

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

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THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR
REGIONAL RESEARCH IN SLOVAKIA
DIPLOMA THESIS

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Affirmation

I hereby affirm that this thesis represents my own original research and writing and that I have referenced all appropriate source materials.

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Abstrakt

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Diplomová práca sa zaoberá skúmaním vplyvu kultúry na spotrebiteľské správanie so zameraním sa na slovenských spotrebiteľov s ich špecifickými regionálnymi a kultúrnymi rozdielmi. Cieľom je určiť z toho vyplývajúce dôsledky pre marketingové stratégie firiem, ktoré vstupujú na slovenský trh. Teoretická časť práce sa zameriava na faktory, ktoré ovplyvňujú spotrebiteľov v ich nákupnom správaní naprieč kultúrami a naznačuje dôležitosť výberu správnej marketingovej stratégie. Praktická časť sa sústreďuje na analyzovanie faktorov, ktoré vplyvajú na slovenských spotrebiteľov na celoštátnej ako aj na regionálnej úrovni a porovnáva ich vzory správania na základe regionálnych subkultúr. Práca je rozdelená na štyri kapitoly a obsahuje 24 obrázkov a 4 tabuľky. Prvá kapitola sa zaoberá vzťahom medzi kultúrou a spotrebiteľským správaním ako aj analýzou vonkajších a vnútorných faktorov, ktoré hrajú rozhodujúcu úlohu pri nákupných zvykoch a vzoroch správania. Druhá kapitola sa zameriava na marketingový vplyv na spotrebiteľa a jeho kultúru cez médiá, moderné digitálne platformy a obchodnú značku. Okrem toho sa zaoberá aj vplyvom globalizácie na spotrebiteľské správanie a výber vhodnej marketingovej stratégie. Tretia kapitola aplikuje teoretické poznatky z predchádzajúcich častí na Slovensko a jeho regióny tým, že definuje faktory, ktoré ovplyvňujú slovenských spotrebiteľov podložené štatistickými údajmi, výsledkami z iných výskumov a s využitím Hofstedeho kultúrneho modelu ako základu pre definovanie slovenských hodnôt a postojov. Posledná kapitola rozširuje empirickú časť práce a porovnáva odpovede z dotazníkového prieskumu medzi účastníkmi na celoštátnej a regionálnej úrovni a zisťuje rozdielnosti a podobnosti v ich spotrebiteľskom správaní. Z výskumu vyplýva, že nie je potrebné prispôbovať marketingové stratégie slovenským regionálnym subkultúram, avšak firmy by mali uplatňovať osobitý prístup pre slovenských spotrebiteľov na základe ich kultúrnych špecifik na národnej úrovni. Výsledky výskumu môžu pomôcť firmám vo vybraní a vytvorení vhodnej marketingovej stratégie s ohľadom na slovenskú kultúru.

Kľúčové slová: kultúra, vplyv, spotrebiteľské správanie, marketingová stratégia, slovenský spotrebiteľ

Abstract

BUKOVSKÁ, Diana. The Impact of Culture on Consumer Behaviour: Regional Research in Slovakia. – University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages; Department of Intercultural Communication. – Supervisor: PhDr. Ildikó Némethová, PhD. Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2019, pp.83.

The thesis aims to investigate the influence of culture on consumer behaviour with focus on Slovak consumers with their specific regional and cultural variables. The objective is to determine its consequent implications for marketing strategies of companies entering the Slovak market. The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on factors that influence consumers in their buying behaviour across cultures and outlines the importance of choosing the right marketing strategy. The practical part aims to analyse the factors that influence Slovak consumers on national as well as on the regional-level and compares their behavioural patterns on the basis of their regional subcultures. The thesis is divided into four chapters and contains 24 figures and 4 tables. The first chapter concerns with the relation between culture and consumer behaviour as well as the analysis of external and internal factors that play a determining role in buying habits and behavioural patterns of consumers across cultures. The second chapter deals with marketing influence on consumer and its culture through media, modern digital platforms and brand. Moreover, it concerns the effects of globalization on consumer behaviour and the selection of the right strategy. The third chapter applies the theoretical findings from the previous parts on Slovakia and its regions by providing factors that influence their buying behaviour supported by statistic data, results from other researches with application of the Hofstede's cultural model as a base for definition of Slovak values and attitudes. The last chapter extends the empirical part of the thesis and compares the responds from the questionnaire survey between the participants on the national and the regional-level and identifies the differences and similarities in their consumer behaviour. Research shows that it is not necessary to adapt marketing strategies to the Slovak regional subcultures, although companies should employ a distinctive approach for Slovak consumers based on their cultural specifics on the national-level. The findings of the research can help companies in the selection and creation of a suitable marketing strategy with respect to Slovak culture.

Keywords: culture, influence, consumer behaviour, marketing strategy, Slovak consumer

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Introduction

Effects of globalization and rapid progress of technologies encourage companies to use standardised marketing strategies for more countries regardless of their cultural specifics, although there are no global consumers with universal values, attitudes and consumer behaviour. Consumers react to the same information and message differently because their perception is based on their own mental images embedded deeply in their culture and in their individual attributes gained through upbringing, socialization and life experiences. This thesis aims to investigate the influence of culture on consumer behaviour with focus on Slovak consumers and their specific regional and cultural variables. Determination of the factors that influence Slovak consumers, identification of Slovak values, opinions and attitudes with comparison on the national and regional level may help marketers in the selection and creation of a suitable marketing strategy for the Slovak market.

In order to identify the cultural factors that play a determining role in Slovak consumer behaviour, the first chapter focuses on the relation between culture and consumer behaviour in general and examines the external and internal factors that influence the behavioural patterns and habits of consumers. The second theoretical chapter focuses on the marketing influence through media, digital platforms and branding as well as the globalization effects on consumer behaviour and selection of a marketing strategy. The theoretical findings and observations based on publications of many respected authors such as De Mooij, Kotler and Keller and Solomon mentioned throughout the thesis are supported by Slovak statistical data and Hofstede cultural model. They are utilised in the third chapter as a basis for the analysis of factors that influence Slovak consumers on the national and the regional-level. The fourth chapter aims to verify the reliability of the obtained theoretical information regarding the cultural influence on buying behaviour and behavioural patterns of Slovak consumers on marketing purposes through the self-administered questionnaire to be distributed to all regions of Slovakia.

The obtained data has been analysed using a statistical program, evaluated on the national as well as on the regional-level and compared with each other in order to get reliable answers on cultural and regional influence of Slovak consumer behaviour. The results can help marketers and companies that are considering investments in Slovakia to better understand the influencing factors with regard to Slovak culture, the differences and similarities in Slovak consumer behaviour based on the regions they live in and to identify

Slovak values and opinions. The comparison of consumer behaviour in Slovak regions can help them to choose the right marketing strategy and communication for Slovak consumers.

1 Consumer Behaviour and Culture

The interrelation between consumer behaviour and culture is recently in the foreground. Consumer behaviour is a complex mechanism that is distinct from culture to culture. The attractiveness of this field for marketers and companies is still increasing because in today's multicultural environment, consumers started to value more their cultural variabilities and support their local products and services. That is the reason why going local and recognition of variables of each culture is a new trend between marketers. The first chapter introduces the background of the research topic, the decision-making process of consumers in relation with their culture and explains its importance for marketing. Schiffman, Hansen and Kanuk (2008) distinguish two types of consumers i.e. individual and organisational one. Individual consumers are the final customers that are represented by families and individuals that are shopping for their own purposes, while the organisational consumers are companies, institutions and other organizations that want to make further profit and sell it to the final consumer. This research is aimed at the individual consumers across cultures and examines the influence of culture and its variations on consumer behaviour of Slovak people and its implications for marketing purposes.

In a consumerist society, people buy and use products and services on a daily basis. This leads to the interest of scientists, marketing researchers and businesses in the study of buying behaviour. Schiffman, Hansen and Kanuk explain it as “the behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products, services, and ideas” (Schiffman – Hansen – Kanuk, 2008). Analysis of consumer behaviour is undoubtedly important for successful marketing strategies. With the increasing popularity of social media there is still a higher demand for information to target a customer. For a consumer interaction, marketers have to take into consideration many economic, psychological, sociological, cultural and individual factors that are affecting our buying preferences. It is a complex process because people go through dynamic changes throughout their life and so does their consumer habits and behavioural patterns. It follows that, to sell more products and services, it is necessary to be a little bit of sociologist, psychologist and expert into culture and marketing, because “consumer behaviour is much more than buying

things; it also embraces the study about how having (or not having) things affects our lives, and how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and about each other – our state of being” (Solomon, 2006). Another author claims that “the study of consumer behaviour can be divided into three interdependent dimensions; the study of culture, the study of social groups and the study of the individual” (Kotler – Keller, 2012).

Even though, it is said that every individual is different, we all form part of some group of people, society, culture, subculture etc. that has similar needs and wants. Since a consumer can be a little girl buying ice-cream or a businessman looking for a new sport car, it is helpful to make a market segmentation and categorise consumer needs according to their age, gender, beliefs, economic situation, profession, family cycle, motivation and other indicators to understand more easily their preferences. A concept of needs is a complex psychological system. Needs and demands are dynamic and reflect our ideas, feelings, experiences and situational problems. The main difference between needs and wants is that needs are quite universal among the world while wants are based on different cultural variables. Scientists distinguish between “basic psychological needs for food, clothing, warmth and safety; social needs for belonging and affection; and individual needs for knowledge and self-expression” (Armstrong et al., 2014). On the other hand, the wants express that people all around the world have different habits and tastes. While some prefer tea during breakfast others like coffee, water or orange juice. Desires “are shaped by culture and individual personality” (Armstrong et al., 2014). It follows that behaviour is influenced by culture because the wants of consumers differ with relation to their diverse cultural values.

1.1 Consumer Traits

Traits can be defined as specific personal characteristics that affect any kind of behaviour across all kind of situation. They are defined as “any distinguishing, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another” (Schiffman – Hansen – Kanuk, 2008). Every consumer is different with regard to the different backgrounds, personal characteristics, psychological processes, economic situation, values, education, motivation and etc. These diverse factors shape a consumer with its unique values, beliefs, preferences, priorities and dreams that influence their perception of products and services. Moreover, consumer’s needs and wants may be different even within the same culture based on their different language, ethnicity, religion, lifestyle and etc. Marketers should take into

consideration different subcultures that may exist within the national culture, segment them and adapt their marketing strategy accordingly because buying behaviour often changes significantly based on the different psychological, social, cultural, economic and individual factors. The influence of these factors is examined in the following sections.

1.1.1 Cultural Factors

Cultural factors that influence consumer behaviour are frequently ignored by marketers when entering a new market. However, cultural values, beliefs, traditions, religion and expectations that people acquire in their lives through the process of socialization and through their life experiences is embedded deeply in their behavioural patterns.

Culture

Culture determines people's wants and behaviour. Children are raised with different values, beliefs, customs and worldviews that are later reflected in their buying behaviour, perception and preferences for products and services. Their culture affects their everyday life routine, it influences the clothes they wear, the food they eat, the products and services they buy and how they use and consume them.

From a marketer's point of view, culture is "the sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct the consumer behaviour of members of particular society." (Schiffman – Hansen – Kanuk, 2008) Consumers with similar value systems are believed to behave in a similar way, i.e. if someone is raised in a family with healthy diets and enough exercising, the individual believes that it is the right way of living, so they will act accordingly and teach their descendants the same. Value is an individual's belief about what is in relation to people's behaviour important, appropriate, desirable, useful, good or bad. It is the guide line or some kind of mental boundary people are unconsciously using in their everyday life and purchases. Although, culture is passed from generation to generation, there are some shifts throughout the time. According to Hopkins (2016) culture changes all the time, but at a different rate. When people experience some significant changes, as it was at the end of the last millennium with the advance of technologies, culture changes more rapidly. For example, people are becoming more environmentally conscious because of the raising awareness of effects of climate change which causes that consumers' values change and companies respond by launching of ecologic products and alternatives. This ecologic movement has led to the emergence of a new trend of sustainable consumers in Europe. They

are looking for more ecological products and services, with natural, non-plastic and non-chemical elements.

Solomon claims (2006) the impact of culture on the consumer behaviour is only being realized when people travel and live in a foreign country with different environment, where they cannot behave the way they are used to or buy the things they would normally buy. It is because of different cultures; e.g. Cuban people use more sugar than people in Europe. The difference is based on their history of sugar production, since a concept of culture not only involves the mental images but also the history, language, rituals, tradition, material artefacts and more. Moreover, a country production and its well-known products can demonstrate the culture specifics and it gives us an idea of their values, tradition and history. There are lots of certain products that can be ascribed to a particular culture, e.g. consider American hamburger, Chinese porcelain, Dutch tulips, Czech beer, Belgian chocolate, Ceylon tea, New Zealand wool, French wine etc. These products give us an idea of the culture's values, e.g. French people have a liking for a fine wine with a specific taste, Ceylon people prefer tea to coffee and Americans do not have a well-balanced diet.

Nevertheless, culture is not only significant as a whole, within a culture there are several subcultures with their unique value systems reflected in their potentially different consumer behaviour from their national culture.

Subcultures

A culture can be divided into several smaller groups based on their demographic factors, geographic regions, national and ethnic identities, religious, political and environmental beliefs etc. Within these groups people share the same values, beliefs, attitudes and habits which may distinguish them from their national culture and affect their buying behaviour.

The segmentation of people on the basis of factors such as their age, life cycle, gender, sexual orientation, religion, occupation, education, marital status and geographic region divides people into different demographic subcultures with a characteristic behaviour. There are youth, hacker, gay, hipster, gothic, zero-waste, rock, Buddhist, Hispanic, Chinese, Vietnamese and millions of other subcultures present in cultures. To reach the target consumer and make more profit, marketers have to take into consideration subcultures and analyse their buying behaviour because their responds to advertisement may be different.

Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2012) explain that a furniture company IKEA noted they had problems to reach the Hispanic subculture in U.S., so they chose to translate all the advertisements and to engage some popular Hispanic celebrities in order to gain their audience. Shortly afterwards, they monitored immediate results.

Geographic characteristics also play an important role in buying behaviour because the way people behave may vary according to where they live or from which part of the country or region, they have moved in. Geographic subcultures can be perceived from various points of views, e.g. regional, urban or rural subculture. Throughout countries conditions change, they may have different climates, territorial conditions, age distribution, religious and political beliefs, lifestyles and etc. that affect their buying behaviour. For example, people living in colder territories near mountains buy probably more warm clothes and shoes than people in cities; people from cities are eating out in restaurants more than people living in villages because the villagers tend to cook at home. These regional differences may influence the way people respond to marketing, what types of product and services do they use, how they buy them, to which attributes they give importance when buying or in which situations they do their purchases.

Another factor that can play a determining role in consumer behaviour are religious beliefs. Marketers have to be careful and analyse all religions in their target culture because the behaviour of believers may vary according to their different religious values, beliefs and habits. A particular religion can determine what consumers buy or not buy and it can also discourage them from certain products and services, e.g. Islam consumers are discouraged from a purchase of items such alcoholic beverages or pork, Hinduist from India cannot buy beef because it is a sacred animal etc. However, the impact of religion depends on the level of religiosity, because devout believers behave differently than those less devoted, e.g. devout Islamist may consider immoral to be materialistic. Catholics on the other hand have “the authoritarian’s tendency to rigid, exaggerated sex-role stereotypes that stress clearly defined roles of dominance and submission in husband/wife and general male/female relationships” (Delener, 1994). This tendency may affect their buying behaviour, because the gender roles are already set and each one has the extent where he can make a buying decision.

Ethnic subcultures are groups of people that have migrated from one country into another and started there a new life. They can become citizens of another country still their

buying behaviour might not change. Their national culture is still a part of them and they feel pride towards their tradition and culture. It is reflected in their purchases because they buy products and services that resemble their original culture, e.g. ethnic food, clothes, newspaper, music, art, plane tickets to their country etc. For example, there are many inhabitants from Muslim countries living in different parts of the world, that are already citizens of the country they live in still their buying behaviour is like in their national culture. They buy their typical food, wear traditional clothes and go to mosques on Friday. The ethnic identity is passed from one generation to another although it is normal that they may lose their national culture over time.

1.1.2 Economic Factors

A purchase of a product or service is not only conditioned by consumer's interest in buying because consumers would not buy the merchandise unless they have a sufficient sum of disposable money. The consumer behaviour is closely linked with economic factors such as personal income, family income, future income expectations, the state of economy, unemployment rate and etc. These economic indicators and people's approaches towards spending vary across countries and that is why they form part of every marketing analysis of a new market.

Personal and family incomes are one of the most significant determinants of buying behaviour. While personal income only takes into account the earnings of a one member of a family, family income is a sum of all earnings, especially those of mother and father that are used to satisfy their family needs and wants. In order to predict the consumer behaviour, income and purchasing power of the target consumers have to be carefully analysed. After deducting taxes and money spent on basic necessities from the net personal or family income, the discretionary income is left. "Many marketers are particularly interested in discretionary income, the amount of money people have to spend after buying necessities such as food, clothing, and housing" (Boone-Kurtz, 2015) The amount of money that people can use according to their preferences is the decisive factor that influences their decision making concerning the selection of goods and brands. "An increase in the discretionary income leads to an increase in the expenditure on shopping goods, luxuries etc. which improves the standard of living of a person" (Ramya, 2016). Income depends on the kind of occupation people have and determines the social class that people belong to. More implications of level of income on consumer buying behaviour will be examined further in the chapter.

Another factor that has an impact on consumer behaviour is the income expectation. When consumers expect to have a steady or increased income, they spend more on luxury products and services than those who expect it to fall in the future. However, it does not reflect the amount of money that people earn, it is only a subjective perception of how much money they can spend or should save. “A consumer’s anxieties about money are not necessarily related to how much he or she actually has: acquiring and managing money is more a state of mind than of wallet” (Solomon, 2006). These beliefs play an important role in the future health of economy because it determines the amount of money that people will spend. It follows, that the economy cycle also influences the consumer behaviour. Consumers are optimistic towards more spending during the period of economic boom, while during the recession, they tend to save more and spend less. “When people are pessimistic about their prospects and about the state of the economy, they tend to cut back their spending and take on less debt. On the other hand, when they are optimistic about the future, they tend to reduce the amount they save, take on more debt and buy discretionary items” (Solomon, 2006) Moreover, during the economic downturns job cuts increase and unemployment have a direct effect on people’s spending habits and discretionary incomes. It causes that they become more sensitive to prices, they search for economic and functional purposes and spend only on the essentials.

1.1.3 Social Factors

People are social beings used to live in a society with their families, friends and other member groups within whose they are looking for the sense of belonging and therefore, they can play a significant role in their buying decisions. Through the process of upbringing and socialization, they acquire values, opinions and attitudes from their families and surroundings and with the time they go through different roles and statuses that shape their buying habits and behavioural patterns.

Reference Groups

“A person’s reference groups are all the groups that have a direct (face to-face) or indirect influence on their attitudes or behavior” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). It can be distinguished between two influence groups i.e. formal and informal. The informal groups have usually direct impact on consumers because there is a regular interaction and the relations are more personal such as family, friends, co-workers etc. The formal groups are larger, with some formal organization as e.g. in some religious, professional or sport groups,

where the involvement of the members is not based on a daily basis. “They expose an individual to new behaviors and lifestyles, they influence attitudes and self-concept, and they create pressures for conformity that may affect product and brand choices” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). On the other hand, Solomon (2006) claims that the influence is not the same for all products, because people only want to be influenced or to take advices on products or services that will be shown publicly or with regard to more expensive or luxurious goods. The reference group’s influence consists of giving an advice about the products or services. It also serves as a model for consumers how they should behave, what is right and wrong and as a result of that, the want to enhance their image so that they would feel accepted.

Family

One of the most influential reference groups is a buyer’s family. The family can be perceived from two points of view, i.e. the family of orientation and the family of procreation.

The first type is a family people are born into. Parents shape the child's basic values, attitudes, traits, and orientation towards religion, politics, economics and other important opinions during the process of socialization and upbringing. This process is culturally based, i.e. children from China are raised differently than children from Europe. As people grow older, they interact less with their procreation family and their lifestyles and consumer behaviour may change. Nevertheless, there is still an unconscious and implicit influence obtained from their parents, culture, background and environment that serves them as a base for future consumption patterns. “Almost 40 percent of families have auto insurance with the same company as the husband’s parents” (Kotler – Keller, 2012).

The other type of family is the family people create with their spouse and children. The consumer behaviour of the family is affected by the unification of two consumption patterns – husband and wife. In a family everyone has its role that influences the family's buying behaviour. There are traditional families where the decision of members differs regarding a product category and there are modern families that have experienced a shift in their roles. The shift is reflected in the change of the decision-making where there are no longer products and services ascribed to only one family member, e.g. more husbands decide about household products and wives about the purchase of cars and other products related to men. “Now traditional purchasing roles are changing, and marketers would be wise to see both men and women as possible targets” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). What is more, children,

teenagers and young adults have their consumer function, too. They play a significant part of the decision-making because parents are influenced by children's requests, preferences and opinions. For example, there is a bigger demand for sustainable households, where the change is affected mostly by children that teach their parents about the importance of environmental protection reflected in the increasing number of shops and e-shops that offer sustainable products and services.

