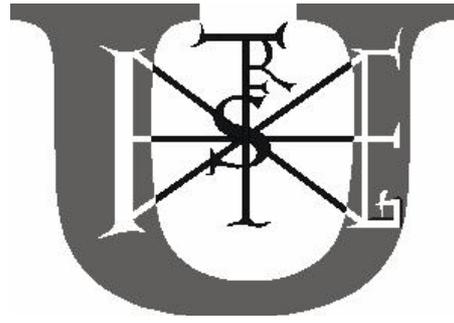


THESIS OF DOCTORAL (Ph.D.) DISSERTATION

ILDIKÓ KOVÁCS

Gödöllő
2015



SZENT ISTVÁN UNIVERSITY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION

**ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIALLY
RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR**

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2015

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1. PRELIMINARIES OF THE WORK AND OBJECTIVES

1.1. The importance and timeliness of the topic

The subject of the thesis is the types of *socially conscious consumer behaviour* within which I have analysed the appearance of corporate social responsibility in consumer decision making. Defining and researching of socially conscious or ethical consumption has now been four decades of history; its characteristics appeared in Hungary, too. Studies in recent years highlight the strengthening of the ethical consumer attitudes, and consumer groups are growing, that can be characterized by certain appearing forms of the responsible consumer behaviour. The environmentally conscious consumer choices and the demand to contribute to sustainability more and more appear as characteristics of consumer trend groups.

Ethical consumption can be analysed by various approaches, of which I have distinguished three typical avenues of research. The first approach deals with the meaning of consumption, which explains what meaning the consumers give to consumption and especially ethical consumption. The second direction is the analysis of each component of the decision process of consumption concerning their contribution to consumer choice. Finally, the third approach includes studies covering types of appearance of ethical consumption that use consumer surveys to formulate the main characteristics of ethical consumers.

My research contributes to the results of the latter trend through the systematization of literature and the analyses of empirical researches. Based on the literature research, scientific research on the types of ethical consumption behaviour based on consumer surveys is a relatively neglected area, which is why this topic is considered to be a reasonable choice.

On this bases, two main research questions were formulated as follows: *what are the forms of appearance of the types of ethical consumer behaviour describing the Hungarian individual consumers? Does the search for the products of socially responsible companies appear among the characteristics of ethical consumption?*

1.2. Objectives of the paper and hypotheses of the research

Objectives

To answer the main research questions, the systematic presentation of scientific literature of individual and corporate forms of ethical behaviour was set as a research objective (C₁). Research methods were developed based on the results of national and international theoretical and practical research experience and previous similar studies.

Since there is no similar research in the national literature and there is no scale used to measure ethical consumption, developing a scale based on a qualitative research and results from previous studies for surveying of individual and corporate behaviour types of ethical consumption was determined as an objective (C₂). I organized the assumptions and interpretations of respondents related to socially responsible consumption based on a qualitative research and presented the types of appearance of ethical consumption, which the

respondents mentioned in the context of social goals (C₃). The distinction of consumer groups based on a quantitative research that can be distinguished and characterized on the basis of ethical behaviour types was another objective of the research (C₄). I examined particularly the perceived consumer effectiveness of segments formed (C₅), the appearance of certain forms of corporate social responsibility in consumer choice and the possible reasons for boycotts. I tried to find the answer for the question if a prioritization can be set up for the ethical characteristics that may affect consumers in decision-making situations (C₆).

Hypotheses of the research

In the context of answering the main research questions of the thesis, the following hypotheses were examined:

- H₁** The characteristics of ethical consumption appear in the thinking system of respondents.
- H₂** The respondents have positive attitudes about the types of appearance of ethical consumption.
- H₃** Typical consumer groups can be detected with different ethical consumption patterns.
- H₄** Consumer groups based on the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different expectations regarding diverse appearance of corporate social responsibility.
- H₅** Belonging to the individual consumer groups is related to the demographic characteristics.
- H₆** The consumer groups created according to the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different perceived consumer efficiency.
- H₇** The consumer groups created according to the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different priorities for the ethical characteristics.
- H₈** The respondents have positive attitudes regarding the types of appearance of corporate social responsibility.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1. Mind mapping of the socially responsible consumption

The aim of qualitative research: interpreting the socially conscious consumer behaviour by developing a joint mind map. The mind mapping was carried out in two groups (socially conscious group and the control group) in which participants were selected based on screening questions. Behaviour forms of socially responsible consumptions described by the last similar research of François LeCompte and Roberts (2006) were used as a screening question. If at least three of the questions are taken into account and regularly exercised by the self-assessments of the respondent, those respondents were selected as socially responsible consumers. Also, based on the results of previous research, the desired demographic characteristics were selected; according to these characteristics, the participants of the group meet the described specific features of ethical consumers.

