Examining the Image and Preferences of Local Beer Brands – A Case Study of Polish Consumers

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the decision-making processes behind the choices of beer brands in Poland and examine the brand image of perceived local beer brands among Polish consumers.

The study engages in the interpretative and qualitative research approaches to examine those issues among Polish beer lovers. The data was collected through interviews, observations and secondary research in form of various industry analyses. The research took place in PiwPaw, one of the multi-tap pubs/restaurants in the centre of Warsaw, Poland.

The results show that the following factors influence consumer-purchasing decisions: taste of the beer, price, recommendations, the context, packaging and patriotism. It also showed that the choice of beer is for many beer lovers more important decision than one may think.

Considering Aaker’s (1997) brand personality dimensions, the local beer brands are considered exciting, sincere and competent. The results also showed that positive image of local brands is strongly impacted by negative attitudes towards global brands.

The study contributed to the literature by providing reader with in-depth understanding of consumer perspective on beer industry in the context of beer revolution in Poland.
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1. Introduction

Polish beer market is one of the largest in Europe. After political transformations in 1990s it was observed that consumers tend to move from heavy spirits to lighter alcoholic beverages like beer and the trend continues ever since (Euromonitor International, 2016b). Currently, Poland faces beer revolution and polish consumers, who are bored with uninteresting taste of mass-produced lager, shift towards smaller, local brands. Despite growing market share of local breweries, there seems to be little research on how Poles choose beer brands and what image local brands have which this study will attempt to change.

1.1. Setting: Alcoholic Drinks and Beer Market in Poland

In order to examine image and preferences of local beer brands in Poland it is essential to understand how does the alcoholic drink market with special focus on beer looks in order to acknowledge the setting of the study.

Polish spirit industry undergoes constant changes, mainly due to changes in consumption structure (Rynki.pl, 2007). In the first decade of 21st century the consumption of alcohol rose by 30% in Poland, with beer being the most consumed alcoholic drink (Ministry of Treasury Republic of Poland, 2014). In 2015 the alcoholic drinks market in Poland showed the signs of saturation and stagnancy, however the beer market continues to grow. The key trend observed was structural transformation of the market with domestic mid-priced lager being the largest category in overall alcoholic drinks market (Euromonitor International, 2016a). The visible move of consumers towards small manufacturers that offer traditional technology and production methods was observed as well as the visible trend of polish customers moving away from heavy spirits towards beer. It is also said that customers pay more attention towards quality of the products they purchase and as a result the demand for premium products is growing (Euromonitor International, 2016a).

When it comes to beer, Poland is one of the top five countries in the world with highest consumption per capita. 90% of polish consumer drink beer at least once a year, with 60% of women claiming that they have tried beer at least once. The average consumers of beer in Poland are between age range 18-39, with share of female drinkers increasing and male segment showing the signs of saturation (Euromonitor International, 2016a).
International, 2016b). According to Euromonitor International (2016b) polish consumers do not pay attention to the alcohol content of beer they order. Instead they are interested in experiencing new flavours, which is claimed to be caused by disappointment with the unified taste of mass beer brands. In 2007, Krzysztof Rut – Corporation Director of Żywiec SA group, a company producing and distributing beer, pointed out that several years ago not many people would have guessed that Poland will become a nation of beer lovers, with the average amount of beer consumed per head rising from 30 litres annually per person to 80 litres in several years (Rynki.pl, 2007). According to Browary Polskie – 33% of their respondents always or almost always order beer once they are eating meal in the restaurant and 26% of them see going out with friends for a beer as a perfect way to spend their weekend (Związek Pracodawców Przemysłu Piwowarskiego - Browary Polskie, 2012). Traditional breweries represent a small share of total beer sales but it rises very dynamically. They focus on meeting demands of consumers looking for high quality products, made in traditional and unprocessed way (Euromonitor International, 2016).

1.2. Purpose of Dissertation

This dissertation seeks to examine the local beer brands preferences among polish consumers. As beer became the most consumed alcoholic drink in Poland and local and traditional breweries are quickly increasing their market share, various market analyses were carried out but there seems to be a gap in literature when it comes to understanding of consumers’ perspective on the phenomena. By conducting primary research this dissertation will seek to understand consumers’ view on local beer brands image and their preferences while choosing the beer and it will also compare, contrast and link the findings with the existing literature. The dissertation will investigate the following research questions:

**Research question 1:** How do consumers make a decision about which beer brand to choose? What aspects are important while choosing beer brand?

**Research question 2:** What image do perceived-local/regional brands have among polish customers compared to perceived-global brands and how does it influence their purchasing preferences?
1.3. Overview and the Structure of Dissertation

The structure of this dissertation is as follows:

- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results and Discussion
- Limitations and Future Research
- Conclusions and Practical Implication

Literature Review will focus on explanation of critical concepts for understanding of the study. It will provide the reader with the short history of beer industry in Poland, which is crucial to understand the context of this study – beer revolution in Poland. It will also discuss critical concepts and theories related to branding like: the definition of the brand, marketing mix, brand image, Aaker’s dimensions of brand personality and brand globalness and localness. Finally, this chapter will summarize and critically evaluate previous research on beer industry in Poland.

Methodology will focus on philosophical assumptions of the study. It will identify and analyse the data collection and analysis methods, as well as ethical concerns and how they were mitigated.

In Results and Discussion chapter the reader will be presented with the results of primary research and the findings will be analysed in attempt to answer research questions.

Limitations and Future research identifies the limitations of the research and the possibilities for future research that this study opens.

Conclusions and Practical Implications chapter provides the reader with final summary of the results and building on them identifies implications for practitioners resulting from this study.
2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In order to successfully examine the preferences of polish consumers when it comes to beer brands it is essential to understand several issues connected with brands, brand image, as well as several concepts connected specifically with consumption of local brands and beer with particular focus on polish consumers. This chapter will discuss cover following content:

- History and Evolution of Polish Beer Industry
- The Brand Concept Definition
- Marketing Mix – 4Ps
- Brand Image
- Brand Localness and Globalness
- Previous Research on Beer Industry in Poland
- Research Problems and Relevance of the Study.

2.2. Context: History and Evolution of Polish Brewing Industry

In order to examine the preferences of polish consumers towards beer brands, it is essential to understand the context and the relevance of the study.

2.2.1. Polish Brewing Industry History and Development

Polish beer industry has over 1000 year long history. Like in other European countries, it started with home beer production. The big breweries that currently dominate polish market were opened relatively late. The oldest Tyskie Brewery opened in 1629 and Okocim Brewery and Żywiec Brewery opened in 1845 and 1856 respectively (Boss, 2014). More than 100 breweries operated in Poland after the World War II. However because of lack of new investments in the industry, many of them were closed. Insufficient supply and permanent decline of the quality of beer was observed until the end of 1980s (Boss, 2014).

