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NON-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF THE BEHAVIOR OF THE KALININGRAD OBLAST RESIDENTS ON THE POLISH BORDER MARKET

ABSTRACT: Dynamic changes in international relations as well as political, economic and social conditions make it necessary to study the behavior of inhabitants of border regions. The article aims to present non-economic determinants of the behavior of the inhabitants of the Kaliningrad Oblast on the Polish border market. The article describes the specificity of the market behavior of Russians, the causes and effects of changes in these behaviors. Selected political and economic, socio-cultural and psychological factors as well as situational factors such as local border traffic are described. The analysis of bibliographic materials was used to achieve the goal. The behavior of Russians is influenced by the decisions of the authorities and the social, emotional and existential values created in it, but geopolitical factors seem to take precedence over socio-cultural and psychological factors.

KEYWORDS: Kaliningrad Oblast, Polish-Russian border market, market behavior, embargo, local border traffic

Introduction

The problem of the behavior of border region residents on border markets is becoming increasingly important in the dynamically changing international relations and new political, economic, and social conditions. Market behavior in the Polish-Russian border area evolves along with economic, social, and cultural changes. Therefore, it should be analyzed in a specific spatial and temporal dimension. The analysis of the specificity of the market behavior of border regions' inhabitants stems from the necessity for considering new needs and possibilities of satisfying them. These new needs are related to processes, mainly: globalization, internationalization, and European integration.

This article aims to present the factors determining market behavior in the border markets on the example of the Kaliningrad Oblast (KO) residents on the Polish border market. It indicates the specificity of the market behavior of Russians and the reasons leading to the changes. The analysis entails political and economic,

social, cultural, and psychological variables, as well as situational factors, including principally the functioning of the local border traffic (LBT). The goal of the study was achieved through the analysis of bibliographic sources.

The dynamics of changes resulting from globalization, European integration, and internationalization of life hampers an exact prediction of phenomena that may occur soon in the European arena. Therefore, it is worth considering the discussed problem, which, in the author's intention, means the need to analyze the behaviors on border markets, considering their interrelated determinants. Geopolitical, geoeconomics, and geocultural changes are a perfect pretext for such a reflection.

Market behavior results from the interaction of many processes, trends, and patterns, characterized by high volatility and coexistence. All these phenomena are a consequence of political, economic, social, legal, cultural, demographic, and technological transformations. Many factors influence market behavior, and they are classified differently. They include exogenous and endogenous conditions – external factors, as well as individual consumer characteristics.

1. Political and economic factors

Geopolitical transformations in Europe, seemingly different in economic, social, and political terms, are closely intertwined. Among the processes involved, the focus is primarily on: 1) elimination of borders between the European Union (EU) Member States, due to which the external borders take over the functions of the external border from third countries; 2) efforts to establish political, economic, cultural, and social contacts with non-EU countries.

These processes directly concern cross-border regions, including especially regions located at the external EU border. Borders have largely lost their former role as regions' separators, but significant economic and social differences are still observed between the neighboring regions. These differences are most noticeable at the external EU borders with the Eastern European countries.

When analyzing the behavior in border markets, particular attention should be paid to the influence of exogenous factors related to the opening borders, which result in the free movement of technology, capital, goods, and labor; and the development of information technologies enabling broad access to information. The functioning of the border markets in the Polish-Russian borderland depends primarily on:

- consequences resulting from Poland's membership in the EU,
- Poland's cooperation with international organizations and adopted legislation,
- economic sanctions imposed by the EU and Russian countersanctions,
- the unpredictability of the Russian economy and political management system.

The behavior of the KO residents is shaped by the conditions in which their national economy functions. In the Soviet society, which remained under the rule of the

communist regime for a longer period than the other European countries, the centrally planned economy system was stronger. Access to Western goods was practically impossible. Consumer nationalism was an essential factor driving the Soviet economy.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian consumers were delighted with everything that came from abroad. The economic stabilization of the country, in turn, contributed to the intensification of ethnocentrism among Russians. The ethnocentrically-oriented Russian consumers make their purchase decisions based on moral considerations. Consumers associate buying local products with the situation in the country or region, which may strengthen their ethnocentric attitude in consumer behavior and make them base their choices on duties and moral obligation rather than on rationality or emotions (Zalega 2017). With the change in the global political situation, the development of the Russian economy, and the public's fear of the threat posed by the inflow of products imported mainly from the EU, the Russia's ethnocentric orientation can be expected to reinforce.