Social Roles and Statuses

In a society, people play different roles that have significant importance in a consumer's daily life. Their purchase is influenced by the roles they have at the time e.g. in some situations they behave as mothers, in others as daughters/sons, managers, volleyball players, artists, football players, dancers etc. A social role is a set of activities, behavioural patterns and habits that people do regarding their status, competences, duties and expectations of their surroundings and society. Social roles can vary in different cultures. De Mooij (2013, p.132) explains that while in feminine cultures husbands consult the purchase of expensive products and services with their spouse, in masculine cultures it is not necessary.

Status is defined as "a group member's standing in the hierarchy of a group based on the prestige, honor, and deference accorded him or her by other members" (Burn, 2003). Frequently, status serves as a motivation for buying because people seek similarity with others and want to belong into some social groups. Consumers seek recognition or even some kind of admiration that they are hoping to find or enhance by the purchase of luxurious status products, services and brands that will reflect their actual or ideal status regardless of their consumer's income or social class. For example, if a director drives an old small car it is possible that their business partners would not take him as seriously as if they had a luxurious brand. Status-driven consumers are attractive for marketers because they are willing to pay great sums for products and services in order to enhance their social position and gain respect.

1.1.4 Personal Factors

Personal factors are individual's characteristics that include such variables such as age, life cycle, occupation, education, lifestyle, personality and self-concept. They influence a consumer's perception, selection of goods, responds to different marketing communication and they also determine where, when and how consumers consume products and services.

The personal attributes dictate different behavioural habits and patterns of consumers. Nevertheless, the society is comprised of people who share similar wants, needs, characteristics, consumption habits and patterns that enable marketers to segment them into different groups and use suitable communication channels and strategy to target the group successfully.

Personality and the Self-concept

Personality is a set of traits and other characteristics of an individual that differentiate them from others and influence their behaviour. Through the combination of heredity and life experience, people obtain a unique set of attributes that predict their behaviour. As a result, some people are more ambitious, sociable, confident, dominant and nervous than others, which has an effect on the selection of products and services, their habits and other behavioural patterns.

Personality is “a set of distinguishing human psychological traits that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to environmental stimuli” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). However, the concept of personality and its understanding is not universal across the World. According to De Mooij (2013, p.117) in individual cultures, people’s personality is fixed and linked with properties that can be ascribed to an individual without any relation to their environment while in collectivistic cultures the personality varies with the situation and social role. Though an individual’s personality is unique, people are assumed to react in a same or similar way to certain situations within the same culture.

The concept of self has a decisive influence on consumer behaviour. Perceptions and emotions that people have about themselves, the society’s expectations on how others should look and act control consumer behaviour. People with higher self-esteem have no problem to buy some extravagant or provocative clothes because they are willing to get attention, while people with low self-esteem are more careful, due to the fear of failure and rejection. Buying behaviour is influenced by the image people have about themselves, the ideal image they would like to have and the image they think is ascribed to them by society. “Consumers often choose and use brands with a brand personality consistent with their actual self-concept (how we view ourselves), although the match may instead be based on the consumer’s ideal self-concept (how we would like to view ourselves) or even on others’ self-concept (how we think others see us)” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). People use products and services not only for functional purposes but also to show who they are, what type of person they want to become

and how they want to be perceived by others. Some consumers choose their products because of the luxurious brand personality, modern design, trends, others due to their ecological principles, religious beliefs, sincerity etc. The selection of goods depends on how they perceive themselves and how they want to present themselves to others.

Age and Life Cycle

Age and life cycle are important demographic personal factors that affect consumer behaviour and the marketer's selection of suitable marketing strategy. During the life people go through different life cycles: teenagers, young adults, adults, seniors etc. As people grow old, their needs and desires change and so does the individual's demand for specific types of products and services. The age groups are different in terms of personalities, lifestyles, values, attitudes and experiences. When people are young, they are looking for leisure and fun-activities, travel and ways to start a new family, but through the years, they stay more time at home and they focus on different characteristics in their products and services as their young selves.

Education and Occupation

People with higher level of education use more critical thinking and they look for information in order to decide and make conclusions. Education causes that consumers are more sophisticated in their buying behaviour and habits. However, the preferences for products and services change depending on their field of study, e.g. a doctor that is well informed about nutrition would probably buy more healthy food to have a balanced diet but on the other hand, they may not buy sustainable and fair-trade products because they are not well-informed in that field.

Educated people are supposed to have better jobs with higher income. Job position and income are other influential factors affecting the buying behaviour. For example, a commercial director is looking for different products and services than a plumber. While a plumber selects a car for its functional purposes a commercial director may buy it to enhance their image and inspire confidence in business partner. People with lower income who belong to middle class make decisions based on utility of goods while people with higher income that belong to upper-class look at the design, style, brand and special features of the goods. The expenses on travelling, hotels and vacations are also higher; they are buying

luxurious and life style products. “People in the same social class are approximately equal in terms of their incomes and social status” (Solomon, 2006).

Lifestyle

“A lifestyle is a person’s pattern of living in the world as expressed in activities, interests, and opinions.” (Kotler – Keller, 2012) The preference for goods and services can reveal an individual personality, the type of person and their way of thinking. As their behaviour based on their lifestyle may be similar to other people, it is possible to examine their characteristics as a group. “Lifestyles may be considered as group identities” (Solomon, 2006). Marketers focus on group identities, because customers with similar lifestyles share similar opinions, values and attitudes and they are looking for alike products and services, e.g. when a specific brand is characteristic or popular in a sport team it influences them to buy it. Person may be a student, mother, yet still have a passion for healthy cooking, dancing or jogging and within these groups they share similar lifestyles and consumer behaviour that marketers wants to target.

1.1.5 Psychological factors

Individual reactions to information and marketing are unique and mostly invisible to others. Some of the key internal processes such as motivation, buying motives, emotions and perception, important in the study of consumer behaviour are going to be analysed in this section. A few psychological processes of a consumer’s mind between the marketing stimuli and the final decision will be examined.

Motivation and Buying Motives

Maslow’s theory of motivation (1987) indicates that people are motivated by needs hierarchically. The motivation drives people to act and buy commodities that will satisfy successively their physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. Motivation makes consumers develop a certain buying behaviour.

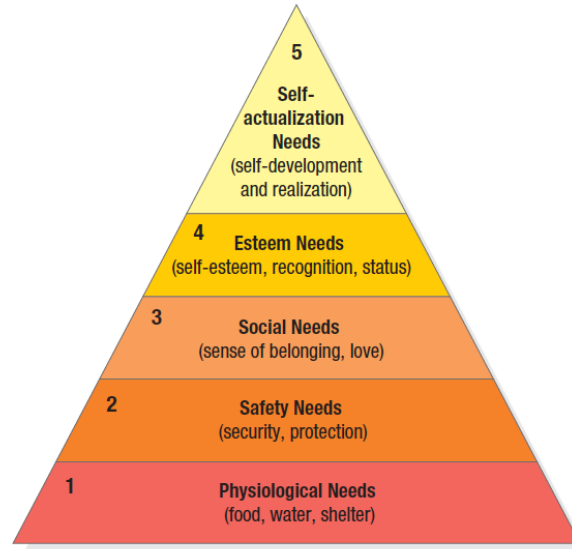


Figure 1, Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1987)

According to Kotler and Keller (2012) the need may arise from our physiological or psychological state of being that may sooner or later develop into buying motives. A need becomes a motive after the urgency that emerges because of some internal or external pressure to which people are pushed to react. Each buying motive has a different level of intensity, while some of them are less urgent others are priorities.

The driving motives can be miscellaneous, consumers may need/want the product or service for its functionality or some abstract added value that invokes various emotions to consumer. The motives based on emotions are for example, the want to reflect an actual or ideal self, to gain self-esteem, popularity or independence. People choose the same products and services to satisfy different needs e.g. purchase of a car can meet the need for social status, independence or adrenaline based on individual buying motives. Motives determine consumer's selection of goods and services that is based on conscious or subconscious preferences and expectations. To earn more, marketers are creating subconscious buying motives for consumers to convince them about the need for the product or service so that customers develop a purchase motivation and temptation to purchase the promoted goods. Perfect examples are fast fashion retailers, the most popular around the world, that are strategically launching a new collection every two weeks to persuade its customers that they need something new and that the clothes, shoes, accessories they have bought in the previous collections are already out of fashion. Many consumers, especially

young generations buy these products with a motivation of being fashionable, popular and to gain recognition and admiration.

Emotions

Rational purchases are characteristic with the recognition of need, prior research of consumers, comparison of various offers, models and brands and evaluation of the alternatives. Such purchases mostly require higher expenses and research in which people are looking at the functionality of the compared goods, e.g. investments, cars, computers. However, consumers do not only behave on the basis of rationality alone, frequently the subconscious motives driven by emotions, senses and moods are of significant influence. “Each specific emotion is associated with a set of cognitive appraisals that drives the influence of the emotion on decisionmaking through nuanced psychological mechanisms” (Achar et al., 2016). The previous or related experiences, promotions, trends, opinion-leaders and social media subconsciously create consumer’s preferences in designs, colours, materials, shapes, brands and influence them to purchase the familiar or promoted goods and services. In purchases driven only by emotions consumer does not look for information when making a purchase nor evaluate alternatives because their decision is frequently motivated only by the temptation caused by the mentioned influencing factors. Such consumer behaviour is characteristic for impulsive buying, when customers buy products and services spontaneously without prior planning or need. Even though, emotions play such a significant role in consumer behaviour, people do not want to admit they are driven by emotions, on the contrary, after the purchase they tend to rationalize it by justifying it by their need, functionality and that it was the best alternative. One of the causes of emotionally driven consumer behaviour is the intangible added value that people ascribe to products and expected benefits they gain from their purchase, e.g. feeling of happiness, healthy body, better appearance, popularity, recognition, respect etc.

The impact of emotions is related with culture and consumer’s identity. While some psychologists indicate that many emotions are universal, De Mooij states that “concept, definition, understanding, and meaning of emotions vary across cultures” (De Mooij, 2013, p.130). Because of the fact that people show their emotional states differently across cultures, marketers should be careful and should not use the same strategies to influence customers across the World. The dissimilarity can be seen in their diverse facial expressions, significance of colours, symbols etc. when interpreting a specific emotion.

Perception

“Perception is the process by which we select, organize, and interpret information” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). Since the people’s perception has a subjective character, its interpretation is relative because each person may interpret and understand the situation or promotion differently even if they participate in it together. The relativity of their perception is influenced by their individual experiences, needs and preferences. The decision is accompanied by all senses, e.g. the more impressive the product, promotion and store is the more people would want to buy it. Emotions play a significant role in such decisions. Consumers are driven mostly by appearance of products, their styling, design and packaging. As a result, colour is a decisive and influencing factor when purchasing. Different colours may influence positively or negatively their feeling, mood and so the perception of products, services and brands. Colourful design can distinguish the brand or product from its competitors. However, marketers should be careful in respect to culture because “colours are rich in symbolic value and cultural meanings” (Solomon, 2006). To choose a right colour, it is crucial to study a colour psychology in each culture to which marketers want to promote. It follows that, perception is more valuable than reality because individual understanding affects directly their consumer behaviour.

The consumer behaviour is influenced by many internal and external factors that are linked together and depend on a consumer’s culture. On the one hand, there are unique internal and individual processes that consumers acquire from the process of their upbringing and surroundings throughout their childhood and experiences regarding the characteristic features bounded to their culture. On the other hand, they are limited with their income and influenced by psychological tools of marketing specialists. Consumer behaviour depends on their motivation and life situation but frequently a purchase is not based on the rational buying motives but rather on intangible added value that invokes different emotions. Marketers use the emotions to affect consumer’s want and needs by amending their feelings, moods and attitudes towards products and services they promote. The suitable and successful form of marketing respects the cultural specifics and considers that internal individual processes are unique for each culture, since the different values, beliefs and understanding of the World is reflected in their consumer habits and behavioural patterns.

2 Marketing across Cultures

Diversity exists even within the same country. Reactions of people from different cultures to marketing strategies, promotions and approaches vary because of their different background in relation to their culture, ethnicity, climate, environment, economic and political situation, job position and other factors that are reflected in their consumer behaviour. Taking into account the different reactions, marketers have to be careful when entering a new market and take into consideration various factors such as trademark, logo, attributes of the product, functions, usage in different countries and etc.

In this chapter it will be examined the influence of media, marketing on cultures and consumers, the importance of localization of cultural values in branding as well as possible international marketing strategies that companies may apply when expanding on new markets.

2.1 Media and Marketing Influence on Culture and Consumer

Internet, newspaper, magazines, TV stations, blogs and other mediums control what people know, how they should act, look, what trends they should follow and which things to buy. The mediums and popular culture shape our understanding of the World, cultures, events, they also have an impact on our cultural and personal values, beliefs and priorities, which is in consequence reflected in our behaviour and identities. “(...) the stories we are exposed to shape who we are, how we live in the World, and what we dream is possible” (Sorrels, 2015) It means that information of people in miscellaneous cultures vary in accordance with the political system, owners of the media and marketers. “Much of what we learn about the world is filtered by marketers, whether through conspicuous consumption depicted in glamorous magazine advertising or via the roles played by family figures in TV commercials” (Solomon, 2006)

Not long before, television and other traditional media were one of the main influencing tools of marketers used to communicate to masses. Since that time technologies advanced and so did the consumer behaviour change. Considerable number of consumers use Internet in their daily life to communicate, to search for information, to follow the news and trends, to make transactions and etc. Since the consumer behaviour has changed and it only take seconds to find a reference of a brand, product or service, marketers in the developed countries are looking for perfect online marketing tools and strategies to help them better analyse potential consumers and convert them into their customers. On the one

hand, the introduction of the online marketing has brought many possibilities to reach the right consumers but on the other hand, the market has expanded and it is more competitive. Businesses have to work hard in order to keep up with competitors, consumer's needs, wants, values, actual trends and events. According to Mathew (2018) due to the freedom that consumers have over the content they want to see, it has become more difficult for companies to reach their desired consumers since they are spread over different mediums. "Because of the enormous variety of new media that must be integrated in a media planning campaign, media planning has become very complicated within countries and even more complicated across countries" (De Mooij, 2013, p.231).

Marketers cannot assume that they can promote their brands, products and services through the same mediums across cultures. Since the mediums may be used differently across cultures or be more/less popular than in other parts of the World, the key is to distinguish which medium is used by their target customers and to understand how it works within the culture they want to promote to. In developing countries or regions, companies can better reach potential consumers using traditional media. "TV viewing is negatively correlated with wealth, that is, in the poorer countries, people watch more TV than in the richer countries" (De Mooij, 2013, p.233) In developed countries, considerable number of consumers, especially younger groups, watch only a little TV and do not read much newspaper. They switched to modern digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. These platforms have become the biggest influencing platforms in the shaping of their identities and behaviour.

2.1.1 Social Media, Influencers and Trends

Rapid innovation and technological progress have made that social media and influencers marketing came to the foreground in majority of countries and that is why online marketing deserves more attention in a today world. "They have become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behavior including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behavior, and post-purchase communication and evaluation" (Mangold – Faulds, 2009). A number of daily users of Internet and social media platforms is still increasing, therefore businesses in order to be successful have to adapt their marketing strategies and devote more time to online marketing. "Social media has become the main source of news online with more than 2.4 billion internet users, nearly 64.5 percent receive breaking news from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram instead of traditional media." (Martin, 2018) The power of social media for business purposes is

enormous. An interesting advertisement or information can go viral just in a few hours. According to the study carried out on 12000 consumers published in Forbes by Olenski (2012) up to 80% of US and UK citizens tried a new product based on a friend's recommendation and 78% of respondents stated that company's posts on social media influence their buying behaviour.

As people in developed countries have moved away from traditional media and spend more time on social media, brands quickly noticed the power of online marketing. With a popularity of social media, not only celebrities influence consumers' tastes but a new type of influencers has arisen. Many people such as travellers, fashion bloggers, food bloggers, sport enthusiasts, artists and etc. have started their businesses on social media where the major part of their income is based on collaboration with brands to promote their products and services. "Advertising through influencers allows brands to promote through someone that a niche community watches, engages with and trusts on a daily basis" (Mathew, 2018). Popular figures with a large number of followers on social media platforms can promote their brand's products to consumers in a more authentic way while still being aware of the cultural and personal values of their followers. Such promotion strategies may make it easier for foreign brands, because influencers have knowledge about cultural background of their followers and know exactly what they are used to and what they expect. It is common that products with foreign origin are sought by potential customers around the world. Internet, social media and influencers makes the spreading of brand's name, products, services, marketing communication, advertisements and other information simpler and faster.

As a product of media and marketing a popular culture has arisen. Oxford English Dictionary defines popular culture as "modern popular culture transmitted via the mass media and aimed particularly at younger people" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019). Younger people are the most influenced by popular culture. They are driven by the latest trends, news and posts published on social media platforms that, as a result reflect their similar tastes, buying motives, concerning also the concept of beauty or what is trendy and popular. They attach big importance to branded products and services promoted across different mediums. Such products and services have become a mainstream merchandise that younger groups desire to possess in order to gain status within their peers. The similarity can be spotted in their preference for brands of all categories, fashion, accessories and etc. "(...) popular culture continues to evolve as products and styles from different cultures mix and merge in new and interesting ways." (Solomon, 2006) These trends and mainstream products

and services are rapidly changing, especially because companies want to make more profit, so they are launching new collections and versions of products that make consumers believe that they need the new collection in order to be trendy and popular. This approach serves as a basis for a consumer culture or consumerism.

Media have a significant impact on consumers and their cultures. The different platforms are forming their identities, opinions, priorities, brand images and preferences for specific brands. The globalization made the spreading of information even faster and popular culture causes that especially young people behave as consumers similarly because of their common values, opinions and beliefs. Many researchers claim that the similarity of behavioural patterns owing to the influence of globalization and media makes it possible to employ marketing strategies that can be used globally regardless of the cultural variables. On the other hand, cultural specifics and adaptation to the consumer culture has throughout the time proven to be more successful.

2.2 Cultural Influence of International Marketing Strategies

As international trade is expanding, the role of international marketing and well-chosen marketing strategies are becoming crucial for companies. In such a competitive environment, companies want to stand out from the crowd and become unique so that consumers could easily recognise them, identify with their values and give preference to their brands, products and services over the other ones. To achieve these goals, some researchers propose uniform products and marketing strategies regardless of consumer's culture, while others emphasize the importance of respecting different cultural values and specifics to succeed beyond national borders. These sections will focus on connections between different cultural values and branding; consumer's diverse perceptions of brand images across cultures as well as the importance of selecting a good international marketing strategy on a new market.

2.2.1 Branding and Diversity of Cultures

With fast spreading of information via the Internet, the way a company presents itself can attract the attention of consumers both positively and negatively in a short time. "Branding has become one of the most important aspects of business strategy" (Holt, 2003). Companies are no longer competing with their products but with their brands. A brand is something that differentiate one company from another while their products and services satisfy the same needs. "These differences may be functional, rational, or tangible – related

to product performance of the brand. They may also be more symbolic, emotional, or intangible –related to what the brand represents or means in a more abstract sense” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). As it was examined in the previous chapter, the decision-making process is based on the principles of rationality and emotions. Even though, consumers are making a decision based on emotions (brands, colour, intangible added value) they tend to rationalize their choices. It follows that a brand is not only a trademark, logo, colour and design, it is the way consumers perceive a brand.

Consumers are unconsciously accepting the intangible values transmitted by strategic marketing mix tools and media that as a result create an emotional connection between consumer and a brand. In consequence, there are consumers who would choose a trustworthy branded version of a product with some added intangible value even though the unbranded one or the unfamiliar one had better price, parameters, attributes or taste. The researchers have studied the intangible value and the impact brands have on children by testing the same food, but one labelled as McDonald’s and the other one without any brand, and they have come to a conclusion that “even carrots, milk, and apple juice – tasted better when wrapped in McDonald’s familiar packaging than in unmarked wrappers” (Kotler – Keller, 2012). The brand awareness and prior experiences with its products or services play significant role in the decision process of consumers because it can convince them that the branded versions are better without no rational reasons. De Mooij (2013, p.28) states that brand enhances the value of the product, satisfaction consumers get from buying it and makes the selection easier. In order to gain competitive advantage on a market where consumers are overwhelmed by an infinite number of brands and products, it is important to enhance their brand equity or the added value of the brand’s products and services and to develop a strategy that is respecting consumer motives, values and identities in different cultures. “The more focus on emotional benefits, values, or myths, the greater the need to localize, to be culture-specific” (De Mooij, 2013, p.27).

The Internet with its unlimited opportunities enables marketers to build up brand recognition of products and services far beyond the national borders. However, the brand may not necessarily mean the same across different cultures. “Consumers will attribute the brand characteristics that fit their own mental maps and from there develop a brand image” (De Mooij, 2005, p.224). When a brand is considered of higher quality in one culture, it does not mean that consumers from another culture would ascribe the same qualities to the same brand. Coca-Cola, Nike, Mc Donald’s, Apple became symbols of global brands, “brands

whose positioning, advertising strategy, personality, look, and feel are in most respects the same from one country to another.” (Aaker – Joachimsthaler, 1999). Yet it does not mean that consumers from different parts of the world link these brands with the same concepts. On the one hand, a company creates a brand identity by means of which it wants to express its desired image, abstract values and to provide experiences to their consumers. On the other hand, the way consumers understand the message may vary and they may develop a different brand image as it was desired by brands. An ideal brand positioning strategy would result in a match of brand image with identity i.e. a consumer would decode a message of a company as it was aimed to. The most culturally sensitive tools that help to create a desired brand image is a communication strategy of a company and the attributes of product itself.

