

THE ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL BRANDS – A COMPARATIVE STUDY POLAND – SLOVAKIA – HUNGARY

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Abstract. The empirical research results, which aim was to define the degree of awareness of the leading global brands, have been presented in the following article. The fundamental research material has been acquired thanks to direct interviews done in three cities: Rzeszów (Poland), Debrecen (Hungary) and Kosice (Slovakia), on the sample of 1,200 respondents (adult inhabitants). The survey questionnaire, elaborated by the author of this article, has been used as a measuring tool. The research period was from 2012 to 2013 year.

The achieved research results indicate that the most popular food products brands are Swiss chocolate Milka, French yoghurt Danone and Italian wine Martini. In turn, according to the respondents, the most recognizable non-food products brands are: American clothes and Nike sports shoes, Finnish mobile phones Nokia, Czech Škoda cars and Italian clothes and perfumes Giorgio Armani.

Key words: brand awareness, consumer, direct research, Polish, Slovakian and Hungarian respondents

INTRODUCTION

Shaping a strong brand is a key element of the marketing strategy of every enterprise. A well-known brand, however, is perceived by a prism of emotional and rational benefits, offered to the customers. It increases' value of a product for the customers. A strong brand is, in the opinion of the customers, a symbol of a high quality of a given good, its strong market position and prestige [Steenkamp 2014].

It is worth to stress the fact that from the point of view of a company, a stable and strong brand means customers' loyalty, what comes after that, the increase in sales and

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profits of the company. A decisive factor about loyal behaviour of the customers towards a given product is, among others, “brand awareness”. This term includes ordinary brand recognition as well as complex, cognitive structures, built based on detailed information about it. Brand understanding with its most essential element such as brand awareness is a very important factor, which conditions making final purchasing decision by consumers. That is why the companies are at constant “war on brands” – which is a psychological fight about “a place in customers’ minds”.

In the present elaboration, the empirical research results have been shown. Their aim was to define a degree of the leading global brands awareness. The research has been done among consumers, who live on the territory of the three countries, which belong to the Carpathian Euroregion – Poland, Slovakia, Hungary.

THE BRAND AWARENESS – THE ESSENCE AND RANGE OF THE TERM

In the marketing literature, a product brand is not unambiguously defined category. It is most often called as “name, symbol, pattern or combination of these elements, given in order to mark a product (or service) and to differentiate it from the offer of the competitors” [Kotler et al. 2002].

The brand has characteristic attributes, which create the capital. From the marketing point of view, the brand equity is responsible for how a brand is evaluated and perceived by the customers – “what does a brand mean for customers” [Dębski 2009]. Among the elements, which create its capital, the following can be distinguished: perceived brand quality, loyalty towards a brand, awareness of the brand existence, brand associations and other assets (patents, trademarks, etc.) [Urbanek 2002].

In the present article, a particular attention has been paid to the brand awareness, understood as the ability of a potential buyer to recognize the brand and associate it with a certain product category. The brand awareness is a foundation, a starting point for further activities connected to brand creation – building its personality, image, meeting the purchasers with the benefits offered by the brand [Kędzior 2003].

The brand awareness plays a crucial role in the purchasing decision making process by a consumer. This strategy allows customers to save time and effort, while making buying choices. In case of lack of this strategy, they would spend more time comparing certain goods by paying additional attention to other attributes [Stawecki 2015]. The category – awareness of the brand existence in the consumers’ minds can be interpreted as certain cognitive simplification. Purchasing decisions are made by referring to such simplification, especially when a product is cheap and quickly marketable [Özsomer 2012].

The usage of the brand awareness is a decision making tactics when a product is bought for the first time. When another purchasing decision is made, usable product attributes are important for a customer: quality, functionality, taste or smell, especially, when products differ significantly among each other by criteria, which have important meaning for them [Urbanek 2010].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

As it has already been mentioned, the empirical research results have been presented in this article. Their main aim was to define the level of awareness of the global brand products.

