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**Are elderly consumer more ethnocentric?  
Attitudes towards Polish and ‘foreign’ food products**

**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to analyze the consumer ethnocentrism towards food products. The results of the study suggest that the relationship between the level of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer demographics is weak. Gender and income were found not to affect the level of ethnocentrism, while the influence of age was weak. In general, ethnocentrism towards food products was not found to be weak, although it showed tendency to grow with consumer’s age.

**Keywords:** consumer ethnocentrism, consumer characteristics, food products.

**JEL Classification:** M 31.

**Introduction**

Consumers make decisions regarding food choice every day, based on multiple criteria. The need for food is fundamental and physiological one, with straightforward goal and solution [Mela 1999]. However, the choice of food is rather complex and multifaceted [Vabo & Hansen 2014]. Since consumers make food choices repeatedly a few times a day, they develop personal systems for food choice, comprised of conscious value negotiations and strategies of choice

based on habits [Vabo & Hansen 2014]. The negotiated values include sensory perceptions, monetary considerations, convenience, quality, nutrition and health properties of food products. According to Furst et al. [1996], sensory perception is the most dominant factor in first group, while the choice strategies tend to be heuristics that guide food related decisions. These may be unique for every food product choice, but can exhibit similar patterns and, while flexible, tend to remain stable over time. The choice of food products is highly complex, frequent, multifaceted, contextual and dynamic. The main focus in research on food choice has been placed so far on physiological and psychological determinants, with less attention given to cultural, social, historical and demographic factors [Nestle et al. 1998; Vabo & Hansen 2014]. As the need for food is fundamental, so is the importance of food market difficult to exaggerate. The same holds true for its complexity, growing due to global competition and sourcing. The advances in food preservation, storage and transportation technology allowed products from distant parts of the globe to become every grocery store's staples and to overcome the seasonality of many fresh produce, which are nowadays available all-year-round. From a domestic companies' perspective this means growing competitive pressure so in order to stay competitive, they must understand how their customers react to non-domestic products. When 'exotic' and 'foreign' becomes everyday option, at least in the developed countries, and consumers can choose between 'domestic' and 'foreign' alternatives, consumer ethnocentrism level might become important selection determinant. As the origin of a product might affect consumers' choice, marketers must understand their attitudes towards domestic and foreign offerings, so they could formulate appropriate marketing strategies to target segments least favoring imported products, or position products or brands accordingly. Itself, consumer ethnocentrism is determined by many factors, including consumer demographics. In marketing literature, the dominant belief is that elderly consumers are more ethnocentric than younger ones, yet this is based on rather mixed and confusing evidence. Considering the growing size of the elderly segment in the developed countries, the factors that affect this segment's choices require careful inquiry. Yet this seem not to be the case, and, despite more focus placed on elderly consumers in the last decade, this is still rather underdeveloped area of marketing, biased with negative stereotypes of elderly as weak, dependent and in the cognitive decline. One of the reasons behind our limited knowledge of elderly consumers' behavior is relatively difficult access to the elderly respondents. Another one is probably the preoccupation of companies with younger consumers in general. However, one can expect the growth of interest in the elderly consumers as the consequence of the demographic changes.

This paper discusses the relationship between consumer demographics and ethnocentrism level in the food products context. In particular, the relationships between consumer age, gender, income and ethnocentrism level are analyzed. First, consumer ethnocentrism and its determinants are discussed, with focus on consumers' characteristics. Second, we provide information on research methodology used in this study. Third, the results of the field study are presented and discussed. Finally, managerial implications of the research findings are provided.

## **1. Consumer ethnocentrism**

The construct of ethnocentrism was introduced by Sumner and Keller [1906], who defined it as general predisposition of an individual to base evaluations of external phenomena in relationship to standards of a group an individual belongs. In sociology, ethnocentrism is regarded as universal trait, which implies behaviors that are discriminatory in nature [Chinen 2010]. When ethnocentrism level is high, everything perceived as 'in-group' is perceived as normative and superior, while 'out-group' or 'external' as inferior. Ethnocentrism is associated also with cooperative behaviors within a group and reluctance or rejection of cooperative relationships with out-groups [Bizumic & Duckitt 2008].

