

FOOD PURCHASE HABITS IN FIELD OF DIRECT SALES

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Abstract

The growing popularity of direct sales is promoted and caused by increasing numbers of factors. A trend, for instance, is that as a result of alleged and real food scandals of recent years, trust of consumers in modern food industry has started shrinking. Consequently, on a consumer side, the demand for safety and transparency is rising. Consumers would like to have information on the origin of the product they purchase. This need is possible to be satisfied by direct sales.

A research on consumer habits connected to direct sales is in the centre of the study. Influencing factors in food purchase are being examined and consumer groups defined by a cluster analysis based on the importance of influencing factors in food purchase are also being introduced. Amongst others, behaviour of individual consumer groups in a direct sales context is being highlighted, too.

Key words: direct sales, consumer behaviour, market, retail market

INTRODUCTION

The declining return on agricultural production raises the need for constant research for new ways to increase revenues. One way is building a system of direct sales, a channel that is promoted today by several factors both on a producer and a consumer side.

However, to be successful in direct sales, being aware of consumer habits and motivations is essential for farmers. Therefore, in this study the emphasis is on the promotion of direct sales as a retail form with a consumer side approach. This also includes the still not standard concept of direct sales and direct sales supporting consumer trends. Furthermore, the status of direct sales in Hungary based on a domestic representative survey is also being discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of direct sales

There is no single definition for the concept of direct sales in the literature.

HEER (2007) systematically shows the development of direct sales concept based on the German literature and it seems that the definition has been constantly changing: according to ZENTES (1988) direct sales is the selling of a product directly from the producer to the end user. ALSING (1955) added that the circle of end users includes those hospitality units that use the food in their own operations. KUHNERT (1998) would also add sales of ready food to retailers. The last two is considered a two-level sales form by KÖGL and MANN (2002).

Reasons for the growing significance of direct sales

In the recent years food prices have been increasing around the world (WAHLBERG, 2008.) A reason for the global food crisis is growing input prices in the agriculture. Another reason is the price pressure behaviour of food retail chains. The present system of globalized markets creates the possibility for hyper- and supermarkets to purchase and sell the cheapest products. These multinational giant companies force their suppliers to accept lower and lower producer and purchasing prices. Purchasers shift the low prices to producers who are forced to work with worldwide high production and low purchasing costs resulting declining revenues. (STARMER and ANDERSON, 2008 In: ALFÖLDI, 2009).

Apart from global problems and processes, Hungarian farmers have to face more difficulties, since Hungarian products have a disadvantage compared to import products arriving to the country. Price competition on the market causes increasingly heavy damage, while their production efficiency is not able to be improved either in the short or the mid term. A direct consequence is that domestic food producers are not able to preserve their target market through the price competition, therefore they need to choose alternative marketing tools. One

option is to strengthen consumer patriotism within the circle of domestic consumers. Another option for increasing the added value is developing a system of direct sales. A growing number of farmers are recognizing in Western-Europe and in the USA that direct sales significantly increases the level of profit and it also means a certain level of independence from the processing industry and the retail market.

Consumer trends in favour of direct sales popularity

Several consumer trends support the growing popularity of direct sales:

- Due to the BSE crisis and food scandals of recent years the trust of consumers in modern food industry has been gradually decreasing. Consumers, due to globalization, often connect increasingly non-transparent product structure with environmental load, declining quality and poorer taste of food as well as livestock farming among inappropriate circumstances which degrades the image of the whole industry (DLG, 2003; HEER, 2007). Consequently, there is a growing demand for safety and transparency on the side of consumers, resulting that they would like to have information on the origin of the product they intend to buy. Direct sales is one possible solution for satisfying this need. (HASAN, 2010)
- The lower the number of operators between the producer and the consumer, the easier to follow the origin of the product and the method or circumstances of the production (HEER, 2007).
- The image of product purchased through direct sales channel has become positive: the main reasons of consumers for choosing these products are the naturalness and freshness. Moreover, they consider these kinds of food tastier and richer. (ZENNER et al., 2004)
- To personally experience the product quality (taste, freshness) is increasingly important to customers. Personal experience provides credible and direct information on the circumstances of production. Meeting personally with the producer provides the possibility to have credible information directly from the producer on the method of production, too. (HASAN, 2010; WIRTHGEN, 2003).
- More and more consumers believe that through the elimination of transportation the load on the environment will decline. Therefore they choose direct purchase from the producer. Furthermore, personal connection with the producer also satisfies social needs of consumers (HASAN, 2010).
- Emotional ties to a region encourage lots of consumers to support local agriculture (ALVENSLEBEN, 2000).
- To preserve cultural landscape, traditional values and traditional recipes are all motivators of purchases. (WIRTHGEN et al., 1996)
- According to SZAKÁLY et al. (2006) Hungarian consumers increasingly search for reliable, healthy products with certificate of origin, for which they would pay a higher price after the right marketing influence. This tendency has a growing influence.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

