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SELECTED ASPECTS OF ETHNOCENTRIC BEHAVIOUR OF VEGETABLE CONSUMERS IN WARSAW

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Abstract. The aim of this study was to analyse certain aspects of ethnocentric behaviour of vegetable purchasers in Warsaw. The research, in the form of a survey, was carried out among the adult population in 2015. Among the studied factors were consumers' attitudes in relation to domestic and imported vegetables, depending on selected demographic characteristics. The analysis of empirical material has indicated ethnocentrism among vegetable buyers. Domestic vegetable purchases are primarily determined by practical advantages of the products. The choice of domestic products for mainly rational reasons points towards intentional ethnocentrism.

Key words: ethnocentrism, consumer, vegetables

INTRODUCTION

The concept of ethnocentrism was coined at the beginning of the twentieth century, defining this phenomenon as follows: "the perception of the world, where one's own group makes the centre, and everything else is evaluated in relation to it" (Summer, 1995). Shimp and Sharma (1987) have identified ethnicity as "the consumer-shared belief on obligation for and morality of buying goods of domestic origin".

There are two groups of factors that have direct impact on the level of consumer ethnocentrism: psychosocial and demographic. Psychosocial factors include i.e.: patriotism, conservatism, collectivism, individualism, openness to foreign culture, whereas demographic factors are mainly as follows: age, sex, level of education as well as income (Figiel, 2004). Both groups of factors are mutually correlated. Age is one of the factors determining either the positive or negative attitude to foreign products. Older people are more conservative, they are characterized by greater patriotism, and therefore they show a higher level of consumer ethnocentrism (Witek, 2010), while young people (students) are little ethnocentric in their purchasing decisions (Zięba and Ertmański, 2006). The criteria for assessing the origin of products are also different, which depends on gender. Men pay attention to technical achievements, while women consider geographical proximity to be more important (Ryttel, 1999). Women demonstrate a more conservative attitude than men, are characterised by, among others, a higher level of patriotism. In turn, foreign products are more likely to be acquired by people with a university degree and higher financial status (Figiel, 2004). There are factors which moderate or intensify ethnocentrism - indispensability of the product and an assumed economic threat. Perceiving an imported product as a necessary one, results in weakening the ethnocentrism. On the other hand, the fear of foreign competition, the prospect of losing one's job – these intensify ethnocentric behaviour (Sowa, 2010).

Consumer ethnocentrism can be conscious and purposeful, but can also be the result of an instinctive favouritism of domestic products. These preferences may be dictated by the practical advantages of the products and the confidence that ethical and moral obligation to

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buy domestic products form the liability (Liczmańska, 2010). To make the purchase decisions in a thoughtful manner, in accordance with one's feelings, the consumer should have basic socio-economic knowledge (Sajdakowska, 2003).

The phenomenon of ethnocentrism is changeable, depending on the country, the category of goods and the target group. Products manufactured in one's own country are preferred by mainly consumers from developed countries, while consumers from a developing state rate foreign brands higher than their domestic ones (Morganosky and Lazarde, 1987; Herche, 1992; Elliott and Camoron, 1994; Min Han, 1998; Agbonifoh and Elimimian, 1999). In Poland, foreign products were chosen more often in the case of high technology products (television, radio and household appliances) and cosmetics (Liczmańska, 2010), whereas as regards food products, most respondents demonstrated the ethnocentric approach (Kędzior, 2003; Wróblewska and Kwiatkowska, 2014). Yet it is not always reflected in their purchasing decisions (Zabrocki, 2014). The origin of the product is, next to the quality and the reasonable price, considered an important factor in the choice of food (Ertmańska, 2011).

