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ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMPTION AS AN INFORMED LIFESTYLE CHOICE OF POLISH POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to identify whether Polish society consciously buys and consumes organic food as well as what motives guide their purchases and consumption. A diagnostic survey method with an author's questionnaire was used to examine 3436 respondents from the whole Poland. The Statistica 10.1 PL program was applied to conduct statistical and discriminant analysis. It was shown that Polish consumers mainly emphasized a great importance of health qualities of organic food. The older respondents were more interested in the fact that their relatives consumed healthy food. Fresh vegetables and their products as well as eggs were the most common choices of organic food. The main places of purchase of organic food were discount stores and those specialized in selling organic food as well as organic farms. It was emphasized that respondents paid high importance to the accreditation of product certification body on food packages as well as the labeling that these products were produced in ecological conditions.

Keywords: consumption, consumer choices, organic food market, healthy life style

INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle can be defined as general characteristics of the activity of a social group or an individual which differs from others due to its specific actions and values (Siwiński et al., 2008, p. 386). Thus, lifestyle includes behaviors and motives as well as the effects of phenomena which represent the consequences, objectives or instruments of these behaviors (Piasecka 2008, p. 86).

There is a close relationship between lifestyle and consumption models. It was demonstrated that the main motives for consumers choosing consumption patterns were health aspects and environmental protection (Nie and Zepeda, 2011, p. 28). Food security is also a type of consumption model and a global concern, especially in developing countries. These developments are commonly discussed in the context of the adverse impact of climate changes on agriculture and natural resources, the availability of productive inputs, and the importance of the processing of food products (Ingram et al., 2010, p. 13).

As regards the quality of food, even if available in abundant supply, new problems emerge because of excessive food processing which has a negative impact on public health (Phungpracha et al., 2016, p. 2). According to studies on proper nutrition, there is a rising incidence of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart failure, all of them directly related to a diet with high levels of carbohydrates, fats and refined sugars (Kuhnlein et al., 2009, p. 19).

Eating habits, to a great extent, are learned at home (Buro et al., 2015, p. 549), as confirmed by a developed consumption model (Birch and Davison, 2001). The purpose of informational, promotional and educational

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activities is to disseminate proper consumption patterns based on organic food. Implicitly, such actions contribute to restoring the popularity of organic farming, including the promotion of local economy focused on environmental protection (Urban-Rural…, 2001).

As shown by the developed profiles of health-oriented consumers (Demby, 1974, p. 34), a long distance to organic food stores and markets is not an issue for persons who put a great emphasis on the consumption of highly nutritious foods (Haynes-Maslow et al., 2015, p. 317–318). The hypothesis that organic food buyers are, in general, consumers who care about a healthy diet, natural environment and proper development of the human body has been confirmed. Usually, they are women aged 30–45 with children (Davies et al., 1995, p. 121).

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the lifestyle of the Polish society leaves room for the purchase and consumption of organic food. Efforts were made to identify the motives that drive the consumers' decisions when buying organic food, and to specify the type of food they buy and the place of its purchase. Another important aspect covered by this study was the certification of organic products.

METHODOLOGY

A diagnostic survey method based on the author's proprietary questionnaire was used to conduct the study. Upon completion of the construction and validation procedures, a five-point Likert scale was applied to measure the attitudes. The indicator of scale reliability was calculated, and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.85.

A methodological procedure allowed to determine the size of the sample. The level of confidence was set at 0.95, the estimated size fraction at 0.50, and the maximum error at 0.05. The respondents were divided into groups by education level, gender and place of residence. Quota sampling was performed based on the availability of respondents.

The studies were conducted in 2015 with a group of 3436 respondents from all over Poland. Three groups were created, including 1150 respondents with primary or vocational level education; 1180 with medium level education and 1106 with higher level education. The population was divided by their place of residence: villages; towns with a population of up to 30,000; and towns with a population over 30,000. Additionally, respondents were proportionally divided by gender, with the respective shares being 51.3% for women and 48.7% for men.