The basic source material has been acquired thanks to the direct interviews conducted in three cities, which belong to the Carpathian Euro region: Rzeszów (Poland), Kosice (Slovakia) and Debrecen (Hungary)¹ The interviews were done in the period from December 2011 to June 2012. The research sample included 1,200 respondents (400 people in each city), selected in the quota way Quotas were – gender, age and education. As far as the age criterion is concerned, the respondents were divided into three groups: people aged 15–44, 45–64, 65 and older. In turn, taking education into account, three groups were distinguished among the consumers: one with higher, secondary and post-secondary education, the other two belong to basic and vocational ones. A survey questionnaire was used as a measurement tool. A questionnaire, which included questions subordinated to the research aims, has been used as a measuring tool.

RESULTS ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL BRANDS AWARENESS RESEARCH

In this part of the publication, the direct research results done among the inhabitants of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary have been presented. In the beginning, I would like to compare the two researched groups in relation to the features describing social status of the respondents. Gender, age and education belong to them.

In the Table 1, the level of the respondents diversity has been presented, taking into consideration gender and nationality. It results from the placed data that the women population taking part in the research outnumbered the amount of men with a few per cent, in the all analyzed groups.

Table 1. The Polish, Slovakian and Hungarian respondents structure taking gender into consideration

Specification	Poland		Slovakia		Hungary	
	numerousness	%	numerousness	%	numerousness	%
Woman	222	56	207	52	199	52
Man	174	44	192	48	183	48
Sum	396	100	399	100	382	100

Source: Own elaboration.

¹ In Rzeszów the direct interviews have been done by the author of the present work and the chosen to this aim respondents. In Kosice, the initial research has been done by a group of employees and students of the Department of Management of Bratislava University of Economics in Kosice under prof. dr hab. W. Liestkovska direction. In turn, in Debrecen, the empirical material has been collected by a team of employees of the consulting company Tö-Vill Kft.

As far as the age criterion is concerned, the most numerous group, among the respondents, consists of people at the age of 15 to 44 – over 50%. The second place belongs to the ones who are 45–64 years old (about 30%). The smallest percentage of the respondents included pensioners (people aged 65 and older) and was in the percentage range of 12–15%.

People with secondary education also dominated in the research sample (41–52%). The participation of the respondents with higher education in general number of the people who took part in the survey, oscillated in the range of 23–37%. The lowest percentage of the respondents included the consumers with basic and vocational education (20–33%).

The respondents answered the questions concerning knowledge about global brands of the food and non-food products. In order to do this, the participants have been presented the list of 58 leading global brands (29 food products and 29 non-food products) and they have been asked to show the recognizable “signs” and give the name of the producer’s country². Three variants of the information given have been considered: general knowledge about the brand without giving the producer’s country (“knows”), knowledge with giving the name of the country where the product comes from (“knows the country of origin of a given brand”) and lack of knowledge of a given brand (“does not know”). In the data analysis, the static tests method has been used, in particular the independence chi-square test [Aczel 2000]. The answers of the researched Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians have been thoroughly analyzed and the research concerning each brand presentation have been placed in 58 data tables.

Table 2 data present the dispersion of the respondents’ knowledge only about the Milka brand (Swiss chocolate products). It turns out that the Slovakian respondents have the best knowledge about the Milka products, as 60.8% of the people questioned identify a given brand and country with its origin. The Hungarians are on the second place with 45.4%, and the Poles on the third 26.5%.

Table 2. The structure of the Poles, Slovaks and Hungarians’ answers concerning the knowledge about the Milka brand

Specification	Country (p-test factor of the chi-square $p = 0.0000$ *** test)						Sum
	Poland		Slovakia		Hungary		
	numerical amount	%	numerical amount	%	numerical amount	%	
Does not know the brand	52	13.0	32	8.0	10	2.6	94
Knows the brand and the country of its origin	106	26.5	243	60.8	174	45.4	523
Knows the brand	242	60.5	125	31.2	199	52.0	566
Sum	400	100	400	100	383	100	1183

Source: Own elaboration.

² The list of global brands presented to the respondents has been elaborated on the basis of the people’s answers in the pilot questionnaire and in the result of the secondary data analysis, among others, the market report *The best global brands* (<http://www.interbrand.com/images/pressreleases>, accessed: 07.02.2011).

