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Examining Changes in Brand Preferences During Crisis: The Case of Ukraine

[Zkoumání změn v preferencích značky během krize: Případ Ukrajiny]

Anastasiia Lukianenko[1]

[1]*Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, Fakulta managementu a ekonomiky, Mostní 5139, 760 01 Zlín*
Email: lukianenko@utb.cz

Abstract: This paper explores the shift in consumer brand preferences in Ukraine in response to the ongoing full-scale invasion since 2022, specifically examining the change from international to local brands. By employing a survey-based approach, the study seeks to assess changes in consumer attitudes towards brand reliability, quality perceptions, and willingness to support local businesses both before and after the onset of the conflict. The questionnaire utilizes a Likert scale to gather data on these preferences, alongside demographic factors such as age and proximity to active military activities. The insights gained from this research aim to enhance understanding of consumer behaviour during wartime conditions, offering valuable implications for marketers and policymakers in adapting strategies to meet evolving consumer needs in crisis situations.

Keywords: consumer behaviour, crisis, ethnocentrism, local brands, Ukrainian economy.

JEL classification: D12, M31, F52, P16

Introduction

The ongoing war in Ukraine has disrupted various aspects of life, including consumer behavior, brand preferences, and economic stability. War represents one of the most extreme forms of disruption, with its impact going beyond the performance and profitability of businesses to threaten the survival of both companies and individuals. Businesses in war-affected regions, such as Ukraine, operate in environments marked by high levels of uncertainty, depleted resources, ineffective financial systems, a disregard for the rule of law, and increased black-market activity, all while heavily relying on foreign aid (Forrer and Katsos 2015). The war in Ukraine offers a unique setting for examining how businesses and consumers respond to such crises, providing a litmus test for existing theories on consumer behaviour, brand loyalty, and economic resilience.

Unlike past conflicts in isolated regions with limited global economic influence, the war in Ukraine affects a country that is deeply integrated into the global economy. Ukraine, with over 1.3 million operating companies, is a key supplier of vital global commodities such as iron ore, steel, cereals, agricultural products, electrical machinery, and equipment (Obłój and Voronovska 2024). The Ukrainian economy's integration into global supply chains makes the conflict not only a national crisis but also one with global economic consequences. Businesses and consumers in Ukraine face unprecedented challenges, and their response to these challenges offers important insights into how conflict influences consumer behavior, particularly regarding brand preferences.

One of the most significant findings to emerge from the current conflict is the role of consumer spending in supporting local producers, which is now seen as vital for national security. According to Yuliia Svyrydenko, the Minister of Economy of Ukraine, "support for Ukrainian producers is an important component of our national security. Indeed, we can only finance the security and defense sector with the money we earn domestically." This highlights the connection between consumer behaviour and national security, where purchasing decisions impact the economic survival of the country.

The Ukrainian business sector has shown extraordinary resilience during the war, with many companies continuing to fulfill contractual obligations even under enemy fire. This resilience not only underscores the dedication of local businesses but also inspires Ukrainian consumers to prioritize local brands, reinforcing the social and economic fabric necessary to withstand the challenges posed by conflict. Supporting local producers has thus become a symbol of national solidarity, making consumer choices a powerful tool in the country's efforts to navigate and survive the ongoing conflict.

This context provides the foundation for understanding how brand preferences in Ukraine have shifted since the war began. The study at hand seeks to explore the factors that influence these shifts, focusing on the increasing preference for local brands over international ones. This research delves into the motivations behind consumer behaviour during a crisis, examining how perceptions of reliability, quality, and economic impact drive the growing support for local brands. Additionally, it assesses whether demographic factors such as age, income, education, and proximity to military activities influence these shifts, offering a comprehensive view of how the war has reshaped consumer preferences in Ukraine.

By examining these factors, the study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of consumer behaviour in times of crisis, with a particular focus on how national loyalty and economic imperatives shape purchasing decisions. As Ukraine faces one of the most significant challenges in its history, this research provides valuable insights for businesses and policymakers looking to navigate the turbulent economic landscape and align their strategies with the changing needs and priorities of Ukrainian consumers.