A brand is an important influencing factor in consumers decision-making process. It adds value to the products and help consumers to differentiate them from the other ones. However, people in different cultures ascribe different values, attributes and qualities to the same brands. In order to gain the desired brand image in various cultures, marketers have to analyse their new market and adapt to the cultural variables. In the next section, various strategies to promote products and services to new cultures are provided.

2.2.2 Influence of Globalization on Marketing Strategies

The discussion which international marketing strategies companies should employ when expanding to different cultures have kept occupied researchers for decades without definite solutions. The main issue is whether companies should unify their products and standardise marketing strategies or adapt their brands, products, communication and other attributes according to target culture. Since the debate did not came to a clear solution, some companies made a compromise between these two opposite stands. Arguments of each approach are given further in the text.

Because of the significant propagation of the Western culture to the other parts of the world, many people consider globalization that is related to uniformity as an Americanization or Westernization. Flowing of the Western culture into the world due to the effects of globalization, advance of technology and Internet caused that people from different countries have identified with some of the American values. “Industrialization, modernization, wealth, and technology are supposed to bring a universal civilization, including universal values and consumption patterns” (De Mooij, 2013, p.7). In early 80s an American Theodor Levitt (1983) published a first article about standardization where he

claims that the globalization and technologies have affected the human behaviour to such extent that all consumers want uniform products and he proposed that companies can save money from the economies of scale, logistics, production and marketing. He used a lot of examples of global brands that were mostly standardized models such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Revlon cosmetics or Starbucks which encouraged other researchers and companies to follow this model. Defenders of this strategy have reasoned that customization requires a lot of time and money to develop a deep analysis of each aspect of the culture that companies want to enter and even more to adapt their products and communication accordingly. They asserted that globalization and its effect of making the World a smaller place makes markets more homogenous and that is the reason companies can offer standardised product and services for many countries regardless of their culture.

“However, other researchers argued that markets continue to be diverse in spite of the forces of globalization, and that variances in customer needs continue to persevere even within the global market” (Haron, 2016) Standardization may have seemed as a good strategy at first but consumers became more interested in customized products, packaging and communication that suits with their cultural values. “Globalization has not produced globally uniform consumers. Although there is a worldwide convergence of technology, media, and financial systems, desires and behaviors of consumers are not converging” (De Mooij, 2013, p.2). Even the biggest brands such as Coca-Cola, Nike, Red bull, Starbucks and McDonald's have later discovered that it is important to show people that their cultures matter and to adapt the attributes of a products and communication in an appropriate way. Coca-Cola's representatives even admitted their mistake: “The world had changed, and we had not. The world was demanding greater flexibility, responsiveness and local sensitivity, while we were further consolidating decision making and standardizing our practices. The next big evolutionary step of “going global” now has to be “going local” (Ball, 2003).

There are many reasons why the model of fully standardised strategy is not possible to employ. The strategy one-size-fits-all is said to be suitable for companies which products or services are not culturally specified. For example, such perfect global product without needed cultural specifications was considered to be Sony Walkman. However, De Mooij (2013, p.5) asserts that even the presumption about that perfect global product is wrong because people have been buying it with different motives i.e. in individualistic cultures, they used Walkman to enjoy the music without being disturbed by others while in the collectivistic cultures they used it to do not disturb others. Even if the Internet and

globalization made the needs and wants of people similar, their motives for purchase can be different because of the diversity of consumers, their needs and wants proceeding from their cultural, environmental, economic and political background. On the other hand, Apple Inc. with a standardised approach in all countries, with exception of multilingual menu and different power source, is one of the most successful brands of all times. The brand uses its marketing to create a desire towards their products and consumers must adapt. However, there are not so many examples of such successful businesses with fully standardised strategies. Many global brands, have discovered that non-respecting cultural variables can be sometimes quite inefficient:

- Kotler and Keller (2012) give an example of Generali Foods, a company that introduced an alternative beverage to orange juice on the French market displaying a perfect drink for breakfast, without knowing that local people rarely drink orange juice and hardly ever during breakfast.
- Another example of Kotler and Keller (2012) was a company S.C. Johnson's wax that launched a polish for floor in Japan but they did not succeed because the Japanese take shoes off in their homes and the product made it too slippery.

In such cases, it is really inefficient and expensive because of all the time and money invested into the launching of a product on a new market that at the end was unsuccessful because of the lack of marketing analysis. The fact is that these companies were only product driven and did not take into account the fact that buying behaviour, needs and wants of consumers may vary across cultures. "Marketing is about consumers, and marketing and advertising will be successful only if the values of consumers match the values of the product or brand, which means that strategies successful in one culture can be extended only to other cultures with similar relevant values" (De Mooij, 2013, p.329).

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the adaptation to local cultures is needed even in the selection of colours, symbols, logos, right names for brands and products and etc. These are the factors that influence the creation of brand image and emotional relation to a brand across cultures, and as a consequence the revenues. The emotions play a crucial role in buying behaviour towards branded goods. Consumer's associations with colours and symbols may evoke different emotions throughout countries. De Mooij (2013, p.349) gives an example of Kotex campaign that had to change the originally red dot on their packaging

to white one because in Eastern cultures it resembled blood and was not accepted that way. “People make up their minds within 90 seconds of their initial interactions with either people or products. About 62-90 percent of the assessment is based on colors alone” (Satyendra, 2006) Another factor that may influence a consumer in a negative or positive way is a brand’s name which has to be chosen carefully. In majority of cases, it is not sufficient to only translate the campaign or advertisement. “People of different countries speak different languages, and those languages represent different worldviews. Translations do not uncover the different worldviews, different ways of thinking, and different intellectual styles” (De Mooij, 2013, p.6). If marketers employ the same strategy as in the country of origin of products, it can have a negative effect on the perception of brand, products and its profit.

- “Coca-Cola had enormous problems in China as Coca-Cola sounded like 'Kooke Koula' which translates into 'A thirsty mouthful of candle wax'. They managed to find a new pronunciation 'Kee Kou Keele' which means 'joyful tastes and happiness” (Doole – Lowe, 2008).
- American automobile manufacturer General Motors did not consider the different meanings of the name of one of their models in a foreign language and used a standardised strategy without translating its car's name 'Nova' for Spanish market which in Spanish conveys a very inappropriate message for a car 'it does not go'.

Even though standardization supporters assert that companies waste a lot of time and money to develop a deep analysis, without knowing the cultural, economic, political legal, technological environments, regulations, infrastructure and other characteristics, it is too risky to enter a foreign market. On the other hand, De Mooij (2013, p.5) claims that the costs of developing one uniform idea are also relatively high because many managers, marketers, supervisors, directors and advertising agencies have to agree on one single model, which takes a lot of time, travel, meetings and thus money. Moreover, when it comes to cultural misunderstandings that originate from the lack of information in the target culture it makes additional costs for affected companies. At the end, the change is more inefficient, expensive and not practical. “The essentials of localization is that the marketer is subject to a new set of macro-environmental influences and different constraints such as language, climate, race, occupations, education, and frequent conflicts resulting from different laws, cultures, and societies which need to be taken into account when outlining the marketing strategy” (Yankelovich, 2006). It follows that the first step when companies want to expand to another

country is to make a cultural analysis. It is easier for international marketers to make a plan when they have a preconceived idea of local people's behaviour. Gilligan and Hird (2012) suggest that companies should analyse their markets and occupy with the aspects that have an impact on marketing programme such as language, religion, the position of women in a society, the social class distribution, ethics, aesthetics with its symbols and colour psychology and prejudices.

Companies should also take into account that there are many subcultures within a particular culture and there are cases, it is necessary or profitable to pay attention to their specific characteristics and tailor products, packaging, communication and other marketing tools to their different tastes, needs and wants. Gilligan and Hird (2012) claim that planning a marketing strategy gets harder sometimes because of the existence of more cultures within the one that they want to aim at. They give an example of Canada with its two major subcultures divided regarding the two official languages or Belgium with its Flemish and Walloon culture. Sometimes the characteristics of subcultures are so diverse from the national culture that it is not possible to generalize a marketing strategy and campaign to a nation as a whole. To make a profit, marketers have to understand differences even within the same cultures and address them in a different way. The way marketers choose to promote their brands, products and services to different cultures and subcultures determines their future success because people's purchase is a reaction to a good campaign and advertisements that they can identify with. "(...) people may desire to think globally, but as a result of globalization, they actually become more aware of their specific local values" (De Mooij, 2013, p.348).

Many resounding brands abandoned the strategy of uniform products and services because they had comprehended that respecting cultural diversity of their consumers influences their profit. They decided to make a compromise between the two opposing strategies globalization (standardization) and localization (adaptation) and employed a middle way often called glocalization that consists in using the company's global experience while still customizing their products, communication and other attributes with respect to local cultures. Basic features of the glocalization can be seen in different flavours of Coca-Cola drinks around the world but similar communication strategy and packaging. Another example is Mc Donald's which is popular among tourists from many countries because their menu seems familiar everywhere, even though the company is customizing it and modifying

its flavours with respect to cultures; for instance, they do not offer beef burgers in India because of Hindu religion where cows are considered as sacred animals.

The interrelation between media, the selection of marketing strategies and adaptation to the local cultures has a noticeable impact on the buying behaviour of consumers, their perceptions of brands, products and services and as a consequence it influences brand's revenues. The standardization strategy may have attractive advantages as for example economies of scales but without a proper cultural analysis of a new market it can represent additional costs for a company and may not be as effective as localization strategy when aimed precisely at the cultural variables of consumers. Even the global brands are going more local. The understanding of globalization and other cultures makes consumers to appreciate more their own cultural values and characteristics. The fact is that companies need to find the right balance between standardization and adaptation and to communicate and tailor their products for specific cultures and subcultures.

3 Variables in Slovak Consumer Behaviour

The Slovak republic with an estimated population about 5,4 million, is a small country in Central Europe with only 49 035 km². It has been formed in 1993 with its capital Bratislava after a peaceful separation from Czechoslovakia. As a member of European Union, Eurozone, Schengen Area, OECD, WTO, NATO and other international organizations, Slovakia has become a competitive and reliable market with many opportunities for new investments and companies.

Because of its geographical location and a developed infrastructure, it has become a popular choice among foreign investors who are looking to expand to new markets. According to the statistical division of European Union NUTS II that "is a hierarchical system for dividing up the economic territory of the EU for the purpose of socio-economic analyses of the regions" (Eurostat, 2018), Slovakia is divided into 4 areas: Bratislava region, West Slovakia, Central Slovakia and East Slovakia. Even though Slovakia is a small country, there are various differences that can be found in accordance with economic indicators, climate, culture, traditions, values, priorities, attitudes and etc. "In 2016, the Slovak Republic had the second highest regional economic disparities among 33 OECD countries" (OECD, 2018).

3.1 Factors that Influence Slovak Consumers

Many companies entering smaller countries such as Slovakia, tend to implement a standardised marketing strategy for Central and Eastern Europe, however, the differences between the neighbouring countries may be significant and what is more, within the countries, other subcultures with different values and worldviews can also influence the consumer behaviour. In this section, Slovak buying behaviour influenced by the economic, global, cultural and social factors will be analysed and compared according to the region consumers live in. The analysis of Slovak consumers and the factors that influence their behaviour can help in determining the right marketing strategy for companies entering the market with respect to Slovak culture and its regional variables.

3.1.1 Economic Influence of Slovak Consumer Behaviour

Analysis of economic factors, regulation and rules is one of the first indicators that multinational companies have to take into account when looking for new market opportunities beyond their borders. In order to choose the best possible strategy within the country, various regional factors have to be examined. The fact that Slovakia belongs to one of the countries with the largest regional inequalities in the area of jobs and income indicates that the analysis of economic factors has to be examined on the regional level.

Unemployment has a direct negative impact on the revenues of companies. If people do not have enough money, their consumption is decreased and their purchase is based mainly on rationality which means their buying behaviour is reflected in purchases to satisfy the most basic needs. The rate of unemployment across the regions of Slovakia varies significantly. According to the most actual statistics of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2017) the highest rates of unemployed people within Slovak regions is in East Slovakia and lowers towards Bratislava region. It contributes to the regional migration between the Slovak regions since the number of easterners in Bratislava is considerably high.

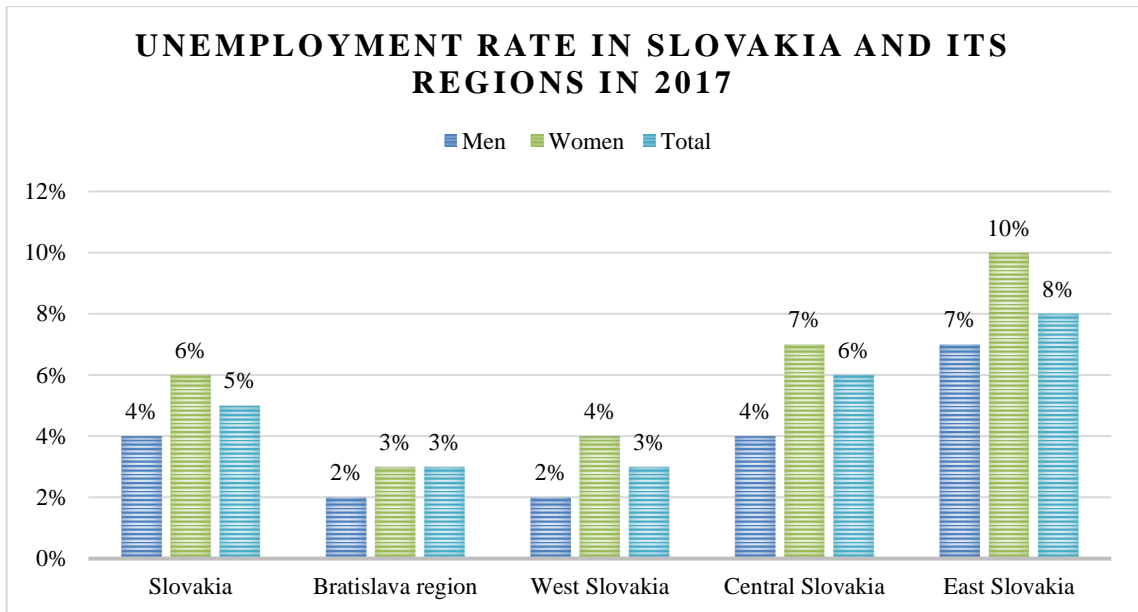


Figure 2, *Unemployment Rate in Slovakia (the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2017)*

Another fact that contributes to the regional migration is the amount of money that people earn in their region. The income is one of the determining factors that influences the buying habits and behavioural patterns. From the graph below, it is evident that the average personal income in Slovakia differs across the regions significantly. According to statistics of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2017) the highest average incomes are in Bratislava region and they lower towards East Slovakia. It has a direct impact on consumer behaviour, since people from Bratislava region tend to spend more on premium brands, luxury products and recreational activities.

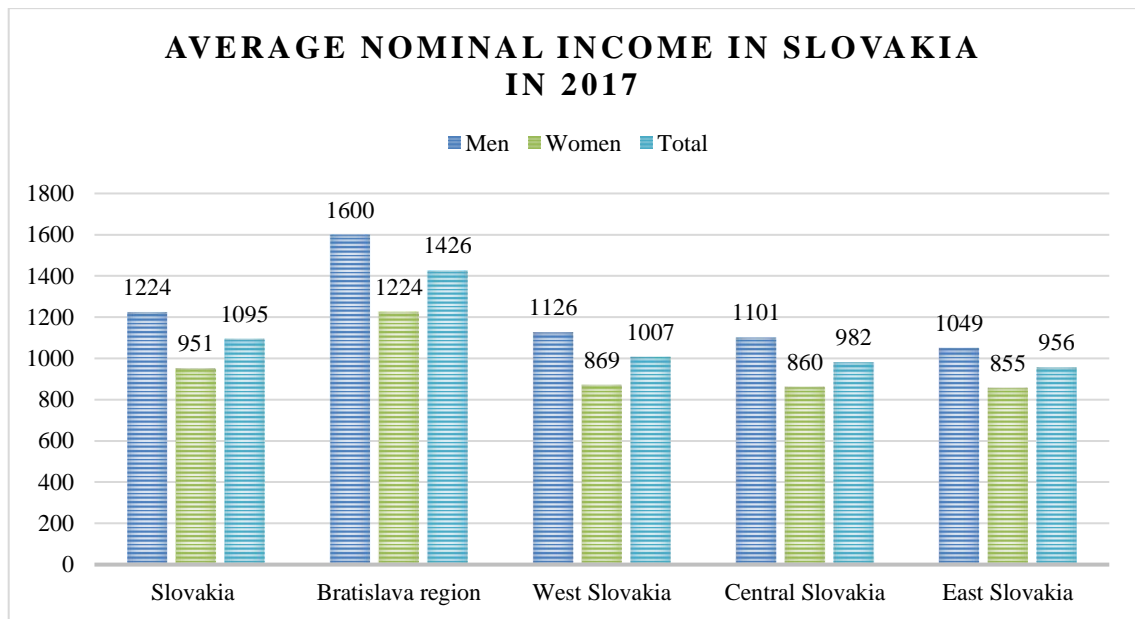


Figure 3, Average Nominal Income in Slovakia (the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2017)

However, the nominal income does not define the amount of money that people can spend on goods and services freely, firstly they need to pay for taxes, levies, the basic needs such as housing, food and other important needs. Moreover, the expenditures of households differ across regions according to the level of incomes people earn in their region and the lucrativeness of their place of residence. According to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2017) the highest expenditures of households are in Bratislava region and they lower towards East Slovakia which means that the discretionary income also varies across regions. The different discretionary incomes may cause that consumers have different motivations towards purchases and selection of brands, products and services. According to Eurostat (2017) Slovak expenditures are rising annually and even though the biggest part of their expenses belongs to *Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, Food and non-alcoholic beverages*, Slovak consumers started to spend more on *recreation and culture, restaurants and miscellaneous services*. Such changes in the Slovak buying behaviour may be related to rising incomes and living standards. The overall distribution of the household expenses may be seen in the graph below organized by consumption purpose.

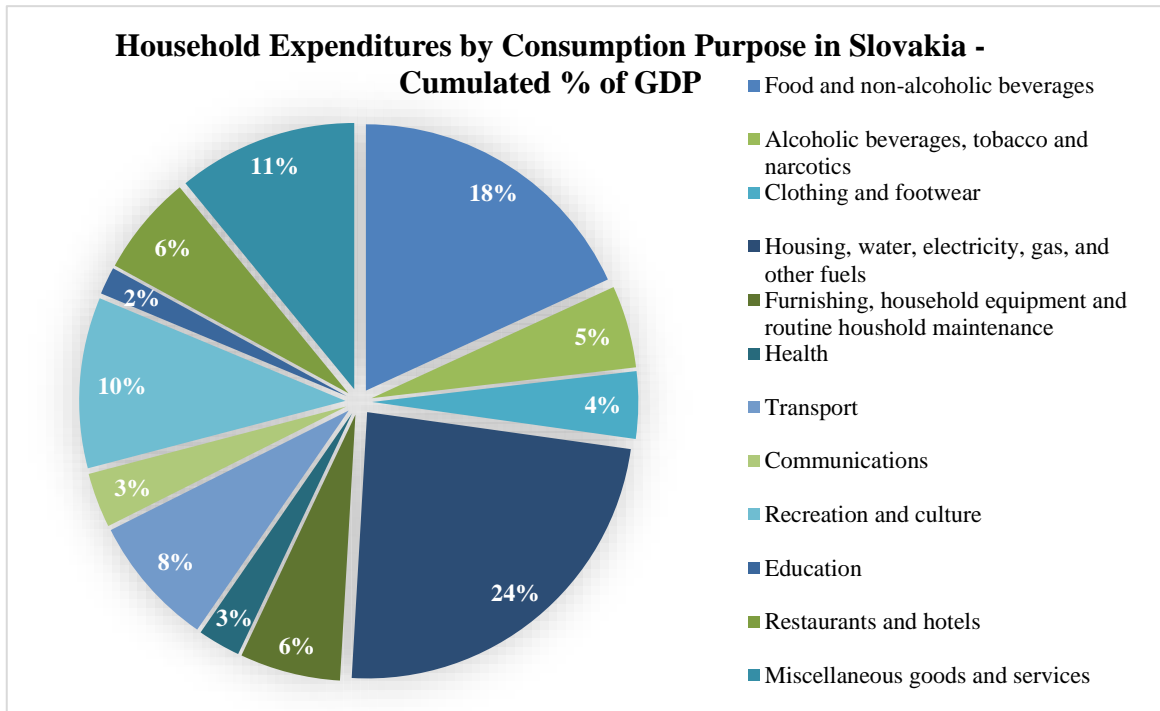


Figure 5, Household Expenditures by Consumption Purpose in Slovakia (Eurostat, 2017)

The indicators that are related to economic factors are also very important because they may help marketers to analyse advantages and disadvantages in the Slovak market. OECD (2018) compared various indicators of Slovak consumers' well-being on the NUTS II regional-level with other OECD regions. These indicators can have an impact on consumers' buying habits and behavioural patterns. From the graph, it is evident that Bratislava region surpassed other regions in almost all categories except for community of people, safety and environment. Consumers from Bratislava region have the highest incomes, numerous job opportunities, easy access to services, many educational institutions to choose from and they scored the highest in satisfaction with their life.

