

## STUDY OF CONSUMER PREFERENCES OF REGIONAL LABELING. SLOVAK CASE STUDY

Jana Jaďudová, Iveta Marková<sup>1</sup>, Jana Hroncová Vicianová<sup>2</sup>, Anna Bohers<sup>1</sup>, Ivan Murin<sup>3</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> RNDr. Jana Jaďudová, Ph.D., email: jadudova@umb.sk, Prof. RNDr. Iveta Marková, Ph.D., email: iveta.markova@umb.sk, RNDr. Anna Bohers, email: anna.bohers @umb.sk, Department of Environmental Management, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Tajovského 40, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia

<sup>2</sup> Ing. Jana Hroncová Vicianová, PhD., email: jana.hroncova @umb.sk, Department of Corporate Economics and Management, Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Tajovského 10, 975 90 Banská Bystrica

<sup>3</sup> PhDr. Ivan Murin, PhD., Department of Social Studies and Ethnology, Faculty of Arts, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Cesta na amfiteáter 1, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, email: ivan.murin@umb.sk

**Abstract:** The authors of the article consider regional labeling as a marketing tool which can contribute to the development of regional activities. These are focused mainly on traditional regional products and products. Their general popularity in prosperous regions is an important source of income for the inhabitants. In the less developed regions, it represents a significant stimulating tool of development. By means of a Slovak region of Gemer-Malohont as an example, the authors bring quantitative findings related to the preference of regional brands. They took into consideration the indicators of age, gender, education, monthly income and locality in connection with preference of regional products. They pointed to the fact that regional labeling has a mobilizing function to link and then jointly present its local activities. The behaviour of the population from the regions is an important recommendation for small producers and producers from less developed regions of Central Europe.

**Key words:** local activities, regional products, regional label region of Gemer-Malohont, consumer preferences

**Abstrakt:** Autori článku považujú regionálne značenie za marketingový nástroj, ktorý môže napomôcť rozvoju regionálnych aktivít. Tie sa sústreďujú predovšetkým pri tradičných regionálnych výrobkoch a produktoch. Ich všeobecná obľúbenosť v prosperujúcich regiónoch je významným zdrojom príjmov obyvateľstva. V menej rozvinutých regiónoch je významným stimulujúcim nástrojom rozvoja. Na príklade slovenského regiónu Gemera-Malohontu autori článku prinášajú kvantitatívne zistenia k preferovaniu regionálnych značiek. Všímajú si ukazovatele veku, pohlavia, vzdelania, výšky mesačného príjmu a lokality vo vzťahu k preferovaniu regionálnych výrobkov. Poukazujú na skutočnosť, že regionálne značenie má mobilizujúcu funkciu k spájaniu sa a následnému spoločnému prezentovaniu svojich lokálnych aktivít. Správanie sa obyvateľstva z regiónov je dôležitým odporúčaním pre drobných výrobcov a producentov z menej rozvinutých regiónov Strednej Európy.

**Kľúčové slová:** lokálne aktivity, regionálne produkty, regionálna značka, región Gemer-Malohont

## 1. Introduction

Since the specification of its global ideas, the idea of sustainability is moving more and more into concrete and applied regional and local dimensions. This turning point – from global to local – brings accumulation of activities through which regional producers are trying to trigger the local development. This is realized mostly by reinforcement of the value of sustainability within the support of a local product or a regional activity. There are local marketing tools available to support the global idea of sustainability, focused on a specific environment. Among them, the most preferred are those which have more universal semantic identifications, thus being applicable also in other regions. In relation to the revitalisation of disappearing and often already disappeared products, there are marketing strategies to support local and regional communities.

Regional products which have such designation are the material expression of the human-environment interaction. It is then clear that sustainability as an idea is secondarily spread also via such labeling. It is significantly connected especially to agricultural products, as well as in non-agricultural regions to many other products. In the European Union countries, traditional and regional products are represented by special products with guaranteed quality and whose features are unique tradition, especially where the method of production is passed on from generation to generation (Kosiorowska, 2013; Jarossová, Šupolová, 2015). The aim and contribution of a regional brand can be derived from the interpretation of regional development in terms of Act 503/2001 Coll. on the promotion of regional development "the continuous growth

of the economic potential and the social potential of the region, which increases its economic level, performance, competitiveness and the standard of living of its population" (Štensová, 2013).