The process of expanding European structures to the east has resulted in a significant economic and social revival in the areas bordering the KO. After Poland and Lithuania had joined the EU, the KO is affected by the effects of EU policy more than any other Russian region. The process of European integration has significantly changed the behavior of the region's inhabitants, who gained access to and began to dynamically penetrate European markets.

European integration, globalization and internationalization are processes that shape the behavior of consumers in the markets in a particular way. Globalization of the economy and the modeling of the behavior of the residents of other countries are conducive to the unification of consumer behavior. The globalization of consumption is a process of consumption patterns becoming similar and merging on a transnational scale (Senda 2000). The effect of globalization of consumption is the adoption of consumption patterns from the inhabitants of neighboring countries, which is especially visible in border markets. On the one hand, this process is triggered by the growing mobility of consumers, who adopt new consumption patterns based on experiences from other cultures. On the other hand, it is an outcome of actions of global enterprises, which, by directing a unified offer to different cultural groups, influence their experiences and preferences (Crittenden 2010; Hennart 2012). In the case of Russia, a great variety of consumers is indicated in terms of culture, mentality, values and financial possibilities (Chernova et al. 2017).

Russia is a large and absorbent market. Although the statistics of recent years show a decline in the purchasing power of Russians due to the sharp drop in the purchasing power of the ruble. The lower the value of the ruble in relation to the dollar or euro, the lower the profitability of shopping in Poland. Small border traffic on the external border of the EU was a chance to access and purchase of goods and services. The massive presence of Russian consumers had a significant

impact on retail trade in Polish cities and towns located in the LBT (Batyk 2020b). Cross-border purchases are treated by the communities of peripheral self-government units, which are located at the border as a stimulator of socio-economic development (Powęska 2020). The suspension of the LBT did not stop the Russians from coming to Poland, but it did have some quantitative restrictions (Bobyryk 2020).

The promotion of global consumption has a huge impact on consumer behavior (Schiffman, Kanuk 2004). The progressive unification of consumption is related to imitation in production and consumption (Zalega 2012). One of the effects of the globalization of markets is the globalization of consumption. The functioning of economic systems in a globalized world largely depends on the indicators of consumer optimism and the tendency to buy new products. This is especially important in the context of the current world situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Starostin et al. 2020).

Polish-Russian economic relations depend primarily on political factors and decisions, e.g., the Russian embargo on importing agri-food products from EU countries introduced in 2014. The embargo resulted in the exclusion of Polish products from the Russian market, especially from the border market. Prices of cheese, vegetables, fruit, fish, and meat increased significantly in KO. The embargo changed the market behavior of the KO residents on the Polish border market. The Russians' interest in coming to Poland to buy Polish products, mainly food, has increased.

Due to the complex international situation and Polish-Russian relations, political problems determine economic, technological, and socio-cultural conditions (Waldziński 2011). Unfortunately, Poland's relations with the KO are most often perceived through the prism of current problems and not through long-term activities (Żukowski 2002).

The market behavior of border region residents is an extremely complex phenomenon and, to a large extent, depends on the global political and economic situation. In analyzing these phenomena, great attention should be paid to situational factors that may activate, deactivate, or completely change the market behavior. These factors are most often unexpected and sometimes difficult to predict. The increase in the spatial mobility of the residents of the Polish-Russian border regions, resulting mainly from the opening of local border traffic, turned out to be extremely important in this respect.

The development of the free market economy, the facilities, and the functioning of the LBT between Poland and the Russian Federation has resulted in a change in the accessibility by the Russians to goods and services on the Polish market. The Russians usually bought agricultural and food products in Poland, especially meat and its products, dairy products, as well as shoes and clothing (Batyk 2019). They bought those goods for their own needs or to resell them for profit. Even though part of the turnover was reached in the shadow economy, it positively affected the region's economy. A new category of market participants has also

appeared – these were less affluent people for whom obtaining a visa was too much of a burden on the budget (Bobryk 2020). An increase in cross-border activity contributes to greater European unity. In the context of rising Euroscepticism, it seems necessary to look more critically at the actual situation, especially at the external borders of the EU. This will help discover its specific consequences for people living in border regions (Batyk 2020a).

