

Characteristics of Cosmetics Brands by Country of Origin According to the Opinion of Polish Consumers

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Abstract

Purpose: This article concerns the attitudes of Polish consumers toward the country of origin of the brand. The aim is to describe the characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin according to the opinions of Polish consumers.

Methodology: The study covers several types of cosmetics: creams, shampoos, soaps, and lotions. The text analyzes twelve characteristics of brands and twelve countries of origin. The quantitative study bases on the Web Panel Interview method. The survey is representative of Polish adult internet users.

Findings: The study shows significant differences in the perception of the characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin. Companies may use the positive features associated with the country of origin of the brand in the process of creating value for customers.

Research limitations: The results are valid for all brands of cosmetics from the selected country but not for individual brands. The research analyzed twelve characteristics of brands and twelve countries of origin. Thus, future research should address other characteristics and countries of origin. The opinions of Polish consumers may differ from those of other countries.

Originality: The originality of this study consists in the analysis of many differences in the perception of the brands depending on the country of origin. This article shows that the selected country of origin may be associated with many different characteristics.

Keywords: brand, country of origin, marketing, consumer behavior, consumer attitudes

JEL: M31, M37

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Introduction

Many articles consider the influence of the country of origin on consumer behavior. Scholars define the influence of the image of a country on consumer opinion about products or brands that originate from this country as the effect of country of origin (Figiel, 2004, p. 127).

Studies often consider the product country of manufacturing. However, in recent years, many researchers scrutinize the brand country of origin. The country of origin can be understood as the country that hosts the headquarters of the company, which created the brand (Samiee, 2011). For example, if the company's main seat is in France, then France is the brand country of origin, regardless which country manufactured the product.

Noteworthy, consumers decreasingly perceive the country of origin as the product country of manufacturing and increasingly as the brand country of origin (Usunier, 2011). We should not explain the effect of country of origin by focusing on the product country of manufacturing. Rather, we should explain this effect by focusing on the associations with the brand that consumers have in their minds (Andèhn and L'Espoir Decosta, 2016).

The consumers favor the products of specific national origin. This behavior is called consumer ethnocentrism. Some authors describe consumer ethnocentrism in Poland (e.g. Ertmańska, 2011; Szromnik and Wolanin-Jarosz, 2013). However, the research described in this article concentrates on different questions.

This article considers the attitudes of Polish consumers toward brand country of origin. This research analyzes consumer associations with different brand countries of origin. The aim of this article is to describe the characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinions of Polish consumers.

Country of Origin and Consumer Behavior

There exist many factors that determine consumer behavior. The country of origin is one of the factors that can influence consumer purchasing behavior. We must analyze the factors that determine the relationships between the country of origin and consumer behavior. Moreover, we must scrutinize the use of the brand country of origin in the company marketing activities.

The country of origin makes consumers perceive some categories of products positively and other negatively. Moreover, the occurrence of the effect of country of origin can depend on the existence of a perceptual connection between the country and the product category (Andéhn, Nordin and Nilsson, 2016). A specific brand country of origin can have a different meaning for different consumers; for example, for consumers who live in countries with a different level of economic development (Eng, Ozdemir and Michelson, 2016).

The brand country of origin perceived by the consumers can be different from the true brand country of origin. Beyond this, some consumers may be unaware which country is the real country of origin of a specific brand (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos, 2011).

The image of the country of origin can influence consumer attitudes toward a brand. Purchasing intentions that refer to specific products depend, among others, on brand country of origin (Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos, 2013).

The effect of the country of origin can be used in marketing activities. Companies may influence consumers by using a positive image of the brand country of origin (Martín and Cerviño, 2011). However, if the image of the brand country of origin is negative, then the company should emphasize different factors in its marketing activities (Prendergast, Tsang and Khan, 2010). Consumer knowledge about the country of origin can be the key factor that leads to the avoidance of a brand (Khan and Lee, 2014).

Managers decide to publicize the brand country of origin. Moreover, they decide to use the associations with the brand country of origin in the creation of a brand's image. The associations connected with consumer experience are particularly important (D'Antone and Merunka, 2015).

