

Consumers' experience as the basis for ecologically responsible trade in the region of former Yugoslavia

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Abstract: Devastating information about the pollution of the environment sounds the alarm, telling us that nowadays all market subjects are obliged to act in a socially responsible way more than ever. As consumers' experience is often a decisive factor of consumers' behaviour, and socially responsible behaviour as well, in this paper we analyse consumers' experience as a basis of ecologically responsible trade, keeping in mind that it is also a kind of ecological responsibility. The region of former Yugoslavia is analysed in this paper because we believe that there have been no cross-cultural studies in this region into consumers' experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade. This cross-cultural research was conducted on a sample of 900 respondents through a questionnaire. The statistical data that were used were: descriptive statistics, ANOVA and Tukey HSD tests. The results of the research show that there are differences between countries from the region of former Yugoslavia when it comes to consumers' experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade. The obtained results have a practical application, which is seen in the possibility that the market respondents who are engaged in ecologically responsible trade in the region of former Yugoslavia adequately define and position the consumers' experience in their strategies as a tool that can manage ecologically responsible trade. Theoretical application is seen in the possibility of using the results as a basis for future research.

Keywords: *experience, consumers, trade, former Yugoslavia*

JEL Classification: F18, Q56, O18

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1. INTRODUCTION

8.1 million early deaths a year are attributed to air pollution, according to Health Effects Institute's new State of Global Air 2024 Report (HEI, 2024, p.3). Around 99% of the world population lives in places where the level of air pollution surpasses the limits set by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2025). According to WWF's data from 2024, there has been a fall in the average number of global populations of wild animals by 73% in the short period of 50 years (Fallah, 2024).

Data from the international agency Global Footprint Network indicates biocapacity per person (biocapacity per person - ecological footprint per person = biocapacity debtors) for all countries in the world. If biocapacity per person is observed for the countries of the former Yugoslavia for 2022, it is concluded that: Slovenia has the worst biocapacity per person (-2.4), then Bosnia and Herzegovina (-2.1), then Serbia (-1.7), then Macedonia (-1.2), then Croatia (-1.1) while the best biocapacity is Montenegro (-0.9) (Global Footprint Network, 2022). However, it indicates that all of the listed countries have a bad biocapacity per person, i.e., biocapacity debtors.

These are just some of the devastating data that indicate the levels of environmental pollution both globally and in the former Yugoslav countries, as well as the obligation to change the behaviour of all market entities and direct them towards environmental responsibility, which also implies environmentally responsible trade.

Ecologically responsible trade refers to environmentally friendly trade practices, i.e., it doesn't cause ecological harm. It includes trade in clean energy, green raw materials, green products and services, promotion aimed at education and increasing awareness of the importance of consuming green products, recycling, eco-labelling, etc. Ecologically responsible trade is an increasingly popular approach to investing that emphasises environmental sustainability and social responsibility. It is a form of trading that takes into account the environmental impact of the

companies and industries being invested in, with a focus on promoting green technologies and sustainable practices (Bucur, 2024; Hsieh, 2024; Grigoras, 2024). The concept of ecologically responsible trade emerged in the late 20th century as environmental awareness began to influence economic and financial decisions.

According to the authors, environmentally responsible trade is not sufficiently represented in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, which is why more attention should be paid to factors that would contribute to its increase. From the perspective of consumer behaviour, four basic factors influence consumer behaviour: a) social factors, b) cultural factors, c) psychological factors and d) personal factors. However, in addition to the above factors, consumer behaviour is also influenced by factors that do not directly fall into the above-mentioned factors, such as consumer experience. Consumer experience has been recognised as a factor that has a strong influence on future consumer behaviour in general, as well as for environmentally responsible commerce (Forlizzi & Battarbee, 2004; Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006; Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger, 2009; Beyond Philosophy, 2025; Schwager & Meyer, 2007).

Because of the aforementioned facts, the subject of the paper is consumers' experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade. Positive experience figures as one of the basic driving forces of ecologically responsible trade as a form of ecological responsibility.

This paper aims to examine consumers' experience as a basis of ecologically responsible trade in the countries of the region of former Yugoslavia, as the authors believe there has not been such a study. The countries of former Yugoslavia are: The Republic of Serbia (Serbia), The Republic of Croatia (Croatia), The Republic of Slovenia (Slovenia), The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina), The Montenegro and The Republic of North Macedonia (Macedonia).

The paper consists of five parts. The first part defines the consumer experience in general and in the domain of environmentally responsible trade. The second part presents various cross-cultural research results and the reasons why the research focuses on the region of the former Yugoslavia. The third part describes the research methodology: sample, instrument, research flow and statistical methods used in it. The results constitute the fourth part of the paper, while the discussion of the results constitutes the fifth part of the paper. The last part of the paper is the conclusion, with a summary of the results and guidelines on how these results can be used practically and theoretically and what future research could be conducted.