In order to find out the role of direct sales forms in purchases of Hungarian consumers, a country-level representative sample was surveyed. Data record took place in September, 2011 in the framework of the research „Omnibus 2011” with 1015 respondents, conducted by Cognitive Piackutató Kft. (a market research company in Hungary). The sampling method was reinforced random walk, using stratified sampling based on the type of settlement and region. Final respondents were selected by the method of last-birthday selection. After multi-component weighting had been carried out along data on age, sex, education, region and settlement types from the 2011 census of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the sample was considered as representative.

After the data record, adjusted data was processed in the statistical software SPSS 16.0. Data processing was carried out employing uni- and multivariate statistical methods, especially factor and cluster analysis.

RESULTS

Examination on the role of direct sales forms

In the examination of direct sales on a consumer side, the question was the frequency of purchases through given direct sales channels. Results are displayed in Figure 1:

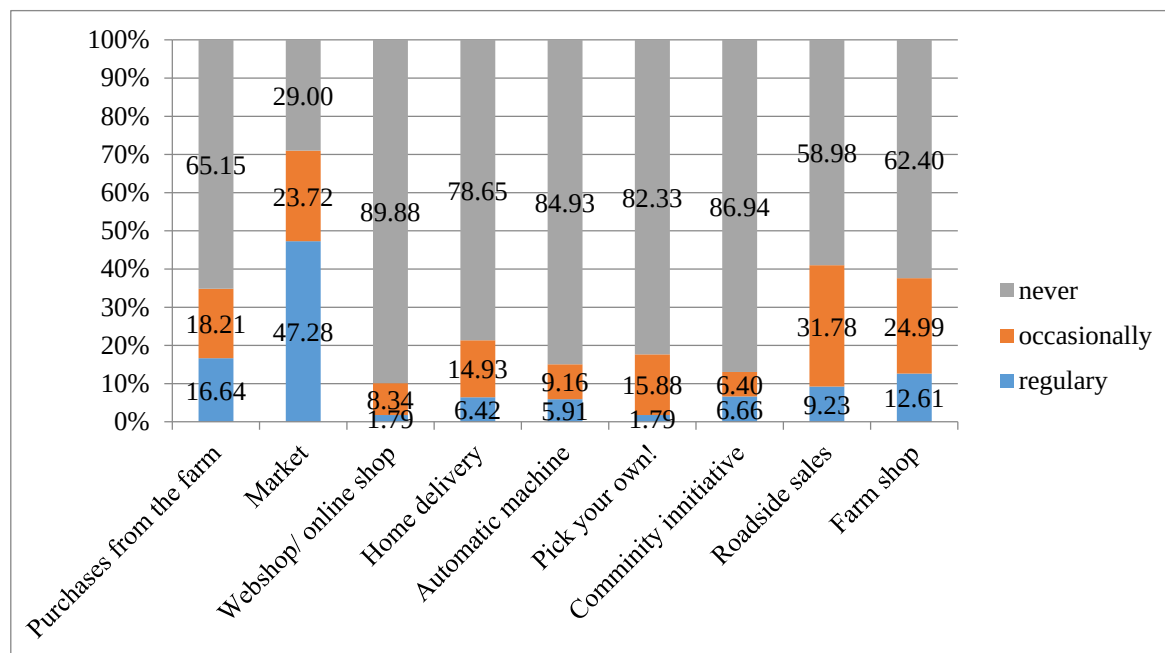


Figure 1: Frequency of purchases by direct sales forms

(value=%, level of measurement=nominal, attributes=regularly (minimum monthly), occasionally, never purchases, N=1015)

Source: research by the author, 2011.

