

ETHNOCENTRISM AMONG CONSUMERS IN SELECTED CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: A DETAILED ASSESSMENT OF ETHNOCENTRIC PATTERNS*

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ABSTRACT By employing surveys, this paper aims to conduct a cross-national comparison of ethnocentric behaviour in three neighbouring countries in the Central European region. The level of ethnocentrism, expressed by a reduced CETSCALE, is measured and assessed using six demographic indicators and four products. Responses to the reduced CETSCALE show that Polish respondents are more ethnocentric than Czech and Slovak respondents and that Slovak respondents are more ethnocentric than Czech respondents. However, only the differences between Czechia and Slovakia, and between Czechia and Poland are statistically significant. The strongest level of ethnocentrism among Poles is also evident when analysing consumer opinions on the four selected products. As far as possible differences in the ethnocentric consumer behaviour of the population are concerned, the analysis revealed that age and permanent residence in the three selected countries are discriminating factors. The study is original in that it combines two levels of investigation and examines three neighbouring countries simultaneously.

KEYWORDS: *ethnocentrism, demographic indicators, perception, country of origin, Central Europe*

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, consumer ethnocentrism has been a frequent object of interest among researchers. In January 2022, the Web of Science lists around a thousand social science articles with the terms “ethnocentric” or “ethnocentrism” published in the last five years (Web of Science, 2022). Google Scholar collects an even larger number of studies for the same period. However, only a few of the available studies have so

far analysed possible differences and similarities between different countries. As far as the Central European region is concerned, the situation is even worse for a cross-national comparison, as this region has only been analysed to a very limited extent.

In the context of consumer ethnocentrism, there are four categories of antecedents of ethnocentrism: socio-psychological, political, economic and demographic (Shankarmahesh; 2006). The demographic antecedents are numerous and include,

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for example, age, gender or income. However, demographic antecedents are not the only ones that can help determine the level of consumer ethnocentrism in a particular country or region, as previous research has shown (e.g. Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2004).

Against this background, this paper examines the issue of consumer ethnocentrism from two different angles simultaneously: demographic history and product perception, focussing on the country of origin effect. These two aspects are analysed in three selected countries of the Central European region: the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. These countries are traditional representatives of this region, i.e. various organisations (e.g. the EU, INSEE) assign them to the group of Central and Eastern European countries, and, therefore, there is no doubt about their geographical classification. Moreover, these countries have common borders and share the same Slavic language roots.

The main objective of this paper is a cross-national comparison of the ethnocentric behaviour of consumers in the three countries mentioned, taking into account six demographic parameters and four products. Firstly, the paper aims to enrich the discussion on how ethnocentrism differs internationally. Secondly, it aims to find out whether consumers, when confronted with more specific questions, tend to consider their country as an important decision criterion when purchasing different products. The main reason for conducting this study is the need to respond to the numerous calls (e.g. Cassia and Magno, 2022; Al Ganideh and Al Tae, 2012; Javalgi et al., 2005) for an investigation of consumer ethnocentrism in more than one country.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer ethnocentrism (hereafter also abbreviated as CE) in the Central European region has already attracted the attention of numerous authors. As far as the three selected countries of the region are concerned, most of the works originating from there are recent. In the following lines, we target both global and regional CE-related research that covers the demographic parameters of interest to us. Specifically, we analyse the following six demographic parameters: age, gender, education level, income, status and place of residence. These parameters are usually analysed in the context of CE and also in many other areas. Firstly, we will look at the relevant pieces of research on consumer ethnocentrism from around the world in relation to these demographic parameters. This is only a summarised presentation as these works have already been discussed in detail on many occa-

sions and therefore it is not useful to present them again. We then present studies that look specifically at the three selected countries.

Age is a traditional demographic parameter analysed in studies on consumer ethnocentrism. In some studies, young people are assumed to be less ethnocentric than older people (e.g. Richardson, 2012; Josiassen et al., 2011; Erdogan & Uz Kurt, 2010; Chrysochoidis et al., 2007; Javalgi et al., 2005; Witkowski, 1998; Caruana 1996), while in some others no difference was found (e.g. Mangnole et al., 2011; Bawa, 2004). In terms of gender, there is work that concludes that women tend to be more ethnocentric than men (e.g. Josiassen et al., 2011; Erdogan & Uz Kurt, 2010; Mangnole et al., 2011; Javalgi et al., 2005; Clarke et al., 2000), while others have not been able to support this assumption (e.g. Bizumic, 2019; Klein & Etensoe, 1999; Caruana 1996). The level of education tends to correlate negatively with the level of CE (Richardson, 2012; Erdogan & Uz Kurt, 2010; Chrysochoidis et al., 2007; Caruana; 1996), although there are also studies that show no correlation (e.g. Bizumic, 2019; Javalgi et al., 2005). Income is also sometimes thought to be negatively related to CE levels (Richardson; 2012; Erdogan & Uz Kurt, 2010), but there are also a number of studies that have found no correlation between respondents' income and CE (e.g. Richardson, 2012; Josiassen et al., 2011; Javalgi et al., 2005; Caruana, 1996). Occupational status (sometimes referred to as "occupation") has generally not been found to be a determinant of consumers' ethnocentric behaviour (Cazacu, 2016; Caruana, 1996). Place of residence is not a very frequently studied demographic factor, but it should be noted that existing research points to possible differences between cities within a country (Schnettler et al., 2011), regions within a country (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Kaynak & Kara, 2002) or between countries (El Banna et al., 2018).

It is possible to find authors whose studies contradict the general results presented above. For example, Kvasina et al. (2018) found a positive correlation between consumer ethnocentrism and education level in a sample of 420 Croatian respondents and found that educated consumers may be better informed and have a greater awareness of the benefits of buying local products. Kvasina et al. (2018) also found that younger consumers from their sample were more ethnocentric.

2.1. Ethnocentrism in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, there are only a very limited number of studies on consumer ethnocentrism. Considering the wild upheavals in the Czech economy in the 1990s, this lack can be characterised as strange.