1 Literature Review

The early decades of the 21st century have witnessed numerous major events, including the US-led 'War on Terror' (since 2001), the Global Financial Crisis (2007-2008), the Arab Spring (2010s), Europe's migration crisis (2015), the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), and the Russo-Ukrainian war (ongoing since 2014).

Casson (2022) identifies four main types of crises: natural disasters, political crises, financial crises, and economic crises. Political crises arise from human actions, such as when nationalist leaders create conflict through populism. Hardman (2019) notes that populism can be a significant issue for both authoritarian regimes and established democracies. These political crises can lead to economic problems and affect not just the countries involved but the global economy as well.

Globalisation has made our societies and economies highly interconnected. Disruptions from political instability, regional conflicts, public health issues, environmental disasters, or financial shocks can have lasting and unpredictable effects on consumers. The study of consumer behaviour during crises has gained significant attention because it is vital for businesses and professionals worldwide. Research shows that when a crisis occurs, consumers change their behaviours and attitudes. While some of these changes last, others fade over time (Vázquez-Martínez et al. 2021).

Consumer purchasing behaviour refers to the actions and perceptions individuals have before buying goods or services (Solomon 2016). Understanding this behaviour is crucial for businesses as it helps them identify target markets and create effective marketing strategies (Zhong et al. 2019). Several factors influence consumer decision-making, including cultural, social, personal, and psychological aspects, with cultural factors often playing a significant, albeit implicit, role. Keillor and Fields (1996) argue that culture is the most fundamental of these factors.

During stressful and unpredictable times, consumer buying patterns tend to change. The perception of risk significantly influences how people react in uncertain situations. Concerns about potential unemployment and future spending prospects often lead to reduced purchases related to leisure and entertainment. Consumers may buy less overall or choose larger items to avoid making repeated purchases. Brand loyalty also shifts, as consumers become more focused on price than quality (Mansoor and Jalal 2010). Ferrell et al. (2022) found that during a crisis, even those who can afford it are less likely to spend on high-quality or premium products.

According to Theodoridou et al. (2019), research shows that individuals act more rationally during crises, often prioritising essential goods over luxury items. A study by Vázquez-Martínez et al. (2021) found significant changes in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 crisis. Consumers focused strongly on basic needs, driven by practical motivations. In contrast, spending on categories like electronics declined due to their higher costs and uncertainty surrounding lockdowns.

This study indicated that individual perceptions of the crisis influenced purchasing behaviour more than objective facts, such as infection rates or government actions. It showed that how consumers personally interpret a crisis shapes their buying decisions more than external realities. Additionally, regardless of the specific measures enacted by governments, consumer responses tended to be similar, highlighting a universal impact of perceived urgency on purchasing patterns.

Siamagka and Balabanis (2015) discuss consumer ethnocentrism, which Shimp and Sharma (1987) define as the belief that buying foreign-made products is inappropriate or even immoral. Ethnocentric consumers view purchasing imported goods as unpatriotic and harmful to their domestic economy, as it can lead to job losses (Siamagka and Balabanis 2015).

Wang and Chen (2004) found that consumers in developed countries often view local products more favourably than imported ones. However, in emerging markets, consumers may see foreign goods as superior. Good and Huddleston (1995) observed that consumers from nations with a history of oppression, such as Poland, show higher levels of ethnocentrism compared to those from countries viewed as conquerors, like Russia.

Following this idea, Ostrovskiy et al. (2019) explored ethnocentrism's impact on consumer behaviour in Kazakhstan. Their findings revealed that Kazakhstani consumers exhibit high levels of ethnocentrism, animosity, and conservatism, which may negatively affect their attitudes toward and willingness to purchase products from Russia and Belarus.

The research suggests that during crises, consumers may prioritise local economic support and community resilience, which can make local brands more appealing. Consumers tend to consider not just the functional benefits of products but also the symbolic value of supporting local businesses during tough times. When consumers notice a price difference between local and foreign brands, their preference for local brands increases (Hansen 2005).

