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TARTALOM

PLENÁRIS ELŐADÁSOK	7
Költségvetési stabilitás és gazdaságpolitikai mozgástér 2022 őszén – 2022: a növekvő kockázatok éve	
KOVÁCS Árpád.....	9
Hogyan támogatják a számvevőszékek a fenntartható fejlődési célok elérését?	
PULAY Gyula.....	23
FENNTARTHATÓSÁG A GAZDASÁG FÓKUSZÁBAN	39
Bulgária: az eurozóna 21. tagja?	
FERKELT Balázs.....	41
Egy fenntartható pénzügyi rendszer, a parciális iszlám bankrendszer szabályozása Európában	
CSEH Balázs.....	54
ZÖLD PÉNZÜGYEK ÉS ZÖLD SZÁMVITEL A GYAKORLATBAN	65
ESG szemlélet az államkötvénypiacokon	
BODÓ Regina	67
A nem pénzügyi információk közzétételi standardjai bevezetésének vállalati kihívásai	
BARTÓK István János.....	82
A 4/2013-as (I.11) kormányrendelet kapcsolata az önkormányzati alrendszert érintő reformokkal	
TÓTH Balázs.....	93
A változók dinamizálásának hatása logisztikus regresszió alapuló csődelőrejelzési modellek esetében	
SZÁNTÓ Tünde Katalin	110
A pénzügyi tudatosság vizsgálata egy primer kutatás tükrében	
BARANYI Aranka – BENCSIK Márta – CSERNÁK József.....	122
A beszámolókat összehasonlíthatósága a magyar számviteli törvény függvényében	
TÓTH Rita – KOVÁCS Tamás.....	139
Zöld pénzügyi megoldások Magyarországon	
SZÉLES Zsuzsanna – SIDLOVICSNÉ TÓTH Ildikó – BARANYI Aranka	147
Audit Planning, Literature Review	
TÓTH, Gábor – SZÉLES, Zsuzsanna	161

ZÖLD GAZDASÁGFEJLESZTÉS	
– FENNTARTHATÓ MEGOLDÁSOK	169
Lean alkalmazás a szállodaiparban	
PANKOTAY Fruzsina Magda.....	171
Szelektív hulladékgyűjtés Vas megye háztartásaiban	
MÉSZÁROS Katalin – NÉMETH Nikolett.....	178
Az egyetemi szféra piaci finanszírozásának elmúlt pár éves eredményei	
CZIRAKI Gábor	194
A környezetvédelem és a fenntarthatóság megjelenése a középiskolai	
oktatásban néhány tantárgyi példafeladaton keresztül	
RESPERGER Richárd	206
Benchmarking alapú termékfejlesztés a csomagküldő szektorban	
HACKL János.....	224
A távmunka aktuális kérdései nagyvállalatok esetében	
KERESZTES Gábor – TÓTH Dorina Anikó.....	241
A rövid ellátási láncok szerepe a fenntartható városi	
élelmiszerellátásban	
BAZSÓNÉ BERTALAN Laura.....	259
A geoparkok szerepe a helyi gazdaságfejlesztésben a Novohrad-Nógrád	
UNESCO Globális Geopark példáján keresztül	
PAPPNÉ VANCÓS Judit.....	274
Edukációs tevékenység a TikTokon? – tapasztalatok egy pénzügyi	
tudatosság kampány példáján	
PIRGER Tamás – LIPTÁK Katalin – HORVÁTH Kata.....	288
How do Generation Y and Z Relate to the Practices of Companies	
Towards Sustainability? Focusing on Cafés and Catering Units	
Specializing in Non-Alcoholic Drinks in Sopron and Győr	
NYIKOS, Bendegúz Richárd – MÉSZÁROS, Katalin.....	296
FENNTARTHATÓ GAZDASÁG,	
FENNTARTHATÓ FINANSZÍROZÁS.....	311
Emelkedő energiaárak, kamatok és infláció hatása az alternatív	
energiát felhasználó projektek megtérülésére	
CZIPF Csongor	313
Hogyan szolgálja a közösségi finanszírozás a fenntarthatóságot?	
HORVÁTH András.....	335
A pénzügyi kultúra pénzleértékeléssel kapcsolatos hiedelmei az egri	
felsőoktatási hallgatók körében	
CSORBA László.....	348
A digitális jegybankpénz (CBDC) – mint a pénz új megjelenési formája	
– vizsgálata a felhasználói szempontok előtérbe helyezésével	
MIZSAK Márta – KERÉNYI Ádám.....	372