After analyzing the results, the conclusion is that on a consumer side the most popular direct sales form is farmers market, as it is regularly attended by 47.28% of respondents. Other direct sales forms are well behind in terms of frequency of purchases. Sales from the farm, farm shop and roadside sales are less popular, approximately 40% of residents purchases, even if occasionally, through these types of sales forms. In contrast, webshops, home delivery, automatic machines, pick-your-own trend and services by community initiatives are used only by 20% of residents, showing their insignificant roles in direct sales.

Correlation studies were carried out in order to identify consumers of specific direct sales forms based on socio-demographic characteristics. The correlation studies were able to show the correlation between the frequency of purchases through specific direct sales forms and socio-demographic characteristics such as sex, family status, age, educational background, employment status as well as the type of settlement.

The socio-demographic based examination of purchases at farmers markets found that the variants income of household, the size of household, the presence of a child/children in the family, and commitment to sustainability do not show a significant correlation with the frequency of purchases at the market (sig.> 0.05). There is a significant deviation between other socio-demographic characteristics and the frequency of purchases.

According to the correlation between sex and the frequency of purchases at farmers markets, while women regularly (Adj.res.=2.5), men rather never (Adj.res.=2.9) purchase at the market.

In terms of age respondents between the age of 15-24 and the retired never (Adj.res.=2.6; 2.0), while respondents between the age of 25-34 occasionally purchase at the market (Adj.res.=4.2). The result of age group 15-24 was not surprising at all. However, it was so in the case of the retired. The reason is that pensioners from the countryside were overrepresented in the sample (Adj.res.=3.6), a significant deviation appeared between the frequency of purchases and residence (sig.=0.00), and residents at rural areas generally do not purchase at

markets (Adj.res.=5.2). Partly because there is no market organized in a lot of villages, and on the other hand because rural residents produce their own food. Main customers of markets are generally those residents of cities with more than 50,000 residents and less than 50,000 who regularly attend markets (Adj.res.=4.7; 2.9;).

The correlation analysis between education and the frequency of purchases at the market showed that consumers with low education level normally never (Adj.res.=4.9), while consumers with middle and high level of education regularly purchase at markets (Adj.res.=3.0; 2.8).

Regarding employment status housewives occasionally (Adj. res.=2.1), students and pensioners never visit markets (Adj.res.=3.7; 2.5). Furthermore, based on employment/unemployment status, those who do not work never attend markets (Adj.res.=3.2). This result is in parallel with the type of employment, since non-workers are normally pensioners and students. This result harmonizes with the age-based examination, and it is a possible explanation for the overrepresentation of rural pensioners in the sample.

Examination on the role of direct sales in product groups

How purchases directly from producers are allocated in product groups is displayed in Figure 2.

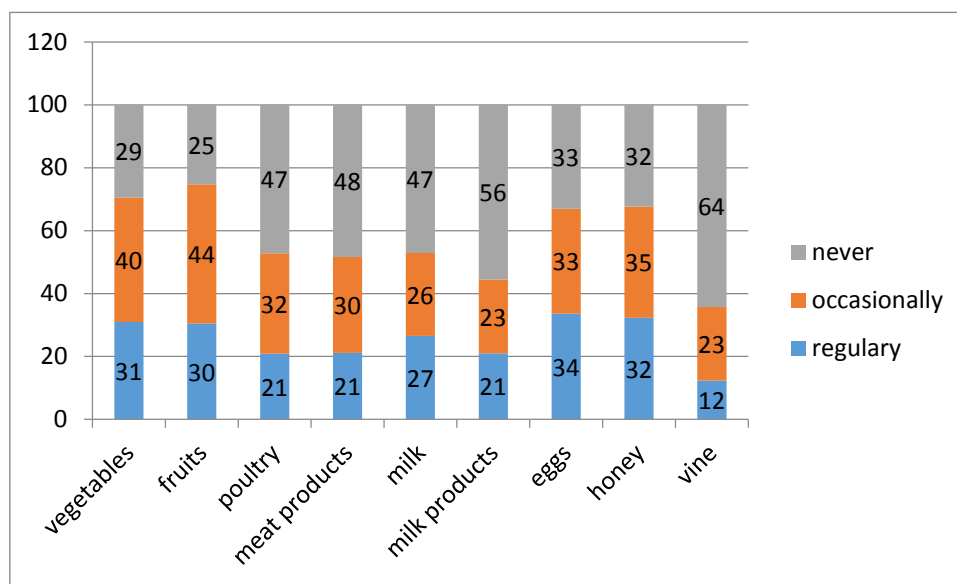


Figure 2: The frequency of purchases directly from the producer in product groups

(value=%, level of measurement=nominal, attributes: never, occasionally, occasional purchasing frequency, N=1015)

Source: research by the author, 2011.

