

The influence of credibility and trust to form of communication message in the context of ethnocentrism

Dr hab. Ewa Jerzyk, Associate Professor
Poznań University of Economics, Faculty of Management, Department of Marketing
Strategies, al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań, Poland
ph: +48618543768 email: e.jerzyk@ue.poznan.pl

Dr hab Magdalena Stefańska, Assistant Professor
(Corresponding author)
Poznań University of Economics, Faculty of Management, Department of Marketing
Strategies, al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań, Poland
ph: +48618543769, email: m.stefanska@ue.poznan.pl

Renata Nestorowicz, PhD., Assistant Professor
Poznań University of Economics, Faculty of Management, Department of Marketing
Strategies, al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań, Poland
ph: +48618543768, email: r.nestorowicz@ue.poznan.pl

Anna Rogala, PhD. Assistant Professor
Poznań University of Economics, Faculty of Management, Department of Marketing
Strategies, al. Niepodległości 10, 61-875 Poznań, Poland
ph: +48618543774, email: anna.rogala@ue.poznan.pl

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Abstract

The paper aims to establish if trust and reliability influence the perception of marketing communications and enhance consumer ethnocentric attitude. The paper puts forward two hypotheses, subsequently verified by surveys. The analysis employed factor analysis to isolate variables for the models, correlation analysis, also segmentation by k-means cluster method was implemented. The CETSCALE was used in the research to define intensity of ethnocentric attitudes.

To enhance consumer ethnocentrism based on the preferences for local products it is important to use celebrity endorsement to inform about creating jobs, and increase the availability of products in store. The higher the ethnocentrism is, the smaller the influence of celebrities on ethnocentrism is thought to be. If the consumer's ethnocentric attitude is characterized by aversion to imports, one should focus on promotional activities in the outlets. The research tool should therefore be perfected in order to improve the determination of the model, and research on a random sample ought to be carried out. When creating the advertising message, attention must be paid whether it aims to enhance the preference for local products or the aversion to imported goods. The CETSCALE was used for stepwise regression modeling.

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Keywords:

Trust and reliability in communication, enhancing ethnocentrism attitude, marketing communications, celebrity endorsement

Theoretical background

Ethnocentrism means viewing other cultures and evaluating them from the perspective of one's own, and consumer ethnocentrism is, according to Shimp and Sharm the preference of products or services of a given country, region, or local markets (Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Ethnocentrism is based on consumers' emotional, moral, and economic drives, which make the consumers consciously choose domestic products and, at the same time reject foreign products or brands. Consumer ethnocentrism means favoring products from one's own country or region and holding attitudes based on the belief that it is immoral and despicable to buy products from other countries. (e.g. Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2004; Watson and Wright, 2000).

The marketing communications were related to ethnocentrism as determinant influencing buying behaviors. Marketing communications is a business activity aimed at persuading and shaping attitudes of particular market segments (Wiktor, 2013). From the perspective of local food producers it is important to enhance ethnocentric attitudes in order to build a preference for the local brands. It is in their interest to build a preference among local communities for the food which they produce rather than the products offered under international or global brands. Global brands and multinational corporations show little interest in customizing their communication strategies to the local market character, despite ample research that confirms the effectiveness of doing so (Zhang, Gelb 1996, Mueller 1992, Kanso 1992). They are, however, looking for ways to ameliorate ethnocentric attitudes, which pose a significant barrier to their expansion (Puzakowa, Kwak, Andras, 2010;). This may give an opportunity for the local businesses to intensify their communication efforts and focus them around enhancing the preference for local products. Consumers' ethnocentric attitudes

are one source of local preferences. On the other hand, the concept of CSR is playing an increasingly important role in retailers' communication strategies. There is a growing role of CSR in strengthening cooperation with local suppliers by multinational companies and communicating this fact to the local public (Bilińska-Reformat 2014; Stefańska 2014).