A 2024 study by Gradus Research on consumer trends in Ukraine identified key patterns. The desire to support local producers is a significant factor influencing consumer choices, especially amid the ongoing conflict. Survey data indicates that Ukrainian consumers are cautious about changing their brand preferences, with over half (54%) preferring familiar brands. This reflects a strong emotional connection to established products during uncertain times (Gradus Research 2024).

This willingness to support local brands is primarily motivated by a desire to buy Ukrainian products, with 57% of respondents citing this as their main reason for trying new brands. Cost savings are also important, with 45% of consumers highlighting this as a factor for exploring new options (Gradus Research 2024).

The shift towards local brands is evident in changing consumer behaviour. In December 2022, 69% of respondents expressed a willingness to purchase from Ukrainian producers. This figure has since risen to 74%, indicating a growing preference for domestic brands over foreign ones. Such data illustrates the changing landscape of consumer preferences in Ukraine and highlights a strong nationalistic sentiment driving support for local producers during the challenges posed by the conflict (Gradus Research 2024).

To further support Ukrainian producers and encourage spending on domestic goods, the Ukrainian government launched the National Cashback program on August 24, 2024. This initiative offers consumers a 10% cashback on purchases of products made in Ukraine, with a government-defined list of eligible items. Yuliia Svyrydenko, the Minister of Economy of Ukraine, emphasised the benefits of this program, stating that encouraging local purchases not only creates jobs but also contributes to government revenue. "For every hryvnia spent on Ukrainian goods, up to 40% is returned to the budget," she noted, emphasising the link between consumer spending and funding for national security (Ministry of Economy of Ukraine 2023).

These findings underline the necessity for businesses to adapt their strategies in response to changing consumer priorities during crises. This study aims to understand the underlying factors driving these changes, specifically focusing on perceptions of brand reliability, quality, and support for local businesses in times of crisis. By exploring these shifts, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing consumer choices in crisis situations and provide valuable insights for marketers and policymakers.

2 Research Methodology

The main objective of the presented article was to investigate how the full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022 has influenced consumer brand preferences, specifically the shift from international brands to local ones. The study aims to understand the underlying factors driving these changes, including perceptions of brand reliability, quality, and support for local businesses in times of crisis. In direct link to the main objective set out above, the following key research questions have been formulated (RQ), following the hypothesis in Table 1.

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Table 1: Research questions and hypothesis

RQ1: How did the conflict influence consumer preferences for local brands compared to international brands?	
H1: Since the conflict, consumers prefer local brands over international brands more than they did before the conflict.	H0: There is no significant change in consumer preferences for local brands compared to international brands since the conflict.
RQ2: Has the perceived reliability of local brands changed since the conflict?	
H2: Consumers perceive local brands as more reliable since the conflict compared to before.	H0: There is no significant change in consumers' perception of local brand reliability since the conflict.
RQ3: Has the perceived quality of local brands improved compared to international brands since the conflict?	
H3: Since the conflict, consumers perceive the quality of local brands as more comparable to international brands.	H0: There is no significant change in consumers' perception of the quality of local brands compared to international brands.
RQ4: Are consumers more likely to support local brands because of their contribution to the local economy since the conflict?	
H4: Since the conflict, consumers are more likely to support local brands because they contribute to the local economy.	H0: There is no significant change in consumers' likelihood to support local brands due to their economic contribution.
RQ5: Has consumers' willingness to pay a premium for local brands changed since the conflict?	
H5: Consumers are more willing to pay a premium for local brands since the conflict.	H0: There is no significant change in consumers' willingness to pay a premium for local brands since the conflict.
RQ6: Does proximity to military activities influence the shift in preference for local brands?	
H6: Proximity to military activities significantly influences the preference for local brands over international brands since the conflict.	H0: Proximity to military activities does not significantly influence the preference for local brands over international brands.
RQ7: Do different age groups show varying changes in brand preferences since the conflict?	
H7: Younger consumers (e.g., Gen Z and Millennials) show a greater shift toward local brands compared to older age groups since the conflict.	H0: Age does not significantly influence the shift toward local brands since the conflict.
RQ8: Do different income groups show varying changes in brand preferences since the conflict?	
H8: Different income groups show varying changes in brand preferences since the conflict.	H0: Income groups do not significantly influence the shift in brand preferences since the conflict.
RQ9: Do different education levels influence the shift in preference for local brands?	
H9: Different education levels significantly influence the shift in preference for local brands since the conflict.	H0: Education levels do not significantly influence the shift in preference for local brands since the conflict.