The analysis on the role of direct sales within product groups found that regular purchases directly from the producers affect primarily eggs, honey, fruits and vegetables as well as milk. These products are purchased directly from the producers by approximately 30% of consumers. In the case of poultry and other meat products and dairy products the result is 20%, and only 12%, the lowest, regarding vine. Examining occasional purchases the result is that among occasionally purchased products fruits and vegetables are the most important (44 and 40%), while honey and eggs are at the second place (35 and 33%). In occasional and regular purchases from the producer, the proportion is the highest in fruit purchases, 74% of customers buy fruits directly from the producer. In terms of significance, fruits are followed by vegetables (71%), eggs and honey (67-67%). Within the group of products examined, vine is purchased directly from the producer the least, 64% of consumers never buy vine directly from the producer, probably because of strict legislation.

The importance of characteristics with an influence on food purchases

In the research, after an overview on the literature of consumer behaviour in direct sales, a list of 14 components was set up to examine their effect on consumer decisions. The list included both rational (e.g. price, quality and range of products) and emotional components (e.g. support of Hungarian farmers, reduction of environmental load).

The first step was the analysis of average, standard deviation and relative standard deviation of the factors (Table 1).

The conclusion is that for Hungarian residents the most important factors in food purchases are price, quality, the freshness of product, food safety and the range of products. In contrast, the least important components are developing a personal relationship with the producer, the method of food production and the reduction of environmental load.

An important result is that deviation is the lowest in the case of those components that are the most important for consumers: the opinion of consumers in terms of price, quality, and freshness are relatively similar, and they consider these components highly important. At the same time deviation is the lowest in the case of components that are the least important for costumers.

	Average	Standard Deviation	Relative deviation
The atmosphere of the purchasing venue	3.9657799	0.9830197	24.79%
Personal relationship with the producer	3.6933586	1.1820937	32.01%
The support of Hungarian farmers by buying their products	4.0875181	0.9484644	23.20%
Freshness of the product	4.6405138	0.6588644	14.20%
Information on the origin of the product/traceability	4.1682925	0.9436609	22.64%
Purchasing guaranteed Hungarian product	4.1350104	0.8957949	21.66%
Range of products	4.4483606	0.7413128	16.66%
Discounts	4.3718392	0.8720475	19.95%
Reasonable price	4.6513387	0.661475	14.22%
Excellent quality	4.6440446	0.6674832	14.37%
Personal experience of the product quality	4.4323895	0.798473	18.01%
Reduction of environmental load through shorter transportation routes	3.8913949	1.0500341	26.98%
Food safety	4.4744253	0.787265	17.59%
Production method of the food (bio, intensive production, etc.)	3.8703102	1.0840894	28.01%

Table 1: The importance of characteristics with an influence on food purchases
(level of measurement=interval; attributes: 1-not important at all; 5-very important; N=1015)

Source: Research by the author, 2011.

In order to find out the structure of varieties included in the research, a factor analysis was carried out. In the factor analysis the “Atmosphere of the purchasing venue” variate was excluded from the final factor analysis since factor scores belonging to this variate appeared in the case of both factors and the exclusion from further analysis seemed to be useful. After the exclusion of the variate, two factor groups were defined (Table 2):

1. **Factor 1: Abstract and specific product characteristics** (Explained variance: 28.09%): those components are included in this group, that define consumer decisions in a rational way. Since factor weight of the components in the factor groups has a small weight in the other factor, the classification of specific component into a given factor group is obvious. The skewness of the factor shows that the distribution function is strongly positively skewed, meaning that Hungarian consumers think that these components are especially important.

2. **Factor 2: Social values** (explained variance: 23.31%): Those components are included in this factor that define consumer decisions in an emotional way. This means that while components of the first factors are possible to be defined by product characteristics, components of the second factors depend on the judgement of consumers. Examining factor weights, factor weights of the components in these groups are low in the other factor group, therefore they obviously belong to the second factor. In terms of factor skewness, there is a strong positive skewness, meaning that Hungarian consumers consider these components important, though to a significantly less extent than in the first group.

