

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OF INHABITANTS OF KALININGRAD DISTRICT IN THE POLISH-RUSSIAN LOCAL BORDER TRAFFIC ZONE

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ABSTRACT

Local Border Traffic (LBT) established on the Polish and Russian border in 2012 created new market opportunities for Russian consumers from the Kaliningrad District, which led to a question of how the changing political, economic and social conditions impacted consumer behavior of Russians in the border market of LBT. The study aimed to answer this question based on a survey of 1,022 respondents from Kaliningrad District, carried out in 2012–2016. Findings show that Russian consumers benefitted from cross-border shopping and trade and contributed to local development on both sides of the border until administrative and economic barriers appeared. The unfavorable border crossing regulations, ban on the import of agri-food goods from Poland to the Russian Federation, and increasingly unfavorable ruble exchange rates changed the behavior of Russian consumers significantly, decreasing their purchase and consumption of goods and services bought in the LBT zone in Poland.

Key words: local border traffic, consumer behavior, Russian consumers, Kaliningrad District

JEL codes: D12, D91, E27

INTRODUCTION

After Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, the Polish north-eastern and eastern border became an external border of the European Union. To relieve the negative effects of visa requirements for the inhabitants of the Polish-Russian border area and enable continuation of trade, as well as social and cultural exchange [Chmieliński and Wawrzusiszyn 2017], a Local Border Traffic (LBT) between Poland and the Kaliningrad District – KD (also: Kaliningrad Oblast) was established in 2012. Establishing local border traffic between an European Union member state and a non-EU country was made possible based on the Regulation (EC) No 1931/2006 of the European

Parliament and of the Council of December 20, 2006, laying down rules on local border traffic at the external land borders of the Member States and amending the provisions of the Schengen Convention.

The main aim of LBT was to stimulate cross-border collaboration [Żęgota 2014] which could enhance the competitiveness of border regions [Palmowski and Fedorov 2020] and improve the standard of living of their inhabitants [Witkowski 2014]. The new opportunities for cross-border trade and shopping defined new research areas. These areas include market behavior of inhabitants of border regions, which is an extremely complex phenomenon. It depends on the political and economic situation, built up of numerous situational factors that may accelerate, delay or

completely stop the participation of market entities in cross-border trade.

The Russian Federation (Russia) has been a very important economic partner, whose favors are sought by many economies in the world, despite the dynamically changing geopolitical conditions, the specificity of the behavior of Russian consumers, the instability of the Russian market and difficulties in developing the principles of bilateral cooperation. The Ipsos Global Trends [2017] report showed that Russians were among the societies least satisfied with their standards of living and with what they had achieved in their lives. In addition, differences in the behavior of Russian consumers is very much dependent on their place of residence due to the huge geographic extent of the country, and varied culture, mentality, values and financial possibilities [Chernova et al. 2017]. Thanks to the Agreement on the local border traffic [Umowa... 2012], and the development of a free market economy, the facilitation and functioning of local border traffic between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation caused a change in the availability of Polish market goods for Russians. Thus, on the one hand, Russians living in KD could purchase goods and services in Poland, being a part of the European Union single market. On the other hand, the massive presence of KD residents had a significant impact on retail trade in the zone covered by LBT on the Polish side [Batyk 2020a].

The Agreement on the local border traffic [Umowa... 2012] signed by Poland and the Russian Federation in 2012, laid down rules for the development of cross-border trade between these two countries. According to Powęska [2016], the development of cross-border trade depends on:

- economic factors such as differences in prices of goods, differences in population income, taxes, the level of socio-economic development, quality of goods and the level of market supply;
- formal and legal factors including possibilities of crossing the border, control systems, flow of information and security;
- infrastructural and technical factors, e.g. technical infrastructure and spatial accessibility;
- organizational and behavioral factors, i.e. population behavior, service level, interpersonal relations,

trade organization, entrepreneurship, readiness to travel and forms of trade.