In the further part of the publication, in order to increase the clearness of the presented research results, the received, extensive research material (concerning 58 brands) has been reduced (shortened) and presented in the synthetic way in the summary tables.

In the Table 3, information concerning the global brands knowledge of food products has been compared. It results from the presented data that the biggest percentage of the

Table 3. The knowledge of global brands – the answers given by the respondents from Poland, Slovakia and Hungary

Brand	Poles		Slovaks		Hungarians		p-chi-square test factor
	Knows the brand	Knows the brand and the country of origin	Knows the brand	Knows the brand and the country of origin	Knows the brand	Knows the brand and the country of origin	
%							
Wyborowa	7.5	89.3	1.8	38.8	24.5	16.4	0.0000
Wedel	19.3	70.8	2.0	1.5	15.7	11.7	0.0000
Smirnoff	46.3	35.8	23.0	23.0	21.7	14.9	0.0000
Lavazza	31.5	28.2	26.5	18.0	14.6	4.7	0.0000
Martini	48.5	28.0	50.5	20.5	50.4	39.7	0.0000
Milka	60.5	26.5	31.3	60.8	52.0	45.4	0.0000
Lipton	57.5	24.8	56.8	26.0	49.3	23.5	0.0000
Dr Oetker	52.0	22.5	45.0	35.8	55.1	21.1	0.0000
Tchibo	52.5	20.3	51.2	16.5	62.4	29.0	0.0000
Tetley	56.0	19.8	5.5	1.3	12.3	3.7	0.0000
Knorr	65.3	16.8	43.5	19.3	56.1	15.9	0.0000
Metaxa	38.8	16.3	52.3	27.3	46.5	24.3	0.0000
Lindor	41.5	15.8	15.3	6.8	12.8	5.7	0.0000
Calsberg	59.5	15.3	16.3	14.8	29.2	22.5	0.0000
Jacobs	56.3	14.2	64.5	15.5	65.5	12.0	0.0000
Zott	40.5	13.5	33.3	18.8	27.7	19.1	0.0000
Heineken	66.3	13.3	38.3	49.0	57.2	30.3	0.0000
Danone	68.3	11.8	53.5	26.3	59.8	19.3	0.0000
Nestle	65.8	10.5	51.7	31.5	69.2	11.5	0.0000
Hochland	67.5	9.5	6.5	3.3	10.2	4.4	0.0000
Raffaello	59.8	8.8	57.3	20.8	55.4	30.0	0.0000
Lay's	51.7	8.5	20.5	7.8	41.0	11.2	0.0000
Heinz	58.8	7.8	28.5	21.0	23.2	10.2	0.0000
Grosch	28.2	4.5	3.0	1.3	13.8	5.7	0.0000
Stock	55.8	4.3	39.3	10.8	10.4	1.6	0.0000
Nescafe	65.3	3.5	63.5	18.5	66.8	7.8	0.0000
Cheetos	43.5	2.5	7.8	1.0	52.0	18.0	0.0000
Ponte	12.0	1.3	3.3	1.0	15.9	3.9	0.0000
J&B Rare	14.0	0.3	4.5	2.5	12.8	8.9	0.0000

Source: Own elaboration.

researched Poles recognize (“knows”) the brand products like: Danone (68.3% of the answers), Hochland (67.5%) and Heineken (66.3%). The full knowledge, however (“knows the brand and the country of its origin”) can show the respondents from Poland with reference to the Russian vodka of Smirnoff brand (35.8% of the answers), Italian coffee Lavazza (28.2%) and French alcohol Martini (28.0%). In turn, Slovaks claim that the best known brands are: Jacobs (64.5% answers) and Raffaello. However, they correctly defined the country of origin for Dutch beer Heineken, Polish vodka Wyborowa (38,8%) and German desserts Dr Oetker (35.8%). The most popular brands (“knows”) among the Hungarians are: Nestle (69.3%), Nescafe (66.8%) and Tchibo (62.4%). However, they correctly indicated the country of origin of the three leading brands: above all Italian wine Martini (39.7%), Dutch beer Heineken (30.3%) and Italian sweets Raffaello (30.0%). To the food products brands recognizable to a very small extent by the respondents from Poland, Slovakia and Hungary belong: Scottish whisky J&B Rare, Dutch beer Grolsch, and also Italian pasta Ponte.