One of the first serious studies analysing ethnocentric tendencies in the Czech Republic was conducted in the early 2000s. At that time, Orth and Fírbasová (2003) analysed consumer attitudes towards yoghurt produced in the Czech Republic. The authors pointed out that consumer ethnocentrism is a strong and significant predictor of consumer evaluation of products. The only demographic parameter they analysed was age. They concluded that younger people are more likely to be non-ethnocentric than older people.

Stoklasa and Starzyzna (2017) compared two surveys that they and their colleagues conducted in 2013 and 2017 with samples of 414 and 439 respondents from the Moravian-Silesian Region, respectively. The selection of this one region was justified by the claim that it is culturally different from the other Czech regions, resulting in different consumer behaviour in each part of the country. In both surveys, higher education and higher income (calculated as monthly cash income) were found to imply a lower level of ethnocentrism among consumers. In the more recent study, age also proved to be a differentiator, but this survey was not as balanced as the first study in terms of the different demographic groups of respondents.

In the study by Wanninayake and Chovancová (2012), which focussed on beer brands and surveyed respondents in the Zlín region, education level and income were also negatively correlated with the level of CE. However, the number of responses processed for this study was low, at 108. Finally, Čvirík's (2021a) study concluded that older Czechs are more ethnocentric than younger Czech consumers and Czech men are more ethnocentric than Czech women. The latter result is very unusual in the existing literature.

2.2. Ethnocentrism in Slovakia

Research on the ethnocentrism of Slovak consumers has only increased in the last ten years. Surprisingly, almost every CE-related study on Slovakia deals with different demographic parameters. Moreover, a considerable number of the existing studies were authored or co-authored by M. Čvirík, but not all of them are worth citing as they either appear in inferior sources or provide contradictory results.

Regarding the general situation in Slovakia, Čvirík (2021b) has repeatedly found low rates of consumer ethnocentrism in his country. According to Vilčeková (2014), it can be assumed that Slovak consumers are in favour of buying domestic products, but lower local purchasing power and higher price sensitivity in times of economic downturn as well as historically underdeveloped consumer patriotism in Slovakia could be the reasons why Slovak consum-

ers seem to be less patriotic and less ethnocentric in their actual purchasing behaviour than consumers in other countries. The low values found by Čvirík could be in contrast to Tábořecká-Petrovičová and Gíbalová (2014), who conclude that Slovak consumers show average ethnocentric tendencies, or to Lorincová and Ondrijová (2019), who even claim that most of their respondents show moderate to strong ethnocentric tendencies. However, these two studies analysed smaller samples of consumers (160 and 118 respondents respectively) than Čvirík, and their results may therefore be less reliable or less provable.

Older Slovaks were categorised as more ethnocentric in the studies by Čvirík (2021a), Tábořecká-Petrovičová and Gíbalová (2014) and Szromnik (2014). While Čvirík (2021a) also found Slovakian women to be more ethnocentric than Slovakian men, the latter two sources found no statistically significant correlation between the gender of consumers and their CE level. The status of consumers was analysed by Safu et al. (2010), who investigated possible differences between students and non-students. They found that Slovakian consumers who were not students were less ethnocentric than students.

2.3. Ethnocentrism in Poland

In Poland, consumer ethnocentrism became a subject of research in the 1990s, when the marketisation of economic processes enabled consumers to choose products according to their individual preferences and needs. Over time, a positive change in the attitude of Polish consumers towards imported products became noticeable. Moreover, Poles perceived Polish goods as being of poor quality (Wolanin-Jarosz, 2015). Over time, however, ethnocentric tendencies among Polish consumers increased. This was confirmed by Włodarczyk (2015), who analysed the data collected by many authors between 1994 and 2013: Over the years, Poles began to speak out increasingly in favour of Polish goods.

Consumer patriotism is increasingly becoming a visible trend in Polish purchasing decisions (Ertmańska & Ertmański, 2011). However, there is a discrepancy between the explanations and practise, which may be partly due to consumers' limited knowledge of the companies' country of origin (Włodarczyk, 2015). There are also visible differences in preferences for domestic and foreign products depending on the product category. The study by Maison (2004) showed that Polish respondents, regardless of their age, perceive Polish food products more favourably than foreign products. The opposite was the case for durable goods such as cars, trousers and electrical appliances. The study by Maison and Baran (2014) also

showed that the ethnocentrism of Polish respondents is strong when it comes to food and drink. Another study analysing the ethnocentrism of Polish consumers in relation to selected product groups was conducted by Baran (2017). It found that in the purchase criteria for milk and dairy products, the importance of the country of origin of both the brand and the product itself was higher than for cosmetics, clothing and footwear. However, it is worth noting that these factors were less important than high quality, brand trust and low price. The results also show that although respondents do not admit that country of origin is important to them, they choose domestic brands when asked which countries they prefer brands from.

Over the years, studies have been carried out in Poland to show whether the extent of consumer ethnocentrism depends on psychosocial and demographic factors. Wolanin-Jarosz (2015) pointed out that prejudice against other cultures leads to an increase in ethnocentrism, as does the collectivist attitude of individuals. In terms of demographic factors, studies by Falkowski et al. (1996) and Good and Huddleston (1995) indicate a positive correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and age. Younger consumers are less ethnocentric in their conscious purchasing behaviour (Zięba & Ertmański, 2006). Figiel (2004) found that older people are generally more patriotic than younger people and are therefore more inclined to buy products of local origin. In addition, the study by Szromnik (2014) showed that relatively older people have more prejudices against foreign products. However, this dependence was only weakly pronounced.

Some studies also point to the influence of gender on ethnocentrism (Ertmańska & Ertmański 2011; Good & Huddleston, 1995; Szromnik & Wolanin-Jarosz, 2014) – according to these, women show stronger ethnocentric tendencies than men. However, the study by Hat (2017) did not show such a result. This study also found no correlation between ethnocentrism and income. However, the analyses by Falkowski et al. (1996) and Good and Huddleston (1995) showed a negative correlation between the level of income and the level of ethnocentrism. The study by Ertmańska and Ertmański (2011) found no correlation between the financial situation or place of residence and the level of ethnocentrism of Polish consumers – however, it was found that in groups of people living in large cities, there is a tendency towards a low level of ethnocentrism. Maison and Baran (2014) point to the lack of a significant influence of place of residence, Jadach (2020) points to a weak negative correlation supporting previous studies suggesting that ethnocentric consumers most often live in small towns and villages (Falkowski et al., 1996; Hat, 2016).

