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CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM TOWARDS FASHION PRODUCTS

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Abstract

The subject of this paper is the analysis of consumer ethnocentrism with special reference to fashion products. The aim is to examine: whether consumers of fashion products in Serbia are ethnocentrically oriented; what they think about the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products; whether they choose a domestic or a foreign fashion product, provided that their prices are equal; how often they ordered fashion products through (domestic, foreign) websites before and during the pandemic; and how often they bought fashion products promoted by (domestic, foreign) influencers before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The empirical research was conducted in the period between March and June 2021, in the Republic of Serbia. The specificity of the research is reflected in the analysis of consumer ethnocentrism by consumer generational cohorts (ranging from Z to Baby Boomers) and by the amount of monthly income, all while considering the frequency of ordering fashion products through domestic and foreign websites before and during the pandemic, as well as the impact of domestic and foreign influencers on the frequency of purchasing the mentioned products in the observed periods. The results show that the greatest percentage of Generational cohort Z members believe that the prices of domestic fashion products correspond to the quality of products, in contrast to generational cohorts Y, X and Baby Boomers, the majority of whom believe that the prices are high in relation to the quality. Consumer ethnocentrism is most pronounced among the category of consumers with high income and among Baby Boomers.

Key words: consumer ethnocentrism, fashion products, domestic products, generational cohorts, COVID-19 pandemic.

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ПОТРОШАЧКИ ЕТНОЦЕНТРИЗАМ МОДНИХ ПРОИЗВОДА

Апстракт

Предмет рада је анализа потрошачког етноцентризма с посебним освртом на модне производе. Циљ је да се испита: да ли су потрошачи модних производа у Србији етноцентрички оријентисани; шта мисле о односу цене и квалитета домаћих модних производа; да ли би одабрали домаћи или страни модни производ под условом да су им цене једнаке; колико су учестало наручивали модне производе преко (домаћих, страних) сајтова пре и током пандемије; као и колико су учестало куповали модне производе које промовишу (домаћи, страни) инфлуенсери пре и током пандемије COVID-19. Емпиријско истраживање је спроведено између марта и јуна 2021. године, у Републици Србији. Специфичност истраживања се огледа у анализи потрошачког етноцентризма према генерацијским кохортама (укључујући све од генерацијске кохорте З до Бејби бумера) и према висини месечних примања, уз разматрање учесталости наручивања модних производа преко домаћих и страних сајтова пре и током пандемије, као и утицаја домаћих и страних инфлуенсера на учесталост куповине поменутих производа у посматраним периодима. Резултати показују да генерацијска кохорта З у највећем проценту сматра да цене домаћих модних производа одговарају квалитету, за разлику од генерацијских кохорта Y, X и Бејби бумера чији припадници у већини сматрају да су цене високе у односу на квалитет. Најизраженији је потрошачки етноцентризам код категорије потрошача са високим примањима и код Бејби бумера.

Кључне речи: потрошачки етноцентризам, модни производи, домаћи производи, генерацијске кохорте, пандемија COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer ethnocentrism is a significant factor in the fashion industry (Slijepčević, 2019), and it represents an attempt to apply the general sociological concept of ethnocentrism to a business context. As such, it is connected with the patriotic feeling of the individual which dictates that it is desirable to buy domestic products (Karoui & Khemakhem, 2019; Bakti, Sumaedi, Rakhmawati, Damayanti & Yarmen, 2020; Rašković, Ding, Hirose, Zabkar & Fam, 2020; Kostić, Stanišić & Marinković, 2021). The above-mentioned relation was also identified in the research conducted on the Serbian market (Pavlović & Savić, 2017). Specifically, consumer ethnocentrism represents a preference for products and brands from one's own country over products and brands from other countries (Gašević, Vranješ & Tomašević, 2019; Casado-Aranda, Sánchez-Fernández, Ibáñez- Zapata & Liébana-Cabanillas, 2020; Ma, Yang & Yoo, 2020). This term could be used to explain the reasons why some consumers have negative attitudes towards foreign products, and to justify the consumer's bias towards buying domestic versus foreign products (Bešlagić, 2015). From a marketing perspective, consumer ethnocentrism should be viewed as a consumer choice conditioned by the attitude that ethnocentrism helps not only the economic but also the political and social development of the country (Kragulj, Parežanin & Miladinović, 2017; Das and Mukherjee, 2020; Vuong & Giao, 2020).

FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM

The demographic characteristics of consumers represent a very important factor in the research on consumer ethnocentrism. The most common demographic variables in the research on consumer ethnocentrism are age, gender, income and education (Javalgi, Kahare, Gross & Scherer, 2005). A slightly different classification is given by Shankarmahesh (2006), who points out that the most important variables within this group are age, income level, the level of education, race, and social class. Nguyen (2017) states that gender, age, the level of education, and the average level of monthly income are relevant socio-demographic characteristics for research in the context of consumer ethnocentrism. Although research results are not consistent, there seems to be more empirical support for the hypothesis that younger people express a lower level of consumer ethnocentrism than older people (Rakić, Rakić & Stanojević, 2018; Abdalrahman, Fehér & Lehota, 2019; Bernabéu, Oliveira, Rabadan & Diaz, 2020; Migliore, Rizzo, Schifani, Quatrosi, Vetri & Testa, 2021). Research also shows that women have greater ethnocentric tendencies than men (Bernabéu et al., 2020; Migliore et al., 2021). Apart from a few exceptions, research results indicate a negative association between consumer ethnocentrism and the level of education (Rakić et al., 2018; Bernabéu et al., 2020; Guo and Özdinç, 2021). Most studies found a negative association between individual income and the scores on the consumer ethnocentrism scale (Wel, Alam, Khalid & Mokhtaruddin, 2018; Stepchenkova, Su & Shichkova, 2019; Bernabéu et al., 2020; Aljukhadar, Boeuf & Senecal, 2021). However, some studies find no effects of income on consumer ethnocentrism (Jain and Jain, 2013; Awdziej, Tkaczyk & Włodarek, 2016; Bešlagić, Bećirović & Čavalić, 2018), while other studies find a positive association between income and ethnocentrism (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2011; Al Ganideh and Good, 2016).

When it comes to consumer ethnocentrism in Serbia, i.e. the demographic factors that determine it, the research by Marinković, Stanišić and Kostić (2011) found that ethnocentric tendencies occur to a greater extent in men than in women. This result is different from the one obtained from the research in other countries, where the level of consumer ethnocentrism was higher among women. The results of this research also show that the lowest degree of consumer ethnocentrism is present among younger respondents, and the highest among older respondents. In addition to the above, the increase in household income implies a decrease in consumer ethnocentrism (Veljković, 2009). The fact that the elderly and consumers with the lowest level of monthly income are more ethnocentric and show a greater degree of economic patriotism has also been proven in recent research conducted on the market of the Republic of Serbia (Rakić et al., 2018; Gašević, 2022). Moreover, according to the results of the research by Gašević (2022), it can be observed that there are no statistically significant differences in consumer ethnocentrism between consumers according to the education level criterion.

The COVID-19 pandemic, as an unprecedented situational factor, has had significant implications for consumer psychology and behaviour during and after the pandemic (He & Harris, 2020). It is a collective traumatic event that has caused increased concern for health and safety (Maltseva & Li, 2020), and that inflicted physical, psychological and emotional harm to consumers (He & Harris, 2020). In addition to health and psychological problems, the pandemic has also caused financial problems and difficulties for individuals. The pandemic has created a radically different marketing environment and different consumer needs and habits (Sheth, 2020; Zwanka & Buff, 2021; Mamula, Perčić & Nećak, 2022). An important area of consumer (ethical) decision-making that is changing under the influence of the pandemic relates to behaviours directed towards the purchase of domestic and foreign products. The question of purchasing domestic and foreign products is not only a question of affordability, quality and price but also a question related to consumer ethics in terms of whether it is right (or wrong) to act in a certain way (He & Harris, 2020). Thus, the research conducted by Verma and Naveen (2021) showed that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers avoided foreign products, which had a positive effect on their level of ethnocentrism, i.e. on the purchase of domestic products. A higher degree of consumer ethnocentrism is more pronounced among consumers who buy domestic fashion products more often – frequently and very often (Gašević, 2022). The lowest level of consumer ethnocentrism was identified among consumers who do not buy products from the mentioned categories. On the other hand, according to this research, the correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic and consumer ethnocentrism was assessed as positive and of high intensity. The results obtained are in line with the results of recent studies that deal with the analysis of the influence of external factors on consumer behaviour, which primarily refers to consumer behaviour research on the choices they made during the COVID-19 pandemic (Ben Hassen, El Bilali & Allahyari, 2020; Kock, Nørfelt, Josiassen, Assaf & Tsionas, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020; Hamadani et al., 2020; Migliore et al., 2021; Miftari, Cerjak, Tomić-Maksan, Imami & Prenaj, 2021; Mhatre and Singh, 2021; Savarese, Castellini, Morelli & Graffigna, 2021; Verma and Naveen, 2021; Chakraborty, Siddiqui, Siddiqui & Alatawi, 2022).

