

HIP AND PRACTICAL: CULTURAL CAPITAL AND THE TWO FACES OF SUSTAINABLE FOOD CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT: *The paper presents an analysis of the connections between attitudes toward sustainable food consumption and cultural capital based on a nationally representative survey conducted in Hungary in 2018 (N=2,700). Drawing on the literature on food consumption associated with the creation of social boundaries, we sought to capture the characteristics of food-related attitudes of consumers with high cultural capital. According to our results, sustainable attitudes toward food did not form a coherent eco-habitus, but rather, elements of ethical consumption were mixed with (1) elements of conspicuous consumption and (2) health concerns. We identified two dimensions: (1) hipster and (2) practical components of food sustainability. However, our multivariate analysis showed that both components were related to the cultural capital of the survey participants. In linear regression models, we distinguished different (embodied and institutionalised) forms of cultural capital. We found that the effect of cultural consumption overwrote the effect of education on sustainable food consumption attitudes.*

KEYWORDS: *sustainability, food, ethical consumption, cultural capital*

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we use data from a nationally representative survey to reveal the connection between sustainable food attitudes and cultural capital. Attitudes toward food are an important part of the habitus and distinction among social groups (Bourdieu 1984). According to Bourdieu's thesis and the many later empirical studies on the topic, social status and economic and cultural capital strongly determine food choices. However, the way that consumers with high cultural capital differentiate themselves from other social groups is changing constantly as consumers introduce new and complex forms of distinction. Contemporary research and literature on food consumption and social stratification continuously search for markers of such differentiation, from Bourdieu's refined and light classier eater via Johnston and Bauman's foodie to Carfagna's eco-habitus (Bourdieu 1984; Carfagna et al. 2014; Johnston–Bauman 2009). In the last decade, strengthening aspirations for ethical and green consumption have increasingly been seen as an important characteristic of high cultural capital consumers (Carfagna et al. 2014; Cornelissen 2016; Currid-Halkett 2017; Kennedy et al. 2019; Kennedy–Givens 2019). In this paper, we would like to contribute to this literature with a quantitative analysis of Hungarian consumers' attitudes toward food sustainability.

In general, our research confirmed the link between sustainable food consumption and cultural capital in a society where we were the first to investigate this. At the same time, our empirical results did not identify the full formalization of a coherent eco-habitus in Hungary.

We also consider an important result: by decomposing cultural capital into several forms, we found that embodied cultural capital, as measured by various forms of cultural consumption, overwrote the effect of education on food consumption attitudes.

The paper is structured as follows: after framing the theoretical background on food and cultural capital, we present our methodological tools, the main points of the survey, and the statistical methods that were used. Then follows the empirical analysis, and finally, after discussing the results, conclusions are drawn.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FOOD CONSUMPTION AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

Food consumption creates social boundaries

The role of food consumption and culinary taste in signalling social status is a classical argument in cultural sociology. It fits with Veblen's conspicuous consumption thesis (Veblen 1994) as well as with the habitus concept of Bourdieu. Bourdieu in *La Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984) gives several examples of the distinct tastes and eating and drinking practices of different social classes. Indeed, food is the area of consumption from where the original meaning of the notions of 'consumption' and 'taste' came, and food consumption serves as a basis for analogies that connect social position and cultural taste via the notion of habitus. Bourdieu argued that the consumption of different social groups is systematically different regardless of whether it is food, music or sport that is being consumed. Dissent habitus is defined by the different amounts and shares of economic and cultural capital of different social groups. An important element of habitus is the ability to make distinctions among different consumption goods (ibid.). According to this line of argument, to eat is to differentiate and discriminate, to include and exclude (Belasco–Scranton 2014). Food choices create boundaries and frames in the social environment.²

There is a strong research tradition in cultural sociology that studies the effect of Bourdieusian types of capital on consumption. The role of cultural capital is especially highlighted (Holt 1998; Prieur et al. 2008; Prieur–Savage 2011). In his most cited work, Douglas B. Holt differentiates several dimensions in which the taste of consumers with high and low cultural capital is different: among other aspects, he notes materialism versus idealism, local versus cosmopolitan tastes and communal versus individualist forms of consumer subjectivity (Holt 1998).³ Other studies have also supported the claim that consumers with high cultural capital are oriented towards international, cosmopolitan consumption (Prieur et al. 2008). Besides an international orientation, Prieur and Savage highlight participation and knowledge as characteristics of high cultural capital consumers (Prieur–Savage 2011).