Unfortunately, geopolitical conditions and complicated Polish-Russian relations have led to a crisis in mutual relations and LBT. The crisis was and still is severe for all areas of cross-border cooperation, sectors of the economy, and especially for the residents of border regions. The LBT suspension has triggered changes in the rules of crossing the Polish-Russian border. The obligation to have a Schengen visa has become a factor limiting the cross-border mobility of many border region inhabitants. This mainly applies to people living in rural areas, whose financial situation is significantly different from that of Kaliningrad residents. Payment for a visa, and a complicated and lengthy visa application procedure constitute significant obstacles and are often an insurmountable barrier to them (Powęska 2016).

After the suspension of the LBT, there was a sharp decline in the Polish-Russian border crossing activity, which led to direct economic losses. These losses were estimated at EUR 20 million in the case of Poland's border regions and EUR 50 million in the KO (Korneevets et al. 2017). However, those losses take no account of the multiplier effect, which significantly affects other economic indicators and the living standards of border region residents (Sokół 2017). The shape of the new situation following the LBT suspension indicates that the changes in border crossing conditions did not hinder the processes of convergence of consumption and cultural pluralism.

The history of mutual Polish-Russian relations influences the transfer of emotions to all spheres of political, economic, and social life. In the opinion of Sobczak (2010), "As a nation, ... we should treat Russia as every neighbour and partner with whom it is worth and worth developing the most comprehensive economic, political and cultural relations". Unfortunately, the experiences of recent months related to the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border show that Russia has a large share in it. Therefore, Russia cannot be considered a partner in neighbourly relations, and the unpredictability of Russia's actions does not create a platform for cooperation.

2. Socio-cultural factors

The contemporary market is characterized by cultural pluralism, which is manifested in the fact that the inhabitants of regions or countries function in many cultures. The confrontation and diffusion of cultures are due to integration processes, globalization, internationalization, information technology development, and

international communication. Cultural and psychological variables are critical factors determining behavior in border markets. In behavioral research, it cannot be assumed that these behaviors are culturally specific or completely universal.

The influence of culture on market behavior is visible primarily through consumer preferences, shopping habits and preferences regarding advertising and promotion. Traditions, customs, cultural preferences, and the system of values have a significant impact on behavior. The relationships of consumption patterns with culture involve the interplay of social and cultural patterns in each society concerning consumption. The analysis of Russians' behavior on border markets needs to take account of the influence of cultural systems and patterns to which their system of values is subordinated. Intercultural differentiation is important, as is the relationship between individual elements of cultural systems and the behavior of individual people or social groups. Culturally related behaviors are typical of a geographic and cultural area. The phenomenon of convergence is increasingly influencing the contemporary market. Unification of market systems between countries makes patterns of consumption behavior similar. Mass culture is being promoted, and patterns of Western culture are transferred.

The Russian identity and its consequences are unique and often difficult to understand for the Western civilization. The Russian identity has been shaped over many years of the country's functioning in specific political systems and historical conditions. Features (what features?) diametrically different from those that functioned in the Western civilization took root. While the residents of Western European countries can express their approval or disapproval of state policy, the Soviet society was deprived of such an opportunity. Imposed norms and behaviors sanctioned the life of the inhabitants of the former Soviet Union. All efforts made by the Russians to achieve financial success, enrich, and improve the quality of life were publicly stigmatized and officially exterminated. Living in more luxurious than average conditions was considered a bourgeois whim and luxury. Only the ruling Soviet elite could obtain consent and access to luxury goods, such as cars, houses, or going on vacation. The products offered to the average resident of Russia were mainly intended to meet basic needs. M. Yanowitch (1985) claims that it was only after 1960 that the incomes of the Russian residents were above the minimum subsistence level.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic system changed, the free market was created, and new income opportunities appeared. This collapse caused dramatic social changes, changes in the way of life of Russian citizens. The KO is a region of unusual contrasts, noticeable in its population's diversity (including numerous nationalities and ethnic groups) and disproportions in the living standards and financial resources. In the exclave, next to millionaires, there are very poor people who have not found themselves in the new conditions of the market economy. According to A. Hlebowicz (2012), KO residents draw much inspiration from the