ETHNOCENTRISM TOWARDS FASHION PRODUCTS

When it comes to research aimed at identifying the impact of consumer ethnocentrism on the evaluation of different categories of products, it can be said that the available literature (primarily foreign) is almost explicitly focused on high-tech products and fashion products (such as, for example, cars, household appliances, computers, clothing and/or services), especially in developing countries (Gašević, 2022). The research on consumer ethnocentrism in Serbia shows that the level of consumer ethnocentrism is higher in the category of food products than in some other categories (Rakić et al., 2018). In fact, consumers from Serbia have the most positive attitudes towards domestic products from the following categories: everyday food products, alcoholic beverages, non-alcoholic beverages (Rakić et al., 2018). A recent study by Gašević (2022) reached similar results, according to which consumers from our country show the highest degree of ethnocentrism towards food and cosmetic products, as well as household cleaning products. On the other hand, fashion clothing and appliances are the last two categories of products that are not bought every day, and require a longer purchase decision process. Nevertheless, regarding the analysis of the profile of consumers who buy fashion products, it can be concluded that certain characteristics of consumers influence their decision to buy these products. Specifically, with increasing age, the tendency to buy fashion items also increases, but it is interesting that consumers with a lower level of education are more likely to decide to buy products from this category, which means that the level of education significantly affects the purchase of fashion products. This can also be explained by the fact that they choose branded products due to the fear of making the wrong choice. However, for this group of respondents, the level of monthly income does not play a significant role in the purchase of these products. Moreover, it has been shown that the choice of online purchase of fashion products (through a website, mobile applications or social media) affects their tendency to purchase these products (Borisavljević and Radosavljević, 2021).

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The research subject of this paper is the analysis of the degree of consumer ethnocentrism in Serbia from the aspect of fashion products. In accordance with the defined subject, the main objectives of this research are to answer the following questions: (a) is there consumer ethnocentrism in Serbia regarding fashion products; (b) what is the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products; (c) which fashion product would consumers choose if the prices of domestic and foreign products were equal; (d) what was the frequency of ordering fashion products through domestic and foreign websites before and during the COVID-19 pandemic; and (e) what was the frequency of purchasing a fashion product promoted by domestic and foreign influencers before and during the pandemic.

In accordance with the thus defined subject and objectives of the research, the following hypotheses have been set, and will be proved as a contemplative and theoretical supplement to certain gaps in the knowledge of the phenomenon under research: *hypothesis* H_1 – consumers in Serbia are ethnocentrically oriented when it comes to fashion products; *hypothesis* H_2 – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents with different socio-demographic characteristics in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products; *hypothesis* $H_{2.1}$ – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different age categories in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products; *hypothesis* $H_{2.2}$ – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different gender in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products; *hypothesis* $H_{2.3}$ – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different amount of monthly income in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products; *hypothesis* H_3 – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents with different socio-demographic characteristics in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products in case the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal; *hypothesis* $H_{3.1}$ – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different age categories in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products in case the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal; *hypothesis* $H_{3.2}$ – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different gender in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products in case the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal; and *hypothesis* $H_{3.3}$ – there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different amount of monthly income in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products in case the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal.

