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Studia commercialia Bratislavensia Volume 13; Number 45 (3/2020); pp. 200-214
DOI: 10.2478/stcb-2020-0008 ISSN 1339-3081

Consumer Behaviour and Attitudes by Purchasing of Selected Food Products [1]

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Abstract

V In this report we are aimed at problems of consumers` behaviour and at factors that have an influence on it. We are focused on behaviour during purchase and consumption of bio products that belong to the actual trends. We explain understanding of healthy lifestyle and we also present abstract of its classifications. The report includes results of a research the goal of which was to find out preferences of consumers while making decisions when buying healthy food (farm and bio food). In conclusion we propose recommendations on possible ways of education and information of consumers on food and on support to consume products beneficial to our health.

Key words

Consumer behaviour, healthy lifestyle, health prevention, food

JEL Classification: P46, Q18

Received: 16.9.2020 Accepted: 23.9.2020

Introduction

The goal of the report is to point out which facts and factors have an influence on consumers` behaviour when choosing healthy food and we aimed at farm and bio food. We made a survey on consumers` attitude to food and their opinion on bio food in the context of healthy lifestyle.

Consumers and their consumer behaviour are variable in permanent process of changes. It is changing under the influence of many factors that change attitudes, values, opinions or preferences of people. In present time we can include among them especially new ways of communication, increasing use of information technologies in all sectors of life, change of lifestyle and lack of leisure time, increasing interest on health protection and environmental protection.

Healthy lifestyle is currently more and more widespread and popular. Interested in it are not only young people but also the older ones that had until now other habits and they try to learn this lifestyle and thanks to it become healthy and vigorous. State as well as merchants, have accept requirements of citizens into account and to adapt their offer and give them sufficient possibilities to live healthy lifestyle. There exist several

[1] VEGA 1/0339/18 Health conscious consumer behaviour: determinants, perspectives and intervention possibilities.

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factors that - to some extent - have an influence on health of population. Health quality is directly influenced by the quality of health care in respective country, though, only by 10 % to 15 %, genetics influences health quality by the same percentage and more important impact has an environment where we live (20 % to 25 %). Our behaviour, habits, interests, opinions and complete way how we live is an important factor that has an impact on our health and health condition (Celedova L., Cevela R. 2010).

Currently it is often a topic of discussion when products are marked by the BIO symbol. Consumers often have a negative attitude towards such label. It could be a consequence of various rumours, scandals and unconfirmed information.

1 Methodology

After specifying topic of the report, we made plan according to which act when working out the report. The first step was to specify the goal and then partial goals; through fulfilment of these we came to the final version of our report. We have analyzed the problems through theoretical specification and subsequently through realization of a quantitative survey which was a practical form. The main goal of the quantitative survey was to find out attitude of customers to healthy food. Quantitative survey was made at the Economic university in 2020 (Jasanová, Korčoková 2020) in a form of a questionnaire. In a survey it took part 115 respondents. We survey behaviour of customers through the questionnaire in a following way:

Addressing of respondents with a request to fill in a questionnaire
Acquisition of necessary information from respondents
Processing of acquired information
Evaluation of questionnaires
Representation of results and their interpretation in a form of charts with their description.

We select from the abovementioned questionnaire only a part of questions and responds that are directly related with the problems of the report. According to the presented sample the results of the survey are only rough. We compared results of the survey with two other surveys that also examined problems of bio products consumption. We draw information from domestic as well as from foreign literature, electronic sources accessible on internet and we also used articles presented in journals and expert reports in anthologies. When working out the investigated problems we have used wide spectrum of classical methods of scientific heuristics – analysis, synthesis, concretization, generalization and comparison, induction and deduction.

2 Results and discussion

2.1 Customers Behaviour and Factors that have an Influence on it

We understand under the name customers behaviour an act that could be observed, i.e. purchase and consumption. These processes occur even before the purchase (realize the need, information retrieval, assessment of accessible alternatives …) during buying and after purchase (assessment of products and services after purchase, consumption). These processes are influenced by many various factors that we call cultural, social, personal and psychological factors.

According to TNS Worldpanel company we could classify new and current generation of customers as 5E that are (Korčoková, M., 2016):

Egoistic – customers for whom it is important authenticity, tradition and local origin of products.
Ecological – customers that are interested in environment that search ecological products that do not load environment.
E-consumers (online consumers) – customers who have orientation on internet and use information technologies to search, compare prices and to buy products on internet.
Ethnic – consumers that search things that are exotic and different from their culture
Ethic – consumers that think about consequences of their consumption on environment and on animals who search products that are made Fair trade – their producers guarantee respective earnings to producers and growers from development countries.

Customers have currently a possibility to choose from large variety of products - the ones that fulfil technical, economical but also environmental requirements. That is why an attitude towards environment in also one of the important factors that has an influence on a purchase.

At present the preference of healthy lifestyle in one of the important and visible trends. It could be seen in an increase of customers` interest in their health condition and an effort to improve it through sport activities and better feeding.

