Abstract: The research of preferences towards imported products, primarily food products, is very current in marketing research and studies today. In various studies, evaluations of specific attributes of imported food products were taken as factors that determine preferences towards imported food products. The subject of this research is to investigate the influence of consumer evaluations according to various attributes of food products, such as quality, price, brand, design, and packaging and packing, on the evaluation of preferences for imported food products in the Republic of Srpska. The population included in this research refers to the total population in the Republic of Srpska aged 18 and over. For the purpose of empirical research, a sample of 297 respondents in the territory of the Republic of Srpska was processed, out of which 195 respondents were female (65.66%), and 102 respondents were male (34.34%) aged eighteen and over. After the primary data were collected, the processing and analysis of the obtained data were carried out. The analysis of the collected primary data was carried out on the basis of applied factor analysis using principal component analysis (PCA) methods. The results of the research that we obtained through the empirical part of the work showed that the ranking of the brand and design of food products with higher ratings are the determining attributes on the basis of which respondents rate imported food products as more preferred. The implications of the research results can be viewed through different prisms of observation (from the perspective of consumers, producers, competitors, and the public).

Keywords: preferences, food products, consumers, attributes, purchase

JEL Classification: D12, D91, M31, M39
Rad dostavljen: 09.05.2023.

INTRODUCTION

The creation of a global market through the abolition of barriers to international trade enabled the market competition of companies from all over the world on the national markets of individual countries. In such circumstances, countries where there is no satisfaction of customer demand with domestic supply, either of final or industrial goods, import most consumer and industrial goods from countries with better quality and more sophisticated products. Such processes lead to the opening of national markets for the import of goods from significantly more developed and technologically more progressive countries, which present significant competition for domestic producers. This further implies greater price competitiveness of producers from more developed countries compared to domestic producers.

Although the actions of the World Trade Organization (WTO) produced the effects of reducing tariffs, countries still rely on protectionist measures. Nations use legal barriers, exchange barriers, and psychological barriers to limit the import of unwanted goods (Cateora et al., 2009). The result of this is the effort in certain countries to carry out propaganda activities that try to encourage the purchase of domestic products under the slogan „buy domestic”, or through various other types of hidden measures that, from an administrative point of view, cannot be classified as import restriction measures (customs), but as a result, they have a de facto restriction of the import of certain products, in order to protect domestic production from foreign competition. This type of protection of the domestic economy from foreign competition carries the title of “new protectionism”.

Neven et al. (1991) state that the result of the success of such campaigns, directed towards the purchase of domestic products, is reflected in an increase in preference towards domestic products, which will narrow the diversification of consumer attitudes, and as a final result it will have a constant increase in the price of domestic products. The increase in international exchange due to the acceptance and success of these barriers
in the globalized world is constantly displayed. On the national market, customers have a large number of alternatives available when choosing products, from the perspective of diversifying the products themselves according to their countries of origin, but also from the perspective of world brands that are available on the market. The development of the global market has led to the spread of foreign brands that are produced or assembled and launched by local or foreign companies. Thus, customers anywhere can choose from multiple brands that include products manufactured abroad or licensed products of all imaginable categories, from food, toys, cars, computers, and industrial robots (Samiee, 1994). In this process, the convergence of world demand is established, that is, the homogenization of consumer behavior (Rakita, 2009).

The increased flow of people, technology, ideas, and money around the world has led to communities being increasingly understood as global communities (Strizhakova & Coulter, 2019). Globalization has largely led to the development of a bicultural identity, in which people around the world combine their local identities with an identifier associated with global culture (Ferguson & Thompson, 2020; Stolzenbach, Bredie, & Byrne, 2013). Kipnis et al. (2019) state consumers formed a multicultural identity under the influence of global and local consumer culture. Zhang and Khare (2009) state that consumers with a high global identity prefer imported products, while consumers with a local identity perceive local products as more attractive. Research has shown that a high global identity is associated with openness to other cultures, that is, visits to other countries, and consumption of their products forms in people's positive or negative attitudes towards products from those countries (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2015; Guo, 2013). Numerous authors have dealt with the issue of Covid-19 and consumers’ behavior during the pandemic (e.g. . Kirk & Rifkin, 2020; Omar, et al., 2021). Research has shown a change in consumer behavior when purchasing food products during the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. Coulthard et al., 2021; Tribst et al., 2021). Although it is pointed out in the previously mentioned research that people increasingly prefer imported products, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed people's trust in imported food products, which has led to increased consumer interest in domestic food products, and thus to support for domestic producers (Hobbs, 2020).

