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Ethnocentrism of Consumers and the Importance of Information in Consumer Behaviour: the Case Study of Food Consumption in Russia

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Abstract

Economic instability, as an external factor, significantly affects consumer behaviour (Shankarmahesh 2006). Since 2014, mutual sanctions between Russia and Western countries, as well as the fall in oil prices intensified the crisis processes. The absence of certain types of goods on the Russian market as a response embargo on food import has led to the changes in the assortment of the food market and, thus, in the choices made by Russian consumers towards certain food products. The main objective is to study the drivers of consumer behaviour of Russian consumers and changes in their preferences related to food purchasing and food habits in the new economic conditions. Primary data are collected by qualitative approach. The qualitative data were collected by the author with holding two focus groups with open testing of products (yogurts), in Moscow, in October 2019, among 13 participants. For primary data analyses qualitative methods (content analysis, factor analysis, data fragmentation by using Conceptually clustered matrix and Componential analysis of chosen food categories). The results of qualitative research of consumer behaviour towards certain food products (embargoed product – yogurt and non-embargoed – pasta) in Russia show that the country of origin and product brand are important for the consumer, but not decisive in the choice of goods. However, it was possible to identify a high level of consumer support for those food products to which the import substitution policy is largely directed, in view of the sanctions introduced. The author also believes that the preference for foreign-made pasta may be related to the shelf life of the product. Unlike yoghurts, among the decisive factors during the purchase, the shelf life was not identified by the respondents, since pasta is a product with a long shelf life.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, consumer ethnocentrism, food products, import substitution, Russian consumers