2. CONSUMERS' EXPERIENCE AS A BASIS FOR ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE TRADE

Consumer's experience is considered to be a subjective category and is described as a „construct, holistic in nature, and comprised of cognitive, affective, emotional, social and psychological responses” (Verhoef et. al., 2009, p. 31). Also, consumers' experience is defined as „a combination of rational effect, sense stimulation and emotions measured intuitively in relation to the expectations of consumers at all times of contacts with the product and the company” (Beyond Philosophy, 2025). Moreover, consumers' experience is seen as an „inner, subjective response to direct or indirect contact with a company and a product. Direct contact is usually established during the purchase, the use of products, and, in most cases, is initiated by the customer. Indirect contact in most cases means an unplanned encounter with those who represent the campaign and the product, or with somebody who has already had some experience with the product” (Schwager & Meyer, 2007).

Consumers' experience may also be viewed as total, cumulative experience, which is the sum of minor experiences, that is, the net result of good experiences minus the bad ones (Schwager & Meyer, 2007). From a temporal perspective, minor experiences may be viewed as experiences gained before the purchase or consumption, at the time of purchase or consumption and after the purchase or consumption. As time passes, most frequently insignificant experiences are forgotten, while major experiences, exceptionally emotional experiences and experiences related to other ones are remembered (Forlizzi & Battarbee, 2004).

The perspective of consumers' experience has undergone certain changes over time. The focus of consumers' experience used to be on the functionality of the product; it was about whether the product was instrumentally (practically) of good quality. However, nowadays the focus of consumers' experience is on emotional experience (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). Emotions are examined within the frame of consumers' experience from two aspects (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). The first is the importance of emotions caused by the use of a product, while the second aspect concentrates on the significance of emotions as a prerequisite for the use of the product and making conclusions as a result of the experience (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). According to Forlizzi and Battarbee (2004), emotions arising in the frame of the consumers' experience have a third

aspect, the aspect of the present, which is about the influence of emotions on the current interaction with the product and the company.

Many factors influence consumers' experience generally and about ecologically responsible trade, most of which can be divided into three categories (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006; Popa & Barna, 2013) (Figure 1):

- Factors related to the system. A system contains some created and controlled points of contact between subjects who engage in ecologically responsible trade and the target group. Points of contact are all sources of contact between subjects who are engaged in ecologically responsible trade and the target group: the image of the market subject, product, marketing messages, expenses which are brought about by the consumption of products, etc. (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006; Schwager & Meyer, 2007). Realisers of ecologically responsible trade must design the points of contact (those which can be planned) carefully and in detail, so that they are positive, because this is how they influence the success of ecologically responsible trade directly. Points of contact are fundamental sources of consumers' experience. Positive points of contact will make the consumers' experience positive.
- Factors related to consumers. Factors related to consumers are consumers' characteristics: biological, psychological, behavioural, social, demographic, economic, as well as their attitudes, habits, beliefs, motivation, temper, and previous consumer experience. Factors related to consumers are the most difficult to control, even when well planned. Individual perceptions, emotions and unexpected behaviour of consumers are factors which are almost impossible to control (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). A significant characteristic of consumers' experience, as a factor related to consumers, is

trust, as an individual category which is a result of experience and existing knowledge. Ecologically responsible trade will be successful only if consumers trust the subjects who manage ecologically responsible trade.

- The context of the consumption of a product (situation). This factor is about the frame of the interaction with a product, which in turn serves as a basis for the formation of experience (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). Some situational characteristics are: the social environment in which a product is used, the legal framework, the meaningfulness of activities, etc. Situational characteristics cannot be controlled completely, either.

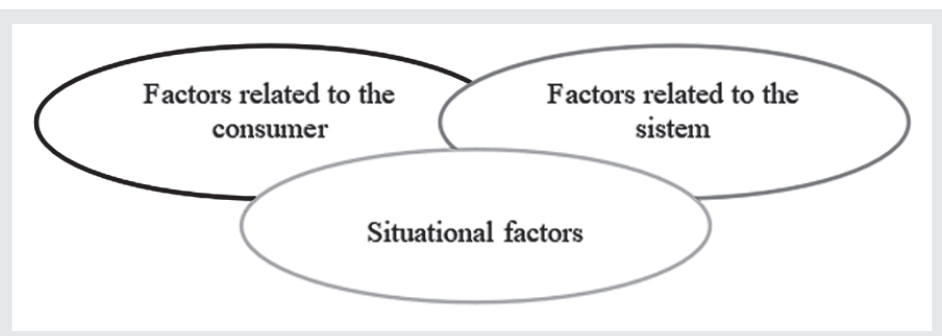
A combination of the stated kinds of factors, which include numerous subfactors, enables the influence of different experiences (Figure 1). All the information the consumers hear, see or feel, they perceive as „a single thing” which is reflected in the whole experience. Consumers' experience is an added value which came into existence as a sum of different factors at play. This means that we can conclude that the creation of consumers' experience is based on a holistic approach.