Due to the ethnocentric behaviour manifested with fluctuating intensity by communities in different countries and regions in relation to different groups of products, as well as taking into an account the great importance of vegetables in Polish agricultural production and in consumption, there is a need for a wider research also on the Polish vegetables market and local markets. The aim of the study was to analyse aspects of ethnocentric behaviour among buyers of vegetables in Warsaw, the city with a high level of inhabitants affluence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analyses of ethnocentric behaviour expressed by vegetable consumers in Warsaw, based on the results of the survey carried out in 2015 through direct interviews of 200 residents of varied demographic backgrounds. The collected research material, having been reduced at first, was applied to create a database consisting of 188 cases. Target screening and simple random sampling were proceeded to select a research cluster (level of statistical significance $p = 0.05$), taking into an account the fact that purchasing food products is highly differentiated by gender. Women more often than men go shopping alone, while men are more than twice more likely to admit that they actually never make any purchases (Centre for Public Opinion Research, 2011). Considering the above, all respondents included 63% of women and 37% of men. A university degree was declared by 54% of respondents, 40% had a secondary level of education, whereas 6% refers to graduates of vocational schools. There were no people with primary education level. In the analyses of ethnocentric behaviour in respect to the level of education there were two groups of subjects determined, i.e. people with secondary and higher education. Those with vocational schooling were omitted in the analyses due to insufficient number. Given the occupation, 23% of the respondents are students, 62% are professionally active, 14% are pensioners and the unemployed make less than 1%. A group of unemployed, due to insufficient number, was not included in the analyses. Furthermore, considering the monthly income at respondents' disposal, 5% of them had an income up to PLN 500, 20% between PLN 501 and 1000, 18% between PLN 1001 and 1500, 26% between PLN 1501 and 2000, and 31% above PLN 2000. A group of people having PLN 500 of income was omitted in the analyses due to the insignificant number.

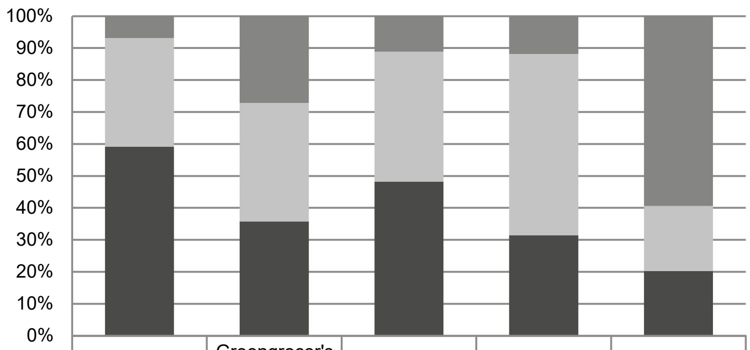
The preferences as to the origin of purchased vegetables, domestic and foreign vegetable species most commonly purchased, the places of their purchase, domestic vegetables brands were all studied. The respondents opinions were analysed on domestic and foreign vegetables as well as opinions on the characteristics distinguishing the first ones. In the analyses of respondents' views on domestic vegetables compared to foreign ones and of evaluation of incentives to their purchase, Likert 5-point scale was applied, where 1 meant a total incompatibility, and 5 referred to the total compliance with the statement. As regards those statements where a 5-point scale was used, the sum of ratings for individual subjects was calculated so as were arithmetic mean value of ratings and standard deviation, which determines how all statistical units of the population differ from the average arithmetic variable. To evaluate the characteristics of domestic vegetables compared with foreign ones, there were three groups of respondents determined, representing a respectively low (the part of respondents showing a total lack of agreement and disagreement), medium (I have no opinion) and high (percentage of showing agreement and full agreement) assessment of domestic vegetables compared with foreign ones and vulnerability to purchases determinants of horticultural products of domestic origin.

All phenomena allowing to assess the level of ethnocentrism of Warsaw residents were analysed with respect to their demographic characteristics, i.e. gender, age, education and income per capita.

