

HOW DO YOUNG CONSUMERS SEE FAMILY FIRMS? EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM POLAND

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Purpose: In this paper we investigate how young consumers see family-owned firms and products provided by this group of business entities.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was designed to be conducted on a population of young consumers who are currently at the stage of increasing their knowledge about the principles of market operation and running a business. The structured online web interview (CAWI) method was selected. A total sample of $N = 1069$ consumers aged 20-25 years completed the survey. A series of C&RT was conducted. In order to test the model's generalizability and provide an insight on how the model will predict new independent data such an unknown dataset, a procedure of $k = 10$ -fold cross validation was used, using a randomly selected sample called Train Data.

Findings: Results of the study revealed that consumers are positively oriented towards products made by family-owned companies. They are highly convinced that signing products with family-owned trademarks emphasizes their family character. About 20% consumers declare to notice family firm trademarks in the products offered. The most important values sought in products by young consumers are: product quality, price and quality of ingredients, while three most significant features of family-owned businesses perceived by young consumers are tradition, low scale of production and high quality of products indicating high reputation of family-owned businesses.

Research limitations/implications: The main limitation of this study results from the lack of full representativeness of the examined sample. The research looked at young consumers, so the conclusions cannot be applied to consumers with different demographic characteristics. The second limitation is the type of research tool used. The questionnaire allowed only to diagnose subjective beliefs about one's own preferences and attitudes, and not to study real shopping behavior.

Practical implications: The findings complement the current discussion of the uniqueness of family firms. They might also help family business owners to increase efficacy of their marketing activities.

Originality/value: The paper explores the research gap in the area of the attitudes of young consumers, who have knowledge of market mechanisms, towards family businesses and products offered by this group of business entities.

Keywords: family business, perception, young consumers.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

Introduction

Family firms are the oldest and most widespread business entities making a major contribution to GDP generation in most countries (Colli, 2002; Ramadani et al., 2020). Their stability is crucial for global economic growth (Ramadani, Hoy, 2015). According to data from the Central Statistical Office, there are over 2 million family businesses in Poland, which generate 63-72% of GDP and generate about 8 million jobs. The important social and economic role played by family businesses makes them the subject of a high number of research papers (D'Angelo et al., 2016; Kellermanns et al., 2008; Schwass, Glemser, 2016; Sharma, Chrisman, Gersick, 2012; Dorda, Shtëmbari, 2020; Haynes et al., 2021; Rovellii et al., 2021; Aparicio, 2021). In spite of the fact that different aspects of functioning of family businesses have gained better understanding for the last decades, research areas worth deeper investigation can be identified. A relatively poorly recognized aspect of family business research is the area of consumer perception of family businesses (Elsbach, Pieper, 2019; Andreini et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2020; Schellong et al., 2019; Beck, Prügl, 2018; Köhr et al., 2021; Rajan, Salunkhe, Kumar, 2023; Bargoni et al., 2023). This paper, taking inspiration from the study by Andreini et al. (2020), aims at exploring how consumers see family firms. The study was designed to be conducted on a population of young consumers who are currently at the stage of increasing their knowledge about the principles of market operation and running a business on the Polish market. The structured online web interview (CAWI) method was selected (Salant, Dilman, 1994). A total sample of $N = 1069$ consumers mostly aged 20-25 years completed the survey. The study contributes to traditional literature on the relationship between consumers and family business by accounting how family firms are 'seen' by young consumers. It can enrich the knowledge of family business owners and managers in terms of selecting the optimum cooperation strategies towards their stakeholders-consumers.

This paper is organized as follows. The introduction addresses the problem of perceiving family firms and family firm products by the group of young consumers. In the following section selected factors referring to consumer perception are described in the context of the specificity of family firms. The next section presents research methods, procedures and

measures. This section is followed by the analysis of the results obtained in this study. The paper ends with concluding comments and implications for further research.