Consumer's experience is dynamic, also in the case of ecologically responsible trade, because it is modified continually due to the changing circumstances, which in the first place belong to the three kinds of influential factors that have been mentioned.

The basis for experience is interaction. In the context of consumers' experience within ecologically responsible trade, interaction has more than one dimension (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006):

- Interaction between conscious and unconscious experience. It is believed that more than 50% of the total consumers' experience is experienced subconsciously, that is, the experience which influences how a consumer feels (Beyond Philosophy, 2025). This experience is also called unconscious

Figure 1: Consumers' experience as an interaction of factors



Source: Hassenzahl & Tractinsky (2006)

experience. While the other, smaller part of cumulative experience is conscious experience, which is experience based on rationality.

- „Real” interaction. „Real” interaction is interaction between subjects who engage in ecologically responsible trade and consumers in all points of contact. The greatest part of experience is formed under the influence of the effect of all points with which a target group has contact.
- Interaction between „real interaction” and factors outside of real interaction. This interaction is a cumulative consumer experience, which is formed under the influence of the total effect, which is made through the points of contact and the effect which is made under the influence of factors outside of the actual interaction, some of which are factors related to consumers and also situational factors.
- Interaction between single experiences and total experience. Single experiences influence consumers’ total experience. However, total consumers’ experience is not always the sum of single minor experiences because some experiences are more dominant and vivid than others.
- Feedback. Consumers’ experience determines whether and to what extent they will decide on ecologically responsible trade in the future. If consumers’ previous experience was positive, it is more probable that a consumer will act in an ecologically responsible way in the future and engage in ecologically responsible trade. However, if a consumer’s experience is negative or a consumer has no experience, ecologically responsible trade will come into question.

Consumers’ satisfaction is seen as an accumulation of a series of experiences, or rather, the net result of good versus bad experiences. Also, consumers’ satisfaction is the result of the comparison of the perceived performance of what is offered in relation to the expectations. Expectations are seen as the probability of events, which stems from previous experience, while perception is the appraisal of everything on offer. The consumers’ satisfaction is a personal feeling of dissatisfaction, indifference, satisfaction or delight. If the perception is lower in relation to the expectations, the consumer is dissatisfied, and his/her experience can be perceived as negative. If the perception equals the expectations, the consumer is indifferent, and his/her experience can be seen as inconclusive. If the perception equals the expectations, the consumer is satisfied

and his/her experience is positive. Or, if the perception surpasses the expectations, the consumer is very satisfied or delighted, and the experience is characterised as extremely positive. It should be pointed out that building a satisfying and very satisfying consumer experience is a very complex endeavour.

The central question related to consumers’ experience is how to create an extremely positive experience, which does not only mean preventing problems, but much more. The main aim of consumer experience in the future is to improve the quality of life, which is also achieved through ecologically responsible trade, by increasing satisfaction, and not by the absence of problems, that is, by a state of indifference (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). To fulfil this aim, it is necessary to answer the question: Which factors and in what way do they influence the creation of an outstanding experience for each consumer from the domain of ecologically responsible trade?

Taking into account all this, consumers’ experience must be positive because it is the basis of the future behaviour of consumers, and ecologically responsible trade as well. This means that, if the consumers are satisfied or delighted (which means having a positive or extremely positive experience), they will repeat engagement in ecologically responsible trade again and again.

3. THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION OF FORMER YUGOSLAVIA AND EXPERIENCE IN THE DOMAIN OF ECOLOGICALLY RESPONSIBLE TRADE

Through the analysis of international and national studies available to the authors, through scientific databases “Kobson” and “SCIndeks”, the authors have learned that cross-cultural research into ecologically responsible behaviour (and ecologically responsible trade is part of this) is not a frequent research subject. Cross-cultural studies which related to factors that influence environmentally responsible consumer behaviour and environmentally responsible trade are the following: United States of America – France (Arbuthnot & Lingg, 1975), United States of America – Germany (Sriram & Forman, 1993), Sweden – The Baltic states (Gooch, 1995), Canada – France (Laroche, Toffoli, Chankon & Mutter, 1996), Belgium – Poland (Roozen & De Pelsmacker, 2000),

the countries from the territory of former Yugoslavia (Raletić Jotanović, Sudarević, Katić, Kalinić & Kalinić, 2016; Raletić Jotanović, Sudarević, Grubor, Katić & Vuksanović, 2019; Raletić, Jotanović, Koveljenić, Okanović, Vladislavljević & Živkucin, 2023).