According to Krnáčová and Kirnová (2015), the regional product is the result of a human activity which is unique and connected to the region. This product is hand-made using local raw materials. Van Ittersum et al. (2007) define the regional product as a product whose quality and origin is linked to a specific region. The important attribute is that the product is sold using the name of the region of origin. Fernández-Ferrín et al. (2018) consider such a product to be a regional product which is produced locally with exceptional quality derived from the specific conditions of its geographical origin. We agree with Hrubalová (2017) that regional products have a positive impact on the local economy, the environment and the social side and can therefore be considered as an instrument of sustainable regional development. The regional label is in line with all three pillars of sustainable development. The regional products contribute to the development of agriculture and local businesses, create new jobs, strengthen the development of tourism, increase the volume of local taxes and contribute to building regional identity and culture. With regard to local residents, a brand can strengthen solidarity with the region and encourage public participation in regional developments and mediate contacts between producers and other local participants (Vokáčová et al., 2017).

Each country has its own regional labeling network. For example, we indicate the regional labeling in the V4 countries. Within V4 countries, the Czech Republic is a model example. It has the best developed system of regional labeling of products which are covered by the Association of Regional Brands. First regional labeling scheme was established in 2005. The first labels which became the basis for the future Association of Regional Brands have been originated from the project supported by the European Commission "People for Nature, Nature for People". The first labels were from Krkonoše, Beskydy and Šumava regions. Recently, ARB associates 26 regions with their regional labels. All of them have unified graphic design as well as common granting principles (Chalupová, Prokop, Rojík, 2016). Systems of a regional character operate in individual regions and in most cases are controlled by regional governments (Vokáčová et al., 2017). In addition to the labels included in the ARB, other regional labels operate in the Czech Republic as well.

There is also a well-developed system of regional product labeling in Poland. Nearly every region of Poland has "Local Action Groups" that promote products specific to the region. The most famous of them are: "Naszyjnik Połnocy" ("Necklace from North"), "Wrzosowa Kraina" ("Landscape with heather"), "Dolina Karpí" ("Karpá valley"). It has been proven that partnerships and alliances have been created among the various entrepreneurs in the region (with local entrepreneurs or municipality). At national level, high-quality food products include traditional products covered by the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products. The label "Jakość, Tradycja" ("Quality, Tradition") requires a traditional composition, production method, quality and a minimum of 50 years of history (Jarossová, Šupolová, 2015).

Regional labels in Hungary are not yet as developed as in other V4 countries despite the rich offer of traditional Hungarian products. These products are characterized by traditional production, unique quality and specific regional features. The problem is presented by the low awareness of these products, only a few of which are internationally known, for example, "Salam Szeged", "Paprika Szeged", "Gyulai Sausage" and "Onion of Makó" (Jarossová, Šupolová, 2015).

Among the first regional labels initiatives in Slovakia are the Regio Danubiana Quality Label. In 2008, NGO Regional Environmental Center of Slovakia started with products labeling in Kysuce, Záhorie and in Malé Karpaty. After the end of this initiative, regional product labeling has passed under Local Action Groups (Hrubalová, 2015). Currently, except the above mentioned labels, regional product labels of regions Podpoľanie, Hont, Ponitrie, Gemer-Malohont, Karsticum, Kopanice, Malodunajsko-Galantsko are used (Fig. 1). All regional labels have their own website, the uniform appearance of the logo of the type representing the symbol typical of the region. The principles for product certification have also been adopted: regional uniqueness, local raw materials originating in the region, tradition and manpower and nature care.

Nemčíková et al. (2016) assesses Slovakia as a country that is only at the beginning in building a brand area (including regional product labels) in individual geographic dimensions.