2.2. Method of the quantitative survey, description of the sample

Given that the results from the sample survey are analysed in order that statements could be formulated for the entire Hungarian population, the sampling was carried out by a random sampling technique.

The samples were taken in 57 settlements of the country, on the basis of the selection principles of multi-level stratified sampling method. The primary purpose of stratifying was the presentation of the characteristics of domestic consumers, and secondly because it was necessary that the sample follows the features of the total population along demographic characteristics.

Strata were formulated according to the characteristics of the most important socio-demographic variables (region and settlement type, age, sex, and educational level). Inevitable distortions in the course of the survey were corrected by using a multi-attribute weighting process prior to data analysis. After the weighting, the sample followed the characteristics of the 18 – 69 year domestic population for these variables.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Results of the theoretical research

During the section of the theoretical research on the forms of behaviour of the socially responsible consumption, the dominant theories and research on the forms of behaviour of ethical consumption were reviewed and classified as well as their historical development was presented in order to answer the research question. In order to establish the empirical research, the earlier research on the appearance of corporate social responsibility in consumer decisions was systematized in connection with the presentation of ethical forms of behaviour occurring in the literature.

Based on the important experience of organising the research on socially responsible consumption, the typology on the forms of behaviour of socially responsible consumption based on consumer surveys is a neglected area both in the international and the domestic literature. Based on the processing of the literature, the results of similar previous studies were presented and evaluated, which were compared to the results of empirical research so that the characteristics of the domestic socially responsible consumption could be described.

3.2. Results of the mind mapping

The fundamental goal of qualitative research was to assess the relevance of the research topic and understanding of the thinking system of the respondents. The mind mapping method made it possible to detect two important results. It was possible to draw preliminary conclusions on the national characteristics of ethical consumption by comparing its results to the results of previous research. Besides, it gave the opportunity to verify one of the assumptions (H₇) of the subsequent quantitative analysis.

The first difference between the main conceptual points of the two groups is that it is helping the community in case of the ethical consumers while protection of the environment for the other group. Based on the main points of the two groups (Table 1) and taking into account the contents of the arguments during the interviews, the following observations can be made:

- 1) The central idea of the ethical consumers was helping the community, while for the neutral group it was the protection of the environment.
- 2) In the ethical consumer group, the aspects of waste reduction appeared (e.g. recyclability).
- 3) The main conceptual point of ethical consumers was the deliberate reduction in the amount of consumption.
- 4) The purchase of domestic products was emphasized in both groups.
- 5) The most important difference between the approaches of the two groups: voluntary frugality and environmental protection arose in relation to the community interest in the ethical group, while protection of the environment appeared as a central idea in the neutral group.
- 6) The different information needs: the ethical group separated two types of information: about products and companies, as well as about the effects of the consumption.

Table 1: Central idea and main conceptual points of the mind maps created by the two groups of respondents

	Group of ethical consumers	Group of neutral consumers
Central idea	helping the community	protection of the environment
Main conceptual points	driving forces	
	values	causes
	needs	health protection
	community	ethical operation
	purchase of local products	protection of the environment
	information	information
	volume of consumption	helping small scale producers
	producers/companies	characteristics of the product
	consumption less harmful for the environment	rejection of purchase

Source: own research, 2010

The features listed above can be described as domestic characteristics because helping the communities appeared as a central idea in the ethical group beside the importance of recycling and the reduction in the amount of consumption. The search for local products or those produced in Hungary is among the main conceptual points of both groups, which is also specific. According to the results of international research, expectations for the companies are

more intense, and the commitments to the corporate boycotts are also stronger than in this research.

H₁: The characteristics of ethical consumption appear in the thinking system of respondents – accepted.

3.3. Results of the quantitative research

The results of the quantitative research that a segmentation according to the types of behaviour of ethical consumption is based on

According to the results of univariate analyses of the characteristics of ethical consumption, the respondents declared important, beside the prices and usability, the long-life products, the products less harmful to the environment and the purchase of the really necessary products only (average between 4.44 and 4.15). The respondents have neutral perception about some variables, otherwise they have more positive judgment about certain types of behaviour of responsible consumption. They answered "not important" or "not at all important" for the following questions: "to choose products that are made from recycled materials" (mean = 3.00), "to choose products with a direct donation" (mean = 2.93), and "to choose products which help disadvantaged" (mean = 2.99). The most common responses were neutral (Mode = 3) responses for these variables.

H₂: The respondents have positive attitudes about the types of appearance of ethical consumption – partly accepted.

The results of the factor analysis supported the argument of the existence of theoretical dimensions, which were created during the foundation of the qualitative research.

