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ECONOMIE

**CARACTERISTICILE DE CONSUM
ALE PRODUSELOR DIN CARNE DE MARCĂ
ÎN UNGARIA – ABORDAREA DIN PUNCT
DE VEDERE AL LANTULUI VALORIC**

*Szakács Zs., Guth L., Vasa L.
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Marca și problemele sale strategice, ambele fiind teoretic clasate în arii separate, reprezintă o parte decisivă în comportamentul consumatorului și în comunicarea de marketing, fapt ce dezvăluie o relație interesantă. Utilizând cercetările noastre anterioare, abordăm acele baze care pot fi punctul de pornire pentru "constructiv" și cu ajutorul acestuia, poate fi estimată valoarea adăugată a branding-ului. Începând cu un impact major asupra ofertei, au fost investigate consumurile. Pe parcursul ultimilor 25 de ani de schimbări socio-economice, s-au simțit efecte sporite în producția de carne, procesarea și consumul. Cu standarde adecvate, informații, supraveghere din partea unei surse de încredere, utilizatorul sau consumatorul primesc un produs de o calitate înaltă (în zonele rurale, de obicei se consumă propriul produs sau se procură de la piața de la un vânzător bine-cunoscut). Produsele străine sau de origine necunoscută: aici există cel mai mare risc, deoarece în multe hipermarket-uri, sau centre comerciale mari se întâmplă mai multe abuzuri, re-etichetări, nu este furnizată informația necesară. Valorile s-au schimbat în ultimul deceniu și foarte des au dus la tendințe nutritive contradictorii și discordante, care au afectat categoriile de valori ce joacă un rol decisiv în comportamentul consumatorului. Considerațiile etice și de sănătate, timpul și plăcerea sunt printre cele mai importante valori.

Cuvinte cheie: Carne de marcă, comunicare de marketing, comportamentul consumatorului

Introduction. During the period from 1991 until present days the privatization of food industry has given a very varied result. Beside foreign capital investment, employee buyouts, privatization lease application, mental arithmetic, stock sales, bank property acquisition took place as well. Rather interesting that large corporations are beginning to merger (e.g., Pick Co. acquired the Herz salami factor and the Ringa Meat Company Co., the Hajdúsági Co. became the poultry market strongest company, the Group of Bábolna and the Conavis Co.) These changes have led to an acceleration of innovation in marketing, the traditional domestic brands are refreshed, the internationals are widespread and appeared the commercial brand names. Generally (as we know), the more we have, the less its value worth. A wide variety of brands and brand owners' presence and communication enhance the market noise, which can confuse consumers. Meanwhile a lot of people are seeking for the security and something to grab on to. Moreover the consumer expectations are changing as well: to provide experiential purchase conditions, attraction, show elements has become a requirement for the consumers (Töröcsik, 2003).

**CONSUMPTION CHARACTERISTICS
OF BRANDED MEAT PRODUCTS
IN HUNGARY – THE VALUE CHAIN
APPROACH**

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The brand and its strategic issues both theoretically separable area, it is a decisive part in the behavior of the consumer and in marketing communication, which reveals an interesting relationship. Using our previous researches we are looking for those bases which can be the starting „building” point and with the help of it the marketing added value of branding can be estimated. Starting with a major impact on the supply side, consumption was investigated. Over the past two and a half decades of socio-economic changes made a strong affect in meat production, processing and consumption. With appropriate standards, information, supervision from a reliable source, the user or consumer get high quality, domestic product (in rural areas typically consume their own or they buy the product in the market from a well-known seller.) Foreign or unknown origin products: here is the greatest risk because in many hypermarkets, or large shopping center happens a lot „abuse”, re-labeling, moreover not proper information is provided. Values has changed in the last decade and often led to contradictory, discordant nutritional trends, which have affected the value categories playing a decisive role in consumer behavior. Health, ethical considerations, time and pleasure are among the most important values.

Key words: branded meat, marketing communication, consumer behavior

1.1 Recognizable changes on the consumers' sides:

These processes have resulted a significant realignment in the demand side of the food market. Nowadays, only food can achieve long-term success that carries some nutritional benefits and has clearly distinguishable marketing characteristics (Szente, 2006). From our point of view, all these required a necessary step to be made: a novel approach of the food consumer segmentation. In order to reveal the characteristic differences of food consumer's behavior, beside traditional demographic, social and economic criteria, it is appropriate to use such segmentation criteria as well, with which the individual market groups can be characterized more precisely. In the study of consumer behavior - according to the foreign literature - with the start of the eighties, the value and value-based market segmentation have got a bigger role.

1.2 Main objectives of the research

The social changes, the accelerated pace of life, the reevaluation of quality of life increased the value of leisure.

