

# Domestic Food Consumption Patterns In The Context Of The Sustainability Trend

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**Abstract**– The research focuses on the analysis of domestic food purchasing habits. Consumption of domestic food has many benefits, both economically and environmentally. It supports local producers, strengthening the economy and labour market of the country. It contributes to a more sustainable food chain due to shorter transport routes, less packaging and less use of preservatives. Local production helps to preserve traditional farming methods, thus contributing to biodiversity conservation.

The main question of our research is how to increase consumers' preference for local food and thus encourage more sustainable consumption.

We conducted a pre-tested standardised questionnaire survey as part of our primary research, resulting in 2198 evaluable questionnaires from Hungarian respondents.

The results of the survey show what consumer attitudes towards domestic food can be identified, what preferences characterise domestic food purchasing. The results also provide elements of practical relevance for the development of positive consumer attitudes towards domestic food..

**Keywords**– sustainability, domestic food consumption, primary research

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Global food consumption patterns have undergone significant changes in recent years. Environmental, economic and social sustainability is playing an increasingly important role in driving consumer choices. The rise of conscious consumption and the spread of the "local food" and "slow food" movements highlight that consumers are choosing values as well as products. This is particularly true in the food market, where the length of the supply chain, the origin of the product and the production method all influence consumer behaviour.

In Hungary, there is an increasing focus on local products, including Hungarian food. The aim of the present research is to explore the motivations behind the choice of Hungarian food, with a special focus on sustainability aspects (e.g. environmental protection, support for jobs, ethnocentric attitudes), and to analyse the differences in motivations and purchasing attitudes between different socio-demographic groups (age, gender, education, etc.).

The study is based on a quantitative questionnaire survey of the food purchasing habits of 2198 Hungarian respondents. Our results contribute to sustainability-based marketing and consumption research and can also provide practical guidance for planning the promotion of Hungarian food products.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. The theoretical basis of sustainable consumption

The concept of sustainable development was introduced into the international scientific discourse by the Brundtland Report (1987), which stated that "development must be such as will meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". At the level of consumption, this approach is embodied in the concept of Sustainable Consumption, which seeks to reconcile environmental, economic and social dimensions (OECD, 2020; UNEP, 2022; Dagevos & Ophem, 2013).

Sustainable food consumption refers to a set of choices that favour foods with less environmental impact, including seasonal, local, organic or reduced animal products (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Grunert et al., 2014; Galli et al., 2020).

### B. Demand for local food

The choice of local food is often linked to short food chains, economic localisation and the strengthening of community cohesion (Renting et al., 2003; Illbery & Maye, 2005). Motivations for choosing local products include:

- environmental concerns (lower CO<sub>2</sub> footprint)
- safety and reliability (Grunert, 2020)
- social responsibility (Kiss & Piskóti, 2020)
- economic patriotism (Lusk & Briggeman, 2009)

In the Hungarian context, Törőcsik (2020) and Veres & Hofmeister-Tóth (2021) have pointed out that the choice of domestic food is often associated with positive attitudes and strong emotional attachment.

#### C. Consumer ethnocentrism and domestic product preference

Consumer ethnocentrism (CETSCALE, Shimp & Sharma, 1987) expresses the extent to which consumers are willing to prefer domestic products for economic and identity-based considerations. A number of Hungarian studies (Lengyel, 2023; Gulyás et al., 2021; Czine et al., 2024) demonstrate the importance of ethnocentric attitudes in Hungarian consumer behaviour, especially when purchasing food.

According to Papadopoulos et al. (2022), domestic product preference is not only an identity-based but also a partly pragmatic decision, where value for money, quality and availability play a role.

#### D. The role of value-based consumption and trust

Trust is an essential condition for consumer decisions, especially in the food market where experiential and belief attributes are difficult to control (Akerlof, 1970; Grunert, 2020). Campaigns such as "Choose your homeland" have a significant impact on consumer attitudes, especially by emphasizing positive emotional attachment and trustworthiness (Gulyás et al., 2021).

According to Zsóka & Csákvári (2023), trust in domestic food products is strengthened when the benefits of the product are communicated in a way that is compatible with consumers' values.

#### E. Generational and socio-demographic differences

Purchasing motivations are also differentiated by age, gender, education and place of residence (Hofmeister-Tóth & Radó, 2023; Csizsárik-Kocsir, 2023). Younger generations (Z and Y) are more inclined to make decisions based on trends and social media, while older consumers' decisions are driven more by tradition, family patterns and value preference (Németh, 2021).

Our own research has also shown that the motivation to protect the environment and create jobs is particularly strong for the 46-65 age group - confirming the generational differences in sustainable consumption.

