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Promotion of regional and traditional products

Abstract: The main goal of the studies described in this article may be defined as an analysis of the promotional processes of regional and traditional products executed with the use of symbols regulated by European law: Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG), Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

The analysis presented here and the trends in promotional activities deduced from it, primarily result from the specifics of the goods. The shape of the information system is also influenced by social and cultural factors decisive for the recognizability and renown of the products, which have been confirmed by the results of the questionnaire conducted for the study. What is worth noting is the correlation between quality and tradition, reflected, among other things, in declarations regarding the reasons for the choice of these products: the sense of pride and the willingness to continue the traditions were chosen by 45% of the survey participants. The Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) has proven to be the most recognizable European symbol (38%).

Key words: intellectual property protection in the EU, promotion, visual communication

Introduction

In the EU countries the origin of food products is increasingly capturing consumers' attention. The multitude of products creates the need to distinguish those which provide guarantees of quality and flavor, while at the same time being elements of the European heritage. In light of the principles of the EU agricultural product quality policy it is necessary to secure implements allowing for efficient labelling and promotion of traditional and regional products of defined specific features, especially those related to their geographical origin (Regulation (EU) No. 1151/2012). Considering the above, the European system of legal protection of tradi-

tional products' signs, as an element of their promotion, has been chosen as the subject of the study.

The main goal of the study may be defined as an analysis of specific promotional processes of regional and traditional products with the use of the symbols regulated by EU law, i.e. Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG), Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The goal has been reached by attempting to answer the following questions:

- do the currently applied tools for promotion of regional and traditional products have their own specifics?
- how recognizable are the legally protected symbols of regional and traditional products?
- what are the sources of information on traditional and regional products and what is the role played in this respect by the legally regulated *sui generis* symbols (TSG, PDO and PGI)?

The defined subject matter exceeds the limits of linguistic analysis of the binding regulations. It seems desirable to use the tools of purpose analysis and functional analysis. Such an approach is favored by the complex, multifaceted character of the issues related to the promotion of traditional and regional products with the use of legal instruments. Assessment of the legal practice and viewing certain phenomena as parts of a larger whole – a political and socio-economic system – requires the use of external comparative analysis related to the numerous achievements of political and economic sciences. In view of the above, the analysis of source and secondary materials has been presented in this article. The state of the matters has been established, identifying relationships among many phenomena and processes. Sampling procedures have been used, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted, and the questionnaire contained both closed and open questions.

Therefore, in order to achieve the goal, presentation of political and economic processes against the backdrop of the contents of the examined regulations is required, both from the point of view of the functions they have and the values they serve in regular practice.

Tools for promotion of traditional and regional products

The need to promote agricultural products has been recognized by the European Commission which appropriated €188.5 million for this

purpose in 2018. This amount exceeded that for 2017 by €46 million (see: the European Commission, Promotion of Agricultural Products in the EU, Introduction). The financing is available not only for projects promoting European agricultural products globally and in the EU. The projects cover a wide range of issues related, among other things, to campaigns promoting healthy nutrition. EU internal projects specifically highlight policies to inform customers of the EU systems and symbols of quality such as geographical indications and labels of ecological products.

An important role in promotion of regional and traditional products is played by organizations whose activities are aimed at the popularization of knowledge about such products. The AREPO (French: Association des Régions Européennes et des Produits d'Origine – the European Association of Geographical Indications, EAGI) is the most important association functioning on the European level (Adamczuk, 2013, p. 18). Meanwhile, every member state may create its own quality assurance mechanisms promoting regional and traditional food products. In Poland the most well-known symbols of quality are: *Jakość Tradycja* [Quality Tradition] and *Poznaj Dobrą Żywność* [Try Fine Food] (Decision by Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of July 21, 2004 on the template of the quality symbols for produce and agricultural products, Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 170, item 1794) as well as *System Gwarantowanej Jakości Żywności* [Guaranteed Food Quality System].

In Poland one such important organization is the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Products (PIPRiL). Through its activities, the organization is tasked with effective communication with groups of addressees: food manufacturers, processors, controlling institutions, self-governing bodies and consumers. The primary goal is to inform the public about the role of traditional and regional products on the Polish and European markets. Products may obtain (1) the Quality Tradition mark, registered in the Polish Patent Office under the registration number Z-307821 and protected in accordance with Industrial Property Law, as a collective guarantee mark awarded by the Polish Centre for Testing and Certification (PCTC); and (2) regional symbols awarded to manufacturers of produce, foods and alcoholic beverages, provided they meet the standards set in the rules of obtaining the symbols. Since 2007, in line with the Decision of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of June 12, 2007, the Polish Chamber of Regional and Local Product is entitled to grant the Quality

Tradition mark. It rewards food products of high quality and renown. To date the mark has been awarded to 73 traditional products.