In addition, education correlates negatively with the level of ethnocentrism (Falkowski et al., 1996; Good & Huddleston, 1995). The study by Szromnik and Wolanin-Jarosz (2013) came to a similar conclusion – Polish respondents with primary school and vocational education showed stronger ethnocentric tendencies than respondents with secondary and higher education.

2.4. Cross-border comparison

There is no study that directly compares the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. Although there are already at least three studies comparing two or three countries simultaneously, the results are not conclusive. Szromnik (2014), who compared consumers in Slovakia, Poland and Romania, found that Slovakian consumers had the highest CETSCALE scores, but the difference with consumers in the other two countries was rather marginal.

According to Čvirik (2021a), Czech consumers were more ethnocentric than Slovakian consumers. Looking only at the studies by Čvirik (2021a) and Szromnik (2014), one would expect Czechs to be more ethnocentric than Slovaks and Slovaks to be slightly more ethnocentric than Poles. However, the study by Małysa-Kaleta (2011) does not allow such a conclusion to be drawn. This is because her respondents from Poland and the Czech Republic showed a different hierarchy of importance of product selection criteria – only the Polish respondents ranked the criterion of national origin among the three most important. In addition, Polish respondents showed a higher level of ethnocentrism in relation to food and a lower level in relation to high-tech products. Czech respondents were more cosmopolitan on these issues. In an older study comparing four Central European countries (Vida & Fairhurst, 1999), the Poles were also proved to be more ethnocentric than the Czechs. The question therefore remains as to which of these three nations is the most ethnocentric.

2.5. Hypotheses formulation

The research summarised above is not only extensive, but also shows that consumer ethnocentrism still needs to be analysed. Considering only demographic parameters as one of the four sets of antecedents of CE, there are several indications of how these may influence the level of CE in different countries around the world, but only a limited number of papers track these parameters at the regional level.

In formulating the research hypotheses, we are guided by the most common findings found in global and local/regional publications and make the following assumptions:

- H1: Younger people are less ethnocentric than older people in all three selected countries.
- H2: Women are more ethnocentric than men in all three selected countries.
- H3: People with higher education are less ethnocentric than people with lower education in all three selected countries.
- H4: Income does not impact the level of ethnocentrism among consumers of all three selected countries.
- H5: Status impacts consumer ethnocentrism in Slovakia, but not in Poland and the Czech Republic.
- H6: In each selected country, the level of consumer ethnocentrism differs regionally.
- H7: Czech consumers are more ethnocentric than Slovak consumers.

The hypotheses are based solely on the reviewed research findings and we do not arbitrarily extend them by adding additional variables or elements. Furthermore, the research presented in the literature review has generally worked with the CETSCALE, either in its original form or in a modified form. However, as can be seen from the previous lines, some researchers have extended their research on ethnocentrism to better understand consumer attitudes when choosing between domestic and foreign products. An example of this is Hamelin et al. (2011), who wanted to find out to what extent domestic products are favoured by Moroccans over foreign products or vice versa. These authors used four products: juice, jeans, cars and shampoo. They only found a statistically significant relationship between cars and country of origin (referred to as "country of assembly" in their study) and found that a person for whom the country of origin is important tends to be less ethnocentric.

If we compare the study by Hamelin et al. (2011) with the above-mentioned studies conducted in Poland (no similar studies could be found in the Czech Republic and Slovakia), there are hardly any similarities, as the Moroccans were more critical of their local products than the Poles. We therefore formulate three further research hypotheses in a more general form (still focussing on the three CEE countries studied):

- H8: *The level of ethnocentrism correlates with the perception of the importance of the country of origin for juice as a representative of food (No dependence was found in Morocco, but foreign juice was seen as better in absolute terms. Polish foods were rated more favourably.)*
- H9: *The level of ethnocentrism is negatively correlated with the perception of the importance of the country of origin for trousers and shampoo as representatives of relatively*

cheap products. (Foreign products were better perceived in Morocco, as well as in Poland.)

- H10: *The level of ethnocentrism is negatively correlated with the perception of the importance of the country of origin for the car as a representative of expensive products.*

The primary focus of our research is displayed in Figure 1.

3. METHODOLOGY

As already mentioned, we decided to conduct a questionnaire survey in three countries: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland. For this reason, three versions of an anonymous questionnaire were prepared: in Czech, Slovak and Polish. The questionnaires were distributed via social networks to people to whom the authors had personal access (family members, friends, university colleagues, etc.). We only interviewed people who were born and permanently reside in these countries.

To achieve the aim of the study, we prepared a questionnaire with 33 questions, including 27 content-related and six demographic questions. The survey, which follows on from the study by Hamelin et al. (2011), focussed on four products: fruit juice, trousers, car and shampoo. For each product, six characteristics were analysed: quality, price, style, country of origin, brand and innovation (i.e.: $4 \times 6 = 24$ questions). Respondents chose from four valid answers (not important, less important, important, and very important) and one "missing" answer ("I cannot judge").

In addition, respondents were asked to give their opinion on three selected statements on a five-point scale (from "I do not agree" to "I fully agree"). These statements correspond to three of the 17 items used by Shimp and Sharma (1987). This is not a literal translation of the original items.

