ETHICAL CONSUMPTION: WHAT MAKES PEOPLE BUY "ETHICAL" PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Consumers express their ethics through their consumption decisions. The article examines the preferences of Czech respondents in the area of ethical consumption. The aim of the study is to find out the respondents' attitudes towards ethical shopping. We apply a series of ordinal regression analyses to analyse data from a survey (N=1670; aged 15–93 years, M ± SD: 35.51 ± 16.82; 62.00% women; 32.10% with higher education) conducted in 2021. In some cases, the survey results are compared with surveys on the same topic conducted in 2016 and 2018. The research found that customer interest in purchasing is growing, but this trend has not yet manifested itself in the volume of purchases. Beyond the reasons, the decision to buy, ignore ethical products or boycott unethical products is largely linked to the natural interest in and availability of information about "ethical shopping" in general and "ethical" products. The results suggest that personal responsibility is the most important reason for ethical shopping. Poor availability in the sales network, disinterest and higher prices were the most significant reasons for not buying "ethical" products. This research extends existing studies by examining the reasons for purchasing or ignoring so-called ethical products in relation to the intensity of their purchase. We believe that the results of the research can be used as baseline data to support targeted ethical purchasing, for example through education.

Implications for Central European audience: To achieve long-term sustainability, current patterns of behaviour and consumption need to change at all levels. Environmental protection and sustainability are now increasingly implemented in most EU policies, programmes and regulations. In the case of Central European economies, the transition towards sustainable and environmentally neutral practices is still delayed. One of the key prerequisites for sustainable development and its further expansion is sustainable consumption at the level of

consumers. The results of our analysis can be used to broaden awareness and raise shoppers' understanding as an important tool to increase ethical consumption behaviour.

Introduction

Recent publications agree on the need to change current consumption patterns and levels in order to achieve long-term sustainability. Sustainable consumption is considered one of the main prerequisites for sustainable development (Barber, 2007; Bengtsson et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2017). This is a very topical issue at the moment. Promoting the purchase of ethical products and the role of education in sustainable consumption are two important areas of research in this field (Araújo et al., 2021). Lack of information and knowledge on the part of consumers has been confirmed as one of the barriers to wider development of sustainable consumption (Han, 2020; Minton et al., 2018; Leary et al., 2014). Promoting education on sustainable consumption is, for example, the subject of a study by Adomßent et al. (2014). It is important to develop teaching skills to address the current problems associated with unsustainable production and consumption patterns (Barth et al., 2014; Frank & Stanszus, 2019). In this context, it becomes relevant to understand what attitudes respondents have towards ethical purchasing.

The link between ethics and sustainability on the one hand and consumer purchasing decisions on the other is evident in a group of consumers called ethical consumers. These consumers feel a responsibility towards the environment and/or society and seek to express their values through consumption and purchasing (or boycotting) (Davies & Gutsche, 2016; Shaw & Newholm, 2002). Andersch et al. (2019) explained ethical consumption and ethical products clearly. Current major barriers to ethical consumption include the high prices of environmentally friendly products, lack of information and knowledge on the part of consumers, and a generally low level of environmental awareness (Han, 2020; Kreuzer et al., 2019; O'Connor et al., 2017). Personal ethical attitudes and values often have limited influence on purchasing decisions (Govind et al., 2021). In some cases, consumers adopt ethical habits in their everyday consumption, even though they have little interest in or understanding of ethics. The usual reason is media coverage of negative impacts of consumption on the environment. Ethical consumption is becoming a phenomenon that influences consumers' ethical choices by creating a culture of ethical consumption (Lee, 2017). People are more likely to handle it ethically if their neighbours also do so (Starr, 2009). The fact that awareness and knowledge of sustainable and ethical principles are not high among consumers and that people often shop only under environmental pressure was confirmed by Davies and Gutsch (2016). Recent perspectives on sustainable consumption research highlight the influence of the immediate neighbourhood, in this case, the role of citizens organizing for more sustainable lifestyles with changes in individual values (Bachnik & Szumniak-Samolej, 2018; John et al., 2016; Schröder et al., 2019), taking into account that the consumption problem is not only limited to eco-friendly products and environmental impacts but is also a social problem (Briceno & Stagl, 2006; Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014; Lorek & Spangenberg, 2014). Consumers can benefit from purchasing ethical products in several ways. Ethical products are often produced with a focus on sustainability, reducing their environmental impact. This can include using eco-friendly materials, reducing waste and