Since 2000 the Chamber, together with the Union of the Provinces of the Republic of Poland, has been organizing Our Culinary Heritage – Tastes of Regions competition. The main purpose of the competition is to promote regional products and to prepare producers for participation in national and EU food products quality systems. Pioneering documentation of culinary traditions from all parts of Poland has been gathered through the years of the competition's existence.

To promote these unique products it is possible to use various tools, such as sales promotion, advertising, public relations or personal sale. Here promotion has various functions: informative, visualizing, activating, economic, educational and competitive purposes (Wiktor 2005, p. 40). Sales promotion is a typical strategy used for regional and traditional products. The promotion consists of the use of economic incentives to boost the offer, selling the message 'buy now and you will be better off' (Sławińska, 2008, p. 150). This very effective tool, also called supplementary promotion, brings the desired results if it is used as a part of an integrated marketing communication system. Therefore, it should not be used as a stand-alone tool but as one complementary with other measures, such as advertising and public relations. Sales promotion tools include, among other things, degustation, awards, drawing lots and token gifts (Blythe, 2002, p. 241). Displays in retail shops employing original visual elements are also typical for food products. Such measures are effective when combined with, for example, advertising campaigns, which in the researched area primarily regard "informing and reminding about the quality values of the product, its nutritional and health-related properties, labelling, specific methods of manufacturing and high regard for the natural environment, as well as creating the need in the customers to continue traditions and the desire the sense of pride in the riches of the culinary heritage" (Teruszczuk, 2009, p. 194).

One of the tools used, among others, by organizations active in this area are events, i.e. special occasions, planned and financed by themselves. They may be organized for various purposes related to image creation, advertising or marketing activities. A specific characteristic and one of the main advantages of such events is the possibility to evoke emotions and build direct ties with the audience (Jaska, Werenowska, 2017, p. 46).

The events' openness for the public boosts chances to reach out to specific groups of recipients. This is especially important for regional and traditional products. Although, as it results from the analysis of the questionnaire survey, internet communication was the least effective one, this should not discourage its use. In the case of specific traditional and regional products, it should be used in conjunction with traditional forms of promotion.

Currently, both enterprises and consumers have the need for interactive communication (Taranko, 2015, p. 52). In the twenty-first century owning a website has become a standard and a necessity. For the generation Y (born after 1980) and generation Z (born after 1996) of the recipients, contacting a communication source only through a website or an internet portal is – as such – not sufficient. What is required is a social media presence. The media include mass applications – social or industry apps, business portals with films, photos and articles, blogs, microblogs, as well as industry and individual social servers. They may be divided according to the recipients, functions and types. They guarantee interaction between the sender and the recipient; they are active, lively and timely. They inspire interest in the product, enable direct contacts with the recipients and allow the opportunity to present information about the product. Immediate feedback from the customer and from the producer is vital. It is also worth noting that publishing entries and accessing the contents of many industry portals is totally free of charge. Examples may be provided by lokalnazywnosc.pl or ekotarg.pl.

The need to correctly position a promotion system within the regional strategies of development is worth highlighting. Adamczyk suggests “incorporating regional food products into the region's tourist product. Traditional and regional products would become a fixed item of the social awareness inventory, as proven by vast experience of West European regions” (Adamczuk, 2013, p. 23). Self-governing bodies also play a significant role in the promotion of the discussed products. Their activities contribute to the increased awareness of the products and to their promotion. The producer alone is not capable of taking sufficient responsibility for the promotion of and information about traditional and regional products. Properly authorized bodies and industry associations are helpful and even indispensable in this respect, promoting the products with regional indications.

Legal protection of EU symbols of regional and traditional products

The European system of legal protection of symbols (Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 and the regulations cited in the preamble) is a vital instrument for the development of the economic competitiveness of agricultural products and foodstuffs on the global market – which indirectly contributes to the increase of quality of these products. This has been reflected in the establishment of the EU symbols aimed at the popularization of the protected designation of origin and protected geographical indications from the European Union. The labels may bear the title: ‘protected designation of origin’ or ‘protected geographical indication,’ or the abbreviations: PDO or PGI respectively (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Symbols of protected European marks

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality_en.