Promotion of global consumption that results in the unification of consumption also has a huge impact on the behavior of consumers in border markets [Schiffman and Kanuk 2004, Zalega 2012]. Additionally, the behavior of consumers in border markets largely depends on their optimism.

The development of cross-border trade on the Polish-Russian cross-border market was significantly influenced by an increase in the spatial mobility of the inhabitants of the border regions. This mobility started on July 27, 2012 and continued until July 4, 2016. During this period, there was a changeable dynamic in the number of Russians crossing the Polish-Russian border, which allowed distinguishing two stages of LBT functioning:

- from July 2012 to the end of 2014, when there was a gradual increase in the number of Russians entering Poland under the LBT;
- from 2015 until 2016, when there was a downward trend.

Unfortunately, geopolitical conditions and tense Polish-Russian relations led to a crisis in mutual relations and suspending of the LBT in 2016. The crisis was severe for all areas of cross-border cooperation, economic sectors, and especially for the inhabitants of border regions. Suspending the LBT changed the rules for crossing the Polish-Russian border – from that moment, all Russians who wanted to cross the border with Poland had to obtain a Schengen visa. It limited the cross-border mobility of many Russian inhabitants, especially people living in rural areas, whose financial situation was significantly different from that of the inhabitants of the city of Kaliningrad. The cost for a Schengen visa, along with the cumbersome and lengthy procedure of obtaining it, created a significant obstacle or even an insurmountable barrier for many of those residents [Powęska 2016, Batyk 2020b].

When the LBT agreement was in force, nearly 2.4 million Russians from KD entered Poland [Statystyki Komendy Głównej... 2017]. It raised a question of how LBT on the Polish-Russian border affected market behavior of inhabitants of the KD. As the literature lacks studies on this matter, the aim of this article is to answer this question and to verify the following hy-

pothesis: consumer behavior on border markets that allows local border traffic depends on exogenous economic and administrative factors.

METHOD

The hypothesis was verified based on the results of interviews conducted between 2012 and 2016 with 1,022 residents of KD purchasing goods on the Polish border market. Standardized face-to-face interviews were conducted. The selection of the research method was deliberate, as through the direct contact with respondents their reactions and emotions were revealed. Face-to-face interviews enabled achieving the most reliable research results. The research time span was characterized by a very high volatility of political, economic and social factors, such as: starting the LBT and the increased activity of Russians on the Polish border market, Russian embargo on agri-food products from the European Union, large currency exchange rate fluctuations, political tensions and hostile media propaganda influencing the public mood and the suspension of LBT. All those factors contributed to distinguishing the following four stages:

- stage I: lasted from July 27, 2012 (commencement of the LBT) to January 31, 2014. Border traffic on the Polish-Russian border significantly increased and so did the purchasing activity of Russian consumers;
- stage II: lasted from February 1, 2014 until December 31, 2014. In February 2014, Russia

banned the import of agri-food products from the European Union countries, and in December the value of the Russian ruble fell sharply. There was a further increase in border traffic and the expenses of Russians in Poland;

- stage III: from January 1, 2015 to July 3, 2016 (suspension of the LBT). There was a relative stagnation in the currency market and a ban on the import of agri-food products from the to Russia. Border traffic decreased and Russians spent less money in Poland;
- stage IV: lasted from July 4, 2016 until December 31, 2016. There was a significant decrease in the intensity of border traffic and expenditures of Russians in Poland. It was a period of political tensions and hostile media propaganda influencing public attitudes.