	Factor	
	Abstract and specific product characteristics	Social values
Excellent quality	0.7660826	0.20138956
Freshness of the product	0.7658535	0.15291726
Reasonable price	0.7560244	0.18077461
Range of product	0.6685072	0.28014129
Food safety	0.6241886	0.31225746
Personal experience of the product quality	0.6021881	0.35975919
Discounts	0.5084421	0.22099052
Reduction of environmental load through shorter transportation routes	0.2165348	0.71289321
The support of Hungarian farmers by buying their products	0.3193232	0.68506233
Personal relationship with the producer	0.0841861	0.66088865
Production method of the food (bio, intensive production, etc.)	0.1936092	0.63317748
Purchasing guaranteed Hungarian product	0.3473578	0.63277106
Information on the origin of the product/traceability	0.3685987	0.60355146

Table 2: Rotated factor matrix

(Data Reduction=Factor Analysis Extraction method= Maximum likelihood, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization, Rotation converged in 3 iterations, KMO: 0.923195845, Bartlett: (Approx. Chi Sq.) 6093.479537 (Sig.) 0.00, Total Variance Explained: 51.41, Goodness-of-fit: (Chi Square) 0.322, Sig.=0.384)

Source: Research by the author, 2011.

In order to see whether there are deviations in the approach to the components that influence food purchases or not by socio-demographic characteristics, the skewness of distribution function was examined based on socio-demographic characteristics. The first step was a Two-Sample T-Test and variance analysis to find out which components show statistically significant average deviation in the case of certain socio-demographic characteristics, then skewness of the variate-based classified sampling population was compared to the skewness of the total sample. The summary of results is displayed in Table 3.

	Abstract and specific product characteristics	Social values
Age		<i>age of 35-49, 50-64</i>
Residence		<i>village, capital</i>
Employment status	<i>pensioners, students</i>	<i>entrepreneurs, housewives, white-collar workers</i>
Social class		<i>high social class</i>
Commitment to sustainability		<i>strongly or moderately committed to sustainability</i>
Frequency of purchases in terms of product groups		<i>Consumers purchasing directly from the producers</i>
Frequency of purchases through direct sales forms	<i>Consumers who never use home delivery or automatic machines</i>	<i>Consumers purchasing regularly in the market, roadside, on a farms, through community initiatives</i>

Table 3: Approach to analysed factor groups based on socio-demographic characteristics and the relation to direct sales

Source: Research by the author, 2011.

The examination showed that in the case of abstract and specific product characteristics, significant deviation exists between employment status and the type of employment (F-Test sig.<0.05). In terms of employment status, mostly non-workers (Skewness=-2.113 - skewed to the right compared to total sample) while in terms of type of employment normally the retired (Skewness=-1.935- skewed to the right compared to total sample) and students (Skewness=-2.153- skewed to the right compared to total sample) consider abstract and specific product characteristics important. A possible reason is that income per capita of unemployed people is generally low (Adj.res.=2.5), and consequently they consider primarily rational factors during their purchases, emotional factors become less important because of the high level of their price sensitivity.

Regarding the approach to social values the picture is sharper. These components are significantly correlated to (F-test sig. <0.05) age, residence, educational background, type of employment (job), social status and commitment to sustainability. Examining the age, mainly middle-aged, and elder people between 35-49 (Skewness= -0.0780 skewed to the right compared to total sample) and 50-65 (Skewness=-0.861 skewed to the right compared to total sample) think that social values are especially important in food purchases.

Based on residence, generally rural residents (Skewness=-0.733- skewed to the right compared to total sample) and residents of the capital (Skewness=-0.781 skewed to the right compared to total sample) believe that social values have an important influence on food purchases.

In terms of educational background, while respondents with low and high level of educational background consider social values less important (Skewness= -0.626; -0.548 – skewed to the left compared to total sample), respondents with middle level of educational background consider them more important (-0.839 – skewed to the right compared to total sample).

As for job type, freelancers/entrepreneurs, office workers and housewives highlight the significance of social values (Skewness $\text{rendre} = -1.398$; -0.958 ; -0.983 - skewed to the right compared to total sample).