Feeding represents an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Change towards consumption of products labelled as bio, and/or towards products bought directly from their producers, farm products.

In the field of feeding it could be seen increasing trend to promote veganism and vegetarianism. Vegetarians are people who do not consume meat and meat products while vegans do not consume besides meat also any animal products such as eggs, milk, honey etc. Reasons for this way of lifestyle are religion, ethical and environmental motives but also health grounds. The World Health Organization states that such rationally planned way of feeding is healthy, nutritionally balanced and it provides many health advantages regardless of age of consumers (aktuality.sk). And although in the world still exist many consumers of meat and milk products, numbers of vegetarians and vegans has been permanently increasing (Leach T., 2016).

2.2 Bio products

On a food market currently exists fierce competition and production of food that is beneficial to health becomes necessary requirement to break through on domestic and on foreign markets. We could state that bio food winning through on a market became faster and it is a little bit ahead of conventional food.

The study „How we buy" of MB Brand Management company presented very interesting results and we selected some conclusions. Survey study that has been made on a sample of 1,460 respondents that were representative from the point of age, sex, region, size of settlement and education in the age between 18 and 69 years through internet questioning, supplemented by personal talks with people that were accessible on internet only with difficulties, evaluated the following findings (https://www.mbbm.sk/tlacove-spravy/bio-potraviny-na-slovensku-kamenny-obchod-alebo-internet/):

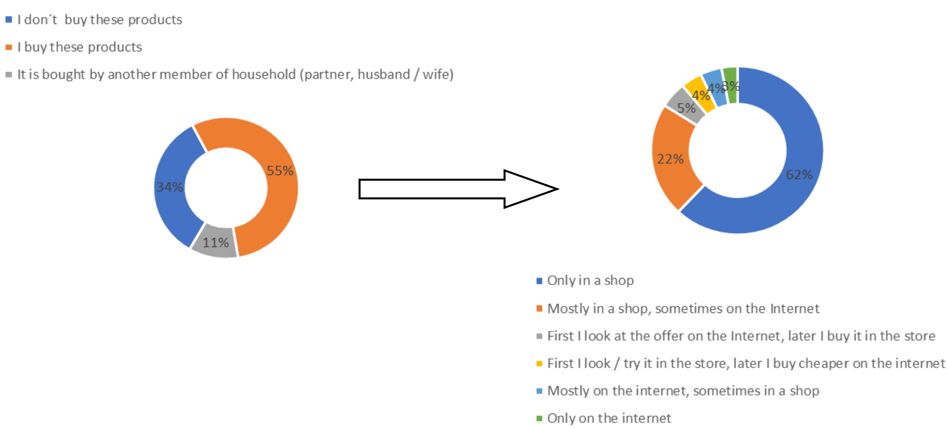
Bio products are purchased by 55 %, 11 % stated that they are bought by their partner and one third did not buy any bio food.

People that buy bio food at least occasionally said that they buy them especially in shops, bio products are bought almost equally by men (48 %) and women (52 %); while women use to look at offer on internet and then buy it in a shop, men prefer to look at offer in a shop and then buy it cheaper on internet.

Most important customers in shops are people from 35 to 44 years old and people older than 55 years.

Purchase on internet prefer people that are younger than 34 years but also people from 45 to 55 years old; among young people most of the customers are households with no children, people oriented on labels that want to be trendy and in; among the middle aged most of the customers are people that have an above-average income and simultaneously they want the highest possible quality.

Fig. 1 Purchase of bio food



Source: FMCG&RETAIL, 2018

BIO label is currently often in discussion and media pay attention to this topic. Customers have often inconsistent, sometimes also negative feelings on BIO label that result from various unverified reports, food scandals and unconfirmed information.

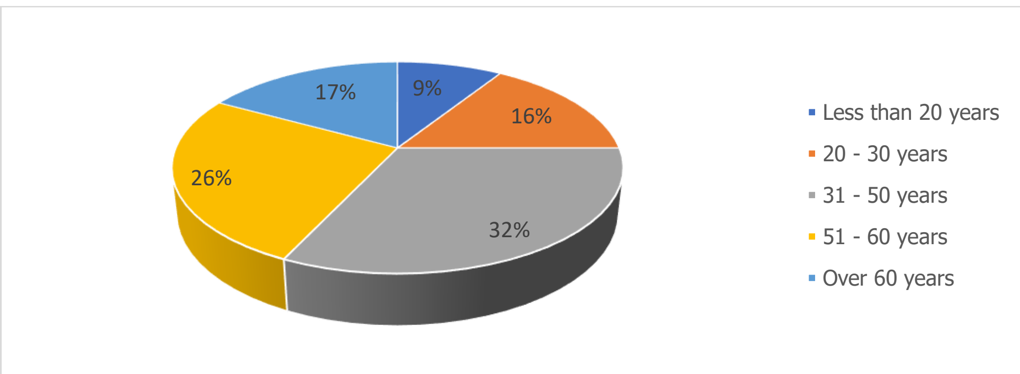
Association of ecological agriculture in Slovakia defines concept bio products as "plant and animal products made in a system of ecological agricultural production. Bio product is e.g. grown cereals, vegetables, additive food, feed, bred animals such as chicken, sheep etc., but also eggs of ecological hen." (https://www.ecotrend.sk/bi-oprodukty/co-su-bioprodukty/). These products meet all the regulations of the Law on ecological agriculture and are regularly inspected on every level. Bio food is made only of bio products while there are used only components, additives and materials permitted by a law. They, though, contain at least 95 percent of food components made of bi-oproducts with certificate on ecological origin.