In view of the binding EU law (Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, cf.: Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 of 20 March 2006), the labels identify the product as coming from a specific geographical area, which needs to be understood as signifying that at least one stage of the product’s manufacturing needs to take place in the area. The quality, renown and/or a specific feature of a given product is also crucial for awarding it with the protection stemming from the geographical indication. The indicated feature should primarily result from its geographical origin. In the case of products marked with the ‘protected designation of origin’, they must (1) identify the product as coming from a specific geographical area, which needs to be understood as signifying that at least one stage of the product’s manufacturing needs to take place in the area; (2) the product is distinguished by its quality, good opinion or other specific features. The feature which distinguishes a product from

other goods similar in kind (point 2) is associated by the customer with an area indicated in point 1.

In compliance with provisions of the regulation's preamble (Regulation (EU) No 1151/20120, cf. Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 of 20 March 2006), the system of geographical indications regarding agricultural products and foodstuffs, as well as the system of traditional quality guaranteed have certain common goals and regulations (cf. Barańczyk 2008, *passim*; Kondrat, 2003, p. 13; Szczepankowska-Kozłowska, 2004, pp. 6–7; Szewc, Jyż, 2011, p. 130; Gualieri, Vaccari, Catizzone, 2017, p. 15).

In the case of traditional products, “[a] name shall be eligible for registration as a ‘traditional speciality guaranteed’ where it describes a specific product or foodstuff that (a) results from a mode of production, processing or composition corresponding to traditional practice for that product or foodstuff; or (b) is produced from raw materials or ingredients that are those traditionally used” (Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, Art. 18).

An analysis of the discussed legal institutions from the perspective of social sciences allows us to see that the key reason for considering a given mark as subject to legal protection is provided by its informative and persuasive functions. The labelled product is distinguished by quality, good opinion and/or other specific features. As an example, what is worth noting is the reference to local legends used as a justification for awarding the EU symbol to a specific Polish sausage (C 205/70 PL Official Journal of the European Union 29.6.2017, 73).

According to the doctrine, labelling of the products is a message directed at an average consumer (Szczepankowska-Kozłowska, 2004, p. 6; Kondrat, 2003, p. 13; Sieńczyło-Chlabicz, 2015, p. 569). The essence of the communication process discussed and the regulations referenced assert that the message, in the form of a geographic indication, is relayed at various levels of communication and this is a transmission not only of data but also of the interpretation code. The intangible value stems from the fact that the consumer receives information about the features and quality of a given product and he gives a meaning to them, which is a source of positive feeling, associations and assessments (a positive denotation). The use of geographical indications as a form of regional products promotion requires relevant cultural competence and legal awareness. At the same time, it facilitates the strengthening of the community and boosts knowledge of the customs and traditions. The premises, areas of interest and tools of the discussed promotional activities are largely

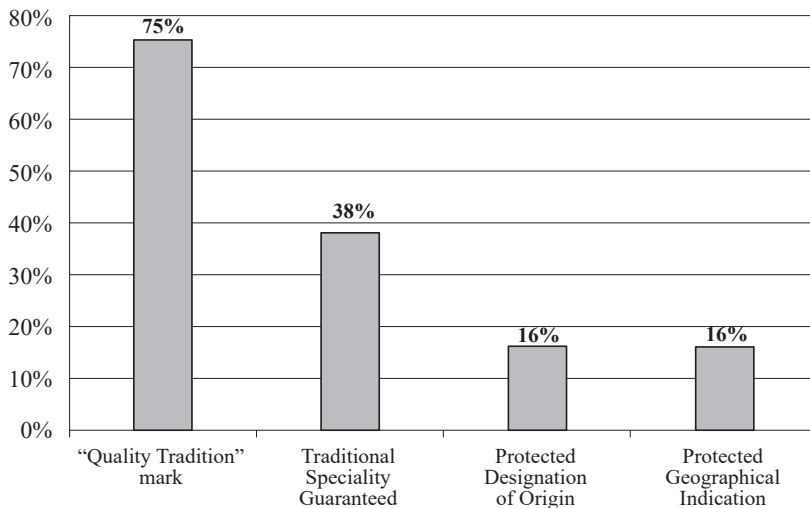
congruent with the axiological assumptions, scope and means of the legal protection. It is worth noting that not only on the normative level, but also in social practice, and especially in communication, cultural aspects of manufacturing and distribution of the products are taken into account (cf.: Oleksiuk, 2015, p. 85).