According to a study (Arbuthnot & Lingg, 1975), minimal differences in environmental behaviour were observed between consumers from America and France, but Americans' attitudes toward the environment were more pro-environmental than the French ones. The results of the study (Sriram & Forman, 1993) suggest that there are significant differences between American and Dutch consumers when it comes to environmental attributes of products (product composition, packaging, price, etc.). In a study (Gooch, 1995), it was found that environmental behaviour is related to knowledge, environmental characteristics of products and concern for the environment, but only when it comes to Swedish respondents and not when it comes to Baltic respondents. The results of a study (Laroche et al., 1996) indicate that French consumers are less environmentally literate and less concerned about local environmental problems than Canadian consumers. The study also indicates that no significant differences were found between these two groups of consumers in terms of pro-environmental attitudes and purchases of environmentally unfriendly products. A study by Roozen and De Pelsmacker (2000) indicates that Belgians purchased environmentally friendly products, used environmentally friendly products, and disposed of waste more than Poles. The study, which relates to cross-cultural research of Yugoslav countries (Raletić Jotanović et al., 2016), results show that there are differences in environmentally responsible purchasing between: Montenegro and Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia and Montenegro and Slovenia, and in such a way that consumers from Montenegro buy less than the mentioned countries. The results of the study (Raletić Jotanović et al., 2019), which relates to cross-cultural research of Yugoslav countries, show that there are differences in environmental waste management between consumers from Macedonia and all other ex-EU republics, Montenegro compared to Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. Respondents from Macedonia, Montenegro and Croatia dispose of waste less environmentally responsibly than countries with which differences have been identified. The results of the study (Raletić, Jotanović et al., 2023), which relates to cross-cultural research of Yugoslav countries, indicate that there are no differences between Yugoslav countries except Macedonia when it comes to

the form of the most stimulating partnership for environmentally responsible trade. Based on the above, it can be concluded that there are differences between consumers from different countries when it comes to environmentally responsible behaviour, i.e., environmentally responsible trade, as well as factors that influence environmentally responsible behaviour. Also, based on the above, it can be concluded that there is no cross-cultural research that deals with consumer experience as a factor in environmentally responsible behaviour, or environmentally responsible trade, not even in former Yugoslavia.

Cross-cultural research was carried out in the region of former Yugoslavia because the countries in the region of former Yugoslavia are now independent countries with different microeconomic, macroeconomic, demographic, socio-economic, etc. characteristics, according to available statistical data from these countries. But most of the countries of the former Yugoslavia have close cooperation in numerous fields, and the key ones are: a) energy – the countries of the region are members of the Energy Community for South-East Europe, which allows for the harmonization of energy policies in the development of a common energy market; b) the regional initiative “Open Balkans” – which aims to improve economic cooperation and the free movement of people, goods and services in the region; c) diplomatic relations – even if there are challenges in this area, the countries of the former Yugoslavia are working to stabilize and improve international relations. The above-mentioned has the effect that the Yugoslav countries operate in similar economic frameworks, which also affects consumer behaviour. It is also particularly noteworthy that the countries of the former Yugoslavia had 73 years of common history, forming one country, which also certainly influenced consumer behaviour.

Based on the concept of consumer experience and the impact of consumer experience on environmentally responsible trade, as well as the fact that there is no cross-cultural research conducted to the impact of consumer experience on ecologically responsible trade in the area of the former Yugoslavia, while other cross-cultural research has largely resulted in differences in environmentally responsible behaviour and differences in factors influencing environmentally responsible behaviour, the study is based on a hypothesis: *there are differences between the countries in the region of former Yugoslavia in terms of consumer's experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade.*

4. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The methodology of the research calls for a detailed description: the sample of the research, the instruments of the research, the course and procedure of the research and the statistical methods used in it.

4.1. The sample of the research

In this cross-cultural research, whose aim is to determine the differences between countries in the region of former Yugoslavia about consumers' experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade, 900 respondents took part (100% sample), with 150 respondents from each country, which means 16.67% of the whole sample from each country. Respondents are residents of the former Yugoslav countries.

The sample size is fairly small, comprising only 0.005% of the base group. Research was carried out on 900 respondents taken from the basic sample of 18 million people, which is the total population of the six countries from the territory of former Yugoslavia, according to the census of 2023. (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2024; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2024; Statistical Office of Montenegro, 2024; Statistical Office of Slovenia, 2025; State Statistical Office of The Republic of North Macedonia, 2022; Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013). The sample size is small but acceptable, considering the nature of the research, the variability of the characteristics of the population, the number of variables that are examined and the variability of the subject of the research.

