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# The role of self-convergence effect in purchasing process vs brand familiarity on example of energy drink category in Polish consumers conditions

Relacja efektu zbieżności z "Ja" z postawami i efektywnością promowania nowego napoju energetycznego

The objective of the study was to verify the relation between the congruity effect between the product 'personality' image and one's self-image with the intention of purchase and valuation, in which attitudes played a mediating role. Analysis of the SEM-PLS structural model showed that the self-convergence effect influenced significantly the level of attitudes, which in turn determined the intention of purchase and willingness to pay for the product. It was shown that one's emotional attitude increased the amount of payment for a known product and decreased it for the unknown product. On the other hand, the cognitive and behavioral attitude increased the willingness to pay for the unknown product rather than the known one. The results expand the knowledge about the effect of convergence between the personality of the customer and the product image.

#### Nakłady finansowe na marketing firm sprzedających napoje energetyczne (np. Redbull, Tiger, Black) z roku na rok rosna. Kluczowe dla producentów i specjalistów od marketingu jest określenie silnych determinant sprzedaży swoich produktów. Celem artykułu było zweryfikowanie relacji efektu zbieżności obrazu produktu z obrazem własnego "Ja" z intencją zakupu i wartościowaniem, w której postawy odgrywały rolę pośredniczącą. W badaniu wykorzystano reklamę nieznanego i popularnego napoju energetycznego oraz oceniono efekt zbieżności produktu z "Ja", trzy rodzaje postaw wobec niego, intencję zakupu oraz postrzegane wartościowanie wyrażone w pieniądzach. Analiza modelu strukturalnego SEM-PLS wykazała, że efekt zbieżności z "Ja" wpływał istotnie na poziom postaw, a te z kolei determinowały intencję zakupu i postrzeganą wartość. Wykazano, że przy znanym produkcie postawa emocjonalna zwiększała jego postrzeganą wartość, a przy nieznanym ją zmniejszała. Natomiast postawa poznawcza i behawiorala silniej zwiększała wartość przy nieznanym produkcie niż znanym. Wyniki badania rozszerzają wiedzę o efekcie zbieżności z "Ja" i postaw w kontekście promocji napojów energetycznych.

#### Słowa kluczowe

attitudes towards the product, self-congruity effect, intention to buy, willingness to pay, structural equation modeling, energy drink

Kevwords

postawy wobec produktu, zbieżność z ja, intencja zakupu, modelowanie równań strukturalnych, napój energetyczny

### Artykuły Introduction

Energy drinks are a specific product class, which are widely consumed in Poland, yet their packaging differs little from one another. Without a label and the trademark, the buyer is not able to recognise a particular brand of drink and choose his favourite. In spite of this, there are energy drinks on the Polish market that have achieved their distinct recognition and are eagerly bought at a higher price. Kozirok (2017), indicates that the choice of energy drink is strongly determined by taste, smell, trust in the producer, loyalty to the brand, and price. However, the basic distinguishing feature of drinks is a brand. The familiarity with the brand affects consumer behavior and increases sales revenues. Based on the example of the best-selling energy drinks brands (i.e. Red Bull, Tiger, Black), it can be said that the producers of these beverages try to influence the position of their brand in the minds of consumers mainly due to marketing strategies. The observation of marketing expenditure statistics for 2016 shows that Red Bull, as compared to other brands, was the leader of advertising its drink in Poland (http://www. wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/napoje-energetycznereklamy-red-bull-black-tiger). Apparently, not only the taste and smell but the marketing activities that create the brand image in the minds of consumers, are one of the key determinants of the purchase. A certain strategy applied to create the image and perception of a brand is to combine its features with the consumer characteristics, the so called self-congruity effect (Kleine, Kleine, & Kernan, 1993). We think that this convergence is crucial for the success of selling energy drinks because it benefits from relying on the similarity between the personality of the brand and the personality of the consumer. The mentioned before Red Bull brand is trying to bind its drink very strongly with a full of adrenaline and excitement lifestyle. The product image that is close to the consumer's self-image influences the receipt of the brand and the purchase of the product. Therefore, it is very significant to relationship between determine the the self-convergence and attitudes towards a product and the desire to buy it and willingness to pay for it. Until now, the self- convergence effect has not been tested in the case of energy drinks sales efficacy. Thus, the following article focuses on the effect of self-convergence, attitudes towards such class of products as well as the intention to buy it and how it is valued in money.