The situation changed after political transformation in 1990s. The supply and the quality have improved, as well as the product range (Boss, 2014). The consumption of alcohol has increased by 12.8% in 90s. Similarly the worth of alcohol beverages market...
has grown (Borowska, 2009). Klimek (2014) describes an evolution of beer market in Poland from the point of view of production, international trade and technological changes. Between 1995 and 2013 the production of beer in Poland has doubled. The growing competition from the global beer concerns lead to closure of many local breweries in early 90s. Despite this fact, recently the production and demand for local brand of beers has increased and even though they constitute small percentage of market share, local brands have significant impact on growth of the market offer (Klimek, 2014). The dynamic growth of brewing industry after the political changes in Poland was a surprise for experts who in 1990s were suspecting that beer consumption would rise to 80 litres per capita. In fact the amount of beer consumed rose to 95-100 litres per capita by 2010. This growth is considered rather unusual, as in majority of European countries the beer market is declining (Golaś and Ścibek, 2010).

2.2.2. Beer Revolution in Poland

Since political transformation in Poland, beer market has slowed down only 3 times in: 1993, 2009 and 2012. The improvement of the situation after 2009 is attributed mainly to niche producers, regional and contract breweries (Sikora and Kowrygo, 2014). Those producers aim at developing niche and alternative beers with unusual flavours that satisfy more sophisticated consumers. Beers produced by those breweries appeal to consumers who seek for new flavours and pay attention to the product specifications (Sikora and Kowrygo, 2014). This moment in polish beer industry history is very often considered the beginning of beer revolution in Poland. According to Senderek (2015:7) the phenomena is caused by consumers being tired with “not engaging” taste of so-called euro-lager, which constitutes 90% of polish market. Dzierżak (2015) supports this view by defining beer revolution as “opposition against unification and mass production of taste-wise unappealing beers.” The major sign of beer revolution in Poland is the increasing number of multi-tap restaurants and pubs and local breweries specialising in niche beers (Dzierżak, 2015). The aforementioned decline in beer quality in the period after World War II is claimed to be the cause of relatively low standard for beer in Poland for many year. It is believed that enthusiastic welcome of beer revolution by polish consumers is partially caused by the lack of strong brewing traditions, which results in openness to new flavours and types of beer, which cannot be found for example in Germany with strong attachment to traditional brewing methods (Korus, 2016). According to Drewnowska (2017) 2017 can be the record year
for regional breweries. She estimates that in 2017, 40 new regional breweries will be opened and more than 15000 new products will be launched.

2.3. Academic Underpinning and Definitions

2.3.1. The Brand Concept

According to Wood (2000) brands are critical aspects of company’s success as there are primary points for customers to differentiate between the offers. There are several ways to define the brand, which results from different perspectives on the concept. In 1960, American Marketing Association defined brand as:

A name, term, sign, symbol, or a design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (in: Wood, 2000).

Since then, this definition was widely criticised due to being “too product-orientated” and focusing on the visual features (Wood, 2000). Styles and Ambler (1995 in: Ambler and Styles, 1997) pointed out that there are two major ways to defined a brand: product plus definition which sees the brand as an addition to the product and holistic approach, which was adopted for purpose of this dissertation and which sees the brand as a sum of all elements of marketing mix: product, price, promotion and distribution (Ambler and Styles, 1997).

2.3.2. Marketing Mix – 4Ps

According to Borden (1984) marketing mix concept is a helpful device in business problem solving and in general in marketing thinking. Borden introduced the concept in 1960s but the most widely known version of marketing mix was introduced by McCarthy and is known as 4Ps: Product, Place, Promotions and Place (distribution) (Keller, 2013). The concept has been widely criticised by the scholars. Grönross (1994) argues that 4Ps is simply a list of categories of marketing variables. It is also criticised for being simplification of Borden’s original concept that included 12 elements (Grönross, 1994). According to Van Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992) the 4Ps classification does not fulfil the requirements of good taxonomy. Despite the criticism the 4Ps remain the most widely cited and used tool for marketing mix classification,
which contains all the elements mentioned in brand definition (Van Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992).

2.3.3. Brand Image

According to Park et al. (1986) conveying a brand image to the target market is a fundamental marketing activity. In their study Park et al. (1986) claim that well-communicated image is essential to successful establishment of brand positioning and has strong relationship with market performance. They point out that brand image is not only perceptual phenomenon affected by firm’s communication strategies but also consumers’ understanding, which is derived from a set of brand-related activities (Park et al., 1986). The brand image is developed by combining two or more brand concepts that satisfy various consumer needs, which include:

- functional – the search of products occurs to solve consumption-related problems,
- symbolic – desire to fulfil internal needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership or ego-identification.
- experimental – desire to search for sensory pleasure, variety and/or cognitive stimulation (Park et al., 1986).

Roth (1995) builds on Park’s et al. (1986) research to point out that brand image success relies also on socioeconomics and national and regional culture, which may determine which brand concepts should be addressed in the given country.

According to Hatch and Schultz (1997) due to increasing levels of interactions between different organizational members, suppliers, customers and regulators, organizational identity and image are influenced by both “insiders” and “outsiders” and therefore can not be fully controlled by top managers. They claim that the relationship between organizational culture, image and identity is a dynamic and interdependent process (Hatch and Schultz, 1997). Therefore, consumers by their interaction with a company or a brand in a way co-create organizational image. Moreover, it is important to understand customers’ values and desires in order to differentiate the brand from the others in the age when customers become more sophisticated and create the sense of belonging of key stakeholders to the organisation (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Following this logic Arvidsson (2006) points out that recently “consumer-based brand equity” becomes increasingly important. He defines it as “the set of associations or attitudes that
consumers have in relations to the brand that contribute its value for them” (Arvidsson, 2006:189).

While talking about brand image one must mention symbolic use of brands. Graeff (1997) examined what role consumption situations play in determining the effects of brand image on consumer’s brand evaluation. His study relies on Belk’s (1988) concept of extended-self. According to Belk (1988) people view their possessions as extensions of themselves. Graeff (1997) assumes that consumers prefer brands with images consisted with their own self-image and that consumers very often purchase brands for their symbolic meanings. His research found that when it comes to brand choices, both when consumption occurs in public and in private, the decision is influenced by ideal self-image of the consumer.

Brand personality is defined by Aaker (1997) as: “the set of human characteristics associated with the brand”. It is argued that symbolic use of a brand and its image is due to consumers associating brands with human characteristics (Aaker, 1997). Aaker (1997) developed a framework (Fig. 1) to portray 5 dimensions of brand personality. The framework can be used to compare personalities of two or more brands. Moreover, presented traits by evoking emotions in consumers can increase trust levels and loyalty and therefore influence consumers’ purchasing decisions (Aaker, 1997).
Building on Aaker's model Kim et al. (2001) established that even though brand personality is not easily created, once it is, it tends to have long life. Moreover, the effective use of it can improve brand loyalty and word-of-mouth reports.