Currently a threat that represent food to customers, i.e. damage of their health through ingestion of inconvenient and/or harmful food is a serious problem. There is a situation on our market when unwholesome food was sold. Despite strict legislation and measurements realized by respective authorities´ violation of legislative regulations still exists. That is why it is necessary to do radical steps and put into effect measurements that will prevent to product and sell dangerous and harmful foodstuffs. Customer is, though, in this field often uninformed and uneducated. That is why it is necessary to inform customer permanently in a way that he/she could avoid possible pitfalls and consequences because of dangerous food purchase because a customer that is educated in some field could make rational decisions and to choose the right products from the whole assortment of offered products.

2.3 Results of Survey on Customer´s Behaviour when Buying Healthy Food

The goal for the survey was to find out preferences of customers when making decision on purchase of healthy food (farm food and bio food). Total 115 respondents took part in a survey, 72 of them were women and 46 men. Most of respondents were from the category 31 to 50 years old and least of them from the category younger than 20 years (Figure 2).

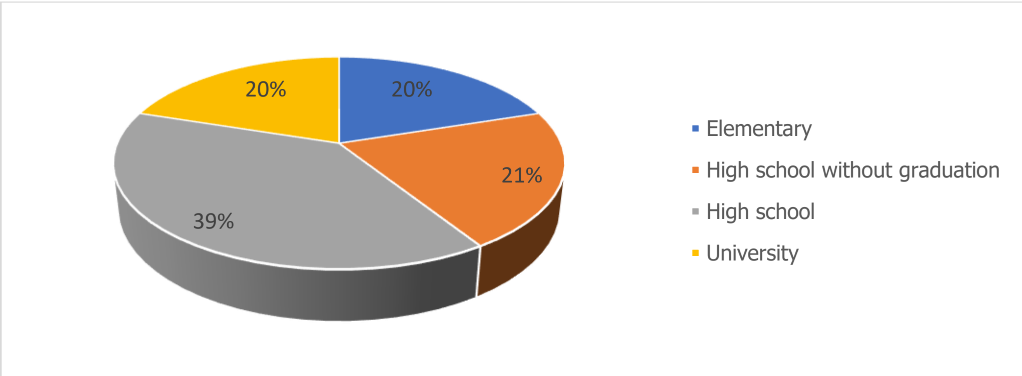
Fig. 2 Age of respondents



Source: Own research

The most numerous segment according to education were people with high school education – school leaving examination (A level) (39%), percentage of other categories was similar (Figure 3).

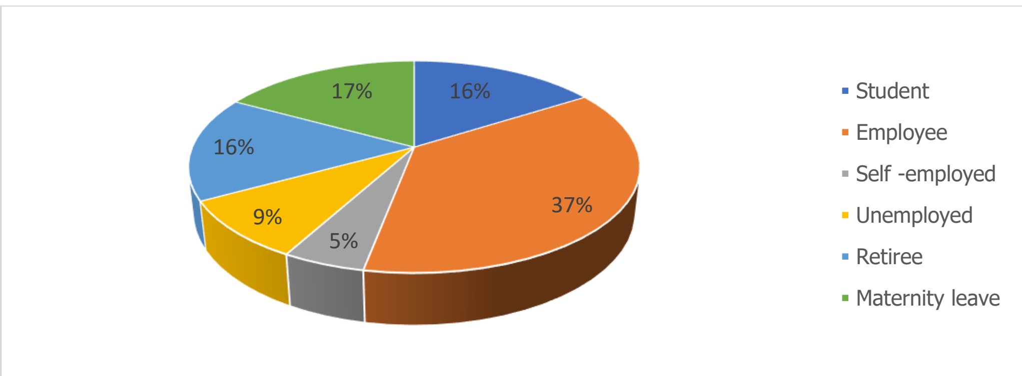
Fig. 3 Figure Education of respondents



Source: Own research

When speaking about employment of customers that were asked in a survey the most numerous segment were employees and smallest group were self employed persons (see Figure 4).