For the needs of the study, two advertisements were created. One presented a well-known energy drink whereas the second one showed completely unknown energy drink. The ads were aimed to verify how attitudes towards the product mediate in the relationship between self-convergence and the intention of purchase and willingness to pay. The argument for testing a completely unknown drink is the fact that it is the way to assess, unburdened for social, psychological and marketing influences, the relation between the self-convergence effect, attitudes and willingness to pay. The unknown drink called Generix was contrasted with the Red Bull drink, which has established recognition and is the leader in energy drinks market in Poland (Kozirok, 2017).

### Self-convergence effect and Personality System Interactions Theory

The role of self-convergence can be seen as an expansion of the consumer 'Self' (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011). People buy a product more willingly if it coincides with their own vision of themselves. The convergence consists of two components: product image and self-image. Sirgy (1985), explains the phenomenon in the way that the products and services could be seen as having the same or a similar personality to humans. Such a personality is shaped by advertising, stereotypes, marketing action and other psychological as well as social factors. The features created in this way are, for example, friendly, modern, traditional, extreme, etc. and are distinguished from its operational activities, e.g. quality or prices. Thanks to its personality, the product creates a convergence between the picture of the product and the picture of human 'Self' as a result of its interaction with the consumer. This in turn impacts the preference of the product and its purchase willingness. Interaction of Personality Systems (PSI) theory by Kuhl (2000; 2001), explains and predicts this effect perfectly. It treats its own 'Self' as a system of personal collection of experiences, knowledge, values, needs, attitudes, etc., gathered during the social history of learning. This information is encoded in the extensive memory and forms an integrated system of representation of the 'Self'. This mechanism provides an extended network of associations between possible goals, meanings, and objects (Kuhl, 2001). The integrated 'Self' is not treated as a self-coded concept in a symbolic and verbal format. They are hidden representations of the 'Self' that function based on parallel processing of information and are an intuitive overview of the internal and external world. This theory explains the convergence effect in that whenever the 'Self' system is activated, the behavior guided by it manifests itself in the greater effort put into action, it is accompanied by positive emotions and attitudes, as well as all other resources of the integrated 'Self' system (Kuhl, 2000; 2001; Quirin, Bode, & Kuhl 2011). Active, allows you to make decisions and manage behavior in accordance with the aspects of the integrated 'Self' system that is in harmony with yourself. The consequence of this type of action is generally understood satisfaction and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Research in the context of the consumer indicates that the convergence effect is associated with many important market variables. e.g. product assessment (Quester, Karunaratna, & Goh, 2000), attitude towards it (Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012), the desire to buy it (Shahbazi & Ghorbani, 2016; Yu, Lin, & Chen, 2013), as well as loyalty to the brand and consumer satisfaction (Grzeskowiak & Sirgy, 2007; Hapsari & Adiwijaya, 2014).

## Attitudes towards the product

Attitudes towards products that involve personal disposition towards them are an important part of both psychology and also consumer behavior. In the concept of Allport (1935), attitude refers to the preparation to encountering certain objects, people, products, and events. Ajzen (1985) and Bocian and colleagues (2018) characterise attitudes as an instruction by which a person reacts positively or negatively to persons, objects or behaviors. Breckler (1984) distinguishes three components of such attitudes (cognitive, emotional and behavioral). The cognitive component (knowledge) reflects the openness to the product and knowledge about the product or its quality. They have the form of beliefs (correct or not) that the consumer has about the product, brand or service. The emotional component (feelings) refers to the sentiments and feelings towards the object, which may be good or bad, pleasing or unpleasant. Feelings, impressions, moods, and emotions directed to the product are this part of attitude. On the other hand, the behavioral component (action) refers to the action tendencies or the willingness of the person to behave towards the object in a certain way. Attitudes determine many behaviors, e.g. moral assessments of other people (Bocian et al., 2018), having a new child (Ajzen, 1985; 1991), buying organic cosmetics (Mombeini, Sha'abani, & Ghorbani, 2015), environmentally friendly products, and animals (de Graaf et al., 2016), as well as the desire to improve the quality of rural water and pay for it (Cosse, 1998).