### 2.3.4. Brand Localness and Globalness

Özsomer and Altaras (2008; in Halkias et al., 2016) define global brands as “having global awareness, availability, acceptance and desirability and are often found under the same name with consistent positioning, image, personality, look and feel in major markets enabled by standardized and centrally coordinated marketing strategies.”. On the other hand local brands are defined by Dimofte et al. (2008, in Halkias et al., 2016) as “only available in specific geographical region or concentrated market”. They create brand value by “building on local identity, supporting the local culture and adapting the brand to local needs” (Halkias et al., 2016). Perceived brand localness or globalness is the extent to which customers believe that a given brand is a global or local player (Halkias et al., 2016). Siemieniako’s et al. (2011) study showed that Poles do not
consider the ownership of the brand as the factor determining if the brand is local-Polish or global. According to their study about beer brands, the most important elements of brand identity are a physical connection to Poland and traditional polish recipe. Following findings of Siemieniako’s et al. (2011) this study focuses on perceived localness of the beer brands and the term local brands refers to any beer brand that respondents perceived as local.

Lee et al. (2016) suggests that when products are considered low-involvement or unnecessary consumers are less likely to assess to what extent products are congruent with themselves and tend to choose local brands. It is argued that foreign products can be seen as wrong or unpatriotic as it hurts domestic economy (Kaynak and Kara, 1996 in: Lee at al, 2016). It is claimed that consumers’ ethnocentrism can provide them with the sense of identity, feeling of belongingness, attachment and pride (Lee et al., 2016). This links to Belk’s (1988) view that we see our possessions as extension of ourselves that are important to our sense of identity. The feeling of belongingness can be linked to Cova’s (1997) linking value theory. He claimed that in goods consumption consumers seek the linking value of goods, which allows them to feel a part of community.

2.4. Previous Research on beer industry in Poland

Even though beer market in Poland is one of the biggest in Europe, there seems to be a gap in literature when it comes to examination of polish consumers’ preferences. There seems to be even bigger gap when it comes to focus on local and regional brands of beer.

The biggest segment of literature concerning beer and in general alcohol beverages market in Poland focuses on evolution of the market and analyses new trends within industry. Gołaś and Ścibek (2010) attempt to characterize the beer market in Poland. Their study focuses on production, sales and the importance of the industry for polish economy. They claim that current technological advancements and foreign investments in the industry made it one of the most modern markets in the world, which results in improved quality of beer and increased consumption. The study also points out the fact that consumers in Poland became more sophisticated and aware of the products they choose to consume (Gołaś and Ścibek, 2010). Their results were sustained
by Klimek’s (2014) and Borawska’s (2009) studies, which both came up with similar conclusions to Golaś and Ścibek (2010).

Sikora and Kowrygo (2014) analyse new trends on beer market in Poland. They identify 3 main producers of beer in Poland: Kampania Piwowarska S.A (owned by SABMiller), Grupa Żywiec S.A. and Carlsberg Polska S.A. and analyse their influence on the market but also recognise the importance of the small, regional breweries. According to their study local producers appeal to consumers because they offer wider product ranges than the global producers, which satisfies needs of more demanding consumers. The study also consists of questionnaire research about consumers’ preferences when it comes to choice of beer. The respondents identified taste as a most important factor while choosing a beer, followed by type of beer and familiarity with the brand (Sikora and Kowrygo, 2014).

Śmiechowska and Wawszczak (2005) focus more on regional beers in their analysis of the industry. The study describes differences in production between regional and mass-produced beer. According to Śmiechowska and Wawszczak (2005) traditional brewing methods result in richer and more interesting taste of the beer. The study predicts that this is the main reason of growing popularity of local beer brands, despite limited marketing resources and competition with global brands.

Jąder (2013) examined beer purchasing behaviours and preferences among students in Poland. 80% of students in Poland identify beer as the first choice alcoholic beverage. 63% of them drink beer at least once a week. According to this study students purchase beer most often in supermarkets. Similarly to Sikora’s and Kowrygo’s (2014) study, students in Poland identify taste of beer as the most important factor influencing their purchasing decision, followed by familiarity with the brand. According to Jąder (2013) promotion and packaging are relatively unimportant for students. Wawszczak et al. (2012) investigated factors influencing women’s preferences regarding dark kinds of beer produced with traditional methods and came up to similar conclusions. Their study also found that the taste of the beer is the main factor considered by consumers. In this particular case, women preferred sweeter types of beer to more bitter ones. The packaging was also considered irrelevant to women’s preferences.

The literature on beer consumption in Poland seems to pay special attention to local patriotism and national and regional ethnocentrism. Siemieniako et al. (2011) focused in their research on regional ethnocentrism and how it influences beer
preferences among students in region of Podlasie. Ethnocentrism can be defined as “conscious preference for local products over those imported from abroad or other regions within the country” (Siemieniako et al., 2011). According to their research this kind of behaviour is usually motivated by moral rather than rational or emotional reasons. Even though the research did not show any negative attitudes towards foreign brands, very strong regional preferences were found as 23% of respondent living in Białystok identified locally manufactured Żubr as their favourite brand while 35% of respondents from Łomża identified manufactured in the city - Łomża as their favourite brand (Siemieniako et al., 2011), both produced in Podlasie region. Krot et al. (2008) focused on the relationship between local patriotism and brand preferences within the same research group. Even though the research shows that the taste and the price of the beer are more important while choosing beer, local patriotism also influences the choice. The respondents claimed that if they can choose beer from different regions of Poland they are going to choose the one produced in their region. However, one must notice that Podlasie is the region with strong tradition and sense of identity and similar research was not conducted in any other regions of Poland, therefore the results should not be generalised to the entire population of Poland.

2.5 Research Problems and Relevance of the Study

Even though polish beer market is still growing and local breweries increase their market share, there seems to be a major gap in literature, which would examine consumers preferences when it comes to beer brands. The literature focuses mostly on industry development from producers’ points of view. Consumers’ preferences issue, even when mentioned, is not provided with an in-depth understanding of how consumers make their decisions and what image of beer brands they have. Trying to fill this gap in literature this study will try to explore and answer following research questions:

**Research question 1:** How do consumers make a decision about which beer brand to choose? What aspects are important while choosing beer brand?

**Research question 2:** What image do perceived-local/regional brands have among polish customers compared to perceived-global brands and how does it influence their purchasing preferences?
RQ1 focuses on decision-making process of consumers. The answer to this question will attempt to identify which aspects of a brand are important when consumers are choosing the beer brand but also how long does it take for them to decide and other external factors that may influence decision. Considering previous research on the subject it is predicted that the taste of beer will be the most important aspect of consumers’ decision.

RQ2 attempts to address the phenomena of growing popularity of local and regional brands. Even though they are considered the reason for improvement of beer industry situation after 2009, there seems to be little understanding of what attracts consumers to those brands and what image they have.

According to Hatch and Schultz (1997) the organizational image is to some extent co-created by the outsiders like consumers. That is why it is important to understand consumers’ values and desires (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Therefore, this study will not only attempt to fill the gap in the literature by providing a reader with customers’ perspective that would explain the phenomena and describe consumers’ associations with the local brands, but also which can be potentially useful for both local and global producers of beer that are present on or want to enter Polish market.
3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this case study is to explore and describe Polish customers’ perception of local beer brands and attempt to understand why they decide to purchase them. It is hoped that by comparing collected primary data with existing secondary data, the study will provide an in-depth insight into beer brand preferences in light of current beer revolution in Poland.