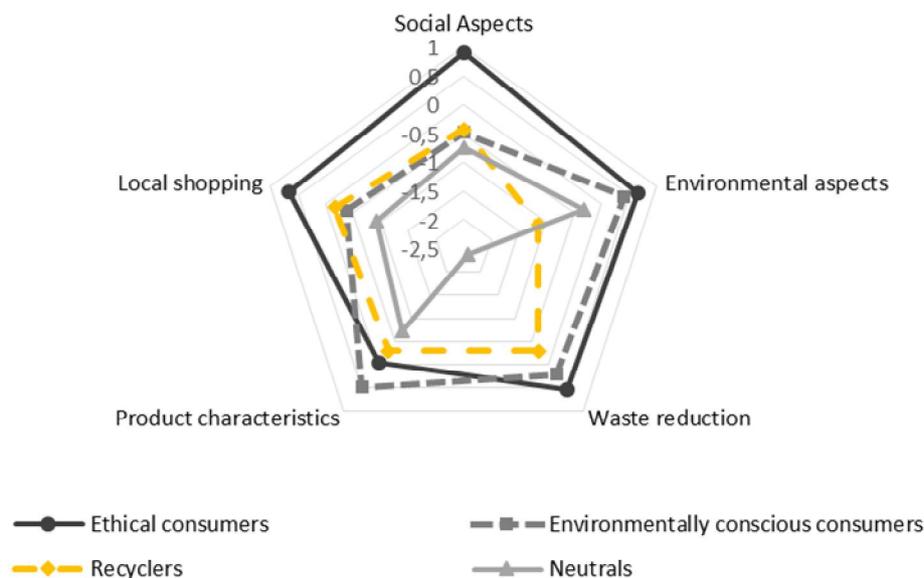


Figure 1: Characteristics of consumer groups formed on the basis of types of behaviour of ethical consumption according to the derived variables

Source: own research, 2010, n=510

Five groups were formed in the factor structure formed on the basis of ethical behaviour types: *social aspects*, *environmental aspects*, *waste reduction*, *product characteristics*, and *local shopping*. Based on these characteristics, four consumer groups were distinguished by cluster analysis.

The differences on the basis of clusters based on the features of ethical consumption according to the derived variables created by factor analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

The types of appearance of socially responsible consumption that are presumed essential by the various groups of consumers are illustrated in Figure 2. Ethical consumers tend to consider the factors listed as important or very important. Some typical exceptions: the prices and products made from recycled materials are considered to be more important for the group of recyclers, while the purchase of long-life products, the prices and the product quality are more important for the group of environmentally conscious consumers. Members of the group of neutral consumers appreciate the importance of the prices similarly to the responses of the ethical segment.

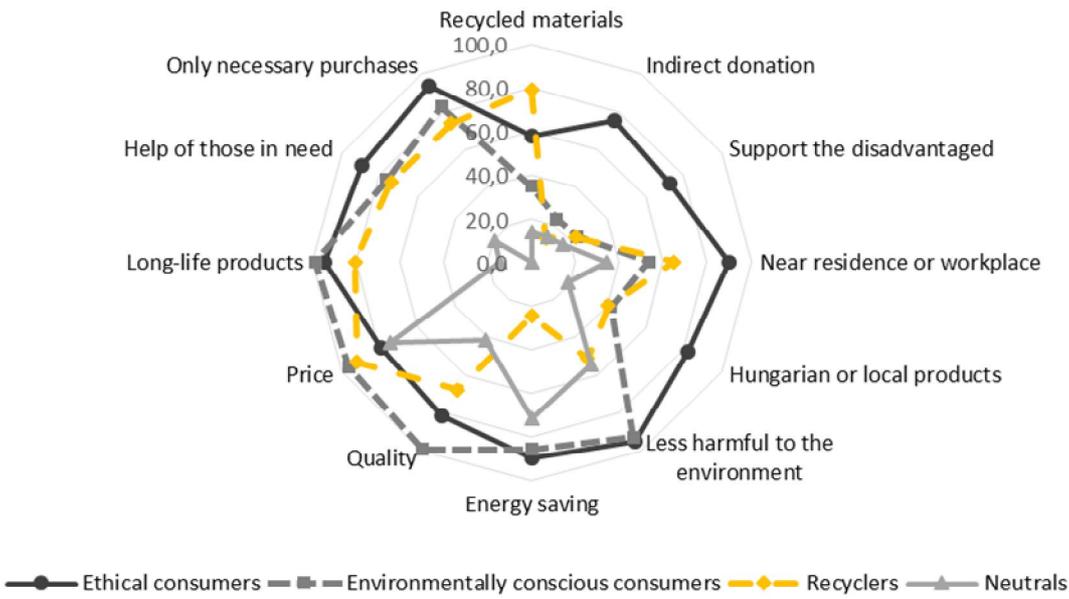


Figure 2: The importance of the appearance of ethical consumption in the consumer groups established on the basis of the types of behaviour of ethical consumption

The uniqueness of the established groups is also reflected in the differences between the responses of individual segments. Based on the results, the consumer groups distinguished by the characteristics of ethical consumption are well separated along the following created ethical dimensions: social aspects, environmental aspects, waste reduction, product characteristics and local shopping.

