STOWARZYSZENIE EKONOMISTÓW ROLNICTWA I AGROBIZNESU
Roczniki Naukowe ● tom XVI ● zeszyt 4

Stanisław Minta, Bożena Tańska-Hus, Anna Kapała
Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Studies, Poland

CONSUMER AWARENESS OF REGIONAL PRODUCTS – SELECTED RESEARCH RESULTS

ŚWIADOMOŚĆ KONSUMENTÓW NA TEMAT PRODUKTÓW REGIONALNYCH – WYBRANE WYNIKI BADAŃ

Key words: consumer awareness, regional product, food market
Słowa kluczowe: świadomość konsumentów, produkt regionalny, rynek żywności

Abstract. The study was based on field research. The main goal of the work was to determine the level of consumer awareness of regional products and to examine the statistical relationship between the age and education level of respondents and their declaration of purchasing this type of product. Data collection was performed in Sudeten districts, because the described study was part of a research project concerning the introduction of a new regional product „Sudeten Beef" into this area. The study was conducted in 2012 using direct interviews with 219 respondents. On the basis of the investigation it could be said that the surveyed respondents had little awareness of regional products. The statistical analysis confirmed a weak correlation between age and level of education and declarations of purchasing regional products. This study is of a preliminary character and the results are not representative of the whole Polish population, but they should be regarded as a good starting point for further in-depth research.

Introduction

Regional products are products manufactured with the resources of a territory. They have a clear link with the local culture, history and nature [Zdon-Korzeniowska 2009]. Most are agricultural and food products closely related to a specific area and characterized by a natural mode of production [Bilska 2008, Gąsiorowski 2006]. To determine the products of this type the terms "traditional" or "local" are also used [Gąsiorowski 2007, Rak 2008, Tańska-Hus and Minta 2012]. The greatest recognition is seen in regional products legally protected at European Union level (these are three types: PDO – protected designation of origin, PGI – protected geographical indication and TSG – traditional speciality guaranteed). There are also many other regional products that are listed only on the national or local list.

The Polish market of regional products is not very well developed. Evidence of this can be found in the number of registered products PDO, PGI and TSG at European Union level. For example in April 2014 the total number of registered PDO, PGI, TSG were 35 in Poland, 77 in Germany, 178 in Spain, and 264 in Italy [*European Commission* 2014]. The main reasons for the weakness of the Polish regional products' market are: lack of tradition in the sale of such articles and other barriers of development based on supply and demand (inadequate law, lack of strong cooperation between producers on the promotion field, high production costs, low consumer incomes, little buying availability near consumer homes, and others) [Minta 2013]. Development limitations may also be the result of insufficient consumer awareness of regional products. This issue has received particular attention in the present study because consumer awareness largely shapes the tastes and preferences of purchase, which are among the main determinants affecting the size of demand for specific goods [Rekowski 2005].

Generally in academic literature, topics concerning the awareness and behaviour of consumers are widely described. However, the scientific output is not as high in relation to the specifics of regional products. In Polish academic literature unrepresentative studies can be found, which suggest that the concept of regional and traditional food is quite well known. However, buyers often do not have precise knowledge of this subject and may even be unaware that they are consuming such a specific product [Grębowiec 2010]. Reviews can be found in foreign literature stating that consumers of regional products are rather elderly, with higher incomes and a sense of attachment to their region of origin. Special markings have an impact on consumer awareness and purchasing decisions in the market of regional products. These confirm the quality and originality of this type of goods [Vanittersum et al. 2000]. Studies conducted in the U.S. state of Indiana indicate that the desire to purchase local products increases with time of residence in the region, and that women are more willing to buy such products. However it should be noted here, that a key role when making purchasing decisions is the perception of quality, which in the case of regional products should be at high level [Jekanowski et al. 2000].