The change was made to make the statements sound more natural to respondents in the three countries:

- 1) *"Czechs (or Poles, Slovaks) should not buy foreign products, as this may harm entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic (or Poland, Slovakia) and cause unemployment in the Czech Republic (or Poland, Slovakia)."*
- 2) *"Buying Czech (Polish or Slovak) products is always the best decision."*
- 3) *"Only products that we cannot produce ourselves should be imported."*

Although the three statements are intended to serve as a primary indicator of CE in the three countries, we have deliberately assessed several product parameters simultaneously and placed the corre-

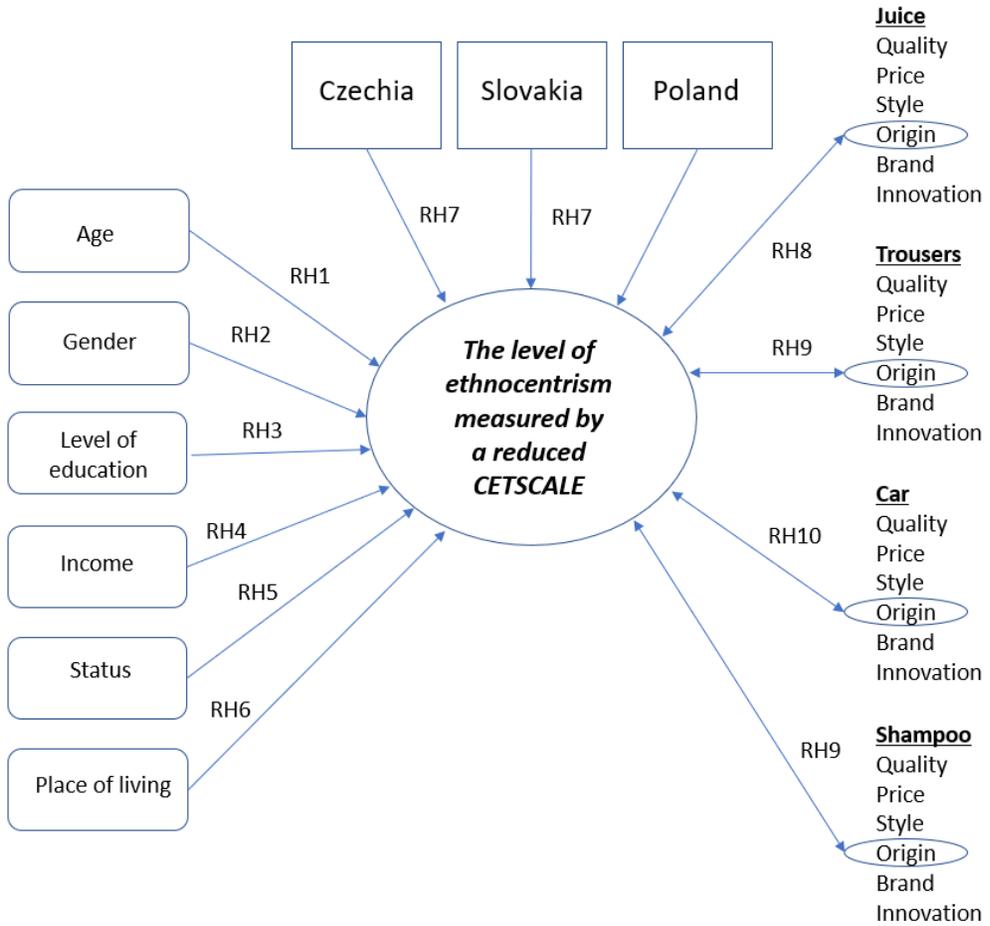


FIGURE 1. The main investigated factors and relationships

SOURCE: Authors.

sponding questions in the questionnaire before the three statements so that consumers are not directly forced to think about their attitude to domestic and foreign products.

In addition, various demographic indicators were used in the questionnaire. These are age (six intervals), gender (two categories), completed education level (3 categories; also referred to as "education"), status (six categories), permanent residence (regions of each selected country) and net monthly income (seven or eight valid options and one non-response option; also referred to as "income").

As the questionnaire adopted the content-based questions of other authors – Shimp and Sharma (1987) and Hamelin et al. (2011) – there was no need to extensively test the reliability of the questions or scales used. However, before implementing the questionnaire, we shared it with a pilot sample

of 12 respondents to identify possible inconsistencies and errors. This pilot survey proved to be successful.

The questionnaire, which was addressed to the Czech population, could be answered from 8 October to 8 November 2021. Responses were collected from a total of 216 respondents. After excluding people who do not have permanent residence in the Czech Republic, responses were collected from 210 respondents. The questionnaire for the Slovakian population ran from 21 October to 8 November 2021 and responses were collected from a total of 236 respondents. After excluding people without permanent residence in the Slovak Republic, we were able to work with the responses of 226 respondents. For the questionnaire addressed to the Polish population, responses were collected from 8 January to 16 January 2022. In total, the answers of 260 respondents were collected. After excluding people without permanent

residence in Poland, we received responses from 251 respondents. We ended the data collection whenever we saw that no further responses were received. The different time periods for data collection resulted from the fact that the authors were not able to develop three language versions of the same questionnaire at the same time; however, this procedure did not affect the respondents' answers, as the respondents in the different countries did not know each other.

First, we summarised the answers we received. Using a statistical analysis, we analysed the dependences of the content-related variables on the demographic indicators. Since the values of the content-related variables are on the ordinal scale and all explanatory variables were recoded into two categories (see below), we applied the Mann-Whitney test. We also conducted a correlation analysis (using the Spearman correlation coefficient) to assess the relationships between respondents' opinions on the importance of product features and between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of product features.

4. RESULTS

As already mentioned, we analysed three samples of 210 Czech respondents, 226 Slovak respondents and 251 Polish respondents. Some categories of demographic indicators happened to have low frequencies. For this reason, we combined some categories. The categories of demographic variables used for the analyses are listed in Tables 1–3 together with their frequency distributions.

TABLE 1. Frequency distributions (in percent) for demographic variables by country (number of respondents in brackets)

	Czechia (210)	Slovakia (226)	Poland (251)
Gender			
men	27.1%	29.2%	17.1%
women	72.9%	70.8%	82.9%
Age			
24 or less	47.6%	61.5%	44.6%
25 or more	52.4%	38.5%	55.4%
Education			
basic or secondary	60.0%	55.8%	53.8%
higher or university	40.0%	44.2%	46.2%
Status			
student	48.1%	53.1%	40.2%
other	51.9%	46.9%	59.1%

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Source: Authors.