Discovering the approach to the importance of social values in social classes, consumers of lower classes consider social values important the least (Skewness $= -0.168$ – skewed to the right compared to total sample), and consumers of the highest classes the most.

Examining the commitment to sustainability, consumers who strongly committed or committed to sustainability believe the most that social values are important (Skewness: -0.949 ; -0.816 – skewed to the right compared to total sample), and consumers who are hardly committed think the least that social values would be important (Skewness $= -0.168$ – skewed to the left compared to total sample).

Apart from examining the effect of socio-demographic factors on food purchases, an analysis was conducted on what kind of effect purchase frequency of food groups bought directly from the producer has on the approach to each factor groups.

Purchase of food groups directly from the producer shows significant correlation primarily in connection with social values (F-test a sig. <0.05): social values are important for those who regularly purchase fruits, vegetables, poultry, other meat, milk, eggs and honey directly from the producer. Results are different only in the case of dairy products and vine.

In the case of dairy products there is a significant deviation both in terms of abstract/specific product characteristics and the approach to social values (F-test sig. <0.05): while those consumers who regularly purchase dairy products from producers consider both abstract/specific product characteristics and social values highly significant (Skewness $= -1.915$; -1.041 - skewed to the right compared to total sample), those, who do not purchase dairy products directly from producers think that though abstract/specific product characteristics (Skewness $= -1.954$ – skewed to the right compared to total sample) are important, social values are not (Skewness $= -0.608$ – skewed to the left compared to total sample).

The examination also included to find out that how the frequency of purchase through given direct sales forms effect the approach to component groups.

The result is that there is a significant deviation between the frequency of purchases in the market and social values (F-Test sig. <0.05). Those consumers who attend the market several times per week or month, practically regular visitors of the markets rather consider social values important in purchases (Skewness: -0.969 ; -0.972 ; -0.906 – skewed to the right compared to total sample).

In terms of roadside sales, there is a significant deviation in the case of both abstract/specific product characteristics and the approach to social values (F-Test sig. <0.05). While for those who buy food several times per week next to the road consider social values more important (Skewness $= -1.337$ — skewed to the right compared to total sample), those who do not, rather think that abstract/specific product characteristics (Skewness $= -1.948$ — skewed to the right compared to total sample) are the primary.

Significant deviation appears between frequency of purchases on the farms and social values (F-Test sig. $=0.000$): monthly or occasional (a couple of times per year) customers of farms rather believe in social values (Skewness $= -0.752$; -0.892 - skewed to the right compared to total sample), they consider them in their purchases.

The deviation is significant between home delivery and abstract/specific product characteristics (F-Test sig. <0.05): rational factors are important to those who use home delivery several times per week or those who never use this service (Skewness $= -3.406$; -1.910). A part of consumers do not like buying food by home delivery probably because they are not able to experience personally the product characteristics, while the other part of consumers consider personal experiences less important or they use the service for the delivery of products with good experiences.

Both in the case of purchases by pick-your-own or automatic machines, the deviation is significant in terms of abstract/specific product characteristics (F-Test sig. <0.05): these characteristics are generally important to those who never use these channels (Skewness $= -2.005$; -1.989 - skewed to the right compared to total sample) meaning that those consumers who consider these components important never make purchases through these channels.

Furthermore, there is significant deviation between purchase through a webshop and abstract/specific product characteristics (F-Test sig. <0.05): customers who use these channels monthly or a couple of times per week

(occasionally) rather believe these characteristics are important (Skewness: -3.069; -1.922 – skewed to the right compared to total sample).

In total, components belonging to specific product characteristics and social values within the components that define food purchases are easy to differentiate. However, the fact that the influence of components connected to product characteristics is significantly stronger than components of social values should be emphasized.

Consumers groups based on the approach to components considered in food purchases

After the factor analysis a cluster analysis was carried out to segment Hungarian consumers along the components that have an influence on food purchases. Considering the large sample (N=1015), k-means method was employed to define clusters of consumers. According to the result of cluster analysis four consumer segments were established along the examined components. Results are displayed in Table 4.