Research material and methodology

The main goal of the study was to acquire preliminary data describing the phenomenon of consumer awareness in the market of regional products. An additional aim was to test the hypotheses concerning the relationship between selected features of consumers and their purchasing decisions on the described market. The study was conducted in October 2012 using the direct interview method (on the streets) with a special questionnaire [Stachak 1997]. The research questionnaire included, among others, questions about: knowledge of regional products from Poland and Lower Silesia, buyers' purchasing decisions, the reasons for buying or resignation of the purchase of regional products, as well as questions characterizing the respondents. Data were collected in Sudeten districts (south-western Poland, province of Lower Silesia). This area was chosen for investigation, because gathering information to describe the study was part of a research project concerning the introduction of a new regional product „Sudeten Beef". The collection of primary data was made possible from funding based on a contract with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education – project number NN 112 317638). The respondents constituted 219 people (adults, residents and tourists staying in the study area who could be potential consumers of the new regional product). The answers given by the respondents were analyzed, including statistical research using the chi-square test and V-Cramer factor [Lipiec-Zajchowska 2003]. The investigation results are presented in graphical, tabular and descriptive form.

The studies were of local range and of a preliminary and exploratory nature. Samples for the study were selected incidentally. For these reasons, the results are not representative of the general population in the country and can be considered as a starting point for in-depth analysis based on a survey of a representative sample.

Research results

Amongst the 219 people chosen for research 61% were from Lower Silesia and 39% from other parts of Poland. Among respondents 44.3% were men and 55.7% women. The structure of respondents according to age was as follows: 17% were people aged between 18-25 years, 19% aged 26-35 years, 25% aged 36-50 years, 27% aged 51-65 years, and 12% were persons above 65 years.

At the beginning respondents were asked whether they buy regional products and whether they can give examples of these products from Poland and Lower Silesia. The results for the answers to these questions are presented in Table 1.

Almost 67% of the respondents said that they buy regional products. A negative response option was seen amongst one third of persons interviewed. A similar structure of answers could be seen to the question "Can you mention examples of any Polish regional products?" (65.3% gave positive answers and 34.7% negative). In contrast, completely opposite proportions of responses occurred in the case of question "Can you mention examples of any regional products from Lower Silesia?" This time almost 36% investigated persons gave a positive answer, but over 64% chose a negative answer (Tab. 1).

In order to verify the previously collected declarations of knowledge about regional products, the respondents replying positively were asked to give the specific names of such products. For this reason, the number of people asked to specify any Polish regional product amounted to 143 people, and in the case of products of Lower Silesia – to 78 people (those who declared in advance that they do not know any examples were omitted). The answers were divided into three groups: those who gave the name of at least one regional product correctly, those who specified two or more names correctly, and those who gave incorrect answers. The results of this research are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

The work carried out confirmed that the actual knowledge of regional products is much lower than those resulting from previously received statements. In the case of names of Polish regional products incorrect answers were obtained 35% of the time. Only 27% of the 143 people who initially declared such knowledge could give more than one correct example (Fig. 1). Real knowledge of the Lower Silesian regional products was even worse. Among the 78 people who declared that they know an example, only 46% gave correct examples (Fig. 2). The most frequently mentioned correct name of Polish regional products were (in original Polish spelling): "Oscypek", "Krupniok", "Bunc", "Bryndza", "Kołocz Śląski" and "Rogale Świętomarcińskie". Accordingly, examples from Lower Silesia were as follows: "Karp milicki", "Piwo Lwóweckie", "Ser Kozi Łomnicki" and "Kamiennogórski Ser typu Rokpol".

Table 1. The quantity and structure of answers given by respondents to the fundamental questions related to the survey.
Tabela 1. Liczba i struktura wskazań udzielonych przez respondentów na podstawowe pytania związane z prowadzonymi badaniami.

Options/ *Wyszczególnienie*	Quantity of indications/ *Liczba wskazań*	Structure of answers/ *Struktura odpowiedzi [%]*
Question "Do you buy any regional products"/*Pytanie „Czy kupujesz jakiekolwiek produkty regionalne"*		
Yes/*Tak*	146	66,7
No/*Nie*	73	33,3
Total/*Razem*	219	100,00
Question "Can you mention examples of any Polish regional products"/*Pytanie „Czy możesz wymienić jakiekolwiek polskie produkty regionalne"*		
Yes/*Tak*	143	65,3
No/*Nie*	76	34,7
Total/*Razem*	219	100,00
Question "Can you mention examples of any regional products from Lower Silesia"/*Pytanie „Czy możesz wymienić jakiekolwiek produkty regionalne z Dolnego Śląska"*		
Yes/*Tak*	78	35,6
No/*Nie*	141	64,4
Total/*Razem*	219	100,00

Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

In the next part of study, respondents were asked about the reasons to buy or not to purchase regional products. These questions were also aimed indirectly and additionally to indicate the level of consumer awareness of the analysed products. Respondents were divided according to their purchase declarations. Therefore the main reasons for the purchase of regional products were specified by

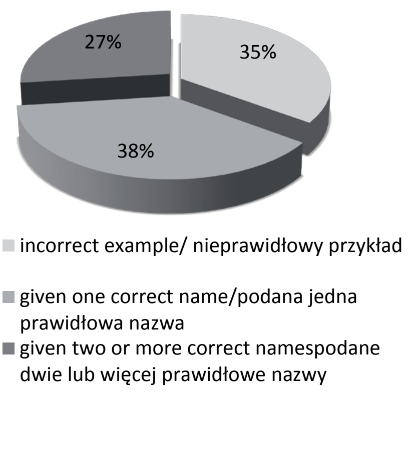

Figure 1. Answer structure of respondents who declared knowledge of Polish regional products according to the accuracy of determining the name of these commodities (n = 143)
Rysunek 1. Struktura odpowiedzi od respondentów, którzy deklarowali znajomość polskich produktów regionalnych według poprawności określania nazw tych towarów (n = 143)
Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

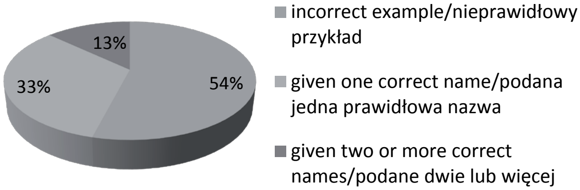

Figure 2. Answer structure of respondents who declared knowledge of Lower Silesia regional products according to the accuracy of determining the name of these commodities (n = 78)
Rysunek 2. Struktura odpowiedzi od respondentów, którzy deklarowali znajomość polskich produktów regionalnych według poprawności określania nazw tych towarów (n = 78)
Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

146 people, and the reasons for not purchasing: 73 people declaring no acquisition of such goods. The results in this regard are shown in Figures 3 and 4.

The most frequent answers concerning the reasons to purchase regional products were originality (66%), high quality (64%) and searching for diversity when travelling – (56%) (Fig. 3). The most frequent reasons for resignation from purchasing regional products were: a lack of information about such commodities (40%), insufficient possibility to buy near the consumers' home (32%), and too high prices – (14%) (Fig. 4).

The last part of the study was to test the hypothesis of independence between the age and level of education of respondents and their declarations of purchasing regional products. A chi-square test was conducted for this purpose and the V-Cramer factor was calculated. The number of responses selected for analysis was lower than the total number of respondents because some people did not indicate their age or level of education (Tab. 2).

An analysis of the empirical distribution determined that most of the respondents who do not buy regional products belonged to the age group to 25 years old. On the other hand the majority of people older than 25 years responded that they buy such products (Tab. 2). The statistical analysis indicates that there is a correlation between the age of respondents and their declarations regarding the purchase

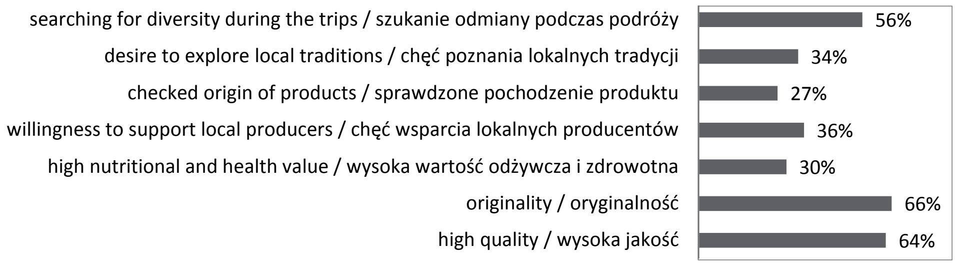

Figure 3. Main reasons for the purchase of regional products (n = 146)
Rysunek 3. Główne powody zakupu produktów regionalnych (n = 146)
Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