Due to the above, in many pieces of research, the motivation for researching the attitudes and preferences of customers towards imported products is found. The defined research problem in this work refers to the quantification of preferences towards imported food products among the total population of the Republic of Srpska aged eighteen and over. The subject of research for the previously defined research problem is the examination of consumer preferences toward imported food products from the aspect of specific product attributes. Empirical research will be conducted on the territory of the Republic of Srpska based on previously collected primary data. The main goal of the research of this work is to quantify consumer preferences in the market of the Republic of Srpska towards imported food products from the aspect of evaluating specific product attributes. The special aims sought to be achieved in the work are:

i. quantification of specific attributes of food products from the aspect of the frequency of product purchases;

ii. Quantifying the importance of specific attributes of food products from the aspect of the age of the respondents.

In relation to the defined research problem, this work tries to confirm the hypothesis that reads: brand and design, as attributes of food products, stand out especially when evaluating preferences for imported food products. In the next part of the work, attention will be paid to the review of previous theoretical and research studies on the decision-making of customers when choosing a product, especially when it comes to the choice between a domestic and foreign product, followed by the methodological determination of the research framework, so that in its final part we will come to the „tangible” research results, wherewith we try to confirm the hypothesis set in the work. In the paper, based on the results, we will imply the effects the work will produce, from the perspective of observing consumers, producers, competitors, and the public.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Decision-making when there are multiple available alternatives

The process of making a customer’s decision when choosing between several available products has always been the essence of marketing research, especially market-oriented research. Researchers have tried to understand the mind of the consumer to enable companies to plan marketing strategies. The explanation of consumer behavior, that is, the process of decision-making to buy a certain product on the market in or-
The factors that influence consumer behavior in the market often referred to as stimuli are intended to be presented among the many models of consumer behavior. Stimuli can be classified into two categories: marketing stimulants that include product, price, promotion, and distribution, and other stimulants: economic, geographical, technological, political, cultural, and demographic (Macura, 2009). Keegan et al. (1995) point out that the response of customers will be different depending on the effects of the stimuli on them. Kotler (2000) developed a model of buyer behavior that analyzes the influence of stimuli on making a purchase decision. According to this model, marketing and environmental stimuli from the surroundings enter into a consumer’s mind where the consumer’s characteristics and the decision-making process lead to a purchase decision. So, the marketer’s task is to understand what happens in the consumer’s mind between external stimuli and the process of making a purchase decision. In the model, consumer behavior is shaped by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. A purchase decision results in a set of responses such as product choice, brand choice, retailer choice, purchase time, and purchase volume (Cornelis, 2010).

Howard & Sheth (1969) developed an approach according to which the consumers’ behavior in the market, as well as their preferences, are determined by a combination of social, psychological, and marketing factors. This model distinguishes three levels when purchasing a product - the level of extensive problem solving when the customer does not have enough information about the brand, as well as special preferences, the level of limited problem solving, where a customer has an inadequate or insufficient level of information about the market, brands or products on it, and the level of routine consumer’s response, where a consumer is fully aware of the products and brands that are present on the market. The inputs that determine consumer behavior according to this model are purchase importance, personality characteristics, social groups, culture, time pressure, and financial status. Nicosia model was one of the first consumer-behavior models which shift focus from the act of purchase itself to the more complex decision process that consumers engage in about products and services. This model representing situations where companies design communications to consumers, and consumer’s responses will influence actions of the company in future. Nicosia assumes that the consumer is seeking to fulfill specific goals and that initially there is no history between the consumer’s and the firm, so no positive or negative predispositions toward the firm exits in the consumer’s mind (Vijayalakshmi & Gurumoorthy, 2018). The consumer will properly become forced to gain in order at this point, and search activity is likely to occur.