Catering to but also creating ethnocentric consumer attitudes and behaviors in local producer's communications will increase both the competitiveness of such companies and the preference for local products and brands. It also influences the strategy of global retailers which develop strategies by adding local brands to their assortment (Bilińska-Reformat 2013). This will result in purchasing decisions of customers. However, ethnocentric attitudes vary in strength, as confirmed in research i.a. (Ertmańska, 2011, [Lebiejko, 2012](#), also Nestorowicz and Kaniewska - Sęba 2014). They may also stem from different reasons. The tendency to show limited interest in foreign goods is affected by a range of factors, including some characteristics of the consumers, patriotism, cultural, political, and historical circumstances, or the perceived level of economic development, as well as the category of the product or the country of its origin (Watson, Wright 1999; Nguyen, Nguyen and Barrett 2008; Chao, Wührer and Werani 2005; Byeong-Joon, Jufei, Piron, and Xin 2004). Consumer ethnocentrism plays a significant role in times of economic recession, especially as a factor in making purchase decisions (Kreckova, Odehnalova and Reardon 2012; Chinen 2010; Dube and Black 2010; Smyczek and Glowik 2011). On the one hand, economic crises result in lowered consumer confidence and cause anxiety in consumers' attitudes and consumer behavior. On the other hand, they spur the consumers into protecting their own markets and jobs, and taking better care of local business. Rational and emotional consumer reactions determine their shopping preferences.

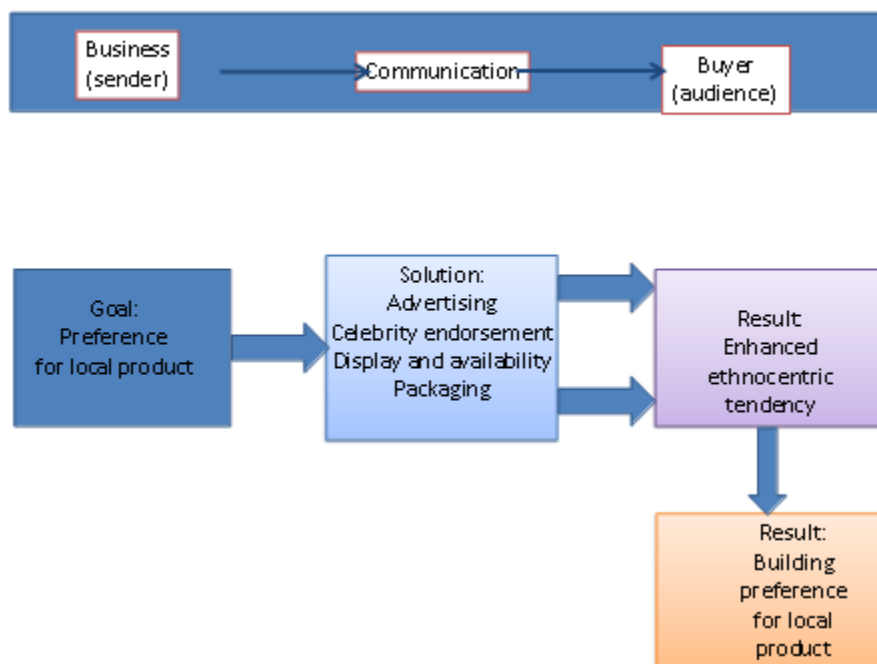
Ethnocentric attitude is influenced by external and internal conditions – like communication, personal knowledge and attitude toward local products, also availability of products. To enhance ethnocentric attitude it's necessary to launch communication strategy, which performs specific functions, like informing, persuading, or competing, by using a sender, and audience, the channel, and means of communication (Rogala 2011). Kotler and Keller (2012) point to nine determinants of effective communication: sender, target audience, the message, the media, encoding, response, feedback and distortions, which lead to certain types of consumer response (cognitive, affective, and behavioral). The local producers need to establish which elements of the communication process enhance ethnocentric attitudes, thus creating preference for local products, and what features they should possess. The article focuses on selected items related model of communication like the message and its effectiveness. In particular a consideration was given to the trust and credibility of the persons appearing in advertising messages. Trust in communication refers to the generalized expectancy that a message received is true and reliable and that the communicator demonstrates competence and honesty by conveying accurate, objective, and complete information (Renn and Levine (1991, p.175-218). In turn, credibility is a multidimensional concept which refers to different sources of information and it influence attitude and consumers' shopping behavior (Wilson and Sherrell, 1993, p. 101-112). When consumers trust the messages and have a positive attitude to them, this translates into their positive attitude and intentions of purchase. In the case endorsement, trust and credibility of consumers will be built on the basis of the authority and characteristics as celebrities such as occupation (or industry he represents the type of star: actor, athlete, model, person known), his or her nationality or gender. These will serve to reduce the risk of communication in the form of a lack of response or a negative response. Particular attention requires in such situation constructing an advertising message - including the presence of people with their authority emphasize the content of the message. The more tailored the star brand or a product, the greater the chance that the message will be effective and raise the confidence of