According to our fundamental hypothesis the adjudication of the values and the time in it can be applied as a segmentation criteria, therefore it offers the chance to characterize new consumer target groups in the market of food consumption and „work meal” market as well. Purposes:

- C1: Value concept, the general consumer behavior – characterization of the dimensions.
- C2: The interpretation of brand conscious behavior.
- C3: Conduction of quantitative research to confirm the segmentation of meat product.
- C4: Model Creation (in connection with the influential factors of communication).

The objective is to create a heuristic model in the view of the results of the primary researches, which elements can be used as a starting point of further researches. We would like to make a model that can substantiate the communication of the branded meat products consumption in a period of purchase. It characterizes the connections system between the factors which influence the content of the message and its chosen form. Establishing the consumer model (in a practical aspect as well) will give useful information to professionals who is thinking about the development and communication of their product supply. In the research we intend to prove that the values, the brand awareness, the adjudication of food consumption utility factors are very distinct in different consumer section. There are links between the target groups which were evolved according to the demographic, and the behavioral segmentation criteria. Between the target groups as aggregations there are always some overlaps, but it is important to define the differences correctly.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Basic secondary research

In the research we would like to analyze the influential factors of branded meat products' consumption and the decisive preferences of costumers' decisions. Towards, we did a previous secondary research, and it made possible to determine those questions and "grey stains" which are need to be examine in a deeper way during the qualitative quest. With the help of the secondary examinations the aim were only the study of the "environment", the delineation of the most important influential factors of market and sector, which play a role as an influential factors.

2.2 Quantitative national primary research

In the frame of the qualitative, primary research we indented to reveal some questions more precisely, and in a more detailed form with the issue of branding the products and their factors in which way and how can they influence the decisions of the customers. We chose the survey as a quantitative research method, including e-survey (or electronic consultation), for me it was the most effective way. To make a primary research methodology, first it was necessary to do a careful planning and to analyze deeply the data from the secondary research. The qualitative research methodology's basic elements are the following:

Survey: via online questionnaire survey (method: CAWI) based on the group of aged 18-65. The questionnaire was filled out by 550 people.

After filtering out the defective questionnaires and those who has exclusive professions (see questionnaire: media, market research, marketing) the sample finally has 390 elements. During the survey we used the conducted sampling by weighting criteria, to not to get very high weight numbers. (The reason of that: firstly, the demographics parameters of the internet users still do not fit the whole Hungarian population, secondly, each user groups are more active in filling the questionnaire.) The data recording and processing happened during the spring of 2011.

Weighting and representativeness: The sample (390 people) became edge weighted according to sex/age/educational level and region between the 18-65 years old people living in Hungary. See more: weighting information. It provides the representativeness.

Summary: The results are available partly in a tabular form. In the total column are the simple distributions. There are some cross boards with the main demographical characteristics.

Representation of the results: Diagrams were made about the basic results and some cross-correlation.

Evaluation criteria: Before all test, weights must be used because of correct adjustment. Another aspect is that a) ranking of each brands is not relevant because the examination of the brands is not holistic, furthermore, the opinions themselves are too subjective. Only a small pieces of the brands were tested. After the results were overviewed it became determined that what further specific contexts need to be explored regarding the study subject.

The proposed test directions were

- Some meat (pork, chicken, etc.) nutritional value (in terms of nutritional needs) price and consumption habits. Do people make rational decisions?
- Role of the brands and the importance of the assigned values.
- The difficulties of the branded products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Starting with the examination of supply side which strongly influences the consumption. Over the past two and a half decades of socio-economic changes on the field of meat production, processing and consumption have made a great impact, as a result stock-raising, meat production, processing, trade, namely the management positions of meat „verticum” have changed significantly.

- firstly, the major part of domestic food consumption (demand) is satisfied by the domestic food production;
- secondly, the domestic agricultural products' major market is the domestic food industry;
- thirdly, one of the main pillars of the food industry is the national economy's export, the balance of its foreign trade is positive.

Nowadays it is a positive phenomenon that those products' share grow in the export which have aimed at more confident buyers and require higher processing degree. In the example of meat can also be noted that there is a strong competition between some meat industry firms at home and abroad as well.

Internal conditions:

- the state's role diminished, privatization;
- reduction of the subsidies of production and export, liberalization;
- the abolition of the central subsidy of consumer prices, making free the agricultural and food industry's farm and consumer prices;
- the decline in food consumption, stricture of the domestic solvent demand;
- differentiation.

External conditions:

- the Comecon (KGST), the East-European cooperation system's collapse;
- transport to the industrialized countries;
- agreement about the abolishment of trade policy restrictions.