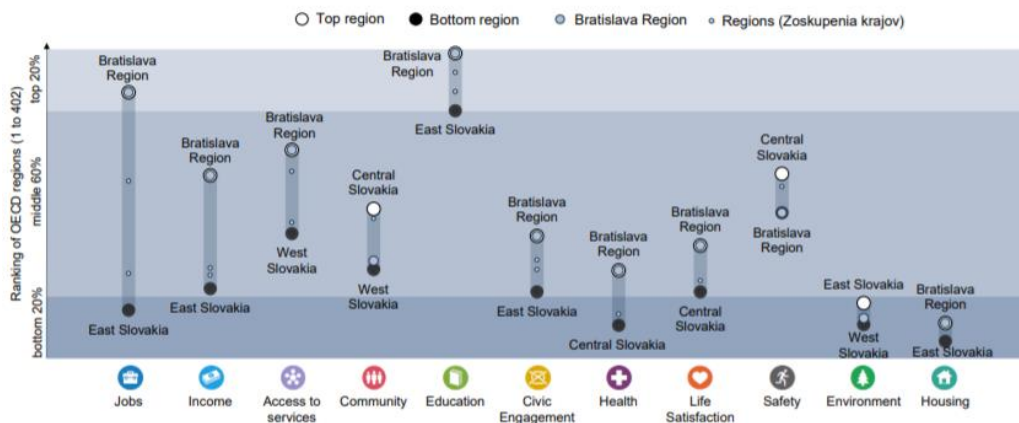


Figure 4, Well-Being in Slovak Republic (OECD, 2018)

Whereas Bratislava region is perceived in majority of indicators to be among the average of OECD countries, the other Slovak regions are mostly below the average. It is evident that the gaps between Slovak regions are significant.

3.1.2 Globalization Influence of Slovak Consumer Behaviour

Slovakia as a small country in the heart of Europe has become an interesting choice for foreign investors. By the contrary to communism regime that Slovakia has undergone, today as a part of European Single Market consumers have the availability to buy everything they need and want. However, the effect of globalisation and the saturation of the market with foreign made products made that Slovak consumers are becoming more aware of the foreign values and beliefs transmitted through these products and services. “Consumers that once welcomed large stores (upon entering the EU) now turn to smaller specialist stores. They also value grocery retailers that feature Slovak products, which had become under-represented with the increase in product diversity” (Nordea, 2019). The interest of Slovak consumers in buying local products resembling their own culture and traditions is on the rise and that is why entrepreneurs try to revive the underused potential of Slovak companies in order to satisfy the demand. The habits and behavioural patterns are changing, “Slovak consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the composition of the product (contents of artificial ingredients and colorants) and the origin of the product (local, EU, overseas), as healthy lifestyles and fair-trade patriotism are fashionable” (Nordea, 2019). It follows that in order to gain Slovak consumers, foreign investors should focus on localization of their strategy and analyse the impact that Slovak cultural variables have on consumer in different regions of the country.

3.1.3 Cultural Influence of Slovak Consumer Behaviour

The impact of cultural variables on consumer behaviour is many times overlooked by companies because of the size of the country as well as the previous relations and resemblance with Czech Republic and other neighbouring countries. This research aims at the identification of the Slovak cultural and regional characteristics and its influences on buying behaviour. In order to define Slovak values and other specific attributes, the Hofstede’s cultural model, regional statistics and researches will be employed. The identification of cultural variables can help future investors in the selection of successful marketing strategies.

Impact of Slovak Values on Consumer Behaviour - Hofstede's Cultural Model

The original international value research known as the Hofstede cultural model was based on the sample of IBM employees and up until today is of significant importance. His investigation covered a significant part of the World, although Slovakia was not part of the original research. According to Bašňáková, Brezina and Masaryk (2016) Hofstede extended his research and included more countries among others Slovakia in 2001, where the estimated scores of the country are not based on the IBM employees but on the basis of smaller studies of other authors that were adopted and amended by Hofstede's team. Their results can potentially help foreign investors and companies in the understanding of different cultural variables that may rise as a result of expanding to new cultures. Even though the results are not actual and they do not cover the changing cultural values of countries throughout the time, "Hofstede's dimensions have become key variables or explanatory features in a wide variety of researches" (De Mooij, 2010, p.58) and marketers and advertisers rightly favour this cultural model and apply it throughout most of their studies. That is why, the validity to apply marketing strategies based on the Hofstede's six value dimensions consisting of power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, indulgence/restraint, long/short term orientation will be analysed in relation to Slovak consumer behaviour and their cultural values. Because "together with national wealth, Hofstede's dimensions can explain more than half of the differences in consumer behaviour" (De Mooij, 2010, p.55). However, the results at regional-level may be different from the national-level, the reason why the differences between four Slovak areas based on the division NUTS II will be examined and proved or disproved in the questionnaire survey.

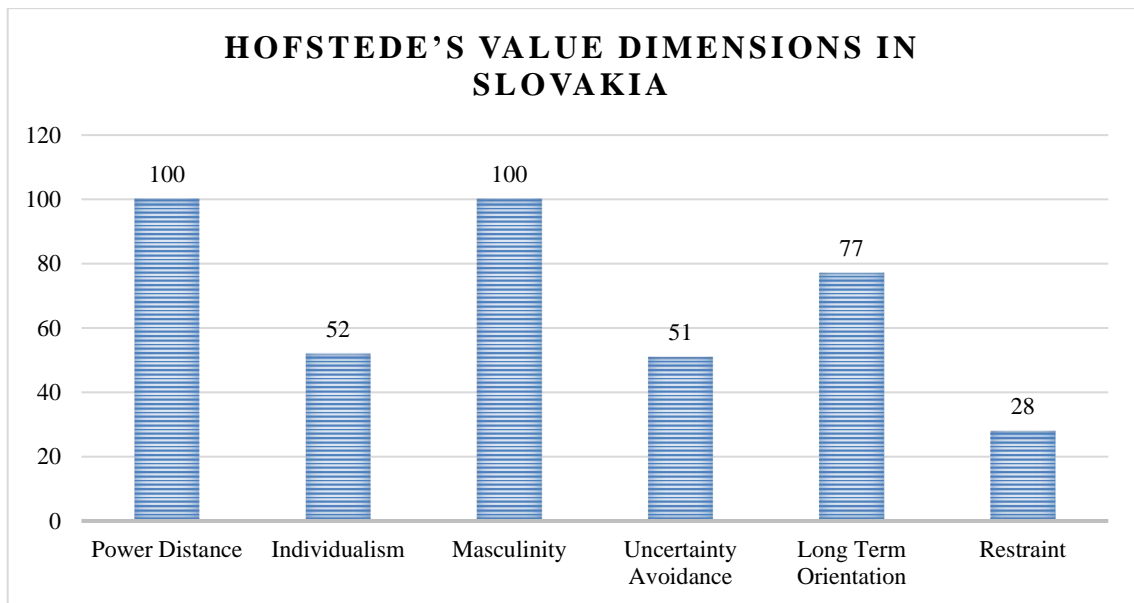


Figure 6, Results of Hofstede's Value Dimensions in Slovakia (Hofstede, 2001)

The first dimension of power distance can help to identify to which extent culture places value on power in a hierarchy and society. Results show that Slovakia with its high results is a country, where less powerful people believe that the distribution of power among the society is uneven. “In large power distance cultures, one’s social status must be clear so that others can show proper respect” (De Mooij – Hofstede, 2011). People naturally accept that everyone has its position in a hierarchy and a role ascribed to their status. “People take the hierarchical distribution of roles for granted and comply with the obligations and rules attached to their roles” (De Mooij, 2013, p.93). Another implication of such high results in consumer behaviour is that such societies buy luxurious goods and services to demonstrate their position in a society, status and prestige. Consumers in such countries decide on the basis of emotions, desires and brand equity. It follows, that Slovaks according to these results should be particular about their appearance and brands they choose, which might be an opportunity for companies that offer premium or luxurious brands. These brands can serve as a booster of consumers’ image and social status because the added value of a brand is perceived as more important than in countries that score low in this dimension.

On the other hand, many researchers claim that the high scores in power distance are only relevant and applicable when expanding to developing countries, which is not the case of Slovakia. This assumption is also affirmed by the research of company Nielsen (2016) that discovered that Slovak consumers buy goods on the basis of rationality. Only 22% of Slovak consumers (by contrast to global average 45%) indicated that the purchase of

premium brands provides them with a feeling of success and even smaller number of respondents only 14 % declared that the way people perceive luxurious brands and products is important for them. Moreover, only 12% of Slovak respondents buy premium product because they want to set them apart from others what is a significantly smaller number than the global average (34%) and even the European average (17%). These results indicate that the dimension of power distance alone may not function as well for the analysis of cultural values, because consumer behaviour can also be conditioned by other factors. Further investigation about the application of this dimension on Slovak consumers will be examined in the questionnaire survey.

Slovakia, with a score of 52 on a scale of individualism/collectivism, points to no clear preference between these two value extremes, but the culture is often interpreted as the individualistic culture. The contrast between the two extremes suggests that people from individualistic societies are occupied firstly with their own individual needs because they think about themselves prior to considering other people's opinions and needs while people from collectivistic cultures form their group identities where they are firstly occupied with other people's needs and opinions, in which they seek approval of others. To belong to a society is really important in collectivistic cultures, which is also reflected in their behaviour e.g. they try to avoid the risk of losing face. This public self-consciousness that is defined as "the concern about what others think of me" (Hofstede, 2001) should not be so important to Slovak consumers, since as an individualistic culture they should not care about what others think of them when purchasing. Moreover, they should not assign a big importance to premium and luxurious brands since their self-image is not so important in relation to others. Additionally, De Mooij (2013, p.110) suggests that the number of people involved in a decision-making process is also directly connected with this value dimension. While only few people in individualistic societies influence the decision-making process and the selection of goods and brands since it is an individual choice, the number of influencers in collectivistic cultures tend to be higher.

"Hofstede's dimension masculinity-femininity is a complex dimension as it measures the degree of assertiveness or achievement orientation versus quality of life as well as the degree of role differentiation versus overlapping roles of males and females." (De Mooij, 2013, p.96) Slovakia is in Hofstede's model perceived as a high-masculinity country, which means that Slovaks should be oriented toward achievement, success and status-oriented brands. Moreover, the roles of females and males in the buying processes in masculine

cultures should be clearly differentiated. The perceptions of roles in consumer behaviour is important since marketers want to hit the member that decides about the purchase. According to Baluchová (2010) Slovak media present simplified images of roles of women and men in a society with gender stereotypes and act as a social control for what is appropriate for women and men. Men are displayed in media and ads having fun and participating in social life while women are usually the caring mothers, house-wives, idols of beauty or sexist objects. The traditional stereotypes and values of what is right and wrong are culturally sensitive and are based on ideas and values transmitted mainly from family, school, religious institutions and considerably also by media and internet to children since their very childhood. The perception of roles has a significant impact on consumer behaviour. It can explain who does the shopping of which products and who makes basic decisions about the purchased goods. In high-masculine cultures it is believed that consumers are more likely to engage in husband-dominant decisions. “Whereas in masculine cultures, head of family would make most decisions, in feminine cultures basic decisions are shared between partners; there is a correlation between masculinity and involvement of family members in decisions and selections” (Bathae, 2014) It means that in masculine cultures head of family can decide and select a car without prior discussing with other members, while in feminine cultures both husband and wife consult the purchase. This aspect of masculinity of Slovakia will be examined further in the questionnaire survey.

The dimension uncertainty avoidance can be defined as “the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations” (Hofstede, 2001). The direct impact on consumer behaviour is, that countries and individuals that score high in this dimension are afraid of changes and innovations and they would rather choose a brand that they trust to because it represents some kind of safe choice. Cultures with higher uncertainty avoidance are more loyal to their preferred brands because consumers are afraid of buying the brands they do not know. Slovakia with a score in the middle of the scale points to no clear preference. On the other hand, research implemented in various Slovak regions by Slovenské združenie pre značkové výrobky (2017) which is a Slovak Association for Branded Goods, demonstrated that three quarters of Slovak people believe that branded goods guarantee the desired quality that they trust and makes them feel safe, with the most affirmative results of 78,34% in Trenčín region (West Slovakia) and the least affirmative in Košice region (East Slovakia) where only 70,50% declared the mentioned attributes. The

relation between this dimension and Slovak consumer behaviour will be examined in the questionnaire survey.

Slovakia in the contrast dimension of indulgence and restraint is considered to be a restraint culture with a score of only 28. According to various researchers “low scores are found for ex-Soviet dominated countries” (De Mooij, 2013, p.102). The restraint attributes can be assigned to the communist regime and the strict rules that people were used to obey. The direct influence on consumer behaviour may be seen in lifestyles of consumers and their relation towards spending on leisure activities and pleasures. While restraint cultures tend to be thrifty and spend money mostly on what they need, indulgent cultures tend to decide on the basis of desires and interests. “Indulgence-oriented cultures are generally characterized as fun-oriented, whereas restrained cultures are less interested in leisure, fun and entertainment in any form of it, and the importance of such activities and pleasures are significantly lower in such cultures” (Minkov, 2007). The implication for Slovak culture is that consumers should spend less on fun-oriented activities, leisure time and experiences. However, the effect of globalization, increased incomes with more possibilities made that Slovakia in the past years has undergone considerable changes in consumer behaviour and younger generations are ascribing more importance to recreational activities. According to statistics of Eurostat (2017) Slovak young people leave their parental houses in average at the age of 32 for men and 29 for women which is one of the highest scores in Europe. They do not need to care a lot about household expenditures so they may spend more money on leisure and experiences. This is also confirmed by other statistics of Eurostat (2017) that indicates that people’s expenditures on recreation and culture in Slovakia are the highest between the countries of V4 and in the rankings in 2017 were the 4th in the European average. These results indicate that Slovak consumers have become more indulgent in their consumer behaviour.

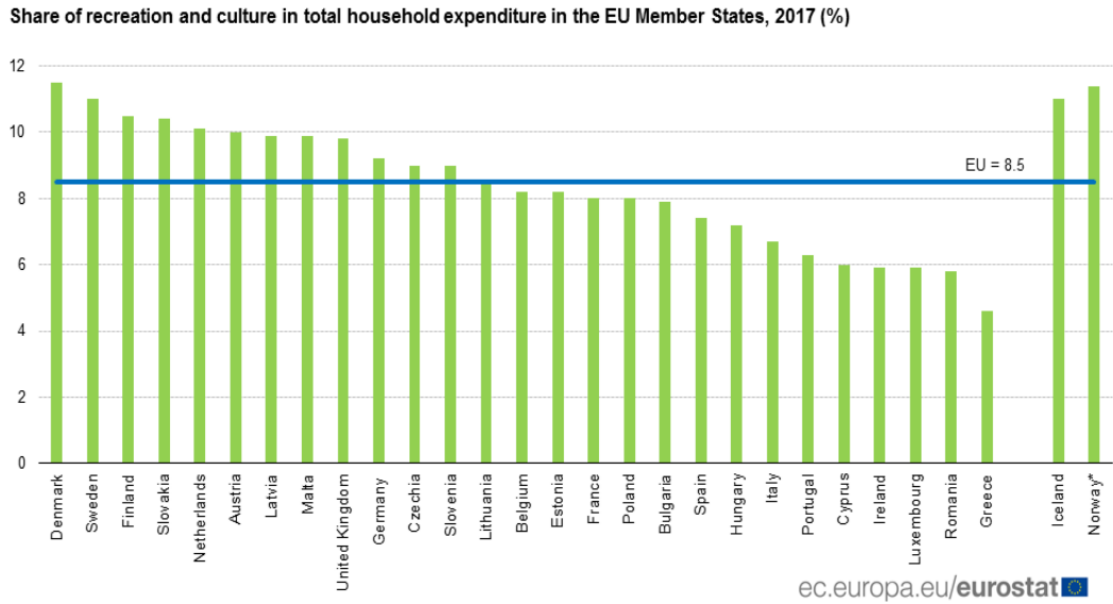


Figure 7, Expenditures on Recreation and Culture (Eurostat, 2017)

Slovakia with its score of 78 in the Hofstede’s dimension of long-term orientation should pay more attention to future outlooks and less to short-term pleasures. “Long-term oriented consumers consider their own selves responsible for future, and avoid present-precedence when deciding to purchase. As the result, focus on short-term pleasures, interests and temptations would decrease” (Bathae, 2014). Such results are often being related to the previous dimension of restraint, since people from restraint cultures tend to be thrifter and the reason may be the worries about future prospects that are directly linked with long term orientation. However, the discrepancies arise between the Hofstede’s results and researches that demonstrated that spending on recreation and culture is rising. GfK Slovakia (2017) estimated that up to 59% of Slovak consumers are following the prices in various retailers and decide by the lowest price, although 61% of Slovak consumers is willing to pay more for higher quality of products. It follows that Slovak consumer is still sensitive to prices although the focus on quality is rising. The validity of this dimension will be compared to the results from questionnaire survey.

Impact of Religion on Slovak Consumers

Slovakia is considered to be a very religious country where according to the latest census the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2011) estimated that the majority of Slovak people are Roman Catholics 62%, followed by Protestants 8,2%, Greek Catholics 3,8%, other unspecified religions 12,5% and atheist 13,4%. The influence of religion on consumer behaviour is not very investigated among Slovak researchers, however as it was

mentioned in the first chapter, Catholics are prone to maintain the traditional roles of women and men in society, in which children are taught to obey the religious rules that in effect can influence their behaviour and selection of goods and services. According to Delener (1994) while in non-religious families both men and women decide jointly on the purchase of car, in Catholic families it is the men who has the final word. Moreover, there are many special Catholic schools where children can deepen their knowledge in this aspect and it can have an impact on their consumer behaviour. The relation between religion and Slovak consumer behaviour will be further examined in the questionnaire research.

3.1.4 Social Influence on Slovak Consumer Behaviour

One of the most influential groups that influences people's values, beliefs, opinions, behaviour and preferences is one's family. However, parental attitudes, values and opinions vary from culture to culture and from family to family. The family environment in which children are brought up has a decisive role in the behaviour of children. Even though, Slovakia is considered to be a religious and conservative country, the number of traditional families is decreasing and the divorce rates rise each year. Authors Šprocha – Vaňo – Bleha (2014) calculated the distribution of family types across Slovakia on the basis of statistical data and estimated their characteristic representation in each region.

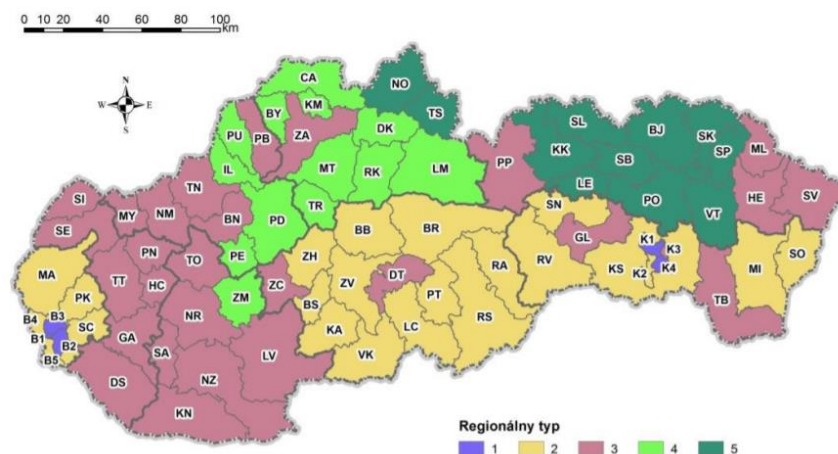


Figure 8, Distribution of Families in Slovakia (Šprocha – Vaňo – Bleha, 2014)

Their results show that Bratislava region and surroundings of the second biggest city in East Slovakia are represented mostly by households of individuals with the lowest number of traditional nuclear families (blue colour). The second regional type that forms a significant part of the south of Central and East Slovakia and is also extended near Bratislava region, is characterised by the existence of the highest number of incomplete families such as e.g.

single parent families (yellow colour). Character and size of families in the third regional type is the most geographically diverse and stands for the Slovak average where the distribution is more or less equal (pink colour). The authors discovered that the distribution of traditional nuclear and extended families, in the two last regional types, has a rising tendency towards the north of East Slovakia where the representation of such families is above average (green colours). It follows that the disparities between Slovak regions are also applicable on family structures which can be reflected in their different family consumer behaviour. However, families regardless of their family structure may have different parental style that can also influence consumption patterns and behavioural styles of their children and other members. “Adolescents who come from homes that are pluralistic (nurturing) continue to rely on parents more than those from laissez-faire families (neglecting) who pay less attention to children overall or protective families (strict) who do not allow children to maneuver consumption on their own” (Moore – Moschis, 1978). Other factors that play a significant role in the upbringing and moulding of consumer patterns are bonds that member have with each other and environmental factors of families such as e.g. education, economic situation and place of residence. The impact of their place of residence will be part of the questionnaire research where the influence of family on buying behaviour will be analysed according to the region respondents live in.