Analysis of the questionnaire survey

The choice of subject matter discussed in this article was justified by the results of the questionnaire survey regarding the popular interest in traditional and regional products, where 92% of the respondents declared making purchases of Polish traditional products, and 89% gave the same answer with reference to regional products. The questionnaire survey was conducted between March and July 2018, involving inhabitants of Mazovia, Wielkopolska (Great Poland) and West Pomerania – 215 individuals, comprising 139 women and 76 men. Over half of the respondents (63%) declared secondary education status and 37% – higher education. No respondents with primary education status were surveyed (cf.: *Brand recognition Poznaj Dobrą Żywność*, TNS Report, 2018, *passim*).

The age group of 18–25 had the largest representation (56%). Young people aged 26–35 formed the second largest group surveyed (24%), followed by individuals above the age of 45 (11%). People aged 35–45 were the least represented group surveyed (9%). The sample varied in terms of the place of origin: villages (21%), towns with over 50 thousand residents (19%), towns with 50–100 thousand residents (9%), cities with 100–500 thousand residents (16%) and those with over 500 thousand (30%). All respondents were Polish citizens.

Identifying the rate of recognizability of the symbols under discussion throughout the surveyed population was the most important task from the point of view of an assessment of the promotional activities, regarding the discussed products. The survey participants were presented with three main symbols regulated by law and applicable to the territory of the European Union, and two Polish symbols (not subject to regulations *sui generis*): 38% of the respondents recognized the TSG symbol, 16% – PDP or POG, respectively. As many as 75% of respondents declared familiarity with the Quality Tradition mark and 10% of them – with the Our Culinary Heritage mark (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Recognition of traditional and regional products

Source: Own study.

What is worth noting is the fact that the highest rate of recognizability was recorded with reference to a mark not subject to regulations *sui generis*. The disproportion between the declared recognition of the Polish mark (81%) and the European one (48%) was especially visible in the recipients with secondary education. Among respondents with higher education there was no such significant difference. The finding that all the presented marks gained at least 10% of recognizability is satisfying. In the age group of above 36 a higher recognition of the European marks was recorded (42%) than in the remaining age groups. The lowest recognition of these marks was recorded in the youngest age group of respondents (10%). No correlation between the gender and the rate of recognizability of the analyzed symbols was identified.

The issues of recognizability are strictly related to the source of information about the discussed products. An analysis of the findings has identified two dominant sources of information: friends (56%) and food fairs public fairs and trade fairs (60%). The main distinguishing feature of the sources of information has been identified as direct contact, which may be regarded as a feature characteristic of this type of products. In this context, it should be stated that traditional forms of promotion were unsuccessful. Press and radio advertising did not even score

10% of the indications. TV commercials were mentioned by 26% of the respondents, predominantly women. Product placement – a promotional tool which has recently gained in popularity – scored only 6% in the group of men. Worth highlighting in this respect is the fact that social media was indicated by only 11% of the respondents and blogs – by 15%. Websites have proved to be the most popular form of social media (44%). An analysis of the above presented data from the point of view of the respondents' age suggests that further research is encouraged by the fact that traditional forms, such as food fairs and trade fairs proved more effective (30%) than social media (18%). The respondents' education did not translate into their preferences for traditional or modern sources of information.

The limited role of the new media in the area researched has been confirmed by the findings regarding the use of specialized internet applications by the respondents. Although a quarter of the respondents declared that they use them, the most popular was the application *Zdrowe Zakupy* (healthy purchases) – dedicated to healthy food products, and not the application targeted at Polish products (*Polska smakuje*, <https://www.polskasmakuje.pl/aplikacja-mobilna/>) which would not be equivalent to findings of research devoted to the reasons for making purchases, in the light of which the reason for the choice of regional and traditional products were their flavor properties (70%) and not health properties (14%). The sense of pride was important for 27% of the respondents.

The above considerations speak in favor of continuation of further studies of the social and cultural conditions which can influence the recognizability and renown of the products.

Discovering the sources of information preferred by the respondents was also an important part of the study. The regularity found here has been increased interest in the analyzed products on occasions of direct contact with the seller or the producer. Also, it has been established that the applications dedicated to the subject matters were used by only 7% of the respondents. Therefore, it would be reasonable to undertake research regarding the potential of mobile applications as a form of promotion of the said products.

