

THE APPEARANCE OF CONSCIOUS CONSUMER GROUPS IN HUNGARY

HOW DO VALUE CHANGES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AFFECT

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ABSTRACT

Examined topics of this issue are the impacts of value changes and sustainable development trends on Hungarian food consumption. Firstly, there is an emphasis on describing the value system (health- and environmental consciousness) of already discovered Hungarian „conscious” consumer groups and their consumer preferences. Furthermore, the inverse relationship between sustainable development and sustainable consumption is demonstrated revealing the necessity for the appearance of an ethical value system. It means a tendency according to which consumption motivations of individuals would shift from self-centred components to social-centred ones and these individuals would take the impacts of their consumption on the ecological environment into consideration. Finally, based on foreign literature, the characteristics of the consumer group LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) are introduced. From the aspects of sustainable development, it is a significant group, since its members consider the impacts of their purchasing decisions on sustainable consumption and therefore the three pillars of sustainable development (social, environmental and economic pillar). However, hedonist values also appear in their consumer behaviour. Because of the hybrid lifestyle of LOHAS group, a need for more sound researches on the factors that influence the purchasing decisions of this group becomes obvious.

Keywords: sustainable consumption, health consciousness, environmental consciousness, ethical consumption, LOHAS

INTRODUCTION

Recently the concept of sustainable development, a top-down process, driven by domestic and international institutions—as a reaction to increasing environmental pollution and overuse of environmental resources—has become a more and more significant issue.

Thus, it probably triggers the appearance of a consumer level trend called sustainable consumption at the same time. Therefore, at an individual and also a social level a transformation in value system becomes necessary. It means that materialist values that dominate the Hungarian society have to be replaced by a post-materialist value orientation.

Firstly, this study, based on Hungarian literature, aims to prove the appearance of those conscious consumer groups in Hungary that show a strong value-oriented

approach to food consumption decisions. Secondly, characteristics of LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability), the consumer group which is compared to other groups committed to sustainability most, is defined according to foreign language literature. Finally, the study compares the consumer segments introduced in order to show that, on factors influencing food consumption decisions, it is necessary to carry out a more sound research.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF BASIC CONSUMER VALUES BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF TWO CONSUMER GROUPS

The relationship of culture and value

Factors that influence consumer behaviour are divided into two main groups: external (social – cultural) and internal (psychological) factors (*Hofmeister-Tóth*, 2006). Here, external factors, more specifically culture and the influence of cultural values on food consumption are in focus. The reason for that is a statement according to which culture is the most complex abstraction and interrelationship of all the factors that influence food consumption. Culture integrates individual, social (group) and also psychological factors and components (*Lebota*, 2001).

According to another well-known approach, cultural factors are either physical/visible (clothing, food and tools connected to their consumption) or non-material/invisible (such as values, habits, norms, rules, ideas). Culture in terms of its factors and consequences is a system based on three elements as follows (*Lebota*, 2001):

- social factors (variables: roles and norms, consequence: individualist/community culture),
- individual factors (variables: lifestyle, personality, consequence: socialisation),
- psychological factors (variables: beliefs, emotions, attitudes, symbols, consequence: motivation, perception and learning).

Culture exists on a dual basis: the duality of individuals and groups (society). Groups affect individuals in the way they perceive, process the information received, their cognitive structure, values and self, through communication, behaviour or environmental factors. Then individuals affect groups again through the same factors and they are able to modify habits, values and structures of the group (*Lebota*, 2001). Thus, people behave according to cultural values until these values help their orientation in the world and serve as guides to solve their problems. When a certain norm fails to satisfy the needs of the society, the norm will be modified or replaced by a new one that is more suitable for their needs and desires. Hence, culture changes slowly, since this is the only way to satisfy the needs of the society (*Hofmeister-Tóth*, 2006).

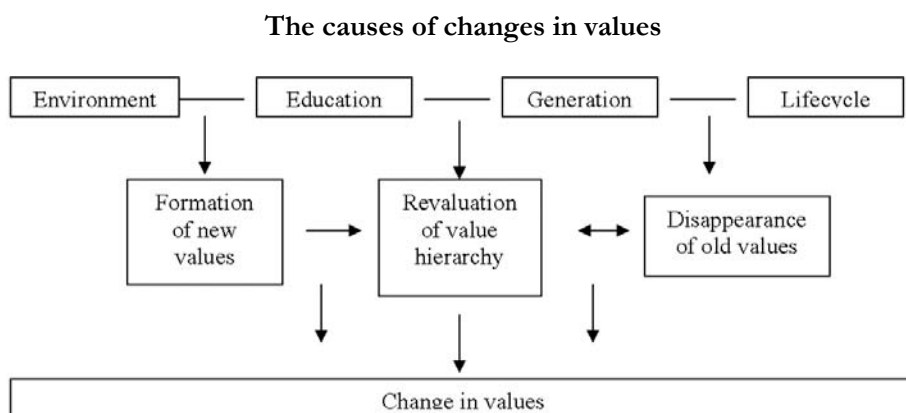
The change in values

According to the Hungarian sociologist *Andorka* (2003), the definition of values is as follows: “*Values are cultural principles that express what is desirable and important, good or bad in a society. Values and their priority could be variable in each society and era.*”

Another interpretation of values: “Ideas of individuals or groups about what is desirable, appropriate, good or bad. Differing values are the key aspects of cultural diversity. Values of individuals are strongly determined by the culture they live in” (Giddens, 2003).