Statistica 10.1 PL was used for the purposes of the statistical analysis and the discriminant function. The classification function was used by calculating the coefficients determined for each group. Prior to the analysis, multivariate normality was examined by testing each variable for normality. Variance matrices were assumed to be homogenous in all three groups. Standard deviation was not taken into consideration due to large number of respondents in each group. Differences in averages were statistically significant if the probability of randomness was $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

For the Polish consumers, the main motive behind choosing organic food was its healthy effect on the human body. Such an attitude, at a significantly higher level with $p = 0.007$, was more frequently demonstrated by respondents aged up to 40 years than by those aged 41 and beyond. The classification function also reached a high value for the respondents who declared to care about a healthy diet of their families. As regards this motive, it was cited more often by respondents aged 26–55, at a significantly higher level (at $p < 0.001$), than by representatives of the youngest and the oldest groups. Older respondents, i.e. aged 41 or above, at a significance level of $p = 0.021$, appreciated organic food because of its better taste. Also, this group of respondents considered the consumption of organic food to be a manifestation of better care for the environment and animal welfare. In this case, the differences were significant at $p < 0.001$. Additionally, the motive for the respondents' interest in different types of diet based on organic food also appeared in the discriminant function model, as developed in this study (Table 1).

Products of organic origin of greatest interest among the respondents were fresh vegetables and their products as well as eggs. The latter reached the peak value of classification function in all age groups. Respondents from the two youngest groups were interested the most in buying fresh vegetables and their products (at $p = 0.008$). On the other hand, most of the respondents from the two oldest age groups were interested in goat's milk and its products, as confirmed by a significant difference in values of classification functions at $p < 0.001$. Respondents aged 56 and above were the

Table 1. Motives for choosing organic food by the Polish population grouped by age
Tabela 1. Motywy wyboru żywności ekologicznej przez mieszkańców Polski z uwzględnieniem ich wieku

Motives for choosing an organic product Motywy wyboru produktu ekologicznego	Discriminant analysis model Model analizy dyskryminacyjnej			Classification function (age of respondents) Funkcja klasyfikacyjna (wiek badanych)			
	Wilks' lambda: 0.832 Lambda Wilksa: 0,832 F (15.232) = 5.143 $p < 0.001$*			< 25 $p = 0.27$	26–40 $p = 0.32$	41–55 $p = 0.30$	> 56 $p = 0.11$
	Wilks' lambda Lambda Wilksa	F value wartość F	p level poziom p				
I care about the environment and animal welfare Dbam o środowisko naturalne i dobrostan zwierząt	0.865	7.152	0.001*	0.742	0.929	0.132	1.211
I care about healthy diet for my family Dbam o zdrowe odżywianie swoich bliskich	0.852	6.180	0.001*	1.153	1.309	1.445	1.179
It is healthy for my body Jest ona zdrowa dla organizmu	0.846	4.026	0.007*	1.742	1.626	1.518	1.539
Tastes better than conventional food Taka żywność jest smaczniejsza od konwencjonalnej	0.845	3.253	0.021*	0.808	0.827	1.019	1.067
I am interested in different types of diets Interesuję się różnego rodzaju dietami	0.842	2.597	0.067	1.067	1.136	1.067	0.895
Constant Stała				10.328	11.087	11.332	12.128

*Level of significant difference at $p < 0.050$.
Source: own elaboration based on the research material.
*Poziom istotnej różnicy przy $p < 0{,}050$.
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie materiału badawczego.

least interested in cereal products as compared to other groups surveyed. The classification function reached high values for pork meat and its products, whereas lower values were recorded for cow's milk and its products, fresh fruits and their products as well as beverages other than milk products. In all these cases, no significant differences in the value of the classification function were found between all groups of respondents (Table 2).