Literature review

The important social and economic role played by family businesses makes them the subject of much research. Their stability is crucial for global economic growth (Ramadani, Hoy, 2015). An increase in interest in the subject of family business was recorded at the turn of the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century, and the dynamic development of research has occurred in the last twenty years (D'Angelo et al., 2016; Kellermanns et al., 2008; Schwass, Glemser, 2016). Their stability is crucial for global economic growth (Ramadani, Hoy, 2015). An increase in interest in the subject of family business was recorded at the turn of the 70s and 80s of the twentieth century, and the dynamic development of research has occurred in the last twenty years (Debicki et al., 2009; Chrisman et al., 2010; Gedajlovic et al., 2012; Aparicio et al., 2021; Rovellii et al., 2021). Researchers place particular emphasis on explaining the specificity of family businesses resulting from the involvement of the family in the functioning of family businesses (Sharma et al., 2012; Chrisman et al., 2003; Chua et al., 1999; Haynes et al., 2021).

Similarly, brand and reputation play an important role in determining a company's behavior and performance. However, despite a significant increase in research on family businesses over the past two decades, the application of marketing theories and concepts in the context of family businesses is limited. Alonso Dos Santos, Llanos Contreras, Mahto (2021) postulate the need for research to better understand reputation, branding, communication and marketing prospects in family businesses. Cuevas Lizama, Llanos Contreras, Alonso Dos Santos (2021) indicate that research on the strategic value of the reputation and identity of a family business is still a topic not fully explored, and there is no complete clarity as to what the reactions of different interest groups will be when these elements are communicated to them. A relatively poorly understood aspect of research on family businesses is also the issue of consumers' perception of family businesses (Andreini et al., 2020; Schellong et al., 2019; Beck, Prügl, 2018; Elsbach, Pieper, 2019). The research conducted by Nikodemska-Wołowik et al. (2020) among Polish consumers shows that the level of knowledge of family businesses by consumers is low. Little research has been devoted to the issue of whether family businesses gain advantages or disadvantages over non-family businesses in terms of consumer perception and behavior (Lude, Prügl, 2018). Shen and Tikoo (2021) investigated whether there is a link between family identity disclosures by companies and consumer product ratings, and whether there is an impact of company size on that relationship. Alonso-Dos-Santos et al. (2019) found that passing on the family identity of a business positively affects the purchase intention of potential consumers. However, other research suggests that the term "family business" can generate both positive and negative

associations from different stakeholders – suppliers, customers, and communities (Botero, Litchfield-Moore, 2021). Small family businesses can create a strong brand with emotional added value, which will bring them a competitive advantage (Tien, 2021).

In today's competitive environment, the growth and survival of family businesses depends to a high extent on how much they can build, expand or reconfigure organizational capabilities in response to a changing environment (Kayid et al., 2022) and in response to the requirements of the sustainable growth. One of the aforementioned capabilities is family firms' the ability to encourage consumers to buy their products and services (Compare also Galvagno et al., 2023). This process depends to a high extent on how consumers perceive these firms and products they offer.

Consumer behavior includes two types of activities 1. physical activities, such as acquiring, using, disposing of a product, and 2. mental activities. The second type of activity often precedes and conditions physical activities. This includes among others: realizing the need to have a good, obtaining and processing information about alternative ways of satisfying a perceived need, making a choice specific product and its evaluation in the course of use, expressing emotions before, during and after the purchase (Antonides, van Raaij, 1998).

In this paper, attention has been paid to consumer activities understood as activities related to the choice of a consumer good of a specific origin. These types of activities are shaped by many variables, including perception and beliefs. Perception is understood as a set of processes taking place in the human psyche that contribute to a subjective image of an object or phenomenon. It includes acquiring - by means of the senses - information about objects/phenomena, as well as their interpretation and use for the needs of a specific activity. Perception is also associated with noticing (realizing) the existence of something. In the literature on psychology, two concepts of the emergence of perceptions are indicated: the first assumes that the consumer's knowledge, experiences, expectations, motivation and education influence the way of defining and classifying the observed object. The second concept indicates the importance of information from the environment in creating a pattern (the so-called cognitive representation), which becomes a reference point in the process of recognizing and analyzing objects. According to this approach, the consumer combines information and organizes it in memory in such a way as to facilitate the interpretation of new stimuli reaching him, and then uses it in the process of satisfying his needs (Kapoor, Madichie, 2012).