1.2. Results of previous empirical research on product attributes

For decades, efforts have been made to understand the determinants of purchase intentions among consumers. These efforts are focused on consumer attitudes toward products and brands (Sahagun & Vasquez-Parraga, 2017). The importance of variables such as price, promotion, packaging, and distribution and their influence on customer attitudes and perceptions toward products is well established (Bannister & Saunders, 1978). Zhang & Jakku (2016) found that importance of various food attributes in a hierarchical order, and there is significant heterogeneity in consumer’s food preference. Through research in Japan, Nishina (1990) analyzed the influence of independent variables on the assessment of quality, design, price, and reliability of seven groups of imported products. The research showed that interest in foreign cultures and education are significant variables in this relationship. The authors Frez-Muñoz, et al. (2016) state in their research that Chileans prefer a well-known brand when buying food products, because it is associated with the perception of high quality, they also state that for Italians the brand is one of the most important attributes and that with food products, mostly they prefer domestic brands. The same results were obtained by Utami, et
al. (2016) in their research „Customer Value Creation of Fresh Tomatoes Through Branding and Packaging as Customer Perceived Quality“. The results showed that Indonesians also give more value to branded products. Investigating the impact of product design on consumer preferences, Velasco et al. (2014) and Rebollar et al. (2012) came to the conclusion that design affects people’s expectations regarding the functional, experiential and sensory (textural) attributes of a product, and that color affects the expected overall experience and expected taste. Grzybowska-Brzezinska (2020) tested relationship between attributes and buying intentions towards food products. They proved that purchasing of a food product is determined by its quality and taste preferences. Saunders, et al. found that consumers from developing countries valued food attributes more than the developed countries. However, the additional input „made in...“ is becoming increasingly important at a time when international trade is growing. Bannister & Saunders (1978) state that the „made in...“ concept creates an image that is very important for importers on the one hand and for consumers in the exporting countries on the other hand. The creation of an image, that is, a stereotype about the country from which it is imported, is done with the help of certain variables. Hahn (1989) points out that customers use the country of origin of a product as a sign of product quality in order to form a conclusion about product attributes. Often products from Western Europe, primarily from Germany, are rated as products of higher quality than products of domestic production, especially when the quality of the product is compared with the quality of the products of the developing countries of southern and eastern Europe. It is usually assumed in research that consumers in developed countries perceive domestic products as having higher quality compared to imported products (Dickerson, 1982; Bilkey and Ness, 1982; Samiee, 1994; Herche, 1992). In developing countries, i.e. underdeveloped countries, products from abroad, especially from developed countries, are often perceived as products with higher quality (Batra et al. 2000; Yagci, 2001; Kinra, 2006; Lu Wang & Xiong Chen, 2004; Valley et al. 2014). Aaker (1991) points out that perceived product quality is the actual evaluation of the product and brand when making a purchase decision. Chao (1993) states that the price, country of design, and country of product assembly are of great importance when a consumer evaluates the design and quality of the product. Parameswaran & Pisharodi (1994) thinks that the country of origin implies multiple dimensions, such as the strength of the economy, the nature of the political system, technology, and similar. While Han & Terpstra (1988) state that both the country of origin and the brand name influence the perception of product quality, Kaynak & Cavusgil (1983) are of the opinion that the less knowledge about companies and their brands is, the greater the influence of the producer’s country of origin is. Lu Wang & Xiong Chen (2004) state that in developing countries, consumers don’t necessarily have to rate domestic products as having higher quality than imported products, although they prefer buying domestic products for moral reasons. Jürkenbeck & Spiller (2021) found that price is most important attribute of tomato for consumers in Germany, similar results are obtained in Flax et al. (2021) for Malawian consumers. Exenberger et al. (2020) obtained that the knowledge of the price affects Slovak consumers, but perception of quality of food product depends of testing of food. For Italian consumers, it was found a willingness to pay a premium price for food with sustainable and origin characteristics (Baldi et al., 2021). Brand is important attribute for consumers due to perceived trust towards food products for Khamitov et al. (2019), Dzyabura & Peres (2019), Šugrova et al. (2020), Frez-Munoz et al. (2016) and Utami et al. (2016).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design and research sample