Shimp and Sharma [1987], who adopted the construct to marketing, defined consumer ethnocentrism as personality trait, founded in generally stable beliefs that dictate what is considered right, or moral, in the context of foreign product purchase. Consumer ethnocentric attitudes seem to direct decision making process towards purchase and consumption of products known or perceived as domestically produced rather than against the foreign ones. Although ethnocentrism is typically linked to discriminatory behaviors, it can be also analyzed as in-group favoritism [Smyczek & Glowik 2011]. This perspective is consistent with anthropological and psychological perspectives that differentiate between ethnocentrism (in-group favoritism) and xenophobia (hostility towards out-group [Brown 2004; Kwak, Jaju, Larsen 2006].

Consumer ethnocentrism, as literature suggests tends to moderate consumers' evaluations of products. Luque-Martinez, Ibañez-Zapata, and Del Barrio-García [2000] argue that research on consumer ethnocentrism is important to better understand how consumers compare domestic versus foreign products. Better knowledge whether the level of ethnocentrism influences consumer attitudes towards foreign products might be useful in developing effective marketing strategies for domestically produced offerings [Kucukemiroglu 1999]. We know, that in general, strongly ethnocentric consumers tend to evaluate domestic

products more favorably. According to Rawwas and Rajendran [1996] strongly ethnocentric consumers tend also to advocate domestic products and discount the value of foreign ones. Rawwas and Rajendran [1996] indicated that high levels of consumer ethnocentrism led to overestimations of the value of domestic products, and underestimation of imported ones. One must note, however, that results of product evaluation may not necessarily correlate with the actual consumer choice. Moon [2003] found that consumer ethnocentrism influences consumers' willingness to buy domestic products rather than imported ones, so even if imported products are evaluated as better, consumers will be willing to purchase domestic offerings, based on moral cues [Watson & Wright 2000]. Similarly, a study conducted by Josiassen, Assaf, and Karpen [2010] indicated that consumer ethnocentrism has strong effect on willingness to buy.

It is agreed that ethnocentric tendencies do not develop in isolation, and are influenced by a variety of factors [Shimp & Sharma 1995]. Shankarmanesh [2006] proposed four categories of antecedents of consumer ethnocentrism: socio-psychological, economic, political and demographic factors. The investigation of these antecedents allowed including consumer ethnocentrism into consumer decision-making process models [Sharma, Shimp, & Shin 1995; de Ruyter, van Birgelen, & Wetzels 1998]. This study focuses on demographic variables because of their expected influence on consumer ethnocentric tendencies and due to the objective of the exploration of potential differences in ethnocentrism between elderly and younger consumers. The decision to focus on elderly consumers was based on number of reasons. First, the number of elderly consumers is on steadily growth in the developed countries, creating large market segment of high business potential. Second, previous research results reported in the literature are inconsistent when it comes to influence of consumer characteristics on ethnocentric tendencies. Third, we investigated consumer ethnocentric tendencies in the context of food products, which are specific category, largely unexplored in the context of consumer ethnocentrism. Although previous studies are inconclusive, they suggest that consumer characteristics could influence consumer ethnocentric tendencies, we believe that this study will fill a gap in current literature, especially related to senior consumers [Shimp & Sharma 1987; Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen 2011; Pentz, Terblanche, & Christo 2014].