limiting pollution. By choosing ethical products, consumers can feel good about their purchase, knowing that they are helping to protect the planet. They are often produced with a focus on fair labour practices, ensuring that workers are paid fairly and have safe working conditions (Nicholls & Lee, 2006). This can include providing living wages, safe working environments and prohibiting child labour. By choosing ethical products, consumers can support companies that prioritize social responsibility and contribute to a more just and equitable society. Ethical products are often made with natural or organic ingredients, reducing the use of harmful chemicals in the production process. Ethical products are often made with a focus on quality and craftsmanship, ensuring that they are built to last. By choosing ethical products, consumers can invest in high-quality products that will last longer, reducing the need for replacements and reducing waste (Ghali, 2021; Karsaklian & Fee, 2016). Overall, purchasing ethical products can provide consumers with a sense of satisfaction, knowing that their purchases align with their values and contribute to a more sustainable world.

However, ethical products can have several benefits for the producer, too, such as improved brand reputation. Consumers are increasingly conscious of the ethical and environmental impacts of the products they buy, and choosing to produce ethical products can help attract these consumers and create a loyal customer base. Ethical products can help build trust and loyalty with customers who appreciate the producer's commitment to social and environmental issues. This can lead to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth referrals, which can be valuable for long-term success, and is an important part of marketing communication (Hasanzade et al., 2018). Another such benefit is improved employee morale: Producers who make ethical products often have better working conditions, fair labour practices and a commitment to employee well-being (Minton et al., 2018). By producing ethical products, producers can reduce the risk of legal and reputational problems associated with unethical practices. Ethical products can help producers access new markets that are focused on sustainability and social responsibility. This can create new business opportunities and help producers diversify their product lines.

It has been found that empirical research mapping the relationship between sustainable consumption and customers in the Czech Republic and the possibilities of transferring this knowledge to the field of education are limited. The paper therefore examines consumer purchasing decisions when considering ethical considerations in the broader context of university students' education. The extent to which respondents are aware of the principles of sustainable development and whether they take them into account when making purchases is being investigated. This study adds to the existing literature by looking in detail at the reasons for purchasing or ignoring so-called ethical products in relation to the intensity of their purchase. We believe that the research results can be used as baseline data to support education in this area and subsequently to support targeted purchasing. The results of the research will be pilot-tested in the form of a case study in courses taught at one German and two Czech universities where the authors of this paper are actively teaching. Based on the above discussion, we have defined the aim of our analysis. The scale of ethical purchasing ranges from actively seeking out and buying "ethical" products to ignoring or even boycotting unethical products. In each part of the scale, the reasons can be very different. This article aims to consider the reasons for buying "ethical" products, ignoring (or not buying)

"ethical products" and boycotting unethical products. The aim of this paper is to assess the importance of different reasons for buying (or not buying) "ethical" products in relation to the subjective frequency of buying "ethical" products. Similarly, we seek to assess the reasons for boycotting unethical products in relation to the subjective willingness to boycott.

Beyond the reasons, the decision to buy, ignore ethical products or boycott unethical products is largely linked to the natural interest in and availability of information about "ethical purchasing" in general and "ethical" products. Age, gender, education and income can also influence ethical purchasing preferences significantly. We add all these characteristics to the final model.

The article is divided into five sections. In addition to the introduction, the next section introduces the theoretical aspects of the field of research on sustainable consumption and purchasing of ethical products. The following section describes the methodological path chosen in this study. After that, we present the attitudes of the respondents in the research conducted. In the discussion section, we review the key findings and discuss their theoretical and practical implications and limitations of this paper.