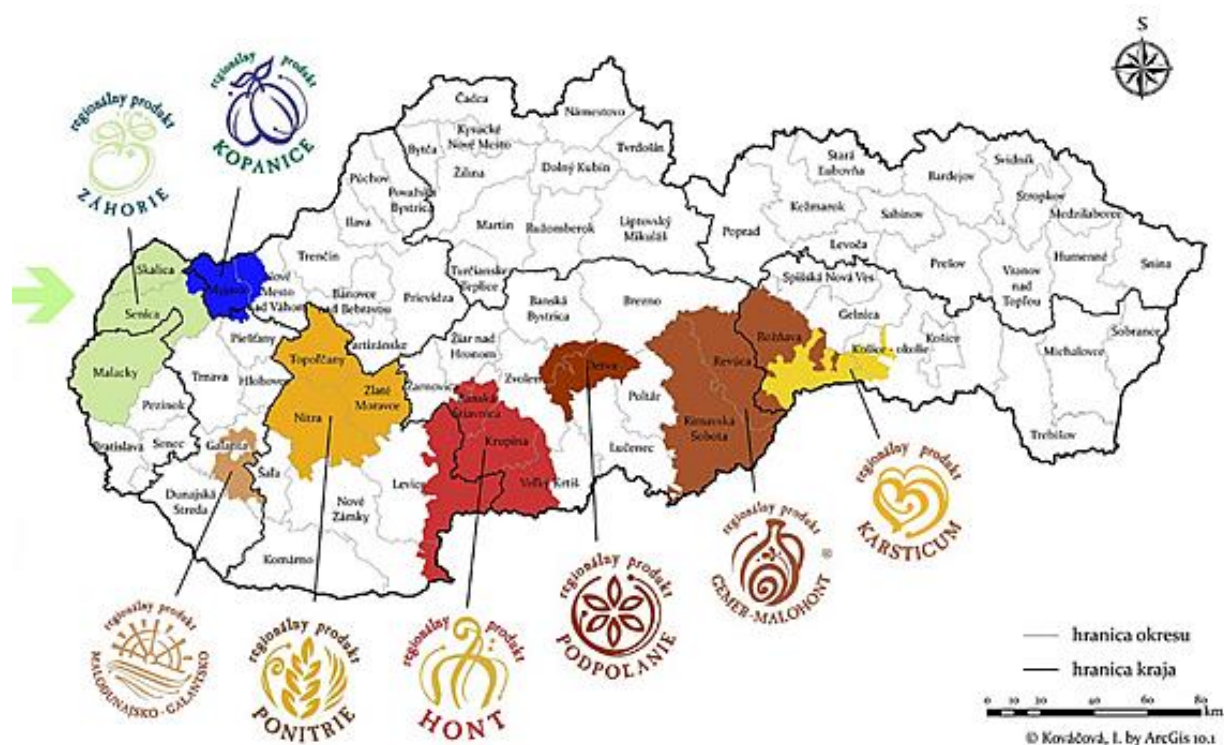


Fig 1. Regional labels in Slovakia ("Regional produkt") under Local Action Groups. Source: Miklenčíčová, 2015

The subject of the survey was to present regional label Gemer-Malohont in Slovakia. The aim of the paper is to monitor the preferences of the consumers on the regional product designation in selected areas. Based on consumer survey results, consumer attitudes, opinions and awareness of regional products in this region have been identified. In addition, connections between selected factors and the label of the regional product Gemer-Malohont have been studied.

## 2. Materials and methods

Regional product labeling in the Gemer-Malohont region was introduced by the MALOHONT Local Action Group (MAS) in 2014 (MAS, 2015). Being the Regional Marking Coordinator, it regularly announces the call for applications regarding regional labeling. All products and services with the Gemer-Malohont trademark are manufactured in the Gemer-Malohont region (Fig. 2) and meet different criteria that are assessed every 2 years in the assessment process.

These products come from a local manufacturer, using traditional practices or local natural resources, contain a certain amount of manual work and are unique in relation to the region. Products from the region which have been branded "GEMER-MALOHONT® regional product" are fruit juices, goat milk, ceramics, woven products, meat and meat products, home-made bakery products, honey, bee hives, natural soaps and cosmetics, wire and wood products, hand embroidered pictures.

The function of GEMER-MALOHONT® regional label is to distinguish, highlight and support local producers and service providers who, in addition to their production and services, are also involved in creating job opportunities, building a good name of the region and preserving its traditions, values and uniqueness. A regional label designating local products or services will guarantee consumers the origin of the product or service in the region, as well as the use of traditional practices or local, possibly regional resources.

