

THE ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF HUNGARICUMS ON NATIONAL IMAGE AND ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

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Keywords

Hungaricum, protected origin, national and international analyses, higher education

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the past years there have been many investigations aiming to analyse the timely issue of consumer behaviour related to Hungaricums, but a great extent of these have dealt only with the ones belonging to the *agricultural- and food economy*. Hungaricums play an important role in strengthening the Hungarian national identity, in creating an attractive country-image and also in tying closer the nation together. The European Union have created a unified regulation system for the *designated protection of national origin*, by which it aims to keep the diversity of food. During the current research several segments of the Hungarian higher education was inquired about the image of Hungaricums. We concluded that, compared to Hungarian students, foreign students do not know the products/values belonging to the Collection of Hungaricums as well. The investigation proves that a more targeted national marketing and the increased appearance of the topic in daily life is needed. Also, it is important to mention that the Hungarian economy nowadays is in a difficult situation, since *the basic functions of the countryside have been weakened*. Among others, these problems may be solved by preserving traditions. The importance of rural traditions has decreased, therefore the role of initiatives aiming to improve community-organisation and individual responsibility, such as the Collection of Hungaricums and the Hungarian Repository of Values, is vital.

INTRODUCTION

Hungaricums have an important role in strengthening the Hungarian national consciousness, because these agriculture-, food-, healthcare-, industrial- and technical products, furthermore, architecture-, tourism/catering- and sport-related cultural heritages, areas, traditions, which every Hungarian people can be proud of and they create strong

bounds between the people. Usually they are famous in foreign countries as well – to some extent –, similarly how people know about foreign specialties in Hungary (such as the Spanish bull-fights, or the Italian pasta and pizza).

The research topic is very timely, since many research attempts have dealt with the analysis of related to consumer habits and behaviour regarding to Hungaricums in the past few years, but the majority of these were directed towards mostly the national values of agricultural- and food-economy, and were based on the opinion of the population of a low number of regions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There have been already several academics, who have dealt with international systems of protected designations of origin. Many of them compared the administration of the legal background of Hungaricums (as products of designated protection) to the legal administration of other nations, but this comparison is not necessarily appropriate, since the two categories are not identical. Regarding to this issue the current institutional background of the EU member states concerning designated protection has been reviewed.

Hungaricums are not Hungarian specialties; most nations collect elements belonging to their identity, which they register as *patrioticums*. Such examples are the Polonicums, Germanicums, Italicums, Frankofonicums and Anglicums (TÓZSA-ZÁTORI, 2013), however, we only partly agree with the abovementioned definition. It is true that every nations have their patrioticums, the legal regulations of their protected origins focus mostly on the agricultural- and food economic products and values. Not many countries possess similar legal regulations similar to the one regarding to Hungaricums in terms of complexity and range. The French and Spanish protected origin regulations have to longest traditions so far in the European Union, and Italy has a similar legal background as well. The named countries are the pioneers of creating such laws, which do not only aim to indicate the origin and high quality, but they also determine the identity of the nations mentioned.

By these national designated origin protection regulations has come the unified regulation of protected origin of the European Union to be, which, according to TÖRÖK (2013), we introduce. It is a priority for the European Union to keep the diversity of food, which policy was strengthened in 1992 by two resolutions. These contained basically the legal regulation of the protected origin of agricultural- and food industry products, which has three vital certification systems:

- *Protected Geographical Indications (PGI)*
For this certificate the product needs to be produced *entirely* in the indicated geographical area. This is the strictest category.
- *Protected Designation of Origin (POD)*
It is required in this category that *at least one* step of the production of the product must be carried out in the designated geographical area. This category is less strict than the previous one.
- *Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG)*
Compared to the previous two categories this one is much more liberal, which regulates only the ingredients or the production circumstances of products, however, it does not require the product to belong to one particular geographical area. In this case only the method of production is connected to an area.

The origin protection regulations in the member states (and in the EU as a whole) concern predominantly agricultural- and foodstuffs. The Hungarian one, on the other hand, created a much more expanded category. But it is similar in the agricultural- approach to some extent: Hungaricums are also mostly agricultural and food products and services (TÖRÖK, 2013).