H₃: Typical consumer groups can be detected with different ethical consumption patterns – accepted.

The relationship between the consumer groups established on the basis of types of ethical behaviour and the importance of corporate social responsibility

I examined how many respondents made specific mention of company actions of corporate social responsibility, and which areas were identified. 64.3% of all respondents could mention examples, a total of 328 people. There were outstanding proportions in the ethical consumers' group (96%) and in the environmentally conscious group (82%) among the respondents who mentioned corporate examples.

Access to the information on corporate social responsibility

Consumer groups are also distinguished by the ways to access information. The ethical group of consumers use every source of information listed more intensively than the other groups. The recyclers, the ethical consumers and the environmentally conscious consumers use mainly the Internet, while the neutral consumers use the product labels and logos as an information source. In all three groups that carry the characteristics of ethical consumerism (recyclers, ethical consumers and environmentally conscious consumers), the second most frequently used source of information is the newspapers, and the third is the product labels and logos.

The appearance of the corporate social responsibility in consumer choice supports the need for access to information. It can be assumed that the individual segments, in addition to taking advantage of multiple sources of information, attach different importance to the forms of appearance of corporate ethical characteristics.

The importance of certain characteristics of the separated groups of consumers and of corporate social responsibility

The importance of certain characteristics of the separated groups of consumers and of corporate social responsibility and the relationship between them are shown in Table 2, in which correlation is controlled by the indicator Cramer's V.

A significant relationship is detectable between the various groups of customers and the characteristics of the expected corporate social responsibility. The strongest correlations were detected between certain consumer groups and the following characteristics: "apply other working abilities", "pay attention to using local products", "employees' satisfaction" and "use of recyclable materials". It can be concluded that the members of the ethical consumer segment also considered the characteristics of corporate social responsibility more important and would rather take these features into account while purchasing than other groups.

The importance of the criteria of ethical consumption is reflected in the relationship with the characteristics of corporate responsibility in several respects. The ethical consumers consider more important than other groups if the company applies other working abilities, uses recycled materials, keeps in touch with the neighborhood and helps them or collects donations and help those in need.

Table 2: Importance and type of relationship of the consumer groups formed on the basis of types of ethical behaviour and the forms of ethical consumption related to corporate social responsibility

Variable	"Important" or "very important" responses within the group responses (%)				Characteristics of the relationship		
	Recyclers	Neutrals	Ethical consumers	Environmentally conscious consumers	Average	Cramer's V	Significance
Apply other working abilities	72.3	51.5	89.4	83.2	80.1	0.303	0.000
Pay attention to using local products	85.9	86.1	82.2	90.4	86.0	0.294	0.000
Employees' satisfaction	91.3	77.2	87.6	90.3	88.5	0.289	0.000
Use of recyclable materials	75.6	47.2	91.1	86.4	79.3	0.286	0.000
Keep in touch with the neighborhood and help them	86.4	72.3	95.0	86.5	88.2	0.246	0.000
It is important to improve the working conditions and health protection	96.6	81.1	99.5	98.1	96.9	0.232	0.000
Ethical (lawful) behavior	91.8	91.7	97.9	95.5	95.0	0.224	0.000
Pay attention to protect the environment: reduce energy consumption	87.7	74.3	92.7	95.5	90.9	0.223	0.000
Pay attention to working conditions	89.2	68.6	85.1	89.0	86.3	0.217	0.000
Collect donations and help those in need	76.8	56.7	81.2	83.9	79.3	0.179	0.000
Handling customer complaints	87.8	82.3	86.5	94.4	89.8	0.169	0.010

Source: own research, 2010, n=510

H₄: Consumer groups based on the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different expectations regarding diverse appearance of corporate social responsibility – accepted.

Characterization of the groups established by the types of behaviour of ethical consumption by demographic characteristics

The consumer groups formed on the basis of types of behaviour of ethical consumption and the demographic characteristics show significant differences for the type of settlement, the age groups and the gender.

H₅: Belonging to the individual consumer groups is related to the demographic characteristics – partly accepted.

Verification of compliance of consumer groups

Discriminant analysis was performed to verify the compliance of consumer groups formed during the cluster analysis. According to the conclusions based on the results of both the cluster analysis and the discriminant analysis, the ethical consumer group separated most definitely from the other groups, which is confirmed by the fact that the same respondents were classified in this group by both methods. The recyclers' group is the second most distinct group whose members were placed in the same group with a small offset. The environmentally conscious segment showed the lowest consistency.