In the present research, the brands of non-food products have been also assessed (Fig. 1). It should be highlighted that the results of the used in the survey chi-square

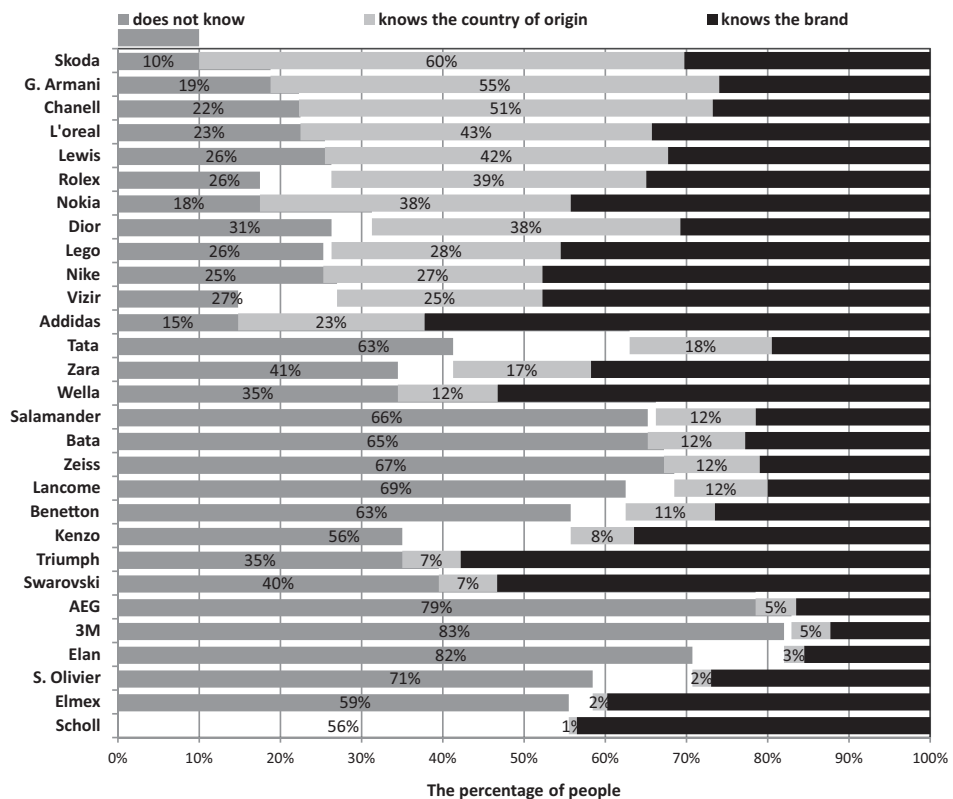


Fig. 1. The knowledge of global brands – the answers given by the Polish respondents

Source: Own elaboration.

test, showed that there are statistically crucial differences among the three researched nationalities.

According to the Polish respondents the best known brands (“knows the brand and the country of its origin”) are: German washing powder Vizir (48% of the answers), American brand of sports products Nike and Dutch games for children and teenagers Lego (48%) – Figure 1.

Similar results have been achieved after the analysis of the Slovakian respondents’ answers (Fig. 2). It turns out that the biggest percentage of the respondents from Slovakia recognize the following brands: American sports products Nike (53% of the respondents), Dutch games Lego (49%) and German sports goods Adidas (49%).

Hungarians, however, very clearly identify products of the German brand Adidas (66% of the answers) and Finnish mobile phones Nokia (60%) – Figure 3. Very recognizable (“knows”) are also: Czech cars Škoda (41% of the answers Swiss watches Rolex (37%) and Italian clothes and perfumes Giorgio Armani (34%). It is also worth noting that among the non-food products of the brands presented to the respondents the least recognizable are: Slovenian skis Elan, American chemical products 3M and German AEG electrotechnical equipment.