4 Research on Consumer Behaviour in Slovakia

The research focuses on the analysis of consumer behaviour in Slovak culture. It examines how Slovak culture and its regional varieties influence buying habits and behavioural patterns of consumers in the Slovak Republic and its regions and what implications it has for marketers entering Slovak market. The results aim to enhance the understanding of foreign companies and entrepreneurs who are willing to penetrate into the Slovak market and help them better understand the buying habits and behavioural patterns of consumers across Slovakia.

4.1 Methodology

In the first part of the empirical research, external and internal factors that influence Slovak consumer behaviour were identified and will be used as a starting point in our quantitative research. To prove that culture has a significant effect on consumers' buying behaviour, a quantitative method in form of an online questionnaire was developed and aimed at Slovak consumers. This approach has been chosen to help gather more responses

from different parts of Slovakia, in order to analyse the similarities and differences in behavioural patterns of Slovak consumers in general and between the regions individually. The results will be compared to the existing theory in this field and our analysis of the influencing factors of Slovak consumer behaviour in the previous section.

Firstly, our focus was placed on a theoretical aspect of the topic to get a clear understanding of the related field. The first chapter focused on the relation between culture and consumer behaviour as well as external and internal factors that influence buying behaviour across cultures were examined. The second chapter aimed to identify the influence of globalization and media on consumer and selection of marketing strategies, in which adaptation to cultural variables has shown to be important for marketing specialist. As a consequence, the theoretical information was applied to practice, different factors that influence Slovak consumer behaviour were identified and Slovak values on the basis of Hofstede's cultural model supported by various researches and statistical data were provided on the national and regional-level. However, the analysed data need further investigation in order to prove their reliability to use them on marketing purposes. For that reason, research questions on the basis of theoretical findings of other researchers and our culture specific expectations about Slovak consumer behaviour were prepared. To provide us with clear responses to our research questions, the hypotheses were formulated and used to create an online questionnaire using the Google formulary.

Research questions:

1. Do Slovak consumers prefer products made in their culture?
2. Do values and opinions of family members influence Slovak buying behaviour?
3. Do values and opinions of friends influence Slovak buying behaviour?
4. Are Slovak consumers influenced by their religious beliefs?
5. Are Slovak consumers influenced by their traditions and cultural values?
6. Do Slovak consumers buy products and services based on rationality?
7. Do the Hofstede's dimension results of Slovakia demonstrate the Slovak consumer characteristics?
8. Are there differences in consumer behaviour and behavioural patterns of people living in different regions of Slovakia based on culture?

Hypotheses:

H1 Slovak consumers are local oriented and prefer products made in their culture.

H1–a Slovak consumers prefer local products made in their region.

H1–b Slovak consumers prefer Slovak products.

H1–c Slovak consumers would welcome more Slovak products and services.

H2 Attitudes and opinions of family are important for Slovak consumers.

H3 Attitudes and opinions of friends and environment are important for Slovak consumers.

H4 Religion influences Slovak buying behaviour.

H5 Slovak traditions and values influence their consumer behaviour.

H6 Slovak consumers decide in their purchase behaviour on the basis of rationality.

H7 Results of Hofstede’s model about Slovakia are in accordance with characteristics of Slovak consumer behaviour and may be used as a basis for marketing analyses.

H7–a Power Distance: Slovak consumers believe that social status may be bought.

H7–b Individualism: Slovak consumers do not care about opinions of other people.

H7–c Uncertainty Avoidance: Slovak consumers prefer well-known brands that represent safe choice.

H7–d Masculinity: The masculine head of a family decides about bigger purchases alone.

H7–e Long-term orientation: Slovak consumers are influenced by lower prices and discounts to save money.

H7–f Restraint: Slovak consumers do not like to spend on leisure activities and experiences.

H8 There are differences in Slovak consumer behaviour based on cultural regional variables.

To get specific responses from our respondents, a self-administered questionnaire was created and tested on a small sample of respondents to identify the clarity of the questions. The tested sample helped us to recognise which questions have been understood differently than was expected and they were amended accordingly. The changes were integrated to the final version and translated to Slovak language so that Slovak consumers can participate in our research without any language barriers.

The structure of the responses was based on Likert scale, which is a response model that offers 5 responses on a scale from the most positive statement, positive, neutral, negative and the most negative one, but there are also some open-end and closed questions. In total, the questionnaire survey consisted of 6 demographic questions, 8 questions in relation to internal and external factors affecting consumer behaviour across Slovakia and 6 questions on the basis of Hofstede's value dimensions.

As a method for collecting data, the snowball sampling has been chosen in order to attract and convince more potential respondents from different parts of Slovakia to fill in the questionnaire. This sampling method required every respondent to share the questionnaire with at least one or more potential respondents which enabled us to share the link in an unbiased way. Because of the broad range that online questionnaire provides, social media were used as a principal tool to distribute the link among the respondents from different regions. The questionnaire was available during the period of 16th of December 2018 until 16th of March 2019. The collection of responds lasted 3 months and the obtained data were analysed using the statistical program jamovi that helped us to define the sample, to ascertain the hypotheses and lead us to conclusions about the influence of culture on consumer behaviour in Slovakia.

4.1.1 Characteristics of the Sample

During the period of three months, the questionnaire was filled in by 700 respondents from which 182 were from Bratislava region, 176 from West Slovakia, 137 from Central Slovakia and 205 from East Slovakia. The sample comprised of 509 women and 191 men, while the biggest number of respondents claimed to be in the age group of 18-25 year (330), followed by respondents between 26-35 years (182), 36-45 years (84) and 46-65 years (76). The group under 18 (18) and above 65 (10) had the smallest representation within the sample.

In which region do you live?	Gender	Age					
		18-25	26-35	36-45	46-65	Less than 18	More than 65
Bratislava region	Female	53	25	12	26	1	5
	Male	25	24	7	4	0	0
Central Slovakia	Female	79	13	6	5	2	0
	Male	18	8	3	1	1	1
East Slovakia	Female	74	31	16	13	8	1
	Male	34	16	7	2	3	0
West Slovakia	Female	33	52	28	22	2	2
	Male	14	13	5	3	1	1

Table 1, Characteristics of the Sample – Gender, Age (own study)

Analysis based on the marital status showed that most people stated they were singles (279), the second most frequent respond was married (190), and they were followed by people in long-term relationship (183). The least representation had the respondents that were divorced (39) and widowed (9). Results show that the majority of our sample in Bratislava region, Central and East Slovakia can be characterised by single respondents while the majority of West Slovakia is formed primarily by married people. This difference between the numbers of respondents that claimed to be married or in long-term relationship in West Slovakia in comparison to people from other regions may play a determining role in the results of the research. Its influence on consumers responds will be taken into account when interpreting the results.

In which region do you live?	Marital status				
	Divorced	Long-term relationship	Married	Single	Widowed
Bratislava region	16	53	45	65	3
Central Slovakia	4	36	18	77	2
East Slovakia	10	50	47	98	0
West Slovakia	9	44	80	39	4

Table 2, Characteristics of the Sample - Marital Status (own study)

Demographic question about employment status of the respondents revealed that the sample was comprised mostly of employed people (313) and students (224). In descending order, they were followed by entrepreneurs (66), females on maternity leave (42), unemployed (30) and pensioners (25). The primacy of students was recorded in Central Slovakia while the majority of other regions was represented by employed people. Another characteristic attribute of the sample was the distribution of incomes in our research that

depended mostly on the people's employment status, although the difference between Bratislava region and other regions was evident. While the majority of people from Bratislava stated that their monthly gross salary is above 1000€, majorities of respondents from other Slovak regions determined that their income represents less than 500€. However, bigger numbers of students, unemployed and females on maternity leaves in these regions may have contributed to such results.

In which region do you live?	Employment status					
	Employed	Entrepreneur	Maternity/Paternity leave	Pensioner	Student	Unemployed
Bratislava region	105	22	6	13	35	1
Central Slovakia	35	7	4	0	84	7
East Slovakia	81	18	13	5	77	11
West Slovakia	92	19	19	7	28	11

Table 3, Characteristics of the Sample - Employment Status (own study)

In which region do you live?	What is your gross monthly income?				
	500€ - 750€	751€ - 1000€	Less than 500€	More than 1000€	Not stated
Bratislava region	45	33	40	54	10
Central Slovakia	13	18	80	12	14
East Slovakia	40	32	91	24	18
West Slovakia	33	35	53	38	17

Table 4, Characteristics of the Sample - Income (own study)

Designation of the typical traits of respondents according to the regions they live in has to be incorporated to the characteristics so that their different traits can be considered when interpreting the results:

Data show that 122 female respondents and 60 male respondents took part in our research survey in Bratislava region. Majority of the involved people in each group were singles (65), in the age category between 18-25 years (78), employed (105) and those with a gross monthly income more than 1000€ (54). The second biggest part of the research in this region were people in long-term relationship (53), respondents of the age category between 26-35 years (49), students (35) and those with a gross monthly income between the range of 500€-700€ (45). They were followed by married (45), people between the age 46-65 (30),

entrepreneurs (22) and the respondents that confessed to have less than 500€ per month (40) and between 751€-1000€ (33). These groups represent the sample that indicated Bratislava region as a region they live in and can be characterised by these demographic groups. The other respondents are not representative for this sample because of their reduced number.

In West Slovakia there were 139 females and 37 males that participated and filled in the questionnaire. The majority indicated that they were married (80), in the age category of 26-35 years (65), employed (92) and with a gross monthly salary of less than 500€ (53). The second biggest group were people who claim to be in long-term relationship (44), between 18-25 years (47), students (28) and with an income of more than 1000€ (38). Other important groups were singles (39), with the age between 36-45 years (33), amount of people who are entrepreneurs (19) and on maternity leave (19) were the same, and those with an income in the range of 751€-1000€ (35) and 500€-750€ (33). The other respondents are not included in this characteristic since their responses were not so frequent.

Demographic questions show that 105 females and 32 males were involved in Central Slovakia. The majority of respondents stated they were singles (77), in the age group between 18-25 years (97), students (84) and those with the income less than 500€ per month (80). The other group that influenced the results to the considerable extent were people in long-term relationship (36), in the age category between 26-35 years (21), employed (35) and quite similar number of people from different income categories specifically those with salary between 751€-1000€ (18), 500€-751€ (13) and more than 1000€ (12). Other groups are not included in the regional demographic characteristics because of their reduced number.

In East Slovakia, it was 143 females and 62 males that took part of our research. Majority of the responses in each indicator responded that they were single (98), in the age group between 18-25 years (108), employed (81) and those that have income less than 500€ (91). The second biggest part was formed by people with long-term relationship (50), with the age between 26-35 years (47), students (77) and people with salary in the range of 500€-750€ (40). They were followed by married (47), with the age between 36-45 years (23) and gross monthly income in the range of 751€-1000€ (32) and more than 1000€ (24). Other respondents formed a minority in the research that is why they cannot characterise the sample as a whole.

4.2 Research Findings and Discussions

To prove or disprove the theoretic field and cultural expectations that are contained in the formulated hypotheses, the comparison between the average Slovak responses and the regional average will be provided. For this purpose, the mentioned hypotheses are used to analyse the obtained data and interpret the results, while some of them needs further analysis of their sub-hypotheses in order to interpret their validity.

H1 Slovak consumers are local oriented and prefer products made in their culture.

H1–a Slovak consumers prefer local products made in their region.

The question: The region I live in influences my buying habits and behavioural patterns.

Example: I am used to the products and services typical for my region and I would favour them in my choice.

In total 47,71% of Slovak respondents indicated agreement to the declaration and only 34,43% disagreed, while 17,86% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. It means that Slovak consumers in total prefer local products made in their region. However, the average responds in every region according to NUTS II indicate some slight differences in the attitudes of participants. While in Bratislava region, Central and East Slovakia there is a clear preference for local products from their region, in West Slovakia there is a slight dominance of disagreement with the statement. On the other hand, such divergence does not form a determining difference in the implications for marketing strategies. The hypothesis **H1-a is affirmed**.

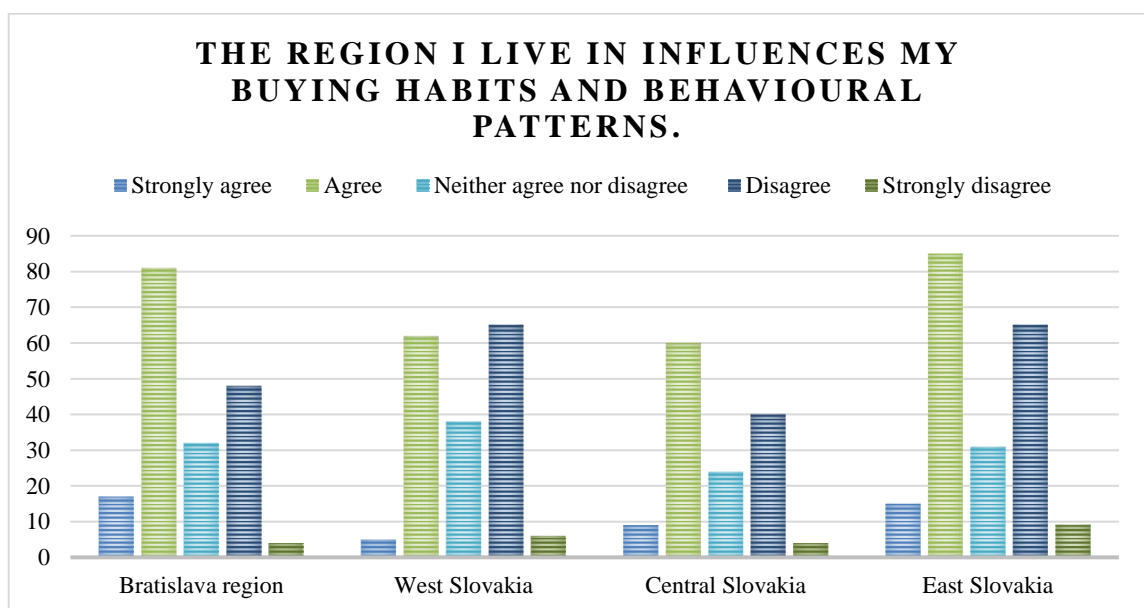


Figure 9, Regional Influence (own study)

H1–b Slovak consumers prefer Slovak products.

The question: I buy more foreign products and services than the Slovak ones.

In total 46,43% of Slovak responders disagreed, which means that they prefer Slovak products and services over the foreign ones. Only 31,43% of Slovak consumers agreed with the statement and 22,14% declared that they neither agree nor disagree because they are not interested in the place of origin. When the results are assigned to each region, there are some differences. While West Slovakia together with East Slovakia and Bratislava region have a clear preference for Slovak products over the foreign ones, the results in Central Slovakia indicate that preference for Slovak and foreign products is quite similar. The hypothesis **H1–b** is affirmed.

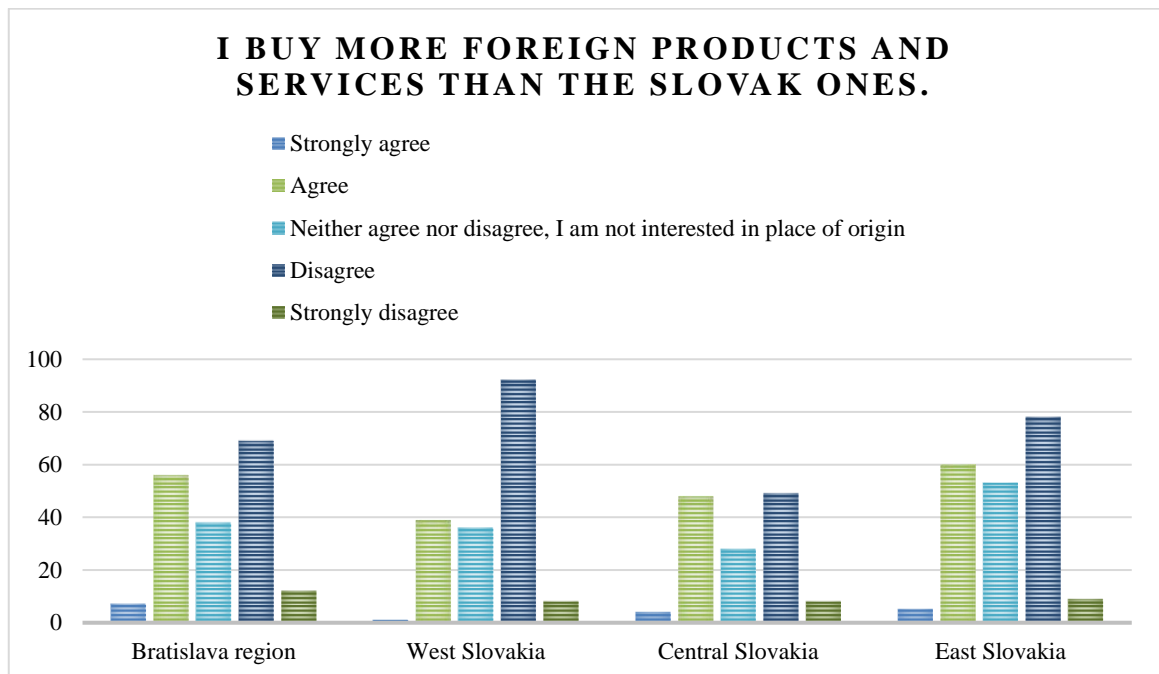


Figure 10, Preference for Products (own study)

H1–c Slovak consumers would welcome more Slovak products and services.

The question: I would welcome more Slovak products and services available to buy.

The results show explicit preference for more Slovak products and services available on the Slovak market, 87,86% of all Slovak consumers agree to gladly receive more Slovak products and services on their market. The results show that half of the people who stated in the previous question that they are not interested in the place of origin would welcome more Slovak products available to buy. This change in their attitudes might be aroused due to the fact

that generally there are not so many Slovak alternatives available to buy. The demand for products made in Slovakia is actually very high.

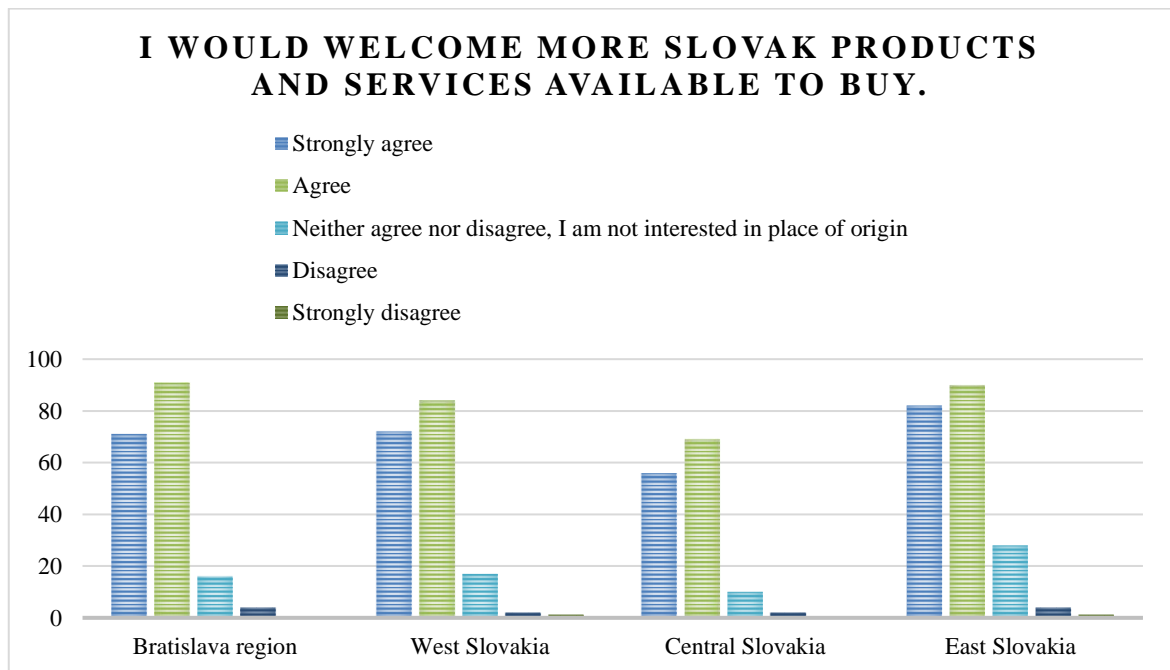


Figure 11, Demand for Slovak Products (own study)

The three sub-hypotheses were confirmed on the national and regional-level with some small divergences between the regions that do not play a determining role for future marketing analyses. The results indicate that majority of Slovak consumers are local oriented and they give preference to products and services made in their Slovak culture. This is probably the effect of globalization that makes consumers turn back to their cultures and appreciate more products that are made in their own country. The hypothesis **H1 is affirmed.**

H2 Values and opinions of family are important for Slovak consumers.