## **2. Consumer characteristics and ethnocentric tendencies**

Recently research in consumer behavior has moved from the study of demographic and socioeconomic factors, focusing more on psychographic variables. Over the years, numerous psychological constructs were established in the

literature, along with adequate measurement methods. These extend our knowledge of the moderators of consumer behavior, yet such constructs are not necessarily easy to operationalize in marketing research. The research results confirm, however, that demographic characteristics such as age and gender are no less important [Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen 2011]. From the perspective of research practice, both academic and business, these are much easier and cost-effective to gather and measure, hence more applicable in research than complex psychological constructs. The most common variables in consumer ethnocentrism research include age, gender, income and education [Javalgi et al. 2005], and their relationships with consumer ethnocentrism attracted interest of researchers for many years [Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen 2011; Pentz, Terblanche, Christo 2014]. However, within the extant literature on the consumer ethnocentrism, the relationship between consumer characteristics and the ethnocentrism is still rather underdeveloped. It is not clear whether consumer characteristics such as the age, gender, and income allow prediction of consumer ethnocentrism levels and how they moderate their decisions [Josiassen, Assaf, Karpen 2011]. The recent empirical evidence available is rather mixed and confusing at least [Shankarmahesh 2006]. Shankarmahesh discussed six studies that have found older consumer more ethnocentric than younger, and two studies which revealed the opposite relationship. For example, Bannister and Saunders [1978] found that younger consumer are more ethnocentric, but they also found attitudes of consumers in the UK became more favorable towards domestic products when their age increased. Pentz, Terblanche, & Christo [2014] reviewed numerous studies conducted within different cultural contexts and focused on various products categories supporting the proposition that older consumers exhibit stronger ethnocentric tendencies than younger. However, they reviewed also a number of studies which results did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between consumer's age and ethnocentrism (Pentz, Terblanche, & Christo 2014). One of possible reasons for varying research results is that previous studies were conducted in the context of specific product categories (such as cars, computers, apparel and domestic appliances), which themselves could have been stronger moderators of ethnocentrism than consumer demographics. Because when other moderators of consumer ethnocentrism than consumer demographics are considered, it is generally agreed that the key factors that strengthen ethnocentric tendencies are product category and attributes. According to Watson and Wright [2000], high level of consumer ethnocentrism may be moderated by specific, desired product attributes. We assume, however, in line with the view dominating in the literature, that consumer ethnocentric tendency strengthens with age, that is older consumers are more ethnocentric when evaluating and buying products. Our assumption is the-

oretically supported by the positive relationships between consumer age and conservatism and dogmatism [Sharma, Shimp, & Shin 1995; Anderson & Cunningham 1972]. Therefore, it is proposed that:

*H1: The level of consumer ethnocentrism grows with consumer age.*

Generally, there seems to be agreement how gender affects consumer ethnocentrism. A number of studies indicated that female consumers tend to be more ethnocentric than men [Pentz, Terblanche, & Christo 2014]. Studies by Balabanis and Diamantopoulos [2011] and Sharma, Shimp, & Shin [1995] suggest that men are less ethnocentric than women. However, similarly to relationship between consumer ethnocentrism and age, some studies found no significant differences between genders [Hamelin, Ellouzi, & Canterbury 2011; Al Ganideh & Al Tae 2012], and some indicate that men tend to be more ethnocentric [Bannister & Saunders 1978]. Mittal and Tsiros found that female consumers rate imported products more favorably, but this could be affected by other factors [Josiassen, Assaf, & Karpen 2011]. Gender may not only affect consumers' ethnocentric tendencies, but also their propensity to act upon these. This is confirmed by several studies in marketing, which suggest that women are not only more consistent between their attitudes and behaviors, but also between their attitudes and intentions [Burton et al. 1995]. Josiassen, Assaf, and Karpen [2011] argue that women tend to be more ethnocentric because they tend to be more conformist, patriotic, conservative and collectively minded [Sharma, Shimp, & Shin 1995]. Therefore, it is proposed that:

