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The effect of health conscious trends on food consumption

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Abstract— Food choice and food consumer behaviour is multifactoral behaviour, influenced by a large number of factors. Consumer way of life and health are relevant factors to understanding consumption preferences. In the last few decades the number of so-called civilization diseases has dramatically increased. Research has proved that the main cause for these diseases is the change in way of life; including rising stress in a fast-paced world and a lack of attention to physical activity and good nutrition. Nutrition and bad dietary habits have the greatest influence on weight gain and obesity, which are serious public health problems because the increased risk of premature death and civilization diseases like heart diseases, high blood pressure and diabetes. The state of health in the European countries was examined, with special focus on Hungary, regarding public health indicators and nutrition habits. Data was collected from FAOSTAT and EUROSTAT database. The life expectancy in Hungary is one of the worst of the European countries and the rate of obesity exceeds the average in Europe. From research and observations, one difference is that people in Hungary eat less of some foods deemed healthful by nutritional scientists, such as vegetables, fruits and milk. Improving the state of health is a notable task in Hungary, and one important part of the solution is changing bad dietary habits.

Keywords— health, nutrition, marketing

I. INTRODUCTION

The crucial success factor of every company is well-targeted and effective marketing. This applies obviously to the food industry companies' marketing. First of all it is necessary to be aware of preference and behaviour of the consumers forming the appropriate marketing strategy. [1]

In the neoclassical microeconomics consumption is defined as the act of buying goods and services, and it is assumed that consumption yields utility. [2] The last element of the economic chain is the consumer, he/she decides about the success or failure of a product. Every consumer wants to reach a higher utility level of their preference system.

You must remember that well-organized production process and innovative product are in vain, if the consumer doesn't like it, then the product is not viable on the market. [3] For recognizing the consumer behaviour is necessary to look at the product from the consumer's point of view, what kind of problems does he/she have to face with during the whole purchase decision process. [4]

To the accomplishment of the adequate step it is necessary to know the consumer's needs and claims, which are determined considerably by his way of life. The people's consumption is formed and determined by their attitude, their habit, their everyday life, on the whole by their way of life. [5] The marketing analyses and the society researches notably deal with mapping the preference of the consumers. [6] Health plays a considerable role in everyday life and in forming the way of life. Therefore the effort to be healthy could be an essential influencing factor for the consumer in his/her purchasing decision process.

The concomitant phenomenon of the industrial and technological „boom” in the XX. century is the change in mankind's life. The observable cumulative everyday stress, the growing environmental pollution, the spread of sedentary jobs effect on people's way of life. Parallel with these phenomenon the people's physical strain has decreased. Nowadays in modern society man becomes comfortable, the majority of jobs requires increasingly less physical effort. [7]

This change of modern life consequently should infer changes in dietary habits. Otherwise the change of the living conditions together with the traditional dietary habits could present a negative effect on the organism. [8] Researches justify that in the last few decades these processes are responsible for the appearance and spread of so-called civilization diseases. [9]

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the previous statements the European countries are the centre of the observation, comparing the nutrition habits on the basis of consumption and few health conditions indicating data. For the analysis the data are obtained from the European Commission and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations database. I have examined data from nearly thirty European countries. The consumer data concern 2006 including fruit, sugar, vegetable, animal fat, pork, beef, chicken and milk consumption,- expressed in gram/capita/day- comparing each country.

The indicators concerning the health conditions are life expectancy at birth, death rate due to heart diseases and the obesity rate in a country. Life expectancy means the mean number of years that a newborn child can expect to live if subjected throughout his life to the current mortality conditions.

Data apply to obesity are demonstrated in the percentage of population Obese people are those with a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30. The BMI is a measure of the body fat content of adults calculated as the ratio between the weight measured in kilograms, and the square of the height measured in meters. [10]

III. RESULTS

The health state of the Hungarian population is among the worst in Europe. People in Hungary eat less of those food which are recommended to eat more of than in Europe and more of those which are recommended to eat less of by nutrition scientists, comparing the Hungarian consumption data with the average of Europe. The vegetable, fruit and milk consumption is less, the animal fat and meat consumption is more than the average in Europe. [11]

The European average consumption of vegetable according to the examined countries is 375,07 gram/capita/day by the fruit is 385,77 gram/capita/day. The measure of the vegetable and fruit consumption in Hungary is 273,17 gram/ capita/day and 341,2 gram/capita/day. At last but not least the milk consumption in Hungary,- which is 465 gram/capita/day- is considerably less than the European average,- which is 637,19 gram/capita/day.