Studying specifically food consumption also shows that cultural capital (when

2 The notion of culinary capital (Naccarato–LeBesco 2012), inspired by Bourdieu, also refers to the connection between taste and social status.

3 Material versus formal aesthetics, referential versus critical interpretations, materialism versus idealism, local versus cosmopolitan tastes, communal versus individualist forms of consumer subjectivity, and autotelic versus self-actualizing leisure (Holt 1998).

controlled for economic capital) affects consumption habits. High cultural capital consumers prefer healthy and exotic food (Øygaard 2000). Warde and Martens, in their study of the eating-out habits of British consumers, found that the main line of distinction was a preference for foreign/ethnic cuisine (Warde–Martens 2000). Ethnic cuisine is preferred especially by young, educated and high-income consumers (Johnston–Baumann 2009).

Omnivores, foodies and cultural capital

The concept of a homology between taste and social class proposed by Bourdieu was heavily challenged empirically by Richard Peterson's thesis of omnivorization in the 1990s (Peterson 1992; Peterson–Kern 1996). The notion of a cultural omnivore (another metaphor from food consumption) means that the consumption of high-status consumers is not exclusively 'high culture' anymore; rather, it is more varied and expands on popular culture. Low-status consumers, however, consume less variously (univormism). Though recently challenged by relevant methodological critiques (Brisson 2019), Peterson's thesis has been supported by several empirical studies (Bryson 1996; Bukodi 2010; Chan–Goldthorpe 2007; Coulangeon–Lemel 2007; Kristóf–Kmetty 2019; Lizardo–Skiles 2015; López-Sintas – Katz-Gerro 2005; Sági 2010; Vander Stichele – Laermans 2006). In the meantime, the spread of omnivorization does not mean that the function of consumption in social status signaling might disappear. The appreciation of various genres or products still implies an eligible amount of cultural capital. Moreover, the dispreferences of (almost) omnivores are also defined by legitimate culture (Warde et al. 2007). When studying the *mode* of consumption, differences between social groups are even more obvious (Atkinson 2011; Jarness 2015; Warde et al. 2007).

Omnivorism is also understood as a kind of aversion of high-status consumers to demonstrative status signalling. In qualitative studies, interviewees are increasingly reluctant to confess their preferences for legitimate cultural forms (Jarness–Friedman 2017). Rather, consumers intend to express their social and environmental commitments through their choices; therefore, they do not accept overt snobbism and one-dimensional measures anymore. The legitimacy of consumption in this new kind of discourse derives from authenticity.

This change is also apparent in discourses on food consumption (Johnston–Baumann 2009). The new characteristics of high-status food are good quality, rare, local, organic, handmade, creative and simple. The construction of authenticity in the *foodie* discourse is built on locavorism (a preference for locally

produced food), regionalism (which is a more sophisticated version of attraction to the exotic),⁴ simplicity, personal connection, historical tradition and ethnic character. The claim for authenticity allows for the exclusion of consumption forms that are preferred by low-status consumers (i.e. fast food). The essence of this strategy is that it constructs taste as a question of individual choice, which makes discrimination more acceptable as it is based on taste and not on social status or income. Nevertheless, consumers need to invest time and money to be able to differentiate between the authentic and the non-authentic. Consequently, culinary taste remains a status marker, even if the cultural omnivorism practised by foodies is an alternative strategy to overt snobbism (Johnston 2014).

Recently, Warde and his co-authors repeated their study on eating-out habits, and their results strongly supported the thesis of cultural omnivorization (Warde et al. 2019). Preferences for variety correlated with high social status. However, while consumers with high economic capital preferred expensive restaurants, high cultural capital consumers preferred unusual cuisines. Another study (Flemmen et al. 2018) found that high-status consumers combined healthy eating with the ingredients of traditional, authentic peasant food. This combination of healthy and peasant cuisine is similar to the way the same consumers have combined legitimated literature with comics or detective stories. Healthy eating has long been a legitimate norm for high-status consumers, but the reinterpretation of peasant traditions is a recent phenomenon. As the authors remark, the reassessment of locality is a logical (distinctional) response of the high social classes to the global process by which exotic and ethnic food has become accessible to a wider group of consumers (ibid.).