Starting from the subject of research, i.e. examination of consumer preferences towards imported food products from the aspect of specific product attributes, with the empirical part of the work we try to confirm the hypothesis that brand and design as specific product attributes are more preferred when deciding on the consumption of imported food products. In the empirical part of the work, we use primary data that were collected among respondents in the Republic of Srpska in the period of October - December 2021. The population in the Republic of Srpska aged 18 and over is put up as a target group in the work. For data collection, we used an electronically generated questionnaire based on the eAnkete platform (https://eankete.com), while the electronic form of the questionnaire is available at the link https://eankete.com/237/anke-ta/237. During the collection of primary data, questionnaires were distributed via social networks and by e-mail from the previously collected e-mail database of respondents.

The sample of respondents that we included in the empirical research is 297 respondents in the Republic
of Srpska, out of which 195 respondents are female (65.66%), and 102 respondents are male (34.34%). The percentage of respondents aged 18 to 25 was 29.29%, while 44.44% of respondents were aged 26 to 35, the percentage of respondents aged 36 to 45 included in the survey was 16.50%, and the rest of the respondents were aged 46 and over. According to the level of professional education, the largest percentage of respondents has a university degree (57.91%), while the percentage of respondents with secondary education is 31.65%. Among the respondents, there are also 10.44% of respondents who have a master’s degree.

2.2. Applied method

Starting from the subject and aim of the research, we try to explain how individual product attributes influence consumer preferences towards imported food products in this work. Therefore, as a dependent variable $Y$, the research uses the consumers’ preferences towards imported food products in the Republic of Srpska. The independent variables in the research are represented by the vector of independent variables $F'$, which consists of a total of 5 independent variables (factors) which describe the evaluations of the respondents’ attributes while making a decision on purchasing an imported product, therefore the model we are trying to evaluate in the research can be described by the relation:

$$ Y = L[Q,P,D,B,A] + \epsilon $$

(1)

where $Y = X - \mu$, $L$ is the matrix of factor loadings, $Q$ is an attribute related to quality during the decision to purchase food products, $P$ represents the importance of price as an attribute, $D$ represents the importance of the design of the food product during the purchase decision, $B$ is a variable that represents the importance of the brand to the consumer when purchasing a food product and the variable $A$ represents the importance of packaging when purchasing food products, while $\epsilon$ is a random error. We selected these attributes based on what general marketing theory says, which identifies the proposed variables included in the model as the most significant product attributes.

Based on the research model, we try to confirm the main research hypothesis, which reads:

$H_0$: Brand and design, as attributes of food products, stand out in particular when evaluating preferences for imported food products.

Contrariwise the main hypothesis, we define an alternative hypothesis:

$H_1$: When evaluating preferences for imported food products, other defined attributes of food products are important.

Factor analysis is used as an applied method for processing the collected data, the technique of which is based on the reduction of a large number of variables to a smaller number of factors. Furthermore, this technique extracts the maximum common variance from all variables and puts them into a common score. As an index of all variables, we can use this result for further analysis. When evaluating the coefficients using this technique, several methods are available, but the principal components analysis (PCA) is the most often used one. The PCA method extracts the maximum variance and places it as the first factor. After that, it removes that variance explained by the first factor and then starts extracting the maximum variance for the second factor. This process goes to the last factor. We will apply factor analysis based on the principal component analysis method, and we will perform the necessary calculations in the statistical data processing program SPSS in this work.

3. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In this part of the work, we present the results we have reached through empirical research based on the collected primary data. We begin the presentation of the collected results with an overview of the descriptive indicators related to the collected primary data that we use in the research. The following table (Table 1) shows the descriptive indicators for the observed variables that are the subject of the research:

Based on the previous table, we can see that in the survey we conducted, there are no missing data that appear as a problem in this type of research. We can see that the sample from which the data was collected was made up of the answers of 297 respondents to the questions asked. The average score for the dependent variable in the research is 3.05, which on a scale of 1 to 5 is closer to the fact that respondents prefer imported products. The highest average score for independent variables of 4.34 was calculated for quality, which indicates that when purchasing food products, quality is a very important attribute. The next attribute with an average score of 4.05 refers to the price; when evaluating the brand, the respondents gave this attribute an average score of 3, while for the attributes of packing
and packaging, that is, the brand, the average scores are 2.95 and 2.81, respectively. In Appendix 2, there are graphical representations of the frequencies of the data we collected.