1 Literature Review

Consumers express their ethics through their consumption decisions (Toti & Moulins, 2016). Changing individual consumption behaviour (accessing, purchasing and consuming products in a pro-environmental way) is key to environmental sustainability (Halder et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). However, environmentally sustainable consumer behaviour is difficult to define exactly (Dong et al., 2020; Garvey & Bolton, 2017). There is no consensus in the current literature on the definition of environmentally sustainable consumer behaviour. One concept states that human behaviour contributes to environmental sustainability (Halder et al., 2020; Steg & Vlek, 2009). Steg and Vlek (2009) provided one of the clearest definitions, namely that environmentally sustainable behaviour is specific human behaviour that does not harm the environment. In the consumer behaviour literature, environmentally sustainable behaviour is often described as environmentally friendly consumption activities (Black & Cherrier, 2010; Chan, 2001; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Environmental behaviour in the literature is divided into post-purchase/pre-purchase product environmental behaviour, energy conservation behaviour, natural resource conservation, green shopping, water conservation, waste sorting behaviour, food waste reduction, solid waste minimization, use of eco-friendly/green products and use of public transportation (Dong et al., 2012; Leary et al., 2014; Minton et al., 2018; Singh & Verma, 2017). Singh and Verma (2017) focused their research on factors influencing Indian consumers' actual buying behaviour towards organic food products. They identified and tested the following factors that could have an impact on customer behaviour in the pre-purchase phase: health consciousness, consumers' knowledge, subjective norm, consumer perception of price and availability, purchase intention and actual buying behaviour and socio-demographic factors. Singh and Verma (2017) wished to expand the validity of the results with more studies on a sample greater than the 611 consumers in their study. Minton et al. (2018) worked with definitions of sustainable consumption and sustainable behaviour of consumers and producers, meaning that the focus was on the post-purchase and pre-purchase phases. The sustainable behaviour of producers means many sustainable activities, which include, for example,

energy-efficient production, alternative modes of transportation and recycling plastics (Minton et al., 2018).

There is a limited understanding of the barriers to ethical consumption (Carrington et al., 2016). Green image (Lee et al., 2010), pro-environmental behaviour in everyday life (Han et al., 2018; Untaru et al., 2016), environmental knowledge (Chan et al., 2014), affection (Rosenthal & Ho, 2020; Yuksel et al., 2010), descriptive social norms (Matthies et al., 2012), expected pride and guilt (Klöckner & Matthies, 2004; Steg & Vlek, 2009), environmental corporate social responsibility (Afifah & Asnan, 2015; Lee et al., 2013), perceived effectiveness (Han et al., 2017), connection to nature (Dutcher et al., 2007) and green values (Halder et al., 2020), ethical obligation, self-concept and altruism are positively related to consumers' attitudes towards ethical consumption (Oh & Yoon, 2014). Idealism and social commitment of consumers are also significant predictors of ethical consumption (Witkowski & Reddy, 2010). Minton et al. (2018) explained the implications towards the different understanding of sustainable behaviour and consumers and producers, especially for companies, governments and other authorities. They should carefully increase their level of understanding of sustainable products through effective communication campaigns. Leary et al. (2014) emphasised the impact of perceived marketplace influence on sustainable consumption, involving all stakeholders on the market. Minton et al. (2018) agreed with Leary et al. (2014) that communication about sustainable consumption could help by increasing the level of understanding of sustainable production and purchasing. However, the primary focus of this article is on consumer behaviour towards sustainable consumption.

Ethical consumerism is a burgeoning movement, but ethically-minded consumers rarely purchase ethically. Although consumers increasingly consider ethical factors when forming opinions about products and making purchasing decisions, recent studies have highlighted significant gaps between consumers' intentions to consume ethically and their actual purchasing behaviour (Casais & Faria, 2022; Alsaad, 2021; Shaw et al., 2016; Budhathoki et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2016; Bray et al., 2011). Explaining this gap between environmental knowledge, environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviour is a very complex and difficult issue (Han & Stoel, 2017; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010). Improving consumer awareness is an important prerequisite for closing the gap between attitudes and behaviour (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018).

Rabeson et al. (2022) present an interesting qualitative study of the ethical purchasing behaviour of couples, based on interviews with French consumers. The authors identified time, money and pleasure as the most critical factors restricting couples' purchase of ethical products. However, we concentrate on individual customers in our research.

Our study builds on all of the aforementioned research and seeks to address the identified research gap, both with a larger sample of respondents and by strengthening the communication of the topic to selected target groups, including young people with future university education, who are the potential for the development of sustainable behaviour in purchasing and production.