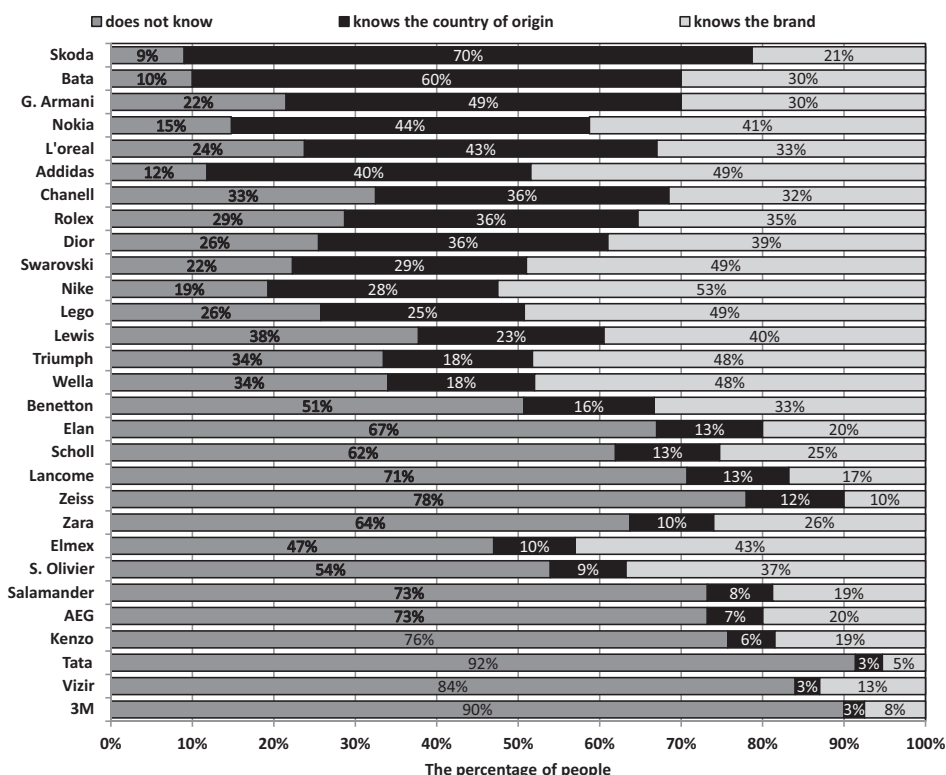


Fig. 2. The knowledge of global brands – the answers given by the Slovakian respondents

Source: Own elaboration.