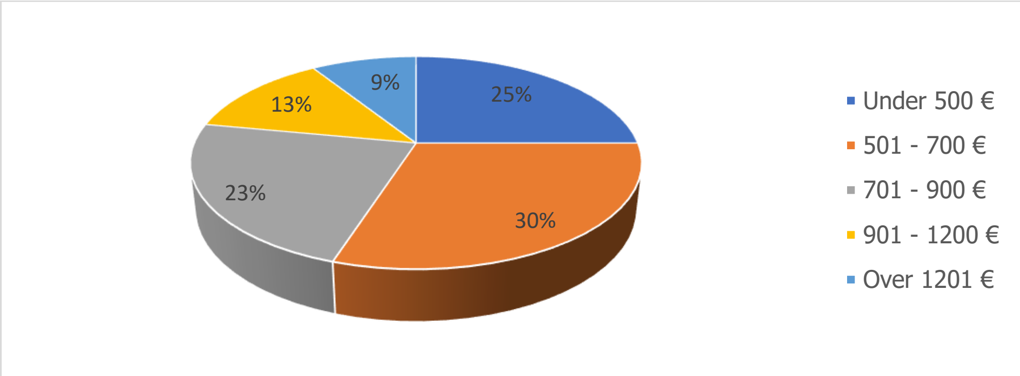
Fig. 4 Occupation of respondents



Source: Own research

In the category in relation to financial incomes, the biggest group was in the interval 501-700 € (30 % of respondents). The smallest group were people with income more than 1201 € (9 % of respondents).

Fig. 5 Net monthly income of respondents

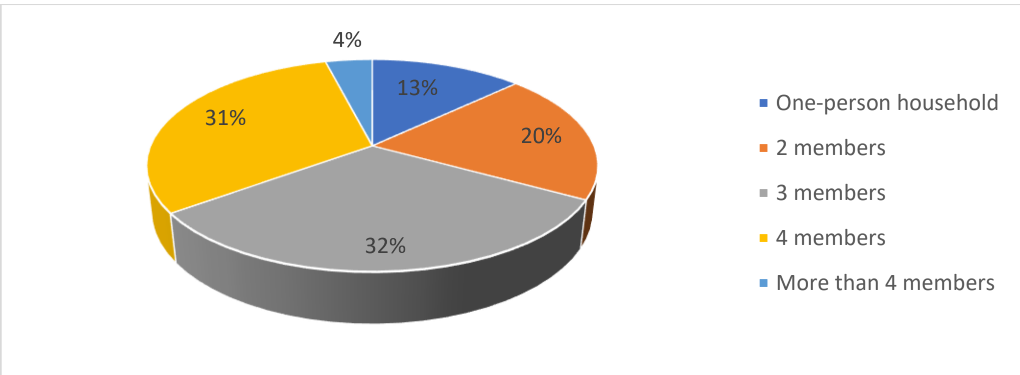


Source: Own research

Most of respondents (77 %) live in a town, while only 23 % of respondents live in a country.

We also examined number of members in households. Most respondents live in a household with 3 members (32 %) and with 4 members (31 %).

Fig. 6 Number of household members



Source: Own research

The following part of the questionnaire was aimed at finding consumers` attitude to healthy food. We surveyed behaviour of consumers on a healthy food market, their preferences and factors that have an influence of consumers` behaviour on bio food market and on a market with farm products.

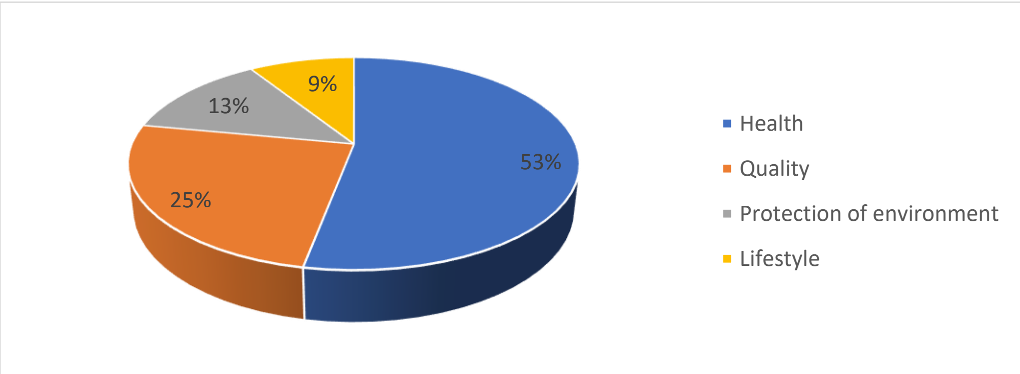
Goal of the question "Have you ever saw bio food and farm products?" was to find out if respondents are familiar with and if they saw bio food on a Slovak market.

Among 102 asked 89 % saw bio food on a Slovak market but 11 % of respondents (13) never saw bio food.

Goal of the question "Do you buy bio food and farm products?" we tried to find out how many respondents really buy respective food. According to the survey 49 respondents (48%) buy bio food while 53 respondents (52%) do not buy it. Among respondents that buy bio food there were 35 women and 14 men. Bio food is mostly bought by women under 45 years old with university degree with income between 501 and 700 Euro per month and women that live in a town. Among men bio food is mostly bought by men in the age category 26 to 45 years with A levels that have monthly income between 701 and 900 Euro, that live in a town.