Methodology

In 2016, the scientists of the Department of Market, Marketing, and Quality of SGH Warsaw School of Economics studied the attitudes of Polish consumers to brands from Poland and foreign countries. The author of this article was the head of this research.

The research concerned the brands of cosmetics for face, body, and hair care: creams, shampoos, soaps, and lotions. The quantitative research was based on the Web Panel Interview method. The internet panel (e-panel) belonged to the research institute ARC

Rynek i Opinia. The size of the sample was 1012 respondents. The research was representative of the Polish adult users of the internet.

In the part of the research described in this article, the respondents answered about the associations they have with cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin. We did not ask the respondents about specific brands but about all the cosmetics brands that originated from the selected countries. The research analyzed twelve characteristics of brands and twelve countries of origin. The aim was to describe the characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinions of Polish consumers.

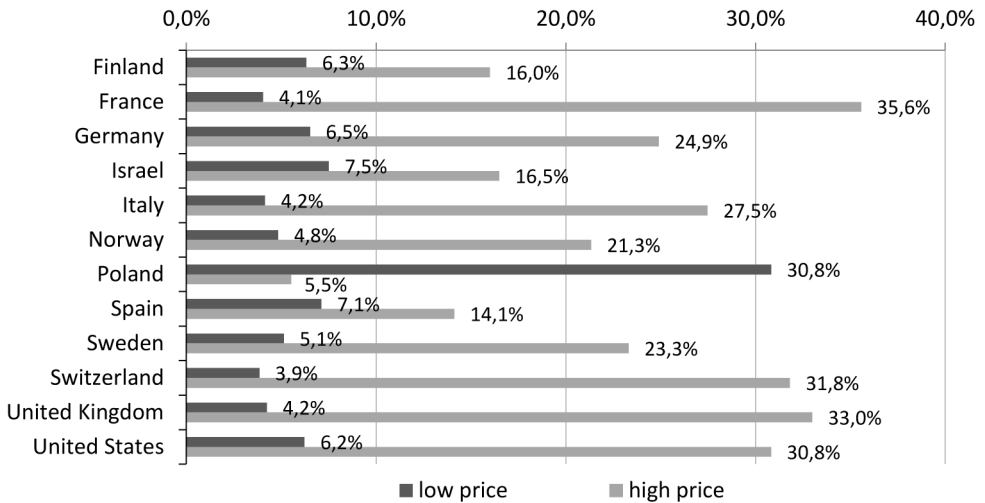
Findings

The results of the research appear in six figures and two tables. Figure 1 shows the low and the high price as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers. With the low price, the respondents first associated the cosmetics brands from Poland: 31% of respondents indicated this characteristic. With the high price, the respondents mainly associated the cosmetics brands from France (36%), then the United Kingdom (33%), Switzerland (32%), the United States (31%), Italy (27,5%), Germany (24,9%) Sweden (23,3%), and Norway (21,3%). The low and high quality of ingredients as characteristics of cosmetics appear in Figure 2. With the low quality of ingredients, respondents first associated the cosmetics brands originating from Israel (13,3%), United States (11,9%), and Spain (11,5%). Whereas, with the high quality of ingredients, the respondents mainly associated the cosmetics brands originating from Germany (24,5%) and Switzerland (21,2%).

The safety of using and naturalness as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers appear in Figure 3. With the safety of using, the respondents first associated the cosmetics brands originating from Poland (39,2%), Norway (18,6%), Sweden (17,0%), and Finland (15,1%). With naturalness, the respondents mainly associated the cosmetics brands originating from Poland (43,3%), Finland (32,8%), Norway (28,9%), and Sweden (24,0).