It was pointed out that the usual places where the Polish population purchases organic food are discount stores and stores specializing in selling organic food. This was true, to a similar degree, for all age groups of respondents. Additionally, the classification function reached a high value for organic farms considered to be the right place to buy organic food. Also, to a lesser extent, the respondents declared to

Table 2. Type of organic products chosen by the respondents grouped by age
Tabela 2. Rodzaj produktów ekologicznych wybieranych przez ankietowanych z uwzględnieniem ich wieku

Organic product type Rodzaj wybieranego produktu ekologicznego	Discriminant analysis model Model analizy dyskryminacyjnej			Classification functions (years) Funkcje klasyfikacyjne (lata)			
	Wilks' lambda: 0.732 Lambda Wilksa: 0,732 F (30.345) = 3.358 $p < 0.001$*			< 25 $p = 0.27$	26–40 $p = 0.32$	41–55 $p = 0.30$	> 56 $p = 0.11$
	Wilks' lambda Lambda Wilksa	F value wartość F	p level poziom p				
Goat's milk and its products Mleko kozie i jego przetwory	0.733	5.938	0.001*	0.765	0.845	0.956	1.127
Cereal products Przetwory zbożowe	0.726	2.968	0.030*	0.967	0.984	0.892	0.721
Pork meat and its products Mięso wieprzowe i jego przetwory	0.723	2.001	0.112	0.987	1.098	1.155	0.956
Fresh vegetables and their products Warzywa świeże i ich przetwory	0.728	3.879	0.008*	1.378	1.312	1.035	1.156
Fresh fruits and their products Owoce świeże i ich przetwory	0.723	1.932	0.122	0.709	0.685	0.854	0.637
Eggs Jaja	0.722	1.392	0.246	1.482	1.351	1.375	1.473
Cow's milk and its products Mleko krowie i jego przetwory	0.721	1.167	0.329	0.876	0.934	1.033	0.934
Beverages other than milk Napoje inne niż mleczne	0.712	1.018	0.382	0.843	0.903	0.834	0.757
Constant Stała				15.978	14.983	15.76	15.132

*Level of significant difference at $p < 0.050$.
Source: own elaboration based on research material.
*Poziom istotnej różnicy przy $p < 0{,}050$.
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie materiału badawczego.

purchase organic food in hypermarkets and online (Table 3).

The respondents believe that organic food is different from conventional products because the producers inform the consumers of its green origin and the package is labeled "organic food." Additionally, the respondents emphasized the great importance of the certification body sign placed on organic food packages. Respondents aged 40 and under paid more attention (at $p <$ 0.001) to the seller's declaration on the origin of organic

Table 3. The place of purchasing organic products by the respondents grouped by age
Tabela 3. Miejsce zakupu produktów ekologicznych przez respondentów z uwzględnieniem ich wieku

Place of purchase of organic products Miejsce zakupu produktów ekologicznych	Discriminant analysis model Model analizy dyskryminacyjnej			Classification functions (years) Funkcje klasyfikacyjne (lata)			
	Wilks' lambda: 0.638 Lambda Wilksa: 0,638 F (15.326) = 3.135 $p < 0.001$*			< 25 $p = 0.27$	26–40 $p = 0.32$	41–55 $p = 0.30$	> 56 $p = 0.11$
	Wilks' lambda Lambda Wilksa	F value wartość F	p level poziom p				
Hypermarkets W hipermarkecie	0.657	7.382	0.001*	0.934	1.123	0.891	0.639
Stores specializing in organic food W sklepie specjalizującym się w sprzedaży żywności ekologicznej	0.667	1.389	0.444	1.703	1.768	1.698	1.687
Organic farms W gospodarstwie ekologicznym	0.659	1.946	0.114	1.520	1.639	1.648	1.712
Discount stores W sklepach dyskontowych	0.689	1.109	0.345	1.703	1.818	1.812	1.818
Online stores with home delivery Zakup przez Internet z dostawą do domu	0.621	1.0567	0.366	0.328	0.389	0.428	0.328
Constant Stała				10.918	12.143	11.387	11.578

*Level of significant difference at $p < 0.050$.
Source: own elaboration based on research material.
*Poziom istotnej różnicy przy $p < 0{,}050$.
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie materiału badawczego.

food available in the store. The two oldest groups had much less confidence in the seller's declarations. The "product of organic agriculture" labeling was also taken into consideration in the discriminant function model also included (Table 4).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The objectives set for this study were addressed and allowed to identify the link between healthy lifestyle and consumption of organic food. As shown by research, the consumption of organic food is a part of the Polish population's healthy lifestyle. The main motive behind the purchase and consumption of organic food in developed countries, and also in Poland, was healthcare and recognition of higher nutritional values of such products, compared to conventional food (Fotopoulos and Krystallis, 2002, p. 743).