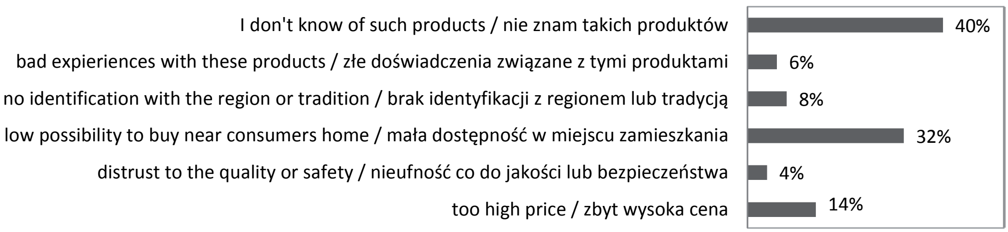

Figure 4. Most frequently reported reasons of resignation from regional product purchase (n = 73)
Rysunek 4. Najczęstsze powody rezygnacji z kupna produktów regionalnych (n = 73)
Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

Table 2. Results of the independence analysis between declarations of buying or not buying regional products and the respondents' selected features (age and education level).
Tabela 2. Wyniki analizy niezależności pomiędzy deklaracjami o kupowaniu lub niekupowaniu produktów regionalnych a wybranymi cechami respondentów (wiek i poziom wykształcenia).

Tested feature/ *Testowana cecha*	Empirical distribution/*Rozkład empiryczny*			Expected numerical force/ *Liczebność spodziewana*		Value of chi-square test/ *Wartość testu chi-kwadrat* (df = 2, α = 0,05)		V-Cramer factor/ *Współcz. V-Cramera*
	yes/ *tak*	no/ *nie*	total/ *ogółem*	yes/*tak*	no/*nie*	calculated/ *obliczona*	theoretical/ *teoretyczna*	
Age group/*Grupa wiekowa* (n = 212)								
18-25 years/*lat*	17	19	36	23.77	12.23	6.85	5.99	0.18
26-65 years/*lat*	105	45	150	99.06	50.94			
over 65 years/ *powyżej 65 lat*	18	8	26	17.17	8.83			
Total/*Ogółem*	140	72	212					
Education level/*Poziom wykształcenia* (n = 214)								
lower than secondary/*niżej niż średnie*	14	18	32	21.53	10.47	14.80	5.99	0.26
secondary/*średnie*	62	35	97	65.27	31.73			
higher/*wyższe*	68	17	85	57.2	27.8			
Total/*Ogółem*	144	70	214					

Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

of regional products. This is because the calculated chi-square value was higher than the theoretical value (6.85 to 5.99). The strength of this relationship has been described as weak (V-Cramer factor = 0.18). A similar situation occurred in the case of education level. The value of the calculated chi-square was higher than the theoretical one (14.80 to 5.99). This means that there is a statistical relationship between the level of education of respondents and their tendency to purchase regional products. The strength of this relationship has been also described as weak (V-Cramer factor = 0.26). If we analyze the empirical distribution, we can see that the majority of respondents who claim to buy regional products occurred in the group with secondary and higher education. However, most respondents with a lower than secondary education, did not claim to purchase regional products (Tab. 2).

Summary and conclusion

The paper presents the results of statistical analysis, which confirmed a weak correlation between age and level of education of the respondents, and their tendency to purchase regional products. A significant number claiming to buy regional products occurred among people older than 25 years and with secondary or higher education. This can be associated with a greater awareness of regional products in these groups of consumers. The studies are not representative of the whole polish population, but it may be a good introduction for further research relating to the issue of awareness about regional products among potential purchasers. Currently, the studies have demonstrated that the surveyed consumers have little awareness of regional products. Although most respondents said that they bought local products, there were many people who were unable to give the correct name of any regional product, especially from Lower Silesia. One of the main reasons for the lack of knowledge about these products, apart from lack of information, is little possibility of purchasing these products in the vicinity of the consumers' homes. This result shows the necessity to improve the regional products' distribution channels. Summing up, this study concludes that it is indispensable to increase consumer knowledge about regional products.