In a question "What are the reasons why do you buy bio food and farm products?" respondents could choose more responds. As we can see on a Figure 7, 28 of respondents (53%) presented the reason for purchase their health, 13 respondents (25%) have chosen quality, 7 respondents (13%) protection of environment and 5 (9%) life style.

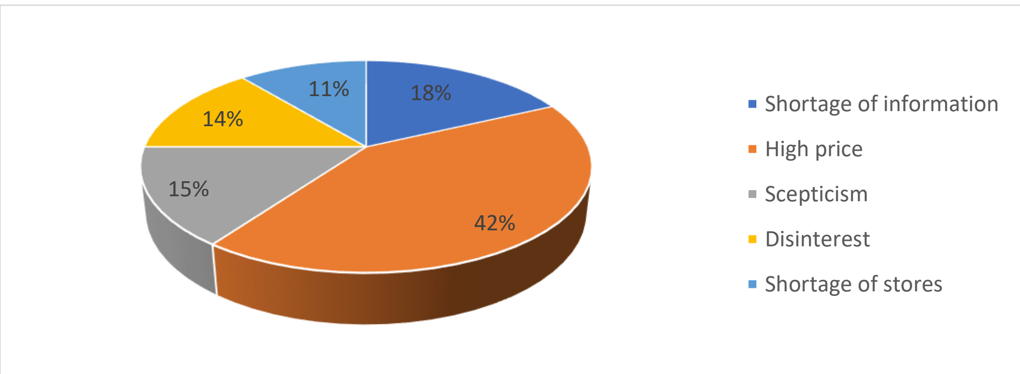
Fig. 7 Reasons why respondents buy bio food and farm products



Source: Own research

The question was: "Which are the reasons why you do not buy bio food and farmer products?" respondents could choose more responds. As we can see on a Figure 8, 28 of respondents (42%) do not buy bio food because of its price.

Fig. 8 Reasons why not to buy bio and farmer products

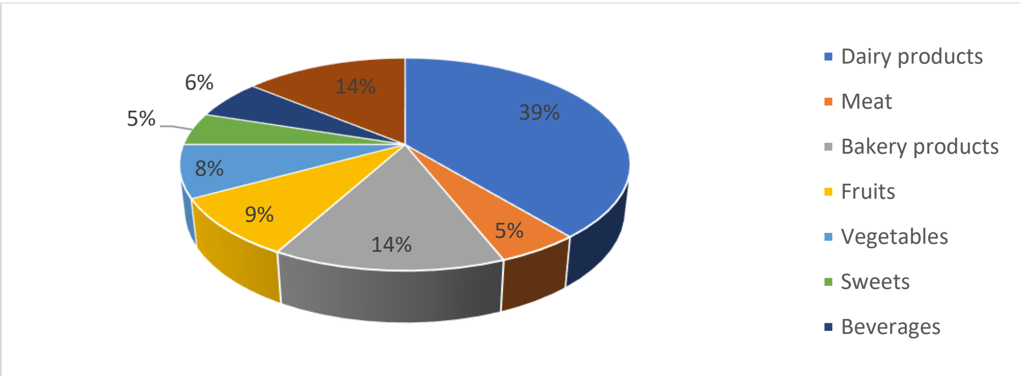


Source: Own research

As other reasons 9 respondents mentioned that they are not interested in bio food, 7 of them because of bio shops lack, 10 respondents have no confidence and 12 respondents have no enough information about bio food.

The other question "What bio food and farmer products do you buy most frequently? In this case respondents could choose more responds. Among respondents 33 of them mentioned that they buy most often milk products, 7 of them said they buy fruit and 7 of them vegetables, 12 respondents presented they buy most bread and bakery products, 5 respondents mentioned beverages and 4 meat products and sweet. In an option to *other* respondents presented they buy pasta, sugar, tea and soya products.

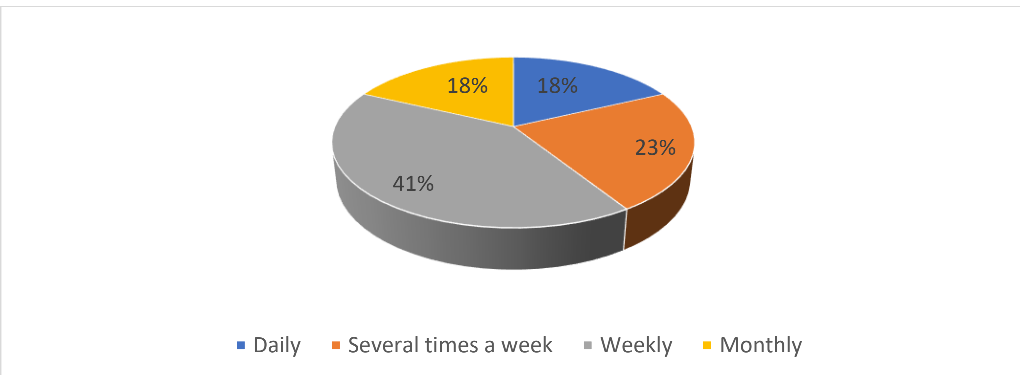
Fig. 9 Most frequently purchased bio and farmer food



Source: Own research

Through the question "How often do you buy bio food and farmer products?" we wanted to find out intensity of bio food purchase. As we can see on Figure 10 most respondents buy bio food weekly (20), several times a week (11) and monthly and daily 9 respondents respectively.