The analysed demographic characteristics of the sample, in addition to the country, are gender, age, education and monthly household income. Table 1 presents the key demographic characteristics of the respondents. If the sample structure is analysed by gender, it is concluded that the majority of the sample is made up of women, with 62.90%, while men make up 37.10%. When looking at the age structure of the sample, respondents aged 18 to 30 make up the majority of the sample at 50.76%. The second largest category is made up of respondents aged 31 to 40, with 25.23%. Respondents aged 41 to 50 make up 12.52%, respondents aged 51 to 60 make up 7.68%, while respondents between 61 and 70 make up 2.65% of the sample. Less than 1% of respondents are 71-80 years old. When looking at the sample structure by educational level, the number of respondents who have completed high school or college/university is 39.81%, the number of respondents who have completed MSc/PhD is 19.61% while the number with primary school education is

less than 1%. Finally, through the analysis of Table 1, it can be concluded that the majority of the sample is made up of respondents who live in households with average monthly incomes, 48.90%. Respondents who live in households with below-average monthly incomes make up 33.68% of the sample. The fewest respondents, 17.30%, live in households with monthly incomes above average.

Three disparities appear in the sample. Disparity represents the deviation of the structure of the sample from the structure of the basic set. The first disparity is the sample size because the sample is not proportional to the population of the countries. This means that respondents from one country comprise 16.67% of the whole sample, while the countries do not have the same population size. The second disparity relates to the age of the respondents, given that the sample structure is such that the sample is mostly composed of respondents under 40 years of age, while the core group is mostly composed of people over 40 years of age, according to the census of 2023. Years of all the Yugoslavian countries. The third disparity relates to the educational level of the respondents, i.e., respondents with and without primary school education. Around 20% of the population of the former Yugoslavia is without school or with only primary school education, according to the 2023 census of the Yugoslav countries, while in the sample, there are fewer than 1% of respondents with primary school education. The disparities can be considered limitations of the research. However, the disparities that arise can be explained. The disparities appear because younger

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographic characteristics		Total % - 100 %
Gender	man	37,01
	woman	62,90
Years	18-30	50,76
	31-40	25,23
	41-50	12,52
	51-60	7,68
	61-70	2,65
	71-80	< 1
Education level	primary school	< 1
	high school	39,81
	college, university	39,81
	MSc/PhD	19,61
Monthly income by household	below average	33,68
	average	48,90
	above average	17,30

Source: Authors

respondents, as well as respondents with higher levels of education, are more interested in participating in research compared to older and less educated respondents (Chan, 2001), especially when the subject of research is related to ecology. van Raaij (1978) and Olatundun (2009) consider it difficult to create equal categories of demographic characteristics of the respondents in a sample that refers to several different countries. Considering the above, it can be concluded that the sample is representative.

4.2. The instrument

The questionnaire was designed to establish the differences between countries in the region of former Yugoslavia concerning consumers' experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade. The questionnaire was created on paper and online.

The questionnaire was created using the previously conducted cross-cultural studies on the territory of former Yugoslavia, whose aim was to establish the differences in ecologically responsible behaviours and factors which contribute to ecologically responsible behaviours (Raletić Jotanović et al., 2016; Raletić Jotanović et al., 2019; Raletić Jotanović et al., 2023). When creating the questionnaire, national characteristics of the countries were taken into account too, primarily the language and data relating to monthly household income, as the questionnaire was translated from Serbian into Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian, to be distributed in Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia, respectively. Respondents from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro filled in the questionnaire in Serbian.

The questionnaire consists of three parts: 1) consent to fill out the questionnaire, 2) demographic characteristics of respondents, and 3) questions related to the connection between experience and en-

vironmentally responsible trade. The analysed demographic characteristics of the respondents are: country, gender, age, education and monthly household income. The questions related to country, gender, education and monthly household income are closed, while the question about the age of the respondent is open. In order to adapt the questionnaire to cross-cultural research as much as possible, it was necessary to standardise the data related to monthly household income, given that these data are presented differently in the statistical data of the former Yugoslav countries. The question related to monthly household income was asked in the currency of the country in which the questionnaire was distributed, for easier understanding and answering the questions. The third part of the questionnaire consists of five questions related to the connection between experience and environmentally responsible trade. These questions were asked using a five-point Likert scale, according to which: 1- I completely disagree; 2- I completely disagree; 3- I am undecided; 4- I agree to a large extent; 5- I completely agree.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire, and according to it, the questionnaire scale has AM=3.39.