*H2: The level of consumer ethnocentrism depends on consumer's gender.*

There is also no agreement regarding the influence of income on consumer ethnocentrism. A number of studies indicated a negative relationship between consumers' income and ethnocentrism, that the more affluent a consumer is the less ethnocentric she tends to be [Lee, Hong, & Lee 2003; Hamelin, Ellouzi, & Canterbury 2011; Richardson 2012]. The assumption prevailing in marketing literature is that with higher incomes consumers tend to be more cosmopolitan [Balabanis & Diamantopoulos 2011]. Sharma, Shimp, and Shin [1995] proposed that wealthy individuals tend to travel overseas more frequently, familiarizing thus with other products, which may result in more favorable attitude and evaluation. However, Han and Terpstra [1988] found no income effects, and Tan and Farley [1987], and Balabanis Diamantopoulos [2011] reported positive relationship. Also a study by Jossiasen, Assaf, and Karpen [2011] found no significant influence of income on consumer ethnocentric tendencies. More affluent consumers may not necessarily be less ethnocentric, but might consume foreign products as

status symbols, under social pressure. Given the above it is proposed that there is negative relationship between consumer income level and consumer ethnocentrism:

*H3: The level of consumer ethnocentrism decreases with growth of consumer's income.*

The review of literature on consumer characteristics and ethnocentrism supports the claim that the empirical evidence is inconsistent and mixed [Shankarmahesh 2006]. In fact, many studies of consumer ethnocentrism continuously repeat the errors that add to the confusion. These were brilliantly analyzed by Jossiasen, Assaf, and Karpen [2011], who pointed at conducting research on students, applying product- country images as a proxy for consumer ethnocentrism, and erroneous cross-referencing without careful verification of previous studies. This, in result, limits not only our understanding of how consumer characteristics allow predicting consumer ethnocentrism, but also managerial relevance of research in this area.

### **3. Consumer ethnocentrism and food products**

With the few exceptions, the majority of research is dedicated to other than food products [Orth & Firbasova 2003]. Typical objects of investigation are product categories such as electronics, apparel and automobiles. Studies investigating food products are rare, with some notable exceptions, such as Orth and Firbasova [2003] and Chrysochoidis, Kristallis, and Perreas [2005]. Orth and Firbasova [2003] found that among various demographic characteristic, age was most significantly linked to consumer ethnocentrism and the resulting consumer choice, supporting the results of the earlier studies [Grunert & Valli 2001]. Also, a study by Chrysochoidis, Krystallis, and Perreas [2007] found that consumer age was linked to ethnocentrism in food context. This was confirmed by studies by Verlegh [2007] and Hamelin, Ellouzi, and Canterbury [2011], in which food products were investigated together with other categories, such a durables or apparel. When the relationship between gender and ethnocentrism is concerned, food products were included into a study of Sharma, Shimp, and Shin [1995], who reported generally higher scores of female consumer ethnocentrism. Selected food products categories were included into study of the relationship between income levels and ethnocentrism by Sharma, Shimp, and Shin [1995], and Hamelin, Ellouzi, and Canterbury [2011], who reported negative relationship between these variables.

However, one must note that the majority of empirical evidence, focuses on Country of Origin effect (COO) rather, then on ethnocentrism as such. Food product purchase is considered by most of the authors as not very involving and, therefore, not engaging consumers into long information searching and processing. Since the attribute information is often limited at the point of purchase, one can expect the final decision to be based on price, packaging and COO [Orth & Firbasova 2003]. However, food consumption is very specific, so these assumptions may be oversimplification. Eating habits reflect not only complex biological processes, but are also culturally, historically and socially determined. Food consumption represents one of the most complex consumption forms at all, with strong symbolism. It is generally agreed that eating habits are characterized by limited rationality, not only because of limited information availability, but also the influence of cultural factors. Decisions regarding food purchases are made within social context, like family, and are affected by individual factors such as experiences and knowledge of individuals. Dietary patterns result from consumer learning process at the early stage of an individual's development. They tend to emerge in the early age and endure, due to consumer conservatism. Therefore, the preferences towards food products may consolidate in relatively young age. In result, there could be no significant differences between 30 and 70 years old consumers within specific social group. The sense of taste, motivating the choice of food products, is strongly influenced by socio-cultural factors such as family or religion [Gutkowska 2004]. Some research studies suggest that elderly consumers are more ethnocentric [Gutkowska 2004]. However, the analysis of literature regarding food preferences and choices suggests that the attitudes towards food products should remain stable and not differentiated across consumer groups with similar socio-cultural backgrounds, regardless of their age. This might result from the specificity of learning process in the food context. As females' preferences are more aligned with social and cultural norms, one can expect that female consumer should be more ethnocentric, presumably being more aware of the moral and social consequences of their choices or simply that they tend to be more conformist. Since overall food availability refers to food options that are also affordable to consumer, one might expect that income will affect attitude towards 'foreign' food products, perceived as more expensive. Hence the higher income and availability, then the lower ethnocentrism level should be expected.