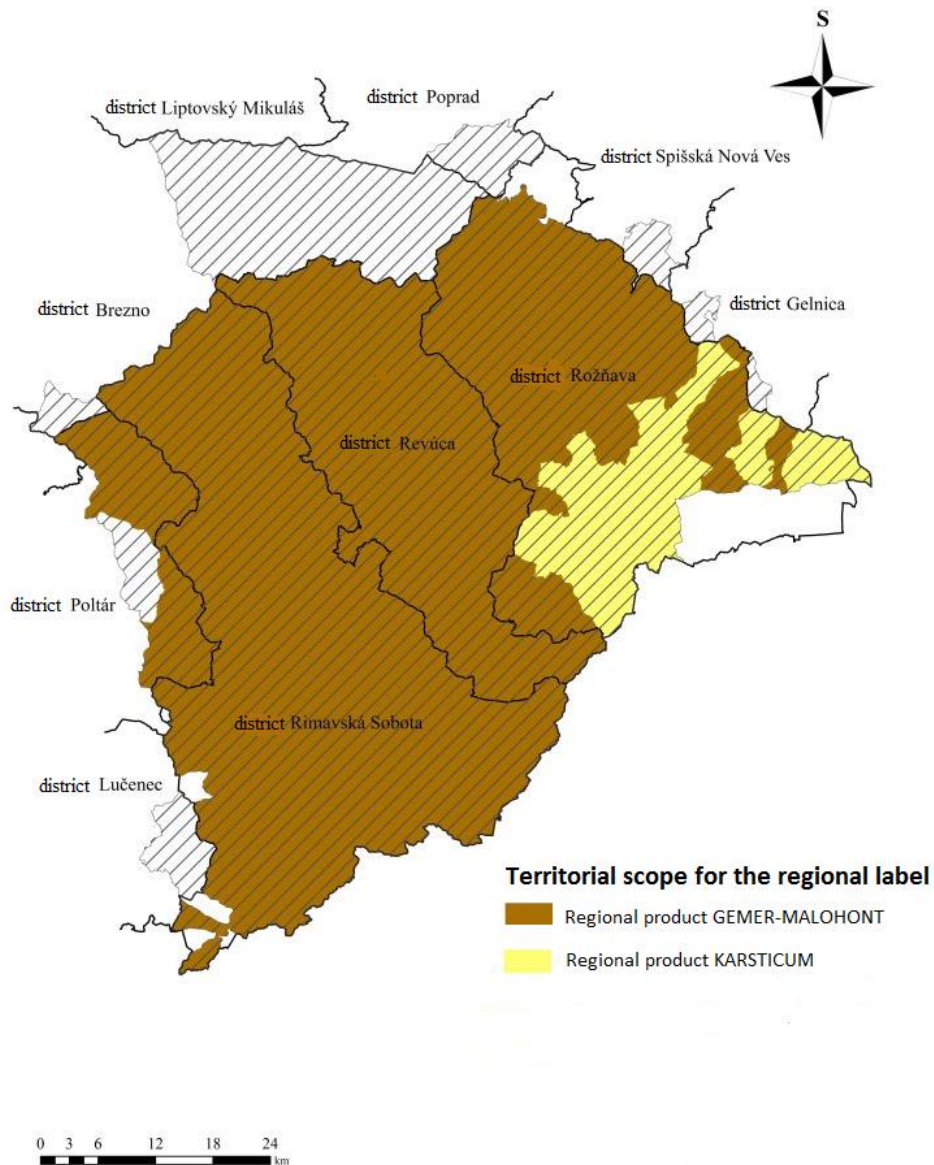


Fig 2. Territorial scope for the "regional product GEMER-MALOHONT". Source: author according to MAS, 2015

In 2015, Belás presented the Integrated Territorial Development Strategy 2009–2015: We will give our hearts to Malohont, we will take care of the development. Strategic objective: to improve the life quality of the Malohont population through the best use of local human, natural and cultural resources.

The following specific objectives will be used:

- to support the creation and maintenance of employment opportunities for local actors,
- to promote the development of rural tourism by exploiting and assessing the region values,
- to improve the basic services and appearance of municipalities,
- to increase the level of education and participation of the population in the development of life in the territory and
- to ensure coordination between actors in the region and strengthen cooperation at regional, national and international level.

To achieve these goals, one of the options present development of environmental labeling of regional products. The research in this area is focused on the application of these principles by monitoring the views of the local population.

We carried out the consumer survey by direct questioning in form of a standardised questionnaire during the months of April – May 2017. The questionnaire was distributed in a printed form through the Gemer-Malohont Local Action Group (MAS).

The basic set consisted of the inhabitants from concerned districts of Rimavská Sobota, Rožňava, Poltár, Revúca. According to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic from June 30, 2017, the size of the basic population over the age of 18 presented 166,464 inhabitants (tab. 1).