It is important to note that values are stable, therefore they change slowly. We constantly learn through our experiences how to integrate isolated and abstract values into a hierarchical system in which values are ordered according to their relative importance (Hofmeister-Tóth, 2006). Factors influencing the change of values are demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1



Source: Hofmeister-Tóth, 2006

Transformation processes between 1945 and 1990 in the value system of the Hungarian society can be separated into four periods (Beluszky, 2000):

1945-1948: Maintenance of the original value system. The simultaneous presence of those values that were explicitly ‘approved’ in the society, in public, cultural and intellectual life.

1948-1962/65: The big transformation, the erosion of the original value system.

1965-1980: The “classic Kádár-era”¹ in value system processes. Transformations slow down and become less visible. However the characteristics of the value system and mentality that determines the way of thinking, behaviour, lifestyle and aspirations of the present Hungary, is becoming dominant in this era.

The 1980s: the era in which the social crisis becomes more and more obvious.

1987/88: the controversial value system developed due to the indoctrination erodes and loses its authority (second erosion). The original value system and values living before the takeover of party state renew in a paradoxical form. Furthermore, new modern and post-modern values and value systems appear again in a controversial way.

Füstös and Szakolczai (1994) found that from the 1970s to the middle 1990s the most important values of the Hungarians were peace and the safety of the family,

¹ Kádár held office as General Secretary of the Communist Party and was de facto ruler far longer than anyone else in the 20th-century Hungary” (www.iearn.hu)

while the second most important were happiness and the mother country. In the 1990s well-being and harmony of life came to the front, and the joy of completed work became less important. They also noted that intellectuality as extrinsic value was at the first place in front of truthfulness, responsibility and bravery-integrity.

Nováky (2001) concluded that the Hungarian domestic value system was strongly individualized and intellectualized. Intellectual values, sometimes even before ethical values, became dominant in the row of extrinsic values. It means that the majority of citizens *place material aims in front of implementing certain post-materialist values*.

The appearance of the tendencies above in food consumption was stated by Gáti (2009) after her researches based on data published in Special Eurobarometer 2005. She classified EU member states into 5 clusters: Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon, Mediterranean, continental and post-socialist. Hungary is a member of the last cluster beside the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. According to the results, post-socialist countries are the last in quality- and health consciousness as factors influencing food consumption decisions. Nevertheless, they were the first in price sensitivity. Aesthetics or beauty as influencing factor was also a priority. Taste and outfit were appointed as an important factor by more than 50% of respondents.

Töröcsik (2006) describes the Hungarian society as a 'fluid' or 'patchwork' society, where there are examples for everything and also for their opposites. People try to live in an 'appropriate' way by organizing values collected from different sources. In this society trends and counter-trends are tied to the categories as follows: time and pace; mobility; performance; knowledge; social life; workout; consumer expectation; basic values at the time of choosing a product; youth ethos; search for the unknown near and far; and health. All in all, today's Hungarian society, contrary to the aspect of sustainable development, is characterized by those trends and central values that encourage consumers to move into the direction of luxuries and experience shopping and tempt them to procure the latest technological innovations.

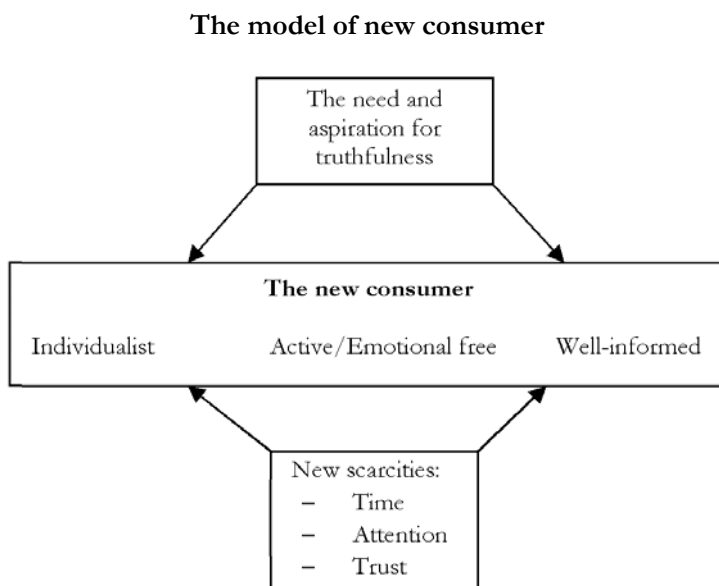
However, beside the value system above, it is important not to ignore the existence of economic considerations as barriers to sustainable development approaches of consumers. The reason is that the quantity and quality of foods purchased by Hungarian households are highly dependent on the financial situation of consumers. Consumers with lower income aim to procure the necessary food quantity, while the quality becomes more important in the case of consumers with higher income (Lehota, 2001).