To investigate into the effects of the Polish-Russian LBT on the customer behavior of inhabitants of KD, the questionnaire included 8 statements (Table 1) that enabled identification of this behavior and its changes at the above-defined four different stages of LBT functioning. The statements were elaborated based on the authors' experience and the direct observations of the studied phenomenon. Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale the strength of their agreement or disagreement to the eight statements describing their consumer behavior. Due to the use of an ordinal scale the study is quasi-quantitative. The scale had numerical values assigned to the following attitudes: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – undecided, 4 – agree

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the behavior of KD residents on the Polish-Russian LBT

No	Opinion	Mean	Dominant	Median	Std. dev.	Coefficient of variation
1.	I buy most food in Poland after establishing LBT	2.79	1	2	1.63	58.38
2.	I spend less money on food after establishing LBT	2.88	5	2	1.73	60.03
3.	I buy most non-food products in Poland after establishing LBT	3.62	5	4	1.47	40.61
4.	I spend less money on non-food products after establishing LBT	3.75	5	5	1.56	41.65
5.	The availability of Polish products increased in KD after establishing LBT	3.46	4	4	1.30	37.57
6.	After establishing LBT prices of Polish products sold in KD are lower	2.74	2	3	1.32	48.34
7.	After establishing LBT I make money on selling products brought from Poland	2.95	1	3	1.88	63.50
8.	I spend my leisure time more attractively in Poland after establishing LBT	4.23	5	4	0.85	20.12

Source: Authors' own research.

and 5 – strongly agree. The numerical values were used to measure the studied behavior.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis was applied to process the survey data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the main socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, which show the distribution of responses in each stage of the research, i.e.: in stage

I – 23.1%, stage II – 28.9%, stage III – 27.4% and stage IV – 20.6%.

The analyses used descriptive statistics such as: mean, mode, median, standard deviation, coefficient of variation (Table 1). Opinions indicating that after the introduction of LBT: Russian consumers spent their free time more attractively in Poland (4.23), they spent less money on non-food goods (3.75), they would buy most non-food goods in Poland (3.62) and the availability of Polish goods increased for them

Table 2. Main socio-demographics of respondents

Socio-demographics	N = 1022	Stage			
		I	II	III	IV
		%			
		23.1	28.9	27.4	20.6
Gender					
Females	51.2	55.9	47.8	52.5	48.8
Males	48.8	44.1	52.2	47.5	51.2
Age					
15–24	15.3	5.9	28.1	10.7	13.7
25–34	19.0	16.1	18.3	20.0	21.8
35–44	17.4	16.1	16.6	18.2	19.0
45–54	17.7	20.8	12.2	21.4	17.1
54 and more	30.6	41.1	24.8	29.7	28.4
Education					
Primary	4.7	6.4	2.0	6.8	3.8
Vocational	47.1	49.1	54.6	41.4	41.7
High school graduate	16.6	19.9	10.9	19.3	17.5
University graduate	31.6	24.6	32.5	32.5	37.0
Place of residence					
Rural areas	25.4	28.8	23.1	24.3	26.1
Town with less than 50 thousand inhabitants	25.4	32.2	18.6	28.6	23.2
City with more than 50 thousand inhabitants	49.2	39.0	58.3	47.1	50.7
Number of persons in the household					
1–2	33.7	32.6	30.2	36.4	36.0
3–4	47.4	46.6	52.2	43.2	47.4
5 and more	18.9	20.8	17.6	20.4	16.6
Profession					
Own business	18.9	23.7	20.7	15.7	15.2
Employed by the state enterprise	21.2	26.3	14.6	24.3	20.9
Administration employee	23.3	19.9	22.0	26.4	24.6
Unemployed	16.6	17.4	13.9	17.9	18.0
Student	14.0	5.1	26.4	8.6	13.7
Retired	6.0	7.6	2.4	7.1	7.6
Average monthly income per 1 person in the household					
Below 10 thous. RUB	23.5	22.9	23.1	23.9	24.2
10–15 thous. RUB	9.3	9.3	10.8	8.2	8.5
15–20 thous. RUB	15.5	22.9	13.9	11.1	15.2
20–25 thous. RUB	20.7	18.7	18.3	24.3	21.8
More than 25 thous. RUB	26.8	23.7	28.1	27.1	27.9
No answer	4.2	2.5	5.8	5.4	2.4

Source: Authors' own research.