Based on the PCA method, we arrive at the calculation of the basic correlation coefficients with the variables in order to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between the variables in the research. The following table (Table 2) shows the correlation matrix with the calculated coefficients:

On the basis of previously calculated correlation coefficients, we can see that the design and brand of food products stand out when preferring the consumption of imported products among the respondents from the sample. Brand and design have a positive sign when preferring imported food products, as the correlation results tell us. Both correlation coefficients were evaluated as statistically significant at the 1% significance level. Other attributes from the model set up in the research are not shown as the important ones according to the correlation matrix when evaluating consumer preferences for imported products. The next coefficient that stands out on the basis of the presented results according to the influence on consumer preferences towards imported food products is age, with a slightly lower correlation coefficient than it is the case with brand and design. at the level of statistical significance of 1%. The results of the correlation matrix show that attributes such as quality (-0.174), design (-0.147), brand (-0.102), and packing and packaging (-0.205) are neglected as the respondents are older. All these coefficients are evaluated at

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of collected data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Packing and packaging</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N Valid</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.051</td>
<td>1.069</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>1.142</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s calculations

Table 2. Correlation matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Packing and packaging</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Professional qualifications</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.139***</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>0.214***</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>0.276***</td>
<td>0.084**</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packing and packaging</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.131**</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.141***</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.186***</td>
<td>-0.174***</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>-0.147***</td>
<td>-0.102***</td>
<td>-0.205</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional qualifications</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>-0.16**</td>
<td>0.121**</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.114**</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td>-0.106**</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.106**</td>
<td>-0.158***</td>
<td>-0.176***</td>
<td>-0.189***</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>-0.1**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Determinant = .209

Source: Author’s calculations
the level of statistical significance of 1%. From the correlation matrix, we can also see that the frequency of purchasing products is negatively correlated with most attributes (design, brand, packaging and packaging), while the frequency of purchasing food products is correlated with the age of the respondents (-0.262). The results testify that the importance of price when buying food products is positively correlated with the assessment of the importance of product quality. The estimated measure of the KMO test of 0.636 indicates that the observed variables in the study participate in explaining each other’s dispersion. The rule when accepting this assumption lies in the fact that when the value is bigger than 0.5, it is concluded that there is a partial correlation between the observed variables. Also, Bartlett’s test at the level of statistical significance of 1% testifies to the existence of a partial correlation between the observed variables.

By applying the method of main components in the research, we can also observe the commonality among the individual variables of the research. The commonality analysis testifies us about the explanation of the variance according to the individual variables that we used in the research. The following table (Table 4) shows the results of communality according to the variables:

When observing commonality, a value of 0.5 is taken as a relevant criterion on the basis of which we make a decision on whether we have a good rating when extracting components, and if the value when extracting is higher than this, we conclude that according to the individual variable, the explanation is satisfactory, and if the value is smaller than 0.5, we conclude the opposite. Looking at the values in Table 4, we can see that for almost all the variables that we

### Table 3. KMO and Barlett’s test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</th>
<th>0.636</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity</td>
<td>Approx. Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Df</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Author’s calculations

Based on the applied tests, we can conclude that there is a partial correlation between the variables.
used in the research, the value of the coefficient after separating the components is bigger than 0.5, except for the variables of quality and frequency of product purchases.

Table 5 provides an analysis of the percentage of explained variance when extracting individual components from the total variance. The method on the basis of which the results were obtained is the method of analysis of the main components, on the basis of which we performed the overall factor analysis in this work.

We make the decision about how many components we will take as relevant when extracting from the total variance when analyzing the total explained variance on the basis of eigenvalues that are greater than 1. On Chart 1, we can see that there are four extracted components when explaining the variance with a value bigger than 1. Therefore, we conclude that we take four components as relevant ones in our analysis of variance:

Based on Table 5, we can see that by extracting four components in our research, we explain 61.23% of the total variance. With this test, we can confirm that the results of the research we conducted on the collected data are significant because most of the variance explained by the variables can be explained with a significant percentage, that is, over 60% of the total variance is explained in the research we have conducted, and based on the analysis which we have applied.