2 Methodology and Data

We rely on multinomial ordinal regression analysis (Formula 1) to test the hypotheses formulated below. Contrary to linear regression, multinomial ordinal regression can be applied to ordinal dependent variables. Contrary to unifactorial methods, such as bivariate correlations or T-statistics, ordinal regressions allow for controlling these variables, which enlarge the reliability of the results. Other papers using similar methodology include Čábelková et al. (2022a, b) and Čábelková (2021).

$$Ethics_{1,2} = logit\ (a0 + a_{1\text{-}3}Interest + a_{4\text{-}6}Reasons1 + a_{7\text{-}11}Reasons2 + a_{12\text{-}14}Reasons3 +$$

$$+ a_{15\text{-}20}Products + a_{21\text{-}a28}Sociodemographics + e) \tag{1}$$

Where:

$Ethics1$ is the subjective frequency of purchasing ethical products;

$Ethics2$ is boycotting of unethical products;

$Interest$ is three variables capturing the interest in ethical products, namely looking for relevant information, reading product labels and looking for the origin of products;

$Reasons1$ are three dummy variables capturing the reasons for purchasing "ethical" products, namely subjective personal responsibility, the wish to help and interest in environmental issues;

$Reasons\ 2$ are five dummy variables capturing the reasons for not purchasing "ethical" products, namely ignorance of the principles of ethical purchasing, little information, poor availability in the sales network, disinterest and higher price;

$Reasons3$ are five dummy variables capturing the reasons for boycotting "unethical" products, namely ethical, human rights and environmental reasons;

$Products$ are six dummies capturing the types of products bought as "ethical" products. Namely, baby products (nappies, toys, cosmetics), food, cleaning products, cosmetics, class A energy-saving appliances, none; and

$Sociodemographic$ are age, gender, education and income.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

Table 1 | Hypotheses about ethical shopping based on research

1. Subjective frequency of buying "ethical" products ($H_{1,i}$) and 2. Subjective boycotting of unethical products ($H_{2,i}$)	are related to	1. Reasons for buying "ethical" products ($H_{j,1}$) 2. Reasons for ignoring (not buying) "ethical" products ($H_{j,2}$) 3. Reasons for boycotting "unethical" products ($H_{j,3}$) 4. Types of "ethical" products ($H_{j,4}$) 5. Interest in and availability of information on "ethical" products ($H_{j,5}$) 6. Income, age, gender and education ($H_{j,6}$)

Source: Authors

It follows from Table 1 that 12 hypotheses are formulated in total, which corresponds to two dependent variables multiplied by 6 independent variables.

2.2 Data

The data were collected in 2021 in a survey conducted by the Department of Trade and Finance at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague. One thousand six hundred and seventy respondents (aged 15-93 years, M ± SD: 35.51 ± 16.82; 62.00% female, 32.10% with a university degree, N=1670) answered the questionnaire voluntarily. The respondents were assured that their answers would be presented in an anonymised statistical form and that the data would not be passed on to a third party. The snowball sampling technique was used to select the sample. The snowball technique of data collection relies on respondents who already answered the questionnaire suggesting others who might complete it too. In some cases, the results of the 2021 survey are compared with surveys on the same topic conducted at the Department of Trade and Finance in 2016 and 2018. This helps identify changes in customer purchasing behaviour in relation to the purchase of ethical products.

3   Empirical Analysis

The respondent indicators and distributions are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Only 14.3% of the respondents make regular purchases which can be considered "responsible" purchases (Table 2). These are targeted purchases by those customers who take ethical considerations into account when making their purchases. Although ethical aspects have recently come to the forefront of society, this has not significantly affected purchasing behaviour. This share is stable at 20% (according to our own survey, 14.9% of customers bought ethical products frequently/regularly in 2016 and 19.8% in 2018). Customer interest in the production, processing and sale of responsible products is growing (the purchase of ethical products was important to 50.3% of customers in 2016, and to 56.1% in 2018). Still, this trend has not yet manifested itself in the volume of purchases.

Table 2 | Indicators of subjective frequency of purchasing "ethical" products, interest in ethical shopping (searching for relevant information, reading product labels, searching for product origin) and distribution of respondents

Coding of answers	1	2	3	4
Do you buy "ethical" products (products/services)? (1) often; (2) less often but purposefully; (3) exceptionally / accidentally; (4) not at all	14	44	31	11
Information about "ethical" products, (1) you search actively; (2) you watch out for an opportunity, for example, in the press, television, publications, etc.; (3) you watch marginally; (4) you are not interested	8	24	42	26
You read labels on products (1) always and carefully; (2) sometimes, rather randomly; (3) not at all	27	62	11	
Do you pay attention to the origin of goods when shopping? (1) yes; (2) sometimes; (3) no	12	41	47	

Source: Authors

On the other hand, it is positive that the number of people who actively monitor and search for data and information on ethical products from various information channels is gradually increasing in the period under review: 18.9% in 2016, 38.9% in 2018 and 32.4% in 2021. The proportion of consumer groups who read product labels carefully compared to consumers who read information casually or not at all is almost identical across all three surveys, with minimal differences between 2016 and 2021.