## Intention to buy and willingness to pay

People, despite unexpected events, usually act accordingly to their intentions. Due to The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985), the intention to perform a specific behavior immediately precedes real behavior. If a person does not behave as intended, it means that the intention has changed, for example, due to the passage of time, new information or unexpected events (Ajzen, 1985; 1991). Ajzen distinguishes three factors determining the intention: attitudes towards behavior, subjectively perceived social norms of behavior and perceived control over behavior. Intention defined in this way is a willingly used indicator of the willingness to buy in consumer research concerning various drinks, e.g. juices (Gadioli et al., 2013), mineral water (Jankovi, 2014; Wu & Jang, 2014), as well as sweetened drinks (Warshaw, 1980). The product's evaluation is also the willingness to pay for it, which is defined as 'the maximum price the buyer is willing to pay for the product' (Didier & Lucie 2008; Franke & Schreier 2008). This measure is related to the intention of purchase, which is another criterion of its assessment, but expressed in money (Barber et al., 2010). In practice, researchers favour a direct approach to this construct and use the open-ended question format (Lipovetsky, Magnan, & Polzi, 2011; Miller, Hofstetter, Krohmer, & Zhang 2011).

## Predictions

From the above, it follows that the similarity of the personality of the product to the 'Self' is associated with the formation of favourable attitudes towards it, which in turn, are the factors leading to its purchase and valuation. When a product is known, its evaluation is based on previous experience with it. When a product is unknown, its perception must be based on 'Self' resources, that is personal needs, feelings, knowledge, acquired attitudes, etc. Based on the Personality System Interactions theory (Kuhl, 2000), it was anticipated that the unknown product (Generix) would be completely evaluated through the prism of one's integrated 'Self' system, which would be perceived as more beneficial. It would also be more preferably bought than a known product (Red Bull), which has already established a position on the market and in the minds of consumers. Relations between self-convergence, three types of attitudes and the

intention to buy the Generix and Red Bull drinks were proven by the questionnaire measurement of the above constructs along with the assessment of willingness to pay in PLN. To analyze the results, a statistical method of structural equations modeling based on the partial least squares SEM-PLS was used (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004; Nitzl, 2016; Rodríguez-Entrena, Schuberth, & Gelhard 2016).

#### Study. Method, measures and participants

The study used two versions of the electronic questionnaire and they were posted on online groups on Facebook, which bring together students of different faculties. For completing the questionnaires, the respondents had a chance to draw prizes with a total value of PLN 200 (portable speaker, headphones, and power bank). Three hundred twenty students of pedagogy and law participated in the study. The study had 2 conditions. The subjects in the Generix drink condition were about 4% older than the respondents in the Red Bull condition M = 22.84; SD = 4.85 vs M = 21.23; SD = 3.61, F(1,318) == 18.29; p < 0.01;  $\eta^2 = 0.04$ . The gender ratio was similar in both groups  $\chi^2(1) = 1.50; p = 0.221.$ Women constituted from 76% to 81% of the sample, and men from 24% to 19% (respectively Generix and Red Bull). All participants declared their lack of knowledge of the presented Generix drink and 100% enunciated the knowledge of the Red Bull drink.

The survey used for the research differed only with the presented brand of energy drink and consisted of 4 blocks. The subject began to fill in it by getting acquainted with the photo (see figure 1) and a description of one of the Generix / Red Bull energy drinks. The advertising description was as follows: "Generix / Red Bull is a modern drink with very beneficial properties energising to action. Due to the content of natural ingredients, it is perceived as completely safe by physicians and dieticians. Drinking it improves the functioning of the mind and helps to maintain the anticipated vigilance and dynamics during exercise. It makes you feel a pleasant desire for daily activities, work, and action. Generix (Red Bull) is dietetic, has a mild candy flavour and you can use it as a light addition to all meals".