(3.46) had the highest average values. At the same time, both the standard deviation and the coefficient of variation for these indications were the lowest, which may indicate a similar perception of the impact of LBT by KD residents.

The following opinions had a very high value of the coefficient of variation: After the establishing LBT: I receive income from the sale of goods imported from Poland (63.50), and I spend less money on food (60.03).

The behavior of KD residents varied most between stage II and stage IV (Table 3) in the following aspects:

- I buy most of my food in Poland: from 11.06% in stage II to 1.37% in stage IV (a decrease of 9.69 percentage points);
- I spend less money on food: from 14.87% in stage II to 2.54% in stage IV (a decrease of 12.33 percentage points);
- I buy most of the non-food goods in Poland – from 12.82% in stage II to 6.46% in stage IV (a decrease of 6.36 percentage points);
- I spend less money on non-food goods – from 17.81% in stage II to 9.00% in stage IV (a decrease of 8.81 percentage points);
- the availability of Polish goods increased in KD – from 13.01% in stage II to 1.27% in stage IV (a decrease of 11.74 percentage points);
- the prices of Polish goods sold in KD are lower – from 5.68% in stage II to 0.98% in stage IV (a decrease of 4.7 percentage points);
- I receive income from the sale of goods imported from Poland – from 12.72% in stage I to 6.65% in stage IV (a decrease of 6.07 percentage points);
- I spend my free time in Poland more attractively – from 15.85% in stage II to 8.02% in stage IV (a decrease of 7.83 percentage points).

The differences in the respondents' answers ranged from 12.33 percentage points (I spend less money on food) to 4.07 percentage points (the prices of Polish goods sold in KD are lower).

The findings of this research showed that Russian consumers' expenditure on food decreased from 42.2% in 2013 to 29.4% in 2014, while the share of expenditure on non-food goods increased from 50.5% in 2013 to 54.9% in 2014 and 57.5% in 2015. It confirmed

results of other studies [GUS and US w Rzeszowie 2014, 2015, 2016]. Since 2014, there has been a significant decline in expenditures on the purchase of consumer goods in KD, which contributed to the economic slowdown in the exclave, where the consumption crisis was intensifying [Anczakowska 2016]. This problem was felt both by economic entities within the LBT and the national economy.

Russians used to buy agricultural and food products in Poland. Those were especially meat and its products, dairy products, as well as shoes and clothing [Batyk 2019]. Russians had the option to buy goods for their own needs at a lower price or to resell them for profit. A new category of participants appeared – they were less wealthy people for whom obtaining a visa was a heavy burden on the budget. Cross-border purchases were treated by communities of peripheral local government units located on the border as a stimulator of socio-economic development [Powęska 2020].

The structure of goods purchased by the inhabitants of Kaliningrad District in Poland changed significantly due to the introduced restrictions on the import of agrifood products from Poland to Russia. The ban on the import of meat and meat products, as well as milk and dairy products from Poland to Russia, in force since February 2014, also applied to individuals who would bring more than 5 kg of animal products to KD. Inhabitants of KD bought in Poland, both foodstuffs prohibited for import, as well as goods that they could transport across the border, such as: clothing and footwear, cosmetics, electronics, building materials. Russians' interest in purchasing luxury goods such as jewelry, leather goods, electronics, yachts and cars increased significantly. Data obtained from the Customs Chamber in Olsztyn showed that since 2015 the number of documents for goods purchased by Russians in Poland decreased, while their value increased.