The individual segments separated significantly from each other by the importance of the characteristics of social aspects that could also be proved by the analysis of correlation between the ethical characteristics and the belonging to the individual consumer segments and by the discriminant analysis.

The previously confirmed hypothesis (consumer groups can be detected with different ethical consumption patterns) is also proved by the analysis.

Evaluation of the role of purchases in the various consumer groups

The results of international research address the fact that the perceived consumer efficiency can greatly affect the socially responsible consumer choices. Explanations for this include – in addition to the informedness and commitment of the ethical consumers – that purchases can influence achieving social changes.

Significant differences can be detected between the various groups of customers with regard to the perceived consumer efficiency (Cramer's $V = 0.202$, $p = 0.000$). 61.2% of the total sample considers that purchasing consumers contribute to the preservation of social values. 69.9% of the environmentally conscious consumers, 61.3% of the ethical consumers and 59.7% of the recycling consumers consider the same way. The members of these three groups trust the most that purchases can contribute to the preservation of social values.

In the group of neutral consumers – completely differently from the other groups – a smaller proportion (30.6%) agreed with the statement in the question, while those who disagreed typically justified their answers with the lack of information.

Those who think that they can not contribute to the achievement of social goals, for each group, rather identified the small amount of information as a reason. The neutral consumers gave the answer "no, because they can not influence the environmental and social affairs with purchases" in the largest proportion (69.4 percent).

The differences between the groups were examined based on the assumption that perceived consumer efficiency influences the appearance of social consciousness in the purchases of consumers. The correlation of perceived consumer efficiency and the belonging to certain groups were proved by a single factor analysis of variance. It was found that the confidence in social impact of purchases anticipated the possibility of belonging to the individual consumer groups. A further analysis, a Scheffé test as a post-hoc test was carried out in order to

determine the difference between the groups: only the group of neutral consumers was significantly different from other groups.

H6: *The consumer groups created according to the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different perceived consumer efficiency – accepted.*

Possible causes of consumer boycott in the consumer groups established by the types of behaviour of ethical consumption

The group of ethical consumers is more rejective than the other groups while the members of the environmentally conscious group would also reject in a high a proportion the purchase in case if it turned out that a company carried out harmful activities for the society (Figure 3).

Based on the analysis of correlation of the individual groups and the corporate behaviour with socially negative consequences, it was found that only the group of neutral consumers accepted it if the companies did not conduct activities that supported the society, pursued animal experiments or their employees worked in poor conditions. The specific consumer groups are different, depending on which corporate actions they rather rejected.

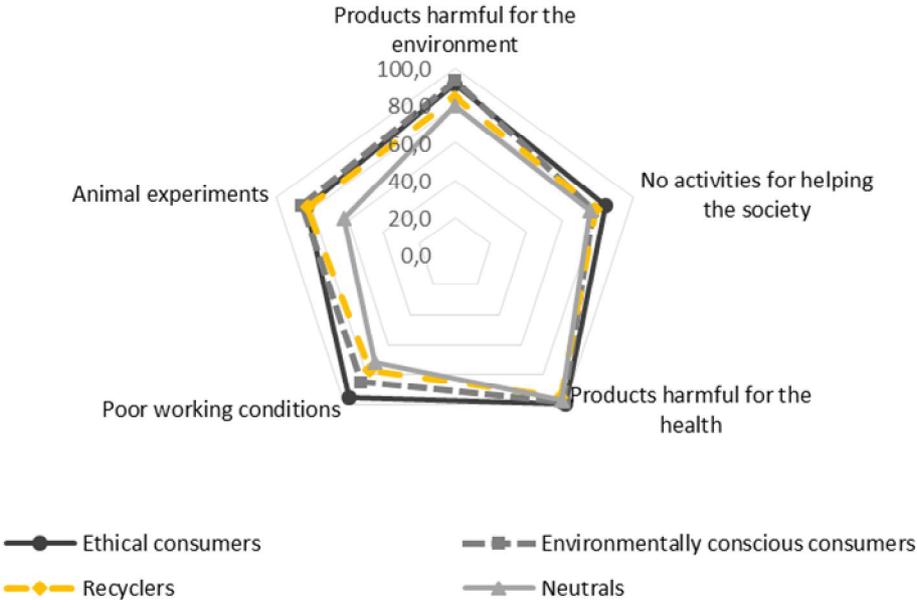


Figure 3: Possible causes of consumer boycott in the consumer groups established by the types of behaviour of ethical consumption, percent

Source: own research, 2010, n=510

Prioritization of the ethical characteristics

Ethical consumption – according to its basic feature – takes into account the social effects as well in addition to the individual preferences. Prioritization between the ethical characteristics made by the ethical consumers requires informedness and the decisions can rely on an individual prioritization. Balancing of the ethical characteristics requires the evaluation of the

product attributes that are socially relevant and the information on the companies. It was important to examine if order of preference of the consumers linked to this issue exists; what order of preference the consumers would give for the company characteristics. This result was compared to the scales that evaluated the forms of appearance of corporate social responsibility.

