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# Consumer awareness of functional foods in Hungary

*Zoltán, Szakály; Orsolya, Szigeti; Viktória, Szente*  
University of Kaposvár, Faculty of Economic Sciences,  
Department of Marketing and Trade

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# Introduction

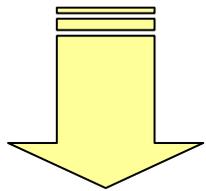
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- Over the past decades the **so-called civilization diseases** have spread very fast in the world.
- Researches soon revealed that it is **the changed lifestyle of people** that is responsible for the spread of chronic illnesses.
- Several factors lie in the background of these findings: environmental pollution, less exercise, while **nutritional habits have been unchanged** for hundreds of years.
- The outlined make the **food industry face new challenges**.
- It is forced to **develop new foodstuffs**, which due to their health protective effects, slow down the spread of chronic illnesses that hit mankind, and at the same time increase the time people are free from chronic diseases.
- These types of foods are called **functional foods**.

# The aim of the research

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Meeting the consumer  
knowledge and  
attitudes towards  
functional foods



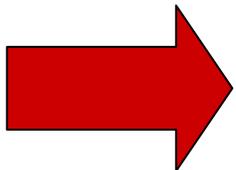
**Marketing strategy**



# Materials and methods

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- Representative questioning by questionnaires involving 1200 respondents from 7 regions
- The sample is representative for gender, age, education, settlement type and region
- Random sampling (random walking method)
- Face-to-face interview at the respondents' places
- Mathematical-statistical evaluation (SPSS 16.0 )



**Quantitative market research**



# Consumption frequency of functional foods

Types of products	Share of daily consumers, %
Fortified with minerals	41.5
Probiotic products	26.9
Fortified with vitamins	19.7
Low fat products	18.6
Low sugar products	16.2
High fiber products	15.1
Dietary supplements	12.2
E-number free products	11.2
Organic products	5.6
Lactose free products	5.6

- Consumption frequency of functional foods is low in almost every category.
- The share of daily consumption is relatively high in case of foods containing calcium and in case of probiotic products.
- Consumption frequency is especially low in case of lactose free dairy products, dietary supplements and organic products.
- Among the segments women, young people and those with higher education and living in the capital consume functional foods more frequently.

**WHY is consumption so low?**

# Consumer knowledge on various components of functional foods

Food component	Share of those who	
	know	do not know
	the component, %	
Vitamins	89.7	10.3
Dietary fibres	85.1	14.9
Minerals	82.0	18.0
Beta-carotene	58.9	41.1
Antioxidants	50.3	49.7
Omega-3	49.4	50.6
Probiotics	20.3	79.8
Sterols	15.3	84.7
Flavonoids	14.7	85.3

- The results reflect that the consumers do not have adequate information on most food components.
- Vitamins, dietary fibres and minerals are the only exceptions.
- The ratio of interpretation was around the average in case of beta-carotene, antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids.
- Only 20 per cent of the respondents or fewer of them have information on the rest of the components.

# Perceived risk of foods and food ingredients according to consumers

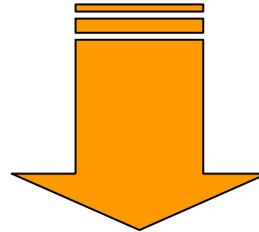
Category	Very harmful, %
E-number	60.8
Cholesterol	54.3
Preservatives	53.6
High sodium content	49.3
High sugar content	46.4
Colorants	42.9
Artificial sweetener	37.5
Margarine consumption	14.1
Pork consumption	13.2
Egg consumption	13.0
Butter consumption	9.6

- According to consumers **additives and cholesterol** are the most harmful ingredients.
- Next in line are **high salt and sugar content** foodstuffs.
- According to respondents **colorants and artificial sweeteners** also do harm.
- During the past years **egg** has regained its **positive image**, consumers do not consider it as harmful as they used to a few years ago.
- **Margarines** are considered **more harmful** than butters by respondents.

Low knowledge level



Anomalies of consumers' worries



What effect do they have on the judgement of functional foods?



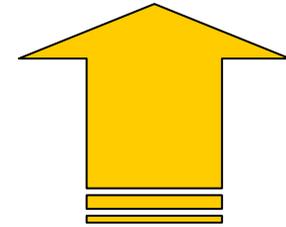
# The survey reveals that...

...only 38% of the consumers believe in the health protective effects of functional foods...

Understanding is a key issue...

## Natural functionality

E-number  
panic



E-number  
panic

...compared to organic products where this ratio is 56%.



# It is not the same what we say...

The product contains *probiotics*.



17.2%

Only component

The product helps *to strengthen the body's natural defense system* because it contains probiotics.



43.0%

Component + benefit

The product helps *to strengthen the body's natural defense system*.