We can summarise the answers to the first 24 questions based on the average scores. The results are shown in Tables 4–7. We can see that country of origin is not a factor that can be considered highly significant compared to the other five factors. If we look at the average of the countries analysed (row

TABLE 2. Frequency distributions (in percent) for permanent residence by country

Czech region	Percent	Slovak region	Percent	Polish region	Percent
Prague or Středočeský Region	43.8%	Region of Trnava or Bratislava or Nitra	30.1%	Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	33.1%
Other Czech regions	56.2%	Other Slovak regions	69.9%	Other Polish regions	66.9%

Source: Authors.

TABLE 3. Frequency distributions (in percent) for net income by country

CZK (Czechia)	Percent	EUR (Slovakia)	Percent	PLN (Poland)	Percent
less than 20,000	47.2%	Less than 400	39.4%	Less than 2,000	23.1%
20,000 or more	47.6%	400 or more	53.5%	2,000 or more	59.4%
I don't want to answer	5.2%	I don't want to answer	7.1%	I don't want to answer	17.5%

Source: Authors.

Total), the average scores for country of origin are 1.91 for trousers, 1.93 for shampoos and 2.63 for cars. Only for juices the country of origin surpassed the style – the average is 2.30 for the country of origin compared to 2.16 for the style of the product. Poles place a higher value on country of origin than Czechs and Slovaks, but a statistically significant difference (at the 5% significance level of the Mann-Whitney test) was only found when comparing Polish and Czech perceptions of the importance of this factor for all four products. It is also worth noting that quality is the most important factor for juice, car and shampoo in all three countries and the second most important factor for trousers.

The importance of the country of origin is only weakly positively correlated with the importance of quality. The Spearman correlation coefficient values are 0.159 for juice, 0.183 for trousers, 0.28 for cars and 0.167 for shampoo for the three countries combined. On the other hand, we can state that the highest Spearman correlation coefficient values were obtained for the dependence of country of origin and innovation (0.365 for juice, 0.431 for trousers), or brand (0.526 for cars) or style (0.468 for shampoo).

We also analysed the dependence of some product content-related variables on demographic indicators in each country. Using the Mann-Whitney test, we obtained P-values of less than 0.05

TABLE 4. Average values and numbers of valid answers (in brackets) for juice

	Quality	Price	Style	Origin	Brand	Innovation
Czechia	3.53 (208)	3.02 (208)	2.11 (209)	2.18 (209)	2.30 (209)	2.19 (205)
Slovakia	3.54 (221)	2.96 (222)	2.06 (223)	2.31 (225)	2.37 (223)	2.29 (216)
Poland	3.46 (246)	3.11 (247)	2.29 (248)	2.39 (243)	2.44 (243)	2.47 (245)
Total	3.51 (675)	3.04 (677)	2.16 (680)	2.30 (677)	2.37 (675)	2.32 (666)

Source: Authors.

TABLE 5. Average values and numbers of valid answers (in brackets) for trousers

	Quality	Price	Style	Origin	Brand	Innovation
Czechia	3.32 (208)	3.13 (208)	3.59 (207)	1.79 (209)	1.97 (209)	1.92 (204)
Slovakia	3.52 (221)	3.19 (224)	3.64 (221)	1.81 (225)	2.20 (226)	2.22 (215)
Poland	3.46 (248)	3.29 (248)	3.49 (245)	2.10 (243)	2.40 (244)	2.30 (245)
Total	3.44 (677)	3.21 (680)	3.57 (673)	1.91 (677)	2.20 (679)	2.16 (664)

Source: Authors.

TABLE 6. Average values and numbers of valid answers (in brackets) for cars

	Quality	Price	Style	Origin	Brand	Innovation
Czechia	3.67 (196)	3.48 (198)	3.29 (198)	2.52 (199)	2.99 (199)	2.84 (189)
Slovakia	3.75 (215)	3.60 (216)	3.38 (215)	2.62 (214)	3.08 (215)	3.06 (207)
Poland	3.61 (242)	3.57 (243)	3.42 (244)	2.74 (240)	3.17 (239)	2.94 (235)
Total	3.67 (653)	3.55 (657)	3.37 (657)	2.63 (653)	3.09 (653)	2.95 (631)

Source: Authors.

TABLE 7. Average values and numbers of valid answers (in brackets) for shampoo

	Quality	Price	Style	Origin	Brand	Innovation
Czechia	3.43 (207)	2.83 (210)	1.89 (209)	1.78 (210)	2.42 (210)	2.53 (205)
Slovakia	3.51 (223)	2.74 (223)	1.83 (223)	1.93 (224)	2.58 (222)	2.57 (212)
Poland	3.48 (246)	2.99 (248)	2.13 (246)	2.05 (248)	2.58 (248)	2.85 (244)
Total	3.47 (676)	2.86 (681)	1.96 (678)	1.93 (682)	2.53 (680)	2.66 (661)

Source: Authors.

for the influence of age and status on the variables *juice_origin*, *shampoo_origin*, *car_quality*, *car_price* and *trousers_style* – for all three countries analysed. The country of origin for juice and shampoo is more significant for older respondents and respondents who are not students. The quality and price of the car and the style of the trousers are more important for younger respondents and for students. We also found that the variables *juice_origin* and *shampoo_price* are dependent on income. For juice, the country of origin is more important for respondents with a higher income and the price is more important for respondents with a lower income.

The last three content-related questions referred to the statements. You will recall that these three statements were used from the scale created by Shimp and Sharma (1987) to examine respondents' level of ethnocentrism. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale. The reliability statistics measured by Cronbach's alpha for these three state-

ments are all above 0.7 (the alpha values for Czechia, Slovakia and Poland are 0.833, 0.749 and 0.835 and 0.814 for the three countries combined), so we can consider these statements as the basis for our modified scale for ethnocentrism.