3.2. Case Study

According to Nilsson Angelstedt (2016) there is no unambiguous definition of case study research. Gerring (2007:20) defines case study as: “as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is - at least in part - to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)”. Eisenhardt (1989: 534) describes case study as “research strategy, which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single setting”. This research approach allows for in-depth appreciation of a particular issue or phenomena in a real-life and natural context (Nilsson Angelstedt, 2016). Johansson (2016) points out that the objective of case study is to find a complexity of the single case. Eisenhardt (1989) identifies following purposes of case studies: to provide description, test theory or generate theory. Moreover, Gerring (2007:7) claims that the product of a good case study is insight. The case study research can be qualitative or quantitative and is particularly useful to investigate issues happening in contemporary context (Farquhar, 2012).

Despite its focus on in-depth understanding case study research encounters lots of criticism. Farquhar (2012) identifies 3 main levels of it:
- lack of objectivity and rigour
- lack of large samples and therefore generalizability,
- lack of appreciation for qualitative investigations.

According to Farquhar (2012) complete objectivity is not the aim of the case study. The lack of distance between researcher and the units of study allow for co-creation of findings in natural context. Moreover, the aim of case study is an in-depth insight and not to generalize the findings of sample to the entire population (Farquhar, 2012).
address the third issue, Gerring (2007:10) points out that even though case studies are traditionally associated with qualitative methods, there is no reason why a case study would not accommodate a quantitative approach and for researchers to limit themselves only to qualitative methods.

This case study is ethnographic, which according to Yin (2011:17) “involves field-based study, which surface people’s every day norms, rituals and norms in detail. According to Beach (2015) ethnography follows the notion that ethnographer must study human activities and the way they interpret their realities in every-day concept in order to develop theories about human life, as well as understand the conditions of the field and derive the meanings from the context.

3.3. Philosophical assumptions

This study is qualitative and falls under interpretivist paradigm. Black (2006) claims that the strength of interpretivist research lies in its “ability to address the complexity and the meaning of situations”. Interpretivist approach emphasises understanding and acknowledges the subjectivity in social interactions. In contrast to positivist approach, researcher is not a detached observer but the active agent who co-creates findings with participants by interaction and interpretation (Farquhar, 2012). Saladña (2011:3) defines qualitative research as an umbrella term for various approaches where data collected and analysed consist primarily from textual materials like: interview transcripts, field notes and other documents. Finally, like most case studies this dissertation follows inductive reasoning, which aims at generating theories from the data by looking for patterns and focuses on understanding and exploration (Farquhar, 2012). Adapting aforementioned philosophical assumptions allows fulfilling major aims of the case study research method by provision of in-depth understanding of polish consumers’ consumption of local beer brands and investigation of the issue in the natural context.
3.4. Research Methods

In order to investigate local beer brands preferences among polish consumers, semi-structured, group interviews and observations were used to collect primary data. The findings were later compared and contrasted with existing academic and industry literature to provide an in-depth and complex understanding of the phenomena. It was acknowledged that other methods could have been used like questionnaires, however they would not provide the in-depth data like interviews and would not show the complexity of the phenomena as accurately.

3.4.1. The setting and sampling

The purposive sampling was selected as the best method to meet the objectives of this study. In purposive sampling, the researcher uses their judgement to choose respondents that are most likely to provide relevant and plentiful data (Yin, 2015). This sort of sampling is particularly useful when dealing with small samples typical for case studies (Saunders et al., 2009). The local beer brands are most often products that are not only classified as premium due to its price but also are of somewhat niche nature. That is why it was decided that in order to gather the most reliable data the extreme case approach should be adopted. Saunders et al. (2009:239) claims that findings from extreme cases will be relevant in understanding of more typical cases. In this case, it was decided that the most suitable sample would be beer lovers who choose local brands on regular basis and feel very passionate about them. To gather data from this particular group, PiwPaw’s customers were approached.

PiwPaw is a chain of 3 multi-tap pubs/restaurants located in Warsaw. For any beer-lover they are key points on Warsaw’s map. The research took place in PiwPaw Bear Heaven located in the very centre of Warsaw, only a few minute walks from Warsaw’s old town. It offers their clients 95 different beer taps with variety of regional, flavoured and craft beers of different kinds (PiwPaw.pl, 2017). The place also attracts beer lovers with their offer of specialist trainings about beer. The participants of the research were random, unknown to the researcher, clients of PiwPaw who happened to be in the restaurant during the time suggested by PiwPaw’s staff as rush hours.
3.4.2. Interviews

According to Saunders et al. (2009:324) qualitative interviews are useful way used to understand the reasoning for people's attitudes, opinions and decisions, which is exactly what this study attempts to explain. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to obtain rich and detailed data set but also discuss ideas that were not considered previously by the researcher, which add to better understanding of the topic (Sounders at al., 2009). In contrast to structured interviews, in qualitative interviews, researcher has a mental framework of study questions, but they might be verbalised differently to every participant, according to context and setting of the interview (Yin, 2015:134). Less structured and more conversational mode of qualitative interviews result in two-way interaction between respondents and interviewee. Open-ended questions rather than closed-ended allow them to use their own words to answer the questions and therefore make the meaning of their experiences on their own terms (Yin, 2015).

After assessing PiwPaw's layout it was decided that group interviews would be conducted. According to Saunders et al. (2009:345) group interviews tend to be relatively unstructured and free flowing. Group interviews also lead to highly productive discussions, as participants not only answer to researcher’s questions but also evaluate on points of other participants (Saunders et al., 2009). Choosing group interviews as a research method facilitated collection of the data in the most natural context. Moreover, it also let the researcher not only to get answers to questions but also to observe participants' interactions connected with the subject of research. The groups in which the research was conducted were not bigger than 4 people. This way it was still possible to get in-depth data on the subject and record the interviews, still being able to distinguish between participants on the recordings.

The interviews took place on 21st of January, after 7pm, which was suggested by PiwPaw staff due to it being the rush hours and therefore allowing collecting sufficient amount of data in relatively short time. Prior to the research the interview guide was created (Appendix A). It aimed at providing mental framework for the researcher but also helping to collect as much in-depth data as possible within relatively short time. This was decided in order to respect the fact that respondents came to PiwPaw to relax and spend time with their friends and to prevent discouraging potential respondents from participation by lengthy interviews. The total of 27 people was interviewed during
11 different group interviews. That includes 27 polish people, 12 males and 15 females. The interviews were ranging between 5 and 10 minutes. The respondents were all given information leaflet (Appendix B) and they were asked to familiarize themselves with it before they agree to take part in the interview. Interviews were recorded on Dictaphone after all participants gave their consent to do so. The participants where informed about the topic of the research however they were not given details to not to bias their answers.

After interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and categories were developed to analyse the data.