In order to derive valid and reliable conclusions, in accordance with the defined subject, objectives and the research hypotheses, the empirical, i.e. quantitative research was conducted using the survey method. An online questionnaire was prepared especially for this research and was distributed to the respondents. Consumers in Serbia were questioned about their opinions, habits and attitudes about the mentioned questions. The survey lasted from March 24 to June 21, 2021 and was conducted on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The sample is random; it consists of 1,002 respondents – consumers of both genders (men – 26%, women – 74%). According to age categories, the respondents were divided as follows: Generational cohort Z (18%), Generational cohort Y (31%), Generational cohort X (35%) and Baby Boomers (16%). Table 1 gives short descriptions of the mentioned generational cohorts.

Table 1. Descriptions of generational cohorts

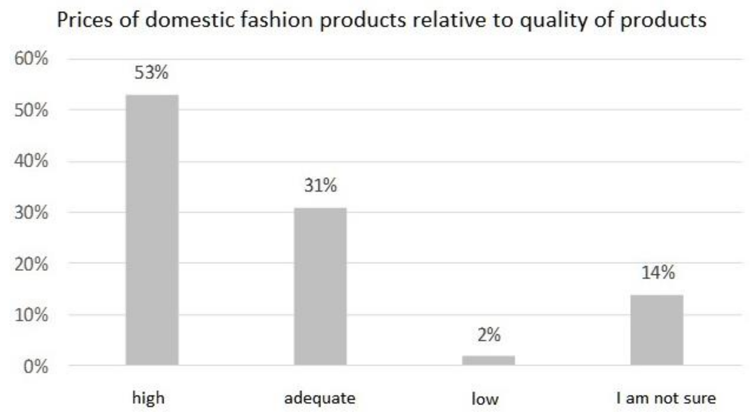
	Baby-boomers (1945-1964)	Generational cohort X (1965-1979)	Generational cohort Y (1980-2000)	Generational cohort Z (2001-2012)
Style of clothing	Business	Relaxed business	Whatever they feel comfortable with	They make a brand out of themselves and create their own image
Work environment	Exclusively an office with a tendency to hard and prolonged work	Office and house, there is a desire for a flexible schedule	Office and home, flexible schedule	They expect flexibility from their employers, remote work
Motivation	Salary	Safety	Work-life balance	Individuality
Mentoring	Can not stand negative feedback very well	Feedback is not necessary for them	Constant need for feedback	They seek stability and permanence
Retention	Salary	Security and salary	Personal relationship	Independence
Means of communications	Personal contact and telephone	Phone, e-mail	SMS, Social networks	They use various computers, mobile phones and others digital devices
Technology	Documents are prepared by colleagues, the Internet is used to a limited extent, they only use e-mail at work	They create documents themselves, use a mobile phone and laptop, use the Internet for research and search, use e-mail and a mobile phone	They create documents and databases themselves, use the Internet for research and to connect, use e-mail/ texting 24/7	Instead of the Internet, they use Internet of Things
Career goal	Build a perfect career and excel at work	Make a „portable" career and, if possible, a business, master a multitude of skills and experiences	Make a few parallel careers or business, have several business at the same time	They choose job they love, versus a better-paying, and in their opinion, more boring job. Usually, they build a career abroad
Attitude towards career	Organizational - careers are defined by employees	Portfolio - devoted to the profession and not to the employee	Digital entrepreneurs	They are prone to entrepreneurship and include their personal projects in regular job
Characteristic product	TV	PC	Mobile phone	Different digital devices and platforms
Choice when making financial decisions	Face to face	Face to face and online	Solutions for decisions are collected digitally	Pragmatic and conservative, rational consumers

Source: Adjusted according to Mamula Nikolic (2021)

The sample includes respondents from all regions of Serbia. According to the amount of monthly income, the structure of the sample consists of the following structure of respondents: up to RSD 50.000 – 43%; RSD 50.000-70.000 – 20%; RSD 70.000-100.000 – 14%; and over RSD 100.000 – 7%. The statistical error of the sample is 3%. The SPSS statistical software was used for data processing and analysis. The following quantitative statistical methods were used: descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, mean) and comparative statistics ($\chi 2$-test). Some questions in the questionnaire were formulated in the form of a five-point Likert scale. The answers offered for the question on frequency of ordering are: almost always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never, and were assigned the values of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results shown in Graph 1, more than half of the consumers in Serbia (53%) believe that the prices of domestic fashion products are high relative to quality. A third of the respondents (31%) believe that the prices correspond to the quality of products, and only 2% of respondents believe that the prices are low relative to quality.