THE RESULTS

The results of the study indicate that, in 2015, 99% of respondents purchased vegetables that play a significant role in the daily human diet, much greater than fruit. The fact that vegetables are the components of basic meals, makes them a common purchase. Having a choice to buy particular species of domestic and imported vegetables, up to 97% of respondents declared their willingness to choose the first ones. Only 3% of respondents would choose imported vegetables. The consumers listed a far wider range of domestic products than imported ones also in the purchased vegetables species structure. Domestic vegetables most commonly bought were: carrots (45% of respondents), tomatoes (44%), potatoes regarded as a vegetable (38%), cucumbers to follow (24%), onions (22%), cabbage (18%). A significant proportion, i.e. 70% of respondents altogether buy vegetable species from the group 'others', including radish, beans, broccoli, courgette, garlic, lettuce, pumpkin. Most commonly purchased imported vegetables were: tomatoes (48%), paprika (27%) and cucumbers (15%) as well as other vegetables (including garlic, cauliflower, lettuce, asparagus, aubergine, broccoli) – 34%.

Most popular place to buy vegetables was a supermarket, where 59% of the respondents frequently acquire them, while 34% of them rarely, and 7% never do so. Local market was the second most popular place to buy vegetables – 48% of the respondents often go shopping there, yet as much as 41% rarely. Less popular for vegetables purchasing are the local greengrocer's and groceries – slightly more than 30% of the respondents often buy vegetables there. 64% and 69% of buyers rarely or never buy vegetables at the greengrocer's and the grocery shop respectively. Much less common are other points of purchase, e.g. the wholesale market, a shop with ecological products or directly from manufacturers in farms. In total, 80% of the surveyed rarely or never buys vegetables there, and one in five frequently does so (Fig. 1).



	Supermarket	Greengrocer's shop Warzywny sklep osiedlowy	Market Targowisko	Grocery shop sklep Spożywczy	Other* Inne*
Never – Nigdy	7%	27%	11%	12%	60%
Seldom – Rzadko	34%	37%	41%	57%	20%
Often – Często	59%	36%	48%	31%	20%

* Other, i.e. wholesale market, directly from a producer in the farm, ecological shops
* Inne, tj. rynek hurtowy, bezpośrednio od producenta w gospodarstwie, sklepy ekologiczne

Fig. 1. Places and frequency of vegetables purchases in Warsaw (%)
Source: own research.
Rys. 1. Miejsca i częstotliwość zakupu warzyw w Warszawie (%)
Źródło: badania własne.

While shopping, the respondents look for lots of information about the product on the packaging or labels, including the producer's country, which demonstrates how a vegetable origin is important for consumers. Information about the country of origin of vegetables was important for up to 88% of respondents, though 79% of them really look for such information (Fig. 2). Women (80%) slightly more often seek this information than men (74%). The interest in information about the country of origin increases along with buyers' age. The percentage of people drawing attention to the country of vegetables origin aged 18–29 was 71%, those between 30–39 amounted to 81%, aged 40–49 – 85%, and among those over 60–79%. A slightly lower percentage of respondents interested in the country of vegetables origin among people over 60 could result from the fact that most of them go shopping at local markets, where most vegetable products come from domestic producers. The level of education did not differentiate the buyers interest in the country of vegetables origin, but professional status and level of income made the distinguishing factors. This information is more often sought by pensioners and employed people (81% each group) than students (68%). The interest in the information about the country of origin increases also along with respondents' level of income, i.e. only 69% of buyers with income between PLN 501–1000 look for it, yet those with earnings between PLN 1500 to 2000 make 90%.