3.4.3. Observations

According to Yin (2015) observations can be invaluable way of collecting data. Unobtrusive observations record the aspects of the social and physical environment already in place, not manipulated by researchers or affected by their presence” (Yin, 2015:146) Even though the results of such measures are usually not sufficient to support the study fully they can be used to complement the other data collected (Yin, 2015). On top of conducting the interviews in PiwPaw, the clients were observed in the restaurant to see how they interact with each other around the local beer brands. Moreover, the researcher paid attention not only to what the interviewees were saying but also how they interacted within their groups and what kinds of beer they were consuming.

3.4.4. Triangulation

Triangulation addresses the issue of validity of the data. Triangulation assumes that the findings need to be supported from more than one source. Triangulation prevents the researcher from drawing unsupported conclusions (Willis at al., 2007:219). In this study data triangulation was used. According to Farquhar (2012:45) different data sources that say the same thing not only provide and argument that the findings are credible but also can capture “more holistic and contextual portrayal of the units of the study”. To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses interviews, observations and related market and industry analyses and literature.
3.5. Ethical Concerns

A number of different factors were considered prior to conducting research. The research followed the guidelines provided in Durham University “Research Integrity – Policy and Code of Practice”. Prior to conducting the research the verbal consent of the owners of PiwPaw was obtained. After giving their initial consent to participate in the research, all participants were given an information leaflet (Appendix B) that they were asked to familiarize themselves with. The leaflet underlined that their answers are fully anonymous and confidential and that participants can withdraw their consent at any point. It also informed the participants that they have to be at least 18 years old. Separate verbal consent was obtained from all participants to record the interviews.
4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Favourite Beer Brand

In the beginning of every interview the respondents were asked to identify their favourite brand of beer or the one they tend to buy the most often. The answers to this question can be categorized into following 2 main groups:

- respondents who identified as their favourite perceived-local brand,
- respondents who claimed that they do not have a favourite brand because they want to try out different brands of beer.

Out of respondents who were able to identify their favourite brand, only one respondent identified as his favourite non-polish brand – German Paulaner. The great majority of respondents claimed that their favourite brands are local polish beer brands. In many cases the brands they mentioned were rather small, regional and niche breweries like Pinta or Perun. One of the most common answers was Ciechan, which is considered one of the pioneers of beer revolution in Poland. It was the first polish brewery to popularized unpasteurized beer and focus on new flavours like honey beer (Piekut, 2010). Other brand that was mentioned quite often was Książęce. Those respondents treated the brand like small and regional one. In fact Książęce is the response of Kampania Piwowarska (owned by SABMiller) to the growing popularity of regional breweries. Książęce is produced in the same brewery as Tyskie Gronie – the brand with the second largest brand share in Poland (Euromonitor, 2016b).

Out of respondents who were unable to identify their favourite brand, many claimed that they want to try different kinds of (most often regional) beer. One of the respondents said:

“I now try lots of different brands. Now in Poland you can find many small, craft breweries. Next to my apartment there is a shop that has a wide offer of beer like that, that’s why right now I don’t have a specific one brand that I choose. I buy lots of different beer from different craft breweries, wheat beer but also ale. In general, I weaned myself off popular beer brands because it is completely different experience (to drink craft beer).”

The other respondent explained:
“I like to find new beer every time. I want to get to know all kinds of beer that are available. That’s why I can’t say that I have a favourite brand. I just like to find the new ones.”

It is clearly visible that those respondents do not choose beer brands for their functional value. The experience of trying different brands, kinds or flavours is much more important to them. The brands that were identified as favourite are also well-known for fairly wide product ranges and unusual flavours of beer. This suggests that the sensory experience is the most important aspect of respondents relationship with a brand (Brakus et al., 2009). It is important to mention that even though some of the respondents identified their favourite brand it was observed that majority of them during the interviews drunk different beer, even though most of them were available. This shows that despite having favourite brand, they are still open to trying out new things and choose to do so.

4.2. The decision making process

4.2.1. Time

To begin discussion about how the decision-making process looks like the interviewees were asked about how long does it take for them to choose the beer they want. One of the trends visible was that it usually takes women longer to make a decision. The respondents that claimed that it takes them quite a while to choose, said that it takes on average 10 to 20 minutes. That being said one of the interviewed female respondents claimed that it takes her 40 minutes to choose a beer.

“In places like this it takes me around 10 to 15 minutes to choose a beer, but to be honest it’s probably similar when I am in the shop”

“I think quickly you can only choose Lech (popular, polish brand that mass-produce beer) from the fridge. I for example like Fortuna and they have 5 different flavours. So it really depends on a day and when you are in a pub like this, the choice is amazing so I really need to think what kind of beer and what flavour I want.”

This kind of approach was also observed as the most common, the majority of clients in PiwPaw spent around 10 minutes choosing which beer to choose. They also ask very often for guidance from PiwPaw’s staff while making decision. On the other hand some respondents – predominantly males – claimed that it is usually very quick decision for
them. However, it appears like the quickness of the decision is rather caused by the fact that they have made a research prior to the decision and they already know what brand they have. An example of this approach can be find below:

“I usually go to shops where I know that there is a wide choice of beer and usually I am trying to find something new but before I go to the shop I know what I want and I check if that beer is available in the given place and then I just go there, buy it and leave.”

Those attitudes suggest that even though one might think that beer is rather low-involvement product for the respondents in this study it is considered rather medium. Clarke and Belk (1979) define involvement as “the importance of purchase decision”. For interviewees the choice of beer is considered more important than one could have expected, since it will have a significant impact on their sensory experience.

4.2.2. Factors influencing decision

Fig 2. Factors influencing the decision-making process

Fig 2. illustrates the factors that influence the decision that emerged from the research.
4.2.2a. Taste and Price

Like predicted, an overwhelming majority of interviewees identified the taste of beer as the most important factor influencing their purchasing decisions, as seen in the following example:

“In general, every type of alcohol I buy, I buy for the taste of it. That’s why I avoid mass produced beer, because I don’t like the taste of it.”

There are several aspects to the taste of the beer that consumers consider. The most obvious one being the flavour. Different respondents identified different flavours that they like from very sweet to very bitter flavours. One of female respondents said:

“The taste is the most important thing. I want it (beer) to taste good and if it’s also regional and natural it’s even better. I also prefer flavoured beers, the sweeter ones.”

Just like in Wawszczak et al. (2012) study women generally preferred sweeter flavours, when men picked more bitter kinds of beer. It was also observed that when customers were choosing beer in PiwPaw they would most often describe the flavour of the beer that they want followed by the type of beer they want, which also influences the way it tastes. Moreover, many of the respondents claimed that they check ingredients to asses the flavour of beer. For example:

“I look at the ingredients of the beer. I check what kind of malt was used because I prefer bitter beer.”

This might be explained by the nature of the sample, which consisted of beer lover, who in many cases have great knowledge of how beer is produced.

Interestingly, one of the respondents claimed that the factor more important to him than flavour is how chilled beer is.