	F	Sig.	Mean score	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
Personal relationship with the producer	322.9766	5E-147	3.6933586	4.556351	3.493814	2.208947	3.101174
The support of Hungarian farmers by buying their products	354.2494	3.5E-157	4.0875181	4.751798	4.082225	3.098302	2.985785
Freshness of the product	304.071	1.2E-140	4.6405138	4.922483	4.684389	4.69974	3.397877
Information on the origin of the product/traceability	280.0833	2.7E-132	4.1682925	4.838276	4.052149	3.36266	3.131566
Purchasing guaranteed Hungarian product	247.4978	2.1E-120	4.1350104	4.752373	4.017564	3.42791	3.163843
Range of products	217.4718	7.7E-109	4.4483606	4.849056	4.384162	4.351967	3.299738
Discounts	118.4443	9.8E-66	4.3718392	4.746236	4.277477	4.386507	3.261636
Reasonable price	330.4967	1.6E-149	4.6513387	4.923359	4.705456	4.746576	3.366723
Excellent quality	289.8986	9.4E-136	4.6440446	4.95582	4.635082	4.720737	3.42635
Personal experience of the product quality	243.1035	9.6E-119	4.4323895	4.884114	4.334648	4.36166	3.162569
Reduction of environmental load through shorter transportation routes	385.6561	6.2E-167	3.8913949	4.67892	3.797015	2.628192	2.968076
Food safety	228.6655	3.2E-113	4.4744253	4.878921	4.50026	4.246008	3.219377
Information on the origin of the product/traceability	303.1167	2.5E-140	3.8703102	4.615968	3.809161	2.555599	3.069948

Table 4: Consumers groups based on components considered in food purchases

(level of measurement: interval scale (1-not important at all, 5 – very important), One-Way ANOVA;

sig<0.05, Test of Homogeneity of Variances sig<0.05 - Post Hoc Tests Tamhane (sig<0.05), sig>0.05 - Post Hoc Tests LSD (sig<0.05), Classify=K-Means Cluster, Number of Clusters=4, Maximum Iteration=20, Convergence Criterion=0, Missing Values=Exclude Cases Listwise;N=1015.)

Source: Research by the author, 2011.

Examining the F values from the cluster analysis, consumers are segmented the most obviously along those components that were among social values in the factor analysis. Apart from the components of social value factors from the factor analysis, price sensitivity has an important role in segmentation within abstract and specific product characteristics. A possible reason is that consumers are possible to segment the most obviously along the approach to social values and their price sensitivity.

4 consumer groups were developed based on the approach to the importance of components in food purchases. The 4 clusters are introduced below based on socio-demographic factors, their relationships with direct sales and the approach to components that have an influence on food purchases. A contingency analysis was carried out to introduce the relationship of clusters with direct sales and to describe the groups along socio-demographic characteristics. In this analysis Chi-squared test and Adjusted residual values were considered. In the introduction of segments the analysis of positive relations was emphasized. Components that influence food purchases of the clusters were examined by variance analysis.

Cluster 1 (N=450; 44%): Urban residents committed to direct sales

Members of this cluster consider both abstract/specific product characteristics and social values highly important, and especially those social values that influence food purchases. They regularly purchase directly from the producer and prefer different forms of direct sales in their food purchases, primarily farms, farmers markets, farm shops, pick-your-own trends and community initiatives. In total consumers of cluster 1 seize opportunities given by direct sales.

Cluster members are mainly middle aged urban residents. Unemployed and retired people are overrepresented that is in parallel with the fact cluster members generally have a low income. In terms of commitment to sustainability, mainly consumers with a mid-level of commitment are represented in this cluster.

Cluster 2 (N=334; 33%): Rural residents committed to direct sales

Similarly to cluster 3, the importance of abstract and specific product characteristics is close to the mean score. Moreover, social values with an influence on food purchase are also close to the mean score in terms of their importance. However, their significance compared to cluster 3 is much higher.

Members of the cluster regularly buy fruits and vegetables, poultry, meat products, dairy products, eggs and honey directly from the producer, while they buy milk occasionally.

In terms of the venue of the purchase, those who buy food on the farms are overrepresented, and a further conclusion is that almost half (49,0%) of the cluster member regularly purchases at farmers markets.

According to socio-demographic characteristics rural residents, entrepreneurs and retired people are overrepresented. Normally consumers with middle-level income, middle or low level educational background or low level of commitment to sustainability are overrepresented in the cluster.

Cluster 3 (N=126; 13%): Refusers

Similarly to cluster 2, abstract and specific product characteristics with and influence on food purchases possess an importance close to the mean score, social values at the same time similarly to cluster 4 has a significantly smaller importance than the average.