#### **4. Purpose of the research and methodology**

The main objective of this study was the identification of consumer ethnocentrism level towards food products, as well to investigate the possible relationships between demographic (age and gender) and socioeconomic (income) vari-

ables and consumer ethnocentrism in the context of food purchase, which has not yet received enough attention from researchers.

To validate the research hypotheses we conducted CAPI and CAWI surveys. The convenient sample consisted of 435 respondents, classified into 4 groups. The first two groups included 'seniors' – above 60 years old (age average – 67.3, age median 67), who were students of so called 'Third Age' universities in Warsaw (135 respondents) and Sokołów Podlaski (43 respondents; this group was included to control the location factor). The third group comprised 121 young adults (students of Kozminski University; age average 21.3, age median 21). Fourth group included 125 adults (professional courses students of Kozminski University; age average 35.5, age median 33.5). In the 'senior' group 91% were women, 5% – men, which reflects, in our opinion, the general demographic tendency in this age group. In the third and fourth groups women constituted 54% respondents, men – 45%. The survey was conducted in November 2013 and March 2014.

The structured questionnaire consisted of three parts, and respondents' characteristics data section. The first included modified CET Scale (CETSCALE, Consumer Ethnocentric Tendency Scale) [Shimp & Sharma 1987].

In this study, an shorter version of the 17-item CETSCALE by Shimp and Sharma [1987]. The questionnaire included 10-item scale, which was applied in many previous studies [Bawa 2004; Evanschitzky et al. 2008]. The adaptation included changing the country of origin ('America' to 'Poland', 'American' to 'Polish'), relating all questions to 'food' or 'dishes', and changing original, 7-point Likert scale to 5-point Likert scale to facilitate responding by senior participants. The items used in the questionnaire are listed on Figure 1.

The second part of the questionnaire included questions relating to consumers' attitudes towards foreign and Polish food products. No specific food product category was specified, since the aim of the study was to analyze the general ethnocentric tendency (general categories such as 'food', 'food products' and 'dishes' were used interchangeably). No specific country of origin was indicated in this part of the questionnaire. Instead, 'Polish-foreign' dichotomy was employed. For 18-item scale the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.885.

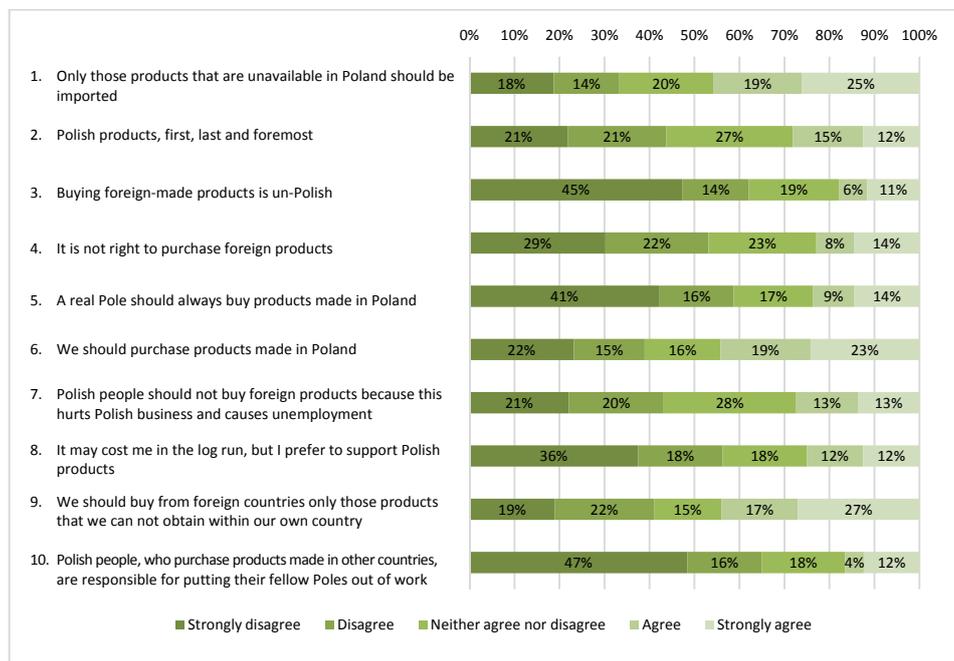
The third part of the questionnaire included questions relating to consumer behavior, in particular purchasing and consumption of foreign food products. These questions related to issues such as buying, in-home preparation of 'foreign' dishes and participating in 'thematic' in – store promotions of 'foreign' cuisines in the selected retail chains. Nominal, ratio and interval scales were used to gather respondent characteristics data (age, gender, income, and residence). In order to eliminate possible interpretation problems and evaluate scale's reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot study. In result of pilot study, the wording of one question was changed to secure respondent understanding.