West – from Poland, Lithuania, Germany, and at the same time, they do not cease to be Russians, usually Orthodox, who love their nation, history, and homeland. In a modern Russian society, the most expressive social phenomenon is the gigantic increase in the wealth of certain social groups. According to C. Belton (2002), a higher level of stratification of the Russian society can be observed in the middle and upper classes. This social stratification leads to consumerism and interest in luxury goods. The need to present one's social position and wealth is expressed by purchasing luxury goods, taking advantage of extreme experiences, or traveling abroad, allowing for unique experiences. There are "positive relationships between identity, status consumption, perceived quality, symbolic consumption and uniqueness, and identity was discovered to have a significant bearing on consumption of luxury goods in Russia" (Kaufmann, et al. 2013).

There is an increase in consumption in the KO, the availability of foreign goods is improving, the range of goods and consumer spending are increasing. Consumption has become the new target of economic activity. In recent years, the largest changes in the consumption structure have been recorded in the luxury goods and services sector, i.e., luxury cars, boats and helicopters, gold and expensive jewelry, branded clothing and footwear, exclusive home furnishings, membership in elite clubs, leisure in luxury facilities and exotic overseas trips. The importance of values related to self-expansion and individual development is growing. Self-expansion in consumption is associated with a lifestyle focused on pleasure (Kieźel 2015). However, this applies to the small percentage of KO residents who earn the highest income. They love splendors and luxury and present their wealth through the consumption of luxury goods and services. Luxury goods and services are also a tool for increasing prestige in society. A psychological habit of consumption develops, which makes people dependent on the constant purchase of more and more expensive goods. A new class of wealthy Russians has arisen, flaunting their wealth and seeking social acceptance. Research conducted by H.R. Kauffmann et al. (2012) shows a strong relationship between the purchase of luxury goods and the need for uniqueness. The use of luxury goods enhances social status, but the Ipsos Global Trends (2017) report shows that Russians are among the least satisfied with the standard of living and with what they have achieved in life.

The following factors also significantly influence KO residents' behavior: multinationality, impoverishment of the society, and changing family model and lifestyle. These factors may underlie the identity dilemma of this region's inhabitants, i.e., the problem of self-determination and defining one's place in the world. The KO residents are trying to maintain a relative balance between Western and Eastern culture. The dual nature can be seen in the fact that, they see the need for Western-style modernization, while maintaining Russian uniqueness, which is often at odds with European ideas. This Russian specificity is related to the need to stand out (Włodkowska-Bagan 2014). Consumers are focused on achieving pleasure and

interested in using market novelties. Their behavior indicates excessive consumption, unjustified by real needs and ignoring social and environmental costs (Bylok 2012). The behavior of KO residents explicitly shows excessive consumerism, an increase in demand for luxury goods, and the need to indicate their prestige, wealth, and social position manifested by the state of possession.

The direct cause of the evolution of the attitudes and behavior of KO residents is the new family model and the change in lifestyle, which were mainly due to the activation of women and people excluded from the labor market. Equality contributes to an increase in the competitiveness of the economy and better economic results, increases the level of social awareness, and contributes to breaking stereotypes (Sawicka | Stolarczyk 2018).

Purchasing preferences and behavior of KO residents are also influenced by the increase in the number of one-person households following a purchasing model different from that of multi-person households. The buyer model has changed dramatically along with the increase in commitment to work and the pursuit of rapid career development. New time-saving solutions, e.g., shopping online, have become popular. The research conducted among KO residents on the Polish border market shows that the Internet was the most popular medium for sharing information (57.6% of the respondents). According to a report presented in 2017 by the Santander Trade (Russia: Reaching the consumer 2017), the Russians imitate the Western lifestyle and appreciate sophisticated taste, while advertising on TV, the Internet, and in social media are among the most effective methods of attracting these consumers. The Internet has transformed how purchasing decisions are made, it is the only medium that can reach most consumers in all markets, and the Russians are exceptionally skilled at using technology. The data presented in the Google Think Insights report (2013) shows that 92% of Russians use the Internet to acquire information.