Miért döntünk a vállalati életciklusoknak megfelelő pénzügyi menedzselés mellett? – Kutatási részeredmények a magyar KKV-szektorban	
ANTAL Anita – KATITS Etelka	384
Az intellektuális tőkeelemek közzététele az éves jelentésekben – a tartalomelemzéses módszer problematikája	
KOVÁCS Zsuzsanna Ilona.....	406
A CSOK-támogatás addicionális gyermekvállalásra gyakorolt hatása és az újjépítésű ingatlanok családalapítást ösztönző hatása az ország nyugati és középső régióiban	
OBÁDOVICS Csilla – PLÖCHL Kata	418
Fenntartható aktív turizmus	
HOSCHEK Mónika – MÉSZÁROS Katalin – NÉMETH Nikoletta.....	442
A KRIPTOVALUTÁK ÉS A BLOCKCHAIN TÉRHÓDÍTÁSA.....	459
Blokklánc alapú technológiai újítások az egészségügyben	
KUCSÉBER László Zoltán – SÁGI Judit	461
Fashion Industry Projects Realized with the Use of Web3	
PAULOVICS, Ágnes	469
A sport pénzügyi irányai a kriptovaluták rendszerében	
FARAGÓ Beatrix – GÓSI Zsuzsanna – GAJZÁGÓ Gergő.....	489
A természetgazdálkodással összefüggő társadalmi konfliktusok és azok kezelésének gyakorlatai a hazai erdőgazdaságoknál	
BEDNÁRIK Éva – JÁMBORI Zsuzsanna – TAKÁTS Alexandra.....	503

How do Generation Y and Z Relate to the Practices of Companies Towards Sustainability? Focusing on Cafés and Catering Units Specializing in Non-Alcoholic Drinks in Sopron and Győr

NYIKOS, Bendegúz Richárd¹ – MÉSZÁROS, Katalin²

Abstract: The commitment to sustainability in general is primarily due to the fact that both companies and consumers increasingly recognize that most resources are finite, therefore the available ones must be used with regard to the consequences. Thoughtfully, an increasing number of small businesses have realized that their practices for sustainability at the local level are accepted by consumers and - in many cases - are highly valued.

The practices of local cafés and catering units specializing in non-alcoholic drinks in Sopron and Győr had been investigated in the research, which in many cases came to the fore due to the pressure of the pandemic. However, due to the positive attitude of consumers, they have become common habits even after the restrictions were lifted. The research focuses on the attitudes and valuation of generation Y and Z, which was surveyed through an online questionnaire.

Keywords: Sustainability, consumer behaviour, hospitality, catering

JEL Codes: M31, L83, Q56

Hogyan viszonyul az Y és Z generáció a vállalatok fenntarthatósági gyakorlatához?

A soproni és győri kávézókra és alkoholmentes italokra specializálódott vendéglátó egységek példáján keresztül

Absztrakt: A fenntarthatóság iránti elköteleződés általánosságban elsősorban annak köszönhető, hogy mind a vállalatok, mind a fogyasztók egyre inkább felismerik, hogy

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a legtöbb erőforrás véges, ezért a rendelkezésre állókat a következmények figyelembevételével kell felhasználni. Ezek figyelembevétele mellett egyre több kisvállalkozás vette észre, hogy helyi szinten a fenntarthatósági gyakorlatukat elfogadják a fogyasztók, és sok esetben nagyra értékelik.

A kutatás során Sopronban és Győrben a helyi kávézók és alkoholmentes italokra specializálódott vendéglátó egységek gyakorlata került vizsgálatra, amelyek sok esetben a járvány hatása miatt kerültek előtérbe. A fogyasztók pozitív hozzáállása miatt azonban a korlátozások feloldása után is megszokott gyakorlattá váltak. A kutatás központjában az Y és Z generációk attitűdjei és véleménye áll, melyek online kérdőív formájában kerültek felmérésre.

Kulcsszavak: Fenntarthatóság, fogyasztói magatartás, vendéglátóipar, vendéglátás

JEL-kódok: M31, L83, Q56

Introduction

A few years ago, it was enough for a given restaurant to present a unique menu full of desirable dishes, a welcoming environment and friendly service, however, today it is not only the quality of the food and the behaviour of the staff that matter to the consumers. Together with the guests, environmental awareness has also crossed the threshold of catering establishments and has become a criterion that increasingly influences the decisions of consumers, thus also the competitiveness of restaurants.

But what exactly is sustainable catering, and what does it mean in the day-to-day operational operation of restaurants? What does it mean to be a sustainable catering establishment?

Sustainable hospitality and catering include establishments that strive to minimize their ecological footprint. Such an effort is made if the raw materials are procured from domestic producers instead of multinational companies, if the emphasis is placed on seasonal ingredients, if there is a large proportion of vegan and vegetarian dishes on the menu, or if they use environmentally friendly packaging for their take-away and delivery items. It is also noticeable in international trends that sustainability has gained an important role in hospitality and catering, as it appears among the evaluation criteria of an increasing number of competitions (Lentner et al., 2017).