The high degree of reliability and validity of the CETSCALE has been proven across many cultures [Orth & Firbasova 2003; Good & Huddleston 1995]. The reliability of the modified CETSCALE was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha, which was 0.93. The relationships between variables, that is the level of ethnocentrism (measured with a nominal scale, made by summing scores for 10 questions) and gender (nominal scale, 1 = female, 2 = male), the level of ethnocentrism and age (ratio scale), the level of ethnocentrism and income (interval scale) were measured using Pearson correlation coefficient.

## 5. Findings

The average level of ethnocentrism in the study was 26.9 points (out of 50), which places the result almost in the middle of the proposed scale and is consistent with the results of studies of American consumers [Shimp & Sharma 1987; Netemeyer, Srinivas, & Lichtenstein 1991]. The respondents agreed the most with the statement "We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country" (26.84%) and "We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country" (26.84%). Values for CETSCALE are presented on Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Values for CETSCALE



Note:

N = 435, the values do not sum up to 100% due to deficiencies in responses.

The level of ethnocentrism was measured for each of four earlier defined groups. Table 1 presents summary of research findings.

**Table 1.** Ethnocentrism level in the four respondents' groups

Statistical measures	Young adults (20-25 years)	Young adults (20-25 years)	Adults (26-59 years)	Seniors (60+; Warsaw)	Seniors (60+; outside Warsaw)
Ethnocentrism level	Average	22.25758	22.48351	28.78519	34.21429
	Standard deviation	7.969279	8.40899	12.63352	8.691911
	Median	21	22	29	33.5

The ethnocentrism level was higher and more diversified in the two groups of seniors, where 6 respondents scored maximum value on the scale adopted (50). There was no significant difference between 'young adults' and 'adults', where no maximum score was recorded. There was very weak, statistically insignificant correlation between consumer ethnocentrism level and gender. Similarly, there was no correlation between consumer ethnocentrism level and income. Therefore, hypotheses H2 and H3 were not supported.