The food industry had to put a bigger emphasis to product innovation, quality, marketing activities, corporate identity design etc. than before. Just a few can manage to form their own shop network (e.g., Pick). While at the beginning of the millennium, the purchase of households (value basis) only 9 percent were home brands, while this proportion increased to 26 percent by 2008, although the growth rate have declined because of the credit crisis. Today is about 28%. Above a certain magnitude the growth stop, because it is unprofitable for the trader to increase his own brand's proportion in the selection, as the trader can lose those-tend to have more purchasing power-customers, for whom the range of branded products is important aspect.

3.1 National primary quantitative research and the creation of a theoretical model

The maintenance of domestic meat value chain competitiveness and its enhancement in food economy, and maintaining its role in the national economy and because of these the issue has a strategic importance, since in our home environment there are all the capability for the proper quality agricultural products, or rather raw material for the meat production and processing. In today's worldwide problem is the financial crisis, which can appear in this field as well: lack of interest by producers, farmers; the strengthening of unemployment, layoffs, loss of income, and as a consequence: mass-scale shift to cheaper products. Appropriate instructions, information, if there is supervision from a reliable source, the user and consumer get good quality, domestic product (in rural areas typically do this, or they consume their own, or they buy it in the market from a well-known seller).

3.1.1 Foreign or unknown origin products:

Here is the greatest risk, in many hypermarkets, or large shopping center happening a lot abuse, because of re-labeling, moreover not proper information. In the questionnaire we also asked about these experiences, sometimes with a very surprising result. Values have changed in the last decade led often contradictory, discordant nutritional trends, which have affected the value categories playing a decisive role in consumer behavior.