The most important characteristics based on the averages of variables related to the types of appearance of ethical consumption are the following: beside prices and usability, two environment-related variables are listed followed by the reduction of consumption and the assistance to those in need.

Among the characteristics of corporate responsibility, environment protection and reduction of energy consumption are more important than satisfaction of employees, fundraising, helping those in need and applying other working abilities.

The results of ranking of ethical characteristics are similar: the production of healthy products is the first in the rank, the protection of the environment is in the second place, the satisfaction of employees and the support of those in need have the third and fourth places (Table 3).

Table 3: Distribution of the characteristics of ethical consumption related to corporate social responsibility that were evaluated as the most important, by consumer group

Variable	Recyclers	Neutrals	Ethical consumers	Environmentally conscious consumers	Total
Support those in need	11.8	3.6	12.0	10.2	10.5
Environment protection	21.6	18.5	15.0	8.3	15.3
Employees' satisfaction	34.1	25.9	10.9	27.8	22.3
Production of healthy products	32.5	51.9	62.1	53.7	51.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own research, 2010, n=510

H₇: The consumer groups created according to the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different priorities for the ethical characteristics – accepted.

Typical types of behaviour of ethical consumption

Based on the results of the quantitative research, ethical consumers are distinguished from other consumer groups most by the importance of the following characteristics (in parentheses ratio of “important” or “very important” responses): public donations (75.4%), employment of disadvantaged workers (72.8%), support those who need assistance (89.3%).

Table 4: The forms of behaviour that the ethical consumers consider the most important

Variable	"Important" or "very important" responses within the group responses (%)	Cramer's V	Significance
Choose products that are made from recycled materials	94.6	0.434	0.000
Choose products that are very necessary	93.5	0.526	0.000
Purchase near residence or workplace if possible	89.9	0.329	0.000
Choose products which indirectly help those in need	89.3	0.412	0.000
Choose Hungarian or local products	82.1	0.390	0.000
Choose products which involve an indirect donation	75.4	0.423	0.000
Choose products which support disadvantaged people	72.8	0.397	0.000

(Measurement level: five-level Likert-scale, 5 – very true, 1 – not at all true)

Source: own research, 2010, n=510

With regard to the amount of consumption, the group of ethical consumers was the only group that held a high proportion of “important” or “very important” responses for the following questions: purchase only the necessary products (93.5%), products made from recycled materials (94.6%), local products (82.1%) and shopping nearby (89.9%). The features distinguish significantly (Table 4).

Based on the analysis of the relationship between the already mentioned forms of behaviour and the demographic characteristics, the highest level of education shows a reliable correlation with the variable "just buying the necessary products" (Cramer's V = 0.514, p = 0.000), and there are weak and non-significant relationships with the other characteristics.

The type of settlement and the gender show significant and weak to moderately strong correlations except for the variable "Purchase near residence or workplace if possible". The variable of age group shows weak to moderate and significant correlations with each characteristics listed.

Forms of ethical consumption that are related to corporate social responsibility

By analyzing the characteristics of ethical consumption that also take into account corporate responsibility, I have presented the forms of appearance of corporate social responsibility and on the other hand, types of consumers, which take into account these characteristics with different importance.

The questionnaire included questions on how sympathetic or important were the statements listed in the respondents' purchasing decisions. Based on the responses for the questions related to social responsibility, the respondents have generally positive attitudes towards

responsible activities of the companies, and the average rates of evaluation are higher than that of the importance of the forms of behaviour for the individual social responsibility (averages between 4.27 and 4.72).

The average importance of each characteristic falls in the "important" or "very important" range. The respondents considered the following characteristics as the most important ones related to the business operation: "it is important to improve the working conditions and health protection", "ethical (lawful) behavior" and "pay attention to protect the environment: reduce energy consumption".

H₈: The respondents have positive attitudes regarding the types of appearance of corporate social responsibility – accepted.

Four factors appear in the factor-model: "Social assistance" and "Environmental protection" and "Employees" and "Customers". The variable of the factor for social assistance with the strongest explanatory factor is the variable "apply other working abilities", and almost as strong is the variable "collect donations and help those in need". Both elements of the environmental factor have strong explanatory power. In the employees factor group, the variable "considers the employees' satisfaction" is stronger than the variable "pay attention to working conditions". The costumers factor only contains the variable "handling customer complaints".