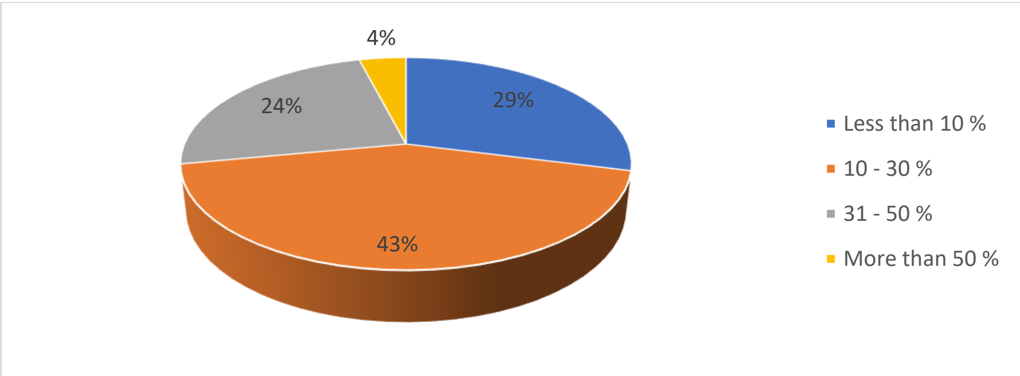
Fig. 10 Frequency of bio and farmer products purchase



Source: Own research

Another question was: "How many percent of your monthly income do you spend on bio food?" On Figure 11 we can see that most respondents spend on food 10 to 30 % of their income, i.e. 43 % of all asked people. From among asked 14 respondents (29%) spend on food less than 10 % of their income while 12 respondents (24%) spend on food 31 to 50% and 2 respondents (4%) 50 % and more of their income.

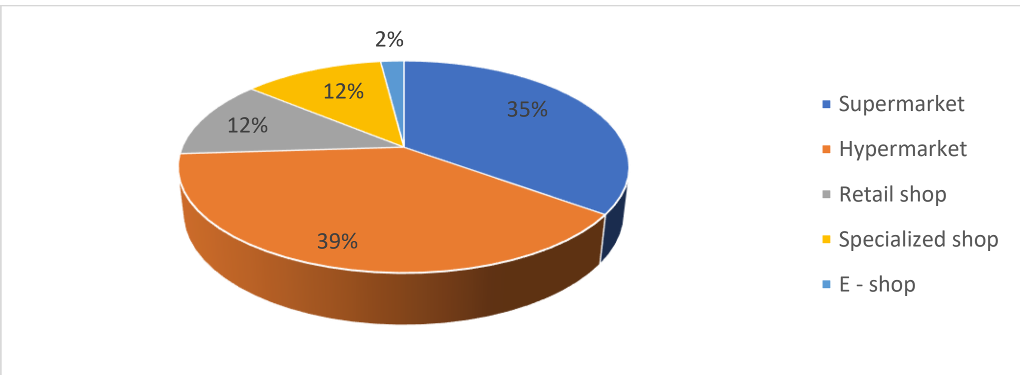
Fig. 11 Monthly costs of organic food as a percentage of income



Source: Own research

Thanks to the question "Where do you most often buy bio food and farm products?" we found out that most respondents 19 (39%) bought most often in hypermarkets and 17 respondents (35%) in supermarkets. Both in specialized and small shops purchase 6 (12%) respondents. Internet shop is used by one respondent.

Fig. 12 Place of purchase

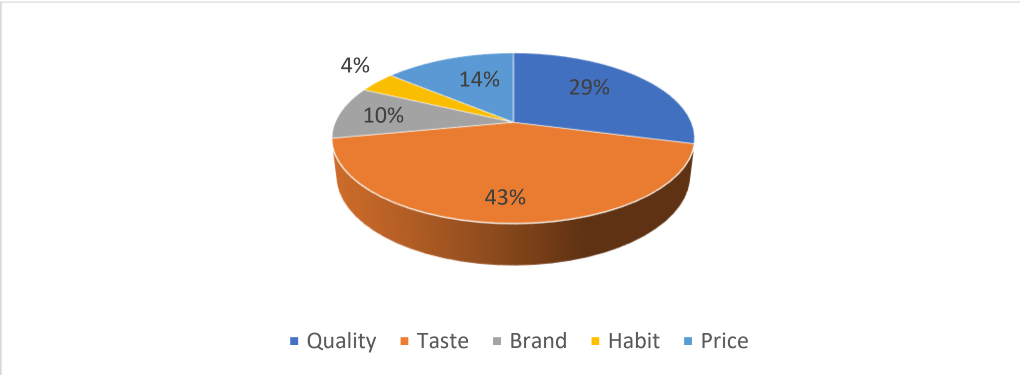


Source: Own research

In a question: "What is the biggest influence when you buy bio food and farm products?" we try to find out what is the most important according to respondents when doing shopping of bio products. Taste has the biggest influence on respondents, it stated

21 (43%) of them. Price has an influence on 7 (14%) of respondents, 2 (4%) of respondents are influenced by habit and tradition, 5 (10%) of respondents are influenced by label and 14 respondents (29 %) by quality.