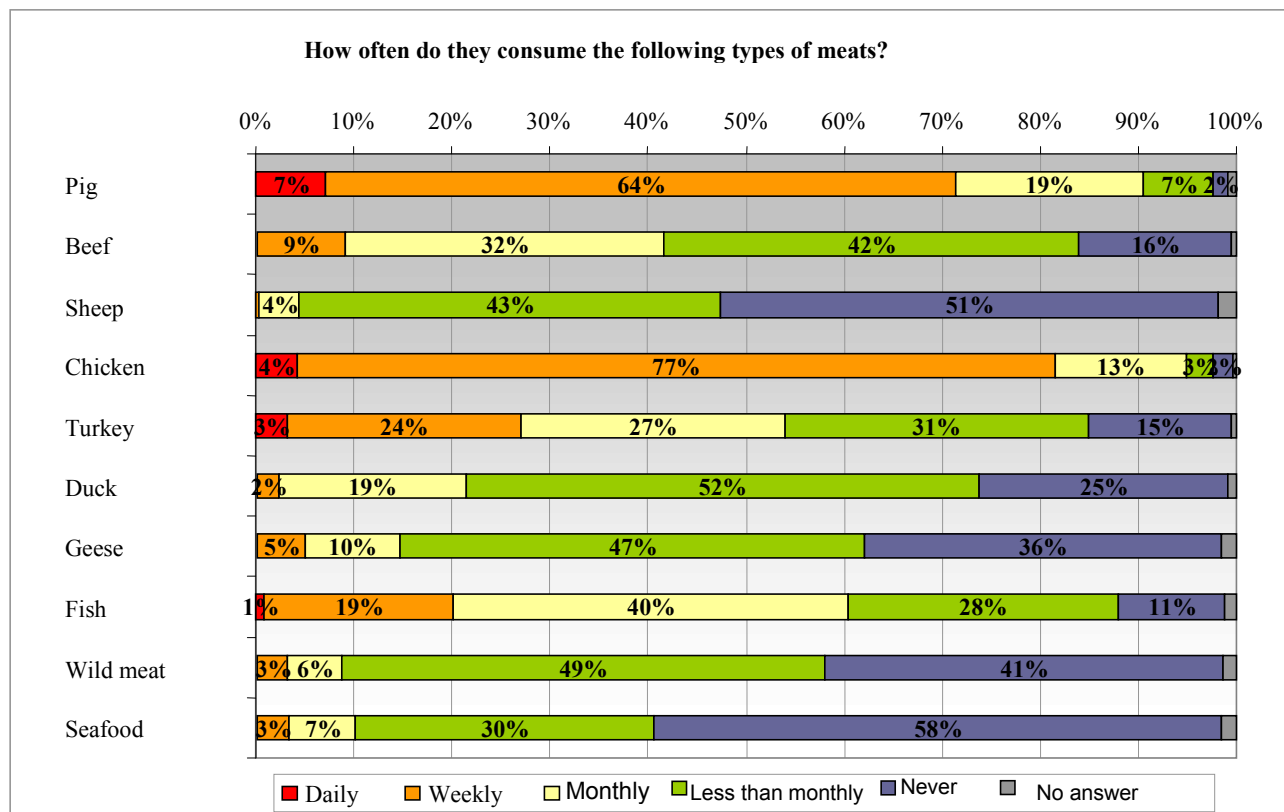


Fig. 1. Meat consumption habits – in the aspect of regularity

Szente-Széles-Szakaly (2006) made a research on the food consumer behavior trends and considered health an outstanding trend as the main social value, which is expected to play the most important role in the coming years. The key values are the following: health (security, controlled), ethical considerations (livestock, slaughter), time(speed, comfort) and pleasure. The results are presented in the following table (see Figure 1).

It can be determined from the test results that the customers in a great proportion buy pork, presumably because of its low price and certain cultural anthropological tradition, and the other extreme: the special meat originated from the sea and it is consumed the least, which reasons can be its relative obscurity or rather in a respective way its price. It can be observed, however, that the balance seems to tip towards the goods of the white meat, and within for the chicken, what the per capita consumption and the consumption frequency values support. Although some people don't consider pork as "red meat", its consumption amount and frequency still exposes the crucial second half of the consumption. The amount and frequency of consumption of beef is accordingly to the international trends.

The interesting thing is that the consumption of the lower amount wild meat get a relatively higher value in the aspect of regularity, than lamb. Their consumption unambiguously indicate the rare category. In the regularity of the consumption of poultry meat – except chicken meat – turkey meat is represented the most; consumed weekly. In the following table we examined that each types of meat what kind of gradation get in the purchase palette of the customers, based on how often the customers mentioned in their answers. Results are displayed in the figure below (see Figure 2). From the analysis of the results clearly shows that we can make the chicken meat the most beloved types of meat, because in connection with the mentions, it was the most common in the first and in the second place as well. The chicken among the concept of people, mostly it is known about its simplicity, its relatively low price, and its least negative health affects (in some sense its positive affects). Not surprisingly, nowadays chicken is the most popular types of meat among costumers.

Of course, in the overall ranking and in the mentions, in the second place is for the pork, however somewhat it is surprising, that the in the third place is not for the beef, but for the fish.