The consumer's perception is an essential condition for the company's marketing activity. It determines which of the mechanisms of persuasion (i.e. the mechanism of evoking emotions or evoking associations) should be chosen in order to build effective advertising of products. By choosing the right approach, you can create preferences for specific products and an appropriate attitude to family entities as producers of consumer goods.

The emergence of consumer beliefs about an enterprise or a product is conditioned on the one hand by his perceptual abilities (sensory perception), and on the other hand, by many psychological factors. They can have both a mental and a preparatory source. The consumer's mental attitude towards an enterprise / product results from all his convictions, attitudes, views and way of thinking characteristic of the social group he belongs to (Bednarz et al., 2022; Botero, Litchfield-Moore, 2021). On the other hand, the preparatory attitude results from previous purchasing experiences, on the basis of which the consumer predicts the occurrence of certain features of the objects.

Andreini et al. (2020) confirmed that consumers play a major role in shaping 'these firms' family nature 'as a key attribute upon which the purchasing process may depend'. The findings by Andreini et al. (2020) contribute firms' family nature by introducing a new ontological perspective, one in which consumers are actively involved in forming the meanings implied in firms' family nature at the micro, meso and macro levels. In other studies family businesses were perceived by the consumers as human (Beck, Prügl, 2018, Jaufenthaler 2023) as well as being sensitive to social responsibility (Panwar et al., 2014; Schellong et al., 2019). Family owned firms were also confirmed to be seen as authentic (Lude, Prügl, 2018). They enjoy a better reputation than non-family businesses (Cuevas Lizama, 2021). A high number of studies confirmed that companies owned and controlled by families are highly trustworthy (Binz et al., 2013; Duncan, Hasso, 2018). Signalling the family nature of the business to consumers can contribute to a competitive advantage over non-family businesses (Rauschendorfer, Prügl, Lude, 2022). Research shows that family businesses do not always inform consumers of their family identity and customers are not always aware that they are dealing with a family-owned business (Ibáñez et al., 2022).

The aforementioned explains customers' positive or negative influence on the sale of family firms' products and services. From this perspective it is crucial for family business owners and managers to understand and monitor how consumers perceive their business and products or services offered. The important questions to be answered are: 1. what are the permanent and 2. what are the occasional characteristics attributed to the family business; what are the expectations of consumers towards family businesses, what emotions consumers are aroused by information about the family nature of the provider of goods and services. This is possible among others by probing and clarifying the associations associated with the term "family business". The level of knowledge of family business brands and the opinions formulated by young consumers as recipients of marketing activities are an important guideline for the company regarding marketing communication and designing buyer experiences.

Research methods

The study was designed to be conducted on a population of young consumers who are currently at the stage of increasing their knowledge about the principles of market operation and running a business on the Polish market. The group of young people aged 20-25 years, due to their high involvement in using social media, is currently a significant leader in shaping opinions on particular products and services offered by different companies (Compare Bergstroem, Jervelycke-Belfrage, 2018). From this point of view it is of importance for every business manager to know how this group of consumers perceives products offered and what are the values associated with both the business and the products. The structured online web interview (CAWI) method was selected (Salant, Dilman, 1994). A total sample of $N = 1069$ consumers, mostly aged 20-25 years, females in majority, completed the survey and $n = 19$ (1.8%) were excluded from further analyses due to incomplete or unreliable response.

To get a deeper understanding of what we know about how consumers form meanings about family firms, a series of C&RT (Decision Making Tree Analyzes) was conducted. Each of them allows us to detect the conditions under which consumers form beliefs about the 'essence' of family businesses in conjunction with their orientation on products made by family-owned businesses.

In order to test the model's generalizability and provide an insight on how the model will predict new independent data (i.e., an unknown dataset), a procedure of $k = 10$ -fold cross validation was used, using a randomly selected $n = 737$ (70.2%) sample called Train Data. The model estimates were then tested on the data obtained from the Test Data ($n = 313$, 29.8%) that had not been used in the estimation procedure. The C&RT procedure was selected because of its stability in multicollinear data estimation (Gupta et al., 2017), which is the case in this study, where the indices describing consumers' convictions about family company brands were obtained in the survey.