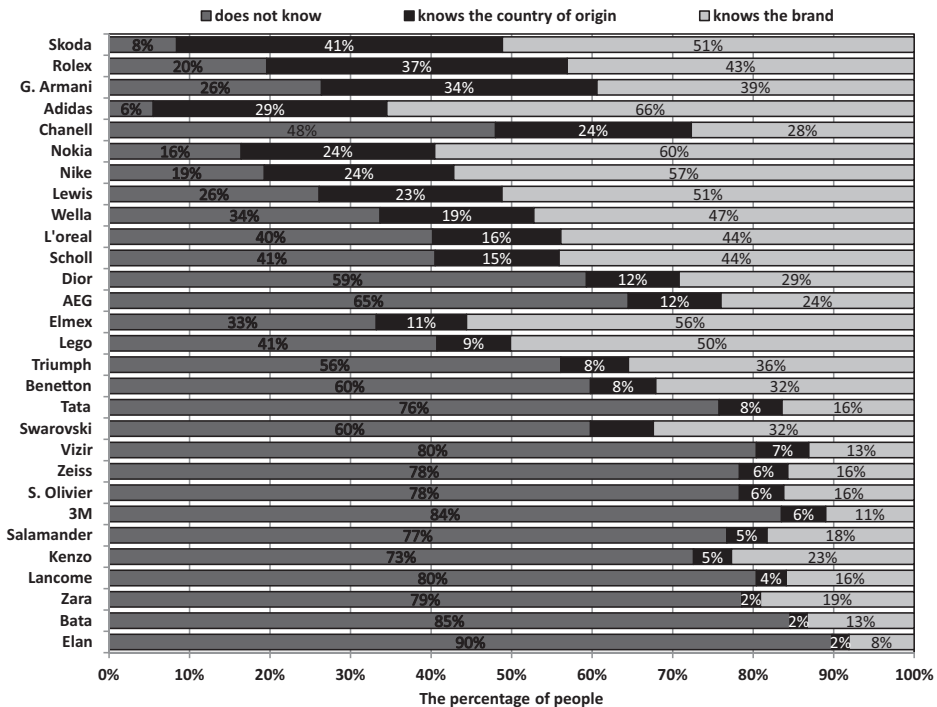


Fig. 3. The knowledge of global brands – the answers given by the Hungarian respondents

Source: Own elaboration.

CONCLUSION

From the above analyses the conclusion can be drawn that the global brands presented to the respondents are characterized by an average level of recognizability among the people who took part in the survey from the three researched nationalities. The most popular food brands shown by the consumers belong: Swiss chocolate Milka, French yoghurts Danone, English tea Lipton, Italian wines Martini and Dutch beer Heineken. In turn, the most recognizable non-food products chosen by the respondents are: American clothes and sports shoes Nike, German sports goods Adidas, Finnish mobile phones Nokia, Czech cars Škoda, Italian clothes and perfumes Giorgio Armani.

The presented research results are similar to the results of the analyses done by the specialised market research agencies. And for example, in 2013 the Interbrand company included the following brands in the food segment to so-called best global brands: Nestle, Danone, Nescafe, Heineken (<http://interbrand.com/best-brands/best-global-brands/2013/ranking>, accessed: 20.07.2015). The brands like Nike, Adidas, Hugo Boss, Gucci, Nokia, L'Oréal or Zara have been included to the best known non-food brands by it. The training company Questus – The Chartered Institute of Marketing presented similar results in its

report *The strongest brands in the world*. It was in 2013 (<https://questus.pl/globalne-potegi-wsrod-marek-dobr-konsumpcyjnych>, accessed: 15.06.2015).

It needs to be highlighted at this point again that the brand awareness has a very crucial meaning in purchasing decisions of customers. The brand recognizability – “brand existence in customers’ minds” increases the probability of choosing this and no other brand in the offered set of products. Building brand awareness being the element of a strong brand is therefore a very crucial tool in shaping marketing strategies of the companies [Michalski 2015]. Strong brand is success and can become the biggest value of every company in gaining competitive advantage as well as on the domestic and foreign market.

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ANALIZA ŚWIADOMOŚCI MAREK GLOBALNYCH – STUDIUM PORÓWNAWCZE POLSKA – SŁOWACJA – WĘGRY

Streszczenie. W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań empirycznych, których celem jest określenie stopnia świadomości wiodących marek globalnych. Zasadniczy materiał badawczy pozyskano dzięki wywiadam bezpośrednim przeprowadzonym w trzech miastach: Rzeszowie (Polska), Debreczynie (Węgry) i Koszycach (Słowacja), na próbie 1200 respondentów (dorosłych mieszkańców). Jako instrument pomiarowy wykorzystano kwestionariusz wywiadu, opracowany przez autorkę artykułu. Okresem badawczym były lata 2012–2013.

Otrzymane wyniki badań wskazują, iż najbardziej popularnymi markowymi produktami żywnościowymi okazały się: szwajcarskie czekolady Milka, francuskie jogurty Danone czy

włoskie wina Martini. Z kolei za najbardziej znane markowe produkty nieżywnościowe uczestnicy badania uznali: amerykańską odzież i obuwie sportowe Nike, fińskie telefony komórkowe Nokia, czeskie samochody Škoda oraz włoską odzież i perfumy Giorgio Armani.

Słowa kluczowe: świadomość marki, konsument, badania bezpośrednie, respondenci polscy, słowaccy i węgierscy

Accepted for print: 21.07.2016

For citation: Wolanin-Jarosz E. (2016). The analysis of global brands – a comparative study Poland – Slovakia – Hungary. *Acta Sci. Pol., Oeconomia*, 15 (3), 135–144.