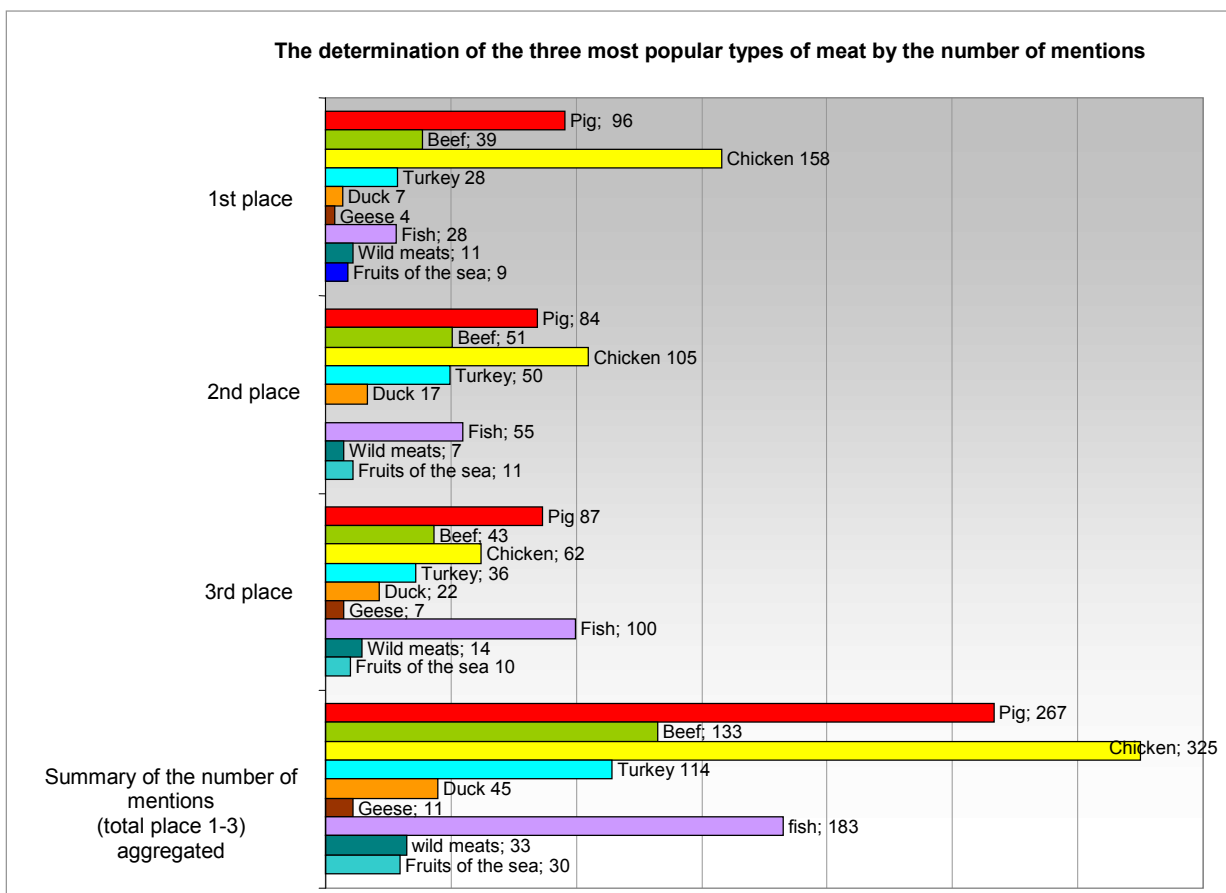


Fig. 2. Meat consumption habits – in the aspect of precedence

The data that can be seen in the Figure 3 indicating that high-income respondents, except that a portion of their saving can be handled as their saving, the branded products are also preferred by them.

Only 22% of the customers registered in a good income category said that it is difficult for them to achieve branded products, which can be claimed remarkably too high in another aspect.

No wonder that those respondents who registered in the lower income category is almost 80%, which is probably too high comparing to the international standards. Furthermore, it is numerous, that more than third of respondents in the middle category said the same.

The highest consensus among respondents of income categories evolved in the aspect of branded products are safe. In the categories of upper and middle income respondents' 80% answered in this way, while the consumers majority of the lowest income category agree as well (64%).

Agreements with the statements with the subdivision of the income categories

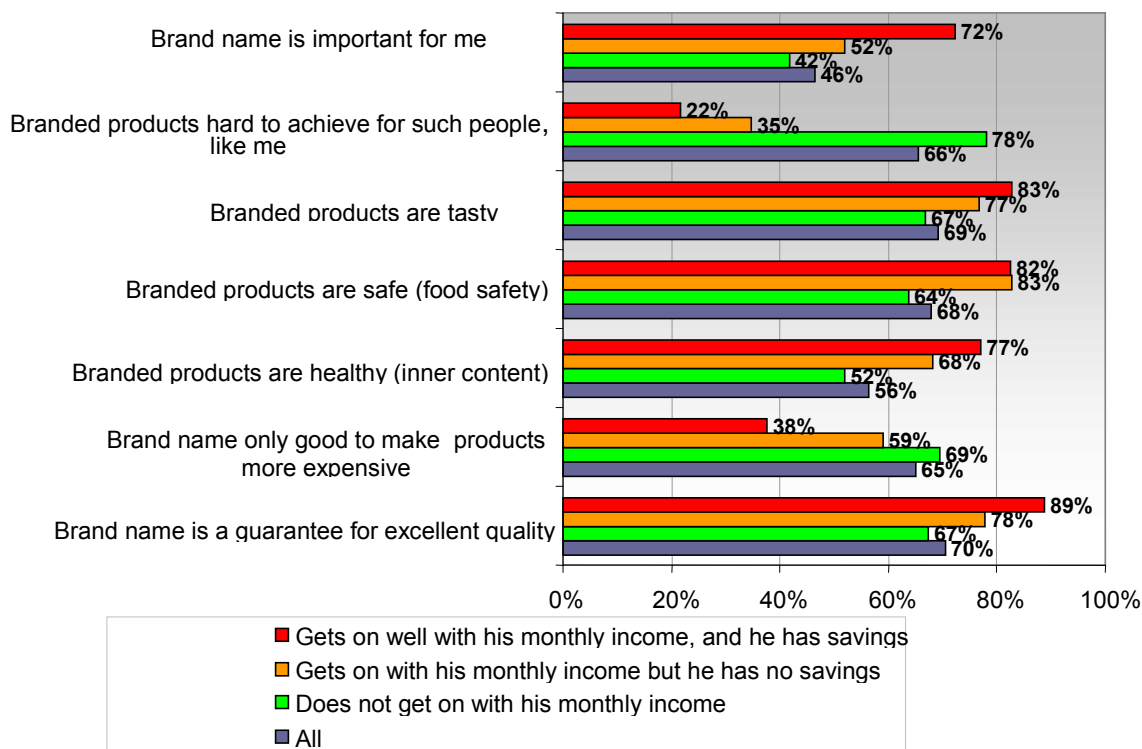


Fig. 3. Summarized statement in order to income status I

Similarly high acceptance characterized the following questions as well, although these extent decreases with the decline of the income as well, this extent is about 70%. Some conclusions: a) The branded products are tasty, b) The branded products are healthy (good inner content), c) The name of the brand is a guarantee for good quality.