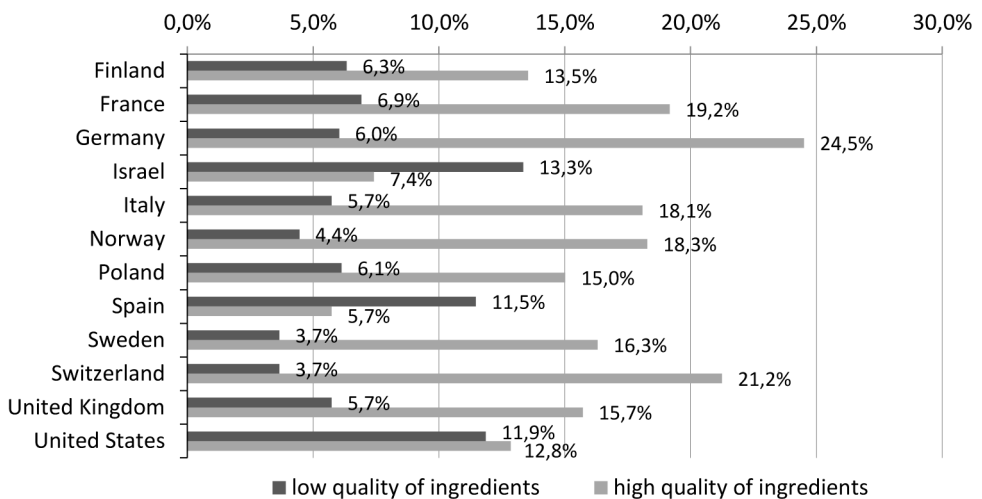
Prestige and mediocrity as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers appear in Figure 4. With prestige, the respondents first associated the cosmetics brands originating from France (35,0%). With mediocrity, the respondents mainly associated the cosmetics brands originating from Spain (28,1%) and Israel (27,7%).

Figure 1. Low price and high price as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers



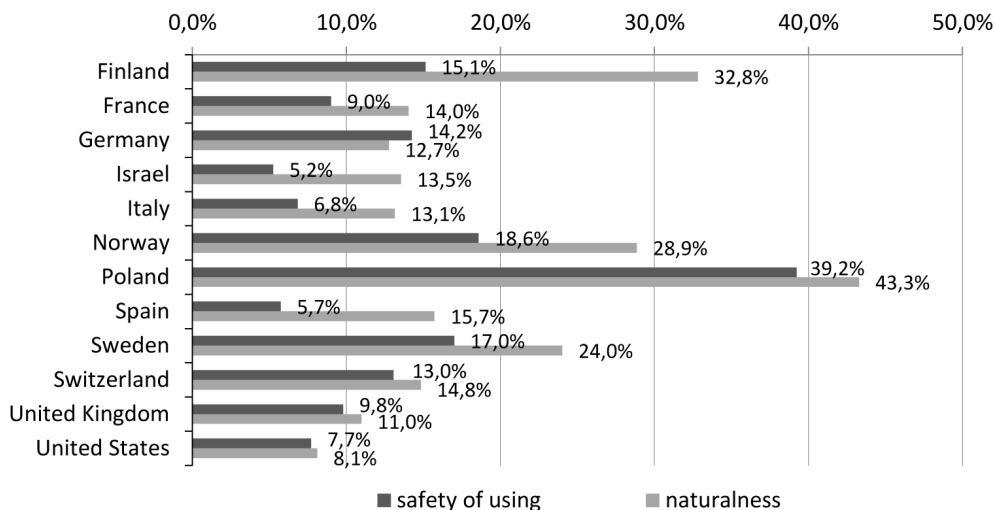
Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

Figure 2. Low quality of ingredients and high quality of ingredients as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers



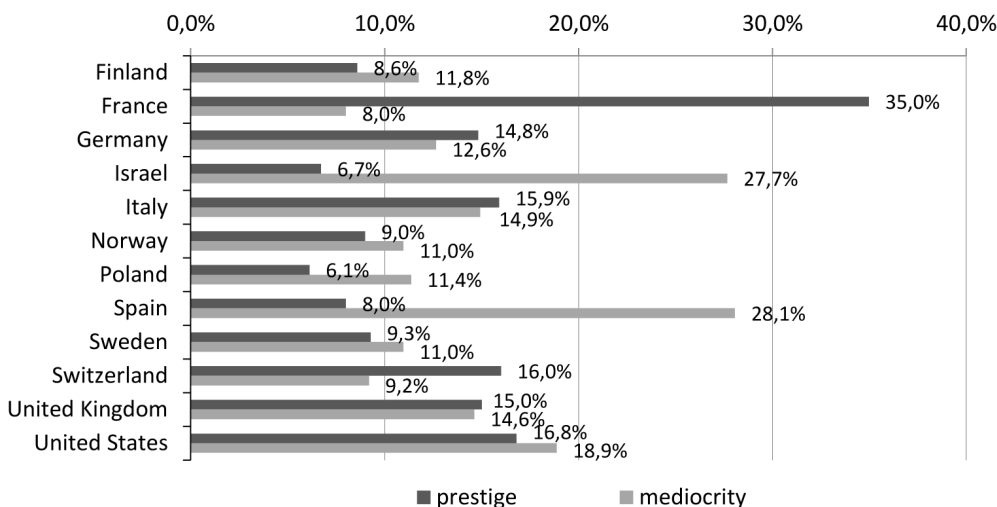
Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