Next, the subject went to the block in which the effect self-convergence with of the previously presented product was assessed. The next step examined respondent's the attitudes, as well as the intention to buy a Generix drink (Red Bull) along

Figure 1. The Generix and the Red Bull photos used in study



S o u r c e: the authors' research.

with the question about the willingness to pay (i.e. how much he or she would be able to pay for it in PLN). Responses to the test items in the survey were measured on the Likert scale (from 1 - Itdefinitely does not apply, up to 5 - Definitelyapplies). Each subject received a different order of filling in the scales inside the questionnaire (randomization of the test items of the questionnaire). In the third block, the respondent declared his sex, age, and knowledge of the presented product (Yes/No). In the last part he or she could leave an e-mail to take part in the prize draw. The content of the test items, which assessed the effect of convergence with 'Self', attitudes and intentions of purchase, is presented in Table 1. Based on the guidelines derived from the theory, it was formulated to anticipate that the product's convergence effect will be associated with three types of attitudes towards it, and those with the intention of buying and willingness to pay. These relationships will be stronger for an unknown product than the known one.

### Results

In order to analyze the results of the study, structural equations modeling was performed using the PLS method and WarpPLS software was used (Kock, 2011). Using the MGA — Multi-Group Analysis comparison procedure (Rodríguez--Entrena et al., 2016), the differences in the value of path relationships between groups of people watching the Generix and Red Bull ads were tested. The tested models were reflective variables

#### Table 1. Measurments and their idicators used in the study

Measure	Indicator			
Self-congruity effect	The product presented is compatibile with my values The product suits my lifestyle The product corresponds with my personality The product refers to my everyday life The product does not fit me (R) The product and I have some common features I could express myself through this product			
Purchase intention	I would like to buy this product I could pay for this product If this product appears in a store or distribution, I will try it out I could devote some effort to finding and buying this product I am interested in this product I have a desire to try this product			
Emotional attitude toward energy drink	I like this product This product is suitable and beneficial for me This product is coo This product is pleasant This product is nice to me The product seems to meet my needs			
Behavioral attitude toward energy drink	I could recommend this product to my friends I could show up with this product among other people I could promote this product I could lend this product to someone for testing I would be able to look for this product in the store if it was not in sight I would treat this product especially			
Cognitive attitude toward energy drink	This product can conquer the market This product will find its permanent place on store shelves This product become a part of everyday life of people This product will be something special in the store The product producer will achieve large profits from sales People will talk about this product			

The scale of answers: It definitely does not refer to me -1 / It definitely refer to me -5.

 $S\ o\ u\ r\ c\ e:$  the authors' research.

(Diamantopoulos, 1996; Iacobucci, 2010), which were conceptualized by corresponding test items.

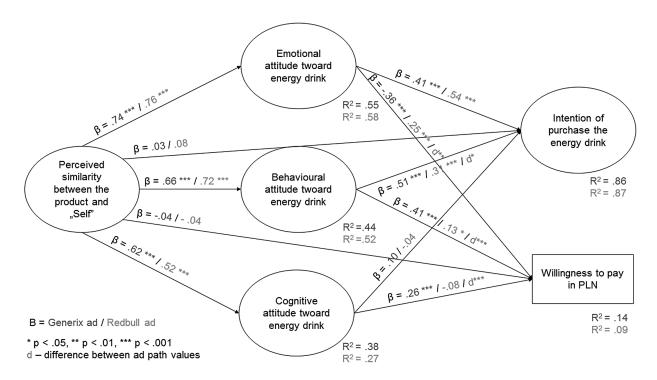
The model is shown in Figure 2. The reliability of measurements expressed by Cronbach's  $\alpha$ coefficient ranged from  $\alpha = 0.77$  to  $\alpha = 0.96$ , and by composite reliability coefficient from CR = 0.84to CR = 0.97. These results are presented in Table 2. The analysis of matching factors showed that the collected data were very well matched to the model in the Generix and Red Bull ad groups and were respectively: Tenenhaus GoF = 0.60, SRMR == 0.06, SPR = 0.73; Tenenhaus GoF = 0.58, SRMR = 0.07, SPR = 0.82.