There was a significant increase in all the aspects assessed, i.e., a sense of personal responsibility, a desire to help someone else and an interest in ecology and the environment. Customers are more aware of their personal responsibility (20.6% of customers in 2016, 33.8% of customers in 2021) and more aware of their desire to help someone (41.4% of customers in 2016, 61.1% in 2021). Overall, they are more concerned about environmental aspects (34% in 2016, 54.5% in 2021). For example, when buying washing powders, where the potential environmental impact is perceived by customers as one of the most immediate, the research found that 5% of respondents answered "always", 26.7% of respondents said "often" and only 15.2% answered "never". Another example of a direct impact on the environment is regular work commuting or travel. Here, 4% of respondents always try to reduce car travel for environmental reasons, 14.2% often, 27.8% rarely and 35.4% not at all.

Personal convenience, flexibility and good accessibility play a big role in reducing the use of cars for private journeys. People have yet to gradually learn to use, for example, car-sharing and sharing journeys with multiple strangers. Other reasons why customers would at least consider buying environmentally friendly products included the assumption of quality of goods, support to local producers, efforts to reduce child labour abuse and protection of animals and nature. Consumers are even more willing to take environmental considerations into account when trying to save energy and water for environmental reasons. In this case, 13.8% of respondents always and 38.9% often try to be environmentally friendly.

Conversely, according to the 2021 survey, the reasons why some customers do not buy eco-friendly products at all, or only to a small extent or accidentally, are most often low awareness, limited availability in mainstream retail and lack of knowledge of the principles of responsible shopping. These reasons often point to reluctance and personal disinterest because the possibilities of obtaining information and its wide availability are unquestionable in the current environment of the information society. There are sufficient shopping opportunities even in the standard retail chain, it is enough to know your way around and to look, for example, at the relevant labelling and certificates. Other reasons why consumers do not buy ethical products include higher price, lack of trust in the arguments justifying the principles, lack of trust in the authenticity of the information provided, lack of promotion, popularity of specific brands and weaker efficacy compared to conventional products (cosmetics and cleaning products).

Table 3 | Indicators of reasons for buying or not buying "ethical" products, types of products, willingness to boycott unethical products, reasons for boycotting and distribution of respondents

Coding of answers	NO, %	YES, %
The reason you shop like this (buy "ethical" products), or at least think about it, is:		
sense of personal responsibility	68	32
trying to help	43	57
interest in ecology/environment	49	51
Which products in the area of "ethical" products do you buy?		
baby products (nappies, toys, cosmetics)	92	8
foodstuffs	30	70
cleaning products	68	32
cosmetics	60	40
class A energy-saving appliances	74	26
none	88	13
The reason why you do not buy or buy little "ethical" products is:		
little or no knowledge of the principles of ethical buying	75	25
little information	51	49
poor availability in the sales network	62	38
lack of interest	84	16
higher price	98	2
Willingness to engage in boycott actions against unethical products		
Do you boycott products or services, for example, due to use of child labour, human rights violations, animal cruelty, etc.?	34	66
Are you willing to boycott products for the following reasons?		
ethical reasons	44	56
human rights reasons	28	72
ecological	40	60
Sociodemographic variables		
Age: 15–93 years, M ± SD: 35.51 ± 16.82; Gender: 62.00% women; Education: 32.10% with higher education; Income per person in the household: < 10,000 CZK (11%), 10,000–20,000 CZK (36%); 20,000–30,000 CZK (34%); > 30,000 CZK (19%)		

Source: Authors

Note: All the questions in this table also had the option "other". We omit presentations of these answers in this table, as they were rare and very fragmented. The only exception was the option "other" in the question about why people do not buy "ethical" products. One of the most frequent reasons in the category was the high price. We coded this answer and included it in the table. However, we realize that the frequency of this reason is lower than it should have been if we had included the "higher price" in the possible list of reasons to check. In all the questions, the respondents could choose as many answers as they wanted out of the enclosed list. The resulting answers were then recoded as dummy variables. Thus, the answer YES in the table implies that the respondent has chosen this option and NO, means that the respondent did not choose this option.