#### F. Sustainability values and attitude formation

Sustainability attitudes include environmental consciousness, social justice and long-term thinking, all of which influence purchasing decisions (Thøgersen, 2021; Moser, 2015). In the attitude-intention-behaviour chain (Ajzen, 1991), the belief that individual purchases have an impact on the collective future plays an important role.

According to Zoller (2023), value-based marketing strategies are more successful in promoting sustainable food than price- or promotion-driven campaigns.

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### III. MATERIAL AND METHOD

Our research aimed to understand how aware consumers are when it comes to food purchasing. This was analysed in terms of the information that influences food purchasing and the maturation of purchasing behaviour.

In the framework of a primary research, we conducted a quantitative standardised questionnaire online survey among Hungarian consumers. Among the sampling procedures, we used arbitrary sampling, aiming to include subjects of different age, gender and place of residence. The arbitrary sampling method is not a probability sampling method, nor did we aim to achieve a sample representative of any population. The aim was to select the elements of the population that were considered typical, average and the most easily accessible. Within the arbitrary sampling, we used the stratification technique, where the stratifying criterion was generational affiliation. The aim of stratified random sampling was to successfully recruit from each generation in a simple and cost-effective way. Nevertheless, the sampling technique is not

representative of any population, and due to the nature of the technique, the results obtained from the sample are not representative despite the large number of items. Thus, the findings and results presented in this study are valid for the sample.

The online survey resulted in 2198 evaluable questionnaires. The majority of the sample (49%) live in a city, 33% in the capital and only 13% in a village or commune. In terms of highest educational attainment, those with secondary education were the most numerous (65%), followed by those with primary education (30%) and finally those with tertiary education (5%). In terms of gender, 47% of the sample was male and 53% female. In terms of the regional distribution of residence, the largest proportion of the sample (60%) was from Central Hungary, followed by 10-10% from Northern Hungary and Central Transdanubia.

The research tool was a pre-tested, standardised questionnaire, with topics such as social responsibility and its impact on consumption, food shopping and ethnocentric behaviour analysis. In addition to the conclusions drawn from the literature, the results of a qualitative research were used to develop the standardised questionnaire. This involved conducting individual interviews using a semi-structured interview guide, with an arbitrary selection of 5-5 people from each generation.

The qualitative research results were evaluated using the traditional content analysis methodology, and the final structure and response alternatives of the standardised questionnaire were developed in the light of the qualitative results and feedback received. In order to process the quantitative results and test the hypotheses, descriptive statistics, bivariate and multivariate analyses were applied using SPSS 26.0 software. To examine the correlation between the results measured on the metric scale, the analysis of variance method was used, including the one-way ANOVA method for comparing multiple sample means. The mean of a metric dependent variable was compared between more than two groups. The post-hoc test was used to determine which pairs of groups were significantly different. In doing so, significance values were used to determine the existence of correlations ( $\text{sig} \leq 0.05$ ). Internal correlations were analysed along the comparison of group means using the F-statistic, i.e. the coefficient of variance of the means within samples. For the correlation tests described in this study, where the significance value according to the ANOVA table was below 0.05, the statistical relationship between the two variables was confirmed (Sajtos & Mitev, 2007; Malhotra & Simon, 2009)

#### IV.RESULTS

For the first time, the motivation of respondents to buy Hungarian food was analysed. The most important motivation was environmental protection, as buying Hungarian food has a much lower ecological footprint. The results show that this is a well-known fact for consumers and a strong motivator to prefer Hungarian products. The other main motivating force is that it supports the domestic economy. They favour local producers and domestic labour market players by buying Hungarian food. Overall, the main motivations are therefore linked to the environmental and economic dimensions, according to the results.

TABLE I FACTORS MOTIVATING THE PURCHASE OF HUNGARIAN FOOD

Statements about the consumption of Hungarian food	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
it is trendy, cool to buy Hungarian food among my friends	2198	1,90	0,891
I buy Hungarian food because it protects jobs in Hungary	2198	2,36	0,981
I buy Hungarian food because it helps the environment	2198	2,38	1,000
I buy Hungarian food because I am touched and	2198	1,96	0,979

motivated by the "Choose your country" campaign			
it is typical in my family that we buy Hungarian food	2198	2,51	0,943
because I think it is trendy and fashionable to buy Hungarian food	2198	1,80	0,891

Source: own research, 2025 N=2198

Next, we examined whether there is a significant relationship between the factors that motivate people to buy Hungarian food and the age of the buyers. The results confirmed that the two variables are not independent ( $\text{sig} \geq 0.05$ ).

Environmental protection and protection of domestic jobs as the main motivating forces are specific to the 46-65 age group.