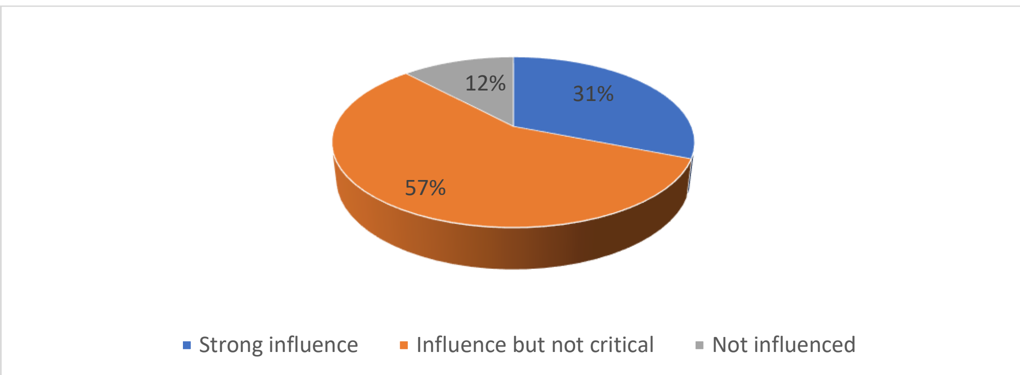
Fig. 13 Factors, that influence the purchase of bioproduct and farmer foods



Source: Own research

We asked respondents how much price influences their decision when buying bio and farmer food. When buying bio food price has an influence on 43 percent of respondents, while 15 percent are strongly influenced and on 28 percent it has an influence, but it is not critical. Only 6 respondents are not influenced by a price.

Fig. 14 Price influence when buying bio products and farmer food



Source: Own research

Results of a survey proved that 89 % of respondents have some knowledge about bio food and almost half of respondents (48%) also buy them. Most interested in bio food were respondents of both genders in the category from 31 to 50 years, so it could be made a conclusion that bio food attracted more young and middle-aged people. Women are more interested in the respective segment of food (67%).

Bio food and farmer products are bought mostly by customers with university degree (59%), 20 percent by customers with high school (A level) degree and 20 percent by customers with secondary education without A level degree. Bio food and farmer products are bought mostly by employees (67%), women on maternity leave (20%) and students (12%).

People have bought bio food because of health (53%) and quality (25%) of bio food. 42 % of respondents told us that they do not buy bio food because of its high price. Respondents bought especially assortment of milk, milk products (39 %), bread and bakery products (14%). Respondents bought most often in hypermarkets (39%) and in in supermarkets (35%). Abovementioned result is surprising as we presupposed that bio food and farmer products would be bought by respondents especially in specialized or small shops. It is a consequence of the fact that there exist smaller number of specialized shops and prices are higher in them.

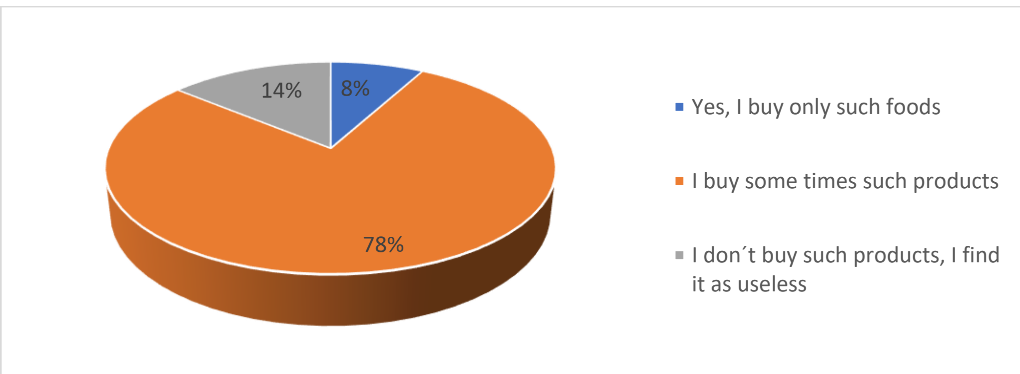
When speaking about frequency, respondents prefer to buy once a week (41%), while both daily and monthly make purchase 18 % of them.