Graph 1. Distribution of respondents by their opinion on the prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality
Source: Authors of the paper

The obtained results are somewhat similar to the results of the research conducted by Gašević (2022), according to which 33.5% of consumers stated that the domestic fashion clothing is expensive, while only 8.6% of them consider it very affordable. Also, 46.7% of the surveyed consumers are satisfied with the quality of domestic fashion clothing.

The greatest percentage of the members of Generational cohort Z believes that the prices of domestic fashion products correspond to the quality of the products (46%). More than half of the respondents in the Y (57%), X (57%) and Baby Boomers (55%) generational cohorts believe that the prices are high relative to quality (Table 2). According to the χ^2-test (Value = 37.167[a], df = 9, p = 0.00 < 0.05), *there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different age categories in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products.*

Table 2. Distribution of respondents (in %) by age groups in relation to the opinion on the prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality

Age groups	Prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality			
	High	Adequate	Low	I am not sure
18-25 (Generational cohort Z)	38	46	0	16
26-40 (Generational cohort Y)	57	27	3	13
41-55 (Generational cohort X)	57	29	1	13
56-72 (Baby Boomers)	55	28	3	14

Source: Authors of the paper

The greatest percentage of female consumers believes that the prices of domestic fashion products are high relative to quality (55%), while 48% of male consumers in Serbia are of the same opinion. A third of the male (34%) and female respondents (31%) believe that the prices are adequate for products of such quality (Table 3). According to the χ^2-test (Value = 13.580[a], df = 3, p = 0.004 < 0.05), *there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different gender in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products.*

Table 3. Distribution of respondents (in %) by gender in relation to the opinion on the prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality

Gender	Prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality			
	High	Adequate	Low	I am not sure
Male	48	34	4	14
Female	55	31	1	14

Source: Authors of the paper

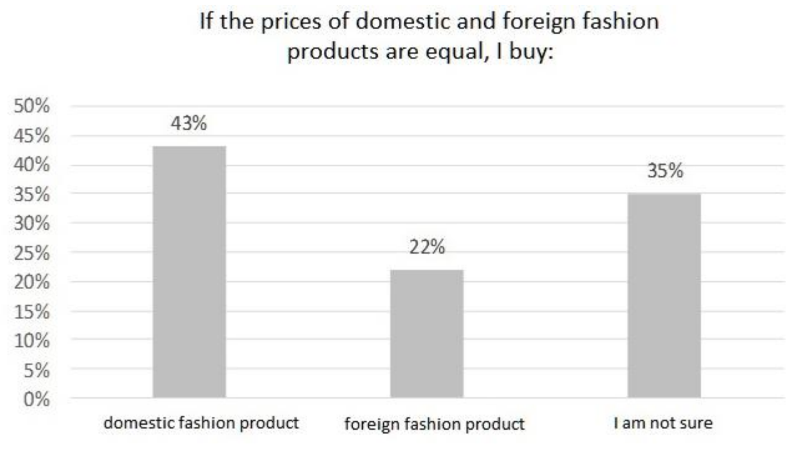
As for the distribution of respondents by the amount of monthly income, their opinions on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products are similar. The greatest percentage of consumers with an income between 50 and 70 thousand dinars (61%) believe that the prices are high relative to quality, and the greatest percentage of consumers within the highest income range (39%) believe that the prices correspond to the quality of domestic fashion products (Table 4). According to the χ^2-test (Value = 12.619[a], df = 9, p = 0.181 > 0.05), *there is no statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents with different monthly incomes in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products*.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents (in %) by the amount of monthly income in relation to the opinion on the prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality

Amount of monthly income	Prices of domestic fashion products relative to quality			
	High	Adequate	Low	I am not sure
Up to RSD 50,000	52	30	2	15
RSD 50,000 – 70,000	61	25	2	12
RSD 70,000 – 100,000	55	30	2	14
Over RSD 100,000	58	39	0	3

Source: Authors of the paper

If the prices of domestic and foreign fashion products were equal, the largest number of consumers would opt for the domestic product (43%), which leads us to the *conclusion that consumers in Serbia are ethnocentrically oriented* (Graph 2).