The eco-habitus: ethical food consumption and cultural capital

The literature about ethical consumption is growing rapidly (Andersen 2011; Elliott 2013; Grauel 2016; Schrank–Running 2018; Stamer 2018). Andersen studied the way justification regimes (Boltanski–Thévenot 2006) behind consumer choices show up in the motivations for food choices (Andersen 2011). The study concludes that choosing (or not choosing) organic products cannot be explained by any one justification regime, as motivations are always mixed. Environmentally conscious food consumption might be motivated by social values (sustainability, environment protection, animal welfare, local community, etc.) and functional values (healthiness, quality, taste, etc.) (Kushwah et al. 2019; Schrank–Running 2018). Most recently, Waldman and co-authors also showed

4 For example, a preference not for ‘Chinese’ but ‘Sechuan’ or ‘Cantonese’ cuisine.

that the motivation for food sustainability also consists of convenience and self-interest and not only the consideration of environmental outcomes (Waldman et al. 2023).

An especially interesting social factor in the motivation for sustainable consumption is the costly signalling of prosocial behaviour and status, sometimes called “going green to be seen” or the conspicuous conservation effect (Sexton–Sexton 2014). By this, consumers can signal their pro-sociality (by fighting against climate change) *and* their ability to sponsor the costs of their altruism (the price of more expensive organic products). Therefore, buying green products is also an act of costly signalling, which is confirmed by the fact that it occurs more often if the purchase is made in public and the product is expensive (Griskevicius et al. 2010). Costly signaling as a behaviour also occurs among the customers of premium organic food chain stores (Johnston 2008). Puska and co-authors also found that consumers preferred organic food when their desire for status was elicited in an experimental situation (Puska et al. 2018).

The shift towards ethical and green consumption correlates more with cultural capital (measured by educational level) than economic capital (income) (Elliott 2013). Several studies have reported that the majority of ethical consumers indeed had high cultural capital as well (Carfagna et al. 2014; Kennedy et al. 2019; Kennedy–Givens 2019). The aspiration for ethical consumption was not dependent first and foremost on income: consumers with a modest income but high cultural capital used ethical consumption as a basis for distinction to strengthen their identity and the social status they aspired to (Currid-Halkett 2017). In the case of green consumption, the omnivorous orientation of high cultural capital consumers is manifested in not simply imitating the practices of lower-status consumers but rather in creatively and “ethically” reconfiguring those practices. A quite extreme example is the case of the hipster dumpster divers in New York City who eat healthy food from the retail trash of vegan restaurants as a lifestyle choice (Cornelissen 2016).

The most obvious change in the food consumption habits of high cultural capital consumers has occurred in relation to the local/global dichotomy described by Holt (Holt 1998). The motivation for eating locally is not often connected to nationalism or patriotism, as the preference for local products generally arises rather due to their supposed authenticity and sustainability. In this case, we can say that “local” means rather a constructed locality imagined by high-status consumers (Csurgó et al. 2019).⁵ However, in the context of the

5 Gastronomy-based tourism reshapes locality: for example, to increase authenticity, the Slow Food movement excludes fast food chains from whole towns, facilitating gentrification (Nilsson et al. 2011).

COVID crisis, Onorati and d'Ovidio show the emergence of a new culinary nationalism in Italy, while health and safety remain a top priority for consumers. This constitutes an obstacle to a coherent ecological culinary ethos, considering that “universalistic” biospheric values might be opposed to locavorism (Onorati–d'Ovidio 2022).

Kennedy and her co-authors examined ethical consumption as a high-status practice. They found that high-status consumers gave priority to either aesthetic standards (‘foodies’) or moral standards (ethical consumers). Meanwhile, the highest status groups incorporate both aesthetic and moral preferences (ethical foodies) (Kennedy et al. 2019)

Similarly, Stamer examined the justification regimes behind food consumption using Bourdieu’s three types of capital as an analytical framework (Stamer 2018). According to the results, high cultural capital is associated with both aesthetic pleasure and collective well-being (the importance of ethical consumption). In the meantime, high cultural capital consumers tend to ignore price and efficiency as justifications for their food choices. Some authors even argue that an ethical orientation toward consumption is not a distinct dimension of capital anymore; rather, the ecological habitus is part of a contemporary, reconfigured cultural capital (Carfagna et al. 2014; Kennedy–Givens 2019). Nevertheless, there are big differences in the prevalence of eco-habitus in different societies. A study of Canadian consumers emphasises that low and high-status households both pursued healthy and ethical food consumption (Beagan et al. 2016). In spite of this, low-status households felt somewhat economically constrained while high-income households could cherish the values of authenticity and quality; the authors argue that in Canada, healthy and ethical food consumption is no longer a suitable marker of class distinctions. Meanwhile, in a less wealthy society, such as Mexico, low-status families do not prioritise healthiness and food safety. Instead, they would rather have more choices in their meals (Bridle-Fitzpatrick 2016)