The question: The values and opinions of my family influence my buying habits and behavioural patterns. *Example: If my family thinks that something is inappropriate, unnecessary, tasteless etc. I will not buy it.*

Slovakia as a conservative country approved that family is in their buying behaviour important; more than half of the respondents 53,29% agreed that they would not buy something that their family would disagree with. On the other hand, 41,14% of Slovak consumers do not take into consideration different values and attitudes of their family. Results show that the average responds slightly vary in regions. While in West Slovakia consumers' families have a significant impact on their buying habits and behavioural patterns, in Bratislava region and East Slovakia the differences are less visible. Moreover,

participants from Central Slovakia stated that family values and attitudes does not play a determining role in their buying behaviour. However, the differences in the sample composition have to be taken into consideration because majority of respondents from West Slovakia is formed by married people between 25-35 years which influences the results of the questionnaire since the other regions are formed by singles in the age category of 18-25 years. Results show that the influence of family depends on the marital status and age of the respondents. The findings indicate that family of procreation has more impact on consumer behaviour than family of orientation. Slovak family values and attitudes have impact on consumer behaviour on the national level but on the regional level there are some variables due to the different composition of the sample. The hypothesis **H2 is affirmed.**

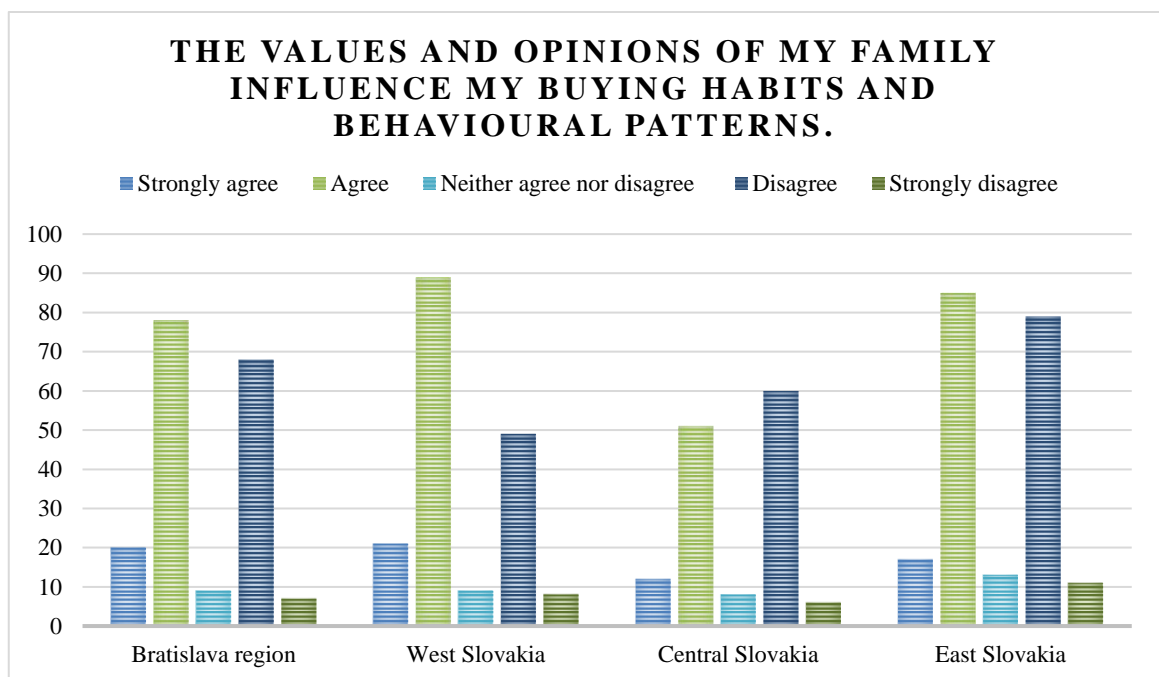


Figure 12, Family Influence (own study)

H3 Values and opinions of friends and environment are important for Slovak consumers.

The question: The values and opinions of my friends and environment influence my buying habits and behavioural patterns. Example: *If my friends and environment think that something is inappropriate, unnecessary, tasteless etc. I will not buy it.*

According to the research, Slovak respondents claim that friends' attitudes and opinions do not influence their consumer habits and behavioural patterns, which is confirmed by 59,14% of negative responses against 32,71% affirmative responses. The responses on the regional level are more or less similar, negative responses have the overwhelming majority. Such results correlate with the attitudes of individualistic cultures, in which people

do not care about what other people think. While family is a close reference group that influences their consumer behaviour, friends do not have such a big impact on their buying behaviour. The hypothesis **H3 is disproved**.

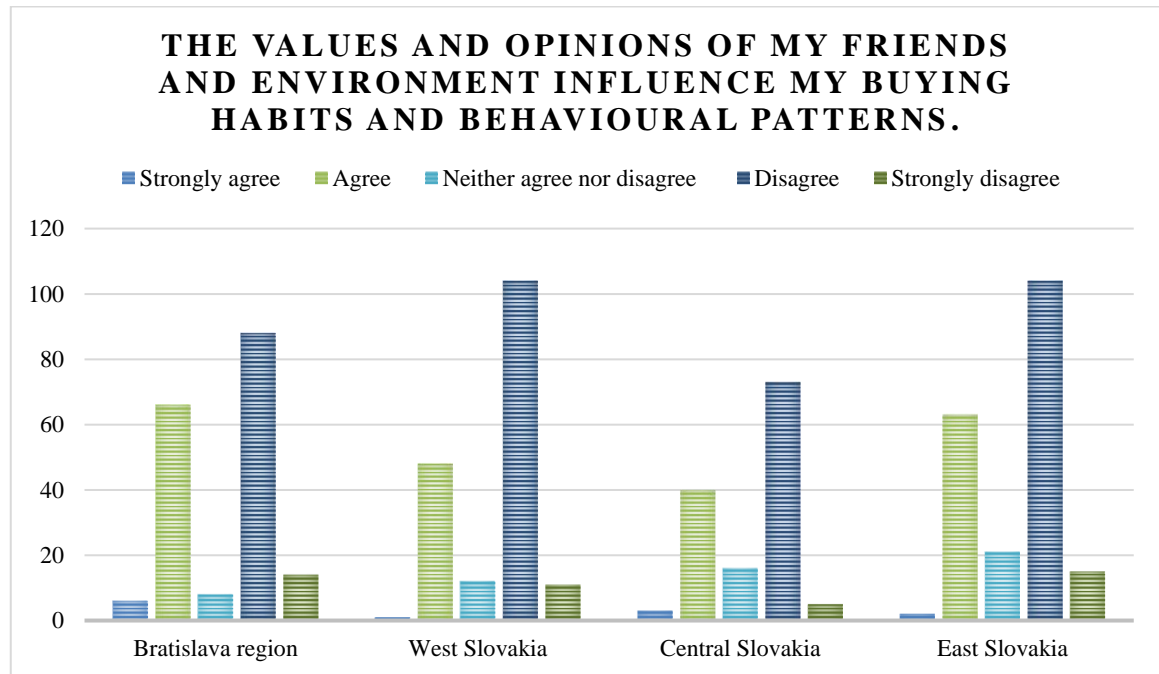


Figure 13, Friends' Influence (own study)

H4 Religion influences Slovak buying behaviour.

The question: My religious beliefs play a determining role in my buying behaviour.
Example: It plays a role if I would buy books or other literature about religion. / I would not buy a mini-skirt, erotic mediums and etc.

Even though Slovakia is considered to be a highly religious and conservative country, majority of Slovak consumers claim that their religious beliefs do not play a determining role in their consumer behaviour. On the national level it was confirmed by 71,29% of respondents against 20% of those who claim that religion plays a role in their buying behaviour. The results do not change in relation to region consumers live in. Such results can be assigned to the raised numbers of atheist since the last official census in 2001, to shifts in values of Slovak people caused by globalization, Internet and technology or the fact that it depends on the level of religiosity of respondents. Religion does not influence Slovak consumers, the hypothesis **H4 is disproved**.

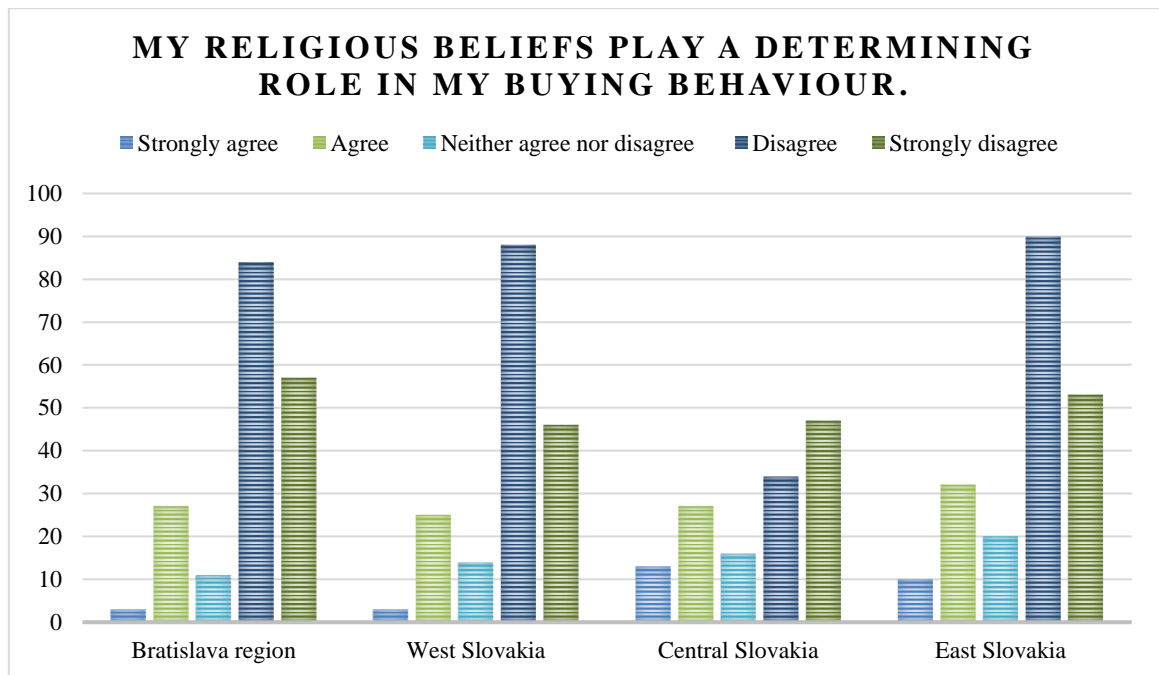


Figure 14, Religion Influence (own study)

H5 Slovak traditions and values influence their consumer behaviour.

The question: Slovak traditions and beliefs influence my buying behaviour. *Example: folk art, traditional meals and beverages, regional customs and traditions, cultural values, etc.*

The research shows that Slovak traditions and values influence Slovak consumer behaviour, the number of positive responds on the national-level represented 49,72 % against 36,14 % of Slovak consumers that responded negatively. The results across regions are quite similar, the impact of Slovak culture on their consumer behaviour is considered important. These results are also reflected in the demand of Slovak consumers for folk motives in Slovak fashion and accessories, the trend to return to Slovak traditions, custom and motives is on the rise. The hypothesis **H5 is affirmed**.

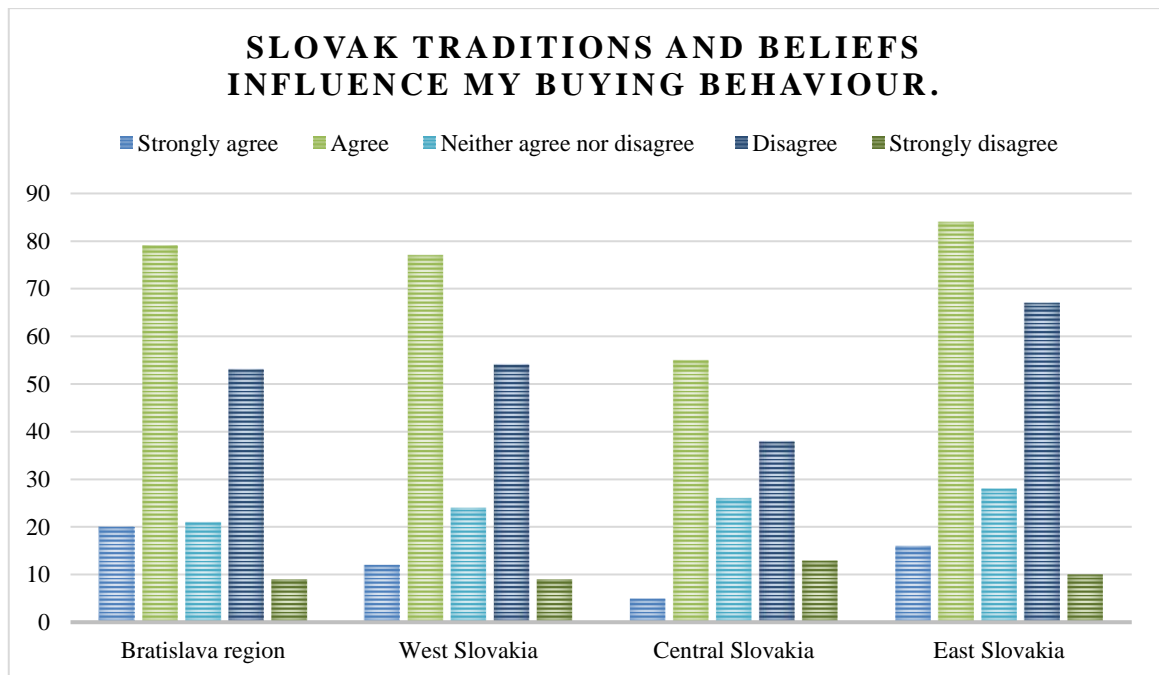


Figure 15, Impact of Slovak Traditions and Beliefs (own study)

H6 Slovak consumers decide in their purchase behaviour on the basis of rationality.

The question: Mostly, I am motivated to buy product/services on the basis of:

- Emotions (feelings and other influencing factors)
- Rationality (functionality and the need)

Slovak consumers seem to decide in their purchases on the basis of rationality, which was confirmed by 83,57% of responds against 16,43% of respondents that claim to have been motivated in their past purchases by emotions. The results do not change depending on the regions respondents live in. However, the fact that people tend to justify their emotional choices after their purchases and the fact that sub-conscious mind selects products and services on the basis of their preferences for example in colours, design and etc. should be taken into consideration. On the other hand, other researches also showed similar findings in relation to Slovak consumer behaviour. Such results indicate that Slovakia should score lower in power distance dimension, because countries that score lower tend to decide on the basis of rationality while highly power distant cultures tend to be motivated by their emotions and added value of brands. Slovak consumers are motivated by functionality which implies that the hypothesis **H6 is proved**.



Figure 16, Decisions Based on Emotions vs. Rationality (own study)

H7 Results of Hofstede’s model about Slovakia are in accordance with characteristics of Slovak consumer behaviour and may be used as a basis for marketing analyses.

H7–a Power Distance: Slovak consumers believe that social status may be bought.

The question: I believe that I can improve my social status by purchasing expensive premium brands or goods. *Example: Rolex, BMW, Gucci, Louis Vuitton etc.*

Responds reveal that 71,43% of Slovak consumers denied that social status may be improved by purchasing premium and luxurious brands. Only 20% of respondents considered expensive premium brands as a tool to boost their social status. The responds do not vary in accordance to the region participants live in. It means that cultural expectation of Slovak consumers based on the Hofstede’s value dimension of power distance separately cannot be applied to marketing analyses based on cultural impact. However, further investigation in this field would be beneficial since results can change according to different contexts since our research was not focus on concrete products and services. However, the findings that Slovak consumers are motivated by rationality when purchasing also contributes to the fact that Slovakia is less power distant in their values than it was expected. The hypothesis **H7-a is disproved.**

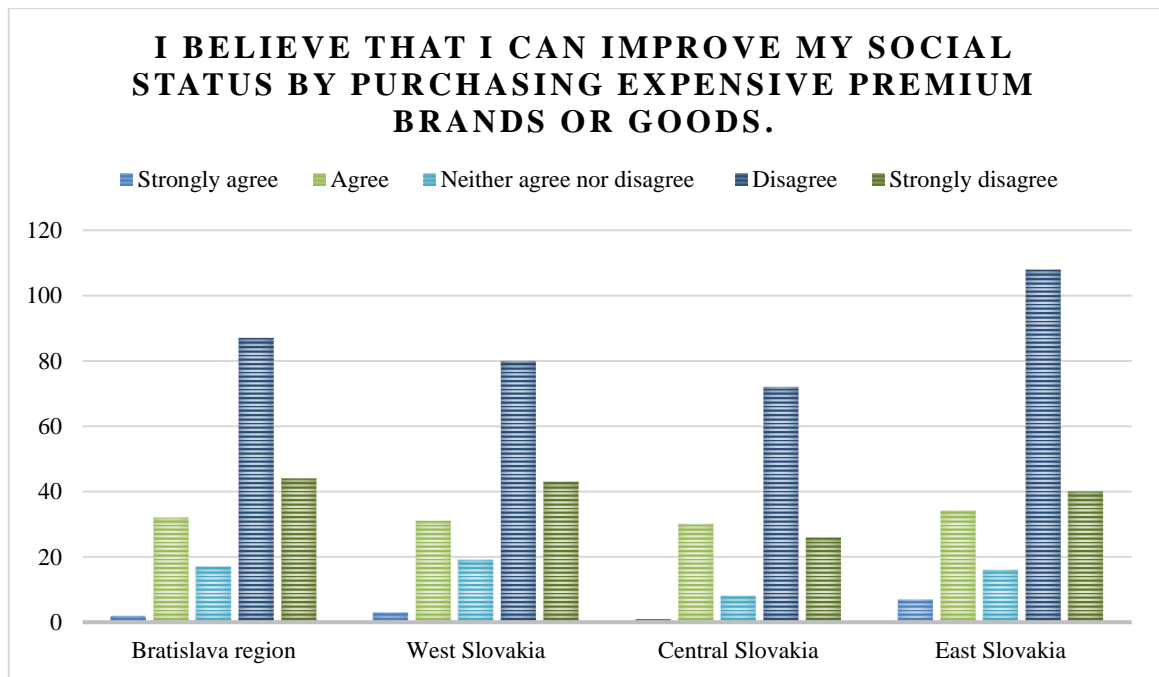


Figure 17, Power Distance (own study)

H7-b Individualism: Slovak consumers do not care about opinions of other people.

The question: When shopping, I care about what other people think.

Slovak consumers proved to be more individualistic in their consumer choices, since 76% of respondents do not care about what other people think about them when purchasing against 15,57% of participants that are cautious about opinions of others. The results do not change depending on the regions they live in. These findings are also supported by the results from the hypothesis H3 about the influence of friends and environment on consumer behaviour which proved to not have any impact on Slovak consumers. Slovak consumers do not care about other peoples' opinions, the hypothesis **H7-b is affirmed**.

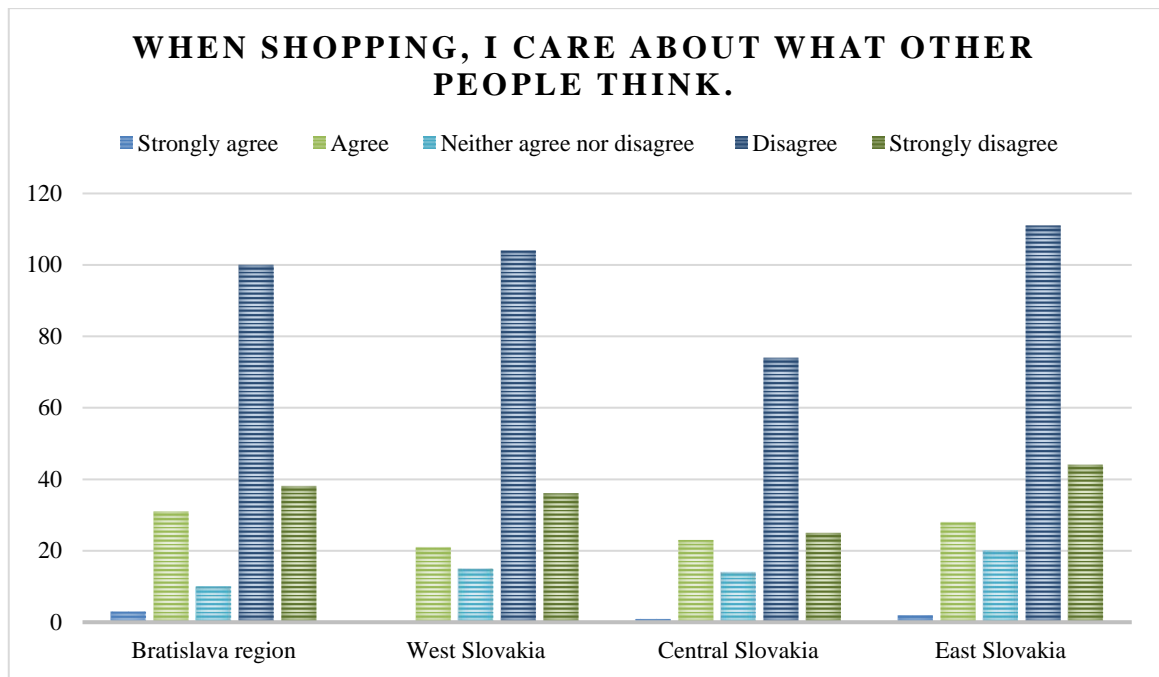


Figure 18, Individualism (own study)

H7-c Uncertainty Avoidance: Slovak consumers prefer well-known brands that represent safe choice.