Food and food supplements are the typical category of so-called ethical products that customers prefer most often when shopping. The share of this category has a slightly increasing trend in the period under review (65.1% in 2016, 61% in 2018 and 70.1% in 2021). Food is generally a "sensitive" product. The origin of food is very important to consumers (more so than for other consumer product categories: in 2021, the origin was important to 91.4% of consumers, 32.2% for non-food products and 12.5% for services), its composition and its impact on health. Therefore, in some cases, they prefer to buy ethical products that they assume have better qualities. In the 2021 survey, the popularity of the ethical product category was second in cosmetics and then cleaning products. These are currently the three most preferred product groups for which consumers are trying to take responsible purchasing principles into account. Again, there is a shift from the previous period, when in 2016 and 2018, the top three categories were food, energy-efficient appliances and cosmetics. In 2021, energy-efficient appliances were the fourth most preferred appliance by consumers. Another category that has seen an increase in consumer interest is products for children (e.g., nappies, toys, baby cosmetics, etc.). It is interesting to note that textiles, for example, which are currently widely discussed in the context of sustainability and social responsibility, account for only 3.6% of ethical purchases. On the positive side, the supply and availability of products that can be classified as responsible purchasing is growing.

Targeted boycotting of products with which there is a negative association is part of ethical shopping. These include abuse of child labour, violations of basic human rights and freedoms, animal cruelty, excessive logging and more. In general, these are topics that are starting to get more media coverage and are very sensitive for customers. Almost all strong international retail chains and brands are now trying to manage this issue in different ways as part of their corporate social responsibility. This is a long-term process where there is an interest in avoiding these negative elements, but it is not always possible (often due to costs). Nor is production and its processes (extraction of raw materials, cultivation) and products, including their packaging and transport methods, always fully transparent. In 2016, 60.5% of consumers said they boycott products associated with negative contexts or at least try to do so when making purchasing decisions. In 2018, 58% of customers had attempted a boycott. In the most recent survey in 2021, a value of 66% was found. These values indicate the interest of shoppers in this issue. They also confirm shoppers' willingness to actively engage in some ways to combat these negatives, either partially or fully. Human rights are the most common reason for boycotting products (74.2% of respondents in 2016 and 75.9% in 2018 cited human rights/ethical reasons). Environmental reasons are also important reasons for boycotting (environmental reasons were important for 25.8% of customers in 2016 and for 24.1% in 2018). In addition, respondents cited political reasons, aggressive or misleading advertising and ownership affiliations.

Table 4 | Results of ordinal regression analysis for purchasing "ethical" products or boycotting "unethical" products

Dependent variable	Purchasing ethical products			Boycotting unethical		
	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.
Threshold=1	-1,369 [c]	728	060	-011	904	990
Threshold=2	1,116	732	127			
Threshold=3	3,179 [a]	732	000			
Interest in ethical purchasing						
Looking for relevant info	**449** [a]	069	000	**367** [a]	090	000
Reading product labels	**424** [a]	096	000	044	119	712
Looking for origin of products	-098	080	219	**-365** [a]	098	000
Reasons for purchasing "ethical" products						
Subjective personal responsibility	**507** [a]	109	000	-018	141	901
Wish to help	139	102	173	015	131	907
Interest in environmental issues	-017	108	873	125	135	357
Reasons for not purchasing "ethical" products						
Ignorance of ethical purchasing principles	-145	115	206	-124	142	383
Little information	**-183** [c]	103	076	**-238** [c]	132	070
Poor availability in sales network	**-322** [a]	105	002	103	135	447
Disinterest	**-318** [b]	156	042	**-576** [a]	186	002
Higher price	**-648** [b]	326	047	-643	396	105
Reasons for boycotting "unethical" products						
Ethical	157	100	115	**890** [a]	123	000
Human rights	173	109	113	**1,329** [a]	132	000
Environmental	007	104	950	**421** [a]	129	001
Products						
Baby products (nappies, toys, cosmetics)	-152	178	394	-153	234	514
Food	088	131	499	-096	164	556
Cleaning products	**193** [c]	110	080	-026	143	856
Cosmetics	**322** [a]	112	004	003	143	985
Class A energy-saving appliances	048	115	678	**-328** [b]	149	028
None	**-1,180** [a]	201	000	**-613** [b]	242	011
Sociodemographic variables						
Age	-001	003	679	000	004	919