Table 5. Percentage of explained variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total % of Variance</td>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.463</td>
<td>24.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.369</td>
<td>13.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>11.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>11.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>9.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>8.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td>7.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.629</td>
<td>6.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>3.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>3.279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Author’s calculations

Chart 1. Chart of eigenvalues
CONCLUSION

In marketing theory, but also in empirical research, the inclusion of products, prices, promotions, and distribution are well established, either when placing products on the market or during the influence of the marketing mix on consumers’ behavior towards different products. Globalization, that is, the expansion of all individual markets to the level of the world market, creates additional factors that determine the decisions of both companies and customers on their actions in different markets. From the 80s of the last century till today, due to the permanent growth of world trade, there has been a significant interest in researching the effects of specific attributes that are important when evaluating the general attitude of consumers towards imported products.

For the most part, research in this area is focused on connecting the country of origin of products with preferences for products from these countries. As a result of cultural conflicts, and religious and national intolerances, in some studies, the conclusion is drawn that these factors in some countries are significant for the consumers’ general preferences towards products originating from countries with which there are disagreements. Conclusions are also made that ethnocentrism is one of the factors that determine consumers in certain countries to purchase domestic products rather than it is the case with the purchase of imported products, regardless of the origin of the imported product. An important factor for customers in certain countries is the “made in...” concept, which, based on the origin of the product, leads customers to create perceptions towards individual products. If the products come from more economically developed countries with a long history of making quality products, from countries characterized by political and economic stability, they are preferred when customers decide on a purchase based on product quality, design, product brand recognition, and similar.

In this work, on a sample of 297 respondents in the territory of the Republic of Srpska, we investigated the influence of consumers’ attitudes towards individual product attributes, i.e. quality, price, brand, design, and packaging and packing as factors when evaluating preferences for imported food products. By applying factor analysis and evaluating the coefficients through the analysis of the main components, we came to important results about the factors that are decisive in the preference for imported food products among the respondents. Namely, according to the obtained results, we came to the conclusion that consumers’ preferences towards brand and design as attributes of food products stand out as factors in greater consumer preferences for imported food products. In this way, we confirmed the basic hypothesis of the work, which read: „Brand and design, as attributes of food products, stand out especially when evaluating preferences for imported food products.” The results we obtained were evaluated as statistically significant.

In addition to proving the basic hypothesis, it can be seen from the results of the research that the age of the respondents, is one of the factors in preferences for imported food products, but also according to the ranking of individual attributes of the products that were the subject of the research as an independent variable, is shown to be significant. Namely, with the age of the respondents, the preferences towards imported food products decrease, but the evaluations of certain attributes such as quality, brand, design, packaging, and packing, as important when buying food products, also decrease. It is also shown from the results that with an increased frequency of purchases, respondents reduce the importance of individual product attributes when purchasing food products. From this, directions for future research can be implied with the expansion of factors that are significant when evaluating consumers during the purchase of imported food products. Likewise, future research directions can go in the direction of linking factors that are important for ranking individual product attributes when making a purchase decision.

As we have seen from the results of the research, customers prefer imported food products because they think they have a better design and brand, which implies that domestic products are not inferior in quality to products from abroad in the opinion of customers. Implications are also present in future research that can investigate preferences towards other imported products in this way in order to find out whether consumers in general prefer imported products from the aspect of these two attributes. The results of the research, viewed from the producers’ point of view, point to the future challenges domestic producers face, and that is the need to work on the design in accordance with customer preferences, and on the creation of a brand of domestic food products. This will require the allocation of additional funds for research and development, as well as brand promotion. From the perspective of competitors, the results of the research will contribute to encouraging the competitive struggle on the market through innovation, differentiating competitors, and positioning on the market. We look at the implications of the research results, from
the perspective of the public, through the prism of the position of governmental and non-governmental organizations whose aim is to protect domestic production. Based on this, it can be expected that the results will influence the more frequent use of the slogan „let’s buy domestic” in order to protect domestic production.