However, this does not mean that ethical consumption is only for those with high cultural capital. Consuming local and/or healthy products, for example, is not necessarily linked to this characteristic (Kennedy–Givens 2019; Onorati–d'Ovidio 2022). It is also worth remembering that in spite of their ethical orientation, the ecological footprint of high cultural capital consumers is usually not smaller than others. Rather, their emphasis on the moral superiority of ethical consumption constructs a moral hierarchy against social groups with lower economic or cultural capital that are excluded from this kind of consumption. While high-status consumers with eco-habitus embody a sense that being green is good and also achievable, low-status consumers experience eco-powerlessness in their everyday life (Kennedy–Givens 2019).

To sum up, our literature review supports the claim that food consumption is structured by cultural capital and, similarly to cultural consumption, creates a basis for social distinction. However, although maintaining the symbolic border among the different social groups is always important, the practices producing these barriers are constantly changing. According to Bourdieu's original thesis on distinction, high cultural capital consumers tended to prefer healthy and exotic, cosmopolitan food. Later theoretical and empirical developments emphasised the spread of omnivorousness and ethical consumption as status markers that express the social and environmental commitment of consumers with high cultural capital. Therefore, in many societies, a preference for sustainable food became an integrated part of the habitus of these consumers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We would like to explore the connections between food consumption attitudes and cultural capital in the case of Hungarian consumers. In our analysis, we build on the Bourdieusian concept of cultural capital and differentiate between embodied and institutionalised cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Therefore, we aim to go beyond the most commonly used operationalisation of cultural capital, and besides educational level, we also measure embodied cultural capital by cultural consumption. In line with the concept of omnivorousness, we measure the consumption of both high culture (theatre, opera, reading books) and pop culture (as emerging cultural capital), like going to pop concerts or using social media (Savage et al. 2013). The third dimension of cultural consumption we use relates to locality: We analyse how participation in local cultural events (like local balls and festivals) appears in cultural consumption.

By analysing embodied cultural capital, we try to answer the question of whether food consumption belongs to habitus or, in other words, whether ethical food consumption attitudes and cultural consumption are systematically connected.

DATA AND METHODS

Research on the relationship between cultural capital and sustainable consumption has employed a variety of methodological approaches. Interviews and case studies (Carfagna et al. 2014; Kennedy–Givens 2019) are common, but participant observation (Cornelissen 2016) is also used. Our research fits into

the literature that uses quantitative, survey-based methods. Within this line of research, either the clustering of consumers according to their attitudes (k-mean cluster, latent class) (Kennedy et al. 2019; Waldman et al. 2023) or explaining sustainable consumption through (linear or logistic) regression models (Elliott 2013; Onorati–d’Ovidio 2022; Stamer 2018) are the main methods that are used. We use this latter method.

Our analysis is based on a survey conducted in November 2018. The sample is representative of the Hungarian adult population living in private households by gender, age, place of residence and education. For the selection of the respondents, a two-step, proportionally stratified probability sampling procedure was used. According to the research description, The primary sampling units were municipalities, while the final sampling units were the appropriate age groups of the population. Based on the number of cases in the sample frame, addresses were randomly selected. On the respondents’ label card, the gender and the age group of the person were indicated. After the completion of the data collection, multi-criteria weighting was applied so that the sample fit the real ratios of the population. The face-to-face (computer-assisted personal) interviews had 2700 respondents. The study obtained ethics approval from the ethics committee of the Centre for Social Sciences.⁶ Survey participants gave informed consent before taking part.

The research is the second wave of a longer piece of research on social integration. Among other questions, the survey collected detailed information about cultural consumption and attitudes toward food and eating. A serious limitation of our research is that several years have passed since 2018, during which time attitudes and practices may have changed. However, as there has been no similar data collection since then, we believe it is worth publishing our data analysis. The relatively large sample size allows for a detailed quantitative analysis of the interconnections between cultural consumption and attitudes toward food consumption. We compiled a set of variables to identify a latent structure which describes the attitudes toward food consumption and the main characteristics of cultural consumption. We conducted factor analysis and principal component analysis to reveal the latent structures using the SPSS v22 program. In the results section, we also discuss the details of the analysis. First, we present the main variables and the principal component analysis, which shows that there are two different attitudes toward sustainable food consumption. Second, we present the results of a factor analysis of cultural consumption. After that, we build linear regression models to explore the connection between food consumption attitudes and cultural capital.