We consider the average of the three scores obtained as the level of ethnocentrism for each respondent. The average values for Czechia, Slovakia and Poland are 2.69, 2.97 and 3.06 respectively. The average values by demographic indicators can be found in Table 8. These tables also contain the P-values obtained on the basis of the Mann-Whitney test. We consider values less than or equal to 0.05 as decisive for the significant dependence of the indicators of ethnocentrism on the demographic indicators. We can mention that when using the variable containing the factor scores (obtained by factor analysis for one component) as the level of ethnocentrism, we obtained the same or very similar P-values as when using the average values mentioned above.

TABLE 8. Level of ethnocentrism according to demographic indicators and P-values (the Mann-Whitney test)

	Czechia			Slovakia			Poland		
	younger	older	P-value	younger	older	P-value	younger	older	P-value
Age	2.36	3.00	< 0.001	2.80	3.25	0.002	2.52	3.50	< 0.001
Gender	men	women	P-value	men	women	P-value	men	women	P-value
	2.62	2.71	0.619	2.72	3.08	0.018	2.91	3.09	0.431
Education	lower	higher	P-value	lower	higher	P-value	lower	higher	P-value
	2.71	2.65	0.624	3.00	2.94	0.753	3.05	3.08	0.775
Income	lower	higher	P-value	lower	higher	P-value	lower	higher	P-value
	2.44	2.98	< 0.001	2.94	3.04	0.419	2.67	3.21	0.001
Status	student	other	P-value	student	other	P-value	student	other	P-value
	2.36	3.00	< 0.001	2.84	3.12	0.048	2.49	3.45	< 0.001
Regions	central	other	P-value	western	other	P-value	Święto	other	P-value
	2.42	2.90	0.001	2.68	3.10	0.004	3.72	2.74	< 0.001

SOURCE: Authors.

Notes: In the education indicator, "lower" means basic or secondary, "higher" means any education higher than secondary, see Table 1.

In the income indicator, “lower” and “higher” mean an income lower or greater (equal, respectively) than 20,000 CZK (i.e., 810 EUR approximately) for the Czech Republic, lower or greater (equal, respectively) than 400 EUR for Slovakia, and lower or greater (equal, respectively) than 2,000 PLN (i.e., 440 EUR approximately) for Poland, see Table 3. In the region indicator, “central” in Czechia represents Prague and Středočeský Region, “western” in Slovakia represents Region of Bratislava, Region of Trnava and Region of Nitra, and “Święto” in Poland represents Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, see Table 2.

Research hypotheses 1 and 6 are the only ones to be confirmed. Younger respondents in all three countries are very likely to be less ethnocentric than older respondents. The dependence of the level of ethnocentrism on the region of permanent residence is difficult to compare between countries, as there are different numbers of regions with respondents of different demographic characteristics. However, we can form different groups of regions and analyse the national differences between the regions, as was the intention of H6. We have therefore tried to create two groups of regions with a significant number of respondents in all three countries. In Table 8, we see that there are significant differences in the level of ethnocentrism between respondents from different regional groups in all three countries.

Research hypotheses H2-H5, regarding gender, education, income and status cannot be confirmed in all three countries. We found that women are generally more ethnocentric than men, but only in Slovakia is the level of ethnocentrism significantly different for men and women. We found no difference in the level of ethnocentrism between respondents with lower and higher education. For net income, we found significant differences in the level of ethnocentrism between lower and higher income respondents in Czechia and Poland (higher income respondents are more ethnocentric than lower income respondents), but not in Slovakia. For status, we must bear in mind that we have only created two categories – “student” and “other” – due to the low frequencies in some sta-

tus categories. We can, therefore, only test differences between these two categories. The results show that there is a dependence on status when, in our sample, students are less ethnocentric than non-students.

As for the country comparison, H7 cannot be accepted (see Table 9). Similar to the significance of country of origin (see text immediately preceding Table 4), Poles are more ethnocentric than Czechs and Slovaks, and Slovaks are more ethnocentric than Czechs. In a comparison by country pairs, only the differences between Czechia and Slovakia and between Czechia and Poland are statistically significant.

For juice, trousers and shampoo, there is a weak positive correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of the country of origin of a given product, see Table 10. It can be seen that the above correlation is highest among Polish respondents – ethnocentrism has the strongest influence on their perception of the importance of the product’s country of origin. The results collected in three countries allow the confirmation of H8, but H9 cannot be confirmed. For cars, there is no significant correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of the country of origin. Therefore, hypothesis H10 cannot be confirmed.

The weak negative correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and product quality for cars and for all countries together was also found for juice, see Table 10. For these two products and for all countries together, there is also a negative correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and price (see Table 11) and for the case of trousers and style (see Table 12). A weak positive correlation was found for the following cases: shampoo and style, juice, trousers, shampoo and innovation (see Table 12).

TABLE 9. Level of ethnocentrism by country and P-values as results of the Mann-Whitney test

	Czechia – Slovakia			Czechia – Poland			Slovakia – Poland		
	Czechia	Slovakia	P-value	Czechia	Poland	P-value	Slovakia	Poland	P-value
Average	2.69	2.97	0.004	2.69	3.06	0.001	2.97	3.06	0.365

SOURCE: Authors.

TABLE 10. Values of the Spearman correlation coefficient for the level of ethnocentrism, and the importance of the country of origin and of the quality of a certain product

	Country of origin				Quality			
	Juice	Trousers	Car	Shampoo	Juice	Trousers	Car	Shampoo
Czechia	0.267	0.185	0.091	0.237	-0.104	-0.089	-0.142	-0.026
Slovakia	0.229	0.205	0.019	0.303	-0.082	-0.033	-0.153	0.004
Poland	0.373	0.267	0.008	0.313	-0.043	-0.025	-0.097	-0.081
Total	0.304	0.230	0.047	0.299	-0.078	-0.027	-0.129	-0.029

SOURCE: Authors.**Notes:** For p-values lower than 0.05, the coefficient values are highlighted.**TABLE 11.** Values of the Spearman correlation coefficient for the level of ethnocentrism, and the importance of the price and of the brand of a certain product