Source: author's compilation

To answer research questions, this study employed quantitative research. Descriptive statistics was chosen to investigate characteristics, averages and trends; inferential statistics (non-parametric tests Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and Kruskal-Walli Test, with no need to check for normality) was used to identify significant differences in brand preferences.

The research took place in September 2024, targeting Ukrainian consumers across various demographic groups. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions. The questionnaire included several sections: demographic information to gather basic information about participants (age, gender, income, proximity to active conflict zones) and Likert-scale questions assessing changes in consumer attitudes towards brand reliability, quality perceptions, and their willingness to support local brands. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale, with the following response options:

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1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

A random sampling approach was utilised to collect data, a total of 93 respondents participated in the survey. Although the sample is relatively small, it allows for meaningful statistical analysis, such as paired t-tests, to evaluate changes in pre- and post-conflict brand perceptions. The sample size was determined based on the availability of respondents and time constraints, which are acknowledged as potential limitations of the study. Future research could build upon this by using a larger sample to increase the generalizability of the findings.

The research adopted a quantitative methodology through a survey distributed via social media platforms, targeting the Ukrainian populace to ensure the relevance of findings to Ukrainian brands. The questionnaire was written in Ukrainian to facilitate comprehension among the target demographic. The composition of the research sample was as follows (Table 2):

Table 2: Characteristics of the quantitative research sample

Identification marks	Possibility of answers	Count	Total
Age	less than 11	1	93
	12 - 27	43	
	28 - 43	23	
	44 - 59	21	
	60 – 78	5	
	79+	0	
Gender	Female	78	93
	Male	14	
	Other	1	
Education	High School	8	93
	Bachelor's	29	
	Master's	46	
	Other	10	
Income level	Low	15	93
	High	64	
	Medium	9	
	Not to mention	5	
Location	Not close to active military activities	55	93
	Somewhat close to active military activities	15	
	Very close to active military activities	3	
	I am not in Ukraine	20	

Source: author's compilation

The respondents represent a broad range of age groups, with the majority being younger consumers from Gen Z and Gen Y (12-27 and 28-43 y. o.). This suggests that the changes in preferences are not restricted to a particular age group. Most respondents are female, which may influence overall perceptions. A significant portion of respondents are not in close proximity to military activities, with some loving abroad. This may affect their perception of local vs. international brands, as proximity to conflict zones can shape consumer behaviour. The majority of respondents report medium income levels and hold bachelor's or master's degrees, suggesting that the sample consists of moderately educated and middle-income individuals.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3: Mean, median, mode and standard deviation of responses

Questionnaire statements	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Before the conflict, I preferred purchasing products from local brands over international brands.	2.88	3.00	3	1.458
Since the onset of the conflict, I prefer purchasing products from local brands over international brands.	3.37	4.00	4	1.317
Before the conflict, I believed that local brands were more reliable than international brands.	2.23	3.00	1	1.278
Since the conflict, I believe that local brands are more reliable than international brands.	2.94	3.00	3	1.309
Before the conflict, I felt that the quality of local brands was comparable to that of international brands.	2.68	3.00	1	1.400
Since the conflict, I feel that the quality of local brands is comparable to that of international brands.	3.44	4.00	4	1.306
Before the conflict, I was more likely to support local brands because they contributed to the local economy.	2.92	3.00	3	1.287
Since the conflict, I am more likely to support local brands because they contribute to the local economy.	4.02	4.00	4	0.978
Before the conflict, I was willing to pay a premium for local brands over international brands	1.86	1.00	1	1.212
Since the conflict, I am willing to pay a premium for local brands over international brands	3.15	4.00	4	1.414
Since the onset of the conflict, I prefer purchasing products from local brands over international brands.	3.37	4.00	4	1.317

Source: author's compilation

Based on the descriptive statistics (Table 3), there has been a shift in consumer behaviour regarding local brands since the onset of the conflict in Ukraine. Before the conflict, consumer *preferences for local brands over international* ones were relatively neutral. The mean score was **2.88** on a scale of 1 to 5, where **3** represents a neutral stance. The most frequent response (mode) was also **3**. This suggests that, prior to the conflict, consumers had no strong preference toward local brands.