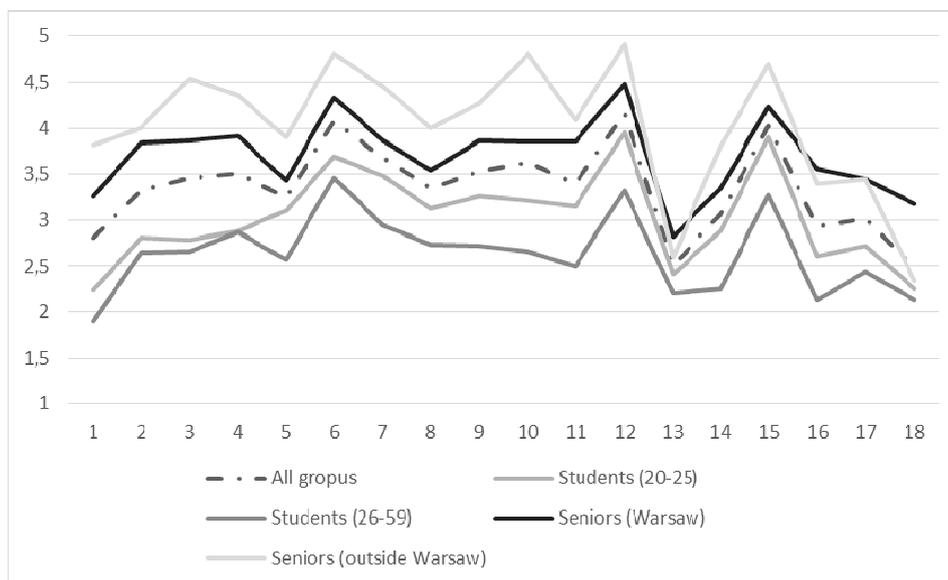
Pearson correlation for consumer ethnocentrism and age was very low ( $r = 0.371$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Considering, however, other findings, this was the strongest relationship indicated. Additional analysis of averages and medians indicates differences between respondents' groups. In both cases, ethnocentrism level was higher for 'seniors'. This allows to conclude that consumer ethnocentrism level grows with the age, and to support hypothesis H1. However, it must be noted that the relationship between age and consumer ethnocentrism is weak. The summary of research findings is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Verification of research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Pearson correlation	p	Result
H1: The level of consumer ethnocentrism grows with consumer age	$r = 0,371$	$p < 0.001$	supported
H2: The level of consumer ethnocentrism depends on consumer's gender	$r = -0,12$	$p > 0.05$	not supported
H3: The level of consumer ethnocentrism decreases with growth of consumer's income	$r = -0,008$	$p < 0.05$	not supported

The attitudes of respondents towards Polish and 'foreign' food products are presented on Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Consumers' attitudes towards Polish and 'foreign' food products (in four groups, scale – 1 strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree)



1. Polish food is easier to prepare than foreign.
2. Polish food is healthier than foreign.
3. Polish food contains less harmful substances than foreign.
4. Polish food tastes better than foreign.
5. Polish food is cheaper than foreign.
6. I have good knowledge of Polish food products.
7. Polish food is more accessible in shops than foreign.
8. The quality of Polish food products is adequate to their price.
9. Polish food is easy to consume.
10. Polish food is good for my health.
11. Polish food is natural.
12. Polish dishes remind me of my childhood.
13. Polish food products have better packaging than foreign ones.
14. Polish food products are more ecological.
15. I find traditional Polish dishes pleasant.
16. Polish dishes are easier to prepare than foreign.
17. Foreign dishes require ingredients that are difficult to find.
18. Foreign dishes are difficult to prepare.

All four groups of respondents agreed that Polish food reminded them of their childhood and was well known. 'Seniors' perceived preparation of 'foreign' dishes difficult, and disagreed that Polish food was more difficult to prepare in comparison to 'foreign'. Packaging of Polish food products was not regarded as better than 'foreign'. The most significant differences were observed between 'adults' and 'senior' groups, which showed biggest discrepancies in their perception of Polish food's quality, health benefits, and price. 'Adults' disagreed that Polish food products were

cheaper, the adequacy of its quality to price, its 'naturalness', and positive impact on health. One may hypothesize that this results from their more extensive shopping and food preparation experiences, compared with the other groups.

Younger respondents purchase 'foreign' food products more often (90%, 'seniors' – 75%). The most popular product categories included fruit, liquors, coffee and tea. When it comes to seniors, the most often purchased 'foreign' products were fruit, coffee and vegetables. 'Thematic' promotional actions more often attract 'young adults' and 'adults' than seniors (83% compared to 60%). Trial of 'foreign' food by younger respondents is motivated with curiosity, while 'seniors' – price. The most popular foreign cuisine in Poland is Italian, pointed by 91% of respondents as 'favorite'; the second choice was Spanish (41%).