Regarding the effects introduced, values and forms of behaviour leading to sustainable development appear only in a minor group of Hungarian residents. These characteristics evolve in the consumer behaviour of the group 'new consumers'.

The model of "new consumer" was established by Lewis and Bridger (2001) (Figure 2). According to the model, to consumers of today the search for identity and the freedom of decision-making is more and more important. The basis of needs is not scarcity, since needs coming in the list in front of identity are possible to be satisfied at any time. Further important factors for consumers are truthfulness

and therefore trust, too. The “new consumer” is well-informed and besides the product often searches for information on the manufacturer (Törőcsik, 2006). According to this, today the trust in food commerce is based on truthful sales and promotion. Consumer decisions of groups are highly influenced also by emotional motivations (such as health, environmental protection and social justice), which leads to the increasing importance of human values (Horváth et al., 2005).

Figure 2



Source: Lewis and Bridger, 2001

According to Törőcsik (2006) these features do not appear clearly in individual groups, they are rather characteristic. The success of these features depends on the degree of interest, and the type of products and services. The new consumers, because of the growing pace of their life search for information only on products that are very important to them. It means that the type of their consumer decisions depends on the degree of their involvement.

Similarly to Western-European societies, conscious consumer groups – whose consumption due to their decisions supports the solution of a civilization problem (for example the overuse of natural resources, civilizations diseases) – have appeared also in Hungary. Materialistic values become less important and human values become important, which is observed in food purchase decision-makings of environment and health conscious consumer groups. A certain part of these two groups, furthermore, shifts from self-centred² to social-centred³ approaches.

² The consumers who take responsibility for themselves and their immediate environment (family). They are motivated by benefits that are immediately visible for consumers.

Health-conscious consumer behaviour

Harris and Guten (1979) define health behaviour as: behaviours expressed by individuals in order to protect, promote or maintain their health regardless of their perceived health status and the efficiency (from an objective viewpoint) of the behaviour. Components of health behaviour are as follows:

- physical activity,
- medical examinations,
- ideal amount and quality of recreation,
- well-balanced psychological status,
- avoidance of drug (mainly medical) abuse,
- regular self-monitoring and examinations,
- personal hygiene,
- conscious nutrition.

Matarazzo (1984 in *Pikó* 2002) demonstrates two forms of health behaviour: preventive and pathogenic. Pathogenic health behaviour is influenced by unconscious motivations and emotional elements, meaning that consumers' behaviour patterns are shaped by nutrition habits, routine and emotional factors. Though, preventive health behaviour is formed by a chain of conscious activities (for instance conscious consumption) which means that cognitive factors are more significant here.

Fern (2007 in *Szakály* 2008) introduces the three main stages of the road to conscious nutrition:

- product-centred behaviour,
- benefit-centred behaviour,
- consumer orientation.

According to the model consumers become product- and benefit-centred first, they focus on food ingredients and the benefits coming from the food. But later, emotional messages are more dominant and marketing becomes consumer-oriented. In the emotional stage health maintenance appears as a value in consumers' view.

Researches on food consumer behaviour carried out at Szent István University prove that there are three groups of elements describing Hungarians' value systems: hedonistic/convenience values, traditional values and values connected to financial security. Researches on value systems conducted in 2002-2004 found that the most important values to Hungarians are peaceful and happy family life, good relationships and health. Aspects of well-being were only at the second place (*Horváth et al.*, 2005).

Results above are supported by also other researches and they prove that for Hungarians health as a social value (*Table 1*) is a priority (*Berke*, 2004).

³ The consumers who take responsibility also for others beside themselves. They are motivated by both visible and invisible benefits.

Source: *Moxie*, 2008

Table 1

Preferences of social values

Social value	Average	Standard deviation	Social value	Average	Standard deviation
Health	4.88	0,45	Economic well-being	4.24	0.83
Happy family life	4.82	0,52	More freetime	4.07	1.01
Peaceful, calm life	4.56	0,73	Economic consumption, savings	4.02	0.93
Good human relationships	4.71	0,67	Grasping opportunities of life	3.95	1.00
Good social relationships	4.43	0,74	Travel	3.58	1.13
Self-confidence	4.42	0,80	Career	3.47	1.13
Happy, joyous life	4.25	0,86	Religion	2.89	1.31

Source: Berke, 2004, n=1000

Szakály (2008) wrote that health conscious consumers are more aware of the food they consume and the ingredients they eat. Consumers, in order to maintain their health status, choose products that help avoid diseases of civilization. The trend is reinforced by increasing individualism. According to another important statement, Hungarian consumers (and usually the Europeans) like other environmentally conscious consumers prioritize the pleasure they can reach by consuming a product compared to its healthiness. Only 14% of respondents would buy healthy food if its taste does not meet their expectations (*Szakály et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, the role of time becomes more significant: consumers require ready-to-eat, but still healthy food.