The development of IT technologies and online sales has triggered a change in KO residents' behavior. Showrooming has developed – a trend in which the buyer visits a brick-and-mortar store to get acquainted with a selected product but purchases it online (Mehra et al. 2013). Moreover, the behavior of KO residents reveals that, having easier access to the Polish market, they can familiarize themselves with the offer of this market and, consequently, purchase goods online. However, not all consumers exhibit this type of behavior. Many KO residents (especially the elderly) prefer a different behavior, called webrooming. Fearing the purchase of an unknown product, they find the product online and then come to Poland to purchase it in a stationary store. In the Polish-Russian borderland, this phenomenon has intensively developed during the LBT.

With increasing competitiveness on the market and the development of new technologies, companies try to achieve a competitive advantage through actions aimed at anticipating the expected changes (Ozimek et al. 2018). The Russian

consumer is more and more skeptical and demanding, expecting a large variety of product and service offers, continuous improvement of their quality, and greater involvement on the part of enterprises (Drabik 2011). Polish entrepreneurs have very quickly adapted to changing the profile of their activities to meet the expectations of KO residents. Multiple service enterprises were established, including shopping, hotel, catering, SPA and wellness, hairdressing, and car services, where the main clients were the Russians.

The purchasing and consumption habits of KO residents are changing due to socio-cultural processes that concern both greater availability of goods of foreign origin, displacing traditional products and domestic brands, as well as the acceptance of foreign goods. Under the influence of many factors, e.g., economic (lower prices of foreign goods compared to domestic ones) or marketing (advertising and branding), the Russian consumer changes his preferences and transforms into a global consumer, with the liking and satisfaction of buying foreign products.

The economic transformation, the processes of European integration, and regional cooperation have enabled KO residents to access the EU market. At the same time, they were exposed to the increasing influence and pressure of the external market, which resulted in consumption detraditionalization. This process manifests itself in reducing the role of local and native traditions and customs. Cross-border contacts are conducive to the similarity of consumption patterns and consumer behavior resulting from the aspirations of the region's inhabitants to European standards.

Socio-cultural factors – such as political, economic, or legal ones – are critical drivers of KO residents' behavior on the Polish border market, shaping the previously unknown behavior.

3. Psychological factors

The changing political and economic conditions imply psychological factors that are very important in analyzing KO residents' behavior on the Polish-Russian border market. The specificity of the behavior on border markets depends mainly on the dissimilarity of the societies. It is especially evident in the behavior of the Russian residents, which is shaped by changes in lifestyle and worldview, fashion, and the need to create one's own image. Also, other features, like stereotypes and prejudice, cannot be underestimated because they may lead to serious misunderstandings in business and social relations (Dąbrowska | Fandrejewska 2020).

The political, economic, and social conditions that have changed in recent years have significantly modified KO residents' behavior, norms, and values. The American style of behavior created by the media is strongly rooted in the socio-cultural life of the region's inhabitants. According to M. Bybluk (2011), the functioning and

symbolic meaning of money have changed. Money has become a real value; it has acquired the power it did not have before. Compared to consumers in other countries, Russian consumers are the best example of ostentatious consumption. There are several reasons for this behavior. In a developing market economy and the lack of a central distribution board, they began to appreciate the new opportunities of the free market. There was a huge increase in retail sales, which, was a sign of the improving living standards of the Russian society (Karpova 2007).

Prejudice is a significant threat affecting the behavior of Russian consumers in the Polish market. It may be directly related to the Russian attitude towards Poles, the transmission of information about Poland, and the strength of existing nationalisms. Prejudice influences the perceptions of Poland and Poles, which is often affected by information provided by the media expressing both favorable and unfavorable emotional attitudes towards Poles.

Also, stereotypes related to the perception of Poland are a factor influencing KO residents' behavior on the Polish border market. Contrary to prejudices, they do not have to be emotional. They can be shaped by individual experiences, observations, and conclusions; they can have a positive, neutral, or negative meaning. On the one hand, stereotypes may concern the perception of Poland and its residents by the Russians; on the other hand, they may concern the perception of the Russian nation by the international community. They are used in most country-based communication strategies.