customers. Positive attitude of consumers towards the product is attributed to positive feelings towards the star, which it advertises. Acceptance of nationality, profession star or evaluation of its achievements may determine the consumer's attitude towards the product or brand. The effectiveness of endorsement will also be larger when celebrities supporting the brand will be similar to its target market. The effect of trust is well known for example the global retailers, who in years 2013-2015 launched very intensive advertising campaign using image of well-known cooks (Nestorowicz and Stefańska 2013).

It seems logical statement that global brands are promoted by people known internationally. To paraphrase - local products should be advertised by famous people locally, that trust and credibility of the message will be greater when local products are supported by local authorities. Practice shows that local brands can be also effectively supported by global authorities. However, this may depend on the type of products promoted by the intensity of the attitude ethnocentric consumer.

Figure 1. proposes a model on which elements of communications this article is based. The model assumes that the goal of a business communication is to enhance ethnocentrism, so that consumers prefer and choose its products in the shops. In order to achieve the goal, the organization communicates the local character of its products by: celebrity endorsement, packaging, and point-of-sale display. The authors believe that the nationality of the endorser is important in communicating effectively. This element has so far been largely neglected in ethnocentric research. Latest endorsement research has focused on matching the person to the product they endorse and the influence of cultural factors on responding to endorsement (Biswas, Hussain and O'Donnell, 2009). Endorsement (support) is a form of mass communication which uses popular and widely recognized persons, called stars, or celebrities (Spears, Royne and van Steernburg 2013). The effect of endorsement on consumer behavior may be explained in terms of social psychology and mass communication. And so, an attractive celebrity inspires positive feelings and serves as a role model for emulating. At the same time, they become a feature in consumer behavior, acting as a source of reliable information, stimulating interest, and determining purchasing decisions. The findings to date have helped to isolate two main areas of analyzing endorsement from the perspective of ethnocentrism: the star's nationality and his or her type (a celebrity, an actor, a sports person, an expert).

Fig. 1. Ethnocentrism enhancing communication model



Source: own concept

It was thus proposed, that in the process of persuading and changing attitudes the most frequently used means is celebrity endorsement, and it is essential for the celebrity to be of local nationality. The authors believe that ethnocentric consumer behavior will be enhanced through using advertising to communicate preference on the example of Polish products and building confidence in products by using celebrity endorsement. The determinants have been singled out due to several reasons. Advertising remains the most popular means of mass influence on the market, aimed at creating awareness or changing perceptions about a product (Aaker, 1991; Jin and Lutz, 2013). Research suggests that advertising motivates consumers to change attitudes and preferences: it impacts cognitive and affective responses, and thus influences consumer attitudes and shopping behaviors. Moreover, consumers' response to advertising is affected by their ethnicity (Whittler 1991; Whittler and Spira, 2002; Butt and de Run, 2012). This gave rise to the following hypothesis:

(H1) - advertising activities undertaken by local producers enhance ethnocentric tendencies and create preference for Polish products.