Today the frequency of *functional* food consumption is low in each category in Hungary, which is supported by observations of lactose free dairy product, food supplements, effervescent tablet, and eco-food tendencies. At the same time, the proportion of people who consume food containing minerals (41.5%) and probiotic food containing live bacteria (26.9%) is relatively high. Furthermore, results showed that functional food is consumed more often by those women who live in the capital, the young and people who have higher qualifications. Consumers think that the most dangerous food ingredients are (*Szakály*, 2008):

- food additives,
- cholesterol,
- high salt- and sugar-content,
- improving agents,
- colour additives,
- swine fat.

The reason why Hungarians consume organic food is to prevent negative effects on health or as a part of a diet in case of a disease. However, in the circle of occasional consumers, the desire for social recognition and status as a motivation (to meet social expectations) appears more often. At the time of choosing a product health factors motivate 97% of consumers, while 34% of consumers buying organic products in hypermarkets want to meet social expectations (*Horváth et al.*, 2005).

According to *Szakály* (2008) most Hungarian consumers are not informed well enough (for instance they are not able to interpret several ingredients) to attach benefits to functional foods. Based on Matarazzo's model above, the development of a conscious consumption attitude is in a cognitive stage, in which consumers focus on the ingredients and want to gain specific information.

This makes the role of labels on food more important in influencing consumers in the information search and assessment stages of the purchase decision process. *Horváth* (1997) states that in purchase decisions of health-conscious consumers the significance of information signed on food products is high. Researches found that 39.7% of health-conscious group members pay attention to nutritional value information and 59.3% to ingredients' list. Furthermore, 41.0% think that the avoidance of preservatives is important, while 26% thinks the same about the avoidance of artificial additives.

If the consumer possesses a sound knowledge of the product's benefits (benefit-orientation), emotions appear in the direction of the product. At this stage, the consumer uses the knowledge acquired at earlier purchase decisions. This results in that most of them tend to pay a higher price, companies will be able to build on brand loyalty, and consumer trust develops. (*Szakály*, 2008) Emotional motivations lead to an attitude of ethic trends (for example environmental consciousness, sustainable development, sustainable consumption, etc.). To reach this state the consumer has to leave the cognitive stage, which means that pleasure and reliability by the product become evident and through this, a decision, based on emotional affection and driven by commitment, will develop.

Environmentally-conscious consumer behaviour

There are some projections of environmentally conscious life. All of them are an important element in environmentally conscious consumer definitions (*Dudás*, 2006):

1. Firstly, environmental-consciousness covers a special worldview, value system and system of beliefs according to which: 1. human and nature are equal, 2. the environment, environmental problems and their solutions are important, 3. to work for these solutions is not only a duty of people but in order to reach these goals they also possess the ability to act efficiently.
2. Secondly, environmental consciousness of consumers involve positive attitudes to the environment and this attitude is nurtured by the special value and belief system above.
3. Thirdly and finally, environmental consciousness of consumers means a special behaviour that aims to reduce the usage and exploitation of environment. This behaviour also includes four principles: (1) environmentally friendly purchases,

(2) alternative ways to reduce environment usage, (3) research for information concerning the environment, environmental problems and their solutions, (4) activities of environmental protection.

Vágási (2000) developed five groups according to the degree and characteristics of environmental consciousness: animal friendly behaviour, the protection of natural environment, the protection of environmental resources, health protection, positive discrimination of natural materials and tastes. Groups are separated according to the products' impact on the environment, since there are people who refuse a product even because of the lowest level of environment damage, while others compare the level of damage to the benefits of the product.

Environmental consciousness appears also in consumer purchases. According to foreign literature the demand for and purchases of products or a product characteristic can be regarded as environmentally conscious as follows (Schafferné, 2006):

- Choosing an environmentally friendly product or brand with a sign on the label.
- Preferring a product that is based on some product characters can be regarded as environmentally friendly. For example choosing a recycled or recyclable product.
- Purchasing organic foods.
- Paying attention to the packaging, searching for environmentally friendly packaging, refusing individually packaged products, refusing unnecessary packaging, looking for products with a minimal package.
- Refusing free plastic bags offered in the shops.

There are plenty of contributing factors in the development of environmental consciousness such as the immediate social environment of consumers, tools of mass communication and own experiences of consumers (Vágási, 2000). Values as altruism, liberalism and materialism have a dominant role. The first two have a positive, while the third has a negative impact on environmentally conscious consumer behaviour. Involvement in environmental issues was examined by the model of Chan and Lau. Chan and Lau states that the number of 'green' purchases and the level of purchase intention increases if there is a human and nature orientation that has an impact through an ecologic approach on the knowledge connected to it (Schafferné, 2006).