## **6. Conclusions and limitations**

The results of the study suggest that the relationship between the level of consumer ethnocentrism and consumer age is weak. Gender and income were found not to affect the level of ethnocentrism. In general, ethnocentrism towards food products was found to be weak, yet it showed tendency to grow with consumer age. Therefore, hypothesis H1 was supported, while H2 and H3 were not.

This confirms the results of some earlier studies, in particular Jossiasen, Assaf, and Karpen findings on relationship between age and ethnocentrism, and the lack of thereof between income and ethnocentrism. However, there are limitations to the study, that need to be taken into consideration. The main limitation of the research results comes from the sampling method. The convenient sampling used does not allow for generalization beyond the population of respondents surveyed. The choice of sampling approach was dictated by time and cost limitations. The quality of research conducted was ensured by data and methodological triangulation (4 groups, 1 outside Warsaw, 2 methods of data collection). 'Seniors' included in this study were students of so called 'Third Age' universities. This is a specific group, taking into consideration their psychographic profile. They tend to be more active, mobile, with more diversified personal interest and in general in better psychophysical condition, contradicting negative stereotypes of the elderly. Moreover, they are also better educated, which might have affected their consumer ethnocentrism level, that was found only slightly higher than of the younger respondents. Moreover, research of consumer ethnocentrism towards food products should be extended with investigation of the impact of broader cultural, social and psychological factors on ethno-

centric tendencies. It would be also interesting to study consumer ethnocentrism in relationship to consumer nostalgia.

The second limitation lays in the research method itself. Although the survey included validated and widely accepted scale, turning towards experimental design, where the respondents would make real choices rather than answering questions about product liking should provide better insight on their food preferences and how their ethnocentrism relates to actual choice [Köster 2009]. The results of the study suggest that the general ethnocentrism level does not always correspond with the level of ethnocentrism towards food products. It may suggest only declarative ethnocentric tendency, which may not reflect actual behavior when purchasing specific food product. The results in general confirm the findings available in the literature.

### **Managerial implications**

Based on the results of our study, several managerial implications can be drawn. As the acceptance level of point-of-purchase promotions of foreign food products was generally high, this suggest that Polish consumers are generally open to foreign products. However, while younger consumers may better react to 'novelty' factor, seniors may be attracted to price. This cues might be used when developing promotional strategies for foreign cuisines and food products in Poland in general. Since age does not differentiate consumers significantly in respect to their attitudes towards foreign and Polish food products, it might not be the most relevant segmentation criterion for food products in general. Moreover, as general ethnocentrism level is low, the 'domestic' factor might not be the most important product attribute affecting the choice. Therefore, any promotional claims or 'Made in Poland' labelling may not be effective, as consumers might be more driven primarily by sensory or price-related attributes. The exposure to product seems to be, along with its availability, an important factor to develop preference toward a food product. Hence, foreign produce must be frequently or regularly available in the retail space, so consumers develop high degree of familiarity with it. The acceptance of foreign food products might be faster and easier, when they are also familiar in their sensory properties and preparation to the already preferred domestic ones. Providing consumers with suggestions on how to prepare them in the familiar way or to pair with the already preferred and known domestic product may also facilitate their adoption. A study conducted by Josiassen, Assaf, and Karpen [2010] indicated that consumer ethnocentrism has strong effect on willingness to buy. They found that consumer age had significant and negative impact on this relationship, but gender and income had no significant influence on this relationship [Josiassen,

Assaf, & Karpen 2010]. These findings indicate that while different consumer segments may exhibit similar levels of ethnocentrism, they may have different propensity to act upon it. While older consumers are found to be more ethnocentric, this may not be the best predictor of their actual behavior, as the link between consumer ethnocentrism and willingness to buy is found stronger with younger consumers. Therefore, older consumers might not necessarily react positively to promotion of domestic products. One of possible reasons for that is that older consumers have more experience and thus, ability to separate their ethnocentric views from actual choices. Having usually more time to shop, they can afford longer and more complex product evaluation.

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