When buying a Hungaricum, the consumers do not only acquire a product, which they can get anywhere, but also tastes, smells and tradition (NÓTÁRI et al., 2009).

The Hungarian economy nowadays is in a difficult situation, since the basic functions of the countryside have been weakened. Among others, these problems may be solved by preserving traditions (KÁPOSZTA, 2014; KÁPOSZTA et al., 2014). The importance of rural traditions has decreased, therefore the role of initiatives aiming to improve community-organisation and individual responsibility, such as the Collection of Hungaricums (with 45 elements) and the Hungarian Repository of Values (with 115 items), is vital.

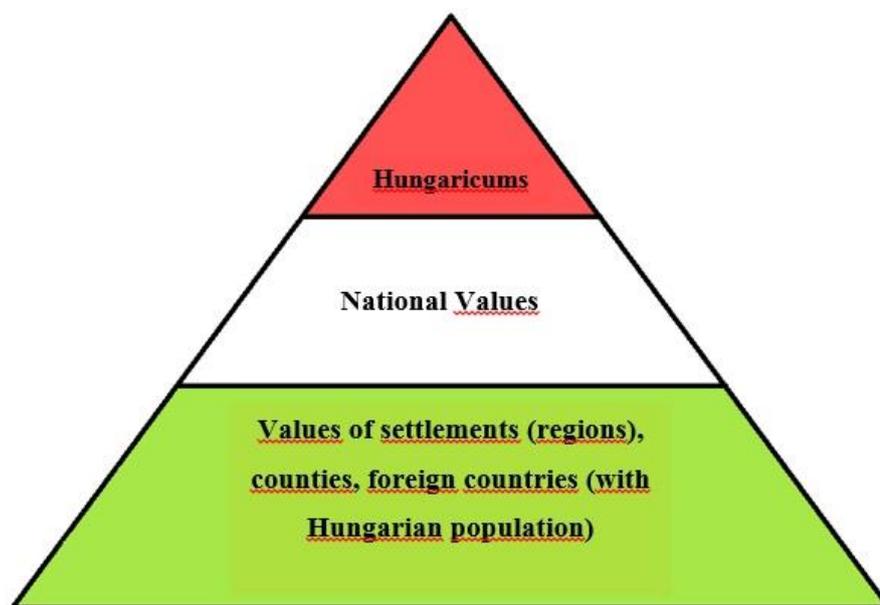
The introduction of Hungaricums

All nations possess a unique national identity. Certain products and traditions have key role in identifying their unique characteristics. Most nations put a lot of efforts to find these differentiating characteristics. The group of these elements in Hungary is called Hungaricums (BAGOSSY, 1996; VILLANYI et al., 2000).

Hungaricums can be defined by the following lines: a value worthy of distinction and highlighting, which represents the high performance of the Hungarian people thanks to its

typically Hungarian attribute, uniqueness, specialty and quality which are considered the work and outstanding value of the Hungarian people both within Hungary and abroad, or which are natural values under protection, or which are national products of a superior standard, or which are classified as Hungaricums by the Committee for Hungaricums as a result of the individual assessment conducted in accordance with the provisions set forth in the legislation issued for the enforcement of this law, or which are considered as Hungaricums by virtue of this law (RITTER, 2013). By law, the identification and protection of national values is carried out in a multiple-level (and bottom-up) system called the ‘Pyramid of Hungarian National Values’, indicated on Figure 1.

Figure 1: Pyramid of Hungarian National Values



Source: Own editing based on Tózsá I. – Zátori A., 2014.

OBJECTIVES

During the research this monography was based on two hypotheses were formulated:

H1: The borderline between the official Hungaricum concept and the unofficial one (from before the act XXX of 2012) is very blurry.

H2: The gastro-Hungaricum products belonging to the scope of the Committee of Agricultural- and Food Economy will appear as more popular items in the answers than the rest of the product types.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

At preparation stage of the research our primary task was to review the national and international literature – to establish the theoretical basis of the research – which was followed by the construction of the database. During the literature review secondary data were analysed as well, for which we conducted document analysis. Since in 2015 we could not access the full database regarding to Hungaricums, our research contains only primary data, which was collected via questionnaires. The final result was 300 questionnaires from both Hungarian and foreign students. The subject of our research: The investigation of the knowledge about Hungaricums among domestic and foreign students studying in Hungary. To gain representative results, we determined two main goals for the investigation:

- **Spatial representativity:**

During the selection of regions for the study we intended to investigate all the segments of the Hungarian higher education. Therefore, we chose 6 significant universities to carry out our surveys (Figure 2.). In the case of two universities from the listed ones we conducted data collection on more campuses.