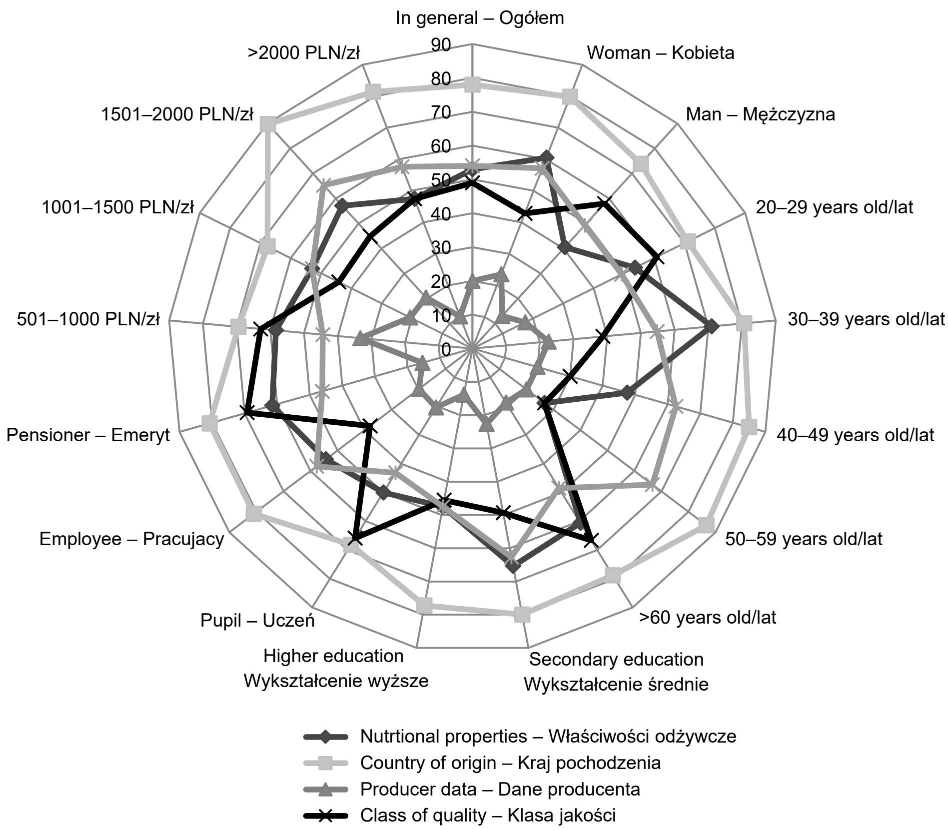


Fig. 2. Product information wanted by vegetable buyers in Warsaw (% of total responses and according to demographic characteristics)
Source: own research.
Rys. 2. Informacje o produkcie poszukiwane przez nabywców warzyw w Warszawie (% wskazań ogółem i z uwzględnieniem charakterystyki demograficznej)
Źródło: badania własne.

An important aspect when choosing a product is its quick identification by the consumer. The consumer can recognize the origin of products on the basis of various information such as: a bar code, national symbols of quality, name and address of the manufacturer, place of manufacturing, brand, product description language (Figiel, 2004). The product brand with its identifying, guaranteeing and promoting role, very often facilitates making the final decision of the purchase. In the case of domestic vegetables only 4% of the respondents could name their brand. As a brand of a vegetable respondents mentioned only the names of places where production plants were located, for example tomatoes of Janow or Żuromin.

Domestic vegetables are associated primarily with such features as freshness (37%), good taste and health benefits (34% each). Every fourth respondent identifies them with good quality. Regarding freshness of vegetables as part of their quality it can be stated that over 60% of respondents associate domestic vegetables with high quality (Fig. 3). However, as the research shows, in practice, the quality of domestic vegetables is still insufficient as more than 43% of the inhabitants of Warsaw declared that they had happened to abandon their purchase. But in the case of imported products, this percentage was higher and amounted to almost 48%. The main reason for quitting the purchase of vegetables, both domestic and imported ones, were first and foremost lack of freshness, high price and nonesthetic look, thus also the characteristics associated with the products quality.

In order to verify whether vegetable consumers' ethnocentric attitudes were not only instinctive, overrated favouring of domestic products, but were dictated by practical advantages thereof, domestic vegetables in a confrontation with imported ones were assessed. The highest percentage of respondents claim they agree and totally agree with the fact that the products of domestic origin are: more tasty (76%) – the average estimate of 4.0 (SD = 0.99), healthier (69%) and have fewer residues of pesticides (66%) – the average estimate of respectively 3.9 (SD = 0.97) and 3.8 (SD = 0.89), are of better quality (63%) – the average ratings of 3.6 (SD = 0.93). The lowest average estimate of ratings recorded for the statement that domestic products were supposedly in comparison to analogous imported products: packed more aesthetically (average 2.6, SD = 0.89),