Features of environmental consciousness have also appeared in the behaviour of Hungarians (Vágási, 2000):

- at the time of purchase the consumer considers the impact of the product on the environment,
- the consumer is ready to pay a higher price for environmentally friendly bags,
- the consumer feels their own responsibility for the environment and its protection,
- the consumer recommends others to buy environmentally friendly products.

A survey conducted in 2005 found that although general attitudes of the Hungarian population to the environment are basically favourable, it is hardly reflected in purchases. Only a small circle of respondents buys organic food (15.7%) or eco-labelled products (23.8%) regularly, and only a small number (26.2%) avoids products affected by animal experiments. Energy-saving devices, bigger packaging,

refill packages are more wide-spread. According to demographical factors, women, people with higher qualifications, and people with the greatest wealth are the most influenced by environmentally conscious attitudes in this case (*Schafferné, 2006*).

A study carried out in 2004, examining Eoster consumers' motivations in organic food purchases, divided consumer motivations into three groups along with the values they connected to. These groups are the value systems of equality, hierarchy and individualism (*Seyfang, 2004*). For those, who represent the *equality view* environmental protection, reduction of consumption, decentralization and social equality play a significant role. Contrary to this, followers of the *hierarchy principle* regard sustainment of social order, centralization and status consumption as main values. Principles of *Individualists* are free market competition, independency, and hedonism. Their environmentally conscious views are characterized by motivations of people with equality view, which means that they are motivated to consume a product of Eoster if (*Pronay and Málóvic, 2008*):

- it is more beneficial to the environment,
- it produces less waste,
- it reduces 'food miles',
- they know where the food comes from and among what kind of circumstances it was produced,
- they support co-operation,
- it leaves money with the local economy,
- it preserves traditions.

A research accomplished among full-time students of the Faculty of Economic Sciences, Miskolc University, indicated that the reason why most people practice an environmentally friendly behaviour is the importance of hygiene around them. This means that they interpreted environment as their immediate environment. The first form of environmentally conscious behaviour is the protection of immediate environment followed by the preference of healthy lifestyle and the care of descendants. To follow sustainable development and the fear of ethical commitments' and environmental pollution's consequences are still possible to be categorized here. Examining the abilities of activities it was found that individual factors (convenience, different socialization) and limited opportunities (expensive products) are barriers to the appearance of environmentally conscious behaviour in purchases (*Nagy, 2009*).

THE APPEARANCE OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION TRENDS IN FOOD CONSUMPTION

The relationship of sustainable development and sustainable consumption

The issue of sustainable development appeared at the time of the great discoveries, colonization, then the industrial revolution, because increasing environmental pollution and the overuse of natural resources became a world-wide problem due to these processes. The first person who pointed out the threats against human health and nature was Rachel Carson with her book *Silent Spring* published in 1962. Then, from the beginning of the 1970s the book was followed by the reports

of the Club of Rome. Among these reports the most significant was the first one called *The Limits to Growth*. According to the report if the world's population and environmental pollution deriving from industrialization keeps the pace of that time until 2100, the world may have to face the collapse of the world economy and population. Thus, a change is necessary. Environmental issues at an international level were dealt with first in 1972, at the 'United Nations Conference on the Human Environment'. The Conference was followed by the establishment of 'World Commission on Environment and Development' (Brundtland Commission) in 1983 (Gyulai, 2008).

A report of Brundtland Committee, *Our Common Future* was published in 1987. It was the first report that defined the essence of sustainable development: "*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (WCED, 1987).

Sustainable development stands on three main pillars: environmental, economic and social pillars. All three have to be taken into consideration before any measures or activities (Szlávik, 2005). According to The European Union the institutional structure (such as communication infrastructure, internet access) is also additional (Turchany et al., 2007).

Goals of sustainable development defined by the European Union are ensured by the National Strategies for Sustainable Development. These strategies harmonize specific national problems with the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development. The most significant issues in Hungary are social, environmental, economic, institutional processes and sustainable development (NFÜ - National Development Agency, 2007).

Since the concept of *sustainable development* represents a global level first, it appears at a regional and local level only afterwards. It means it is a top-down process. However, sustainable consumption works the opposite way, which means that it develops from expectations of consumers, from individual to wider, global questions. Reading the definition of sustainable consumption, the parallel between the two concepts becomes obvious: „*The use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations*” (UNEP, 2001).

Hence, sustainable consumption also stands on the pillars of economy, society and environment. The results of this concept are as follows:

1. Less – The radical reduction of raw material consumption in developed countries.
2. More – Sustainable economic development in developed countries focusing on the needs.
3. Moral/Ethical – A change of global consumption patterns based on the reassessment of values and cultural practice in the Western countries and the accessibility and allocation in Mediterranean countries (UNEP, 2001).

According to Gyulai the development of sustainable production and consumption patterns have to move from the circle of material and energy intensive products and services through material and energy saving ones, to the direction of knowledge

and culture production and consumption. The principles of new *consumption pattern* are as follows:

- local identity, choosing a local product,
- long-term plans, predictable consumer demand,
- diversity,
- demand for natural,
- cooperation between producers/farmers,
- quality before quantity,
- short distances, local products procured from local markets as a priority,
- demand for information, the activity of information search,
- consideration of eco-social aspects in decision-making.