Graph 2. Distribution of respondents by their choice of domestic or foreign fashion product in case of equal prices
Source: Authors of the paper

The greatest percentage of the members of the Baby Boomer Generational cohort (49%) would rather choose a domestic fashion product if the prices of domestic and foreign products were equal, while, on the other hand, the greatest percentage of the members of Generational cohort Z (36%) would prefer a foreign fashion product. Therefore, of all generational cohorts of consumers, *Baby Boomers are the most ethnocentrically oriented* (Table 5). According to the χ^2-test (Value = 25.642[a], df = 6, p = 0.00 < 0.05), *there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different age categories in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion product in the event that the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal.*

Table 5. Distribution of respondents (in %) by age groups in relation to the choice of domestic or foreign fashion product

Age groups	In case the price of a domestic fashion product is equal to the price of a foreign product, I buy:		
	Domestic fashion product	Foreign fashion product	I am not sure
18-25 (Gen Z)	37	36	27
26-40 (Gen Y)	42	20	38
41-55 (Gen X)	43	20	37
56-72 (Baby Boomers)	49	17	34

Source: Authors of the paper

The percentages of male and female respondents are approximate when it comes to deciding between a domestic fashion product and a foreign one (Table 6). According to the χ^2-test (Value = 4.726[a], df = 2, p = 0.094 > 0.05), *there is no statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different gender in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products.*

Table 6. Distribution of respondents (in %) by gender in relation to the choice of domestic or foreign fashion product

Gender	In case the price of a domestic fashion product is equal to the price of a foreign product, I buy:		
	Domestic fashion product	Foreign fashion product	I am not sure
Male	41	27	32
Female	43	21	36

Source: Authors of the paper

The obtained results are almost identical to the results of the research conducted by Gašević (2022). Specifically, according to this research, there is no statistically significant difference between men and women when it comes to attitudes about domestic fashion clothing, the intention to purchase domestic fashion clothing, the degree of satisfaction with and enthusiasm for domestic fashion clothing, and the level of loyalty to domestic fashion clothing (intention to repeat purchase and make recommendations to other customers).

The percentages of consumers according to income levels are fairly even as well, but those within the highest income range (52%), who would opt for a domestic fashion product rather than the foreign one, stand out (Table 7). According to the χ^2-test (Value = 3.313^a, df = 6, p = 0.769 > 0.05), *there is no statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents with different levels of monthly income in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products (provided that the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal).*

Table 7. Distribution of respondents (in %) by the amount of monthly income in relation to the choice of domestic or foreign fashion product

Amount of monthly income	In case the price of a domestic fashion product is equal to the price of a foreign product, I buy:		
	Domestic fashion product	Foreign fashion product	I am not sure
Up to RSD 50,000	44	21	35
RSD 50,000 – 70,000	43	18	39
RSD 70,000 – 100,000	42	20	38
Over RSD 100,000	52	19	29

Source: Authors of the paper

Through domestic websites, 97% of consumers frequently bought fashion products before the COVID-19 pandemic, and 72% of consumers did the same during the pandemic (Table 8). The mean value of the frequency of ordering through domestic websites before the pandemic is 4.40, and it is 3.25 during the pandemic. Through foreign websites, 42%

Table 8. Distribution of respondents (in %) by the frequency of ordering fashion products through domestic and foreign websites, before and during the pandemic

Frequency of ordering	Through domestic websites		Through foreign websites	
	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic
Almost always	58	19	1	3
Often	28	21	11	16
Sometimes	11	32	30	34
Rarely	2	23	34	25
Never	1	5	24	22

Source: Authors of the paper

of consumers frequently bought fashion products before the COVID-19 pandemic, while 53% of consumers did the same during the pandemic (Table 7). The mean value for the frequency of ordering through foreign websites before the pandemic is 2.33, and it is 2.54 during the pandemic.

Chryssochoidis et al. (2007) examined the relation between consumer ethnocentrism and frequency of purchase, but taking into account only foreign products, and the research results showed that consumer ethnocentrism has no effect on consumer purchasing behaviour, which is reflected in the number of purchases of foreign products.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 12% of consumers in Serbia frequently purchased fashion products promoted by domestic influencers, and this percentage was identical during the pandemic (Table 9). The mean value for the frequency of ordering fashion products promoted by domestic influencers before the pandemic is 1.47, and it is 1.44 during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, 9% of consumers frequently purchased fashion products promoted by foreign influencers, and this percentage was identical during the pandemic (Table 9). The mean value of the frequency of ordering fashion products promoted by foreign influencers before the pandemic is 1.41, and it is 1.38 during the pandemic.