Figure 3. Safety of using and naturalness as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers



Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

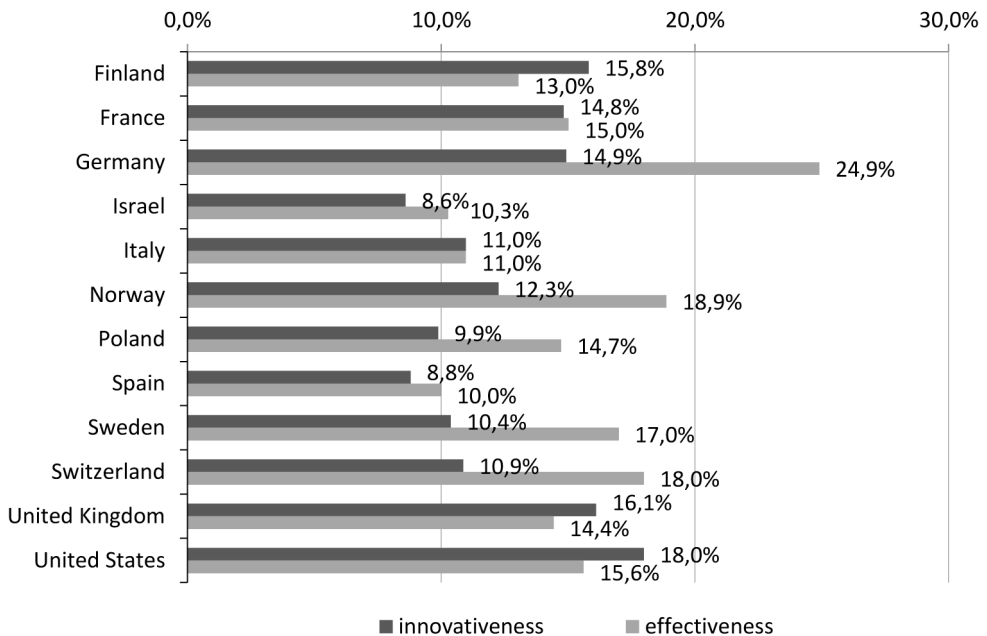
Figure 4. Prestige and mediocrity as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers



Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

Innovativeness and effectiveness as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers appear in Figure 5. With innovativeness, the respondents first associated the cosmetics brands originating from United States (18,0%), United Kingdom (16,1%), Finland (15,8%), Germany (14,9%), and France (14,8%). With effectiveness, the respondents mainly associated the cosmetics brands originating from Germany (24,9%).

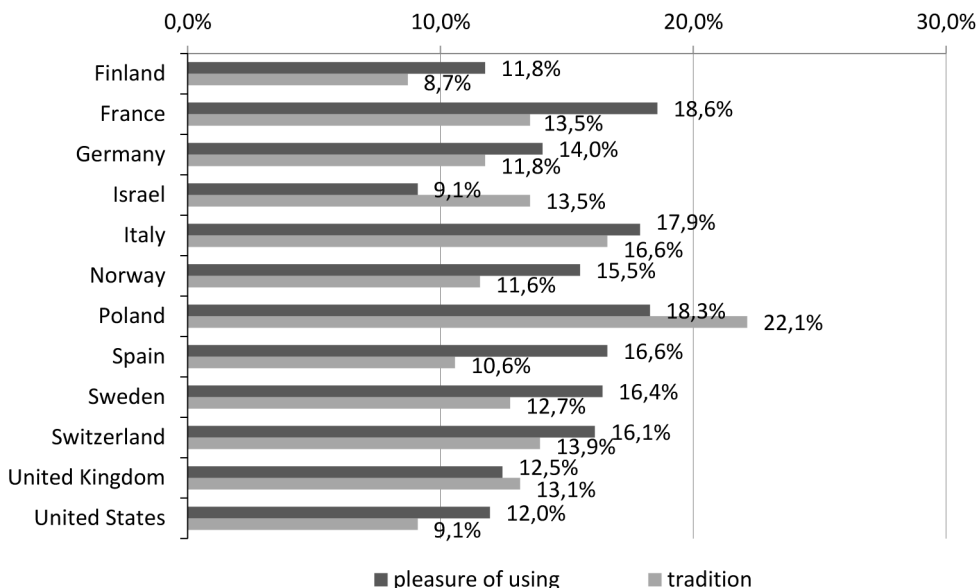
Figure 5. Innovativeness and effectiveness as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers



Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

The pleasure of using and tradition as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers appear in Figure 6. With the pleasure of using, the respondents first associated the cosmetics brands originating from France (18,6%), Poland (18,3%), and Italy (17,9%). With tradition, the respondents mainly associated the cosmetics brands originating from Poland (22,1%).

Figure 6. The pleasure of using and tradition as characteristics of cosmetics brands depending on the country of origin in the opinion of Polish consumers



Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

The characteristics of cosmetics brands from Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Israel and Italy according to Polish consumers appear in Table 1.

Table 1. The characteristics of cosmetics brands from Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Israel and Italy according to Polish consumers

| Characteristic of cosmetics brands | Brand country of origin | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---------|----------------|--------|-------|
| | Finland | France | Germany | United Kingdom | Israel | Italy |
| low price | 6,3% | 4,1% | 6,5% | 4,2% | 7,5% | 4,2% |
| high price | 16,0% | 35,6% | 24,9% | 33,0% | 16,5% | 27,5% |
| low quality of ingredients | 6,3% | 6,9% | 6,0% | 5,7% | 13,3% | 5,7% |
| high quality of ingredients | 13,5% | 19,2% | 24,5% | 15,7% | 7,4% | 18,1% |
| safety of using | 15,1% | 9,0% | 14,2% | 9,8% | 5,2% | 6,8% |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| naturalness | 32,8% | 14,0% | 12,7% | 11,0% | 13,5% | 13,1% |
| prestige | 8,6% | 35,0% | 14,8% | 15,0% | 6,7% | 15,9% |
| mediocrity | 11,8% | 8,0% | 12,6% | 14,6% | 27,7% | 14,9% |
| innovativeness | 15,8% | 14,8% | 14,9% | 16,1% | 8,6% | 11,0% |
| effectiveness | 13,0% | 15,0% | 24,9% | 14,4% | 10,3% | 11,0% |
| pleasure of using | 11,8% | 18,6% | 14,0% | 12,5% | 9,1% | 17,9% |
| tradition | 8,7% | 13,5% | 11,8% | 13,1% | 13,5% | 16,6% |

Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

The respondents most often associated Finnish cosmetics brands with naturalness, whereas least often with low price, low quality of ingredients, prestige, and tradition. The respondents most often associated French cosmetics brands with high price and prestige, while least often with low price, low quality of ingredients, mediocrity, and safety of using. Moreover, they most often associated German cosmetics brands with effectiveness, high price, and high quality of ingredients, and least often with low quality of ingredients and low price. The respondents most often associated British cosmetics brands with a high price, but least often with low price, low quality of ingredients, and safety of using. Furthermore, they most often associated Israeli cosmetics brands with mediocrity, while least often with the safety of using, prestige, high quality of ingredients, low price, innovativeness and the pleasure of using. Finally, the respondents most often associated Italian cosmetics brands with a high price, but least often with low price, low quality of ingredients, and safety of using.

The characteristics of cosmetics brands from Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA in the opinion of Polish consumers appear in Table 2.