	Price				Brand			
	Juice	Trousers	Car	Shampoo	Juice	Trousers	Car	Shampoo
Czechia	-0.073	0.008	-0.112	0.053	-0.044	-0.133	-0.114	-0.056
Slovakia	-0.011	-0.052	-0.102	-0.014	0.104	-0.001	-0.090	0.034
Poland	-0.151	-0.087	-0.128	-0.031	0.111	0.077	-0.035	0.073
Total	-0.077	-0.030	-0.102	0.010	0.066	0.013	-0.064	0.031

SOURCE: Authors.**Notes:** For p-values lower than 0.05, the coefficient values are highlighted.**TABLE 12.** Values of the Spearman correlation coefficient for the level of ethnocentrism, and the importance of style and of the innovation of a certain product

	Style				Innovation			
	Juice	Trousers	Car	Shampoo	Juice	Trousers	Car	Shampoo
Czechia	0.004	-0.161	-0.063	0.085	0.200	0.142	-0.012	0.039
Slovakia	0.074	-0.122	-0.133	0.129	0.102	0.090	-0.084	0.161
Poland	0.076	-0.094	-0.050	0.068	0.191	0.125	0.035	0.051
Total	0.062	-0.125	-0.068	0.098	0.176	0.141	-0.002	0.095

SOURCE: Authors.**Notes:** For p-values lower than 0.05, the coefficient values are highlighted

5. DISCUSSION

Our study strongly supports the evidence provided in several papers (e.g., Richardson; 2012; Josiassen et al., 2011; Erdogan and Uzkuurt, 2010; Chrysochoidis et al., 2007; Witkowski, 1998; Caruana 1996) on the importance of age for consumers' level of ethnocentrism, as younger consumers (aged 24 and under) in the Czech

Republic, Slovakia and Poland appear to be less ethnocentric than older consumers.

Furthermore, our study ties to the work by Schnettler et al. (2011), Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2020) or Kaynak and Kara (2002) who concluded that there is or could be a different level of CE between people when these people come from different parts of a country. In our study, a statistically significant de-

pendence was found between respondents' permanent residence and their level of ethnocentrism.

The need to recode some of the original categories meant that the indicator for permanent residence in each country now offers two categories of regions that are hardly comparable between the three countries. However, we may surmise that people living closer to a country's capital are less ethnocentric. In Table 8, we see that in the case of Czechia, it was statistically confirmed that respondents from our sample who live permanently in Prague or the Středočeský Region (which includes Prague) are less ethnocentric. In Slovakia, people living in the west (in the Bratislava, Trnava and Nitra regions) seem to be less ethnocentric than those living in the central and eastern parts of the country. For Poland, we cannot speculate in the same direction, as one category is represented by the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship and the other category, the recoded one, is formed by other Polish regions. It turns out that the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship has more ethnocentric consumers than the average of the other regions, but it is not a region with obvious specificities that would allow such an assumption. The specific differences between the regions of the other two Central European countries cannot be adequately explained by the existing literature either and therefore require further research in the future. In Czechia and Poland, some regions are less ethnocentric than others within the country. In Slovakia, there is a clear difference between three regions near the capital and the central and eastern parts of the country.

Furthermore, we must emphasise that the statistics for the recoded indicator status that we show in Table 8 reveal statistically significant dependences for all three countries, which would contradict the finding of Saffu et al. (2010) that non-students are less ethnocentric than students. However, we should be very careful because there is a correlation between age and status in all countries, as 93% of respondents in Czechia (82.7% in Slovakia and 83.9% in Poland) aged 24 or younger are students and 92.7% of respondents in Czechia (94.3% in Slovakia and 95% in Poland) aged 25 or older are non-students. We can assume that the differences are due to age and not status. In reality, this says nothing about the other types of status that we originally wanted to capture as well, such as employed or retired. The other three demographic indicators commonly used in social science – gender, education level and income – were not associated with the level of ethnocentrism of the consumers surveyed in all three countries simultaneously.

As already anticipated, the three modified CETS-CALE statements that we used as the primary key to

understanding consumer ethnocentrism in the three selected countries were complemented by examining the importance of different parameters in relation to four selected products. We found that consumers from all three countries prioritised the quality and price of the four products. For trousers, style became the deciding factor over quality, while country of origin tended to achieve lower or lowest on average across the three countries.

Regarding the relationship between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of the country of origin of certain products, this study found a low positive correlation for three products: juice, trousers and shampoo. The results in relation to food are consistent with other studies conducted among Poles, and show that ethnocentrism is related to food choices (e.g. Maison and Baran, 2014). In addition, the study by Małysa-Kaleta (2011) showed that Polish respondents are more ethnocentric about food than Czech respondents. This was also the result of our study – the level of ethnocentrism among Polish respondents correlated most strongly with the importance of the country of origin in the case of juice. We therefore cannot agree with the findings of Szromnik (2014) and Čvirik (2021a) from their two-country comparisons.

On the other hand, no other studies can be found that show a positive correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of country of origin in shampoo and trousers. One could assume that ethnocentric attitudes arise when the choice falls on relatively cheap products. Trousers are generally more expensive than shampoo – perhaps this is why the correlation is lower in their case than for shampoo. However, further research should be conducted to examine whether the price of products has a direct influence on the manifestation of ethnocentric tendencies.

The study by Małysa-Kaleta (2011) also showed that Poles are less ethnocentric when it comes to high-tech products. Perhaps this is related to the fact that they consider Polish durable goods, including cars, to be of lower quality than foreign products (Maison, 2004). This could be the result of previous experiences when domestic products were of lower quality than foreign ones. This study, which was conducted with respondents from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland, found no significant correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of the country of origin in the case of cars. However, it is noticeable that almost all average scores in relation to the importance of various factors in product selection are highest for cars – the only higher average score for the importance of features is found for trousers in the case of "style".

This suggests that more factors are considered important in the purchase decision for a durable product than in the selection of other goods, e.g. food. It is possible that if the quality and price of a car are important to respondents, they primarily consider these factors and do not pay attention to where the product comes from. They may also favour countries with which they associate well-known car brands. It can therefore be assumed that there is a dissociation between the conscious and hidden attitudes of the ethnocentric consumer. This leads to a conflict between decisions based on emotions, the desire to support the domestic economy and the rational judgement of the quality of products based on experience and observation.