“I like the most beer that is chilled, so if I am in the shop where I can buy chilled beer I am going to look at the brands that are available in the fridge. Otherwise I would choose based on taste.”

Even though he differentiated between the temperature of beer and its taste, in fact they are strongly related aspects. According to Kopyra (2016) the temperature of beer influences how it tastes but also other sensory aspects of it like the scent of it.

Moreover, it turned out that the price that they are willing to pay for a beer is strongly related to the taste of the beer.

“Taste is the most important thing, of course if the price is not too high but the taste is the most important thing.”
All respondents that identified taste as the most important factor claimed that they are willing to pay more than they usually do. For example one of the interviewees said:

“I can say that if there is beer that I have heard a lot about and I know it tastes really good, I am willing to pay for it even 40-50 PLN.”

She values taste of beer so much that she is willing to pay 10-15 times more than for average good quality beer brand. This example as well shows that for many of the respondents an experience is more important than functional value of beer.

4.2.2b. Importance of the Context

One of the themes that kept reappearing was the importance of the context for purchasing decisions. The weather is especially important while choosing beer. For example according to Beata Ptaszyńska-Jedynak from Carlsberg Polska, in summer lighter, very often, fruity flavoured beer is more popular (Newsweek.pl, 2014). This was sustained by the respondents:

“The kind of beer I am drinking depends on how I feel. (...) When it’s hot outside I prefer lighter, sparkling beer. In winter I choose stronger beer. “

The other context-related factors consisted of whether they drink beer at home or in the pub, if they are at the party or with couple of friends in the restaurant. One of the interviewees pointed out that it also depends in what region of Poland he is in:

“The given moment influences what beer I am currently drinking, if I prefer lighter or stronger beer. (...) What also influences what beer I am drinking is in what region I am currently in. If I am in Kazimierz or Lubelskie region, I drink Perła (produced in Lubelskie). I don’t even look at the fact that Perła is probably a part of some kind of big, mass producer. If I am by the sea I drink Specjal. My decision is influenced by the region I am in.”

This shows that beer might be also considered the element of food-based tourism phenomena, which can be used in potential marketing strategies of regional breweries. According to Henderson (2009) gastronomic experiences are an important part of tourists attitudes towards place that they visit, which might be used by marketing managers of regional brands to collaborate with local governments on promotion of their products.
4.2.2c. Patriotism and Ethnocentrism

According to Lee et al. (2016) consumers are more likely to choose local brands when it comes to low-involvement products. Even though majority of respondents consider beer rather medium or, in some instances, high-involvement products, the results still show that patriotism is an important aspect of their decision making process. One of the aspects of patriotism in their decisions is the feeling of responsibility towards polish brands, which links to Kaynak’s and Kara’s (1996 in: Lee et al. 2016) that claimed that very often purchasing of foreign brands can be seen as unpatriotic as it hurts domestic economy.

“I try to buy polish beer brands, to support them because of patriotic responsibility. Besides there are so many polish brands that you can drink different one every day.”

“I try to support polish economy (by choosing polish brands), it’s also an important aspect for me.”

This links to Siemieniako’s et al. (2011) findings that patriotic behaviour is usually motivated by moral, rather than rational and emotional reasons. That being said some of the respondents also showed emotional reasons for patriotic preferences. Specifically, the feeling of being proud was noticeable. For example:

“If a German person, representative of the country of beer lovers, can tell me that our beer is great, that means something.”

“Polish beer is better. It’s traditional, like at home. Quality, price, everything is better. Really, I know it’s not very modest but it is better. We should choose our products.”

The above examples show not only emotional attachment to Polish brands but also to some extent feeling of superiority of polish brand over foreign and global brands. This might be one of the reasons why majority of them identified polish regional brands as their favourite.

Siemieniako et al. (2011) and Krot et al. (2008) suggested strong ethnocentric attitudes towards beer brands in Podlasie region. The results of this study, show that national patriotic attitudes are much more common among respondents. Those results can be explained by the fact that Warsaw does not have as strong regional identity. Many of citizens of Warsaw come from different regions of Poland. That being said some ethnocentric attitudes were observed. For example:

“Very often we drink Kormoran because we are from Olsztyn. It is a small brewery that tries to do something cool and it stands out compared to mass produced beer.”
Even though some ethnocentric attitudes were observed, it seems to be less important factor influencing respondents’ decision than for example taste, because respondents are not willing to pay much more for beer from their region, which could be seen in the following quote:

“I really like Ursa Maior from Bieszczady, but I think the prices are a bit too high right now. I am from Bieszczady and I have sentimental feelings towards this beer but 12 PLN for a bottle is a bit too much.”

4.2.2d. Packaging

Surprisingly, even though previous research (Jąder, 2013; Wawszczak et al., 2012) showed that packaging is relatively unimportant for polish consumers, some respondents pointed out that it is important to them. It might be a result of a sample group, who cares deeply about beer and therefore wants the entire experience to be perfect. This aspect matters predominately for women but there was also one male who also pays attention to aesthetic side of beer’s packaging. However, his attitude might be explained by his artistic background:

“I have 10 years of artistic background and education, colours are really the most important thing for me. If a label is nice, I am going to take it.”

For majority of female respondents packaging is a way of attracting their attention, which might be seen in following examples:

“I choose beer based on taste but also based on label and packaging. I am looking for something that will attract my attention. “

“I do notice packaging. If the bottle is interesting, there is a cool picture on the label, nice description, I am more likely to buy this brand, even if it’s not always going to taste nice.”

One of the respondents also pointed out that she is more likely to choose beer if the label describes the taste of the beer:

“The label and graphical side of it is important. I really like when the taste of beer is described on the bottle, like: you will feel thousand of different flavours. I like it because if this taste is described in an interesting way, I feel like I should try it.”

Women’s attachment to esthetical side of product is an interesting result considering that share of female drinkers on the market is still increasing and producers
are trying to come up with new ways of attracting this part of population (Euromonitor International, 2016b).

4.2.2e. Recommendations

The last factor influencing the choice of beer among consumers are recommendations. The examples can be found below:

“I very often ask for recommendations. I don’t know all brands available so in places like this I describe what kind of taste interests me and I take into consideration what the bartender says.”

“When there is wide choice the decision is difficult. I very often ask staff for advice. I tell them what kind of beer I would like and they suggest couple of different brands but then again I ask for their suggestions because it is difficult to keep up with so many brands and flavours.”

“I usually try to talk to the person that sells me beer to see if they know something about beer or just sells it.”

The need for recommendations seems to be strongly related with the wide choice of beer in Poland but also unfamiliarity with some of the more niche brands. The majority of respondents claimed that they are seeking help of staff or friends, while buying beer. Many also pointed out that they like to have an option to try beer before buying it. This result underlines the role of word-of-mouth for brands marketing, but also may have some implications on distribution choices of the brand, as it shows that the knowledge of staff selling the product is relevant for consumers’ choices. Especially that considering Goff et al. (1997) research satisfaction with the sales person can significantly improve consumer satisfaction, which leads to recommendation intentions and bigger brand loyalty.
4.3 Brand Image

This study refers to local brands as any brand that is perceived by respondents as local. Siemieniako et al. (2011) found that polish consumers refer to brand as polish when the brand has physical connection to Poland. It was observed that respondents of this study through the term local brand understand small, regional and craft breweries. They did not refer to the polish brands that mass-produce beer like Żywiec or Tyskie as local. The only exception was Książęce, however it seemed like interviewees referring to this brand were not aware that the brand is a part of Kampania Piwowarska, as explained earlier.