The practices of local cafés and catering units specializing in non-alcoholic drinks in Sopron and Győr had been investigated in the research, which in many cases came to the fore due to the pressure of the pandemic, but due to the positive attitude of consumers, have become common habits after the restrictions were lifted. Even though the analysis focuses on a specific area, the conclusions are much broader and could be linked to further analyses of social

responsibility through two major topics: sustainability through delivery and social media marketing (Szegedi et al., 2020).

Literature review

Hospitality and catering are considered as highly fashionable economic activities these days. These services have a long history dating back to thousands of years. They are dynamic, ever-changing and evolving activities, always adapting to the expectations, fashions and consumer requirements. Hospitality and catering are closely linked to tourism and is an essential part of the tourist offer. Today, we are witnessing a gastronomic revolution in which quality, local and seasonal ingredients are being given prominent roles.

World tourism has grown more than ever before in 2019 on a year-on-year basis. According to Statista, the contribution of tourism to the world economy was US\$2.9 trillion directly and US\$9.63 trillion indirectly. It was unfortunately followed by sharp decrease in 2020 (Statista, 2022).

The first cases of illnesses related to COVID-19 occurred in December 2019 in the central capital of Wuhan, China. The outbreak spread rapidly, leading most countries in March 2020 to introduce travel bans, restrictions on movement within the country and on social contacts and services involving personal contact in areas such as hospitality, catering, education and leisure activities. Hospitality, especially restaurants and other catering establishments were also significantly affected. The defence measures against the epidemic has been extended differently to hospitality worldwide. In Hungary, restaurant services have been subject to repeated restrictions and relaxations. Restaurants and cafés were first required to close at 15:00 (16 March 2020), and then were only allowed to sell takeaway and home delivery (28 March 2020). The first reopening on 18 May 2020 brought a significant increase, but the momentum was broken first by the border closure on 1 September and then by the restrictions of 11 November. Restaurants were once again restricted to takeaway and delivery only until 24 April 2021, when they were allowed to serve guests in gardens and terraces, and from 29 April, guests with a protection certificate could also eat in the restaurants' indoor dining areas. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, the sector shrank by 30% compared to 2019, to 950 billion HUF (CSO, 2021). The damage suffered is illustrated by the fact that the sector's indicators reflect 2016 and it is expected to take years to reach the performance levels of 2019. In the meantime, however, operators will have to adapt to uncertainty, changing guest demand and operating conditions.

Even though the consumption on the spot has been available for consumers for quite some time now, the takeaway and delivery options remained widely popular among consumers, which reduces the environmental burden to

an even greater extent since the removal of single-use plastic products from circulation.

The delivery system on an international basis have been revolutionised through the introduction of the wide variety of Food Delivery Applications (FDA). The concept allows even the smallest catering units to introduce delivery options in their business models through centralised platforms which connects individuals offering delivery services with the establishments. Foodpanda (formerly known as Netpincér) and Wolt has become widely available in Hungary, enabling consumers to select from a variety of businesses. The adaptation of the concept of FDA removes the requirements for businesses to employ own delivery staff and, indirectly, helps them to reduce the environmental footprint through the centralized delivery system which, in many cases, are operated by bike and moped carriers (Li et al., 2020).

In addition, in May 2019, the EU adopted a directive banning certain single-use plastics, expecting all Member States to integrate it into national law by 2021, banning the following plastic products across the EU (Seay et al., 2022):

- single-use cutlery (forks, knives, spoons and chopsticks), plates and straws;
- ear sticks, balloon sticks;
- degradable plastics through oxidation such as food holders and cups made of expanded polystyrene.

According to Probio (2021), on 3 July 2020 the Hungarian Parliament adopted a law to phase out single-use plastics, banning all single-use plastic products and packaging materials from 1 July 2021, in line with EU requirements. However, the Hungarian legislation also included a restriction on the use of plastic bags – going beyond the EU requirements. Along with the legislation, catering establishments now offer a more environmentally friendly mean of packaging which further increases the contribution of Hungarian caterers to a more sustainable business practice.

Along with the adoption of social media marketing model, business on an international basis have started reallocating their budgets from traditional media channels (Jobs et al., 2014). Traditional media channels are considered as more expensive alternatives compared to the possibilities offered by the Internet and to a higher extent, social media platforms (Odoom et al., 2017).

Social media marketing did not only allow businesses to decrease their expenses through the financially difficult periods of time, but also enables them to reach a wide variety of generations – mainly those who are comfortable with the use of the different platforms. According to Dijkstra et al., the combination of traditional channels with online display was already commonly used in 2005 by businesses in order to increase their reach. The research of van Ewijk et al. (2021) presented a more prominent decline in the effectiveness of traditional

media channels such print advertising, further emphasizing the requirement of having online advertisements.

The negative financial effects of the COVID-19 epidemic forced businesses to alter their existing marketing practices, concentrating to more cost-effective alternatives instead of the use of traditional advertising. In addition to producing less paper-based flyers and displays to reduce the environmental impact, with the changes in consumer habits, SME's – regardless of the industry itself – should put more emphasis on their social media activities as today these platforms are viewed as highly prominent and primary channels of communications, especially amongst the digitally native consumers (Chatterjee et al., 2020). According to Lányi et al. (2021), a set of social media platforms allow the companies to reach a wider range of consumers which leads to an increased competitive advantage over their competitors.