As a limitation of the research, it can be observed that the sample is convenient, however, it can be observed that among the respondents there are more members of the female gender, as well as that among the respondents the younger population is represented to a greater extent.

**Literature**


**ANEX**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Gender:
   a) Male
   b) Female

2. Age:
   a) 18-25
   b) 26-35
   c) 36-45
   d) 46-55
   e) 56 and over

3. Professional qualifications level
   a) Secondary vocational education
   b) University degree
   c) Master
   d) Doctorate

4. How often do you buy food products?
   a) Once a week
   b) Several times a week
   c) Once a month
   d) Several times a month

5. Rate from 1 to 5 your preferences for imported food products.
   a) 1
   b) 2
   c) 3
   d) 4
   e) 5

6. Quality:
   a) It doesn't matter to me at all
   b) It doesn't matter
   c) Neither it matters to me nor it doesn't matter to me
   d) It matters to me
   e) It is very important to me

7. Price:
   a) It doesn't matter to me at all
   b) It doesn't matter
   c) Neither it matters to me nor it doesn't matter to me
   d) It matters to me
   e) It is very important to me

8. Design:
   a) It doesn't matter to me at all
   b) It doesn't matter
   c) Neither it matters to me nor it doesn't matter to me
   d) It matters to me
   e) It is very important to me

9. Brand:
   a) It doesn't matter to me at all
   b) It doesn't matter
   c) Neither it matters to me nor it doesn't matter to me
   d) It matters to me
   e) It is very important to me

10. Packaging and packing:
    a) It doesn't matter to me at all
    b) It doesn't matter
    c) Neither it matters to me nor it doesn't matter to me
    d) It matters to me
    e) It is very important to me

11. What is the main disadvantage of domestic food products that makes you decide to buy imported products?
Istraživanje preferencija prema uvoznim proizvodima, prvenstveno prehrambenim, veoma je aktuelno u marke-tinskih istraživanjima i studijama danas. U različitim studijama ocjene specifičnih atributa uvoznih prehrambenih proizvoda uzeti su kao faktori koji determinišu preferencije prema uvoznim prehrambenim proizvodima. Predmet ovog istraživanja jeste da se istraži uticaj ocjene potrošača prema različitim atributima prehrambenih proizvoda, kao što su kvalitet, cijena, brend, dizajn, te ambalaža i pakovanje, na ocjenu preferencija prema uvoznim prehrambenim proizvodima u Republici Srpskoj. Populacija obuhvaćena ovim istraživanjem odnosi se na ukupnu populaciju u Republici Srpskoj starosti od 18 i više godina. U svrhu empirijskog istraživanja obrađen je uzorak od 297 ispitanika na teritoriji Republike Srpske, od čega je 195 ispitanika ženskog pola (65.66%), a 102 ispitanika su pripadnici muškog pola (34.34%) starosti od osamnaest i više godina.

Nakon prikupljenih primarnih podataka vršena je njihova obrada te analiza dobijenih podataka. Analiza prikupljenih primarnih podataka vršena je na osnovu primijenjene faktorske analize (engl. Factor Analysis) pomoću metoda analize glavnih komponenti (engl. Principal Component Analysis – PCA). Rezultati istraživanja koje smo dobili kroz empirijski dio rada pokazali su da su rangiranje brenda i dizajna prehrambenih proizvoda sa višim ocjenama opredjeljujući atributi na osnovu kojih ispitanici uvozne prehrambene proizvode ocjenjuju kao više preferirane. Kroz različite prizme posmatranja (sa aspekta potrošača, proizvođača, konkurenata i javnosti) mogu se sagledati implikacije rezultata istraživanja.

**Ključne riječi:** preferencije, prehrambeni proizvodi, kupci, atributi, kupovina

**Kontakt:**

Drago Kurušić, dkurusic96@gmail.com
IN Consulting d.o.o.: Sarajevo, Federacija BiH, BA

Perica Macura, perica.macura@ef.unibl.org
Faculty of Economics, University of Banja Luka, Republika Srpska

Nevenka Bandić, nevenka.bandic@pepsico.com
Marbo d.o.o. Laktaši, Republika Srpska