Bibliography

Bilska B. 2008: *Konkurencyjność produktów regionalnych i tradycyjnych*, Rocz. Nauk. SERiA, vol., X, no. 4, 20.

European Commission. 2014: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html, on-line 11.04.2014.

Gąsiorowski M. 2006: *Ochrona produktów regionalnych i tradycyjnych*, Agro-Smak, nr 2, 4.

Gąsiorowski M. 2007: *Produkty lokalne, tradycyjne, regionalne*, Biuletyn FAOW, nr 3, 5.

Grębowiec M. 2010: *Rola produktów tradycyjnych i regionalnych w podejmowaniu decyzji nabywczych przez konsumentów na rynku dóbr żywnościowych w Polsce*, Problemy Rolnictwa Światowego, t. 10, z. 2, 22-31.

Jekanowski M.D., Williams II D.R., Schiek W.A. 2000: *Consumers' Willingness to Purchase Locally Produced Agricultural Products: An Analysis of an Indiana Survey,* Agric. Res. Econ. Rev. 29/8, April, 43-53.

Lipiec-Zajchowska M. (red.) 2003: *Wspomaganie procesów decyzyjnych. Tom I. Statystyka,* Wyd. C.H. Beck, Warszawa, 70-76.

Minta S. 2013: *Bariery rozwoju rynku produktów regionalnych i tradycyjnych na przykładzie Dolnego Śląska*, Rocz. Nauk. SERiA, vol. XV, no. 4, 280-284.

Rak L. 2008: *Produkty tradycyjne i regionalne- przegląd aktów prawnych regulujących ochronę i produkcję cz. II,* Ekonatura, nr 3/2008, 20.

Rekowski M. 2005: *Mikroekonomia*, Akademia, Poznań, 43-46.

Stachak S. 1997: *Wprowadzenie do metodologii nauk ekonomicznych*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa, 157-158.

Tańska-Hus B., Minta S. 2012: *Miejsce produktów regionalnych i tradycyjnych w kształtowaniu wizerunku region,* Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego nr 709, Problemy Zarządzania, Finansów i Marketingu nr 23, 215-230.

Vanittersum K., Candel M., Torelli F. 2000: *The market for PDO/PGI protected regional products: consumers' attitudes and behaviour',* Actes et communications – Institut national de la recherche agronomique. Economie et Sociologie Rurales, p. 2, 209-221.

Zdon-Korzeniowska M. 2009: *Jak kształtować regionalne produkty turystyczne? Teoria i praktyka*, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków, 8.

Streszczenie

Celem pracy było określenie stopnia świadomości konsumentów na temat produktów regionalnych oraz zbadanie statystycznej zależności między wiekiem oraz poziomem edukacji respondentów a ich deklaracjami zakupów tego typu produktów. Wykorzystano źródła pierwotne uzyskane podczas badań terenowych. Dane zebrano z terenu powiatów sudeckich, ponieważ stanowiło to część projektu badawczego dotyczącego możliwości wprowadzenia na tym terenie nowego produktu regionalnego „Wołowina Sudecka". Badania wykonano w 2012 roku z użyciem metody wywiadu bezpośredniego. Respondentami było 219 osób dobranych w sposób przypadkowy (mieszkańcy i turyści przebywający na badanym obszarze). Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań można stwierdzić, że poziom świadomości dotyczącej produktów regionalnych wśród zapytanych konsumentów był niski. Analiza statystyczna potwierdziła słabą zależność pomiędzy wiekiem i poziomem wykształcenia a deklaracjami zakupów produktów regionalnych. Większe zainteresowanie zakupami tych produktów wystąpiło w grupie osób starszych niż 25 lat, oraz z wykształceniem średnim lub wyższym. Przeprowadzone badania miały wstępny charakter i ich wyniki nie są reprezentatywne dla ogólnopolskiej populacji, ale należy je traktować jako punkt wyjścia do dalszych badań.

Correspondence address
dr inż. Stanisław Minta
Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences
Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
Pl. Grunwaldzki 24A/p. 439
50-363 Wrocław, Poland
phone: +48 (71) 320 1798
e-mail: stanislaw.minta@up.wroc.pl