However, since the conflict began, mean score increased to **3.37**, indicating that consumers are now more inclined to prefer local brands. The median score also shifted from **3** to **4**, and the

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mode became **4**, showing that many respondents now **agree** that they prefer local brands over international ones.

Before the conflict, consumers were generally neutral to slightly sceptical about *the reliability of local brands*, with a mean score of **2.23**. The median was **3**, but the mode was **1**, indicating that a portion of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that local brands were reliable.

Since the conflict, the mean has risen to **2.94**, and the mode shifted to **3** (neutral). While the change is subtle, this suggests a slight improvement in the perception of reliability of local brands. More respondents now see local brands as either neutral or somewhat reliable compared to international brands.

Before the conflict, *the perceived quality of local brands* relative to international ones had a mean of **2.68**, reflecting neutral attitudes. The mode was **1** (strongly disagree), showing that some consumers doubted the quality of local products.

Since the conflict, the perception of quality has improved, with the mean score increasing to **3.44**. This shift indicates that more consumers now believe the quality of local brands is comparable to international brands. The mode of **4** shows that a significant number of respondents agree with this sentiment.

Before the conflict, the mean score for supporting local brands because they *contribute to the local economy* was **2.92**, indicating a neutral position. However, since the conflict, this score has increased to **4.02**, with the mode at **4**. This suggests that consumers now strongly support local brands, likely due to heightened awareness of the economic benefits of supporting local businesses during the crisis.

Before the conflict, respondents were generally unwilling to *pay a premium for local brands*, with a mean of 1.86. The mode was 1, reflecting strong disagreement with the notion of paying more for local products.

Since the conflict, however, the mean has increased to 3.15, and the mode has shifted to 4 (agree), suggesting that consumers are now more willing to pay a premium for local brands. This could reflect a growing sense of loyalty to local businesses or a belief that local brands have improved in quality and reliability.

This shift could be attributed to several factors, including heightened nationalism, a desire to support local businesses in a time of need, or an improved perception of local brands' quality and reliability. Further research could explore the psychological and cultural factors driving this change, as well as the long-term sustainability of this shift in consumer behaviour.

3.2 Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

The purpose of this section is to report the outcomes of the statistical analyses performed to address the Research Questions (RQ1 – RQ5). The Wilcoxon signed rank test is a frequently used nonparametric test for paired based on independent units of analysis (Rosner et al. 2006).

Table 4: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test results

Research Question	Mean Rank (Positive Ranks)	Mean Rank (Negative Ranks)	Z-Value	p-Value	Conclusion
RQ1: Preference for local brands	32.25	34.24	-5.57	< 0.001	Significant increase
RQ2: Perceived reliability of local brands	32.91	28.7	-3.883	< 0.001	Significant increase
RQ3: Perceived quality of local brands	22.8	27.38	-4.255	< 0.001	Significant increase
RQ4: Support for local brands due to economic reasons	27.63	30.17	-5.922	< 0.001	Significant increase
RQ5: Willingness to pay a premium for local brands	31.75	31.48	-6.04	< 0.001	Significant increase

Source: author's compilation

RQ1: The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test indicated a significant increase in *preference for local brands* since the conflict ($Z = -5.570$, $p < 0.001$). The mean rank for positive ranks was higher than for negative ranks, showing that more respondents preferred local brands after the conflict. We reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that the conflict significantly influenced consumer preferences, with a shift toward local brands over international brands.