Consequently, the principle of sustainable consumption requires a higher importance of social and ethical values. The trend appears in the most complete form in the value system of LOHAS as an ethical consumer group, because LOHAS consumers both consider and influence all three principles of sustainable consumption (and therefore sustainable development) in their food consumption decisions. Thus, a more sound examination of LOHAS is substantial.

Ethical consumption

The principle of ethical consumption is a priority in the development groups representing sustainable development. The reason is that new demands and ethic consumption influences both political and corporate culture and could play an important role in the implementation of activities promoting sustainable development. According to several studies the basic terms of changing consumer habits are strengthening the value systems that move away from the consumer values and the promotion of alternative lifestyles.

From the viewpoint of food consumption habits the two most important interpretations of ethical consumption are responsible consumption and political consumption.

- *Responsible consumption* is an activity in which consumers consider not only the satisfaction of their needs but they are attentive to their consumer identity, too. Egoistic interests are not the basis of preference any more. Instead, consumers consider the effects of their decisions, furthermore the interest of society, environment, and the 'world' (Székely, 2003).
- In the case of *political consumption* the emphasis is on the power of ethical consumption since it is the consumer who selects among the products. In this school the instrumental character of the consumption has a central role. It means that in decision making processes of consumers the need appears to make changes in the undesirable political or corporate practice (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005). To purchase a product is a vote for 'yes' to its positive characteristics (for instance healthy or environment-friendly), while boycotting it is an expression of 'no' because the product fails to fulfill the criteria expected (Gulyás, 2005).

Reactions of ethical consumers could be different: (1) non-consumption, (2) value-centered everyday shopping, (3) boycott, (4) positive boycott (buycott), (5) usage, and (6) placing after usage or cutting of the current. A survey carried out in 2005 among

Hungarian consumers has pointed the issues that play an important role in purchase decision processes and that, at the same time, are able to determine potential groups of boycotters and buycotters. Table 2 shows the issues that influence the Hungarian consumers the most in their purchase decisions (Gulyás, 2008).

Table 2

Potential issues of boycotts

Negative information on the activity of companies influencing consumer decisions	Number of people answering important or very important (%)	Percentage of those (out of the previous) who would choose a product of another company if it is more expensive (%)	Potential boycotters (%)
It pollutes the environment	88.80	52.00	46.18
It employs advertisements deceptive for consumer	90.00	49.10	44.19
It is involved in child labour	75.80	54.90	41.61
It outsources from Hungary	72.80	52.70	38.37
Work conditions are humiliating	79.70	46.10	36.74
It employs people in developing countries among inhuman conditions or for starvation wages	71.40	49.20	35.13
There is positive information on the activity affecting the decision of consumers	Number of people answering important or very important (%)	Percentage of those (out of the previous) who would choose a product of another company if it is more expensive (%)	Potential boycotters (%)
It produces in Hungary	82.15	54.22	44.52
It conducts an environmental program	83.76	48.72	40.78
It has charitable activities	71.37	51.79	36.98
It supports the employment of the disadvantaged	78.27	46.37	36.31
The owners are Hungarian	70.45	50.03	35.22
Possess excellent employment policy (i.e. family friendly workplace)	75.18	43.69	32.85

Source: Gulyás, 2008

Figures in the *Table 2* prove that ethical consumer groups have already appeared in Hungary. Their issue is a demand for more information on patriotism, environmental protection, fair employment practices and the way that consumer are informed in their product selection is (*Gulyás, 2008*).

The LOHAS consumer group

According to some market research institutions the megatrend of sustainability is emerging. The sociologist Paul Ray defined a new social group, the 'Cultural Creatives' in the 1990s, which involves approximately 50 million Americans. A similar group was unfolded by the research group balance in Germany, 2004 (*Kreeb et al., 2008*). Ray described the group 'Cultural Creatives' as follows (*Ray, 1996*):

Group members influence culture strongly by adding new thoughts to it and by promoting its transformation. Usually they come from upper- and middle social classes, and more than 50% of them are women. There are two streams of the subculture 'Cultural Creatives':

- One of them is the 'core group' (10.6%, 20 million Americans). Both values of individuals and green values are involved in the value system of the group members: they are highly interested in spirit and spiritual life, in search for identity and self-expression, they are friendly to foreigners and accept the exotic. They like trying new ideas and they are eager to demonstrate commitments on social issues. They fight for women's rights and for the environment. They regularly come from the upper social classes and 67% of them are women.
- The other group, the 'Cultural Creatives with an ecological orientation' (13%, 24 million adults), approaches questions of environment and social topics in a much more practical way and they put spiritual and individual values less forward. Members mainly come from middle classes.