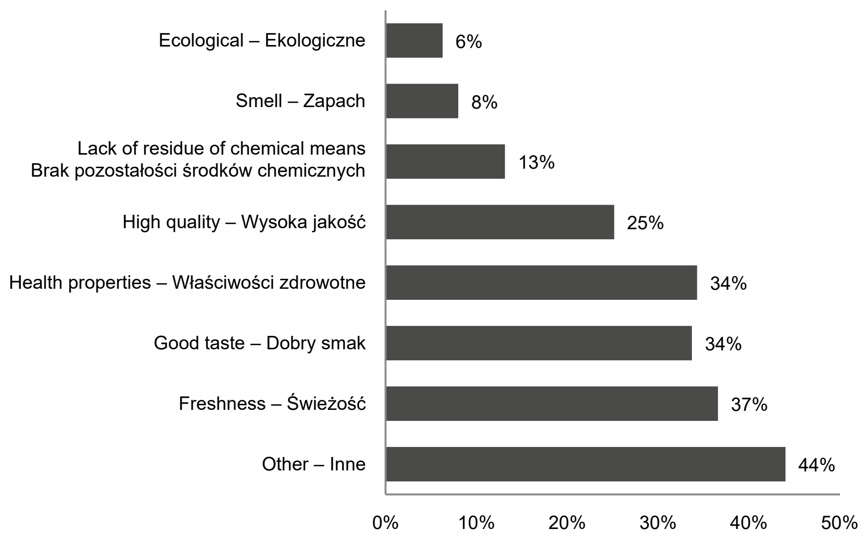


Fig. 3. Warsaw inhabitants' opinions on the distinguishing characteristics of domestic vegetables (% of responses)
Source: own research.
Rys. 3. Opinie mieszkańców Warszawy dotyczące cech wyróżniających krajowe warzywa (% wskazań)
Źródło: badania własne.

cheaper (average 3.0, SD = 1.0), more durable (average 3.4; SD = 0.89). Demographic factors did not basically differentiate an opinion on domestic and foreign vegetables (Fig. 4).

As the results of the research conducted by Rawwas and Rajendran (1996) show, a high level of ethnocentrism leads to overvalued ratings of domestic products and undervalued of imported ones. These results have not been confirmed on the Warsaw vegetables market. The carried out analyses suggest a conscious ethnocentrism among buyers of vegetables in Warsaw, dictated by rational reasons. In addition to the positive qualities of domestic vegetables compared to imported ones, respondents observe that these products have also disadvantages. Domestic vegetables' packaging is assessed poorly by more than a half of respondents, 40% believe