Figure 2: The regions selected for investigation



Source: Own editing based on Horváth Gy - Fonyódi V. (2008)

- **Representativity according to age structure:**

Judging by the investigated age structure it looks like that the surveyed sample is not perfectly representative, because university students were targeted as responders. Since the

survey was carried out in 2014, the youngest age group was the one with students born in 1996. The majority of the sample consisted of students studying for 5-6 years (bachelor+master courses; 1990-1996). The students of ERASMUS programs, postgraduate and doctoral programs were born earlier, but it is not relevant in regard to the sample. We can conclude that the main target group of the investigation were the university students; therefore we can consider the study representative. We would also like to mention that the investigated sample (the age group between 18-30 years) belongs to the most important group according to how much potential they mean as a market segment and how much advertisements target them with other types of products as well.

- **Document analysis:**

To lay down the basis of our research we carried out an analytic research strategy: the surveys followed document analysis, during which we reviewed those domestic and international sources, documents and experience, which are strongly related to the Hungaricums and to the regulation of national values. During the research we considered as documents every material from the near-past, which was not created for the purpose of the research, but from which we could gain important information for our investigation. Our most important note is that the number of documents dealing with the topic of Hungaricum from before the year 2012 is very low. The reason behind this will be explained later in this study.

- **Questionnaires:**

The survey of our research was partly for comparing. As a first step we evaluated the results from the Hungarian responders, and then we investigated the results of the questionnaires from the foreign students. After that we tried to compare the two groups in regard to the consumption habits. We found out that which products/services/values are the common points regarding to the two samples, and that which values are highlighted, and which ones should be promoted, emphasized more. Also, we will present what Hungarians think about Hungaricums they consider internationally famous, and what is reality.

We surveyed 300 Hungarian and 300 foreign students. The basic thesis of the literature is that the larger the sample is, the more accurate the results are. That is why we intended to reach hundreds of respondents in both cases. We carried out the survey in the abovementioned six institutions of higher education. In every university we surveyed 50 Hungarian and 50 foreign students.

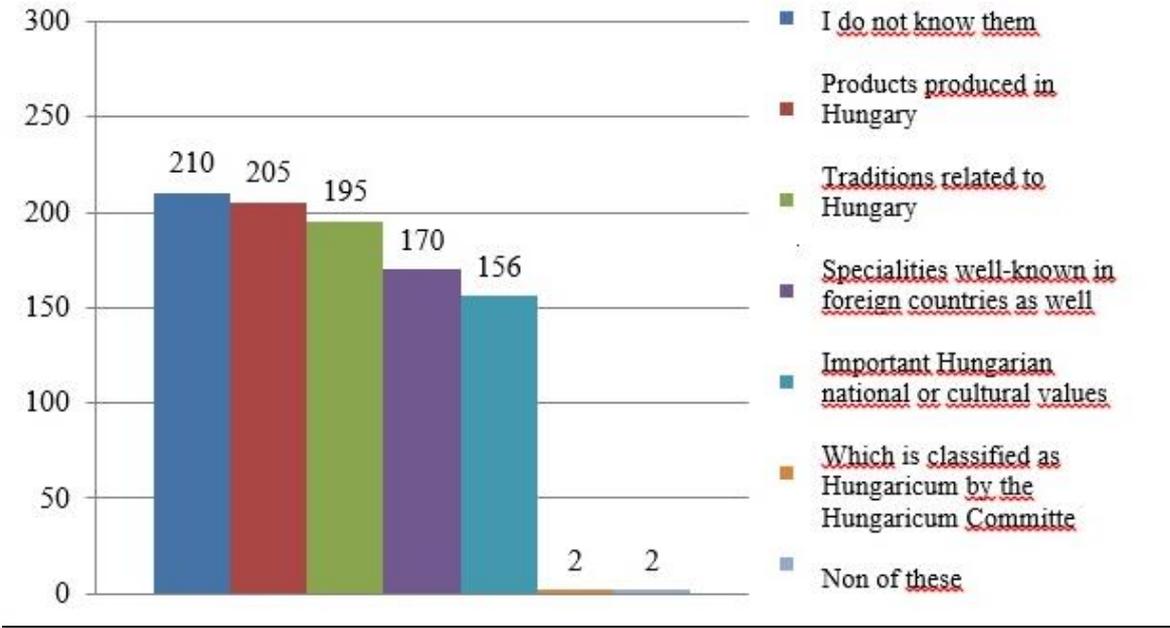
The results of the document analysis and the surveyes, from which in a later part we draw our conclusion and formulate our recommendations, will be presented in the following section of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to the lenth limitations of this study, only some of the most intriguing parts of the complex research results will be presented.