Mediation analysis performed according to Baron and Kenny's method (1986) showed that attitudes completely mediated the effect of the

convergence effect on purchase intent and pricing in the context of Generix and Red Bull (indirect effect coefficients were respectively:  $\beta = 0.66$ ;  $p < 0.001, \beta = 0.26; p < 0.001, \beta = 0.68; p < 0.001,$  $\beta = 0.21; p < 0.01$ ). Both effects of mediation were not significantly different between groups p > 0.05. Table 3. Analysis of differences between groups in terms of path coefficients showed that in both ad groups the convergence effect had a similar force on the emotional, behavioral and cognitive attitude p < 0.001. Similarly, the emotional attitude was related to the intentions of purchasing p < 0.001. In the case of the Generix advertisement, the emotional attitude influenced the reduction of the product pricing  $\beta = -0.36$ ; p < 0.0011, and in the case of Red Bull advertising



## Figure 2. Tested SEM-PLS model of the relationship between the effect of self-convergence, attitudes, intention and perceived value in the group of known product (Red Bull) and the unknown product (Generix)



S o u r c e: the authors' research.

	Red B	Bull	Generix		
Variable	Composite reliability	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	Cronbach's α	
Self-convergence	0.84	0.77	0.84	0.77	
Intention to buy	0.96	0.95	0.96	0.95	
Emotional attitude	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.96	
Cognitive attitude	0.92	0.89	0.92	0.89	
Behavioral attitude	0.94	0.92	0.94	0.92	

#### Table 2. Results of the used scales measurement accuracy in the groups of a known and unknown products

S o u r c e: the authors' research.

## Table 3. Results of the mediation analysis of attitudes between the convergence effect and intentions as well as valuation in the product group known and unknown

	Red Bull (a)	Generix (b)	Red Bull (a)	Generix (b)	T (1:66 1)
Indirect effect	β	β	s.e	s.e	T (diff a vs b)
Self-convergence $\rightarrow$ Attitudes $\rightarrow$ Intention	0.66***	0.68***	0.07	0.07	0.21
$Self\text{-}convergence \rightarrow Attitudes \rightarrow Valued \ price$	0.26***	0.21**	0.08	0.08	0.47

 $^*\!p$  < 0.05,  $^{**}\!p$  < 0.01,  $^{***}\!p$  < 0.001.

S o u r c e: the authors' research.

the same attitude determined the increase of  $\beta$  = = 0.25; p < 0.001. In case of behavioral attitude, it was observed that the Generix advertisement had a stronger influence on the purchase intention than the Red Bull  $\beta = 0.51$ ; p < 0.001 vs  $\beta = 0.31$ ; p < 0.001, t = 1.80; p < 0.05. In terms of price valuation, an analogous result was obtained. A stronger behavioral attitude was associated with a higher valuation of the Generix drink than Red Bull  $\beta = 0.41$ ; p < 0.001 vs  $\beta = 0.13$ ; p < 0.05, t == 3.06; p < 0.001. Cognitive attitude had no meaning in the context of the intentions of buying in both ads, but in the Generix advertising it was associated with a significantly higher valuation than in the Red Bull advertising,  $\beta = 0.26$ ; p < 0.001vs  $\beta = -0.08$ ; p > 0.05, t = 3.10; p < 0.001. The direct effect of the convergence effect on the purchase intent and valuation in PLN was close to zero in both groups of p > 0.05. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

willingness to pay for the product. These attitudes, however, were differently related to the intention of purchase and perceived value in the context of a known and unknown product. The behavioral attitude was more strongly associated with the intention of purchasing and valuation of an unknown than the known product. Emotional attitude, on the other hand, decreased the perceived value of the unknown product and increased the value of the known one. The cognitive attitude had no role in explaining the intention of the purchase. On the other hand, it was important in terms of valuation the product price and was manifested in the fact that in case of an unknown product it significantly increased the valuation and did not associate it with the known one.

As expected, the effect of self-convergence with the product evoked more favorable attitudes towards it (Hryniewicz, 2018; Liu et al., 2012), and

	Red Bull (a)	Generix (b)	Path diff (a vs b)	
	ß	в	t	
Self-convergence $\rightarrow$ Intention	0.09	-0,04	1,12	
Self-convergence $\rightarrow$ Valued price	-0.04	-0,04	0,00	
$\mathbf{Self\text{-}convergence} \rightarrow \mathbf{Emotional} \ \mathbf{attitude}$	0.76***	0,73***	0,25	
Self-convergence $\rightarrow$ Cognitive intention	0.52***	0,62***	0,97	
$\mathbf{Self\text{-}convergence} \rightarrow \mathbf{Behavioral} \ \mathbf{attitude}$	0.72***	0,66***	0,56	
Emotional attitude $\rightarrow$ Intention	0.53***	0,43***	0,98	
Cognitive intention $\rightarrow$ Intention	0.05	0,05	0,00	
Behavioral attitude $\rightarrow$ Intention	0.31***	0,50***	1,80*	
Emotional attitude $\rightarrow$ Valued price	0.24***	-0,34***	5,50***	
Behavioral attitude $\rightarrow$ Valued price	-0.08	0,26**	3,10***	
Behavioral attitude $\rightarrow$ Valued price	0.15*	0,47***	3,06**	