*Tab 1. Relative primary and sample population by gender and district. Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2017*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Primary set</b>	<b>Relative frequency (%)</b>	<b>Sample set</b>	<b>Relative frequency (%)</b>
Male	80,465	48.3%	69	46%
Female	85,999	51.7%	81	54%
In total	166,464	100%	150	100%
District				
Rimavská Sobota	66,594	40%	57	38%
Rožňava	49,922	30%	43	28.7%
Poltár	18,272	11%	18	12%
Revúca	31,676	19%	32	21.3%
In total	166,464	100%	150	100%

The consumer survey was attended by 150 respondents. The representativeness of the group of respondents depends on the gender and the geographical location of the individual regions in Slovakia. In order to verify the representativeness of the sample, we used the nonparametric chi-squared ( $\chi^2$  – test) whose principle consists in verifying the compliance of the expected theoretical distribution with the (empirical) distribution. According to the results of the test, we can note that the sample is representative by gender (p-value = 0.573) and by region (p-value = 0.848).

Data obtained have been processed with crosstabulation analysis and Pearson’s chi-square test. To process the primary data, Software SPSS 2.0 was used. The Chi-square statistic is the primary statistic means used for testing the statistical significance of the cross-tabulation table. The chi-square statistic, with the associated probability of chance observation, may be computed for any table. If the variables are related (i.e., if the observed table relationships would occur with very low probability – only 5%), we can state that the results are “statistically significant” at the “0.05 or 5% level”. This means that the variables have a low chance of being independent (Bolboaca et al., 2011).

Using the Pearson’s chi-squared test, we determined the degree of dependence coefficient which determined the dependence between the gender, age, education, monthly income, locality and selected factors of consumer behaviour. This coefficient has values from the interval  $<0,1>$  or  $<1,1>$ . Value 0 means independence (Hendl, 2012).

### 3. Results

The survey sample consisted of 150 predominantly female respondents (54%). In terms of age, the largest group consisted of respondents aged 26–61 years (70.7%), with predictable purchasing power for regional products.

In the research sample, almost the same percentage was reported for single (51%) and married respondents (49%). There was a slight predominance of respondents with 2 children (38%) and with permanent residency in rural areas (55%).

Tab 2. Dependence between gender and selected factors of consumer behaviour. Source: Author

	Gender						Pearson chi-square test (df = 1)	
	Male		Female		Total		$\chi^2$	P
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO		
<b>Purchase of domestic</b>	83.9%	16.1%	100.0%	0.0%	93.1%	6.9%	12.943	0.000
<b>Purchase of regional food</b>	58.9%	41.1%	72.2%	27.8%	66.4%	33.6%	2.495	0.114
<b>Knowledge of regional labeling</b>	68.6%	31.4%	86.1%	13.9%	78.9%	21.1%	5.474	0.019
<b>Regional label in shops</b>	41.7%	58.3%	32.8%	67.2%	36.7%	63.3%	0.912	0.340
<b>Regional label at public events</b>	71.2%	28.8%	78.4%	21.6%	75.4%	24.6%	0.859	0.354
<b>Product composition</b>	62.3%	37.7%	84.0%	16.0%	74.0%	26.0%	9.062	0.003
<b>Product price</b>	73.9%	26.1%	65.4%	34.6%	69.3%	30.7%	1.260	0.262
<b>Regional label in foreign countries</b>	16.3%	83.7%	28.1%	71.9%	22.6%	77.4%	2.075	0.150

Authors tried to find out if there are differences among gender and selected factors of consumer behaviour. Pearson's chi-square test of independence has confirmed that the purchase of domestic food depended on gender ( $\chi^2 = 12.943$ ; sig.  $p = 0.000$ ). Furthermore, the knowledge of regional food depended on gender. ( $\chi^2 = 5.474$ ; sig.  $p = 0.019$ ). The gender has proven to be an important factor in case of respondents who prefer product composition. The monitoring of consumer behavior did not show dependency of the gender. This information has also been demonstrated in the contingency table (Table 2).