The second determinant results from the very nature of ethnocentrism. From the point of view of ethnocentrism and building confidence in local products, one should examine how well advertising is adapted and similar to the local market. The dilemma between standardization and localization does not seem to have a definite solution (Moon and Jain, 2002). Therefore in this paper it has been decided to shift the interest onto the celebrity endorsing a local product and his or her characteristics, such as nationality and type. Research suggests that the effectiveness of endorsement depends on the culture of the audience, as well as the type of the celebrity used (Biswas, Biswas and Das, 2006; Lord and Putrevu 2009; Biswas, Hussain, O'Donnell, 2009, Hayat, Ghayyur and Siddique, 2013; Kihan, 2011). Consumer ethnocentrism in Poland, a medium-context culture, seems to be responsive to patriotic and national endorsement (Han 1988). It is therefore assumed that ethnocentrism can be enhanced by using endorsement in agreement with the nationality of the target market. The following hypothesis has ensued:

(H2) – confidence of the local community in local brands is established by endorsement by a celebrity whose nationality is the same as the target market.

Methodology

The paper is based on the findings of empirical research carried out in October and November 2013 in selected Polish cities, on a sample of 440 persons, inhabitants of three cities: Poznan, Szczecin and Lublin. The cities are located in different parts of the country, two of them close to German and Ukrainian border. Quota sampling was used in choosing the respondents. Interviews were conducted by field researchers who read out questions to the respondents. Table 1. provides a detailed structure of the respondents.

A five-point Likert scale was used in the questions to measure attitudes. The scale used in research spans from 1 to 5, or 1 to 7, or even 1 to 9 in research 9 (Ertmańska, 2011) and (Supphellen i Rittenburg, 2001). In all cases 1 means "strongly disagree" whereas 5, 7, or 9 – "strongly agree."

The study employs the procedure of composite analysis. The target method used to verify the formulated hypotheses about the determinants of enhancing ethnocentric attitudes was k-means cluster segmentation. In order to isolate variables for the model it was necessary to conduct correlation and factor analyses, which allowed to isolate factors presented in table 2. This fundamental research tool in assessing consumer ethnocentric tendencies, was developed by A. Shimp i S. Sharma (Shimp and Sharma, 198). As a result, two factors were isolated on the CETSCALE - $Y_{ethno1\ pro}$ and $Y_{ethno2\ against}$ – support for local products and resistance to imported goods respectively (table 2). This research obtained the value of 0.958 for Cronbach's Alpha, and the KMO coefficient (0.958), which indicates a very high reliability of sampling and is a basis for conducting factor analysis.

Table 1. The structure of respondents in the survey

Gender	Number of responses	Share in %
Female	314	71
Male	126	29
All	440	100
Age	Number of responses	Share in %
18-24 years	47	11
25-34 years	97	22
35-44 years	92	21
45-54 years	78	18
55-64 years	67	15
65 and older	58	13
All	439	100
Residence	Number of responses	Share in %
Poznan	154	35
Szczecin	150	34
Lublin	136	31
All	440	100
Education	Number of responses	Share in %
Primary	1	0
Vocational	36	8
Secondary	170	39
Higher	232	53
All	439	100