Figure 3 shows the number of occurance of certain answers among Hungarian students. Multiple answers could be marked for the question. The majority of Hungarian youth thinks that only the natural and cultural values found in Hungary, and the country’s traditions (all of which are known in foreign countries) can be considered Hungaricums.

Figure 3: The distribution of Hungarian students’ votes about what they think Hungaricums are

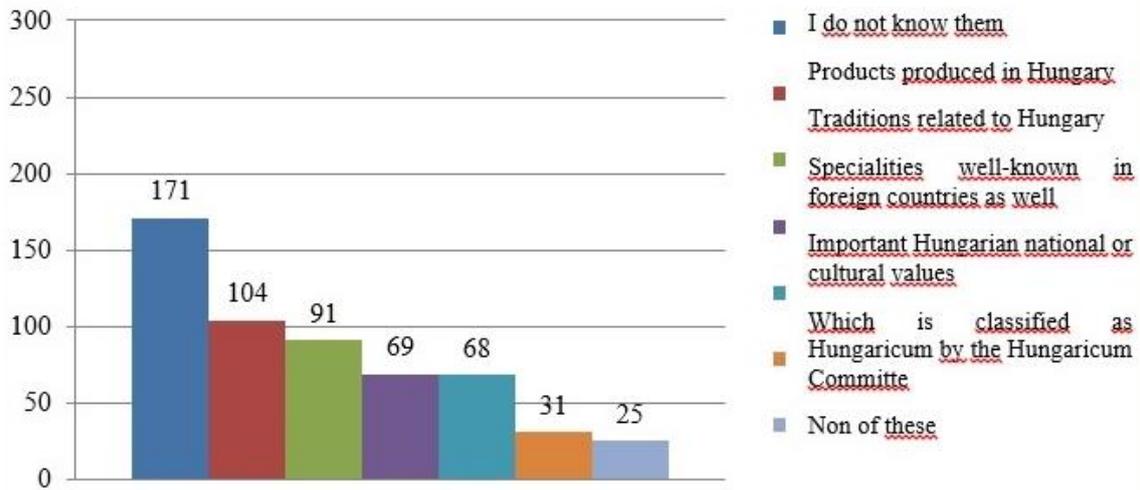


Source: Own editing based on questionnaires, 2014.

The same questions were asked from the foreign students (Figure 4). The answers indicate that the majority of them do not know the Hungaricums at all; therefore they are not able to decide which products belong to this category and which do not. Based on the answers we believe that Hungarians considered mostly natural and cultural values important, but foreigners do not know these elements as much, so they consider primarily those products as Hungaricums which are closely related to the country. Similarly to the case of the Hungarian

sample, more answers could be marked to for one question. The students were asked about their knowledge about Hungaricums.