Methodology

The primary research was concluded after the governmental restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic were lifted. Therefore, customers already gained access to consuming foods and beverages on the spot. The main goal of the research is to see whether the consumption habits acquired during the pandemic still prevail. In addition to the consumer behaviour patterns, the practices of cafés and establishments specialising in non-alcoholic beverages during the pandemic had been examined, with a focus on their social media marketing activities. The changes in both consumption habits and corporate practices are still present today and even though they might be applied and followed unconsciously on both ends, they can be significantly associated with sustainability. Based on the findings of the secondary research, the following research questions had formulated for the primary research:

- RQ1:** When it comes to ordering food and beverages, do generation Y and generation Z order more frequently for takeaway or delivery compared to the pre-pandemic era?
- RQ2:** What was the most important source of information for both generations when establishments offered take-away and delivery options after shutting down?
- RQ3:** Do generation Y and Z prefer the Food Delivery Applications over the traditional ways of ordering food and beverages?

In order to examine these topics, online questionnaires were used in the primary research. The majority of the responses were collected from people from the towns of Sopron and Győr, and their agglomerations. There was a great variety regarding the ages of the respondents, however based on the sizes of the different age groups, the generations of Y (born between 1980 and 1995)

and Z (born between 1996 and 2010) were selected for further analyses. Participants in the study were divided into two categories according to their year of birth (Törőcsik, 2017).

Given the limitations of the research regarding the time horizon and the scope, it was unfortunately not possible to conclude a representative research.

Discussion of results

In the questionnaire survey 1,772 people in total participated in Sopron and Győr and were asked about their attitudes towards the services of cafés and establishments specialising in non-alcoholic beverages and their presence on social media. The respondents were divided into two generations according to their age, therefore only the opinions of Generation Y and Z were taken into account. Within the total sample size, 726 respondents represent Generation Y and 1046 respondents represent Generation Z. In Sopron, 406 people from Generation Y and 614 people from Generation Z were included in the sample size, while in Győr, 320 people from Generation Y and 432 people from Generation Z participated.

Table 1: Sample size by age and gender

Gender	Residency	Generation Y	Generation Z	<i>In total</i>
<i>Male</i>	Győr	212	280	492
	Sopron	263	404	667
	<i>In total</i>	475	684	1159
<i>Female</i>	Győr	108	152	260
	Sopron	143	210	353
	<i>In total</i>	251	362	613

Source: Own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

Cross tabulation analysis was used to examine the frequency of takeaway food and drink orders in cafés and establishments specialising in non-alcoholic beverages among respondents in Győr before and after the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic. *Figure 1* illustrates the attitudes of Generation Y and Z towards takeaway orders at two different points in time.

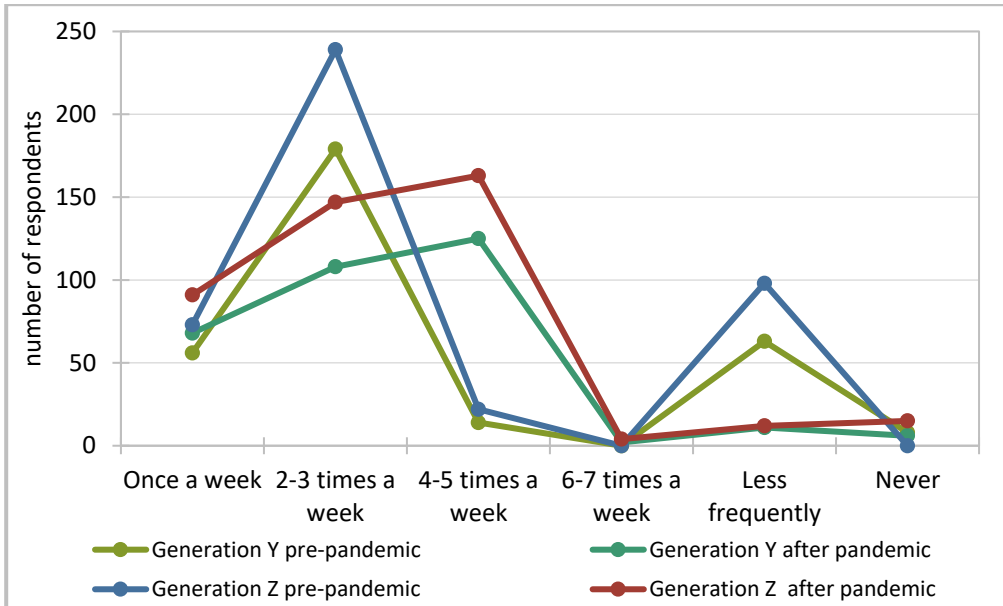


Figure 1: How often did you order food and beverage for takeaway in Győr before and after the pandemic?