The purchase of domestic foods is preferred by female respondents (100% of female respondents). Regional foods are purchased by both men and women, particularly women (86.1% of female respondents) who had the knowledge of regional food. Overall, respondents do not buy regional food in shops (63.3% of all respondents). These foods are purchased at public events (75.4% of all respondents). The product composition is an important factor of purchase for both gender, although women pay more attention to the composition of products (84.0% women, 62.3% men). The price of products is important for male respondents (73.9% of male respondents). The respondents in the Gemer-Malohont region do not buy regional products in foreign countries regardless of the gender (77.4% of all respondents). This information has also been demonstrated in the contingency table (Table 2). It can be stated that female respondents are more aware of the existence of regional label in general and buy these products more often.

Dependence of the age and selected factors of consumer behaviour was tested as well. The results showed strong dependence between monitored factors of consumer behaviour and age except regional label in shops ( $\chi^2 = 1.795$ , sig.  $p = 0.407$ ), product composition ( $\chi^2 = 0.407$ , sig.  $p = 0.816$ ) and product price ( $\chi^2 = 4.937$ , sig.  $P = 0.085$ ), as it is clear from Table 3.

Tab 3. Dependence between age and selected factors of consumer behaviour. Source: Author

	AGE						Pearson chi-square test (df = 2)	
	18–25		26–61		62 and more		$\chi^2$	P
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO		
<b>Purchase of domestic food</b>	85.0%	15.0%	96.9%	3.1%	76.9%	23.1%	9.625	0.008
<b>Purchase of regional food</b>	38.1%	61.9%	78.5%	21.5%	28.6%	71.4%	22.620	0.000
<b>Knowledge of regional labeling</b>	55.6%	44.4%	88.0%	12.0%	46.2%	53.8%	18.861	0.000
<b>Regional label in shops</b>	26.3%	73.7%	40.5%	59.5%	27.3%	72.7%	1.795	0.407
<b>Regional label at public events</b>	52.4%	47.6%	84.6%	15.4%	50.0%	50.0%	15.034	0.001
<b>Product composition</b>	70.4%	29.6%	75.5%	24.5%	70.6%	29.4%	0.407	0.816
<b>Product price</b>	85.2%	14.8%	64.2%	35.8%	76.5%	23.5%	4.937	0.085
<b>Regional label in foreign countries</b>	4.3%	95.7%	32.4%	67.6%	0.0%	100.0%	11.763	0.003

Interesting observation consists of the fact that respondents from all age groups buy domestic food but the regional food is bought by respondent aged 26–61 (78.5% of 26–61 aged respondents). It is possible to observe that the knowledge of regional labeling is present in case of younger respondents. The respondents aged 62 and more do not know what the regional label stands for. All respondents do not buy regional-label products in the shops but they prefer to buy them at public events. The product composition is the most important factor of consumer behaviour in monitored age groups. For respondents aged 18–25 (85.2% of 18–25 aged respondents) and 62 and more (76.5% of 62 and more aged respondents), the most important factor of the product is also price. The selected sample does not require the regional label in foreign countries.

Pearson's chi-square test of independence have confirmed that the purchase of regional food depend on education of respondents ( $\chi^2 = 11.071$ ; sig.  $p = 0.011$ ). The dependence between product price and education is clear from Table 4 ( $\chi^2 = 12.909$ ; sig.  $p = 0.005$ ). Statistical testing confirmed the dependence between regional label in foreign countries and education ( $\chi^2 = 9.180$ ; sig.  $p = 0.027$ ).

We conclude that consumers with a higher level of education (university) have shown a tendency to buy certified products (domestic or regional food) as they have the knowledge of product labeling. Interesting observation lies in the fact that respondents with primary education buy the regional food in shops (66.7% of respondents with primary education). The other group of respondents do not buy these products in the shops but they buy them at public events. For respondents with university 3<sup>rd</sup> degree, the product composition is not important (60.0%) nor the product price (100.0%). Products with regional labels in foreign countries is not purchased by respondents with primary education (100.0%). They, as well as other groups of respondents do not require them.



Tab 4. Dependence between education and selected factors of consumer behaviour. Source: Author