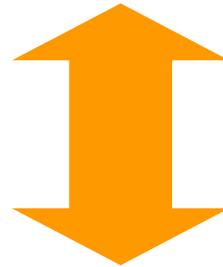
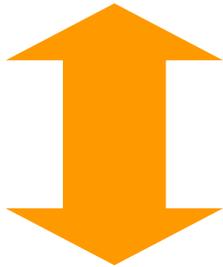
63.6%

Only benefit

# Marketing vs. Science: What shall the industry do? - "KISS RULE"

Keep It Soft and Sentimental

**Marketing**  
(Benefit, trust)



Keep It Serious and Scientific

**Science**  
(Component, knowledge)

**Scientific reasoning should be made understandable for consumers.**

# Conclusions

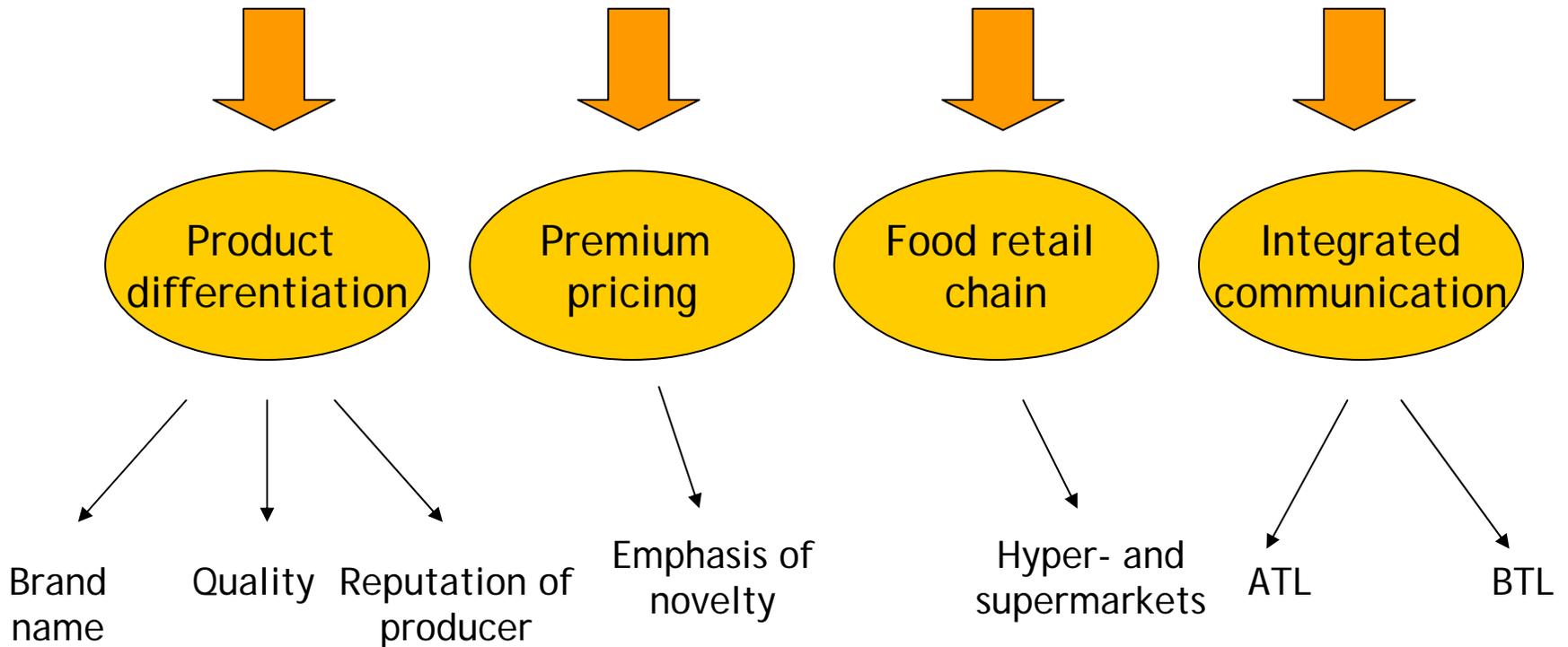
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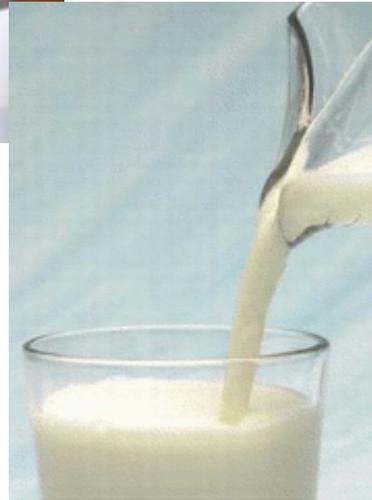
- Hungarian consumers are in the first phase of forming their attitudes.
- They have difficulties in interpreting the different components, many of them have no knowledge about the basic notions.
- Despite this the number of consumers interested in functional foods is increasing, but they do not know how to do something for it.
- Claims referring to nutrient contents and health may help a lot, they will orient the consumers.
- The consumers will use the obtained information, they will act consciously and will look for functional foods in their shopping decision.

**Well informed and conscious consumer**

# Marketing strategy

Young women with higher education and living in bigger towns





**Thank you for your kind attention!**