Table 3 shows the descriptive indicators of the questionnaire scale. The distribution of the scale for individual countries and the total distribution for all countries of the sample do not deviate significantly from normality (the skewness and kurtosis values are within the permissible limits), despite the significant values of the K-S statistics. However, the values of the individual country reliability coefficients as well as the overall reliability coefficients are lower than .70, unsatisfactory, potentially due to the small number of items covering this scale and similarities of items to each other.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the scale experience according to environmentally responsible trade

Items	AM	SD
My previous positive experience with environmentally responsible trade encourages me to continue with this type of trade.	3.78	1.07
My negative experience with environmentally responsible trade will not prevent me from continuing with this type of trade in the future.	3.53	1.16
Until now, I had no experience with ecologically responsible trade.	2.27	1.32
My friends' previous positive experience with environmentally responsible trade encourages me to participate in environmentally responsible trade.	3.18	3.18
My friends' negative experience with environmentally responsible trade discourages me from participating in environmentally responsible trade.	4.18	4.18

Note: AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation

Source: Authors

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the scale experience according to environmentally responsible trade

Countries	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S	α
Serbia	-.169	.189	.130	.625
Croatia	-.384	1.036	.143	.647
Bosnia and Herzegovina	.170	.144	.132*	.415
Montenegro	-.127	.666	.132*	.566
Macedonia	.368	.759	.126*	.509
Slovenia	.489	.794	.156*	.211
Total	.080	.394	.117*	.508

Note: * $p < .01$; AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; K-S – Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic; α – coefficient of internal reliability

Source: Authors

4.3. The course and the procedure of the research

The authors distributed questionnaires directly to members of their families, friends, neighbours, and colleagues, while they also distributed them via emails to numerous addresses and through social networks, using the profiles of associations for the conservation of the environment, because the research was about ecologically responsible behaviour, more precisely, ecologically responsible trade. Social networks of associations for the conservation of the environment were particularly beneficial to the authors when researching Slovenia, North Macedonia and Croatia.

4.4. The methods of data analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to establish the frequency of experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade by countries in the region of former Yugoslavia.

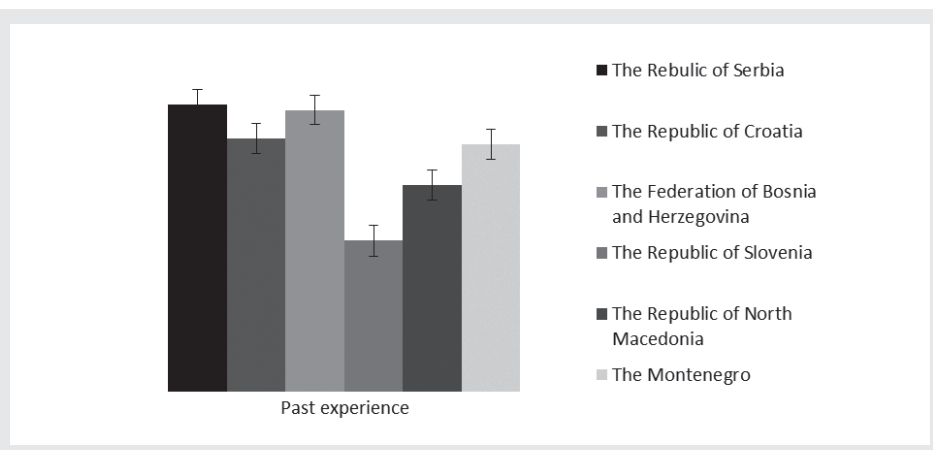
Single-factor analysis of variances was carried out (ANOVA) in order to find the differences between the

countries of the region of former Yugoslavia in relation to experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade. The independent variable is a country (6 levels), while the dependent variable is experience. Tukey HSD tests were done with the purpose of determining precise differences between the dependent and the independent variable.

5. THE RESULTS

Before analysing the results, it is pointed out that the items in the questionnaire were formed in such a way that they constitute one factor, namely the experience factor as the basis of environmentally responsible trade. That is, the results of each individual item in the questionnaire were not analysed, but rather the results were analysed in such a way that the items in the questionnaire were viewed collectively, given that they constitute the experience factor as the basis of environmentally responsible trade.

Figure 2: Descriptive statistics of experience as the basis for ecologically responsible trade by country



Source: Authors

5.1. Descriptive statistics

In Figure 2, it can be seen that out of the total sample from all six former Yugoslavia countries, the largest number of respondents from Serbia opted for experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade. Then, concerning the total sample, experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade was chosen by respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, then respondents from Croatia, then respondents from Montenegro and after respondents from Macedonia (Figure 2). From the total sample from all six former Yugoslavia countries, the smallest number of respondents from Slovenia chose experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade (Figure 2).

5.2. ANOVA – Differences in previous experiences concerning the countries of former Yugoslavia

The results of a single-factor analysis of the variance, with the factor being the country (6 levels) and the dependent variable being experience, as a basis for ecologically responsible trade, show that between subjects from different countries in the region of former Yugoslavia there is a statistically significant difference in terms of experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade, $F(5, 1544) = 11.89$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 p = .04$ (Table 4). Post Hoc tests (Tukey HSD) show that subjects from Slovenia, to the least extent, change their behaviour towards greater ecologically responsible trade thanks to experience in relation to subjects from the majority countries' sample, except concerning subjects from Macedonia. It has also been evident that subjects from Macedonia change their behaviour towards greater ecologically responsible trade because of the experience, to a lesser extent, concerning subjects from Serbia.