Changes in international relations and the development of information and communication technologies create the need to look at consumer behavior, with particular emphasis on mental models that include socio-cultural and psychological factors. Stereotypes about a given country mean that people can have both positive and negative opinions about a given object. Changing behavior is strongly conditioned by psychosocial features (Mahon et al. 2006). Behavior is determined by, among others: who is the consumer, what are their views, what are their values and what social group they belong to (Aronson et al. 2016). It is particularly important for border region residents to what extent they are sensitive to the influence of external factors and media messages.

The stereotypes shaped by the Russian media depreciate Polish goods and services. Research conducted by Batyk (2019) shows that despite the negative media coverage, KO residents appreciate the high quality of Polish goods and services (especially Polish food) and are interested in buying them due to the attractive price. It should be remembered, however, that stereotypes tend to be modified, especially those related to the changing political, economic, and social conditions in the Polish-Russian borderland.

Internalization of stereotypes in Russia related to the need to reflect one's prestige and wealth influences KO residents' behavior on the Polish border market. Attempts to impress others by possessing foreign goods stem from the social

differentiation that has been shaped in Russia over the years. This conduct may result from personal experiences, observations, or sensations of the impact of consumer behavior on the impressions of these behaviors. Such a relationship is strong in the Russian society, although it is not always reflected in the behavior of certain buyers, since not every person represents the same behavior. The choices and experiences related to the purchase and use of goods determine consumer taste, lifestyle, and values. In postmodern categories, luxury goods become producers of benefits for the consumer and, as I. Hassan (1980) argues, it cannot be unequivocally judged whether the subject dominates the object or vice versa. Russian consumers very often represented the trend of hedonism, fully accepting consumerism and enjoying the purchase and possession of luxury goods. Buyers of these types of goods could be divided into two groups. The first group included consumers who appreciated the quality, uniqueness, and value of goods. The second group consisted of people for whom the most important thing was to impress and arouse interest in them, and the consumption of luxury goods itself was symbolic. Observation of the behavior of Russians on the Polish border market shows that many of them are characterized by ostentatious consumption, and real connoisseurs constitute a smaller group. Their behavior exhibits the features of consumer snobbery.

One should also mention the self-perception of the Russian people who consider themselves a unique nation compared to other nations, as well as the state of which they are citizens. The Russians do not consider themselves guilty of the deterioration of Russia's economic situation as well as their own, which creates fertile ground for developing nationalist behavior and perceiving the outside world as a threat. The market behavior of the Russians is characterized by imperial attitudes, which are an antidote to weakness. These attitudes are also manifested in KO residents' behavior, who impose their requirements and expect the fulfilment of demands, which are often inconsistent with European standards.

Summary

Systematization of the market behavior of KO residents is extremely complex and difficult due to the strong influence of geopolitical, geoeconomic, and geocultural processes. The processes of globalization, integration, and the internationalization of life have led to the re-evaluation of activities, behavior, goals, aspirations, and values of KO residents. The behavior of Russians is significantly influenced by the decisions of the state authorities, the geographical location of the region, and the social, emotional and existential values developed in the Russian society. KO residents' behavior on the Polish border market is largely dependent on the legal provisions regulating the carriage of goods across the border, exchange rates of currencies and the mobility of inhabitants of border regions, which resulted from

the local border traffic. The uncertainty of the development of the geopolitical situation was reflected not only in political and economic relations at the state level, but also in KO residents' behavior on the Polish border market.

At the time of the migration crisis and the dynamically changing political and economic situation in the world, and at the same time the high activity of the Russian Federation in the international arena, the identification of market behavior of the inhabitants of border regions and the analysis of changes in the Polish-Russian borderland are becoming more and more important. These changes concern many issues, especially the functioning of the border.

Knowledge about consumer competencies, attitudes, and behaviors is fundamental in the ongoing globalization processes, which revealed the increasing importance of situational, cultural, and psychological factors. Changes in value systems and lifestyles have influenced the development of consumerism and ostentatious consumption, which is evident in KO residents. A significant change in their behavior entails disseminating new behavioral patterns, consisting in resembling the behavior of the inhabitants of neighboring countries.

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