Table 9. Distribution of respondents (in %) by the frequency of purchasing fashion products promoted by domestic and foreign influencers, before and during the pandemic

Frequency of purchasing fashion products	Promoted by domestic influencers		Promoted by foreign influencers	
	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic	Before the pandemic	During the pandemic
Almost always	1	1	1	0
Often	2	1	1	1
Sometimes	9	10	7	8
Rarely	21	19	22	19
Never	67	69	69	72

Source: Authors of the paper

When comparing the percentages in Tables 8 and 9, the mean values for the frequency of purchasing fashion products through domestic and foreign websites, as well as the purchase of products promoted by domestic and foreign influencers, it can be concluded that the purchase of fashion products in Serbia is more frequent through domestic websites than through foreign ones, and that the purchase of fashion products promoted by domestic influencers is more frequent than the purchase of fashion products promoted by foreign influencers, both for the period before and during the pandemic. Moreover, considering that a greater percentage of consumers in Serbia choose domestic fashion products (43%) compared to foreign ones (22%), provided that their prices are equal, it can be concluded that consumer ethnocentrism in Serbia prevails when it comes to fashion products. The obtained results are somewhat similar to the results of the research by Gašević (2022), according to which 42% of respondents stated that they buy domestic fashion clothing occasionally, while 21% of respondents stated that they buy domestic fashion clothing rarely.

In general, the results of the empirical research proved that consumers in Serbia are ethnocentrically oriented when it comes to fashion products, and thus *the hypothesis H_1 is confirmed*. They prefer a domestic fashion product over a foreign one, provided that their prices are equal. Moreover, it has been found that fashion products are purchased in Serbia through domestic websites more often than through foreign ones, as well as that the purchase of fashion products promoted by domestic influencers is more frequent than the purchase of fashion products promoted by foreign influencers, both for the period before the pandemic and during the pandemic. As it has been established that there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different age categories in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products, hypothesis $H_{2.1}$ is confirmed. The same conclusion was reached regarding hypothesis $H_{2.2}$, i.e. there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different gender in relation to the opinion on the price-quality ratio of domestic fashion products. On the other hand, as it has been established that there is no statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents with different monthly incomes in relation to the aforementioned opinion, hypothesis $H_{2.3}$ is not confirmed. Therefore, it can be concluded that *hypothesis H_2 is mostly confirmed.* Given that a statistically significant difference has been proven to exist in the answers of respondents of different age categories in relation to the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products, provided that the prices of domestic and foreign products are equal, hypothesis $H_{3.1}$ is confirmed. In contrast, there is no statistically significant difference in the answers of respondents of different gender and with different amounts of monthly income in relation to the mentioned choice. Therefore, hypotheses $H_{3.2}$ and $H_{3.3}$ are not confirmed. It can be concluded that *hypothesis H_3 is only partially confirmed.*

CONCLUSION

The results of the research show that the greatest percentage of members of Generational cohort Z believe that the prices of domestic fashion products correspond to the quality of products, in contrast to generational cohorts Y, X and Baby Boomers, the majority of who believe that prices are high relative to quality. Based on the aforementioned, it can be concluded that the coming generation of young people is a good potential market for the competition between domestic producers of fashion products, and that it is necessary for the producers to act strategically in this direction from the marketing aspect, and to additionally develop and strengthen the ethnocentrism of Generational cohort Z. On the other hand, in relation to generational cohorts Y, X and Baby Boomers, who, as the most capable generational cohorts, consider that prices are high relative to quality, domestic producers can act in three directions. The first one is to reduce prices and improve quality, which is perhaps the most difficult to achieve. The second direction is to increase quality, which is somewhat easier to implement, and finally, the third and most easily applicable way is to reduce the prices of domestic fashion products.