⁶ Ethics Authorisation Number: TK-14/2021.

RESULTS

Attitudes towards food consumption

To explore attitudes towards food consumption, we asked the survey respondents to evaluate the importance of certain qualities of food. They rated on a scale of 1–5 the importance they awarded to the healthy, environmentally friendly, seasonal, exotic, and vegetarian character of food, as well as its cheapness, organic certification, Hungarian origin, lack of artificial ingredients, being a well-known brand, fast preparation time, and whether it was produced by a small-scale farmer.

Based on principal component analysis, we differentiated two attitudes toward food consumption. From this list of the 12 characteristics, four (cheap, seasonal, easy to prepare, produced by a small-scale farmer) did not fit into any of the principal components. The rest of the variables formed two principal components, which means that our variables measuring attitudes toward food consumption describe two latent attitudes.⁷

The first latent attitude consists of how important it is for the respondents that the food has organic certification, is a well-known brand, is vegetarian, and is exotic.⁸ Two of these variables (well-known brand, exotic) clearly have a status marker role. The other two (organic, vegetarian) express sustainability values. Thus, to refer to the conscious, trend sensitive and cosmopolitan consumption attitudes, we named this principal component the ‘hipster⁹ component’ of sustainable food consumption attitude (Figure 1).

In the case of the hipster attitude, ethical consumption patterns (organic label and vegetarian character) are mixed with the patterns of conspicuous consumption (well-known brand, exotic). The importance of the brand signifies the relevance of the symbolic value of food as a motivation for choice. Since the exotic nature of food is also important for people characterized by a hipster food attitude, we assume that food consumption is also a source of aesthetic pleasure for them.

The second principal component measures the importance of the following characteristics of food: healthiness, environment-friendliness, whether of Hungarian origin, and whether it contains artificial ingredients (Figure 1).¹⁰ This principal component captures a less trendy, more traditional food consumption

7 For the values of the principal components, see Table A1 in the *Appendix*.

8 The high value of the variable shows that this is important to respondents.

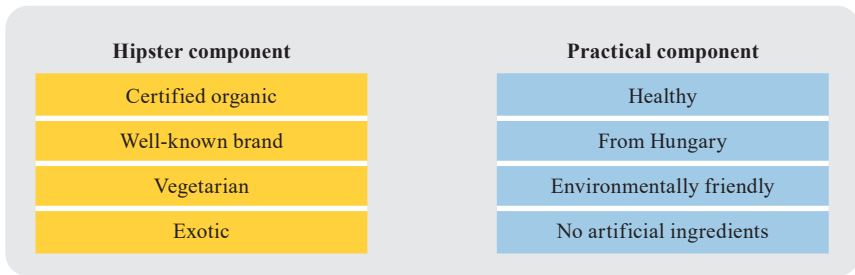
9 A *hipster* (informal) is a person who follows the latest trends and fashions in their lifestyle (Oxford Dictionary). The word is often used for someone who is pretentious or overly concerned with appearing trendy.

10 The high value of the variable shows that this is important for respondents.

pattern than the previous one, emphasizing the practical characteristics of sustainable food (healthy, without artificial ingredients) and showing a preference for Hungarian products (instead of exotic ones).

It is worth noting that environmental friendliness is an element of this food consumption pattern, which shows that aspects of sustainable consumption are connected both to the aesthetic and symbolic characteristics of food and to its practical nature (effect on health and the environment). We assume that those who can be described as associated with the practical component of sustainable food consumption attitude tend to seek less aesthetic pleasure and symbolic value in food consumption than the previous group. However, the well-being of the family and practicality are the more important motivations for their food choices.¹¹

Figure 1. *Components of sustainable food consumption attitude*¹²



Source: Authors' compilation.