The fall in the value of Russian currency did not significantly reduce the competitiveness of Polish goods in relation to Russian domestic products. The suspension of the export of Polish agri-food products to Russia resulted in their unavailability in legal retail trade in KD. However, the embargo did not cause a complete lack of Polish goods on the Russian market. Paradoxically, access to them in frontier trade increased. The research results indicate that

Table 3. Opinions of KD residents about the consequences of the Polish-Russian LBT in stages I–IV

	Opinions of KD residents on statements							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	as % of responses							
Stage I: 27.07.2012–31.01.2014								
Strongly agree	9.78	12.92	10.76	13.01	8.32	5.58	12.72	11.25
Agree	3.91	0.59	3.82	1.27	7.53	3.52	1.17	9.00
Undecided	0.88	0.98	1.86	1.47	5.58	5.97	0.68	2.84
Disagree	4.70	4.70	4.21	4.40	1.17	4.99	0.68	0.00
Strongly disagree	3.82	3.91	2.45	2.94	0.49	3.03	7.83	0.00
Stage II: 1.02.2014–31.12.2014								
Strongly agree	11.06	14.87	12.82	17.81	13.01	5.68	11.35	15.85
Agree	5.58	1.57	6.95	1.66	9.20	4.99	0.98	10.57
Undecided	1.96	1.96	0.39	0.78	5.68	6.95	1.66	2.35
Disagree	5.09	5.38	4.70	4.6	0.78	7.44	0.59	0.10
Strongly disagree	5.19	5.09	4.01	4.01	0.20	3.82	14.29	0.00
Stage III: 1.01.2015–3.07.2016								
Strongly agree	3.62	4.99	9.10	14.09	3.91	2.15	9.59	11.06
Agree	2.15	0.59	9.00	4.11	7.34	3.42	3.52	8.32
Undecided	1.76	1.66	1.37	1.27	6.75	6.85	0.49	4.89
Disagree	5.97	5.87	3.03	3.13	4.70	8.12	0.98	3.13
Strongly disagree	13.89	14.29	4.89	4.79	4.70	6.85	12.82	0.00
Stage IV: 4.07.2016–31.12.2016								
Strongly agree	1.37	2.54	6.46	9.00	1.27	0.98	6.65	8.02
Agree	2.45	1.86	6.65	4.01	3.72	1.76	1.96	7.24
Undecided	1.96	1.66	2.54	2.45	4.21	4.99	1.37	4.31
Disagree	4.79	4.40	1.96	2.15	5.77	5.38	0.59	1.08
Strongly disagree	10.08	10.18	3.03	3.03	5.68	7.53	10.08	0.00

Explanatory note: 1 – I buy most food in Poland, 2 – I spend less money on food, 3 – I buy most non-food goods in Poland, 4 – I spend less money on non-food goods, 5 – access to Polish goods has increased in KD, 6 – prices of Polish goods sold in KD are lower, 7 – I earn income from the sale of goods imported from Poland, 8 – I spend my free time more attractively in Poland.

Source: Authors' own research.

the availability of Polish goods sold in KD increased significantly after the introduction of the embargo, from 8.32% of indications in the first stage to 13.01% in the second stage. Respondents' indications about the lower prices of Polish goods sold in cross-border trade in KD compared to store prices did not differ significantly between the first (5.58% of indications) and the second stage (5.68%).

In the opinion of Russian consumers, food products from Poland had a well-recognized, much higher quality compared to Russian domestic products. Therefore, they were worth paying a higher price.

Even though many Russian media reports informed that the quality of food products from Poland was questioned by the Russian sanitary inspection services, the interest of Russian consumers in purchasing these products did not diminish. Only in the third and fourth stages of the research, after a sharp decline in the value of the Russian ruble and more detailed border controls, the respondents did not agree that the access to Polish goods in cross-border trade in KD increased and that the prices of these goods were lower compared to prices in Russian shops.

The LBT and the resulting possibility of multiple border crossings had a great influence on Russians' shopping on the Polish border market. This is illustrated by the results of the research in its fourth stage. Respondents disagreed with the opinion that they buy most of their food in Poland (10.08%) and spend less money on it (10.18%). The percentage of responses confirming the opinion that the respondents obtained income from the sale of goods imported from Poland decreased from nearly by half.

