase domestic products only. The choice of domestic products requires that consumers should have specific socioeconomic knowledge to make conscious decisions, which are in agreement with their own feelings [Sajdowska, 2003].

We can assume that it is possible to speak of sustainable consumption when we consume material goods and services to a sufficient extent, satisfy our basic needs and simultaneously attempt to achieve higher quality of life, minimise the consumption of natural resources and materials harmful to the environment at all stages of production and simultaneously not limit future generations' rights to identical consumption [Kramer, 2011]. The concept of sustainable consumption was most broadly defined in the Environmental Protection Act of 27 April 2001¹⁴.

¹⁰ The basic assumption of the Sustainable Development Strategy for Poland is to maintain the current economic growth of about 5% and indicate that the target is to increase the efficiency of using raw materials, fuels and natural resources by about four times.

¹¹ The State Environmental Policy Act – the document whose assumptions were agreed on during the Round Table Talks in 1989. It was drawn up and approved by the government in 1990. It was implemented by the Resolution of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland of 10 May 1991. The Polish Energy Policy until 2030. The strategy of changes in production and consumption models favouring stable, sustainable development. The State Transport Policy 2006-2025.

¹² Economic development policy, fuel and energy policy, agricultural development policy, transport policy, national and regional spatial development policy, social policy, environmental policy, financial and fiscal policy, public procurement policy, plans and programmes of development of sectors, administrative actions, legislative and institutional solutions.

¹³ Environmental departments and the State Treasury are responsible for the ecological aspect of the Strategy.

¹⁴ Sustainable development is interpreted as socioeconomic development where political, economic and social actions become integrated while the balance of nature and stability of basic natural processes are maintained



According to the National Development Strategy 2007-2015¹⁵, in 2015 Poland was supposed to be a country with high living standard, strong and competitive economy offering a wide range of employment opportunities. Apart from that, the implementation of the sustainable development policy will involve taking all steps integrating the interest of future generations. It is noteworthy that being a member-state of the EU, Poland signed the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which was the main subject of areas of the Lisbon Strategy. Its elements can be found in another document – the strategy ‘Europe 2020’ [Czarski, 2011]¹⁶.

It is noticeable that sustainable consumption combines a wide range of social, economic and political practices at the level of individuals, households, communities, business circles and governments. It encompasses several areas of knowledge, including life and social sciences. However, this article will describe only some problems of sustainable consumption and consumer ethnocentrism, which are currently being discussed and investigated. Sustainable consumption, whose aim is to increase the use of renewable natural resources, can be expressed with the following actions [Mróz, 2012].

Table 1. Examples of actions taken to develop sustainable consumption and ethnocentric attitudes.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION	ETHNOCENTRIC ATTITUDES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> buying and using consumer goods which least harm the natural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> buying consumer goods which least harm the domestic economy and consumers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> purchasing/consumption of organic products mostly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> purchasing/consumption of products made in one’s own region/country
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> economical and rational use of consumer goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rational use of consumer goods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limiting the acquisition of goods which involve consumption of non-renewable natural resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the acquisition of goods which are not produced in one’s own country
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limiting the purchase of goods forming hazardous post-consumer waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limiting the purchase of goods forming hazardous post-consumer waste
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> buying food and utility goods which are least harmful to consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> buying food and utility goods which are least harmful to consumers

Source: The author’s compilation based on “Consumption and Development 2011/1”.

The definition of sustainable consumption includes a lot of common features, which are characteristic of consumers’ ethnocentric attitudes. Both sustainable consumption and ethnocentric attitudes are characterised by consumers’ present and future choices aimed at development of their country. However, it is noteworthy that ethnocentric products are not always organic. A product can be classified as patriotic if it was made in only one country. The consumption of goods and services

so as to guarantee that individual communities and citizens of the present and future generations can satisfy their basic needs.

¹⁵ This document specifies the conditions, main goals, trends of socioeconomic and spatial development of a particular country, allowing for the rules of sustainable development.