In order to assess the consumer's convictions about family companies and orientation towards their products, an online survey was carried out, comprising four sections addressing three objectives: 1. acquisition of sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., sex, age, level of education, size of the place of consumer's residence); 2. assessment of the consumers' orientation on products offered by family companies (i.e.); 3. general convictions about family-owned companies and their products (i.e. honesty, traditions, low scale of production, high quality of products, reliability, responsibility etc.); and 4. consumer values sought in the product (i.e. price of the product, quality, ingredients, product design and origin).

Research results – analysis

The consumer orientation on products made by family-owned companies was measured using four statements: 1. Information that a product is made by a family company is of importance to me; 2. I notice the family business brand labels/tags in branded graphics of products; 3. I am convinced that family firm brand labeling/tagging emphasizes product traits; and 4. I am willing to pay a higher price for a product made by a family company. The first and second statements let us measure convictions about products made by family-owned businesses and the third and fourth statements measure the behavioral aspect of consumer's orientation towards products made by family-owned businesses.

Table 1.

Summary of Consumer's Orientation Towards Products Made by Family-Owned Businesses Obtained in the Test Sample (n = 313)

Aspect of Consumer's Orientation	Consumer's Response		
	No	Uncertain	Yes
Conviction that Signing Goods with Family Brand Marks Emphasizes the Trade	5.4%	24.6%	70.0%
Readiness to Pay a Higher Price	41.1%	37.5%	21.4%
Conviction on Importance of Family Brand Marks	50.0%	30.7%	19.3%
Noticing Family Businesses Brand Marks Located in Products Design	62.5%	13.9%	23.6%

Source: Authors' own survey.

Customers generally agree that branding products with family brands emphasizes the trade [70.0%], for other aspects of orientation towards products made by family-owned businesses about 20% [between 19.3% for convenience about importance of family brand marks and 23.6% for noticing them] consumers are positively oriented towards products made by family-owned companies.

In order to assess consumers' convictions about the 'essence' family-owned businesses, based on their impressions, the participants were asked to indicate three, out of eight, attributes describing a typical family company, or list any additional attributes, if needed. The predefined options encompassed: a) Honesty, b) Tradition, c) Small Scale of Activity, d) Low Product Quality, e) High Product Quality, f) Solidity, g) Responsibility. These predefined options were selected based on the literature (Andreini et al., 2020; Fernández-Aráoz et al., 2019).

Table 2.

Summary of Frequency Indicating by Consumers Features of Family-Owned Businesses

Features	%
Tradition	80.2
Low Scale of Production	48.9
High Quality of Products	36.7
Honesty	29.7
Reliability	29.4
Responsibility	24.0

Source: Authors' own survey.

Results revealed that three most commonly indicated features in population of young consumers are Tradition (80.2%), Low Scale of Production (48.9%) and High Quality of Products (36.7%) indicating high reputation of family-owned businesses in this population.

In order to assess the importance of values sought by young consumers in products the participants were asked to rank between 0 (meaning “Not At All”) to 10 (meaning “Most Important”) of five key features sought in products they usually buy.

Table 3.

Summary of Analysis of Importance of Values Sought in Products in Young Consumers' Population

Values Sought in Products	M	SD	Q2	Skew	Kurt	SE
Quality of Products	7.59	2.32	8	-1.22	0.863	0.0855
Price	7.05	2.50	8	-0.878	-0.0177	0.0919
Ingredients	5.92	2.74	6	-0.366	-0.811	0.101
Product Design	5.76	2.74	6	-0.305	-0.861	0.101
Product Origin	4.12	2.63	4	0.190	-0.841	0.0970

Note: M - Mean; SD - Standard Deviation; Q2 - Median; Skew - Skewness; Kurt - Kurtosis; SE - Standard Error of The Measure.

Source: Authors' own survey.