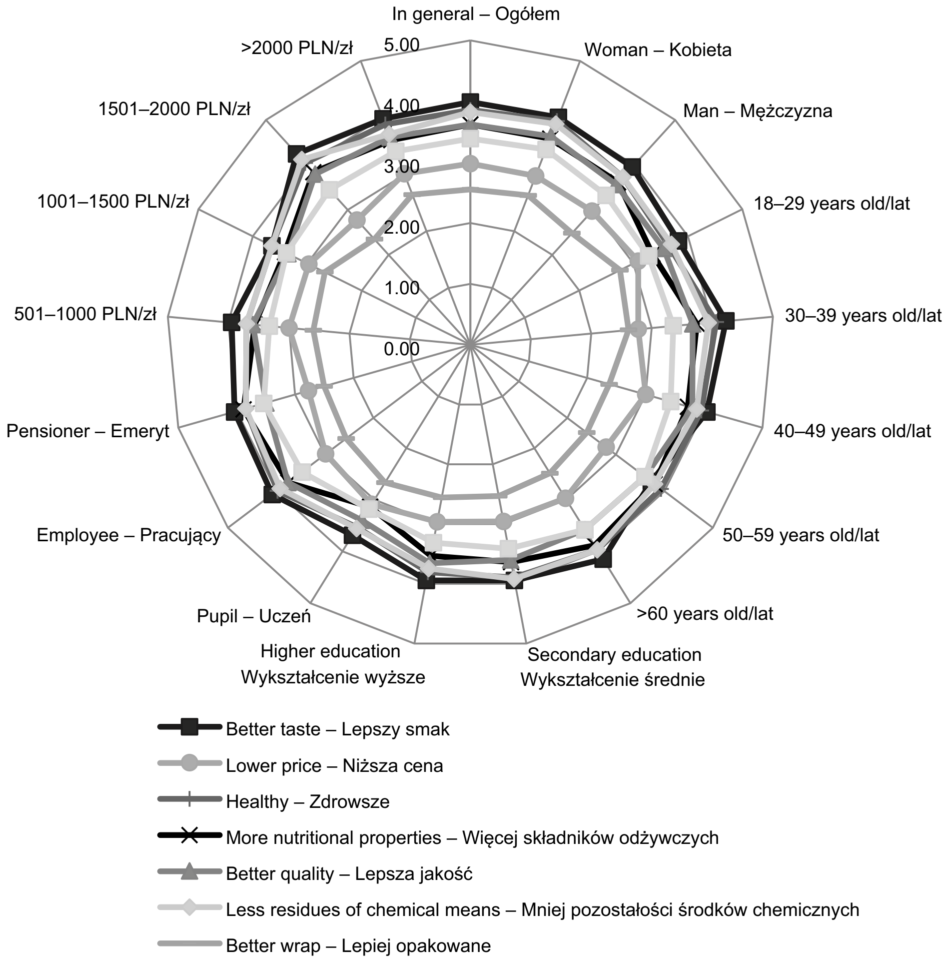
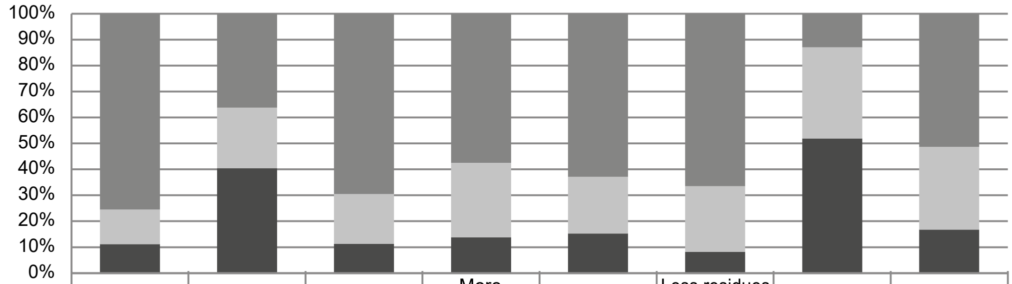


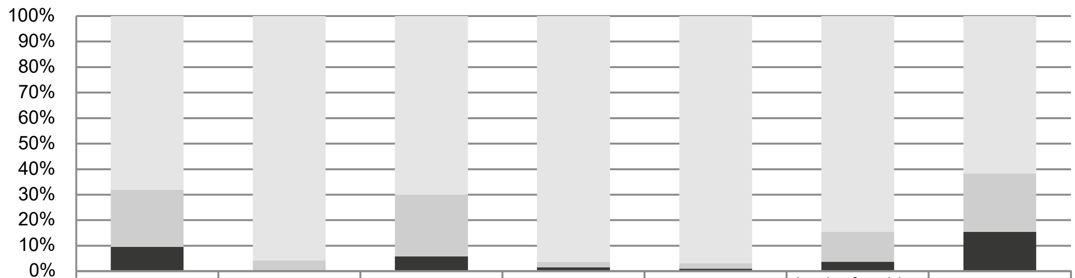
Fig. 4. Warsaw inhabitants' views on domestic vegetables in comparison with foreign ones (in total and according to demographic characteristics, average estimate in scale from 1 to 5)
Source: own research.

Rys. 4. Poglądy mieszkańców Warszawy na temat krajowych warzyw w porównaniu z zagranicznymi (ogółem i z uwzględnieniem charakterystyki demograficznej, średnia ocena w skali od 1 do 5)
Źródło: badania własne.