Refuser consumers generally buy fruits, vegetables or eggs only occasionally, while they never buy poultry, meat products, milk, dairy products or honey directly from the producer.

In terms of the venue, they never purchase on a farm, through pick-your-own, community initiatives, roadside sales or farm shops. Among direct sales, 37,2% regularly and 27,7% occasionally of cluster members purchases on farmers markets. Examining the proportions the conclusion is that though most direct sales forms are not used by this consumer group, farmers markets plays an important role in the purchases of this cluster.

Regarding socio-demographic components, ages of 15-24 and 25-34 with low levels of social commitments are overrepresented. Non-worker residents of the capital with low level of educational background and low level social status are also overrepresented.

Cluster 4 (N=105; 10%): Consumers in favour of new forms

Members generally consider all components that have an influence on food consumption important below the average.

Regarding product groups those, who regularly buy vegetables, eggs or honey from the producer are underrepresented, while those who buy milk occasionally are overrepresented.

In terms of purchasing venue, those who purchase on the farm, farmers market and on roadside are underrepresented, while those who purchase through webshops/online shops, automatic machines, pick-your-own or home delivery are overrepresented.

Based on socio-demographic components, consumers over the age of 65 are underrepresented. Regarding educational background consumers with middle-level educational background, and the employed especially managers, white-collar workers and students are overrepresented.

A summary of clusters is displayed on Figure 3.

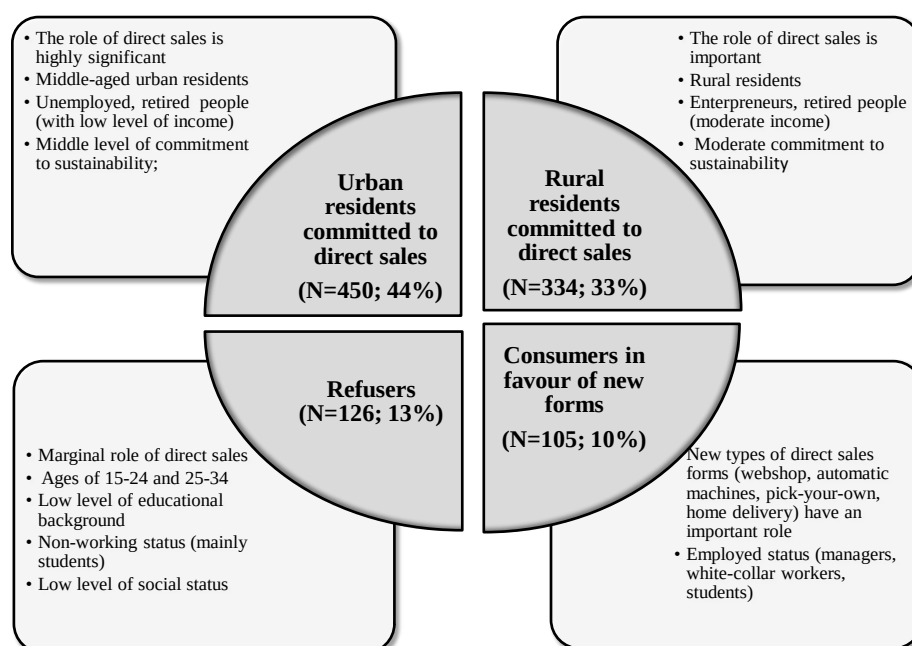


Figure 3: Characteristics of consumers along socio-demographic factors

Source: research by the author, 2011.

CONCLUSION

In total, food purchase decisions of domestic consumers are influenced by two main group of components: abstract/specific product characteristics such as price, quality, freshness, range of products, discounts, etc. and social values such as the support of famers, purchase of Hungarian products, traceability of product origin, etc. Generally abstract and specific product characteristics have a greater role for domestic consumers. Social values are primarily important to consumers of higher social classes with a high level of commitment to sustainability. Normally those consumers who consider social values important in their food purchases regularly purchase directly from producers and prefer forms of direct sales. All in all, the group of consumers to which purchasing food directly from the producer is important and which consider social values in the purchase has been constantly appearing. To find out the characteristics of this consumer group would possibly promote the development of an effective marketing strategy for producers to efficiently compete with other commercial forms.

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