Cultural capital

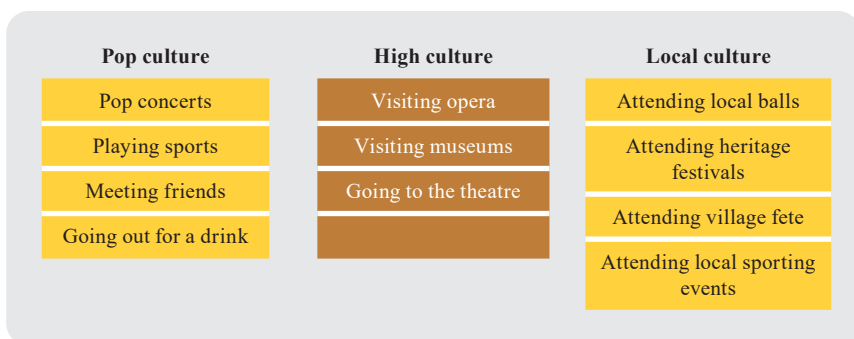
We measured embodied cultural capital by conducting a factor analysis based on the frequency of engagement in different free time activities (Savage et al. 2013, Albert et al. 2017). In line with the omnivorization hypothesis, we include not only 'high' cultural activities in our analysis. Three forms of cultural consumption are differentiated by a factor analysis of the free-time activities,

¹¹ Note that the two principal components, 'hipster' and 'practical,' are not completely disjoint. 'Certified organic' and 'environmentally friendly' are very close terms, both related to sustainability. Our assumption as to why they are separated into different principal components is that the term 'organic' is not very familiar to many Hungarian respondents. It is a relatively new term compared to "environmentally friendly" (*környezetbarát* in Hungarian).

¹² Further details on the analysis can be found in the *Appendix*, Table A1 and A2.

as listed below: the consumption of high culture, of pop culture, and of local culture. Consumers of high culture frequently visit the opera, theatre, ballet and museums. Consumers of pop culture frequently meet their friends, go out to restaurants, bars, and coffee houses, visit pop concerts and music festivals, use the internet and play sports. Consumers of local culture visit local sporting events, balls, village fetes and festivals, and traditional local events (Figure 2). Institutionalised cultural capital is measured by the level of education (primary school, vocational school, high school, tertiary education).

Figure 2. *Dimensions of cultural consumption*



Source: Authors' compilation.

Multivariate analysis of the determinants of attitudes towards food consumption

In the following, linear regression models were used to investigate the factors that influence attitudes towards food consumption. Two models each were constructed to examine both (hipster and practical) aspects of sustainable food consumption.¹³

In the first model, we examined the effect of institutionalised cultural capital (education) in addition to other socio-demographic control variables.¹⁴ In the

¹³ For the linear regression models, see Model 1 in the *Appendix*.

¹⁴ Gender (based on the self-declaration of respondents), Age, Subjective financial status (reference category: very difficult to cover their daily expenses), Level of education (reference category: primary school), Place of residence (reference category: village), Occupational status (reference category: low)

second extended model, we also added the variables measuring embodied cultural capital.

There was a significant association between practical food consumption attitudes and socio-demographic variables, such as gender, subjective financial status and age. Although the effect was not strong, the practical component of sustainable food consumption increased with age. Similarly, the proportion of people who cared about how healthy and environmentally friendly food is and whether it was produced in Hungary increased in line with their subjective financial status. The practical component of sustainable food consumption was generally more important for women than for men. There was a correlation between the occupational status group and the dependent variable only for members of the high occupational status group. Members of this group were more likely to value the practical component of food sustainability than those with low or medium occupational status. The model also showed that people living in Budapest were less likely to value the practical component of food sustainability compared to people living in other settlements. As for institutionalised cultural capital, there was no correlation between educational attainment and the practical component of sustainable food consumption attitude in general. However, those with a tertiary education were significantly more likely to value it than those with primary education.

When we extended our linear regression model with variables measuring embodied cultural capital (pop culture, high culture, and local culture consumption), the otherwise low explanatory power of the model slightly increased. However, of the three added variables, only the effects of high culture and pop culture consumption were significant. The relationship between the dependent variable and gender, age, subjective financial status, and place of living remained significant and operating in the same direction as in the previous model. However, the explanatory power of occupational status was reduced; the difference between the medium and low occupational status groups was not significant. Likewise, in the extended model, institutionalised cultural capital no longer explained the differences in the dependent variable and the effect of tertiary education completely “disappeared” with the inclusion of embodied cultural capital (Figure 3).