The NMI (Natural Marketing Institute) named the new consumer group as LOHAS. LOHAS is the acronym of 'Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability'. Porter Novelli and the NMI carried out a survey called "Ethical consumer behaviour" in July, 2007 to examine the consumer habits of the LOHAS group. 16,000 consumers of 11 countries (USA, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, England, Australia and Japan) above the age of 18 were examined in terms of their attitude, behaviour and consumer patterns. The results showed that there are 40 million adult members of LOHAS, while this number is above 49 million in Europe (*Schulz, 2008*).

The NMI (Natural Marketing Institute), using a new segmentation model, examined the attitude of consumers to environment and social issues and defined 5 new segments of American residents (*French and Rogers, 2006*):

- LOHAS
- NATURALITES
- DRIFTERS
- CONVENTIONALS
- UNCONCERNED

The segments above have also been revealed in Europe and Germany by Porter Novelli (*Schulz, 2008*). Results and proportion of members are presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3

New consumer segments

Market segment (percentage of adult population)	Europe (eight countries)	Germany
LOHAS	18%	17%
NATURALITES (possess strong environment and health orientation, but have no socio-political ambitions)	24%	23%
DRIFTERS (are characterized fully by environment and social orientation, but without their appearance in their behaviour)	18%	21%
CONVENTIONALS (are passive in environmental and social issues, but follow some trends as recycling and energy saving)	22%	19%
UNCONCERNED (are indifferent to environmental and social issues)	18%	20%

Source: Schulz, 2008

According to the segmentation model LOHAS is characterized as follows: the most significant elements of their attitude are the environment, society, and socially responsible management. They are early receivers and are able to influence the opinion, consumer decisions of their families and friends. They are less price sensitive than others and are regularly loyal to brands. All in all, their social role and internal values make them an attractive target point of several marketing activities (French and Rogers, 2006). It is important to note that LOHAS is committed to the principles of sustainability, which determines their basic values. However, they are not a clear follower of sustainability. Lifestyle and aesthetics are equally important values, they do not refuse hedonism (Kreeb et al., 2008).

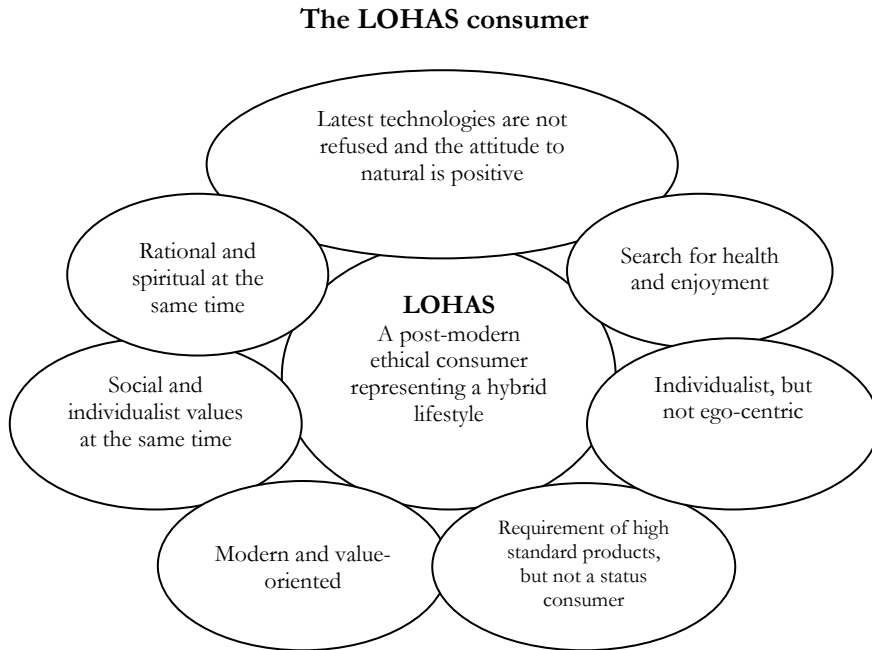
In Germany the LOHAS consumer group was examined mainly by Zukunftsinstitute of Klekheim. Due to an exact research they found that LOHAS appears in the market segments of: LOHAS – food, LOHAS – fashion, LOHAS – health, LOHAS – design, LOHAS – tourism, LOHAS – freetime and LOHAS – media (Wenzel et al, 2007).

Results of the Zukunftsinstitute survey described the LOHAS group as follows: quality becomes more important to them, and authentic values come in front of the search for experiences in their preference. From a political point of view they prioritize participation against representation. This shows a high attitude of taking the initiative in terms of individuals. The stockpiling of material values is replaced by the importance of existence and spirituality. All in all, LOHAS consumers are quality-oriented, health-conscious, and they extraordinarily tend to pay attention to the impact of certain products on nature and social justice (“moral purchase”). They are not deterred by higher prices. The goal of LOHAS consumer is not to

boycott a product manufactured by a non-sustainable way, but they would like to achieve a global change in ecological and social views (Kreeb *et al.*, 2008).