Source: Own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

55.94% of Generation Y ordered takeaway food and drinks 2-3 times a week in the surveyed catering establishments before the outbreak and only 4.38% of them order 4-5 times a week. Since the coronavirus outbreak, this proportion has changed significantly, as 39.06% of Generation Y now use takeaway 4-5 times a week and the proportion of 2-3 times a week has dropped to 33.75%. The same trend can be observed for Generation Z in terms of the 2-3 visits (55.32% before the coronavirus epidemic, 34.03% since the coronavirus epidemic) and 4-5 visits (5.09% before the coronavirus epidemic, 37.73% since the coronavirus epidemic) per week for takeaway option in Győr. The number of people who used takeaway less frequently on a weekly basis for both generations has decreased significantly since the coronavirus epidemic, from 19.69% to 3.44% for Generation Y and from 22.69% to 2.78% for Generation Z.

In Sopron, purchasing with takeaway for at least once a week in the case of Generation Y and Z show a 3% increase compared to the pre-coronavirus epidemic period. The 2-3 times a week options also decreased after the coronavirus epidemic, from 57.39% to 34% for Generation Y and from 57.49% to 33.55% for Generation Z. Ordering for takeaway at least 4-5 times a week increased from 3.49% to 39.41% for Generation Y and from 4.23% to 40.88% for Generation Z since the coronavirus outbreak. The number of infrequent takeaway orders has significantly decreased compared to the period before the

coronavirus outbreak, from 18.97% to 2.96% for Generation Y and from 21.34% to 2.61% for Generation Z in Sopron (Figure 2).

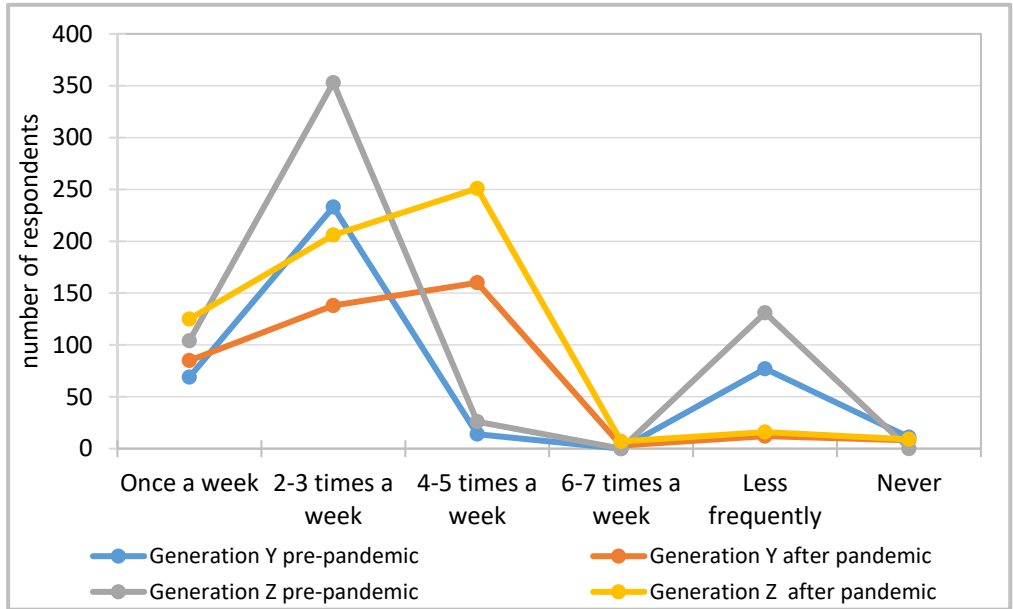


Figure 2: How often did you order food and beverage for takeaway in Sopron before and after the pandemic?

Source: Own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

The spending habits of the two generations in Sopron and Győr in cafés and establishments specialised in non-alcoholic drinks before and after the coronavirus epidemic had been also surveyed. In Győr, most of the respondents spent less than HUF 500 on average in such catering establishments (67%) before the coronavirus epidemic. 48.9% of respondents in Győr spent between HUF 1500-1999 and 47.44% between HUF 1000-1499 on average. Only 9.01% of respondents spent more than HUF 2000 in catering establishments before the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The average spending in cafés and establishments specialised in non-alcoholic drinks in Győr has increased since the outbreak of the coronavirus in the categories 1000-1499 HUF and above 2000 HUF, by 34.7% in the former and by 24.83% in the latter. At the same time, there has been a decrease in the HUF 1500-1999 (by 23.52%) and below HUF 500 (by 27.57%) categories.