The last statement got the maximum value for acceptance among people in the higher income category, which almost reached 90%. The skeptical beliefs to the brands can be discoverable if the contraindicated question relative high agreed response's value is observed, that "the brand is only good to make the product more expensive". The respondents in the high income category also agreed in a quiet high proportion: 38%, while in the bad income category 69%.

3.2 The high degree of price sensitivity is supported by the following two questions:

We purchase high quality branded products, and therefore we are willing to pay higher price too. On this question, our statement is based on the big difference. In the category with higher income, the positive answers were 82% of respondents, while 55% of middle class and low-income category, only 35%. We continuously monitor current promotions and choose based on those. In the high-income category, the value is 51% and 81% in the low income category

The final evaluation of the research collected data about specific brands, during their analysis the most common differences were also emerged from income status

Beside the best-known brands of the domestic market, less known brands were also studied. It is a parallel analysis of brand relevance and income level of the respondents. The results show no clear differences between the different brands, however, shows that in the category of the consumption of higher price level brands, the higher-income respondents were also represented higher. We found outliers in the higher income categories in the following brands: *Csabai, Kaiser, Herz, Zimbo, Ringa, Békési, Regnum*.

It is remarkable also that the vast majority of lower-income respondents, choose the own brands of the supermarket chains.

4. NEW SCIENTIFIC findings

4.1 New scientific results

Brands meet different levels of needs through their functions. The functions can be built on each other, some functions are fundamental, while others have a higher level of needs. These different functions can represent different importance depending on the particular brand. (Hofmeister-Tóth & Töröcsik 1996).

During the research we have examined the domestic food and consumer behavior focusing on the consumption of meat and red meat consumption and psychographic factors affecting the core market and the main trends of its evolution. In our study consumer behavior is fundamental, the key was the factors tied to the value trends, with focus on determining role of the brand.

Results of the research:

1. Quantitative, primary research was carried out to explore, support the opportunities of the characteristics of meat consumption and segmentation, which proved that the differences among the meat consumer segments are caused by factors such as the ones mapped during the general food consumer segmentation.

2. We outlined a communication model based on the research that integrates the meat consumption characteristics, its base is the construction and widening of brand-conscious behavior and takes into account the different consumer characteristics.

3. In the research we proved that values, brand awareness and utility assessment of food consumption factors in various consumer segments are significantly different.

During the research it was outlined that there are several links among the target groups segmented by demographical and behavioral criteria, yet we believe that the examined groups can be easily and quickly separated for practitioners – as a result of that it can be used and easily interpreted.

The segments outlined by the research can be effectively characterized and certain meat consumer segments and target groups can be estimated by certain producers. As a result of the research results marketing and communication have become possible to plan how to reach the described consumer segments.

There is an unexpected result of our research such as it can be seen more clearly the role of nutritional benefits and the distinction of branding based on the behavior of the domestic meat consumers (meat consumer segments), particularly with regard to the different-income segments.

4.2 Conclusions and recommendations

The following statements were made during the examination of brand awareness of the consumption of meat consumers. According to the fundamental hypothesis, the social change, the accelerated pace of life, revaluation of the quality of life increased the value of leisure. As a result, the values and judgment of the time became a new segmentation criterion, it offers an opportunity to characterize new consumer target groups both on the food retail market.

- The domestic meat consumption segments of the literature are not well defined, there is a lot of uncertainty. The marketing activities in practice, often more like fashion than justified. Some activities used were sometimes exaggerated, sometimes dropped.

- The Hungarian meat consumer behavior reflects the general food consumer behavior.

- The brand awareness has increasing role in customer decisions, which is proved in the research.

- Most customers of meat products in the domestic market, (significantly) is committed to a brand, but it is

rather a habit than conscious brand loyalty (Easy to influence).

- The price sensitivity is still high, that is a key factor in the consumption of meat, regardless of income category. Of course, the price sensitivity is the largest in the lowest income category.

- The long-term financially rational consumption behavior among women is more determining.

- The high brand values by themselves do not have significant effect, if it does not include real or deemed (recognized by customers) to be realistic nutritional benefits. This is partly due to the undeveloped of brand awareness, on the other hand, the strong price sensitivity

- The brand is considered by consumers to be more a positive measure of value than steepening factors.

- Based on the results the appropriate use of brands, the creation of perceived and real value for companies can mean an exceptional opportunity.