Results of the analysis revealed that most important values sought in products by young consumers are Quality of Products (M = 7.67; SD = 2.28), Price (M = 7.05; SD = 2.39) and Ingredients (M = 6.08; SD = 2.96). Although the product origin and design are the values less important in consumer's hierarchy, their importance is estimated about 5 (the midpoint of the scale) [i.e. Product Design (M = 5.73; SD = 2.64)] and Product Origin (M = 4.23; SD = 2.64)].

Results revealed that consumers are positively oriented towards products made by family-owned companies, they are highly convenient that signing products with family-owned brands' logos emphasizes the trait and about 20% consumers declare to notice such marks located in product design. The most important values sought in products by young consumers are *quality of products*, *price* and *quality of ingredients* and three most common features of family-owned businesses perceived in the population of young consumers are *tradition*, *low scale of production* and *high quality of products* indicating high reputation of family-owned businesses.

Four decision tree models were estimated in the Train Sample ($n = 737$) to describe rules of predicting different aspects of consumer's orientation towards products made by family-owned businesses. Then predictions were tested against the data obtained in the *Test Sample* ($n = 313$) to test the validity of established models. Summary of the analysis is presented in table below (Table 4).

Table 4.*Summary of Predictive Validity of C&RT Models in the Test Sample (n = 313)*

Prediction	Conviction that Signing Goods with Family Brand Marks Emphasizes the Trade, %			Readiness to Pay a Higher Price, %			Conviction on Importance of Family Brand Marks, %			Noticing Family Businesses Brand Marks Located in Products Design, %		
	No	Uncertain	Yes	No	Uncertain	Yes	No	Uncertain	Yes	No	Uncertain	Yes
No	0.0	0.0	0.5	78.4	50.9	26.8	72.5	45.8	37.5	91.9	92.9	79.7
N.S.	22.2	30.3	7.8	10.4	34.3	32.4	18.3	36.5	17.2	2.0	2.4	0.0
Yes	77.8	69.7	91.8	11.2	14.8	40.8	9.2	17.7	45.3	6.1	4.8	20.3
Summary of Model Validity												
Accuracy	0.716 (0.662; 0.765)			0.546 (0.489; 0.602)			0.559 (0.502; 0.615)			0.629 (0.573; 0.683)		
Kappa	0.224 (0.117; 0.327)			0.280 (0.175; 0.379)			0.276 (0.171; 0.111)			0.107 (0.004; 0.215)		
Sensitivity	0.000 (0.00; 0.01)	0.302 (0.25; 0.35)	0.917 (0.89; 0.95)	0.784 (0.74; 0.83)	0.3426 (0.29; 0.40)	0.4085 (0.35; 0.46)	0.726 (0.68; 0.76)	0.365 (0.31; 0.42)	0.453 (0.40; 0.51)	0.918 (0.89; 0.95)	0.023 (0.01; 0.04)	0.202 (0.16; 0.25)
Specificity	0.996 (0.99; 1.00)	0.911 (0.88; 0.94)	0.287 (0.24; 0.34)	0.587 (0.53; 0.64)	0.8195 (0.78; 0.86)	0.872 (0.84; 0.91)	0.575 (0.52; 0.63)	0.820 (0.78; 0.86)	0.876 (0.84; 0.91)	0.155 (0.12; 0.20)	0.985 (0.97; 0.99)	0.941 (0.92; 0.97)

Note: N.S – Uncertain.

Source: Authors' own survey.

Results of the analysis revealed that the best predicted aspect of orientation towards products made by family-owned businesses is conviction that signing them with family brand logo emphasizes the trait [*Accuracy* = 0.716, *CI95* = (0.662, 0.765)], meaning that about 71% of young consumers can be accurately predicted by rules in the assessed model. Although the model is accurate, detailed inspection revealed that it is valid in prediction of positive orientation in this aspect [*Specificity* = 0.917, *CI95* = (0.89, 0.95)] accurately predicting orientation in a group of consumers who are convinced that signing products with the logo of a family brand emphasize the trade, but validity of predictions that consumer is unconvinced or is convinced that signing products with that logo would not emphasize the trade are insufficient [*Specificity* = 0.000, *CI95* = (0.00, 0.01) and *Specificity* = 0.302, *CI95* = (0.25, 0.35) respectively].