The groups are typically separated from each other along the "costumers" and secondly the "social support" descriptors. The strongest clustering feature shows similarities with the "social aspects" factor characteristics, which were extraordinary at the examination of the individual forms of behaviour. Regarding the contents, the variables "choose products which support disadvantaged people" and "choose products which involve an indirect donation" of the individual forms of behaviour show similarities with the variables "apply other working abilities", "collect donations and help those in need" and "keep in touch with the neighborhood and help them" of the enterprise characteristics.

The adequacy of the established groups and the explanation of the differences between the groups were also verified by a discriminant analysis. The study confirmed the results previously obtained for the individual characteristics that ethical consumers are distinguished mostly from the other consumer groups by the commitment to social assistance.

The assistance and the related individual and corporate behaviour types appear as the characteristics of the domestic ethical consumption. According to the international literary sources, ethical consumption rather means reducing the environmental pressure in both the individual and the corporate characteristics, which is in contrast with the present research results, where the main characteristics of the ethical consumption are – in addition to less environmentally harmful consumption – the demands on social engagement, which are differentiating characteristics both at the features of individual ethical consumers and at the company features.

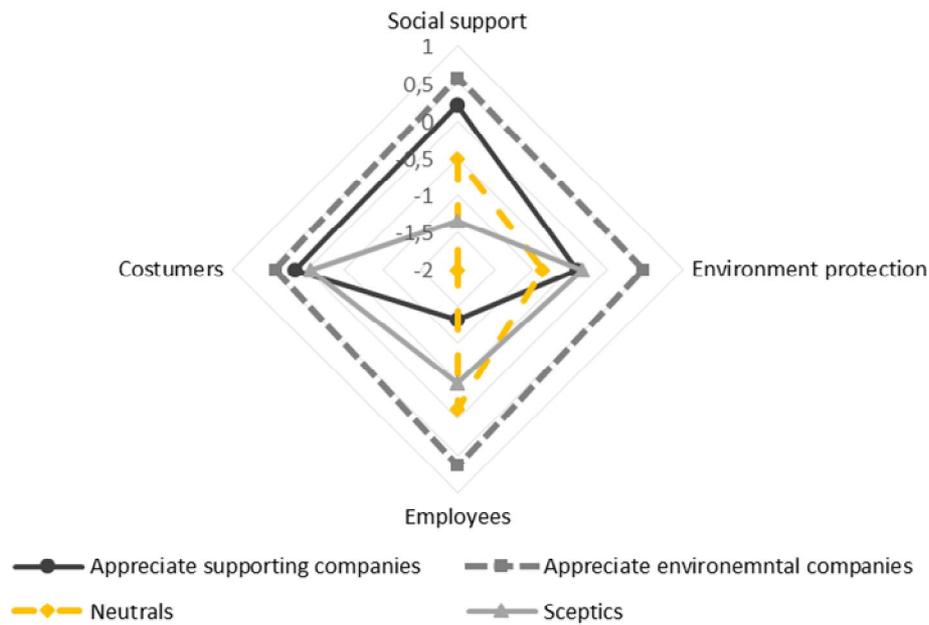


Figure 4: Characterization of the consumer groups established by the forms of ethical consumption related to corporate social responsibility by factor variables

In summary, the consumer groups separated by the ethical corporate characteristics are distinguishable from each other along the factors presented in the analysis: consideration of the social values, the interests of the employees and the customer complaints in the operation of the companies (Figure 4).

The established consumer groups are significantly distinguishable from each other along the examined demographic characteristics.

3.4. New scientific achievements

T1: *The main areas of research of socially responsible consumption have been isolated, and the main development theories have been presented and evaluated starting from the initial works.*

In the dissertation, the forms of behaviour of socially responsible or ethical consumption, as it is called in the international literature and its appearance in the research were systematised. The history of development of ethical consumption beginning from the early research, the spread of certain areas of research and its link with sustainable consumption were presented. Three main avenues of research were distinguished: the approach dealing with the meaning of consumption, the analysis of each component of the decision process of consumption and the studies covering types of appearance of ethical consumption. There are no similar organization published in the national and international studies, therefore the summary evaluation and structuring of the three approaches is considered to be a new scientific achievement of the thesis.

T₂: *The national characteristics of socially responsible consumption were discovered through the results of qualitative and quantitative research.*

The answers for the research questions were presented by the results of empirical research linked to each other. I found the mind mapping method used as a qualitative method the most suitable supported by several important factors: the exploratory nature of the research, creating the measurability of consumer information and discovering the prioritization of the individual socially conscious characteristics. The common conceptual maps prepared by the members of two established groups (the "ethical consumers" and the control group) provided an opportunity to answer these questions. There has not been any similar research in Hungary that would have systematized the types of behaviour of socially responsible consumption through consumer surveys.