- The income level significantly influences the attitude to brands, loyalty, education and social status contributes to that the brand message can be easily transferred by the (brand offering) companies.

- Consumers strongly differentiate branded products, moderately willing to pay more for it if it has real benefits for them, but there also a presence of skeptical beliefs.

- It cannot be decisively said that consumers accept the health impact of the brand value.

- Health awareness is present among the Hungarian consumers (especially the revealed intentions), but due to uncertainty in the knowledge there are no strong loyalties. Many consumers enforces more traditional aspects regarding health awareness (For example: "You cannot eat healthy with little money", "advertised healthy food is not really healthy" ... etc.).

- The older generation much more accepts the values of the brand.

- Women are more likely to think in long term, strive to save more in order to maintain their families, less predisposed to experiment more, they go shopping more regularly and they are more rational, less impulse buyers but more receptive to the supermarkets own branded products.

- In small towns and village communities people reject branding.

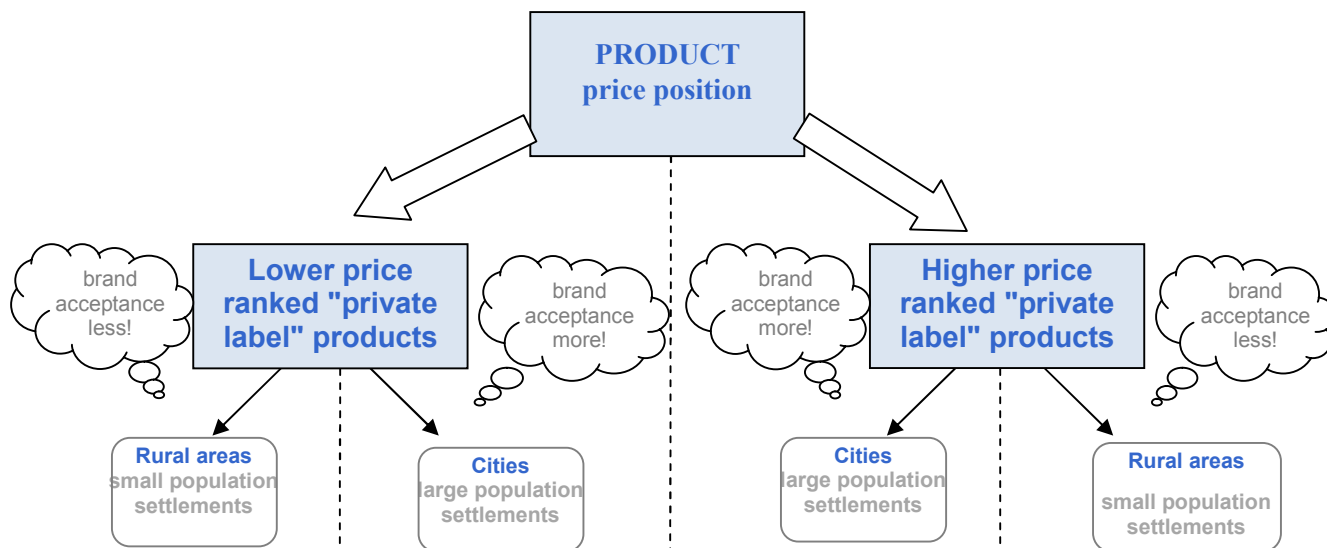
- The higher the educational level, the less common for a lower price-quality "private label" products to be consumed.

- The commitment to Hungarian products is extremely strong, although consumers may not have accurate knowledge of the origin of the product.

- The taste-experience is significantly over-represented among the domestic consumers.

- Almost half of consumers deny that they would try the advertised brands.

- The perceived behavior of consumers and the brand's high-priced products in the value of their reactions to disappointment.



- **Highlight product the benefits**
- - Price advantage
- - Rational benefits (eg, more, bigger, promotional, packaging, simplicity, etc) to the lower income categories of consumers and for women
- - To emphasize the nutritional benefits for higher income
- -New popularity of the benefits for younger

- **The brand's role distinctive only**
- **The emphasis on consumption of local, historical or traditional**
- **The stress on Hungarian products or components**