In Sopron, 71.95% of respondents spent less than HUF 500, 58.87% between HUF 1500-1999, 56% between HUF 1000-1499 and 8.17% over HUF 2000 on average prior the epidemic. The spending under HUF 500 has decreased by 31.55% and spending HUF 1500-1999 has decreased by 29.52%

since the outbreak of the coronavirus. An increase was observed for the amounts spent between 1000 and 1499 HUF (34.6%) and above 2000 HUF (29.53%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Average spending before and after the pandemic in Győr and Sopron

		How much money did you spend in general before the pandemic?				How much money do you spend in general now?			
		Gen Y (number of respondents)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (number of respondents)	Gen Z (%)	Gen Y (number of respondents)	Gen Y (%)	Gen Z (number of respondents)	Gen Z (%)
0 Ft	Győr	8	2,5	15	3,47	0	0	0	0
	Sopron	11	2,71	14	2,28	4	0,99	6	0,98
-500 Ft	Győr	107	33,44	145	33,56	58	18,13	92	21,3
	Sopron	146	35,96	221	35,99	82	10,2	124	20,2
500-999 Ft	Győr	39	12,19	41	9,49	40	12,5	29	6,71
	Sopron	25	6,15	35	5,7	32	7,88	62	10,1
1000-1499 Ft	Győr	77	24,06	101	23,28	131	40,94	178	41,2
	Sopron	86	21,18	141	22,96	150	36,95	219	35,67
1500-1999 Ft	Győr	75	23,44	110	25,46	39	12,19	57	13,19
	Sopron	122	30,05	177	28,82	61	15,02	88	14,33
2000 Ft+	Győr	14	4,38	20	4,63	52	16,25	76	17,59
	Sopron	16	3,94	26	4,23	77	18,97	115	18,73

Source: Own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

The consumption habits regarding ordering food and drink for takeaways has also been surveyed in order to see whether they have changed for the generations studied since the coronavirus outbreak.

In Győr, more than half of Generation Y respondents (52.81%) did not show any change in their purchasing behaviour in relation to takeaway drinks. 39.38% of Generation Y respondents in Győr order drinks more often. 46.99% of Generation Z respondents order takeaway drinks more often, while 44.21% of Generation Z respondents have not changed their previous purchasing mechanism in Győr since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

In Sopron, most respondents of the two generations surveyed did not change their attitude towards ordering drinks for takeaway (48.77% for Generation Y and 51.30% for Generation Z). The increase in the number of drinks ordered since the coronavirus outbreak is most evident among Generation Y respondents in Győr.

Ordering takeaway food is more common in both generations in Sopron and Győr since the coronavirus epidemic than before. In Győr, 59.7% of Generation Y and 60.38% of Generation Z, in Sopron 58.62% of Generation Y and 59.29% of Generation Z order food for takeaway from the surveyed establishments more often and clearly more frequently than before. However, it should also be noted that more than one third of respondents in both cities and in both generations have not changed their takeaway food ordering habits. The increase in the number of takeaway meals since the coronavirus outbreak is most evident in Generation Z surveyed in Győr (*Figure 3*).

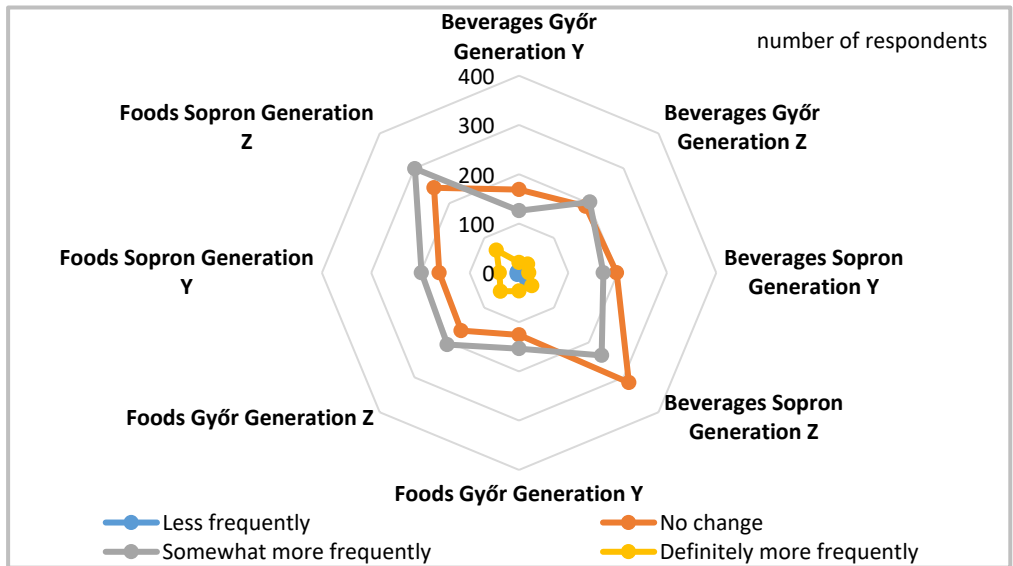


Figure 3: How has the frequency of ordering foods and beverages for takeaway changed since the outbreak of the pandemic?