Table 4. Results of comparisons of the severity of the relationship value in the groups of known and unknown product

p < 0.05, p < 0.01, p < 0.01, p < 0.001.

Source: the authors' research.

#### Summary and discussion

The analyses showed that the measurements of the tested variables were reliable, and the collected data was well-matched to the conceptualised model in both ads. It was also shown that in both groups of products attitudes towards each of them completely mediated the relationship between the effect of self-convergence and the intention to buy and these led to intentions of purchase and payment (Ajzen, 1985; Barber et al., 2010; Cosse, 1998). While controlling the attitudes, the effect of a direct relationship of convergence between myself and the willingness to buy and price valuation was reduced in both groups of products. basis of theobserved People on the show self-convergence with the product a willingness to buy and pay because they display a favourable attitude towards it. The study also revealed that an emotional response to the product

is associated with a similar desire to buy a known as well as unknown beverage. However, the lack of knowledge of the advertised product causes that emotional reaction to it reduces the willingness to pay, and it increases the formulation of beliefs and dispositions to act on it. In the case of a valuation of a known product, the emotional relationship increases its value, and the beliefs about the product and the willingness to act on it, do not have much significance in this situation. Apparently, when the self-convergence effect appears, the 'Self' as one's personality system (Kuhl, 2000), which values an unknown product based on person's own experience, values, and especially emotions, increases the desire and understates the product's value to better satisfy the consumer's well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Grzeskowiak & Sirgy 2008; Ryan et al., 2008). In the context of the known product, the 'Self' evaluates the product based on previous experiences with it, which sometimes happen without the consumer's awareness and sneak in undetected by the 'Self', e.g. by means of advertisements and other information channels and the band as the self-infiltration (Kazén,

Baumann, & Kuhl 2003). Such infiltration takes place when we take into account the Red Bull brand promotion and sales throughout Poland. In the case of convergence with the known product, the 'Self' system perceives the product through the prism of its own and artificial experiences instilled by the market. This results in the fact that the evaluation and willingness to buy it is not as strong and completely compatible with the resources of 'Self' as it is in the case of an unknown product. The perceived self-convergence with the new product engages all the resources of the integrated 'Self' system in the desire to purchase and the pricing, which makes it more favorable and valued by the 'Self'. The strength resulting from this match makes the product more desirable.

As for future research, for theoretical progress in the context of the self-convergence effect, it seems crucial to investigate when this effect appears and when it disappears. A promising proposal is the manipulation of affective states in advertisements that facilitate and hinder access to the 'Self' system (Kuhl, 2000). According to Quirin and the team (Quirin et al., 2011), positive affect increases, and negative affect decreases access to 'Self'.

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## **PWE** poleca

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Prezentowana książka ma charakter teoretyczno-empiryczny. W rozdziale pierwszym omówiono genezę prosumpcji i jej istotę. Wskazano na duże rozbieżności w jej definiowaniu przez różnych badaczy, proponując własną autorską definicję tego pojęcia. Rozdział drugi poświęcony jest prosumpcji jako złożonemu zachowaniu rynkowemu. Przedstawiono ją również w ujęciu procesowym. Omówiono cechy prosumenta jako aktywnego uczestnika rynku i marketingowego partnera oferentów. W rozdziale trzecim przedstawiono natomiast prosumpcję w ujęciu czterowymiarowym, przyjmując, że ma ona wymiar innowacyjny, relacyjny, wizerunkowy i etnocentryczny. Dwa kolejne rozdziały tworzą empiryczną część opracowania, w której na podstawie wyników badań pierwotnych dokonano empirycznej weryfikacji przyjętych założeń. Podsumowaniem dokonanych analiz jest opracowany przez autorkę finalny model prosumpcji.

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