Source: own research

Table 2. CETSCALE used in research

Variable	
<p>Factor 1</p> <p>$Y_{ethno1\ pro}$ (intensity of ethnocentric attitude-support for domestic products)</p> <p>Eighteen value=1,192</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Polish consumers should always buy Polish food instead of imported food 2. Only food products which are unavailable in Poland should be imported 3. Buying Polish food products you give jobs to Polish people 4. Polish is the only food to buy! 5. We should buy food produced in Poland, instead of allowing other countries to get rich at our expense 6. It is always better to buy Polish food products 7. It may be more expensive for me in the long run, but I prefer to buy Polish food products
<p>Factor 2</p> <p>$Y_{ethno2\ against}$ (intensity of ethnocentric attitude –imports perceived as threat to domestic products)</p> <p>Eighteen value=10,175</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buying imported food products is an anti-Polish activity 2. Buying imported food products results in higher unemployment in Poland 3. A true Pole should always buy Polish food products 4. The sale of food products from other countries should only be restricted to when necessary 5. Poles should not buy foreign food products because it harms Polish business and causes unemployment 6. All imported food products should be restricted 7. Foreign companies should not be allowed to introduce food products into the Polish market 8. Foreign food products should be more heavily taxed, so as to restrict their presence on the Polish market 9. We should import only these food products which we cannot produce in Poland 10. Polish people who buy foreign food make other Polish people lose jobs

Source: own research

The model explains 68% of variability. Having identified dependable (Y) variables, factor analysis was also conducted to isolate independent variables (table 3). Their positive verification led to forming indexes, which were independent variables introduced in the estimated models. The indexes were an arithmetic mean of the questions which formed the particular factors, isolated on the basis of factor analyses. The dependent variable – the intensity of ethnocentric attitudes, was formed in a similar way, calculating indexes based on the opinions included in the CETSCALE (table 2).

Independent variables refer to different forms of communications – in store-special exhibition for local products, on shelves – by packaging, by mass media. First Cronbach's alpha was evaluated. Although the value is low and equal 0.69, it's above minimum for Cronbach alpha value which is 0.60, to confirm usage of the factor analysis method. The factors identified in factors analysis are presented in table 3. and they describe: employing well known celebrities in mass media communication (variables x_1 , x_2 and x_3) and country of origin of actors playing in commercials as determinant of trust (x_4). Finally independent variable included into tested model refers to customers attitude toward information on packaging, since packaging is considered as "silent seller" and its design communicates unique values to customers (x_5).

Table 3. Selected variables and indexes

Independent variables	
<p>X_1 –celebrity endorsement</p> <p>Eighteen value=6,599</p>	<p>In your opinion, has endorsement by a celebrity had a positive influence on the image of the brand (on a scale 1-5, where 1 means absolutely not, and 5 – absolutely)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Daniel Olbrychski – Biedronka b. Antonio Banderas – Orbit gum c. Adam Małysz –Teekane tea d. Monica Bellucci –Cisowianka Perlage water e. Anna Przybylska –Veroni water f. Danuta Stenka – Delicje g. Jamie Oliver – healthy diet h. Karol Okrasa – Lidl i. Mike Tyson – Black Energy Drink

	j. Dariusz Michalczewski – Tiger																																				
X ₂ - endorsement by Polish celebrities Eighteen value=3,843	In your opinion, has endorsement by a Polish celebrity had a positive influence on the image of the brand (on a scale 1-5, where 1 means absolutely not, and 5 – absolutely yes) a. Daniel Olbrychski – Biedronka b. Adam Małysz –Teekane tea c. Anna Przybylska –Veroni water d. Danuta Stenka – Delicje e. Karol Okrasa – Lidl f. Dariusz Michalczewski – Tiger																																				
X ₃ - endorsement by foreign celebrities Eighteen value=2,575	In your opinion, has endorsement by a foreign celebrity had a positive influence on the image of the brand (on a scale 1-5, where 1 means absolutely not, and 5 – absolutely) a. Antonio Banderas –Orbit gum b. Monica Bellucci –Cisowianka Perlage water c. Jamie Oliver – healthy diet d. Mike Tyson – Black Energy Drink																																				
X ₄ - trust inspired by country of origin and certain professions Eighteen value=2,562	Who is more trustworthy in food advertisements? <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Polish stars</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>Foreign stars</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polish experts</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>Foreign experts</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polish actors/actresses</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>Foreign actors/actresses</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polish sports people</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>Foreign sports people</td> </tr> </table>	Polish stars	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign stars	Polish experts	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign experts	Polish actors/actresses	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign actors/actresses	Polish sports people	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign sports people
Polish stars	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign stars																													
Polish experts	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign experts																													
Polish actors/actresses	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign actors/actresses																													
Polish sports people	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Foreign sports people																													
X ₅ -information on packaging Eighteen value=1,421	1. I always read the information on the food's packaging carefully 2. I fully understand the information on the food's packaging																																				