Moreover, all respondents have very positive image of local beer brands. To analyse brand image of local beer producers the following categories were developed: quality, taste, trust, innovation and negative image of global brands. Moreover the relationship between quality, taste and trust was observed. Fig 3. explains what contributes to positive image of local brands.

Fig 3. Positive image of local brands in Poland
4.3.1. Quality, Taste and Trust

The majority of respondents identified quality as the most important thing that they associate with local brands of beer. The interviewees showed great concern for the quality of ingredients. For example:

“I pay great attention to the ingredients of beer. If there are any chemical substances added that shouldn’t be there or flavour enhancers, I try not to take this beer.”

“I can definitely say that polish, regional breweries are better quality (then global, mass producers). My family is connected with one of the companies that deliver various substances to breweries. I know that in normal breweries the quality is really low. That is why I try to choose regional breweries, because I know that ingredients are better.”

The importance of the quality of the ingredients can be linked to growing popularity of premium products, which is the effect of polish consumers becoming more sophisticated, and paying more attention to the quality of the products (Euromonitor International, 2016b).

The link was also observed between respondents’ perceptions of quality of local brands and the taste of the beer and trust towards the brand. They associate the perceived better quality of the ingredients and brewing processes with better taste of beer, which as explained earlier is the most important factor while choosing beer. The local brands of beer in their perception taste more like beer and not water, which can be seen in the following quotes

“I think local brands don’t “mix”. There is beer in beer and not water.”

“The most important thing about local brands is the taste. You can taste more hop. It’s not mass production, it tastes like beer.”

Their opinions on quality also result in bigger trust towards local brands, compared to global producers.

“They (local brands) don’t do HGB (High Gravity Brewing). They don’t brew high concentration (of malt), high alcoholic content and then add water to it. They are honest, there use exactly as much malt as they are supposed to and everything is done like it is supposed to be done. They care about quality and not quantity”.

In perception of interviewees local brands are more honest about their production processes and therefore they trust them more. This view is also shared by Kopyra (2016) who claims that any brand that produces hectolitres of beer needs to be lower quality than regional breweries. According to him the mass producers save on good
quality ingredients and speed up brewing processes, which results in low quality of beer.

Considering Aaker’s (1997) 5 Dimensions of Brand Personality, the perceived better quality of the beer produced by local brands links the strongest to competence dimension. The respondents perceive those brands as reliable since they successfully provide them with beer that tastes better than the one produced by global brands. To some extent it might be said that the trust is also a result of perceived quality and links to the fact that those brands are perceived as sincere, due to the honesty of the producers.

4.3.2. Innovation, Creativity and Passion

Another aspect that influences positive image of local brands is innovation. Majority of the interviewees associate local brands with innovative products and doing things differently. One of the respondents said:

“Local brands are really innovative. Also, the new things are really new in terms of how beer is brewed, what is added to this beer and not just that someone has made a new stout or APA. There is usually something really new and different.”

This quote shows that he appreciates the approach local breweries have to development of new products. The other respondent pointed out that to him local breweries produce their beer with passion.

“Regional beer is produced by people with passion that put their heart and soul into what they are doing. They love what they are doing and global brands are all about profit and sales.”

The innovative nature of local brands, links to the very core of the beer revolution in Poland. According to Dzierżak (2015) and Senderek (2015) polish consumers are tired with “boring” taste of euro-lager. The results of this study show that local brands are strongly associated with addressing consumers’ need for new and innovative products. One of the interviewees said the following:

“I think innovation is really important in Poland. We don’t really have long brewing traditions and traditional taste that we are used to. That is why, I think, we experiment a lot and we are looking for new types of beer and local breweries address that need. And I think they are very creative in doing so.”
Her statement can be linked to what Korus (2016) said about the lack of strong brewing tradition in Poland and Sikora’s and Kowrygo’s (2014) claim that local and regional breweries are responsible for the improvement of industry’s situation after 2009. Interestingly, those findings show the dissonance connected with the image of local brands. As mentioned earlier, local breweries seems to be popular due to their traditional brewing methods, which result in richer taste (Euromonitor International, 2016b) but in the same consumers value them for their innovative approach to product development.

Consumers’ attachment to taste of beer and appreciation of the fact that local brands provide them with wide and innovative choice of it show that the brand concept that is crucial while developing their brand image is fulfilling their experimental needs. The consumers buy local brands because they seek to fulfil their desire for sensory pleasure and variety (Park et al., 1986). Moreover, linking to Aaker’s (1997) model, associating local brands with innovation and passion relates to the excitement aspect of brand personality. According to the respondents, local brands provide them with creative and imaginative products that fulfil their need for sensory experiences.

4.3.3. Negative Image of Global Brands

The last aspect that influences significantly the positive image of local brands is the negative approach towards the global ones. The respondents many times underlined that global brands, which mass-produce beer, do not satisfy their needs. They complained about the fact that the beer produced by them tastes the same and there is nothing that differentiates it, as seen on examples below.

“It’s really difficult to tell a difference between global brands like Heineken but also our brands that engage with mass production like Żubr or Żywiec. I think labels are the only thing that differentiate them. The taste of beer from our regional breweries is more refined.”

“Beer from global producers always tastes the same. Really, if someone puts a glass next to the other glass with different global brands, no one would be able to tell a difference. Local beer is different. They have very specific tastes and flavours. Even the colour is better.”

“When I drink it (global brand beer), I feel like I am drinking water.”

Some respondents also showed mistrust in the global brands and the way they produce beer.
“The taste of the so-called popular beer has really been made worse recently. You can feel that at some point the production process was speeded up, something was disturbed.”

The issue on unified taste of widely distributed lager produced by global brands is described in many industry analyses. Euromonitor International (2016b) points out that it is a reason for dynamic growth of market shares of local brands. The negative attitudes towards global brands seem not to be related with country-of-origin aspects of the brand, but purely to the fact that they do not satisfy experimental needs of consumers and because they are not perceived as trust-worthy. According to Homer (2007) the brand is successful when it establishes in consumer’s mind what the brand is about. It appears that in this case global beer brands fail to do so. Local brands are associated with good quality, good taste and innovation. In the same time interviewees claim to see no difference between products offered by global brands. To have an in-depth understanding of polish consumers’ attitudes towards local beer brands, one must appreciate the negative attitude towards global brands. Because of it, it is very difficult to draw a line where local brands are more innovative and reliable and where simply global brands are not like that and therefore local brands look better by comparison.
5. Limitations and Future Research

Like any study this as well has its limitations. Moreover, one may think that by attempting to answer research questions of this study, the study opened many other questions that might be answered in the future studies.