Results of the analysis revealed that majority, i.e. 65.4%, of consumers who declare value product design low notice family brand marks located in products designs and live in cities above 20 000 inhabitants ($n = 17/26$), but it is the very small sample of the entire group (4%). Consumers who declare they do not notice the family brand logos in product design are in majority (i.e. 62,8%) those who value high (i.e. higher than 2/10) esthetics of product design ($n = 384/611$).

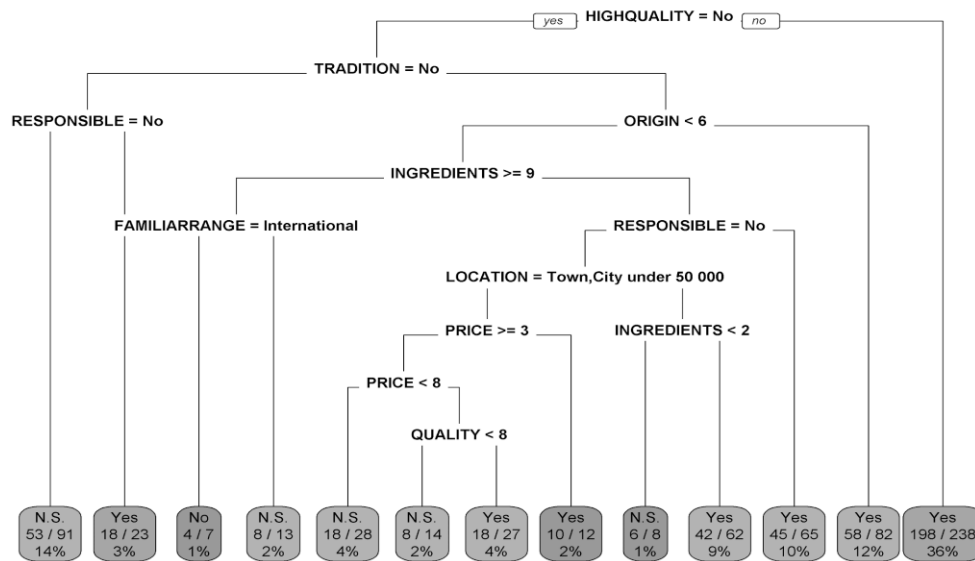


Figure 1. Decision Tree Model Assessed to Predict if Consumer Notice if Products are Made by Family-Owned Companies.

Source: Authors' own survey.

Model assessed to predict if consumers notice family-owned brand marks located on products revealed that the only accurate prediction can be made for those consumers, who do not notice those marks ($n = 384/611$; 91%). These consumers tend to pay attention to product design. The most accurate predictions if consumers notice family-owned companies' brand marks located on product design are consumers not living in town or cities under 50 000 inhabitants and not being concentrated in product design.

Model assessed to predict if consumers are convenient about the significance of marking products with family brand logos revealed that consumers who do not perceive products made in family-owned companies as products of high quality in majority (i.e. 55.1%) do not agree if it is significant to mark products with family brand logos ($n = 288/432$). Consumers over 25 years old, who perceive products made in family-owned businesses as products of high quality are in majority (i.e. 568.1%) either convenient about the significance of marking them with family brand logos ($n = 18/31$).

Results of the analysis revealed that 83.2% ($n = 198$) of consumers being concerned about high quality of products made in family-owned companies 38% ($n = 238$) are either convinced that marking products with family-owned business logos emphasizes the trade. If consumers are convinced that the products produced in family businesses are not of high quality, they need to perceive *Tradition* as one of the most important feature of those businesses and do not highly value products design (i.e. less than 6/10) to be convenient about the facilitating the trade with family-owned brand logos located in product design ($n = 58/82$) or they don't value highly (i.e. less than 9/10) the quality of ingredients and perceive family-owned businesses as reliable ($n = 45/65$). Most frequently consumers unconvinced about the facilitating effect of family-

owned brands logos in product design are those who do not see them as products of high quality and traditional and do not perceive family businesses as reliable ($n = 53/91$).