Source: own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

Respondents were also asked in the questionnaire about their sources of information about the availability of takeaway and order options after the coronavirus restrictions were introduced. Participants had the possibility to choose more than one option. In both Sopron and Győr, most people of both age groups obtained their information from advertisements on social media (*Figure 4*).

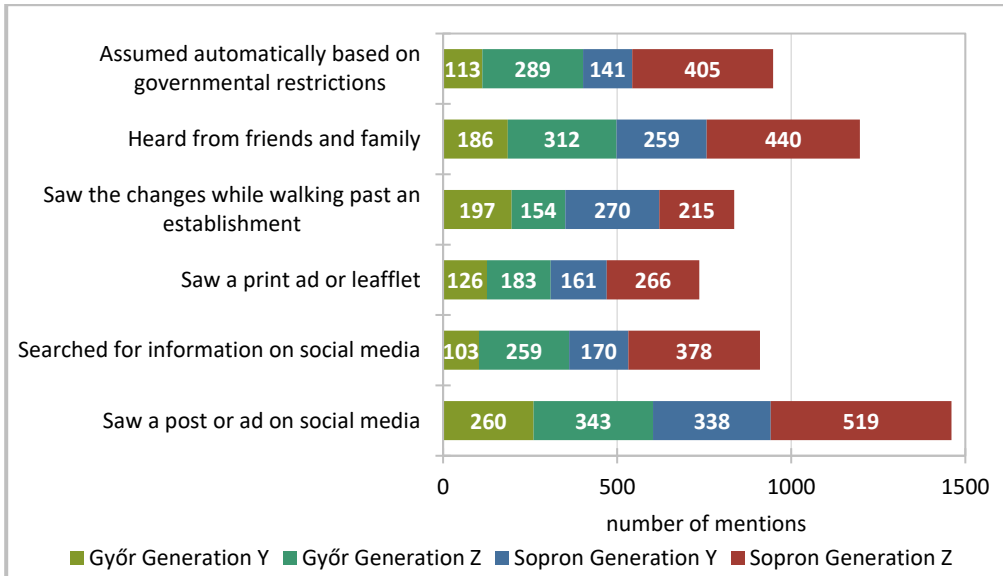


Figure 4: Main source of information about changes in service during the pandemic

Source: Own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

The main reasons for ordering for takeaway and delivery by age group had also been examined. Overall, speed, convenience, safety and reliability are the important factors to respondents when it comes to not consuming on the spot at the surveyed establishments. Respondents in Generation Y in Győr prefer speed, convenience and safety, while Generation Z prefers speed, convenience and reliability. In Sopron, in case of Generation Y comfort, safety and speed were the most important factors, while Generation Z emphasised comfort, speed and reliability.

Respondents use online food ordering platforms for food and drink delivery very frequently. In Győr, 82.19% of Generation Y, 81.71% of Generation Z, in Sopron 83.74% of Generation Y and 85.99% of Generation Z always use the applications called Foodpanda (formerly known as Netpincér) and Wolt for home delivery. In Győr 26.09% of respondents, of which 13.13% are Generation Y and 12.96% Generation Z and in Sopron 27.56% of respondents, of which 14.04% are Generation Y and 13.52% Generation Z, would use food delivery applications more often than ordering through phone calls.

The social media consumption habits of the two generations has also been. Overall, over 60% of both age groups in both Győr and Sopron follow catering establishments on both Facebook and Instagram platforms.