Education, basic	683	428	110	543	519	295
Education, secondary	285	355	422	288	424	497
Education, higher	198	361	583	416	432	335
Gender (men)	000	108	999	176	133	186
Income < 10,000 CZK	**344 [c]**	185	064	-351	233	132
Income 10,000–20,000 CZK	153	139	269	**-300 [c]**	171	080
Income 20,000–30,000 CZK	**249 [c]**	137	069	**-465 [a]**	172	007
Goodness of fit						
Sig.	000			000		
Pseudo R-square						
Cox and Snell	237			223		
Nagelkerke	259			308		
McFadden	109			196		
N	1653			1653		

Source: Authors

Note: Reference variables are other education, income – more than 30,000 CZK per person, gender – women. The coefficients in the categories of products and reasons for (not) buying are for those people who did not indicate that they buy the products or did not indicate the reasons as important. a – significant at the 1% level, b – at 5% and c – at the 10% level. Link function: Logit.

Personal responsibility is related to the frequency of purchasing ethical products (H1,1 was confirmed). In contrast, purposeful rejection of unethical products is not related to the intensity of ethical products (H2,1 was not confirmed). Hypotheses related to the responsibility for purchasing and boycotting unethical products (H1,2 and H2,2) were supported for the variables of little information, poor availability in the retail network, lack of interest and higher price. H1,3 was not supported by the analysis. The hypothesis investigating the association between targeted rejection of unethical products and the reasons for this boycott (H2,3) was supported by the variables of ethical, human rights and environmental reasons for boycotting non-organic products. The association was also found for purchase frequencies for cleaning products and cosmetics and for class A energy-saving appliances (H 1,4). Seeking relevant information and reading product labels is also a significant factor for frequency of purchasing ethical products (H 1,5). Similarly, seeking relevant information and tracing the origin of products is related to rejecting products that contradict ethical principles (H 2,5). H1,6 and H2,6 were supported only for the income variable.

In more detail, it follows from Table 4 that:

(1) Interest in ethical purchasing only
- The more actively the respondents look for relevant information about "ethical" products,
  - the more often they buy "ethical" products;
  - the more often they boycott unethical products.
- The more attention the respondents pay to product labels, the more often they buy "ethical" products.

- The more attention the respondents pay to the origin of the goods, the more likely they are to boycott "unethical" products.

(2) Reasons for purchasing "ethical" products

Of the three reasons for buying "ethical" products (subjective personal responsibility, desire to help and concern for environmental issues) only one, personal responsibility, was associated with the frequency of buying "ethical" products. People who cite personal responsibility as a reason for ethical shopping are more likely to buy "ethical" products.

(3) Reasons for not buying "ethical" products

Four out of the five possible reasons for not buying ethical products were found to be related to the frequency of ethical purchases[1]. Specifically, subjective lack of information, poor availability of "ethical" products in shops, lack of interest in ethical shopping and the higher price of ethical products were found to be the reasons for the lower frequency of purchasing ethical products. Therefore, if we want to increase ethical shopping, all these reasons need to be eliminated.

The only reason that was not statistically related to ethical shopping was personal ignorance of these principles. However, it is possible that respondents were simply unwilling to admit their low level of knowledge.

As expected, two of these reasons were also significantly associated with boycotting unethical products: little information about ethical shopping and lack of interest. Both were related to information availability and interest.

(4) Reasons for boycotting "unethical" products

All of the suggested reasons for boycotting unethical products – ethical, human rights and environmental – were positively related to the likelihood of boycotting.

(5) Products

It turned out that cleaning products and cosmetics are the products most related to frequent ethical shopping. These are probably the products most often discussed in the media with regard to environmental impact and use of chemicals, but not the use or child labour or fair trade. It is interesting to note that although coffee is one of the products most often presented as fair trade by coffee shops, food was not in the category associated with frequent ethical shopping.