The specifics of promotion of traditional and regional products were highlighted by the responses of the survey respondents regarding their consumer behavior. Occasional food fairs were indicated as the main place for the purchase of the analyzed products (63%), which corresponds to the sources of information declared by the respondents.

Referring to the thoughts presented above on the European promotional policy, it should be stressed that its goals are not limited to economic aspects but also have political and cultural dimensions. In this context, the findings are interesting, suggesting that quality is associated with tradition. Almost all of the respondents (93%) named tradition as a defining feature of the said products. Even more interestingly, over a half (55%, or 119 respondents) quoted quality and renown as characteristic features of regional products. These features were reflected in the reasons for the purchases, with the sense of pride and continued tradition selected by as many as 45% of the survey participants. In the context of the short list of traditional products known to the respondents, dominated by meat-and-cabbage stew (*bigos*) and the pork chop (*schabowy*) it is worth noting that the former belongs to the noble culinary tradition (Mickiewicz, 1834; Book IV {co to jest?}; Wielądko, 1783) and the latter draws from peasants' and laborers' traditions and gained popularity among Poles as late as the nineteenth century (Ćwierczakiewicz, 1871, p. 75). Also cited were dumplings (*pierogi*), alcoholic beverages and traditional fermented products. Dishes popular in the multinational culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, such as *lazanki* (type of noodles), meads and bagels, were marginal among the responses.

Conclusions

In the European Union, advantages of high quality products are increasingly noticed, also those of traditional and regional products. The bio-diversity of the agricultural production is also appreciated. This justifies the research and analyses of the subject matters named in the title of this article. The questionnaire survey conducted confirmed a high interest in the discussed products. Almost all of the respondents declared making purchases of traditional products (92%) and regional ones (89%).

Identifying the rate of recognizability of the indicated symbols in the surveyed sample has been important from the point of view of the effectiveness of the promotional activities conducted. The highest rate of recognizability was attributed to the symbol not subject to regulations *sui generis*. 75% of respondents declared familiarity with the Polish Quality Tradition mark, 38% recognized the TSG symbol and 16% indicated PDP or POG, respectively.

In this context it is worth noting that the role of professional communication strategies is growing. The assumptions and goals of the

strategies are defined not only by the costs but also taking account of intangible factors, such as aspirations and cultural competence of the consumers. The significance of common values has been confirmed in the results of the questionnaire survey analyzed. Firstly, the respondents indicated tradition (93%) as a defining feature of the discussed products. Secondly, over half of the respondents pointed out their high quality and reputation (55%). The sense of pride and the willingness to keep up the traditions were an important reason for the choice of regional and traditional products, quoted by 45% of the respondents.

Supporting promotion of European regional and traditional products by means of legal regulation of the protected signs is also important from the point of view of the general public. Protection of exclusive rights guarantees maintenance and development of regional traditions, in the interest of farmers, producers and consumers, as well as local communities.

In light of these considerations it may be claimed that the specifics of promotional activities in this area result from the correlation of specific features of the products, market practices and legal regulations. The above considerations speak in favor of continuation of further studies of the social and cultural conditions which can influence the recognizability and renown of the products.

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Promocja produktów regionalnych i tradycyjnych

Streszczenie

Podstawowym celem studiów opisanych w artykule była analiza specyfiki procesów promocyjnych produktów regionalnych i tradycyjnych z wykorzystaniem oznaczeń regulowanych przez prawo europejskie: Gwarantowana Tradycyjna Specjalność (GTS), Chroniona Nazwa Pochodzenia (ChNP), oraz Chronione Oznaczenie Geograficzne (ChOG). Dokonano krytycznego przeglądu narzędzi promocji produktów tradycyjnych i regionalnych odnosząc się do roli ochrony prawnej oznaczeń wyrobów

w UE. Zwrócono uwagę, że na kształt systemu promocyjnego i informacyjnego mają wpływ uwarunkowania społeczno-kulturowe, które oddziałują na rozpoznawalność i renomę produktów, co znalazło potwierdzenie w wynikach przeprowadzonych badań sondażowych. Na uwagę zasługuje istnienie korelacji jakości z tradycją, czego wyrazem były między innymi deklaracje dotyczące motywu wyboru tych produktów: poczucie dumy i kontynuowanie tradycji wybrało 45% badanych. Najbardziej rozpoznawalnym europejskim oznaczeniem był symbol Gwarantowanej Tradycyjnej Specjalności (38%).

Słowa kluczowe: ochrona własności intelektualnej w UE, promocja, komunikacja wizualna