¹⁶ The strategy ‘Europe 2020’ covers the period 2010-2020 and it is Europe’s response to the increasing intensity of some phenomena and new challenges, such as the increasing competitiveness of emerging economies in India and China. The document presents a vision of social market economy. Its main assumptions are: intelligent development, sustainable development and development favouring social inclusion. In practice it means supporting innovation and development of knowledge, efficient use of resources, competitiveness and environmental protection as well as supporting employment, social and territorial integrity.



that are sufficient to satisfy one's basic needs and to achieve a high life position can be attained by minimal use of natural resources and materials that are harmful to the environment and thus, future generations' consumption will not be limited. Adequate consumer knowledge leading to changes in market behaviours, lifestyle and habits, e.g. shopping habits [Czubała, 2011, Domeradzki 2011], may help to maintain sustainable consumption.

The development of sustainable consumption considerably depends on consumers' attitudes, especially ethnocentric attitudes and purchase decisions of the community, which may have considerable influence on the future stability of a particular region and its development. Sustainable consumption is strictly correlated with ecologisation because it sets adequate proportions between present and future consumption [Kielczewski, 2008]. The main motives of sustainable consumption are ecology, the future of our planet and reduction of hunger and poverty. These goals can only be achieved in a civil society through citizens' appropriate attitudes and their purchase decisions [Korbel, 2001].

CONSUMERS' DECISIONS ACCORDING TO DATA OF THE CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

The awareness that every consumer builds the surrounding reality creates a positive or negative image of a country. The consumer can make a decision whether to buy a product, which product to buy, how to use it, etc. [Bergier, Kronenberg, 2010]. The consumer's choice often affects the model of further economic, social and natural growth and development. Attachment to domestic products and brands is often characteristic of wealthy economies. It is less common in poorer communities, where the price is the primary criterion for purchase, whereas the choice of foreign products is a sign of prestige. For this reason, consumer patriotism is the most common in highly developed countries [Czubkowska, 2014].

Decisions taken by domestic consumers can be presented in more detail when we consider the data of the Central Statistical Office concerning foreign trade in 2014. In 2014 the turnover in foreign trade was greater than in 2013, although there was a gradual slowdown in its growth rate. There was an increase in the value of trade with developed countries, including the EU member-states, and developing countries. On the other hand, there was a decrease in the turnover with Central and Eastern European countries. It was especially noticeable in exports, which had been decreasing gradually since the previous year. As the imports grew at a slightly higher rate than the exports, the negative balance of the total trade increased. Between January and November 2014 the turnover in constant prices was greater than in the corresponding period in 2013. As the prices of imported goods dropped, the terms of trade became more favourable. The value of exports in zlotys increased by 7.0% and amounted to 693,471.6 million zlotys, whereas the value of imports increased by 7.4% and amounted to 704,567.5 million zlotys. As a result, there was negative balance in trade, which amounted to 11,095.9 million zlotys (in 2013 it was minus 8,219.4 million zlotys). The value of exports in euros increased by 7.0% and amounted to €165,773.6 million, whereas the value of imports increased by 7.3% and amounted to €168,432.3 million. The negative balance amounted to €2,658.7 million (in 2013 it was minus €1,984.0 million). The value of exports in US dollars increased by 7.9% and amounted to \$222,339.4 million, whereas the value of imports increased by 8.2% and amounted to \$225,898.5 million. The negative balance amounted to \$3,559.1 million (in 2013 it was minus \$2,642.4 million) [Kapsa, 2015].

As results from the data of the Central Statistical Office, the value of Poland's imports was greater than the value of its exports. Consumers' ethnocentric attitudes may force producers to deliver more domestic products to shops and thus limit the purchasing of foreign products, which might as well be made in Poland.