TABLE III Motivating Factors for Buying Hungarian Food by Age

Statements related to buying Hungarian food by age	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Sig
I buy Hungarian food because it protects jobs in Hungary	18-25 years	1318	2,19	0,93506
	26-35 years	243	2,34	0,96416
	36-45 years	166	2,61	0,97024
	46-55 years	346	<b>2,75</b>	0,99655
	56-65 years	76	<b>2,78</b>	0,99754
	Over 65	49	2,65	1,01141
	Total	2198	2,36	0,98133
I buy Hungarian food because it helps the environment	18-25 years	1318	2,28	0,98029
	26-35 years	243	2,35	0,96544
	36-45 years	166	2,47	1,06573
	<b>46-55 years</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>2,60</b>	0,99413
	<b>56-65 years</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>2,64</b>	1,07955
	Over 65	49	2,53	1,04287
	Total	2198	2,37	0,99968
I buy Hungarian food because I am touched and motivated by the "Choose Hungarian" campaign	18-25 years	1318	1,87	0,95070
	26-35 years	243	1,85	0,95057
	36-45 years	166	2,07	0,98206
	46-55 years	346	2,17	1,01331
	56-65 years	76	2,30	1,08345
	Over 65	49	2,32	1,00805
	Total	2198	1,95	0,97893
In my family, we tend to buy Hungarian food	18-25 years	1318	2,47	0,93628
	26-35 years	243	2,37	0,97206
	36-45 years	166	2,45	0,91821
	46-55 years	346	2,70	0,91988
	56-65 years	76	2,60	0,95330
	Over 65	49	2,77	0,98457
	Total	2198	2,50	0,94292

Source: own research, 2025. N=2198, One-Way ANOVA

A significant relationship ( $\text{sig} \geq 0.05$ ) was also found between the motivating factors for buying Hungarian food and the gender of the buyers. The results show that each of the motivating factors has a stronger effect on female buyers, which is not surprising as food shopping is still typically female-dominated even within the family.

TABLE IIIII MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR HUNGARIAN FOOD PURCHASES BY GENDER

Statements on the motivation to buy Hungarian food by gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
I buy Hungarian food because it protects jobs in Hungary	male	1031	2,25	0,95548	0,000
	<b>female</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>2,45</b>	0,99532	
	Total	2198	2,36	0,98133	
I buy Hungarian food because it helps the environment	male	1031	2,20	0,96993	0,000
	<b>female</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>2,52</b>	1,00214	
	Total	2198	2,37	0,99968	
I buy Hungarian food because I am touched and motivated by the "Choose Hungarian" campaign	men	1031	1,93	0,96901	0,030
	<b>female</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>1,97</b>	0,98767	
	Total	2198	1,95	0,97893	
In my family, we tend to buy Hungarian food	male	1031	2,38	0,92998	0,000
	<b>female</b>	<b>1167</b>	<b>2,61</b>	0,94202	
	Total	2198	2,50	0,94292	

Source: own research, 2025. N=2198, One-Way ANOVA

We also analysed the relationship between the strength of trust in Hungarian food and motivations to buy Hungarian food, with the intention of looking at how more positive trust as an affective component acts at the conative level. Those who perceived Hungarian food as trustworthy overestimated all purchase motivators. This is an important result because it highlights the importance of attitude formation, the need to establish emotional and trusting attachment in the purchase generating process.

TABLE IVV MOTIVES INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE OF HUNGARIAN FOOD IN THE LIGHT OF THE PERCEIVED RELIABILITY OF HUNGARIAN FOOD

Opinions on buying Hungarian food in the light of the perceived reliability of Hungarian food		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	sig
it is trendy, cool to buy Hungarian food among my friends	I do not consider it reliable at all	384	1,35	0,634	0,000
	I prefer not to consider them reliable	705	1,74	0,757	
	I consider them rather reliable	777	2,15	0,842	
	<b>I consider them completely reliable</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>2,30</b>	1,104	
	Total	2198	1,90	0,891	
I buy Hungarian food because it protects jobs in Hungary	I do not consider them reliable at all	384	1,53	0,817	0,000
	I would rather not consider them reliable	705	2,16	0,839	
	I consider them rather reliable	777	2,65	0,842	
	<b>I consider them completely reliable</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>3,07</b>	0,940	
	Total	2198	2,36	0,981	