Results of the analysis revealed that consumers who are convenient that marking products with the logo of family-owned brands emphasizes the trade are in majority those who point that one of most important features of family-owned businesses is that their product can be characterized with high quality ($n = 198/238$, 36%). Moreover the model predicts that the majority of consumers uncertain if marking products with family-owned brand logos emphasizes the trade are those who either do not point that products made by family-owned businesses are characterized with high quality or those companies are traditions and either responsible for their products ($n = 53/91$, 14%).

Predicting if consumers is ready to pay a higher price or products made in family-owned companies is most accurate (i.e. 55.9%) if consumers perceive the high quality of these products and reliability of these businesses ($n = 33/59$) or if they do not perceive family-owned businesses as reliable they moderately value the price of products (i.e. between 5 and 7) and they perceive the high quality and solidity of products made in family-owned companies ($n = 19/34$). Consumers convinced they are not ready to pay a higher price for products made in family owned companies are in majority (i.e. 71,8%) males who perceive products made by family-owned companies as not solid and not of high quality ($n = 84/117$) or females who do not value the product's origin (i.e. less than 5/10) and quality (i.e. less than 3/10) and do not point honesty solidity of products or their high quality as main features of family-owned businesses ($n = 54/75$).

Results of the analysis revealed that the model of predictions if consumers are likely to pay a higher price for products made by family-owned companies is the most complicated of all assessed models. The most accurate predictions can be made for consumers, who are uncertain if they are ready to pay a higher price for product made by family-owned companies ($n = 54/121$; 18%) who pay a high attention to product price and point that high quality of products is one of features describing family-owned businesses and either responsibility for products is not a feature describing it. Consumers who are certain they do not want to pay a higher price for products made by family-owned companies are those who are not likely to pay a higher price for products made by family-owned businesses ($n = 84/117$; 17%), who are males and do not point either high quality either solidity of products as one of features describing family-owned businesses. The other way that being certain that consumer is not ready to pay a higher price for products made by family-owned companies is being the college student, who do not pay a high attention to product origin and pointing high quality but not solidity of products as descriptors of the family-owned businesses 'essence' ($n = 40/74$, 11%). The third most common conditions predicting accurately that consumers do not want to pay a higher price for products made by family-owned companies is if consumer are females pointing honesty but either do not point the high quality or solidity of products as one of best descriptors of family-owned businesses and paying high attention to product quality but not the product origin ($n = 54/75$; 11%).

In order to estimate the importance of each predictor in every model of prediction of customer's orientation towards products made in family-owned companies, a series of analyses were conducted using a Gawrey et al. (2003) method. In each analysis the series of simulations is conducted to estimate the difference in accuracy of the model if a particular predictor is absent, and then values are ranked in a range of 0 through 100, where 0 means the smallest and 100 means the highest change in accuracy indices if predictor is excluded from the model (Quinlan, 1992). Results of the analysis conducted to estimate the importance of each predictor in predicting each particular aspect of consumer's orientation towards products made by family-owned companies is presented in a table below.

Table 5.
Summary of Importance of Predictors in Tested Models

Predictors	Rank of Predictor Importance			
	Notice	Significance	Emphasize	Higher Price
Demographic Characteristics				
Gender	35.36	8.46	92.62	6.46
Age	73.15	39.69	8.03	24.72
Education Status	28.54	20.23	4.23	20.46
Location	54.98	7.55	16.42	23.35
Familiarity with Family Brands				
Being Familiar With Family Brands	88.00	18.37	27.10	6.91
Level of Familiarity With Family Brands	95.74	19.82	27.64	4.21
Category of Family Brands Known	93.72	19.47	27.57	6.99
Hierarchy of Consumer's Values Sought in Products				
Price	31.83	49.16	38.96	32.66
Quality	12.67	0.00	30.97	1.99
Origin	0.10	65.31	40.87	22.51
Ingredients	10.77	43.14	3.40	6.58
Design	100.00	34.77	15.56	19.28
Feature Sought in Family Brand Nature				
Honesty	34.04	67.48	30.63	47.70
Tradition	4.42	4.96	61.26	13.56
Low Scale of Production	37.97	46.95	15.23	47.81
High Quality of Products	97.05	100.00	100.00	100.00
Reliability	42.57	75.30	44.87	62.80
Responsibility	25.64	35.51	30.28	20.01

Source: Authors' own survey.