This difference is almost reach the same measure than the standard deviation among the countries examine milk consumption,- which is 172 gram/capita/day. By researches supported evidence the positive association between health state and milk consumption. [12]

In the case of nutrition scientifically not recommended food consumption the data imply other weaknesses of the Hungarian nutrition habits. For instance the animal fat consumption in Hungary is 7,83 gram/capita/day, the European average is 6,32, so in Hungary people consume 23,9% more animal fat than general in Europe.

Examine the health indicators can demonstrate the following statement. Hungarian life expectancy at birth is 77 years in the case of a female and 68 years in the case of a male, comparing with the European average of 80 years and 74 years, it lags far behind them. The Hungarian data are out of standard deviation which is 4, calculated for the observed countries, which justifies poor national health conditions.

Considering the obesity rate 15,7 % of the male and 9,8% of the female population are obese in Hungary, which is notably higher than the European average of 8,6% and 7%. The life expectancy at birth is one of the lowest the rate of obese and overweight people exceeds the European average in Hungary. Obesity- which has a strong relation with eating habits and lack of physical activity- are serious medical problems because they increase the probability of the premature death.

The consumer behaviour, the eating habits and the health conditions considerably effect each other. Improving the state of health is an important task in Hungary, and a significant step in the process would be to change bad dietary habits. The food industry including mainly marketing has to undertake a considerable role in this task. The food industrial marketing communication has to put more emphasis on health consciousness and food which have a positive effect on health.

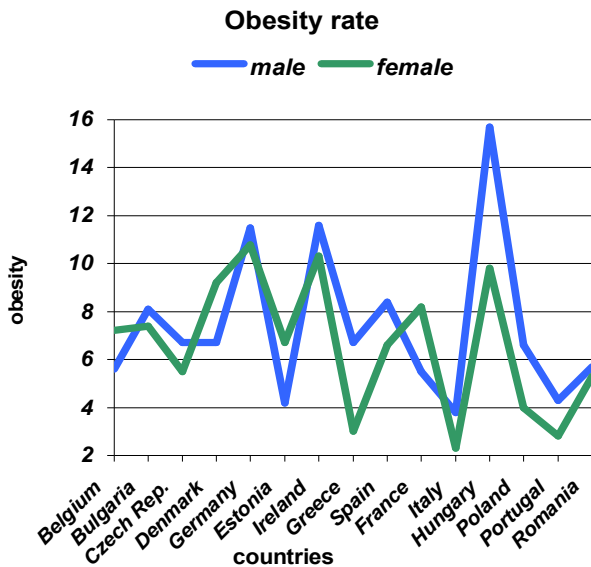


Fig. 1 Obesity rate (percentage of the population) [10]

IV. DISCUSSION

The civilization diseases, like coronary disorders, heart diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes or obesity cause the predominant part of all the mortality worldwide. These diseases are spread especially in the more developed Central and Eastern European countries.

Based on previous researches and examining the Hungarian data apply to the association between health indicators and prevalence of food consumption we can ascertain similar results because in this country the civilization diseases are responsible for the mortality in a considerable proportion as well.

Researches demonstrate that obesity is responsible in many cases for these diseases. In the case of cardiovascular diseases the influence of improper unhealthy eating habit is estimated higher than 30%. [7]

Considering the above mentioned findings food industrial marketing has to pay increased attention to emphasise proper and healthy nutrition and way of life. [13] In accordance with the strong relation between consumer behaviour and way of life the proper healthy nutrition factor has to be considered a

significant part in the consumer purchase decision process analysis.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The life expectancy in Hungary is one of the worst of the European countries and the rate of obesity exceeds the average in Europe.

According to researches and observations, one difference is that people in Hungary eat less of some foods deemed healthful by nutritional scientists, such as vegetables, fruits, milk and fish.

The aim of this research was to examine the relationship between the health state of a population and the quality of nutrition habits, and point out the assumption the people's way of life bear a relation to marketing.

Improving the state of health is a notable task in Hungary, and one important part of the solution is changing bad dietary habits.

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