T₃: *In terms of national characteristics of socially responsible consumption, consumer groups were distinguished, which are characterized by different patterns of individual and corporate social responsibility.*

Based on the results of the mind mapping, the attitudes of surveyed consumers to the forms of behaviour related to personal and corporate social responsibility were investigated by a nationally representative survey. Four groups of consumers were distinguished with different forms of individual and corporate ethical behavior types by cluster analysis and discriminant analysis based on the forms of behaviour. The characteristic forms of behaviour proved to be adequate to answer the question if prioritisation can be set up between the ethical characteristics that affect consumers in decision-making situations. In the analysis, a ranking of individual and corporate socially responsible characteristics was developed as a response to this question.

T₄: *Correlations were proved between the perceived consumer effectiveness and the socially responsible consumption and the differences of the individual types of consumers were presented.*

According to my preliminary assumptions based on the international surveys, the individual groups of domestic consumers believe in the social effects of their purchases at different levels. Correlation was analysed between perceived consumer effectiveness and socially responsible consumption and as a consequence based on the results of this exercise, I have determined the differences in perceived consumer effectiveness of four separate segments. Besides, the impact of perceived consumer efficiency has been proven on the ethical consumption by analysis of variance.

T₅: *It is proved that consumer groups formed on the basis of the types of behaviour of ethical consumption are characterized by different prioritization of ethical characteristics.*

Ethical consumption, according to its basic feature, takes also into account the social effects in addition to the individual preferences. Prioritization between the ethical product characteristics requires information of the ethical consumers and the decision may reflect personal prioritization. I found it important to analyse if an order of preference linked to the characteristics consumer exists; which ranking order would be set up by the consumers if they

are asked to establish clearly an order of the company characteristics. The differences between the isolated segments were proved through the results of the ranking of ethical features as well as taking into account the order of importance of the individual and corporate characteristics.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, according to my opinion, based on the above theoretical considerations and empirical results, the forms of appearance of socially responsible consumption can also be interpreted as a group characteristic of domestic consumers. As regards the confidence in taking into account the social impacts of consumption, the results of the research advise caution. Although ethical consumption has really a positive contribution to social or environmental changes according to international research, because of the fragmentation of socially conscious consumer groups, the social impacts of this phenomenon will probably not be noticeable in the near future.

Based on the results of the research, the following recommendations are highlighted for the further research and practice:

J₁: Based on the results, certain features of corporate social responsibility appear as essential for a consumer group, which I defined in the research as the ethical consumer group and these characteristics are incorporated in consumer decisions. So the results of the research should also be interesting for the companies, and according to the expectations of their target group, they should consider placing these features also on the packaging in addition to product features. According to other approaches, the design of the informational function of packaging is also a task of the regulatory authorities beside the manufacturers and distributors, because the legislation is binding on more complete information, and can help to achieve social goals through the effect of influencing consumers.

J₂: Individual and corporate characteristics which are considered important by the ethical consumer segment formed on the basis of ethical consumption features have been determined by relation analysis. The determination of the typical characteristics of domestic ethical consumption can serve as a basis for future research of this topic. Forms of appearance typical to the ethical consumer group, as well as their socio-demographic relationships and lifestyle characteristics can support further research.

J₃: According to the theory of positional consumption and the argument of the followers of identity economics, the consumer positional competition resulting from the current social structure is not conducive to consumption restraint, despite the fact that the ethical consumer groups are significantly strengthening. Although the spread of frugal consumption patterns can be defined as targets for sustainable consumption, its importance can only be detected by a small proportion of customers. The conclusions based on the results of the research may appoint additional questions and give rise to further research directions. The voluntary restraint of consumption, which can be considered to be the basis for sustainable consumption, is currently a characteristic of only a small group of consumers. Further research on life style characteristics and consumer habits of voluntary simplicity movements is considered to be important.

J4: In addition to the community development, policy and corporate support for grassroots civic initiatives appeared as a requirement in the qualitative research. In my opinion, the more widely spread of ethical consumption can be supported by the awareness-raising campaigns of the socially responsible companies.

J5: In my doctoral research, results of several disciplines were also taken into account in the literature review and with the involvement of the scientific results of previous empirical research. These disciplines can complement the discoveries of the motivations the social consciousness by their further analytical methodologies.

Our results may serve as a starting point for further research and the relationships and the research results detected during the research are considered relevant from the practical aspect. I hope that the thesis is not only of interest to the researchers but corporate professionals can also benefit from the results and conclusions.

5. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS PUBLISHED IN THE TOPIC OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Scientific articles

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