I buy Hungarian food because it helps the environment	I do not consider it reliable at all	384	1,59	0,872	0,000
	I would rather not consider them reliable	705	2,19	0,889	
	I consider them rather reliable	777	2,66	0,870	
	<b>I consider them completely reliable</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>3,03</b>	<b>0,944</b>	
	Total	2198	2,38	1,000	
I buy Hungarian food because I am touched and motivated by the "Choose Hungarian" campaign	I do not consider it reliable at all	384	1,33	0,713	0,000
	I prefer not to trust them	705	1,78	0,831	
	I consider them rather reliable	777	2,21	0,940	
	<b>I consider them completely reliable</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>2,50</b>	<b>1,125</b>	
	Total	2198	1,96	0,979	
in my family we tend to buy Hungarian food	I do not consider them reliable at all	384	1,74	0,896	0,000
	I would rather not consider them reliable	705	2,29	0,813	
	I consider them rather reliable	777	2,79	0,772	
	<b>I consider them completely reliable</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>3,19</b>	<b>0,856</b>	
	Total	2198	2,51	0,943	
because I find Hungarian food shopping trendy and fashionable	I do not consider them reliable at all	384	1,32	0,688	0,000
	I prefer not to trust them	705	1,66	0,730	
	I consider it rather reliable	777	1,97	0,876	
	<b>I consider them completely reliable</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>2,24</b>	<b>1,101</b>	
	Total	2198	1,80	0,891	

Source: own research, 2025. N=2198, One-Way ANOVA

Considering that the environmental dimension was the most important motivating factor among the factors generating the purchase of Hungarian food, we analysed separately the factors generating the purchase of Hungarian food from the perspective of the perceived importance of environmental protection and sustainable development.

The results show that for those for whom environmental protection and sustainable development are really important factors, environmental and economic motives motivate their purchases even more strongly.

On the other hand, they do not follow fashions, trends or current advertising campaigns ("choose Hungarian") when buying Hungarian food.

This result also shows that the purchase of Hungarian food can be based on a strong and lasting commitment among consumers who also consider environmental awareness and sustainable development to be important in their values and whose lifestyles are dominated by these values.

TABLE VV FACTORS GENERATING THE PURCHASE OF HUNGARIAN FOODSTUFFS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Hungarian food purchasing in relation to the perception of the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig
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it is fashionable, cool to buy Hungarian food among my friends	not important at all	41	1,59	0,865	0,010
	rather not important	213	1,78	0,869	
	rather important	503	1,94	0,886	
	totally important	1441	1,91	0,894	
	Total	2198	1,90	0,891	
I buy Hungarian food because it protects jobs in Hungary	not important at all	41	1,88	0,872	0,000
	rather not important	213	2,09	0,906	
	rather important	503	2,32	0,897	
	<b>totally important</b>	<b>1441</b>	<b>2,43</b>	<b>1,012</b>	
	Total	2198	2,36	0,981	
I buy Hungarian food because it helps the environment	not important at all	41	2,22	1,151	0,000
	rather not important	213	2,20	0,956	
	rather important	503	2,25	0,910	
	<b>totally important</b>	<b>1441</b>	<b>2,45</b>	<b>1,024</b>	
	Total	2198	2,38	1,000	
I buy Hungarian food because I am touched and motivated by the "Choose Hungarian" campaign	not at all important	41	2,17	1,138	0,000
	rather not important	213	2,13	0,996	
	rather important	503	2,06	0,965	
	totally important	1441	1,89	0,971	
	Total	2198	1,96	0,979	
In my family, we tend to buy Hungarian food	not important at all	41	2,05	0,865	0,000
	rather not important	213	2,32	1,005	
	rather important	503	2,46	0,889	
	totally important	1441	2,57	0,946	
	Total	2198	2,51	0,943	
because I find Hungarian food shopping trendy and fashionable	not important at all	41	1,93	0,932	0,000
	rather not important	213	1,96	0,879	
	rather important	503	1,97	0,944	
	absolutely important	1441	1,71	0,861	
	Total	2198	1,80	0,891	

Source: own research, 2025. N=2198, One-Way ANOVA

## V. SUMMARY

In the framework of a primary research, we analysed the motivations behind the purchase of Hungarian food and the extent to which the preference for Hungarian products is related to a sustainable approach. The results show that the environmental (I protect the environment) and economic (I support the domestic labour force) dimensions are the strongest purchase drivers.

The results confirmed the importance of establishing and building trust in Hungarian food and the positive impact this has on purchasing.

The results also showed that consumers who are committed to the environment and sustainable development in their values are consumers who buy Hungarian food for economic and environmental reasons, and who are not influenced by current trends and fashion trends or even communication campaigns.

A limitation of the research is that the sample is not representative, despite the large number of items. The results of the research have highlighted that the relationship between sustainability and the consumption of Hungarian food should also be analysed through the individual value system orientation. In the future, we would like to complement our research with a value system analysis, and we plan to continue with the segmentation of the sample using multivariate methods that are suitable for characterising relevant target group specifications, taking into account all the dimensions currently identified. This will allow us to provide a more accurate picture of the potential customer base of Hungarian food buyers, thus providing practical assistance for the promotion of these products.

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