Education										
	Primary		Secondary		University 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree		University 3 <sup>rd</sup> degree		Pearson chi-square test (df = 3)	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	$\chi^2$	P
Purchase of domestic	80.0%	20.0%	90.7%	9.3%	97.9%	2.1%	100.0%	0.0%	4.006	0.261
Purchase of regional	75.0%	25.0%	55.3%	44.7%	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%	0.0%	11.071	0.011
Knowledge of regional labeling	75.0%	25.0%	75.3%	24.7%	83.7%	16.3%	100.0%	0.0%	1.991	0.574
Regional label in	66.7%	33.3%	38.5%	61.5%	31.6%	68.4%	33.3%	66.7%	1.690	0.639
Regional label at	75.0%	25.0%	76.6%	23.4%	73.8%	26.2%	66.7%	33.3%	0.243	0.970
Product composition	71.4%	28.6%	76.1%	23.9%	74.0%	26.0%	40.0%	60.0%	3.237	0.357
Product	71.4%	28.6%	75.0%	25.0%	66.0%	34.0%	0.0%	100.0%	12.909	0.005
Regional label in foreign	0.0%	100.0%	15.9%	84.1%	39.4%	60.6%	33.3%	66.7%	9.180	0.027

Further analyses are focused on the difference between monthly income and selected factors of consumer behaviour. As shown in the Table 5, respondents with higher monthly income buy domestic or regional foods. Statistical testing confirmed the dependence between monthly income and purchase of regional food ( $\chi^2 = 12.430$ ; sig.  $p = 0.014$ ) and knowledge of regional labeling ( $\chi^2 = 15.626$ ; sig.  $p = 0.004$ ). Pearson's chi-square test evaluated dependence of monthly income also from other factors: regional label at public events ( $\chi^2 = 11.491$ ; sig.  $p = 0.022$ ), product composition ( $\chi^2 = 10.373$ ; sig.  $p = 0.038$ ), product price ( $\chi^2 = 26.737$ ; sig.  $p = 0.000$ ) and regional label in foreign countries ( $\chi^2 = 9.787$ ; sig.  $p = 0.044$ ).

Tab 5. Dependence between monthly income and selected factors of consumer behaviour. Source: Author

Monthly income										
	<350 EUR		351–550 EUR		551–750 EUR		751–950 EUR		>950 EUR	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Purchase of domestic food	89.3%	10.7%	87.8%	12.2%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Purchase of regional food	48.4%	51.6%	62.5%	37.5%	73.3%	26.7%	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%	0.0%
Knowledge of regional labeling	63.0%	37.0%	74.5%	25.5%	100.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%	0.0%
Regional label in shops	23.1%	76.9%	32.5%	67.5%	53.6%	46.4%	40.0%	60.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Regional label at public	57.1%	42.9%	76.0%	24.0%	90.6%	9.4%	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%	0.0%
Product composition	82.9%	17.1%	78.6%	21.4%	75.0%	25.0%	50.0%	50.0%	42.9%	57.1%
Product price	82.9%	17.1%	83.9%	16.1%	55.6%	44.4%	43.8%	56.3%	14.3%	85.7%
Regional label in foreign countries	7.7%	92.3%	16.2%	83.8%	39.3%	60.7%	30.0%	70.0%	40.0%	60.0%

The results given in Table 5 demonstrate that respondents with an income of 350 EUR and more buy domestic foods in the range of up to 100%. They also buy regional food (ranging from 73.3% to 100%). Respondents from all categories of monthly income have knowledge of regional labeling. We noticed the positive responses regarding the regional labels in shops only in case of respondents with monthly income in the range of 551–750 EUR. Respondents with higher income do not attach importance to product composition or product price. This fact may reflect the signal that these consumers consider other factors such as label to be more important.

Purchase of regional products is linked to the locality. We assumed that there would be greater sales of the products at the Gemer-Malohont regional brand headquarters and regional producers' headquarters. This fact also arises from the current social situation of the region which has an entirely rural character and weak industrial activity. Using Perason's chi-square test, we tested this assumption but only dependence between locality and purchase of regional food ( $\chi^2 = 5.994$ ; sig.  $p = 0.014$ ) have been confirmed. The purchase of regional foods are connected to the producer's place.

Tab 6. Dependence between locality and selected factors of consumer behaviour. Source: Author

	Locality						Pearson chi-square test (df = 1)	
	Town		Village		Total			
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	$\chi^2$	P
<b>Purchase of domestic food</b>	96.7%	3.3%	90.1%	9.9%	93.1%	6.9%	2.164	0.141
<b>Purchase of regional food</b>	78.2%	21.8%	57.5%	42.5%	66.4%	33.6%	5.994	0.014
<b>Knowledge of regional labeling</b>	81.8%	18.2%	76.5%	23.5%	78.9%	21.1%	0.522	0.470
<b>Regional label in shops</b>	43.8%	56.3%	31.1%	68.9%	36.7%	63.3%	1.837	0.175
<b>Regional label at public events</b>	75.0%	25.0%	75.7%	24.3%	75.4%	24.6%	0.009	0.926
<b>Product composition</b>	70.1%	29.9%	77.1%	22.9%	74.0%	26.0%	0.933	0.334
<b>Product price</b>	68.7%	31.3%	69.9%	30.1%	69.3%	30.7%	0.026	0.872
<b>Regional label in foreign countries</b>	27.9%	72.1%	19.0%	81.0%	22.6%	77.4%	1.145	0.285