	Better taste Lepszy smak	Lower price Niższa cena	Healthy Zdrowsze	More nutritional properties Więcej składników odżywczych	Better quality Lepsza jakość	Less residues of chemical mniej Pozostałości środków chemicznych	Better wrap lepiej Opakowane	More durable Bardziej trwałe
High estimate Wysoka ocena	76%	36%	70%	57%	63%	66%	13%	51%
Average estimate Średnia ocena	13%	23%	19%	29%	22%	25%	35%	32%
Low estimate Niska ocena	11%	40%	11%	14%	15%	8%	52%	17%

Fig. 5. Opinions on domestic vegetables compared to foreign ones (% of people declaring high, average and low assessment respectively)
Source: own research.
Rys. 5. Opinie dotyczące warzyw krajowych w stosunku do zagranicznych (% osób deklarujących odpowiednio wysoką, średnią i niską ich ocenę)
Źródło: badania własne.



	Price Cena	Taste Smak	Esthetics Sstetyka	Quality Jakość	Freshness Świeżość	Lack of residue of chemical means Brak pozostałości środków chemicznych	Social aspects* kwestie Społeczne*
Important and very important Ważne i bardzo ważne	68%	96%	70%	96%	97%	85%	62%
Middling important Średnio ważne	22%	4%	24%	2%	2%	12%	23%
Unimportant and not enough important Nieważne i mało ważne	10%	0%	6%	2%	1%	4%	15%

* For example supporting domestic farms.
* Na przykład wspieranie krajowych gospodarstw.

Fig. 6. Factors motivating to buy domestic vegetables (%)
Source: own study.
Rys. 6. Czynniki zachęcające do zakupu warzyw krajowych (%)
Źródło: badania własne.