According to the facts above, LOHAS developed a hybrid lifestyle which is a mixture of different characteristics (Figure 3). The strongly value-oriented lifestyle of the new post-modern ethical consumer is characterised by these partly controversial features (Schulz, 2008).

Figure 3



Source: Schulz, 2008

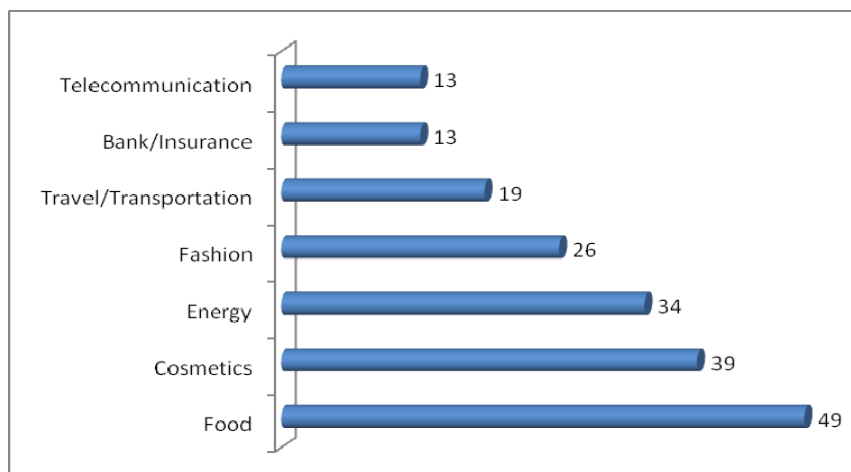
A survey in 2008, Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK), examined the role of environment and social orientation in purchases (Lohmüller and Dilleuth, 2008). These orientations appeared at different areas (Figure 4). The strongest impact that was observed appeared in the food industry. In this case, 49% of Germans were strongly influenced by social and environmental values in their consumption decisions.

For a LOHAS consumer brand and company are not able to separate from each other. Their consumer decisions convey 3 crucial points (www.marketing-insider.com):

- Behaviour before the purchase (is this a company/brand whose mission I do support?)
- Behaviour at the time of the purchase (does the characteristics and price of the product or service satisfy my needs?)
- Behaviour after the purchase (is the packaging recycled or recyclable? will the profit coming from my purchase be used in an ethical and responsible way?)

Figure 4

The appearance of moral consumer



Source: *Lohmüller and Dilleuth, 2008*

Examining their decision-making mechanisms, the consumer group is characterized by sophisticated product selection, and their demand for information is high. Using modern channels (i.e. internet) they are active in searching for products and services that fit into their value systems (*Moxie, 2008*). They expect truthfulness and risk-eliminating solutions from brands.

The proportion of LOHAS consumers in the German population – according to a survey of Nielsen, 2008 – is 30%. According to Statistical Office data 2007 it means 39.7 million households out of approximately 82.4 million. Household expenditures of Germany were 1,304.6 billion euros in 2004, which means that the market potential of LOHAS is more than 390 billion euros (*Kreeb et al., 2008*).

CONCLUSION

Today's Hungarian society is characterized by an individualist, intellectualized, materialist value system, which strengthens hedonist consumption opposed to the trend of sustainable development. However, the presence of new consumer groups whose food consumptions decisions are accompanied by higher importance of human and ethical values is proved. They are the health and environmentally conscious consumers whose consumptions are strongly value-oriented.

Although also self-centred values became significant in consumer groups mentioned above (i.e. personal health, hygiene of immediate environment), social values are present in one part of the group (i.e. protection of ecological environment, ethical considerations). These features reflect the influence of sustainable development trends and it is also supported by the appearance of ethical

consumption. Ethical consumption possibly promotes alternative lifestyles parallel with a moderation of consumer society habits.

Because of the inverse relationship of sustainable development and consumption, in order to reach the goals set up by sustainable development, the appearance of sustainable consumption trends is indispensable. It means that it is not enough if changes are top-down processes, consumers have to influence them from their level, too. Today, the most committed consumer group to sustainable consumption and therefore sustainable development is LOHAS. Its consumption is strongly value-oriented and due to its bargaining power it aims to result a change in ecological and social-centred viewpoints.

There is no accurate data on the number of people in these consumer groups in Hungary, but according to estimates by *Törőcsiké* (2007) their presence is less than 25-30% of the Hungarian population. The existence of this consumer group is also proved by the presence of environmentally and health conscious consumers' value-orientation. Thus, it is likely that the consumer segment LOHAS (maybe emerging from the group mentioned above), which is committed to sustainability, has already appeared in Hungary.

A further common feature of 'conscious' and LOHAS consumers is the higher demand for information in their consumer decisions. Based on this statement and the results of German researches according to which the value-orientation of LOHAS consumers is mainly reflected in their consumer decisions, a further research on consumer decision making processes of LOHAS is a relevant goal. More specifically, consumer information search and information assessment processes require a more sound examination, since considering the bargaining power of LOHAS – based on researches abroad – giving appropriate information to this group could be a competitive edge in the food industry.

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