Suspending the LBT did not stop Russians from coming to Poland, but it resulted in quantitative restrictions [Bobyk 2020]. The sharp decline in the number of Russians crossing the Polish-Russian border led to direct economic losses. Those losses were estimated at EUR 20 million in the case of border regions of Poland and at EUR 50 million for the Kaliningrad District [Korneevets et al. 2017]. The count of losses did not include the multiplier effect, which significantly affects other economic indicators and the standard of living of the inhabitants of border regions [Sokół 2017]. The new situation that followed the suspension of the LBT indicated rather that the introduced changes did not inhibit the processes of convergence of consumption and cultural pluralism.

The results of the research confirm that the complex Polish-Russian relations are determined by political problems, impacting economic conditions and the technological and socio-cultural environment [Waldziński 2011]. Unfortunately, Poland's relations with KD are most often perceived through the prism of current problems, and not through long-term activities [Żukowski 2002]. The results of the research confirm that the complex Polish-Russian political relations determine economic conditions, and the technological and socio-cultural environment [Waldziński 2011].

CONCLUSIONS

The LBT established on the Polish and Russian border in 2012 created new conditions for Russian consumers – it allowed them to benefit from cross-border shopping and trade and thus contribute to local development on both sides of the border. However, such administrative and economic barriers as unfavorable border crossing regulations, ban

on the import of agri-food goods from Poland to the Russian Federation and increasingly unfavorable ruble exchange rates changed the behavior of Russian consumers. Along with the decline in the purchasing power of Russian currency, the purchase of goods and services by Russian customers in Poland decreased. There was a significant decrease in the share of consumers who bought most of their food and non-food products in Poland, and those who spent less money on food and non-food products after establishing LBT. There were also less and less Russians who received income from sale of goods purchased in Poland, and who spent their leisure time in Poland more attractively. The changes in Russian consumers' behavior were caused by exogenous factors and impacted both their standard of living and local development negatively.

The findings and conclusions prove the hypothesis to be true – consumer behavior on border markets allowing local border traffic depends on exogenous economic, political and administrative factors. Findings and conclusions presented in the paper can be a basis for designing further research and for continuation of the discussion on how coexisting political, economic and social conditions impact consumer behavior in border markets with local border traffic.

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ZACHOWANIA KONSUMENCKIE MIESZKAŃCÓW OBWODU KALININGRADZKIEGO W POLSKO-ROSYJSKIEJ STREFIE MAŁEGO RUCHU GRANICZNEGO

STRESZCZENIE

Mały Ruch Graniczny (MRG) ustanowiony na granicy polsko-rosyjskiej w 2012 roku otworzył nowe możliwości rynkowe dla rosyjskich konsumentów z obwodu kaliningradzkiego. Wprowadzenie MRG zrodziło też pytanie o to, jak zmieniające się warunki polityczne, gospodarcze i społeczne wpłynęły na ich zachowania konsumenckie. Odpowiedź na to pytanie przyjęto za cel niniejszego opracowania zrealizowanego na podstawie wywiadów z 1022 konsumentami rosyjskimi z obwodu kaliningradzkiego przeprowadzonych w latach

2012–2016. Wyniki wskazały, że rosyjscy konsumenci odnosili i dostrzegali korzyści z zakupów i handlu transgranicznego oraz przyczyniali się do lokalnego rozwoju po obu stronach granicy do czasu pojawienia się barier polityczno-administracyjnych i gospodarczych. Niekorzystne przepisy na przejściach granicznych, zakaz importu towarów rolno-spożywczych z Polski do Federacji Rosyjskiej oraz coraz bardziej niekorzystny kurs rubla zmieniły znacząco zachowania rosyjskich konsumentów, zmniejszając zakupy oraz konsumpcję towarów i usług kupowanych na polskim rynku.

Słowa kluczowe: mały ruch graniczny, zachowania konsumenckie, konsument rosyjski, obwód kalinin-gradzki