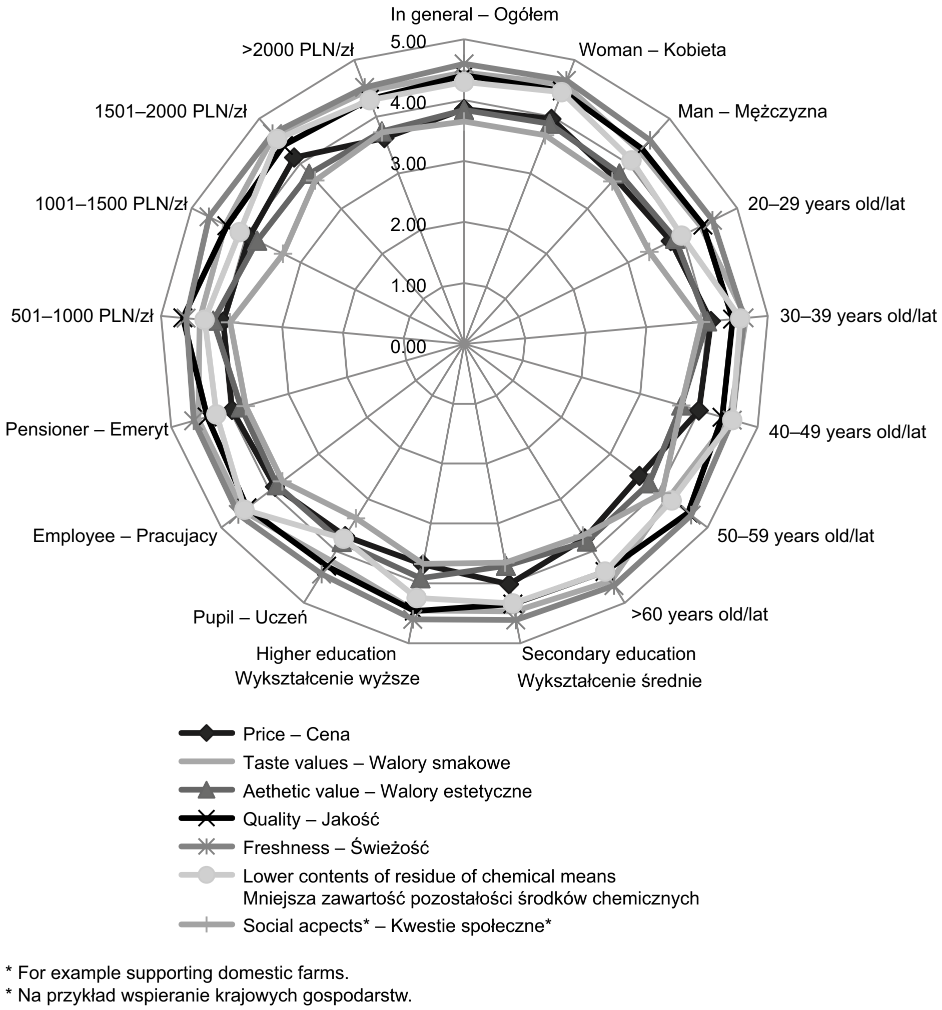


Fig. 7. Warsaw inhabitants' views on factors motivating to buy domestic vegetables (in total and according to demographic characteristic, average estimate of ratings in a 1 to 5 scale)
Source: own research.
Rys. 7. Poglądy mieszkańców Warszawy na temat czynników zachęcających do zakupu krajowych warzyw (ogółem i z uwzględnieniem charakterystyki demograficznej, średnia ocena w skali od 1 do 5)
Źródło: badania własne.

that the price of domestic vegetables is higher than of the imported ones, and 17 and 15% claim that domestic vegetables are less durable and of worse quality compared to the imported products (Fig. 5).

Factors which were mentioned as essential and very important ones to motivate the choice of domestic vegetables included: freshness (altogether 97%), quality and taste (96% each). A significant proportion, i.e. 85% of respondents, believe that an important and a very important reason among factors influencing the purchase of Polish vegetables is a low content of the residues of pesticides (Fig. 6). This confirms the earlier indicated respondents' opinion on a better taste, quality and relatively lower level of chemical residues in domestic products than in foreign ones. Among the incentives to buy domestic vegetables, the least percentage of respondents (62%) mentions social issues, such as support of domestic farms.

The ratings (within a 1–5 scale) of the most motivating factors to buy domestic vegetables, were as follows: freshness – an average of rating 4.6; SD = 0.59, taste – an average of rating 4.5; SD = 0.58, quality – an average of rating 4.4; SD = 0.64, no residual chemicals – an average of rating 4.3; SD = 0.84. The lowest rated factors were: price – an average of rating 3.9; SD = 0.94 and social issues – an average of rating 3.7; SD = 1.10. Demographic factors included in the analyses did not affect the differentiation of response (Fig. 7).

SUMMARY

The analyses indicate that Warsaw inhabitants declare ethnocentric attitudes towards domestic vegetables. The results of consumers declarations seem to reflect actual consumer decisions. On the one hand, the ethnocentric attitude of vegetable buyers in Warsaw may result from a spontaneous domestic products favouritism and inflated evaluation thereof, with respect to imported vegetables. On the other hand, domestic vegetables purchases tend to be conscious and not intuitive, dictated by practical advantages of the products. Remarking also negative features of domestic vegetables, as well as deciding on their purchase due to rational reasons, speak for intentional ethnocentrism.

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WYBRANE PRZEJAWY ZACHOWAŃ ETNOCENTRYCZNYCH WŚRÓD KONSUMENTÓW WARZYW W WARSZAWIE

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu była analiza przejawów zachowań etnocentrycznych nabywców warzyw w Warszawie. Badania w formie wywiadu kwestionariuszowego przeprowadzono wśród dorosłych mieszkańców w 2015 roku. Określono m.in. postawy konsumentów względem warzyw krajowych i importowanych w zależności od wybranych czynników demograficznych. Analiza materiału empirycznego wykazała postawy etnocentryczne wśród nabywców warzyw. Zakupy warzyw krajowych podyktowane są przede wszystkim praktycznymi zaletami tych produktów. Kierowanie się przy wyborze produktów krajowych głównie względami racjonalnymi przemawia za intencjonalnym etnocentryzmem.

Słowa kluczowe: etnocentryzm, konsument, warzywa

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