6. DISCUSSION

The obtained results indicate that there are differences in previous experience as a stimulus for environ-

mentally responsible trade among consumers from former Yugoslavia. Observed differences are between consumers from Slovenia who, to the smallest extent, change their behaviour in the direction of greater environmentally responsible trade, thanks to previous experience, compared to consumers from most countries of the sample, except for consumers from Macedonia. Also, consumers from Macedonia change their behaviour in the direction of greater environmentally responsible trade to a lesser extent due to previous experience compared to consumers from Serbia.

First of all, it is pointed out that the results confirm the results obtained through other cross-cultural studies (Arbuthnot & Lingg, 1975; Sriram & Forman, 1993; Gooch, 1995; Laroche et al., 1996; Roozen & De Pelsmacker, 2000; Raletić Jotanović et al., 2016; Raletić Jotanović et al., 2019; Raletić Jotanović et al., 2023). That is, in this as well as in other cross-cultural studies, cross-cultural differences were found about environmentally responsible behaviour, which includes environmentally responsible trade, and concerning factors that influence environmentally responsible trade.

The results obtained that experience has a lesser impact on environmentally responsible shopping among consumers from Slovenia compared to all other countries from the former Yugoslavia, except Macedonia, are explained by the fact that Slovenia is the most developed of all the countries from the former Yugoslavia, which is why environmentally responsible shopping is widely spread and experience concerning it is not a factor that will change such an established behaviour.

The results obtained that experience has the least impact on environmentally responsible shopping among consumers from Macedonia can be explained by the fact that Macedonia, along with Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the country from the former Yugoslavia that is the least developed according to macro-economic parameters, which is why the choice in shopping is probably influenced by factors such as price and quality, and not factors related to long-term sustainability, i.e., green products.

Table 4: ANOVA test – differences of experience as the basis for ecologically responsible trade in Yugoslavia country

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	151.44	5	30.29	11.89	< .05
Error	2277.02	894	2.55		
Total	2428.46	899			

Note: SS – sum of squares; df – degrees of freedom; MS – mean square; F – F-test value; p – statistical significance

Source: Authors

Table 5: Post Hoc tests – Tukey HSD

(I) Countries	(J) Countries	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Serbia	Slovenia	-1,20*	,099	,000	-1,48	-,92
	Croatia	-2,39*	,099	,000	-2,68	-2,11
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	-,79*	,099	,000	-1,07	-,50
	Montenegro	-2,56*	,099	,000	-2,84	-2,28
	Macedonia	-1,47*	,099	,010	-1,76	-1,19
Slovenia	Serbia	1,20*	,099	,000	,92	1,48
	Croatia	-1,19*	,099	,000	-1,48	-,91
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	,41*	,099	,000	,13	,70
	Montenegro	-1,36*	,099	,000	-1,64	-1,08
Croatia	Macedonia	-,27	,099	,065	-,56	,01
	Serbia	2,39*	,099	,000	2,11	2,68
	Slovenia	1,19*	,099	,000	,91	1,48
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,61*	,099	,000	1,32	1,89
	Montenegro	-,17	,099	,000	-,45	,12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Macedonia	,92*	,099	,000	,64	1,20
	Serbia	,79*	,099	,000	,50	1,07
	Slovenia	-,41*	,099	,000	-,70	-,13
	Croatia	-1,61*	,099	,000	-1,89	-1,32
Montenegro	Montenegro	-1,77*	,099	,000	-2,06	-1,49
	Macedonia	-,69*	,099	,000	-,97	-,40
	Serbia	2,56*	,099	,000	2,28	2,84
	Slovenia	1,36*	,099	,000	1,08	1,64
	Croatia	,17	,000	,000	-,12	,45
Macedonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,77*	,099	,000	1,49	2,06
	Macedonia	1,09*	,099	,000	,80	1,37
	Serbia	1,47*	,099	,010	1,19	1,76
	Slovenia	,27	,099	,065	-,01	,56
	Croatia	-,92*	,099	,000	-1,20	-,64
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	,69*	,099	,000	,40	,97
	Mntenegro	-1,09*	,099	,000	-1,37	-,80

Note: The error term is Mean Square(Error) = ,736; The mean difference is significant at the ,05 level

Source: Authors

7. CONCLUSION

This is the first research into experience as a basis of ecologically responsible trade in the region of former Yugoslavia, and as such, it offers significant results. The first result indicates that out of the total sample which consisting of respondents from all six Yugoslav countries, the most respondents from Serbia and the least respondents from Slovenia recognized the experience of environmentally responsible trade. The second result indicates that there are differences between respondents from countries from the territory of former Yugoslavia when it comes to experience as a basis of ecologically responsible trade. Certain differences were noted between respondents from Slovenia, who change their behaviour towards greater ecologically responsible trade thanks to experience to the least ex-

tent, and respondents from most Yugoslavian countries, except in comparison with respondents from Macedonia. Respondents from Macedonia change their behaviour towards a greater ecologically responsible trade thanks to experience to a lesser extent in comparison with respondents from Serbia. Based on all of these, we can conclude that H0 has been confirmed: *There are differences in experience as a basis for ecologically responsible trade between countries from the territory of former Yugoslavia.*