Source: own research

Next, correlation analysis was made for the obtained indexes in order to exclude those that would show strong dependence. Correlation means that there are interdependencies between features or variables, without establishing a cause or effect. However, correlation does not imply causation, although it does not rule out the possibility of such. Indeed, correlation can often indicate the existence of a causal relationship (Mynarski, 2006).

Results

The paper proceeds to focus on the following features of the advertising message: the profession and the nationality of the endorsing celebrity. One of the key issues the research set out to establish was whether there is a relationship between the intensity of the ethnocentric attitude and the perceived trustworthiness of the celebrity endorsing food products, depending on the celebrity being of Polish or foreign nationality. The CETSCALE was again employed to discover segments with different degrees of ethnocentrism. The intervals for assessing the strength of ethnocentric attitudes were drawn from another research (Ertmańska, 2011; [Lebiejko, 2012](#)). The authors divided people into those of: low ethnocentrism (17-39 or 1-2.29 ethnocentrism index), average (40-62 or 2.30-3.65 ethnocentrism index) and low (63-85 or 3.66-5 ethnocentrism index).

Only some celebrities can be said to have had an influence on the positive image of the products they endorsed from the perspective of people representing different degrees of ethnocentrism. From among 10 commercials that used celebrity endorsement, significant statistical differences were seen in half of them. The higher the degree of ethnocentrism, the lower the perception of the influence of both Polish and foreign celebrities was. Therefore, the significance of the differences between segments in their perceptions as to the role of the celebrities was additionally examined. Significant statistical differences were observed in case of the part of questions about endorsement by foreign stars– Antonio Banderas, Jamie Olivier, Mike Tyson, but also Polish celebrities–Karol Okrasa, the cook and Dariusz Michalczewski, the sportsman (table 4.)

Table 4. Assessment of the influence of celebrity endorsement on the brand image in relation to ethnocentrism

	Segments based on degree of ethnocentrism (mean values)			Statistically relevant mean differences between segments		
	Low (1)	Average (2)	High (3)	(1) and (2)	(1) and (3)	(2) and (3)
Antonio Banderas (Spain)	2,92	3,03	2,52	-	-	p<0,05
Jamie Olivier (UK)	2,69	2,83	2,29	-	-	p<0,05
Karol Okrasa (PL)	3,99	3,71	3,37	-	p<0,05	-
Mike Tyson (USA)	3,29	2,77	2,49	p<0,05	p<0,05	-
Dariusz Michalczewski (PL)	3,11	2,76	2,52	-	p<0,05	-

Source: Own research

1-5 scale, with 1 meaning strongly no, and 5 – strongly yes

The conducted analysis leads to the following conclusions. Firstly, it is not enough to hire a celebrity. He or she must be a person with a characteristics that evokes positive associations with the target segment. What is more, the better recognized a celebrity is, the stronger the beliefs that people of local nationality are more trustworthy. This means that people with an already strong ethnocentric attitude will respond better to a national celebrity. The low ethnocentrism segment in turn, showed a positive response to a foreign celebrity as long as it was universally recognized.

Subsequent analyses looked at the profession of the endorsing celebrity. To inspire more trust in the local product, the celebrity should best be a national expert (2.74 mean). Foreign actors and actresses are least preferred (3.28 mean). Statistically relevant differences in the opinions of respondents depending on the intensity of their ethnocentric attitudes were observed in the perception of national stars, experts, actors, and actresses. No statistically relevant differences were observed in the perception of sports people in this role. Based on the data in Table 5 one can notice that buyers who represented a high degree of ethnocentrism scored on average lower value means for the questions on the presence of celebrities in advertising, which means they preferred national celebrities irrespective of their professions. On the other hand, the people representing the lowest degree of ethnocentrism showed the highest mean for the questions about celebrity endorsement.