Tab. 6 shows that respondents who live in town buy domestic and regional food more than respondents with residence in the village. Respondents in town have more knowledge about labeling of product (81.8% of respondents with residence in town). The acquisition of the specific knowledge needed to sustain the continuity of activities in the local community is more represented by contact experience. This quality of knowledge acquisition can result in the subsequent and gradual acquisition of new local information, practice and use of local products. Overall, respondents who live in town or village do not buy regional foods in shops (total 63.3% of all respondents). They prefer to buy regional products at public events (total 74.0% of all respondents). Product composition and price are important factors for selected sample of consumers in region Gemer-Malohont.

#### 4. Conclusion

Uhrinová (2007) summarized the development of activities in the Gemer-Malohont region in selected operational programs. She points to the need to make the region more visible to its citizens, visitors and investors. Among Slovak regions, region of Gemer-Malohont is represented by the highest unemployment rate and with economic backwardness. On the other hand, it is a region with amazing historical, natural and developmental potential which is capable of forming and building its future and creating positive conditions for its development.

The origin of foods is the most important attribute of purchase, especially for women. In our research, 100% of all women in selected sample buy domestic food. Laroche et al. (2001) came to a similar conclusion on research focused on consumer eco-product behaviour in Canada. Married women with at least one child considered in particular the origin of the products when purchasing food. Origin of product is equally important for consumers in Ireland, Finland, France, Scotland and Wales who link the origin of product with quality and specific product labels (Maeve, McIntyre, 2000). Chalupová, Prokop, Rojík (2016) state a strong dependence on the purchase of regional products by gender. We confirmed only dependence in relation to purchase of domestic foods, not in relation to the regional foods.

Traditional food products are an important element of European culture and identity that contributes to the development and sustainability of rural areas and protects them from depopulation. Through our research, we studied the impact of the locality (town – country) on the purchase of such products. We have recorded a higher preference for regional products in the city.

The regional label strengthens the link between the local population and the region, encourages the engagement of the inhabitants in the regional events and mediates contacts with other entrepreneurs and institutions through various actions (Boháčik, 2011). The region as a whole can search more effectively for business opportunities, advertising, publishing in the press, via social networks, publishing in catalogues, flyers and occasional newspapers, organizing social events, trainings, educational activities (Štensová, 2013). From the point of view of sustainability and issues related to the regional labeling, it seems very important to increase the identity of the region through traditional products. Such motivation does not primarily lead to increase sales but to mobilize local community, a sustainable region (Siebenhuner, 2005) and thus to create cooperative networks of regional partnerships with the scope of creating joint activities.

As Hrubalová (2015) points out, the national network of Slovak local action groups which covers the national level of coordination and promotion of regional labeling in Slovakia, should focus on promoting regional labeling. Regional brands are also an attraction for foreign tourists and their importance is applied also in tourism. Atkin et al. (2017) demonstrated the positive importance of the agri-food sector, so-called "Traditional wine product" for tourism. Tourists, defined as „wine tourists“, identified this issue as the direct reason for their visit. In the Slovak Republic, there are no regional product brands from regions with significant potential for tourism development (Hrubalová, 2015), or, their promotion is inadequate, as is the case in the Gemer-Malohont region. Despite the higher price of regional products with respect to the poorly surveyed region of Gemer-Malohont, an assumption for their involvement in tourism arises. This factor has not been studied in our research.

Regional labeling has theoretical and practical consequences in the context of European rural life. Theoretical implications are based on the satisfaction of man and the people (our respondents) through interventions aimed at improving human capital and standard of living. The practical consequence is the possibility of facilitating access to the local labor market and local investment. Support for regional brands promotes cooperation with local suppliers. Their main goal is to use domestic resources and raw materials with the resulting production of local market support. The result presents the knowledge of respondents about regional brands and their interest with regard to the specifics of the localities.

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