Results of the research can be applied in more than one way, both in practice and in theory. Practical application of the results is seen in the idea that market subjects who are engaged in ecologically responsible trade in the region of former Yugoslavia should implement consumers' experience into their strategies as

an important tool for the increase of ecologically responsible trade, especially when we take into account that this tool can be managed through a number of complex factors. This means that, if market subjects who engage in ecologically responsible trade are at work in the region of former Yugoslavia, consumers' experience as a tool should not be applied in the same way and with the same intensity and importance to all consumers from the countries of former Yugoslavia, but they should design their strategies in such a way that for certain countries. For example, given that in Macedonia consumer experience has been found to be the factor that has the least influence on environmentally responsible trade compared to other countries of the former Yugoslavia, market entities which wishing to engage in environmentally responsible trade in Macedonia could give away environmentally friendly products to consumers so that consumers have a positive experience with them and continued to buy them. It is also recommended to reduce taxes on green products or subsidize green products in Macedonia and influence the price of green products so that consumers consume them, gain a positive experience and create a habit of environmentally responsible trade. It is also recommended to conduct educational promotion in Macedonia that would highlight the importance of environmentally responsible trade and motivate consumers to participate in it, thereby gaining positive experiences and continuing to purchase environmentally responsible products. The results concluded that experience is a significant factor in environmentally responsible trade, however, in the domestic and international scientific literature, experience is not suf-

ficiently recognized as a factor in consumer behaviour and environmentally responsible trade. Due to the above, the theoretical application of the results is reflected in the fact that experience as a factor in environmentally responsible trade should be more theoretically represented and analysed in the domestic and international scientific literature related to consumer behaviour and environmentally responsible trade. It is also indicated that it is possible to theoretically analyse experience as a factor in environmentally responsible trade from several aspects, namely as a social and individual factor in consumer behaviour in relation to environmentally responsible trade. Also, the theoretical application of the results is reflected in the fact that the results can serve as secondary data in other studies, including longitudinal and comparative research related to factors in consumer behaviour and environmentally responsible trade.

Suggestions for the future research in the domain of ecologically responsible trade in the region of former Yugoslavia are: a) to increase the number of respondents in the survey and to ensure that the sample structure in terms of size reflects the sizes of the former Yugoslav countries, b) to conduct research whose sample structure will more closely reflect the basic set, when it comes to the age structure and education of the respondents, c) to improve the questionnaire in the direction of having more items and making the items more different from each other, and d) application of qualitative methods as well, which provide the results that quantitative methods are not able to provide, which are the most frequent reasons for such behaviour.

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Apstrakt

Iskustvo potrošača kao osnov ekološki odgovorne trgovine u regionu bivše Jugoslavije

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Poražavajući podaci o zagađenosti životne sredine predstavljaju alarm koji ukazuje da je danas obaveza svih tržišnih subjekata da se mnogo više ponašaju društveno odgovorno. Kako iskustvo potrošača često predstavlja opredeljujući faktor ponašanja potrošača, pa i društveno odgovornog ponašanja, u ovom radu se analizira iskustvo potrošača kao osnov ekološki odgovorne trgovine, sve uzimajući u obzir da ista predstavlja vid ekološke odgovornosti. Region bivše Jugoslavije je analiziran u radu s obzirom da prema saznanju autora ne postoji kros-kulturalno istraživanje u pomenutom regionu na temu iskustva potrošača kao osnova ekološki odgovorne trgovine. Kros-kulturalno istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 900 ispitanika putem upitnika. Od statističkih podataka korišćena je deskriptivna statis-

tika, ANOVA i Tukey HSD test. Istraživanjem su dobijeni rezultati da postoje razlike između država iz regiona bivše Jugoslavije kada je u pitanju iskustvo potrošača kao osnov ekološki odgovorne trgovine. Dobijeni rezultati imaju praktičnu primenu koja se ogleda u mogućnošću da tržišni subjekti koji se bave ekološki odgovornom trgovinom u regionu bivše Jugoslavije na adekvatan način u svojim strategijama definišu i pozicioniraju iskustvo potrošača kao alat kojim se može upravljati ekološki odgovornom trgovinom. Teorijska primena ogleda se u mogućnosti da se dobijeni rezultati iskoriste kao osnov za buduća istraživanja.

Ključne reči: *iskustvo, potrošač, trgovina, bivša Jugoslavija*

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