The very core of case study research requires in-depth focus on small sample that cannot be generalized to the entire population. This study investigated extreme case of beer lovers, which allowed for collection of rich data about beer brands from the individuals that feel very passionately about them and have lots reflections on them. That being said the part of polish population that can consider themselves beer lovers is relatively small, therefore the future research might focus on investigation of the same issues on wider scale to study the attitudes towards local brands from the perspective of average polish citizen as their attitudes may be less positive or defined.

This study identified some relationships between elements of positive brand image of local beer brands. However, due to qualitative nature of this case study, it was difficult to assess how strong those relationships are. Development of quantitative scale that would allow for assessment of the strength of the relationships is a subject to possible future research.

The study identified that one of the factors influencing the purchasing decisions is context. Respondents claimed that the type and brand of beer they are going to purchase is partially dependent on aspects like weather and region they are in. This suggests that drinking beer is a cultural phenomenon that is determined by many outside factors. The future research may focus on investigation of those factors and explain the reasons for the importance of them that this study is unable to answer.

Respondents also identified that innovation has a positive impact on image of local brands. In this study, the importance of different flavours of beer and creative approach to production of it were highlighted as the key components of the phenomena. However, this raises questions about the role of technological advancements in perceived-innovativeness of the brand. The future research might want to attempt to explore relationship between technological innovation and tradition of brewing methods in consumers” perception of beer brands.

Finally, the study showed that, unlike in previous research the packaging plays role in females’ decision-making processes. The nature of this study however did not allow for investigation what kind of packaging attracts them the most and how
important is it in the process of making decision. This might be subject to the future research.
6. Conclusions and practical implications

This study aimed at exploring the decision-making processes behind choices of beer brands and in-depth understanding of brand image of perceived-local beer brands among polish consumers. It has contributed to the literature by providing in-depth consumer perspective on aforementioned issues. The explored issues are especially relevant in context of beer revolution in Poland and growing popularity of local beer brands. The focus on beer lovers as chosen sample allowed for effective examination of the perspective of target consumers of small, regional and niche breweries.

The study found out that polish beer lovers expect from beer brands sensory experience. They want to experiment with different kinds of beer and different brands and therefore very often are unable to pick their favourite beer brand. They seek for new experiences, while choosing beer brands. Those who are able to identify their favourite beer brand, most often choose local polish brands as their favourite. Through the term local brand they understand small and regional breweries rather than brands, which mass-produce in Poland but also have some regional connotations.

To answer RQ1, 6 different factors were identified as important while choosing beer brand, summed up in Fig. 2. The results showed rather emotional approach to beer as a product. The consumers spend lots of thought and time deciding which beer to choose. The results sustained the findings of previous research and industry analyses by identifying taste as the most important factor of choosing the beer brand. The price of the beer that they are willing to pay is also very strongly related to the taste of beer, for which some consumers are willing to pay even 10 times more. Therefore, product and price are considered to be two most important aspects of 4Ps marketing mix while choosing beer brand. The study also showed the importance of the context in consumers’ decision. The choice of beer, and in result, brand is determined by aspects like for example the weather but also the region in which consumers are. The analysis of patriotic and ethnocentric behaviours showed that even though they might not be the most important aspects of consumers’ choice, they still influence their decision. The behaviours are dictated by moral and emotional reasons: sense of responsibility and pride. Surprisingly, in contrast to previous research on the subject, packaging is also relevant aspect of decision, mostly for female respondents. Lastly, majority of beer-lovers admitted that recommendations are also important part of their decision making process.
In response to RQ2 the image of perceived-local beer brands was examined. All investigated beer-lovers had positive image of local beer brands. Fig 3. explains how different aspects influence positive image of those brands. The most prominent factor associated with positive image of local beer brands is quality. Polish beer lovers consider ingredients and production processes as better quality that those used by perceived-global brands. The quality also is the reason for two other aspects that contributes to the image of local brands: taste and trust. According to the respondents better quality of ingredients results in better taste of beer, which is also associated with local brands. Similarly, the perceived honesty of production processes result in stronger trust towards those brands. Another important aspect of positive brand image identified is innovation. Polish beer lovers associate innovation with wider and more interesting product choice, which fulfil Park’s et al. (1986) experimental needs connected with the brands. The local brands are seen as sincere, exciting and competent, considering Aaker’s (1997) 5 Dimensions of Brand Personality. Lastly, the positive image of local brands is very strongly related to the negative image of global brands, which are perceived as unoriginal and unreliable.

The study can have multiple practical implications for marketing managers of both local and global beer brands. Better understanding of what aspects influence decision-making processes while choosing beer brands can help beer producers to more effectively respond to the consumer needs. Global brands seem to not appeal to beer lovers due to the boring taste of beers and lack of creativity and innovation among them. Global brands therefore should focus on developing wider and more interesting product ranges to slow down the process of growing popularity of local brands. Some of the producers managed to do that effectively already and example of that might be Książęce by some respondents considered as local brand despite being part of global concern. Both global and local brands should address the issue of packaging that in many cases was considered uninteresting by respondents. The aesthetical side of the product appears to be important among female respondents and since the share of female beer drinkers is still growing, effective targeting of this segment of population may help brands to increase their market share. Lastly, while considering their distribution choices, local brands should think of importance of recommendations during the process of choosing beer. Many respondents pointed out that when it comes to local brands they tend to seek for advice of salesperson. The appropriate training of
salespeople in the places where local brands are sold can positively impact sales of the brand.
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Z0954070 – Examining Image and Preferences of Local Beer Brands – A case study of Polish consumers

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Appendix A – Interview Guide

Research question 1: How do consumers make a decision about which beer brand to choose? What aspects are important while choosing beer brand?

Research question 2: What image do perceived-local/regional brands have among polish customers compared to perceived-global brands and how does it influence their purchasing preferences?

Decision Making – topics and questions

- What is your favourite beer brand and why?
- What aspects are you considering while choosing beer brand?
  - Price
  - Taste
  - Packaging
  - Quality
  - Familiarity with the brand
  - Recommendations
  - Promotions
  - Country of Origin
- Which aspect is the most important?
- Willingness to pay more for this aspect
- Amount of time take to decide

The Image of Local Brands – topics and questions

- Do you choose local brands
- Associations with local brands
- Differences between local and global brands
- Positive and negative sides of local brands
Appendix B – Translated Participants Information Leaflet

Thank you for your participation in my research on image and preferences of beer brands among Polish consumers.

All information provided by you during the interviews is fully anonymous and will be used only to write my undergraduate dissertation at University of Durham.

The recordings of the interviews will be not published anywhere and will be used only to write my dissertation.

You can refuse to answer any of my questions and resign from participation in the research in any point during or after interviews.

Please do not consent for the participation in this research if you are below 18.

Please answer all the questions honestly. There are no right or wrong answers.

If you have any questions regarding my research or you wish to provide me with some additional thought on the subject, please email me at:

Thank you for your time and help.

Monika Zebrowska