Next to the nutritional values and positive health effects of organic food, consumers from Western

Table 4. Methods for distinguishing organic food from conventional food by the respondents
Tabela 4. Sposoby odróżniania żywności ekologicznej od konwencjonalnej przez respondentów

Methods for labeling organic food Sposoby oznakowania żywności ekologicznej	Discriminant analysis model Model analizy dyskryminacyjnej			Classification functions (years) Funkcje klasyfikacyjne (lata)			
	Wilks' lambda: 0.638 Lambda Wilksa: 0,638 F (15.326) = 3.135 $p < 0.001$*			< 25 $p = 0.27$	26–40 $p = 0.32$	41–55 $p = 0.30$	> 56 $p = 0.11$
	Wilks' lambda Lambda Wilksa	F value wartość F	p level poziom p				
Seller's declaration of green origin Zapewnienia sprzedającego o ekologicznym pochodzeniu	0.657	7.382	0.001*	1.134	1.023	0.891	0.639
"Organic food" labeled packages Obecność na opakowaniu napisu „zdrowa żywność"	0.667	1.389	0.244	1.703	1.768	1.698	1.587
Food certification body sign placed on the packages Obecności na opakowaniu jednostki certyfikującej żywność	0.659	1.946	0.114	1.520	1.639	1.648	1.712
Producer's declaration of green origin Zapewnienie producenta o ekologicznym pochodzeniu żywności	0.689	1.109	0.345	1.703	1.818	1.812	1.818
"Product of organic agriculture" labeled packages Obecność na opakowaniu określenia „produkt rolnictwa ekologicznego"	0.621	1.0567	0.366	0.328	0.389	0.428	0.328
Constant Stała				10.918	12.143	11.387	11.578

*Level of significant difference at $p < 0.050$.
Source: own elaboration based on the research material.
*Poziom istotnej różnicy przy $p < 0,050$.
Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie materiału badawczego.

Europe, North America and Australia appreciated the absence of harmful substances in such products (Williams and Hammitt, 2001, p. 319). This approach was also followed by the Polish consumers covered by this survey. Specialized organic food shops were most frequently chosen as the place for purchasing organic food. Buying directly from the producer while paying close attention to the green product labeling was another common method (Mamouni et al., 2016, p. 2).

The preferences of Polish consumers have remained unchanged for nearly five years. As shown by Stefańska in her studies (2010, p. 215), customers prefer buying organic food in healthy food stores and agricultural holdings oriented at organic farming. Meanwhile, residents of larger towns continue to purchase organic products in supermarkets due to their convenient location.

Although the changes to the Polish population's eating habits are relatively slow, (Babicz-Zielińska and Jeżewska-Żychowicz, 2015, p. 8), organic food manufacturers try to meet the consumers' demands. Note that in Poland, the organic foodstuffs segment is still considered to be a niche (Verdurme and Viaene, 2003, p. 92; Vanhonacker et al., 2010, p. 454).

In Poland, the determinants of changes in consumption patterns are similar to those found in Western European and North American countries. The reasons for such changes are the aging population, declining birth rates, lengthening human lifespan, changing family models, changes related to the organization of working time, women's professional activity, public health education and promotion of knowledge on healthy and rational diet (Sojkin and Olejniczak, 2012, p. 130).

The changes in eating habits are also related to consumer choices that provide direction for the production of organic food, according to the place of food origin, production processes or preferences of a particular producer. The consumers choose between conventional or organic food and decide of its preparation methods. It is an important aspect for the exploitation of natural resources because food production (especially complex food processing) involves the emission of greenhouse gases and other environmentally-adverse compounds (Annunziata and Vecchio, 2016, p. 194).