When consumers choose products made in Poland instead of their foreign equivalents, e.g. apples, pears, milk, cream, etc., they may contribute to greater amounts of these products being



delivered to shops. However, in practice, it might be unrealistic, because consumers might feel that their choice of products is limited. On the other hand, consumers have to face the fact that shops offer a wide choice of imported goods, which often seem to be more attractive than domestic products. Table 2 lists selected countries from which products are imported to Poland. These products are also made in Poland and they are purchased in large amounts.

Table 2. Goods imported to Poland from January to July 2014.

Country	Name of product	Unit of measurement	Quantity	Value (zlotys)
Germany	Whey and modified whey, concentrated or containing added sugar or other sweetening matter	kg	4,315,914	31,137,869
Germany	Milk and cream, concentrated, liquid, containing added sugar or other sweetening matter	kg	2,702,627	10,628,999
Netherlands	Fresh apples	kg	519,751	1,242,942
Netherlands	Fresh pears	kg	11,015,079	31,595,606
Spain	Potatoes, fresh or chilled, except seed potatoes:	kg	14,118,771	16,924,321
Spain	Cucumbers and gherkins, fresh or chilled	kg	13,789,866	57,314,510
France	Live ducks, not exceeding 185 g in weight	pcs	1,518,319	4,300,358
France	Meat of swine, fresh or chilled: hams, shoulders and cuts thereof, with bone	kg	4,816,710	31,761,182
France	Potatoes, fresh or chilled, except seed potatoes	kg	18,715,273	14,273,001
Portugal	Fresh pears	kg	3,772,691	12,920,752

Source: <http://hinex.stat.gov.pl/hinex.aspx/przeglądanie.aspx>. The database of the Central Statistical Office on foreign trade in 2014.

The table above lists selected imported goods, which can also be produced in Poland [Kuczevska, 2013]. Consumers might choose imported products because of better quality, lower price or other economic or non-economic factors. Domestic products are increasingly often being replaced with imported goods. It is a rare situation when only a Polish product is offered without a foreign equivalent (usually there are a few imported equivalents). This situation can be explained by the fact that at present there are fewer shops with Polish investors.

According to the data of the Central Statistical Office, in 2014 there were 26,464 entities with foreign capital. 1,369 entities with foreign capital were established in 2014, as compared with 1,489 entities established in 2013. These data show that ethnocentric attitudes are not developed in Poland, because imports replace and considerably limit domestic production. Consumers are not fully aware of the consequences of purchasing foreign goods. When they can choose between two identical products of good quality, they are guided by the price. Recently the importance of the price

in purchase decisions has grown. Studies conducted in Poland indicate that some segments of consumers exhibit a high tendency to purchase foreign products, whereas others definitely prefer domestic goods. These preferences depend on many different factors, which can be divided into two groups. The first group includes factors which refer to the product directly. Consumers are guided by the quality, price, design, technology and materials used for production. The other group includes the factors which characterise the consumer, such as: age, education, wealth, social position. These factors significantly reflect consumers' market attitudes [Mazurek-Łopacińska, 2000, 2001].

The data in Table 2 show that there is no balance in consumption, because production is decreasing, whereas the amount of goods purchased and consumed and the amount of waste is increasing. Sustainable consumption is not only related with the environment but also it directly concerns consumers' attitudes and their choices. It is now that consumers make decisions about further development of sustainable consumption. These decisions will have consequences for the present and future generations¹⁷.

CONCLUSION

It is worth noticing that the development of sustainable consumption is strictly related with consumers' attitudes. When consumers purchase domestic products, they considerably contribute to the development of their region or even their country. Their behaviour reduces unemployment and minimises the import of foreign products. Foreign trade is very important, because Poland is not a self-sufficient country. It should import the goods which cannot be domestically produced or are not available for geographical reasons. Sustainable consumption is not so common in Poland as it is in developed countries, e.g. in Germany. People have minimal awareness of the problems caused by the rapid growth of waste and toxic emissions due to consumers' inappropriate choices. It is necessary to transfer this knowledge to people so that their attitudes will result in sustainable development of the Polish economy.

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