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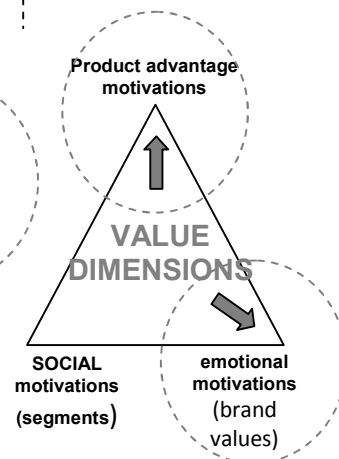
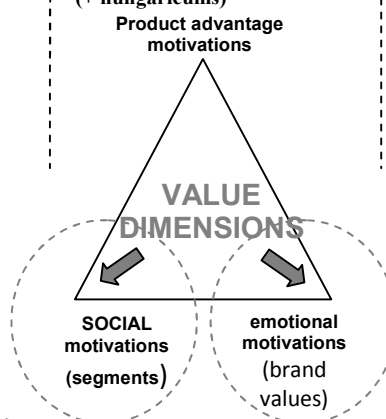
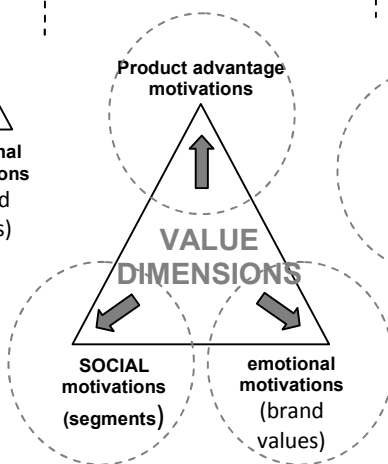
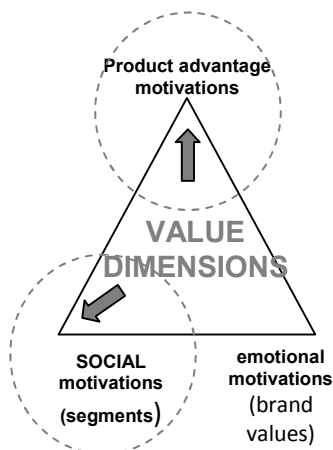
- **The brand's role distinctive only**
- **The emphasis on consumption of local, historical or traditional**
- **The stress on Hungarian products or components**

- Emphasize the benefits of BRAND**
- - Emotional values
 - - Emphasis on prestige
 - - Conscious of the nutritional benefits should be emphasized for higher income (eg, healthiness, safety, home values, content, intensity, excellence, quality) for women, men, older
 - - Special products for quality, for men (eg, culinary curiosities, such as wine)
 - - Special benefits for the younger

- **The role of brand recognition, brand awareness to be used**
- **Traditional product values, qualities emphasizing**
- **emphasis on product Hungary (+ hungaricums)**

- Product and brand advantage is emphasis on benefits**
- - Rational benefits (eg, quality, certificate of origin, etc.).
 - - To emphasize the nutritional benefits for higher income and brand awareness building should be
 - - New popularity of the benefits for younger people (eg, quality, tradition, a new form)

- **The brand's role not only an isolation, more than that!**
- **(+ A conscious brand building)**
- **The consumption patterns, trends, emphasizing, in addition to local traditions**
- **The stress on the Hungarian products or components**



- Meat consumption shifts not only in quantity but also the frequency of white meat towards chicken.

After summarizing the test results we can say that it is expedient to develop a brand communication strategy which differentiates the message by gender, age and region.

Figure 4 we will try to create an information base schema (model), which based on the research results, integrates the Hungarian consumer behavioral characteristics related to meat consumption, brand building and the widening possibilities of conscious behavior, and the presented characteristics of the different consumer segments.

The basic model includes segregation, which can be extended on request, be detailed. The essence of the model that besides the combination of different segments, the main values of products are also different thus it is also important to have an appropriate communication that suits.

The possibilities of utilization of the results

The developed societies of the world and values are characterized by the diversity of conflicting value systems and coexistence. The discordant values often appear in the form of contradictory trends similar to the consumer and the food consumer behavior (2006 Szakaly, Lehota 2004, Szente et al., 2006). With this research work we managed to get results from the research that can be used in practice in the area of the selection of marketing tools, choice of communication channels and the definition of communication contents.

The model's structure is followed by a concept such as price – segments – brand – forms a coherent factor system. The relationship is represented by a triangle with the motivational factors situated in the peaks and these factors are associated with the system. For example, the motives related to product benefits, we find the peak of the price factor, or other value dimensions originating from product benefits. Those value dimensions related to brand value and the brand awareness are placed on the peak of emotional motivation. On the peak of social motivations can be found the characteristics of the identified customer segments and the resulting psychic value dimensions.

We can display the shift of communication focus with the triangle representing the value dimensions. The base of the differentiated communication model is given by the segmentation features represented with a two-headed column in the model. The priority was to keep the model simple enough to be stay useful.

The segments outlined in the research can be used independently and in combination as well to help manufacturers and distributors of branded products to continue to specifying and differentiating mainly their marketing activities and messages to each target direction

The created model of communication, of course, is not complete, just a basic skeleton of specific models used in practice, but can easily be used as a pattern.

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