RQ2: The test revealed a significant increase in the *perceived reliability* of local brands since the conflict ($Z = -3.883$, $p < 0.001$). The mean rank for positive ranks was higher than for negative ranks, indicating that consumers now see local brands as more reliable. We reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that consumers perceive local brands as more reliable since the conflict.

RQ3: The test showed a significant improvement in the *perceived quality* of local brands ($Z = -4.255$, $p < 0.001$). The mean rank for positive ranks was higher than for negative ranks, suggesting that consumers now view local brands as having better quality. We reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that the perceived quality of local brands has significantly improved since the conflict.

RQ4: The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test indicated a significant increase in *support for local brands due to their economic contribution* ($Z = -5.922$, $p < 0.001$). The positive ranks outnumbered the negative ranks, meaning more consumers are supporting local brands for economic reasons since the conflict. We reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that consumers are more likely to support local brands because of their contribution to the local economy since the conflict.

RQ5: The test results showed a significant increase in consumers' *willingness to pay a premium* for local brands ($Z = -6.040$, $p < 0.001$). The mean rank for positive ranks was higher than for negative ranks, indicating that consumers are now more willing to pay a premium for local brands. We reject the null hypothesis (H0) and conclude that consumers are more willing to pay a premium for local brands since the conflict.

The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results provide strong evidence of significant changes in consumer behaviour following the Russia’s invasion in 2022. In every case, the null hypothesis was rejected, and significant shifts in preference, reliability, quality perception, support for local brands, and willingness to pay a premium were observed.

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3.3 Kruskal-Wallis Test

The purpose of this section is to report the outcomes of the statistical analyses performed to address the Research Questions (RQ6 – RQ9). A Kruskal-Wallis test is used to determine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between the medians of three or more independent groups. This test is the nonparametric equivalent of the one-way ANOVA and is typically used when the normality assumption is violated (Bobbitt 2019).

Table 5: Kruskal-Wallis test results

Research Question	Kruskal-Wallis H	Degrees of Freedom (df)	p-Value	Conclusion
RQ6: Influence of proximity to military activities on brand preferences	1.048	3	0.790	Not significantly differ
RQ7: Influence of age on brand preferences	3.077	4	0.545	Not significantly differ
RQ8: Influence of income on brand preferences	10.727	3	0.013	Significantly differ
RQ9: Influence of education on brand preferences	0.569	3	0.904	Not significantly differ

Source: author's compilation

RQ6: Kruskal-Wallis test result suggests that there is no significant difference in how brand preferences have shifted between different age groups (Gen Z, Gen Y, Baby Boomers etc.). The shift in preferences for local brands is consistent across all age groups. We fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0).

RQ7: The result shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the shift in preferences for local brands between respondents in different proximity categories. This means that the change in preferences for local brands is consistent across all proximity levels. We fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0).

RQ8: The p-value of 0.013 is less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the differences in the shift in brand preferences between the different income groups are statistically significant and we reject the null hypothesis (H0). The data shows that different income groups have varying changes in their preferences for local brands. This could be due to differences in economic stability, purchasing power, or priorities during the conflict, with certain income groups potentially prioritizing local brands more due to economic or patriotic considerations.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that the High-Income group significantly differs from both the Low Income (p-value = 0.003 < 0.05) and Medium Income (p-value = 0.005 < 0.05) groups in terms of how their brand preferences have shifted since the conflict. This may suggest that wealthier consumers are either more or less likely to switch to local brands compared to their lower-income counterparts.

However, there is no significant difference between Low Income and Medium Income groups (p-value = 0.27 > 0.05), indicating a similar trend in preference shifts for these groups.

RQ9: The test shows that there are no statistically significant differences in the shift in preferences for local brands between respondents with different education levels. This means that the change in preferences for local brands is consistent across all education levels. We fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0).

Analyzing Kruskal-Wallis test, the results revealed that age and proximity to military activities did not significantly impact changes in brand preferences, suggesting a consistent shift across these groups. Similarly, education level was found to have no significant effect on preference shifts.