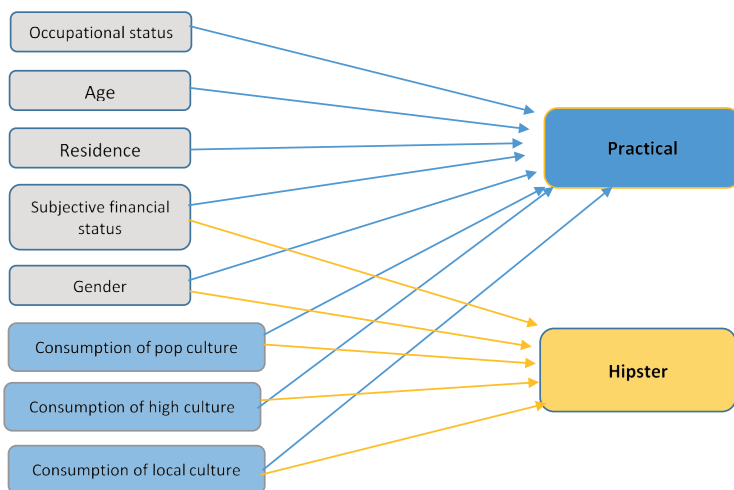
After the analysis of the practical component, we investigated which factors influence the evolution of the hipster component of sustainable food consumption.

The hipster component of sustainable food consumption attitude did not depend on age nor on occupational status-group membership. The correlation with subjective financial status showed that, in contrast to the practical component, only those who cover their daily expenses easily or very easily had significantly stronger hipster attitudes than members of the other groups. Similarly to the

practical component, the hipster component of sustainable food consumption was more prevalent among people living in Budapest than in rural areas and slightly more prevalent among women than men. In terms of institutionalised cultural capital, the hipster component of food consumption attitude increases in line with higher levels of education.

When we extended the linear regression model with variables measuring embodied cultural capital (consumption of pop, high and local culture), the otherwise low explanatory power of the model increased significantly (from 4.3% to 7.6%). The effect of subjective financial situation weakened; the correlation was significant only for those who managed to cover their expenses easily or very easily, and the effect of residence disappeared even for Budapest. In contrast, for all three variables, embodied cultural capital was significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Consumption of high culture had the strongest effect, followed by the effect of local culture consumption, but the effect of pop culture was also significant. In all cases, we find that an increase in cultural consumption increased the likelihood that the hipster component of sustainable food consumption was important to the respondent (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Multivariate explanations of the practical and hipster aspects of sustainable food consumption¹⁵*



Source: Authors' compilation.

¹⁵ Further details on the analysis can be found in the *Appendix*, Table A4.

Figure 3 summarises the results of the multivariate analysis. Both for the hipster and the practical components of sustainable food consumption, it was not the institutional but the embodied type of Bourdieusian cultural capital that mattered. The main difference between the two components of sustainable food consumption was found to be that the practical aspect was more influenced by socio-demographic control variables, although the inclusion of the cultural consumption variables also slightly increased the explanatory power of that model. On the other hand, the control variables did not show much of an association with the hipster component if we included cultural consumption. In the case of the hipster component, the extended model almost exclusively showed the effect of embodied cultural capital.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we examined the relationship between attitudes toward food and cultural capital. We looked for the latent attitudes toward food consumption and tried to investigate if they were related to the patterns of cultural consumption according to Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bourdieu 1984).

We were interested in the ethical dimension of food consumption that is characteristic of high cultural capital consumers (Carfagna et al. 2014; Griskevicius et al. 2010; Kennedy et al. 2019; Stamer 2018). In line with the literature, our results show that food choices could be justified in various ways, and ethical consumption cannot be traced back to a single motivation. (Schrank–Running 2018). In the latent structures, we found two components of food, and both of them contained ethical elements. The practical component was determined by the issue of health (food should be healthy, without artificial ingredients), and the importance of environmental friendliness and being a Hungarian product was also connected to this component. This result is somewhat similar to the results of Onorati and d'Ovidio for Italy (Onorati–d'Ovidio 2022). However, the existence of an eco-friendly gastro nationalist habitus in Hungary is yet to be proven.

In the multivariate analysis, the practical component of sustainable food consumption attitude was associated with subjective financial situation and occupational status – not surprisingly, the higher the status of the consumer, the more important these characteristics of the food were to them. However, the practical component was also associated with a number of socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, place of residence): in general, women, older people and people living in Budapest were more likely to have a practical attitude towards sustainable food consumption.

The other latent dimension of food consumption attitudes, the hipster component, also contained elements of ethical consumption. However, these elements (bio, vegetarian) were grouped with other items that were not connected to health; rather, they were motivated by aesthetic pleasure and symbolic value (exotic, well-known food brands). Therefore, this component might be connected to the status-signalling aspect of ethical consumption (Sexton–Sexton 2014). It is also worth mentioning that in the hipster component, the old and new types of distinction markers (Currid-Halkett 2017; Johnston 2008; Johnston–Baumann 2009) were mixed. Products of well-known brands were grouped together with new status markers such as organic, exotic and vegetarian. Our conclusion is that the new form of eco-habitus (Carfagna et al. 2014) is evolving but not yet coherent among Hungarian consumers.