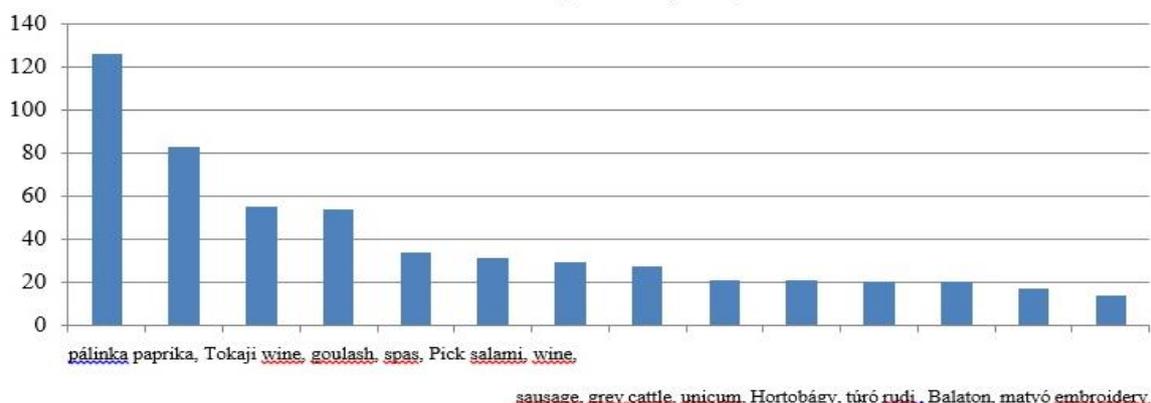
Figure 4: The distribution of foreign students' votes about what they think Hungaricums are



Source: Own editing based on questionnaires, 2014.

One of the elements of the questionnaire was: „Please name three products/services/values, which first occurs to you when you think about Hungary!„. Out of the 300 questionnaires 176 different answers were given in the case of Hungarian students. Figure 5 shows the 14 most popular products/services/values. It should be noted that 14 from these were foodstuffs or food ingredients. It is definitely worth mentioning, that 42% of the responders gave a vote to pálinka as one of the three products/services/values which they relate to Hungary.

Figure 5: The 14 most commonly occurring product/service/value among the Hungarian responders (votes)



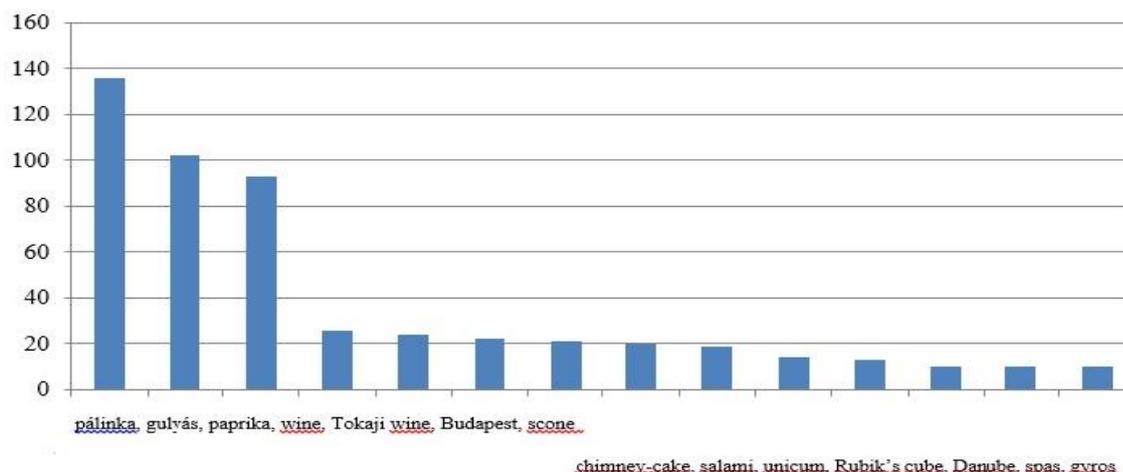
Source: Own editing based on questionnaires, 2014.

The most significant part of the sample was a younger age group, which have typical habits of alcohol consumption “for fun”, therefore the first place of the votes is not unrealistic at all. However, the fact that it had 51% more votes than the paprika on the second position indicates its dominant role even more. Paprika, which can either be paprika or pepper, with 83 votes also gets 50% more votes than the third element. The Tokaji wine and goulash received 55 and 54 votes, which was enough for these third and fourth positions.

After the evaluation of the Hungarian questionnaires we started to analyse the results from the foreign students. Similarly to the results of the previous sample, the answers were manifold this time, too. In the case of English language questionnaire 122 different answers were given to this particular question. Figure 7 indicated the 14 most commonly occurring products/services/values.