Table 5. Assessment of the influence of the kind of celebrity on trust in brands

	Segments based on degree of ethnocentrism (mean values)			Statistically relevant mean differences between segments (p<0,05)		
	Low (1)	Average (2)	High (3)	(1) and (2)	(1) and (3)	(2) and (3)
Stars	3,72	3,18	2,68	+	+	+
Experts (e.g. celebrity cooks, dieticians)	3,40	2,68	2,28	+	+	-
Actors and actresses	3,79	3,27	2,88	+	+	-
Sports people	3,25	3,10	2,79	-	-	-

Source: Own research

1-7 scale, with 1 meaning absolutely Polish, and 7 – absolutely foreign

The next issue the research examined was to establish the connection between the intensity of preferring Polish celebrities in endorsement aimed at building trust in food products and the intensity of ethnocentric attitudes. The results suggest that one in three of the respondents who prefer endorsement by Polish nationals, at the same time represents a high degree of ethnocentrism. The intensity of ethnocentric attitudes decreases with the preference for non-Polish celebrities. The Pearson correlation coefficient was $r^2=-0.23$, which is low, however one must notice that it has a negative value. The obtained results are statistically relevant.

Conclusions

The conducted research confirmed some of the assumptions the paper made in part or fully. Hypothesis 1 that advertising efforts undertaken by local producers reinforce ethnocentric attitudes was confirmed. To this end, the nationality of the endorsing people must be consistent with the target market (positive verification of hypothesis 2). Also confirmed was the fact that the intensity of ethnocentric attitudes influences the response to celebrity endorsement. As a result, the higher ethnocentrism is, the larger the acceptance for endorsement by one's own nationals.

For many years people in Poland did not see this relationship because of the centrally planned economy until 1989 and the preference for foreign goods, which were thought to be superior due to the very fact of being foreign. This attitude was so prevalent in Polish consumer perceptions that numerous chains – clothing or shoe retailers which were set up in the last 20 to 30 years, actually adopted foreign-sounding names to gain better positioning (e.g. Top Secret, Carry, Reserved, Quadri Foglio, House, Young Reporter etc.). There have been similar instances of foreign-sounding naming in the food industry. However the nostalgia for “the tastes of childhood” together with the positive opinion domestic products enjoy, are strengthening their position among the global brands. The conclusion refers especially to food products. This may lead to a conclusion that businesses should emphasize their Polish origin, as well as maintain and build up these brands which date back from before the 1989 political and economic changes. The brands may capitalize on evoking fond memories on the one hand, and on the other on the belief that products which have been on the market for a long time are of high quality (Jerzyk, 2013). The consumers are becoming more and more aware of the synergy between the growth of local business and consumer purchasing behavior: when buying local products you give jobs to yourself and your family.

Managerial implications and limitations

The findings of the research can help managers understand the mechanism of shaping ethnocentric attitudes in the local markets. They will also advise on how to prepare effective communication, which will foster ethnocentric behaviors and improve competitiveness of local manufacturers. One must concentrate on building support for local products through advertising and point of sale activity. In store activities, or a confrontation of Polish and foreign products on the shelves, is important in another goal, like enhancing resistance against foreign goods.

As with other researches, some limitations as to interpreting of the results must apply. The research was not on a random sample, however the paper points out the existence of statistically relevant relationships. The research was conducted in Poland, a country that had to re-establish its national identity after 1989. Before 1989, the unavailability of foreign products made them desirable, which may still distort ethnocentric attitudes. Another constraint is the growing difficulty in defining what makes product local, or foreign, or problems in defining the nationality of brands due to mass importing and foreign ownership of some food companies in Poland.

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