Results of the analysis revealed that the most important predictor of consumer's orientation towards products made by family-owned companies is convenience about high quality of products, which is the most important predictor in all aspects of orientation towards products made by family-owned companies except of noticing marks of family-owned companies, which rank is marginally smaller (*Importance* = 97.1).

Tradition is the feature sought in family-owned companies that is quite not important in predicting if consumer notice the family-owned companies brand marks or even is convenient about their significance (*Importance* < 5.0), but tradition is one of most important predictors in prediction if consumer is convenient about emphasizing the trade with marking products with family-owned logos (*Importance* = 61.26), and is not trivial in predicting if consumer is ready to pay a higher price for products made in family-owned companies (*Importance* = 13.56).

Demographic characteristics are generally poor predictors of consumers orientation towards products made by family-owned companies, except of the gender which is one of the most important in predicting if the consumer is convenient about the emphasizing role of marking products with the family-owned brand marks in the trade (*importance* = 92.6).

The less important aspect of family-owned companies in predicting the consumer's orientation towards their products is the responsibility, which is the fifth (of six) important features in describing the 'essence' of family-owned companies to predict any of aspect of orientation towards products made by family-owned companies.

Conclusions

Products of family businesses are positively perceived by young consumers. They evoke positive associations because they are associated with tradition, uniqueness resulting from the small scale of production and high quality. At the same time, it has not been confirmed that the family character of the product manufacturer translates directly into the purchasing intentions of this group of consumers. The most important criteria for choosing products that they are aware of are: quality, price and composition. Their origin (e.g. from a family business) is of medium importance for shaping purchasing decisions and is not a prerequisite for young consumers to pay a higher price for a product. The most important predictor of consumer orientation to products manufactured by family businesses is their high quality. Consumers who are convinced that branding products with the logo of family brands emphasizes their commercial value are mostly those who indicate that one of the most important features of family business products is their high quality, which is one of the key determinants of purchase intentions. It can therefore be concluded that the high quality of products is an intermediary variable between the positive perception of family businesses and the purchasing intentions of young consumers.

At the same time insufficient effectiveness of marketing communication of the analyzed companies was identified, since only about 20% of consumers declare noticing family business marks on the products offered. On this basis, it can be cautiously concluded that family businesses in Poland do not effectively expose their family character in product labelling.

Like any scientific study, this too has its limitations. First of all, they result from the lack of full representativeness of the examined sample, which were students. The research looked at young consumers, so the conclusions cannot be applied to consumers with different demographic characteristics. The limitation is also the type of research tool which was used. In the study. The questionnaire allowed only to diagnose subjective beliefs about one's own preferences and attitudes, and not to study real shopping behavior. From this perspective, it would be interesting to study the actual perceptions of consumers using other research instruments, for example, an experiment. It would also be valuable to extend the scope of research to other countries in order to identify the impact of cultural variables on the perception of family businesses.

Despite these limitations, it is worth paying attention to the fact that no simple correlation between the family nature of the company and the declarations of young consumers regarding the priority in choosing their products or the willingness to pay a higher price for the good produced by these enterprises was confirmed. At the same time, the positive perception of this group of business entities was confirmed, and the role of product quality was identified, which is a moderator between the perception of family businesses and the shopping intentions of young consumers. This means that family-owned companies can be a potential source of their competitive advantage by strengthening the image of these entities as companies that attach particular importance to the quality of products. This element should be more prominent in the marketing communication of family businesses. At the same time it worth emphasizing that increasing efforts towards building relationships with consumers as strategic stakeholders of family business should be supported, as Bieniok underlines (2020) by activities directed towards protection of the natural environment.

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