Most answers marked an element belonging to the Committee of Agriculture and Food Economics (foodstuffs or ingredients). Also similarly to the Hungarian survey results, the first place was taken by pálinka; 45.3% of responders (136 students) mentioned it among the three things occurring to them when they think about Hungary. The second place was taken by goulash (102 votes, 34% occurrence rate), the only other member of the elements with more than 100 votes. Compared to the results from the survey of Hungarian students, here the gulyás received enough votes to be the second, not only the fourth.

Figure 7: The 14 most commonly occurring product/service/value among the foreign responders (votes)



Source: Own editing based on questionnaires, 2014.

Paprika and pepper received the third place, since 31% of the responders marked it as a commonly occurring element when mentioning Hungary. Based on the 93 votes gained,

goulash is not significantly beaten by pálinka considering their international fame. The fourth and fifth elements are strongly related to each other, since wine and Tokaji wine received 26 and 24 votes. It is also clear that there is a significant difference between the third and fourth position. The first non-foodstuff product/service/value reached the sixth position: Budapest, the capital city of Hungary gained 22 votes from the foreign students. Two specialities of the national cuisine gained the seventh and the eighth places: lángos (deep fried flat bread made of dough with flour, yeast, salt and water) gained 21 votes, while kürtőskalács (chimney cake) gained 20 votes. The foodstuffs popular among foreign students are not elements of the Collection of Hungaricums, and we can only find the kürtőskalács (chimney cake) in the Hungarian Repository of Values since the February of 2015.

The world famous Rubik's cube, which is the invention of Ernő Rubik, appears on the eleventh position. Interestingly, the Rubik's cube is not a member of the Collection of Hungaricums, neither of the Hungarian Repository of Values.

The next three positions were taken by the River Danube, the spas and the gyros, all of them having 10 votes. It was very intriguing to find gyros – an originally Greek food – at the end of the list. Our explanation is that fast food restaurants, such as gyros places are nowadays very popular among the youth (as well).

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Compared to Hungarian students, foreign students do not know the products/values belonging to the Collection of Hungaricums as well. However, we can conclude that Hungarian students do not know Hungaricums well either; they usually know the listed elements and they also know the expression “Hungaricum”, but they cannot connect them. The reason behind this is, in our opinion, that until 2012 Hungaricums did not have proper legal background, nor marketing activity. Foreign students do not know these elements, despite the fact that they could name some other items – such as Túró Rudi, lángos, kürtőskalács – as things occurring to them when they think about Hungary. We recommend the more targeted marketing activity regarding to Hungaricums, for students and for other segments of the population as well.

We also suggest adding the commonly mentioned gastronomic values foodstuffs by the foreign students to the Hungarian Repository of Values.

About our first hypothesis, it was found in our research that the Hungarian students do not know exactly which products/services/values are Hungaricums, and which are not.

Furthermore, they marked many products as Hungaricums, which only belong to the Hungarian Repository of Values. Most Hungarian students do not know exactly that what are the criteria for products/services/values to become Hungaricums, so usually they chose based on their intuition when categorising the items. Therefore, we recommend emphasising the role of systems aiming to promote national values among Hungarian and foreign students as well, in higher education and other levels too. By gaining information, the national identity of Hungarian students and by learning more about this topic they can also give more information to their foreign counterparts. It would also be advised to ask experts from the Hungaricum Committees to take part in this process by holding presentations, giving information to the students and strengthening the ties between the youth and professionals in this field.

About our second hypothesis we concluded that the popularity of products belonging to the Committee of Agricultural- and Food Economy is most likely based on the fact that they are not unique elements, people can encounter them in daily life. As a recommendation we would see it useful to organise study trips among students aiming to promote natural values and other elements via product-tying.

SUMMARY

In our study we have inquired Hungarian and foreign students in Hungary about the image and characteristics of Hungaricums. We concluded that Hungarian students know significantly more about Hungaricums than foreign ones; therefore, a more targeted national marketing would be desirable, as well as the appearance of Hungaricums in the daily life of people (whether they are students or belong to other groups). In our opinion, it would be effective to organise Hungaricum-themed days/weeks in institutions of higher education, which would contribute to the building of a more desirable country-image.

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