However, income emerged as a key factor influencing consumer behavior. The significant differences in brand preference shifts between high-income individuals and their low- and medium-income counterparts suggest that economic status plays a crucial role in how consumers respond to crises, possibly due to differences in purchasing power and priorities. While high-income consumers displayed a distinct change in brand preferences, low – and medium-income groups exhibited similar patterns.

3.4 Discussion

This study found a significant increase in consumer preference for local brands since the conflict, supporting the hypothesis that the crisis prompted a shift toward local brands. This contrasts with the findings of Ismail et al. (2012)**,** who concluded that in Pakistan, the support for local products was more idealistic than practical, with 82% of consumers not considering the country of origin when making purchase decisions. In our case, the conflict may have heightened national loyalty and solidarity, driving consumers to favour local brands as a form of support for the local economy during times of crisis. This is further evidenced by the significant changes in behaviour observed in our study, whereas Ismail et al. (2012) noted that while ethnocentrism was high, it did not translate into actual behaviour, particularly among women.

Our results show that consumers now perceive local brands as more reliable since the conflict. This shift in perception could be explained by a combination of necessity and national pride, as consumers have had to rely more on local products due to the disruption of global supply chains. This aligns with the findings of Elliott and Cameron (1994), who suggested that the quality of products can replace feelings of hostility or enmity toward foreign goods. In situations of crisis, such as the one observed in this study, consumers may reassess the reliability of local brands, particularly when international products become less available or accessible.

The perceived quality of local brands has also significantly improved, with more consumers now viewing them as comparable to international brands. This finding echoes Elliott and Cameron's (1994) assertion that the perceived quality of goods often overrides other factors such as national enmity or loyalty. As the crisis unfolded, local brands may have taken the opportunity to showcase their value, allowing consumers to view them as viable alternatives to international options.

The support for local brands due to their contribution to the local economy significantly increased. This finding aligns with previous research, such as Grunert et al. (2021) and Robinson et al. (2021), which suggested that individuals more impacted by a crisis are more inclined to adapt their behaviour to align with a greater purpose, such as supporting the local economy.

A significant increase in the willingness to pay a premium for local brands was observed. This shift may be attributed to a combination of increased trust in local products and a desire to support local businesses during challenging times. Mrad et al. (2013) suggested that consumers might take boycotting actions against foreign goods from hostile nations, leading to increased support for local brands. While our study did not specifically examine the impact of foreign

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hostility, the willingness to pay a premium for local products suggests that consumers are prioritizing local loyalty over cost.

Conclusion

This study has provided a detailed examination of how the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has reshaped consumer preferences for local brands. The findings indicate a significant shift toward local brands, driven by increased perceptions of reliability, improved quality, and a stronger willingness to support domestic producers due to their contribution to the national economy. These shifts in behaviour align with the notion that, in times of national crisis, consumer choices extend beyond mere product preferences and become intertwined with the broader economic and security needs of the country.

The shift toward local brands underscores the role of consumer behaviour in supporting national security, as articulated by government officials, where spending on domestic goods directly impacts the funding of critical national initiatives.

Demographic factors such as age and education were found to have minimal influence on these shifts, suggesting that the conflict has affected consumers across all strata of society in a similar manner. Proximity to military activities also did not significantly influence changes in brand preferences, indicating that the crisis has had a unifying effect on consumer behaviour throughout the country. However, the study found that income significantly influences the shift in brand preferences, with high-income individuals showing distinct changes compared to low- and medium-income groups, highlighting the role of economic status in shaping consumer behaviour during the conflict.

The study's findings provide valuable insights for marketers and policymakers. In a time of crisis, consumers are more likely to favour local brands, not only out of necessity but also as an expression of national solidarity. Businesses that can effectively communicate their value, reliability, and contributions to the national economy are likely to gain a competitive advantage in such environments. For policymakers, the results underscore the importance of fostering a supportive environment for local producers, as consumer spending plays a crucial role in the nation's economic and security framework.

As Ukraine continues to navigate the challenges posed by the ongoing war, understanding consumer behaviour remains critical for both businesses and the government. This research offers a foundation for future studies that may explore long-term consumer loyalty to local brands and how these preferences evolve as the country moves from conflict to recovery.

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