As for our research question on habitus, in line with our assumption, both components of sustainable food consumption attitudes were related to the cultural capital of the respondents. In the case of the hipster component, the variables of cultural capital were more dominant than the practical component. Status and other socio-demographic variables, except gender, were not significantly correlated with the hipster component, but all three variables of embodied cultural capital, and most strongly, high-culture consumption, were associated with it. Embodied cultural capital even overwrote the role of educational attainment. The hipster component of sustainable food consumption is thus clearly a lifestyle element; its relationship with cultural consumption is habitual.

Nevertheless, our quantitative study could only sketch these relations between attitudes toward food and cultural consumption. There are still unexplored connections between food and cultural consumption-related habits, practices, and attitudes, which can be mapped by in-depth qualitative research.

Our explorative results suggest that sustainable consumption is spurred by different motivations in different social groups and can be linked to cultural capital in different ways. Therefore, if we aim to help Hungarian consumers become more sustainable, we need to differentiate messages about ethical consumption.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. *The hipster component of sustainable food consumption attitude*

How important is it for you that your food ...	Component (1)
... is certified organic?	0.808
... is a well-known brand?	0.764
... is vegetarian?	0.857
... is exotic?	0.837
KMO	0.755

Source: Author's own compilation.

Table A2. *The practical component of sustainable food consumption attitude*

How important is it for you that your food ...	Component (1)
... is healthy?	0.782
... is from Hungary?	0.772
... is environmentally friendly?	0.834
... does not contain artificial ingredients?	0.835
KMO	0.739

Source: Author's own compilation.

Table A3. *The dimensions of cultural consumption (maximum likelihood)*

Do you undertake the following activity?	Factor		
	Pop culture	High culture	Local culture
Going to pop concerts	<i>0.563</i>	0.356	0.196
Visiting opera/ballet	0.248	<i>0.674</i>	0.227
Visiting museums	0.391	<i>0.694</i>	0.205
Playing sport	<i>0.590</i>	0.182	0.257
Meeting friends	<i>0.567</i>	0.172	0.254
Going out for a drink (pub or café)	<i>0.572</i>	0.247	0.306
Going to the theatre	0.357	<i>0.651</i>	0.266
Attending a local ball	0.191	0.433	<i>0.579</i>
Attending a village fete	0.208	0.098	<i>0.663</i>
Attending a heritage festival	0.224	0.391	<i>0.671</i>
Attending a local sporting event	0.410	0.143	<i>0.608</i>
Attending a music festival	<i>0.600</i>	0.414	0.186
Going out to a restaurant	<i>0.584</i>	0.402	0.152
Using the internet	<i>0.613</i>	0.082	0.024

Source: Author's own compilation.

Note: Values higher than 0.5 are printed in italics.

Table A4. *Model 1. – Dependent variable: Practical component of sustainable food consumption ($R^2=0,054$)*

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.692	0.390		1.775	0.076
(Very) easy to cover their daily expenses***	-0.260	0.080	-0.086	-3.246	0.001
Relatively easy to cover their daily expenses***	-0.268	0.062	-0.127	-4.323	0.000
Relatively difficult to cover their daily expenses***	-0.240	0.057	-0.120	-4.243	0.000
Vocational school	0.006	0.064	0.003	0.097	0.923
High school	-0.012	0.063	-0.006	-0.197	0.844
Tertiary education	-0.103	0.087	-0.041	-1.194	0.233

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Small town resident	0.011	0.049	0.005	0.218	0.827
City resident*	0.119	0.060	0.046	1.976	0.048
Budapest resident***	0.387	0.060	0.153	6.407	0.000
Gender*	0.092	0.041	0.047	2.249	0.025
Age***	0.005	0.001	0.075	3.218	0.001
High occupational status*	-0.165	0.084	-0.061	-1.966	0.049
Middle occupational status	-0.092	0.053	-0.047	-1.734	0.083
Pop culture consumption***	0.092	0.030	0.075	3.088	0.002
High culture consumption**	0.065	0.027	0.056	2.446	0.015
Local culture consumption	0.036	0.024	0.031	1.532	0.126

Source: Author's own compilation.

Note: Significance levels: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