According to the Soil Association (2004), the interest in organic food depends not only on the awareness of benefits of its consumption, but also on the consumer's age and family status. This report confirms the authors' findings that consumers above 25 years old (usually having higher levels of education and own sources of income) are the most interested in organic products among all consumer groups. Because organic foods are more expensive (Kapusta, 2015, p. 698), they are purchased more often by families with higher incomes (Murray et al., 2015, p. 566) who pay attention to green labels when making their purchasing decisions (Bulsara and Trivedi, 2016; Wilczyńska, 2015, p. 401).

The younger generation sees a positive impact of organic food consumption on the human body (McGill et al., 2015, p. 1129). The respondents aged 26–55 mentioned the health of their relatives as the main reason for buying organic food. For them, the availability of organic products in supermarkets is very important as this is where they often do shopping (Hjelmar, 2011, p. 336). Older respondents, aged 41 years and above, declare that the taste of organic food is definitely better (Kiviniemi and Rothman, 2006, p. 247), and that a greater consumption of such food is equivalent to a greater concern for the environment (Amate and de Molina, 2013, p. 27).

The highest interest in purchasing eggs and fresh vegetables (Barska and Wyrwa, 2017, p. 4) of green origin confirms the earlier studies on consumer preferences. Undoubtedly, this can be associated with the popularity of these foods and their intensive production in ecological conditions (Gracia et al., 2014, p. 61; Hjelmar, 2011, p. 336).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Persons aged 26–55 purchase organic food more often as they see the positive health effects of its consumption. People in this age group are usually well-educated, have their own source of income, are at the stage of having or starting a family. Taking care of relatives is one of the arguments that makes the consumers buy organic products.

2. Despite higher prices of organic products, fruits and vegetables from local eco farms as well as organic eggs are becoming more and more popular among the consumers. The supply chain of these products (from the producer straight to the consumer) is the shortest one, making the customers trust in the high quality of organic food.

3. Consumers aged above 41 emphasize the importance of sensory and taste qualities of products purchased in organic food stores. This proves that as the consumers mature, they want to the return to the flavors of their childhood.

4. Respondents of all ages attached great importance to the labeling of organic products. The important aspects included the manufacturer's statement and the "organic food" label. It can be concluded that quality marks that prove the origin, quality and authenticity of organic products contribute to greater trust of customers.

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KONSUMPCJA ŻYWNOŚCI EKOLOGICZNEJ ŚWIADOMYM STYLEM ŻYCIA POLSKIEGO SPOŁECZEŃSTWA W ASPEKCIE WIEKOWYM

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu było wskazanie, czy w stylu życia polskiego społeczeństwa występuje świadomy zakup i spożywanie żywności ekologicznej oraz jakimi motywami kierują się konsumenci przy zakupie takiej żywności. W badaniu wykorzystano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego z narzędziem badawczym w postaci autorskiego kwestionariusza ankiety, którym przebadano 3436 respondentów z całej Polski. W analizach statystycznych wykorzystano program Statistica 10.1 PL, szczególnie analizę funkcji dyskryminacyjnej. Wykazano, iż przy zakupie żywności ekologicznej polscy konsumenci sugerowali się głównie jej walorami zdrowotnymi. Starsi respondenci przywiązywali większą wagę, by taką żywność spożywali wszyscy członkowie ich rodzin. Najczęściej kupowanymi produktami ekologicznymi były świeże warzywa i ich przetwory oraz jaja. Miejscem zakupu żywności ekologicznej były najczęściej sklepy dyskontowe i specjalizujące się w sprzedaży żywności ekologicznej oraz gospodarstwa ekologiczne. Podkreślano znaczenie umieszczania na opakowaniu takiej żywności nazwy jednostki certyfikującej produkt, jak również oznakowania, że jest to produkt wytworzony w warunkach ekologicznych.

Słowa kluczowe: konsumpcja, wybory konsumentów, rynek żywności ekologicznej, zdrowy tryb życia

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