6. IMPLICATIONS

This study has some practical implications. Knowing the relationship between demographic factors and the level of ethnocentrism can significantly influence the effectiveness of companies' marketing messages. Age is one of the demographic characteristics related to consumer ethnocentrism in the three countries studied. Therefore, the use of national motifs in an advertising message aimed at older consumers can help to increase the acceptance of marketing activities. It can also increase consumer confidence and thus positively influence consumer purchasing decisions.

Another implication is the suggestion to support local, national producers. Through such activities, companies can create a positive brand image – especially in the eyes of older people. This could be particularly beneficial for companies offering food products in Poland, as the importance of country of origin is most strongly correlated with the ethnocentrism of Polish respondents when it comes to juices. Nevertheless, we must point out that the willingness to buy domestic products could depend on more factors at the same time as discovered, e.g., by Yen (2018) who found that perceived quality, perceived price and perceived brand image were significantly associated with this willingness.

The study found, albeit to a small extent, various levels of CE between regions in different countries. Our limited sample of respondents could not reveal the extent of differences between regions, but companies investing, producing or promoting their products in any of the three countries in the Central European region should not ignore the possibility that local products are favoured in certain locations in certain countries. In addition, companies operating in the region should be careful when introducing their products or services, as our study shows that the Poles are

the most ethnocentric nation of the three analysed nations, while the Slovaks and especially the Czechs may be more tolerant of some foreign products.

8. LIMITATIONS

This work can be criticised on several levels. Firstly, like many previous studies on ethnocentrism, it works only with convenience samples. Even if more than 200 responses in each country could be considered satisfactory, our results cannot be considered a means for reliable generalisation across the three nations. Moreover, some of the observed categories contained only a small number of respondents, which could only be partially compensated by the recoding we performed. Second, our study focused mainly on demographic indicators as one of the antecedents of ethnocentrism described by Shankarmahesh (2006), thus neglecting other preconditions and failing to paint a more complex picture of the consumer profiles and backgrounds of the three countries. Third, our study does not examine the reasons for consumer reactions. Fourth, the paper looks at the situation today and does not track the impact of possible changes in consumer attitudes over time. Fifth, our CETSCALE is in a reduced form. Although it is common practise among researchers to use a modified CETSCALE, this may prevent readers from making quick comparisons with previous research.

Last but not least, the data collection was conducted at unusual Covid-19 times, which could affect the way respondents answer the formulated questions.

As this research was partly iterative and partly explanatory, future research should focus on further assessment of ethnocentric tendencies in the three countries studied as well as in other countries in the Central European region. Not only should future samples of respondents in all countries analysed be more balanced in terms of their geographical and age structure to confirm our two main findings (see H1 and H6), but other products could also be included in the evaluation to learn more about when consumers perceive a country of origin as a relevant factor. Furthermore, we still need to find out which of the three nations analysed here is the least and most ethnocentric, as this study could not give a clear answer.

9. CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to understand the extent to which consumers from three neighbouring Central European countries are similar or different in their ethnocentric attitudes. Worldwide, there are only a very

limited number of studies comparing more than two countries from the same region, so this work should make a valuable contribution to the current state of knowledge. Using a reduced CETSCALE, we found that Polish respondents are more ethnocentric than Czech and Slovak respondents and Slovak respondents are more ethnocentric than Czech respondents, however, only the differences between Czechia and Slovakia and between Czechia and Poland are statistically significant. The analysis showed that age and permanent residence in the three selected countries are discriminating factors. We thus confirm a large number of studies that find a correlation between age and the level of consumer ethnocentrism. Furthermore, by including the indicator of permanent residence, we add new insights into how consumers' place of residence can determine their ethnocentric attitudes, which were previously underdeveloped.

The four products included in the study – juice, car, trousers and shampoo – were used to bring another perspective to the assessment of consumers'

ethnocentric level in the three countries. For juice, trousers and shampoo, there is a weak positive correlation between the level of ethnocentrism and the importance of the country of origin of a particular product in all three countries, but not for cars. Thanks to the analysis of products where Poles generally stated that the country of origin has a stronger influence on their purchasing decisions than in the case of Czechs and Slovaks, we can draw the main conclusion that Poles are the most ethnocentric nation of the three samples.

Despite the obvious drawbacks of this research, the study is original in two respects: it has worked with three neighbouring countries that share similar social and cultural characteristics, and it has integrated two levels of investigation: the demographic antecedents of consumer ethnocentrism and product evaluation. The study extends existing knowledge by pointing to the importance of consumers' permanent residence for their ethnocentric attitudes.

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ETNOCENTRIZAM MEĐU POTROŠAČIMA U ODABRANIM ZEMLJAMA SREDNJE EUROPE: DETALJNA OCJENA ETNOCENTRIČNIH OBRASACA

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Koristeći anketiranje, ovaj rad ima za cilj provesti međunarodnu usporedbu etnocentričnog ponašanja u tri susjedne zemlje srednjeeuropske regije. Razina etnocentrizma, izražena reduciranom CETSCALE skalom, mjeri se i procjenjuje pomoću šest demografskih pokazatelja i na temelju četiri proizvoda. Odgovori na reduciranu CETSCALE skalu pokazuju da su poljski ispitanici etnocentričniji od čeških i slovačkih ispitanika, te da su slovački ispitanici etnocentričniji od čeških ispitanika. Međutim, samo su razlike između Češke i Slovačke, te između Češke i Poljske statistički značajne. Najjača razina etnocentrizma među Poljacima također je očita kada se analiziraju mišljenja potrošača o četiri odabrana proizvoda. Što se tiče mogućih razlika u etnocentričnom ponašanju potrošača stanovništva, analiza je otkrila da su godine i stalno prebivalište u tri odabrane zemlje diskriminirajući faktori. Studija je originalna po tome što kombinira dvije razine istraživanja i istovremeno ispituje tri susjedne zemlje.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *etnocentrizam, demografski pokazatelji, percepcija, zemlja podrijetla, Srednja Europa.*