The question: Mostly, I prefer a new unknown brand that has better parameters than the well-known brand.

According to Hofstede’s value dimension of uncertainty avoidance, Slovak consumers should prefer well-known brands that they have tried before, because they represent quality which mean a safe choice. The theory is supported by various Slovak researches; however, the results of our questionnaire survey show no clear preference, 37,57% of respondents would choose well-known brands and 37,86% would choose new brands with better parameters. Moreover, the option *neither agree nor disagree* represented 24,57% of responds, which in comparison with other results is considerably high. Because of the high percentage of hesitant respondents, it can be concluded that this question cannot be based on general products and services because respondents need to have specified the type of products and services. It means that people’s choices of brands depend on product and service categories. There are brands that consumers would always prefer in relation to some concrete products and services and there are other goods where the brand is not so important. The hypothesis **H7-c is neither proved nor disproved.**

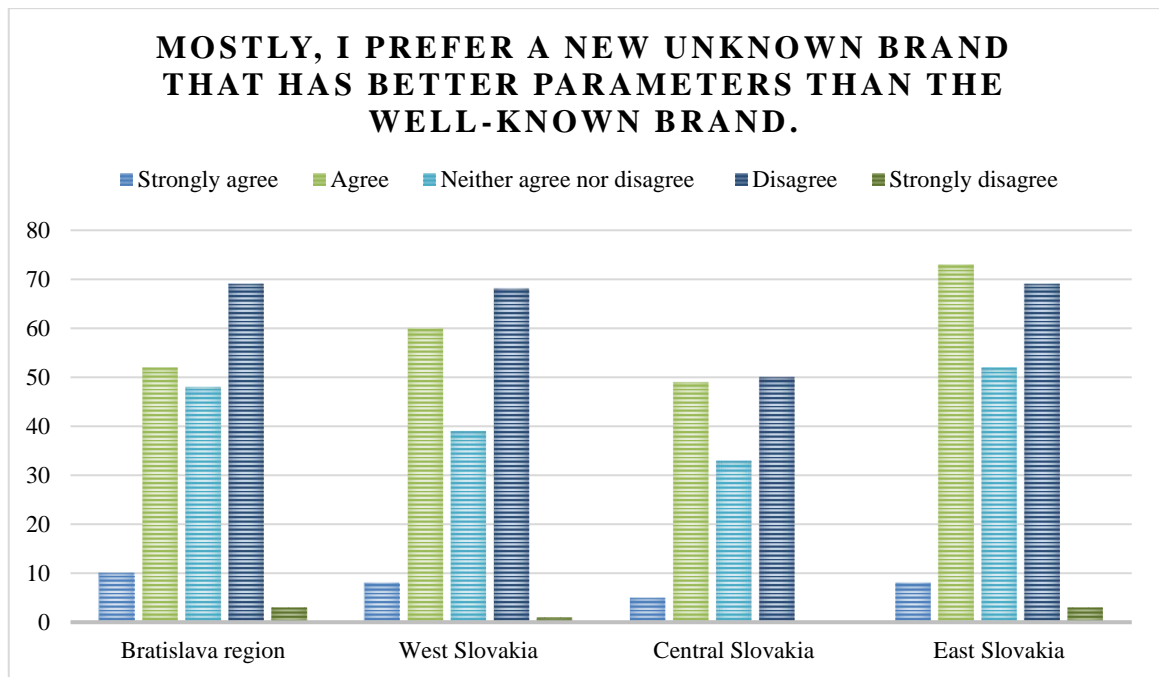


Figure 19, *Uncertainty Avoidance (own study)*

H7-d Masculinity: The masculine head of a family decides about bigger purchases alone.
The question: Which member of your family decides about the purchase of an expensive product or service?

One of the aspects of the researches based on the impact of masculinity on consumer behaviour is that purchase decisions should depend mostly on masculine members of the family regarding more expensive products. This statement is also supported by the fact that catholic religion should have had the same kind of influence on consumer behaviour. However, the results of our research show that majority of families decide jointly since 47,57% of respondents marked the option *male member together with female member* and the second mostly marked option was *female member more than male*. On the other hand, this is only one aspect of masculinity, and in other contexts the research results may vary. It can also change in accordance with concrete products and services, that is why further investigation in this field would be beneficial. According to our research, Slovak culture is more feminine in Slovak consumer behaviour, the hypothesis **H7-d is disproved**.

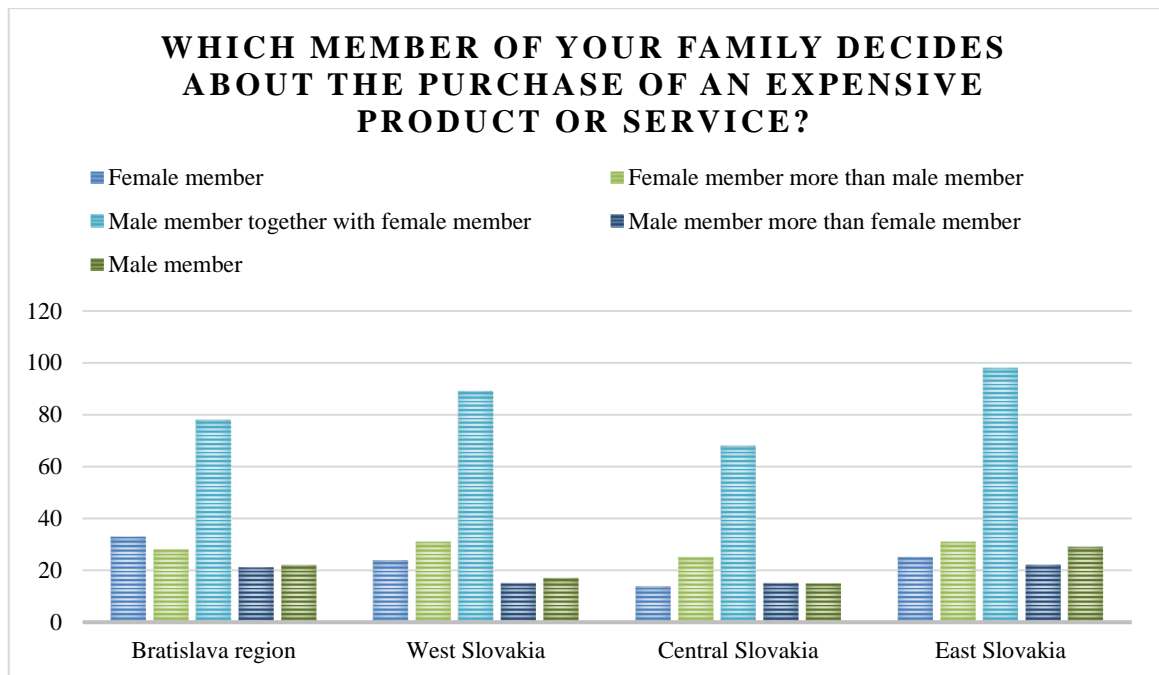


Figure 20, *Masculinity (own study)*

H7-e Long-term orientation: Slovak consumers are influenced by lower prices and discounts to save money.

The question: When shopping, I am mostly influenced by lower prices, discounts or other promotional activities to save money.

Results show that the cultural expectation about Slovak consumers in relation to the Hofstede’s value dimension of long-term orientation are valid. Lower prices, discounts and other promotional activities of companies do influence their consumer behaviour since 69,86% of participants responded positively against 22,57% of those who responded negatively. These findings are also supported by the affirmation of hypothesis H6, in which it was demonstrated that consumers decide on the basis of rationality. Other researches also proved that in order to save money, Slovak consumers are looking for the best prices in various shops and search for discount products and services that they need. The evident attention to such activities means that Slovak consumers are careful about their future outlook and want to save money whenever they can. However, the income of participants also has to be taken into consideration since some might argue that people who earn more are not influenced by discounts and other promotional activities of companies. The figure 22 demonstrates that the income does not influence the results. All categories indicate that price does influence Slovak consumer behaviour, even though in the income category less than 500€ the dominance of positive responds is more evident. The hypothesis **H7-e is affirmed.**

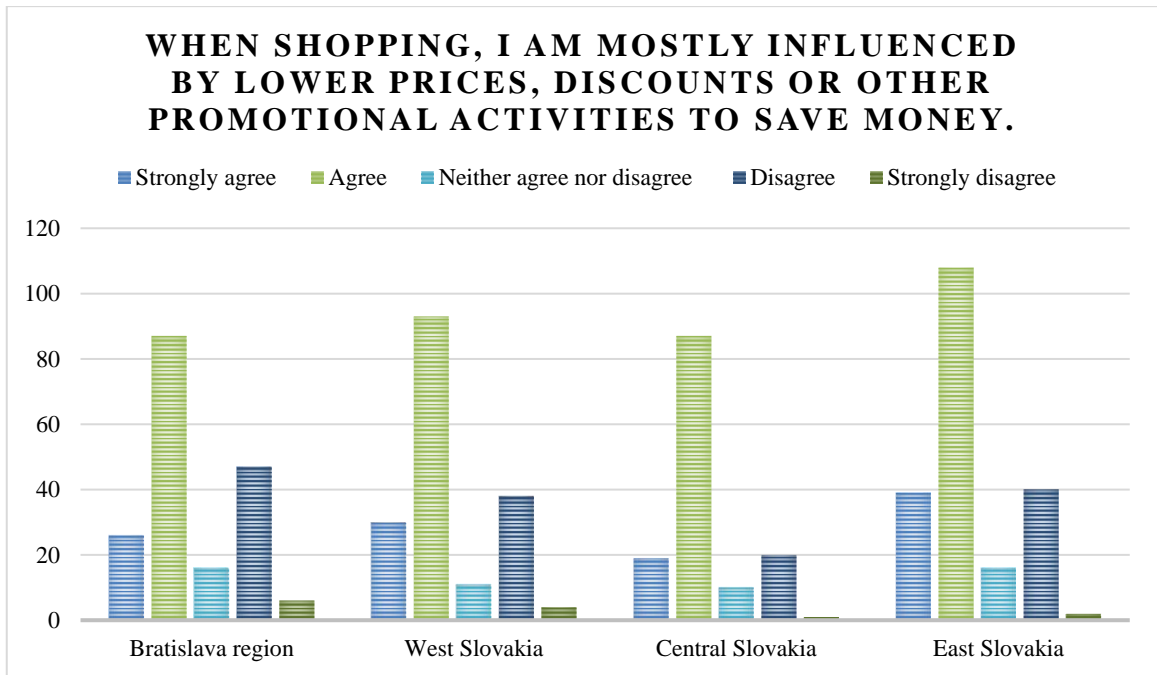


Figure 21, Long-Term Orientation (own study)

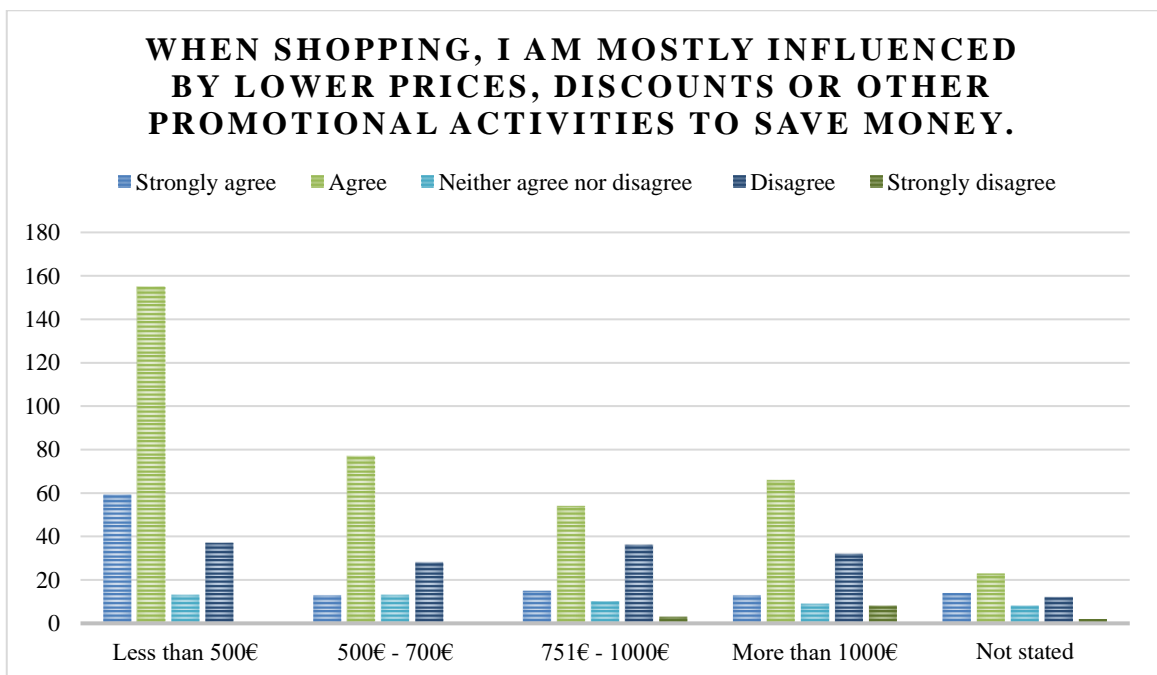


Figure 22, Long-Term Orientation According to Income (own study)

H7-f Restraint: Slovak consumers do not like to spend on leisure activities and experiences.

The question: I like to spend money on experiences, leisure and fun-oriented activities. I treat myself well.

Hofstede’s values in restraint vs. indulgence dimension indicate that Slovakia should be a restraint culture, which can be reflected in consumer behaviour in a way that people should not spend a lot of money on leisure and other fun-oriented activities. However, the results of our research and other researches indicate that Slovak consumers are more indulgent than restraint. The research revealed that 66,57% of respondents treat themselves well, and like to spend money on cultural and recreational activities against 22,27% of those who do not. Results in each region are quite similar except for West Slovakia where the number of people who do not spend a lot on mentioned activities is higher. It might be ascribed to the fact that the research sample in West Slovakia in which the majority of respondents is married and older than in other regions. The findings that Slovakia is one of the countries that spends a lot on recreational activities does not correlate with the hypotheses H7-e about long-term orientation and H6 about rational choices. However, it might be assigned to the fact that young people get married and start a family later than before and they tend to leave their parental houses also later, which enables them to spend more on such activities. There is a relation between the responds and the marital status of respondents and age. While those that are single or in long-term relationships tend to treat themselves well, a big number of married people stated that they do not spend a lot on these kinds of activities. That is the reason why the responds are distinct in West Slovakia. The hypothesis **H7-f is disproved**.

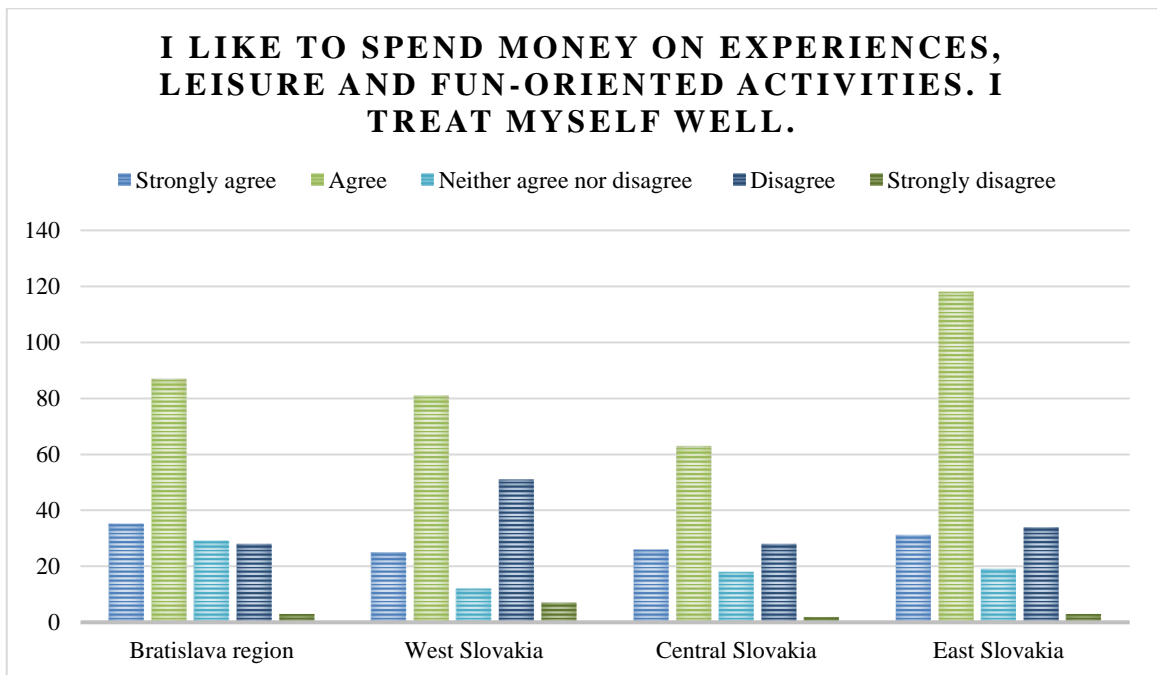


Figure 23, Restraint (own study)

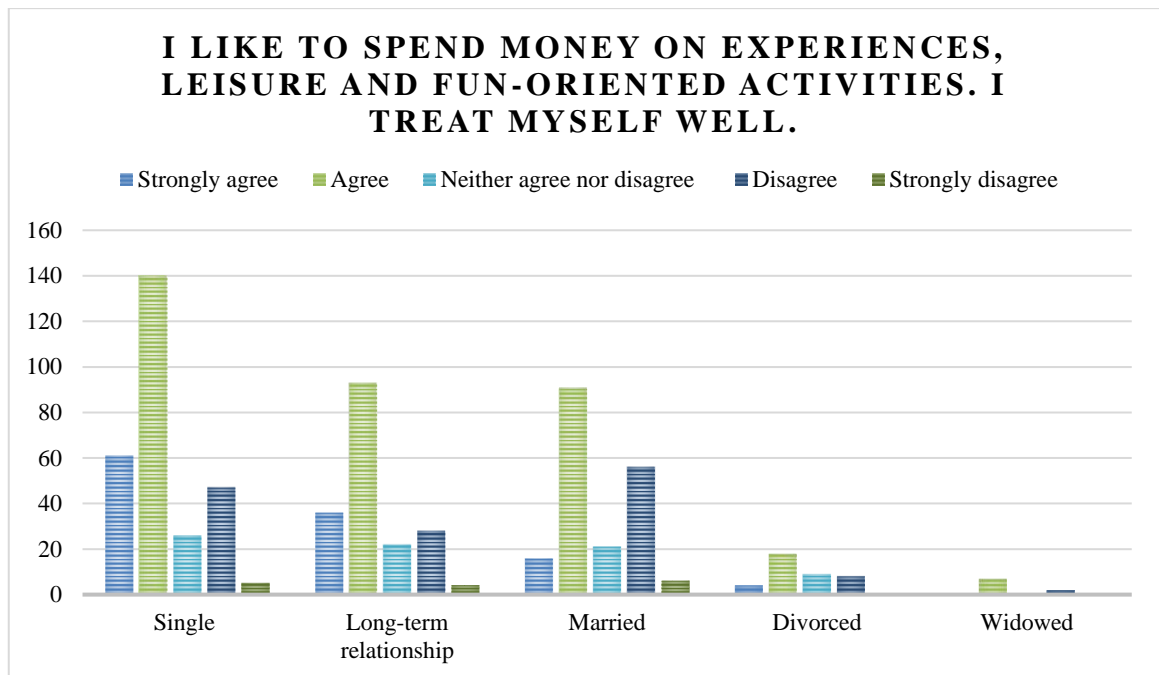


Figure 24, Restraint According to Marital Status (own study)

H7 Results of Hofstede’s model about Slovakia are in accordance with characteristics of Slovak consumer behaviour and may be used as a basis for marketing analyses.

The results of the 6 sub-hypotheses have demonstrated that Hofstede’s model cannot be used for marketing purposes since the values and behaviour of Slovak consumers proved to be in majority of cases distinct from the expectations based on Hofstede’s value dimensions. However, the results may change in relation to different contexts of the researches because researches that focus on concrete products and services may obtain different results than in the general researches. Moreover, more extensive examination based on several aspects of the dimensions may also contribute to different results. According to our research, the hypothesis **H7 is disproved**.

H8 There are differences in Slovak consumer behaviour based on cultural regional variables.

According to the responds of our participants in each question across the regions, it is clear that there are not significant changes in Slovak consumer behaviour depending on their regional cultures. There were some small divergences in the opinions according to NUTS II but they can be assigned to the uneven composition of the sample in different regions. Results demonstrated that it is not necessary to localise marketing strategy according to the cultural regional variables since the responds on regional-level are similar. Thy hypothesis **H8 is disproved**.