One question was aimed at the share of money from the net monthly income invested into bio food. We have found out that up to 43 % of respondents spend on bio food 10 to 30 % of their net income while 29 % of respondents spend less than 10 % of their net income and 24 % spend on food 31 to 50 % of their monthly income. Price of bio food had an impact on 57 % of respondents but it is not critical for them. This result is very important, as it is related to the fact that respondents are interested in healthy food despite high price and they care about healthy lifestyle.

Similar survey was done also in 2015 as a part of a degree work (Bugyiová, D., Korčoková, M., 2015). The main goal of the survey was to find out an attitude of consumers to the food, their safety and to bio food. For comparison we choose some of findings that are connected to the problems of respondents` attitude to bio food.

This survey had interesting results, e.g. under opinion of majority of respondents (69%) bio food is healthier than food that is commonly accessible. Another interesting finding was a fact that 76 % inquired sometimes bought quality products from domestic farmers. Solely such products are bought by only 8 % of consumers (Figure 15).

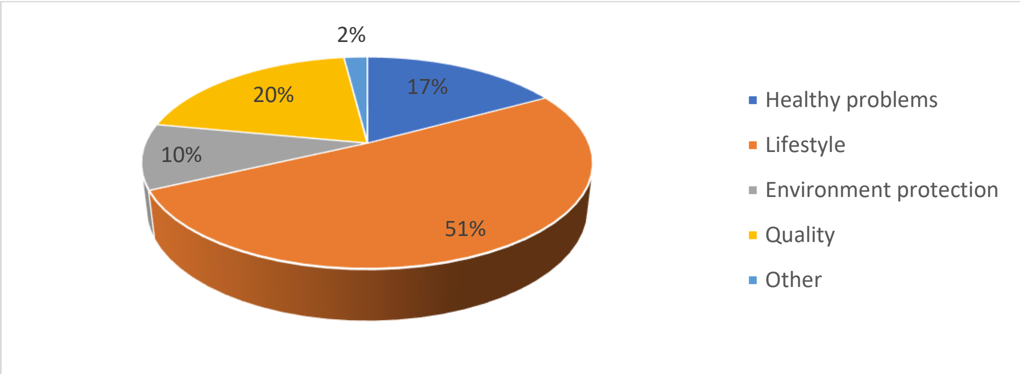
Fig. 15 Willingness of consumers to pay extra for quality food



Source: Bugyiová, Korčoková, 2015

In the survey we have also investigated questions why respondents chose just bio food. There were presented several possibilities. 17% of respondents stated that they prefer such food because of health problems. 51 % buy it because they like healthy lifestyle, for 10 % see it as a part of environmental protection, 20 % of customers buy it because of their quality and 2% said they buy it for another reasons (Figure 16).

Fig. 16 Reasons to buy bio product



Source: Bugyiová, Korčoková, 2015

Conclusion

According to the results of abovementioned surveys we can state that consumers are currently intensively interested in products, especially food that is considered healthy (bio food and farm products). In the forefront it is especially bio food that have been still discussed and its consumption has been increasing with increasing trend of healthy lifestyle of consumers. Survey that we have done in Economic university in the period February-March 2020 (Jasanová, Korčoková, M., 2020) has many same conclusions as the survey study *How we buy* that was presented by MB Brand Management company in April 2016 and also with survey from 2015 (Bugyiová, D., Korčoková M., 2015). All the sources present the fact that interest in bio food purchase is high. Also in the question, why respondents prefer bio food most of them said that especially because of healthy lifestyle.

Surveys from 2020 and 2016 state that respondents prefer shops to internet purchase when buying bio food. Most if bio food were milk products.

According to the retail audit of Nielsen company, sales in segment of bio food in Slovakia from May 2017 to April 2018 reached 25 million 265 thousand Euro what represents increase by almost 8% compared to the period May 2016 to April 2017, when sales in segment of bio food reached 23 million 745 thousand Euro. (http://www.nielsen.com/sk/sk/insights/article/2018/bio-food-segment.)

According to the results of individual surveys we came to several important conclusions. Number of people who are interested in healthy lifestyle and who take care about food selection regularly increases. Respondents are interested in their health and problems of healthy food and bio food are very close to them. We can compare that high percentage of respondents are interested in a healthy lifestyle and problems of healthy food and this trend has been gradually increasing. The goal of this report was to point out that respondents are interested in the respective topic and this area should be supported and people should be permanently educated in this area. We would like to propose several recommendations to improve current situation:

Bigger support and promotion of domestic food, domestic breeders and producers as well as bio farms by the state and EU, help for spot /direct sale of domestic producers and breeders.

Increase of subsidies aimed at support of ecological agriculture – especially bio food production.

Improve awareness of customers on quality of domestic agricultural products. Customers are more aimed at country of food origin but many still prefer more price aspects without regard of a place from which selected food originates. That is also related to awareness of customers on food labelling and accentuation of important information on packaging such as expiry date/best before date, date of minimal durability, food composition, allergens etc.

To improve awareness and education of customers on food and healthy lifestyle.

Customer that is sufficiently informed and educated is able through his/her rational thinking responsibly select food for the needs of his/her family that are benefit and do not jeopardize health and safety.

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