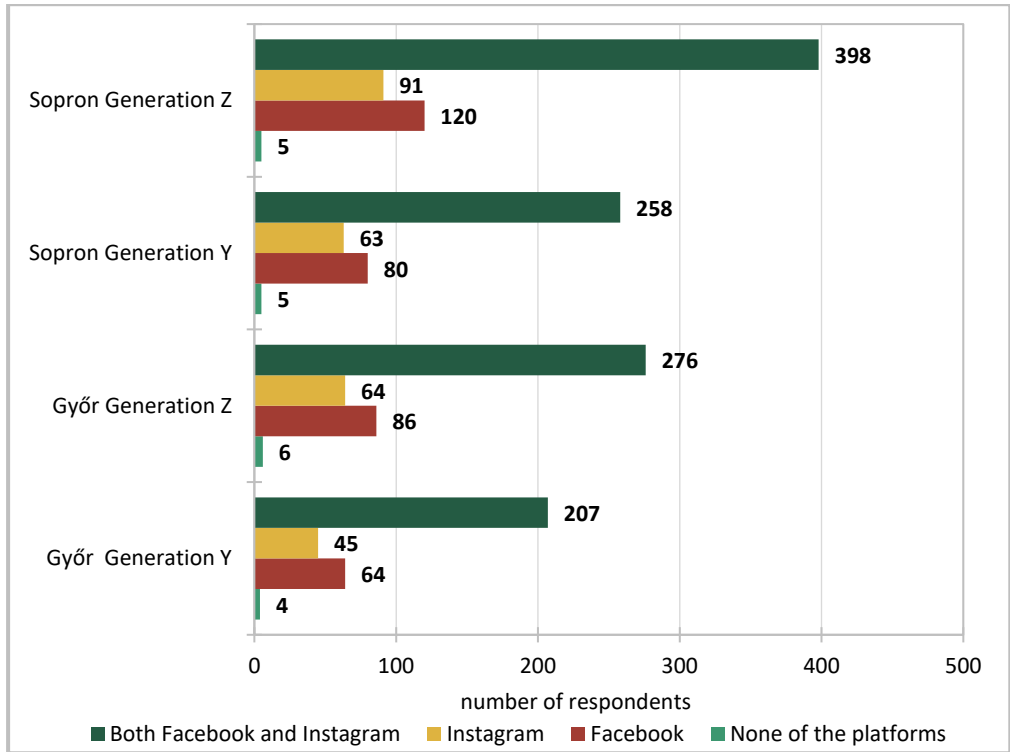


Figure 5: On which social media platforms do you follow local in cafés and establishments specialised in non-alcoholic drinks?

Source: own editing based on the results of the questionnaire survey

In the case of local catering businesses it is important to know which social media platforms they can use to reach different generations. Members of Generation Y use Facebook as the most common social media platform (53.2% in Sopron, 53.75% in Győr), while members of Generation Z use Instagram (57.33% in Sopron, 38.75% in Győr). However, it should also be highlighted that 38.75% of respondents in Győr and 38.92% in Sopron from Generation Y also use Instagram as a social media platform. Facebook is less used by Generation Z, with 17.75% of respondents in Sopron and 19.44% in Győr indicating this social networking site. TikTok is more popular among Generation Z (15.15% in Sopron, 16.44% in Győr), Generation Y is less accessible via the TikTok social media platform, with 4% of respondents in Sopron and Győr using it. The Snapchat platform is also preferred by Generation Z, with 9.77% in Sopron and 6.02% in Győr, and 3% of Generation Y.

Conclusion

The gastronomic transformation and changes in food culture over the past decades have had significant impacts on tourism. The emergence of new trends, the rise of healthy lifestyles, the growing sophistication, the strengthening of national cuisine and the stable market position of standardised franchise chains are proof of the importance of this sector. Gastronomic festivals and programmes enrich the tourism offer, present the culture of the host community to the guests in a light-hearted way, strengthen the local community and generate income. One of the mainstays of rural tourism is the production of food products on the farm, which tourists can participate in making and which the farmer can sell to supplement the income of the local community (Fehér et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, catering establishments are considered as relatively dominant polluters in case of avoiding to operate in a sustainable way and they can place a very high burden on the environment. The activities should be considered and treated as a whole, from the production of raw materials up until the serving of the consumers. This means that the responsibility of restaurants does not start with the way in which the raw materials are processed, but rather, in the case of an operational unit, with a careful examination of the source of supply. However, when setting up a new unit, the principles of sustainability can be applied from the outset in the choice of the location of the restaurant, the choice of materials used for construction, the design of the energy consumption of the building and the ongoing environmental maintenance. There are, of course, specific elements of operation which, if highlighted, will help restaurants to strategically transform their business and manage it sustainably over the long term. This is also perfectly applicable to hotel catering units such as restaurants, bars or various events (Ham et al., 2011).

Based on the secondary research and the results of the questionnaire it can be stated that sustainability can be achieved through commonly used practices. According to the customer preferences discovered through the primary research, consumers support all initiatives. The COVID-19 epidemic had a positive impact on the widespread of Food Delivery Applications along with the increased rate of orders with takeaway and delivery options, which also prevailed dominant after the restrictions were lifted by the government. Customers do not only choose these options over consumption on the spot, but also spend marginally more on a weekly basis on foods and beverages when it comes to ordering with takeaway or delivery.

In terms of communication and marketing activities, social media proved to me a more cost-effective alternative compared to traditional channels. In addition to decreasing the expenses of the establishments and avoiding print media in order to apply a more sustainable marketing communication practice,

social media platforms has become the main information source for generation Y and generation Z during the pandemic and is still considered as the most effective way in reaching out for them.

Even though generation Z is a heavy TikTok user in general, none of the participants followed any establishments at the time when the research was concluded. They could be explained by the fact that at that point of time none of the researched establishments had an account on that particular platform. Based on the results of both the secondary and primary research it can be stated that marketing communication today requires a multi-platform strategy in order to successfully reach all generations – ranging from the youngest to the oldest potential customers.

Ultimately, the changes associated with the outbreak of the pandemic in both marketing communication practices of establishments and consumer habits of generation Y and Z are still present today. Even though they might be applied and followed unconsciously on both ends in Győr and Sopron, they can be highly associated with sustainability.

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