The respondents most often associated Norwegian cosmetics brands with naturalness and high price, while least often with low quality of ingredients, low price, and prestige. They most often associated Polish cosmetics with naturalness, the safety of using, low price, and tradition, while least often with a high price, low quality of ingredients, prestige, and effectiveness. Moreover, they most often associated Spanish cosmetics with mediocrity, while least often with a high quality of ingredients, the safety of using, low price, prestige, innovativeness, and effectiveness. The respondents most often associated Swedish cosmetics brands with naturalness and high price, while least often with low quality of ingredients, low price, and prestige. Furthermore, they most often associated

Swiss cosmetics brands with a high price and high quality of ingredients, while least often with low quality of ingredients, low price, and mediocrity. Finally, the respondents most often associated American cosmetics brands with a high price, while least often with a low price, the safety of using, naturalness, and tradition.

Table 2. Characteristics of cosmetics brands from Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United States in the opinion of Polish consumers

| Characteristic of cosmetics brands | Brand country of origin | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| | Norway | Poland | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | The United States of America |
| low price | 4,8% | 30,8% | 7,1% | 5,1% | 3,9% | 6,2% |
| high price | 21,3% | 5,5% | 14,1% | 23,3% | 31,8% | 30,8% |
| low quality of ingredients | 4,4% | 6,1% | 11,5% | 3,7% | 3,7% | 11,9% |
| high quality of ingredients | 18,3% | 15,0% | 5,7% | 16,3% | 21,2% | 12,8% |
| safety of using | 18,6% | 39,2% | 5,7% | 17,0% | 13,0% | 7,7% |
| naturalness | 28,9% | 43,3% | 15,7% | 24,0% | 14,8% | 8,1% |
| prestige | 9,0% | 6,1% | 8,0% | 9,3% | 16,0% | 16,8% |
| mediocrity | 11,0% | 11,4% | 28,1% | 11,0% | 9,2% | 18,9% |
| innovativeness | 12,3% | 9,9% | 8,8% | 10,4% | 10,9% | 18,0% |
| effectiveness | 18,9% | 14,7% | 10,0% | 17,0% | 18,0% | 15,6% |
| pleasure of using | 15,5% | 18,3% | 16,6% | 16,4% | 16,1% | 12,0% |
| tradition | 11,6% | 22,1% | 10,6% | 12,7% | 13,9% | 9,1% |

Source: own elaboration of quantitative research by ARC Rynek i Opinia ordered by the Department of Market, Marketing and Quality of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, July 2016, e-panel, N=1012.

Conclusions

The research covered the brands of cosmetics for face, body, and hair care: creams, shampoos, soaps, and lotions. The research allowed to describe Polish consumer associations with the brands originating from selected countries. The results show that Polish

consumers perceive Polish cosmetics brands differently than brands originating from other countries. In the opinion of Polish consumers, Polish cosmetics brands associate with the naturalness, safety of using, low price, and the tradition.

In the majority of cases, less than 20% of Polish respondents associate cosmetics brands originating from selected countries with the selected characteristics. Only in several cases, more than 30% customers associated the analyzed characteristics with cosmetics brands originating from selected countries. These are the following characteristics:

- naturalness (respondents associated with this characteristic first of all brands originating from Poland and Finland),
- safety of using (respondents associated with this characteristic first of all brands originating from Poland),
- prestige (respondents associated with this characteristic first of all brands originating from France),
- high price (respondents associated with this characteristic first of all brands originating from France, United Kingdom, Switzerland and the USA),
- low price (respondents associated with this characteristic first of all brands originating from Poland).

The results of the research may help managers in the creation of the brand image. The company can use the positive characteristics of the brand country of origin in the process of value creation for customers. Managers may use consumer opinion about the cosmetics brands. They can use associations with the brand country of origin. Managers may strengthen positive associations with the brand country of origin. They may also enfeeble negative associations with the brand country of origin.

Companies do not have to publicize the information about the brand country of origin. If there is no compatibility between the expectations of the target market and the characteristics of the brand country of origin, then this information is disadvantageous to the enterprise. It is worth mentioning that the consumers often wrongly perceive the brand country of origin.

The findings refer to all the cosmetics brands which originate from selected countries, but the findings do not refer to specific brands. The research focused on the analysis of twelve characteristics of brands and twelve countries of origin. Further research should concentrate on other characteristics and countries of origin. Polish consumer opinion may differ from the opinion of inhabitants of other countries. Further quali-

tative research should concentrate on the analysis of the reasons of positive and negative consumer opinions about the specific brand country of origin.

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