The category of consumers with high incomes gives preference to domestic products compared to foreign ones, provided that the prices of domestic and foreign fashion products are equal, which is a signal to domestic producers to direct their marketing strategy and communication towards that target group with pronounced consumer ethnocentrism. Moreover, the oldest generation of consumers (Baby Boomers) is the one most ethnocentrically oriented of all generational cohorts, and this is where the producers of domestic fashion products have space for more active measures.

During the pandemic, the purchase of fashion products through domestic websites decreased, while purchase through foreign websites increased. The increased purchase of fashion products through foreign websites during the pandemic compared to the pre-pandemic period could be explained by the existence of foreign websites with advanced software used by global fashion companies, significantly better than domestic ones, as well by better presentation, larger marketing budgets and efficient and secure payment, in contrast to those of domestic fashion houses that cannot boast of that level of quality and safety of online offers and sales. In order to stop the growing trend of purchasing fashion products through foreign websites, it is necessary to invest in the modernisation of websites and online sales, and to increase the marketing budget for domestic producers. The reasons for the increased purchase of fashion products through foreign websites are a suggestion for further research.

When it comes to purchases encouraged by influencers, the respondents almost equally declared that their purchase decisions were barely influenced by either domestic or foreign influencers before the pandemic, while this influence was even smaller during the pandemic. It follows that domestic fashion houses should carefully choose and decide on cooperation with influencers, as well as make efforts to strengthen direct communication and interaction with (potential) customers.

The limitation of this paper is reflected in the analysis of only selected factors that influence the purchase of fashion products. The survey method is of a subjective nature, both because of the respondents' answers, with their tendency to answer questions in a more socially desirable direction under certain conditions, and because of insufficient possible precision in the formation of a random sample of the research. As the empirical research has confirmed that consumers of fashion products in Serbia are ethnocentrically oriented when considering the choice between domestic and foreign fashion products, provided that their prices are equal, it would be interesting to further examine the degree of influence exerted on ethnocentrism by quality, price and consumer desire to help the domestic fashion industry. We also suggest the examination of fashion organisations that collaborate with influencers regarding the effects they achieve when their products/services are promoted by influencers. In addition, it would be important to examine the behaviour of consumers of fashion products in the region, in order to compare the results from the aspect of ethnocentrism, which could pose questions about possible opportunities for export.

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ПОТРОШАЧКИ ЕТНОЦЕНТРИЗАМ МОДНИХ ПРОИЗВОДА

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Резиме

Предмет рада је анализа потрошачког етноцентризма с посебним освртом на модне производе. Циљ рада је да се испита: да ли су потрошачи модних производа у Србији етноцентрички оријентисани; шта мисле о односу цене и квалитета домаћих модних производа; да ли би одабрали домаћи или страни модни производ под условом да су им цене једнаке; колико су учестало наручивали модне производе преко домаћих и страних сајтова пре и током пандемије; као и колико су учестало куповали модне производе које промовишу домаћи и страни инфлуенсери пре и током пандемије COVID-19. Емпиријско истраживање је спроведено између марта и јуна 2021. године на територији Републике Србије. Специфичност истраживања се огледа у анализи потрошачког етноцентризма према генерацијским кохортама потрошача (генерацијска кохорта З, генерацијска кохорта Y, генерацијска кохорта X, Бејби бумери) и према висини месечних примања, уз разматрање учесталости наручивања модних производа преко домаћих и страних сајтова пре и током пандемије, као и утицаја домаћих и страних инфлуенсера на учесталост куповине поменутих производа у посматраним периодима. Резултати истраживања показују да генерацијска кохорта З у највећем

проценту сматра да цене домаћих модних производа одговарају квалитету, за разлику од генерацијских кохорти Y, X и Бејби бумера, чији припадници у већини сматрају да су цене високе у односу на квалитет. Током пандемије је куповина модних производа преко домаћих сајтова опала, док је порасла куповина преко страних сајтова. Када су у питању куповине подстакнуте инфлуенсерима, испитаници су се изјаснили да у највећој мери нису куповали под утицајем инфлуенсера (ни домаћих, ни страних) пре пандемије, а током пандемије је тај утицај још мањи. Генерално, потрошачи у Србији су етноцентрички оријентисани када су у питању модни производи. Они радије бирају домаћи модни производ у односу на страни у случају да су њихове цене једнаке. Најизраженији је потрошачки етноцентризам код категорије потрошача са високим примањима и код Бејби бумера.