Questionnaire survey has proved that Slovak culture does influence their consumer behaviour on the national-level. Adaptation to Slovak cultural variables in general would be beneficial for companies that want to enter this market, since Slovak consumers proved to be influenced by their Slovak culture, traditions, beliefs and they would rather buy products reflecting their cultural values, made in the regions they live in or in Slovakia.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to investigate the cultural impact on consumer behaviour concerning Slovak consumers from different regions of Slovakia. Since Slovakia appeared in the rankings of the countries with the most regional disparities, results of the thesis are aimed at marketing specialists who can adjust their marketing strategies according to the research findings on the cultural and regional differences and similarities in Slovak consumer behaviour.

In the first part of the thesis, the aim was to obtain information about the external and internal factors that influence consumer behaviour across cultures. The fact is that even though consumers are exposed to the same external factors across cultures, their perception is different because their values, beliefs, traditions and opinions of what is right or wrong vary. The second part focused on the role of media and globalization in consumer behaviour, and the approaches that marketers apply with respect to different cultures in order to be successful on the market were analysed. The theory suggests that cultural influence on buying habits and behavioural patterns is significant on the national-level as well as on the regional-level. That is why companies should focus on adaptation of their marketing strategy. In the third part, the theory was applied on consumer behaviour in Slovakia and focus was placed on specific factors that influence the buying behaviour of Slovak consumers across its regions. To analyse influencing factors of Slovak behavioural patterns, statistical data as well as the Hofstede's value dimensions of Slovakia were employed. The data were supported or contradicted by various researches. In order to discover the impact of cultural and regional variables on Slovak consumers, 8 research questions were used to formulate hypotheses that helped us to prove or disprove the theoretical cultural expectations based on cultural researches of consumer behaviour and statistical data.

On the basis of formulated hypotheses, a quantitative method based on the self-administered online questionnaire was created. Its objective was to obtain opinions and attitudes directly from Slovak consumers living in different regions of Slovakia and compare them to general results of respondents. The results of questionnaire survey were aimed to determine which marketing strategy would be beneficial for companies entering Slovak market on national and regional-level. To reach more respondents from different parts of Slovakia, the method of snow-ball sampling was used, it required every respondent to share the link of questionnaire with at least one person. This method enabled us to reach 700

respondents from which 182 were from Bratislava region, 176 from West Slovakia, 137 from Central Slovakia and 205 from East Slovakia. Using statistical program jamovi, we were able to identify the major consumer traits that characterised the sample according to the regions that respondents lived in. Their classification based on demographic factors helped us to considerate the sample characteristics when interpreting the results. The research findings were supported by tables and figures that displayed the responds of Slovak consumers.

The hypothesis H1 *Slovak consumers are local oriented and prefer products made in their culture* was confirmed in the research because participants prefer to buy products and services proceeding from their region and they also give preference to goods made in their country. Moreover, from the responds it follows that they would gladly receive more Slovak products and services.

The hypothesis H2 *Values and opinions of family are important for Slovak consumers* that was aimed at the influence of social factors on Slovak consumer behaviour was also proved. It can be concluded that family does influence their consumer behaviour although the family of procreation has a bigger impact since married and older respondents claimed to be more influenced.

The hypothesis H3 *Values and opinions of friends and environment are important for Slovak consumers* was also part of the examination of social factors impact on their buying habits and it showed to not be important for Slovak consumers. They do not consult their purchases with their reference groups except for their family members which supports their individualistic values.

The hypothesis H4 *Religion influences Slovak buying behaviour* which was aimed to discover the impact of religious beliefs on Slovak consumers since Slovak culture is considered to be highly religious and conservative proved to not have any support among the respondents. They denied any impact of their religious beliefs on their consumer behaviour.

The hypothesis H5 *Slovak traditions and values influence their consumer behaviour* that investigated the impact of cultural values, customs, folk art, traditional meals and beverages proved to be important for Slovak consumers in all regions. Slovak consumers tend to make purchases according to the cultural values and traditions.

The hypothesis H6 *Slovak consumers decide in their purchase behaviour on the basis of rationality* was affirmed since Slovak people claimed to be more driven by rationality which implies functionality of products and services and the need to have them.

The hypothesis H7 *Results of Hofstede's model about Slovakia are in accordance with characteristics of Slovak consumer behaviour and may be used as a basis for marketing analyses* was based on 6 sub-hypothesis that were used to prove the validity of Slovak consumers' characteristics based on the theory of each value dimension in researches on consumer behaviour. Since majority of the dimensions proved to not have any relation with actual behaviour and attitudes of Slovak consumers, the hypothesis H7 was not affirmed. Hofstede's value dimension separately cannot be used as a tool to characterise values of Slovak consumers.

The hypothesis H8 *There are differences in Slovak consumer behaviour based on cultural regional variables* focused on differences and similarities of responds of participants across the Slovak regions. The research findings indicate that there are not determining differences between the responds across regions, the hypothesis was disproved.

The results of the questionnaire survey demonstrated that the regional variables of Slovak culture do not have an impact on their consumer behaviour and it is not necessary to localise marketing strategies to Slovak regional subcultures since the responds were quite similar across the regions. However, the effects of globalisation cause that Slovaks are more concerned about the products and services that resemble their own cultural values, attitudes and traditions. For this reason, it would be beneficial to integrate something Slovak to their products and services since the interest in buying local products is evident. The results from the research may be contributive to future marketing analyses since values and opinions of Slovak consumers were identified and culture proved to have an influence on their buying behaviour. It follows that marketing specialists should consider to adapt their marketing strategy and create a special approach for Slovak consumers on national-level.

Resumé

Diplomová práca sa zaoberala skúmaním vplyvu kultúry na spotrebiteľské správanie so zameraním sa na slovenských spotrebiteľov a dôsledky týchto vplyvov na marketingové stratégie firiem, ktoré chcú vstúpiť na slovenský trh. Jedným z dôvodov na skúmanie a porovnanie spotrebiteľského správania na celoštátnej a regionálnej úrovni na Slovensku bolo jeho objavenie sa v rebríčku OECD medzi krajinami s najväčšími regionálnymi disparitami. Pričom ignorovanie kultúrnych vplyvov na slovenských spotrebiteľov vzniká zo strany zahraničných firiem už na celoštátnej úrovni. Touto prácou sme sa snažili ukázať, že kultúrne hodnoty, náboženstvo, tradície a zvyklosti, a charakteristiky regionálnych subkultúr naozaj ovplyvňujú spotrebiteľské správanie Slovákov, kvôli čomu by firmy mali zvážiť prispôbenie sa slovenskej kultúre.

V prvej kapitole teoretickej časti práce sme sa zameriavali na zisťovanie súvislostí medzi kultúrou a spotrebiteľským správaním ako aj na identifikovanie externých a interných faktorov, ktoré vplyvajú na spotrebiteľov. Na objektívne zhodnotenie vplyvu kultúry na spotrebiteľa sme sa sústredili aj na definovanie ekonomických, sociálnych, osobných a psychologických faktorov ktoré spolu navzájom súvisia a vplyv jedného faktoru bez skúmania vplyvov ostatných faktorov sa nedá oddeliť. Je to komplikovaný proces, ktorý sa počas života kontinuálne mení, pričom platí, že veľké množstvo externých faktorov, ktoré vstúpi do procesu spotrebiteľského správania, spotrebiteľ vyhodnotí na základe individuálnych faktorov a postupuje podľa svojich naučených a získaných postupov pred, počas a následne aj po kúpe daných tovarov alebo služieb. Postupy, ktoré počas života spotrebiteľ používa sú ovplyvnené hlboko zakorenenými naučenými kultúrnymi a sociálnymi hodnotami, ktoré získa výchovou, vzdelávaním a socializáciou už v detstve pričom tie sa ďalej vyvíjajú počas života získavaním nových skúseností a sociálnych rolí. V princípe teda platí, že aj keď marketingová komunikácia je rovnaká vo viacerých kultúrach, spotrebiteľ na ňu bude hľadiť cez svoju vlastnú optiku a bude ju chápať v rámci svojich kultúrnych a sociálnych hodnôt, ktoré sa môžu medzi kultúrami navzájom líšiť.

V druhej kapitole teoretickej časti sa zameriavame na vplyv médií, novodobých digitálnych platforiem a marketingovej komunikácie na spotrebiteľa. Medzinárodné ale aj národné médiá, celebrity a firmy, novodobí influenceri s veľkou základňou sledovateľov na sociálnych sieťach z veľkej časti vymenili tradičné médiá ako hlavný zdroj informácií a postupne menia zaužívané vzory správania sa v medziľudskom ale aj spotrebiteľskom

správání, hodnoty a postoje spoločnosti. Táto zmena nastáva dôsledkom vplyvania a miešania rôznych kultúrnych hodnôt, postojov, priorít a trendov v moderných digitálnych platformách. Marketingoví špecialisti určujú stále viac čo majú spotrebitelia vedieť, čo je dobré alebo zlé a v neposlednom rade nastavujú trendy, podľa ktorých sa ľudia majú správať a nakupovať. Ľudia, ktorí sledujú tento obsah sú súčasťou populárnej kultúry, ktorá je základom pre teóriu uplatňovania štandardizovanej marketingovej stratégie na rôzne kultúry bez ohľadu na ich kultúrnu jedinečnosť, zvyklosti, tradície a hodnoty.

Firmy neprikladajú veľkú mieru kultúrnym vplyvom na spotrebiteľské správanie a štandardizujú svoju marketingovú stratégiu na viacero krajín podľa ich kultúrnych podobností. Štandardizácia marketingovej stratégie im môže priniesť úspory z veľkosériovej výroby a ušetrenie nákladov na podrobnú marketingovú analýzu, avšak viacero veľkých medzinárodných firiem si už uvedomilo, že za svoj úspech vďaka práve prispôbeniu sa kultúrnym hodnotám, zvyklostiam a tradíciám. Téma adaptácie marketingovej stratégie podľa danej kultúry začína medzi expertmi rezonovať stále viac. Jednotný vnútorný trh, globalizácia a Internet na jednej strane spôsobujú, že spotrebitelia majú jednoduchý prístup k zahraničným tovarom a službám, na druhej strane nevzniká nový univerzálny spotrebiteľ, ktorého túžby a správanie je jednotné naprieč kultúrami. Naopak trend navrátenia sa k vlastným tradíciám, zvyklostiam a hodnotám, podporovanie domáceho trhu je na vzostupe.

V tretej kapitole a prvej časti empirického výskumu sme sa venovali analýze najdôležitejších faktorov, ktoré ovplyvňujú nákupné správanie Slovákov na celoštátnej ale aj regionálnej úrovni. Slovenská republika sa kvôli členstvu v dôležitých medzinárodných organizáciách, svojej geografickej polohe a vybudovanej infraštruktúre zaradila medzi spoľahlivé a konkurencieschopné destinácie pre zahraničných investorov. Na analýzu spotrebiteľského správania aj na regionálnej úrovni sme podľa štatistického rozdelenia NUTS II Slovensko rozčlenili na štyri časti a to na Bratislavský región, západné, stredné a východné Slovensko.

Pri skúmaní vplyvu ekonomických faktorov sme sa zamerali na regionálnu rozdielnosť v nezamestnanosti, v príjmoch a s tým spojenými výdavkami domácností, ale zamerali sme sa aj na spokojnosť ľudí s rôznymi faktormi v jednotlivých regiónoch, ktoré priamo súvisia s ostatnými ovplyvňujúcimi faktormi a správaním sa slovenských spotrebiteľov. V druhej časti, sme sa venovali globalizácii ako ovplyvňujúcemu faktoru

spotrebiteľského správania. Na základe niekoľkých štúdií sme zistili, že aj napriek všetkým možnostiam nakupovania, ktoré Slováci majú vďaka globalizácii, sa vracajú k menším lokálnym obchodom, podporujú slovenské produkty a služby a tiež sú viac obozretnejší ohľadom zloženia produktov. Ako kultúrne faktory ktoré môžu vplývať na slovenských spotrebiteľov sme určili náboženstvo, tradície, zvyklosti a slovenské jedinečné kultúrne hodnoty, ktoré sme sa rozhodli identifikovať na základe Hofstedeho kultúrneho modelu, keďže jeho výskum bol medzi zahraničnými výskumníkmi označovaný za najvhodnejšiu alternatívu pre štúdium spotrebiteľského správania na základe kultúry. Hodnoty jeho výskumu nám slúžili ako východisko, ktoré sme podporili alebo vyvrátili viacerými slovenskými a zahraničnými štatistikami a výskumami a neskôr overili v dotazníkovom prieskume. V analýze sociálnych faktorov sme sa zamerali na rozloženie rodiny v jednotlivých častiach Slovenska. Postupovali sme podľa štúdie slovenských autorov, ktorí rozčlenili Slovensko podľa počtu členov v domácnosti a typov rodín v jednotlivých regiónoch. Najmenší počet členov a neúplné rodiny boli zaznamenané v Bratislavskom regióne a ich počet sa zvyšoval smerom na východ krajiny.

Vplyv identifikovaných faktorov v predchádzajúcich kapitolách bol overený v druhej časti empirického výskumu, v ktorom sme sa znovu zamerali na slovenských spotrebiteľov na celoštátnej ako aj regionálnej úrovni a porovnali sme odpovede respondentov na týchto dvoch úrovniach tak, aby sme vedeli určiť či je vhodné lokalizovať marketingovú stratégiu na Slovensko a jeho regióny. Výskum bol založený na ôsmich formulovaných hypotézach, pričom časť z nich bola podmienená platnosťou niekoľkých pod-hypotéz. Na základe týchto hypotéz bol vytvorený dotazník, ktorý bol šírený metódou „snehovej gule“, ktorá spočívala v tom, že respondent zašle online dotazníkový formulár aspoň jednému ďalšiemu potenciálnemu respondentovi. Anketa bola prístupná počas troch mesiacov a vyplnilo ju 700 respondentov z celého Slovenska. Na základe demografických faktorov sme charakterizovali vzorku podľa regiónov, v ktorých ľudia bývali a identifikovali sme majoritné skupiny, ktoré sa svojimi odpoveďami najviac podieľali na výsledkoch podľa regiónov.

Výskum dokázal vplyv kultúry na slovenských spotrebiteľov na celoštátnej úrovni, avšak rozdiely medzi jednotlivými regionálnymi subkultúrami neboli preukázané. Odpovede v regiónoch boli vo veľkej časti podobné a tie, čo naznačovali rozdielnosť boli neskôr vyvrátené zložením výskumnej vzorky v danom regióne. Zistilo sa, že slovenskí spotrebiteľia uprednostňujú lokálne a slovenské produkty a služby, pričom do budúcnosti by

privítali viac takýchto výrobkov. Z odpovedí je zrejmé, že Slováci sa zaoberajú pôvodom produktov, ktoré kupujú a ak je na trhu slovenská alternatíva väčšinou siahnu práve po nej. Odpovede respondentov ukázali, že slovenské nákupné správanie je ovplyvňované slovenskými hodnotami, regionálnymi zvyklosťami, tradíciami a ľudovým umením. Tieto výsledky súhlasia s predchádzajúcimi zisteniami, že spotrebiteľia dávajú prednosť slovenským produktom a službám. Na druhej strane kultúrne faktory týkajúce sa vplyvu náboženstva, ktoré hrá významnú úlohu v slovenskej kultúre sa nepotvrdili. Aj keď je Slovensko vnímané ako vysoko náboženská a konzervatívna krajina, ľudia vylúčili akýkoľvek vplyv náboženstva na ich spotrebiteľské správanie.

Ďalšími otázkami sme dospeli k záveru, že slovenskí spotrebiteľia sa nezaujímajú o to čo si myslí ich okolie keď nakupujú. Označili, že sa nenechajú ovplyvniť negatívnymi názormi svojich priateľov a ich hodnoty nehrajú úlohu pri ich rozhodovaní. Na druhej strane prihliadajú na názory a hodnoty svojej rodiny. Zistilo sa, že ženatí spotrebiteľia, starší ako 25 rokov sú viac ovplyvnení názormi svojej rodiny než mladší a slobodní či ľudia v dlhodobom vzťahu. Výsledky naznačujú, že hodnoty a názory rodiny, ktorú si ľudia sami vytvorili majú väčší vplyv na ich spotrebiteľské správanie a rozhodovanie. Vplyv rozdelenia rodín na základe regiónov na spotrebiteľské správanie nebol zaznamenaný.

Výskum sa zameriaval na zisťovanie spoľahlivosti Hofstedeho kultúrneho modelu, ktorý na základe výsledkov ďalších európskych autorov doplnil výskum o niekoľko štátov, medzi inými aj Slovensko. Otázky na zisťovanie spoľahlivosti tohto modelu boli vytvorené na základe teoretických informácií zahraničných autorov, ktorí určili Hofstedeho výskum ako najvhodnejší model pre marketingovú analýzu kultúry pričom sa zameriavali na spotrebiteľské správanie ovplyvnené jednotlivými výsledkami vo všetkých jeho dimenziách. Môžeme konštatovať, že získané výsledky z dotazníkového prieskumu zameraného na slovenských spotrebiteľov bez použitia iných nástrojov na analýzu, nie sú v súlade s výsledkami Hofstedeho modelu a teda naznačujú nevhodnosť použitia tohto modelu na marketingové účely pre firmy vstupujúce na slovenský trh. Na druhej strane, použitím otázok založených na Hofstedeho výsledkoch sme mohli rozlíšiť základné kultúrne hodnoty a postoje slovenských spotrebiteľov.

Prieskum odhalil, že slovenskí spotrebiteľia sa rozhodujú na základe racionality a potreby daného výrobku a služby, pričom zľavy, akcie a ostatné promočné aktivity ich do značnej miery ovplyvňujú pri ich nákupnom správaní. Slovensko tak potvrdilo výsledky

v jednej dimenzii a zaraďuje sa medzi šetrné krajiny, ktoré sa zameriavajú na vyhliadky do budúcnosti. Avšak rozdielnosť našich a Hofstedeho výsledkov bola zrejmá z odpovedí zameraných na ostatné dimenzie. Dotazníkový prieskum ukázal, že táto kultúra by nemala dosahovať také vysoké hodnoty v dimenzii vzdialenosti od moci, nakoľko väčšina respondentov nevnímala luxusné značky ako nástroj rýchleho zvýšenia svojho imidžu a sociálneho statusu ktoré sú charakteristické pre krajiny s vysokými hodnotami v tejto dimenzii. Ďalšia dimenzia, podľa ktorej by roly pri nakupovaní v domácnosti mali byť jasne definované, čo v prípade slovenskej kultúry znamená, že mužský člen by mal rozhodovať o kúpe drahších produktov a služieb sa nepotvrdila. Prieskumom sme zistili, že slovenskí spotrebiteľia by mali dosahovať menšie hodnoty v tejto dimenzii pri spotrebiteľskom správaní než ukazujú výsledky daného kultúrneho modelu, pretože muži a ženy zvyknú rozhodovať pri kúpe spolu, alebo ak nie tak väčšinou rozhoduje žena. Ďalším charakteristickým atribútom slovenských spotrebiteľov je ich individualistická kultúra, ktorá sa prejavuje v ich nezáujme o názory ostatných pri nakupovaní. Väčšina respondentov uviedla, že im záleží na vlastných a rodinných hodnotách a ostatné názory ich neovplyvňujú pri ich spotrebiteľskom správaní hoci Hofstede jednoznačne neurčil individuálnosť tejto kultúry. Podobnosť nebola zistená ani v prípade dimenzie, ktorá naznačuje, že bývalé sovietske komunistické krajiny sú viac zdržanlivé vo svojom nakupovaní. Naopak, z odpovedí vyplýva, že slovenskí spotrebiteľia radi míňajú peniaze na voľnočasové aktivity a kultúrne zážitky, čo bolo potvrdené aj ďalšími výskumami. V prípade dimenzie súvisiacej s vyhýbaním sa neistote sa výsledky nepotvrdilo overiť nakoľko sa ukázalo, že na zodpovedanie daných otázok spotrebiteľia vo všeobecnosti nevedia odpovedať. Na preskúmanie danej dimenzie je potrebné výskum zopakovať s konkrétnymi produktami alebo službami.

Výsledky prieskumu ukazujú, že slovenskí spotrebiteľia sú značne ovplyvnení vlastnou kultúrou, zvyklosťami, tradíciami a hodnotami. Dospeli sme k záveru, že ak by zahraničná firma chcela vstúpiť na slovenský trh, najlepšou stratégiou by bolo práve prispôbenie sa ich kultúrnym hodnotám a prínos niečoho slovenského vo svojich produktoch alebo službách. Na základe výsledkov si myslíme, že výsledky nášho výskumu môžu byť prínosné pre budúce marketingové analýzy nakoľko sa podarilo identifikovať hodnoty a názory slovenských spotrebiteľov a jednotlivé vplyvy kultúry na ich spotrebiteľské správanie. Na druhej strane, odpovede respondentov preukázali, že regionálne subkultúry a náboženstvo nemajú vplyv na spotrebiteľské správanie, z čoho vyplýva, že nie

je potrebné lokalizovať komunikáciu na jednotlivé regióny alebo zameriavať sa na náboženskú vieru. Na druhej strane je ešte veľa faktorov mimo tejto diplomovej práce, ktoré môžu priamo vplývať na slovenských spotrebiteľov a doplniť naše výsledky.

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