People who buy class A energy-efficient appliances as "ethical" products are surprisingly less likely to boycott "unethical" products.

As expected, people who do not buy any of the list of ethical products on offer are less likely to engage in boycotts and less likely to buy "ethical" products.

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[1] *In this paper, we use buying of "ethical" products and "ethical purchasing" interchangeably. Thus, in our context "ethical purchasing" does not mean ethical style of purchasing (e.g., being nice to the shop assistant), but rather purchasing of "ethical" products.*

(6) Sociodemographic variables

Age, gender and education were not statistically significant.

Respondents with a per-person income of less than 10,000 CZK and between 20,000 and 30,000 CZK were less willing to buy ethical products compared to people earning more than 30,000 CZK per person monthly.

Respondents with an income more than 10,000 CZK and less than 30,000 CZK are more willing to boycott unethical products compared to people earning more than 30,000 CZK per person monthly.

4   Discussion

There are two main lines of enquiry into ethical purchasing and the influences on it. These are internal factors (i.e., socio-demographic and psychological traits) (e.g., Ehrich & Irwin, 2005) and external factors such as uncertainty in ethical choice (e.g., Hassan et al., 2013) and the assumption that ethical products are limited (e.g., Bray et al., 2011). Each person's internal set of perceptions of the broader aspects of shopping as an individual personality is reflected in their shopping behaviour. Internal subjective norms are a very strong predictor of ethical purchase intention (Deng, 2013). In our research, the observed indicators were not related to gender, age or education. Age as a predictor of ethical behaviour was also confirmed by Román and Munuera (2005). However, research by Andersch et al. (2019), Bateman and Valentine (2010) and Kayal et al. (2017), for example, has confirmed the influence of gender on intrinsic ethical motives for shopping. The same conclusion was reached by Pinna (2021), who found that femininity significantly increases ethical intention. An interesting aspect of ethical purchasing addressed by Schoolman (2019) is the sheer pleasure of buying ethical products, which in itself can be a significant motivator. Self-identification is also an important motivating factor (Le Grand et al., 2021). However, there are many more factors that are likely to trigger ethical consumer behaviour, such as information, knowledge and emotions.

The important link with ethical and possibly unethical behaviour in the context of internal personality preferences has been confirmed by Arli et al. (2016) and Lu et al. (2015). Bartels and Onwezen (2014) found that consumer identification with environmental principles is positively related to plans to purchase products that have environmental and ethical requirements. Consumers with a high tendency to feel guilty are less likely to agree with unethical behaviour. This may be directly related to a willingness not to buy or boycott unethical products, which has been the subject of research. Ethical, human rights and environmental reasons are common reasons for boycotts. Overall, however, customers specifically boycott certain products to a lesser extent when purchasing, as confirmed by Tilikidou and Delistavrou (2018).

The research showed that respondents whose income exceeds CZK 30,000 per person per month are more willing to buy ethical products. Sing and Verma (2017) presented the same result, that income is a potential factor that influences actual behaviour towards ethical products. Also, a study by Coman et al. (2016) confirmed that income or economic situation, in general, has a significant impact on the actual preference for ethical products in purchasing decisions. Ethical food consumption, as a specific area of ethical shopping, is also framed in the accounts of people living in affluent societies. Salonen (2021) confirmed that the ethics

of choice is linked to the resources available for consumption. The same conclusion was obtained in Andorfer's (2013) study, where income was found to be a relevant determinant in almost all models of preference for fair trade products, which can also be considered part of ethical shopping.

In terms of consumer behaviour and perception in a broader context, a shift towards environmental and ethical aspects can be observed. As the research found, respondents declared their willingness to consider their concern for the environment to a large extent when making purchases. Ghali (2021) came to the same conclusion. Other important reasons for purchasing ethical products include subjective personal responsibility and the desire to help. In contrast, Davies and Gutsch (2016) found that the main drivers of ethical consumption are habit and limited choice, as well as self-satisfaction, peer influence and interpretive understandings of what ethics offers. As a response to increased shopper interest in ethical products, more and more products presented as ethically friendly to the planet and the environment are appearing in shops (Engels et al., 2010). For many shoppers, such products are part of a way to take a stand against environmental threats, social injustice or even against corporate big business (Shugart, 2014). However, some studies have argued that products that make such ethical claims only serve to maintain a certain consumerism and are populist to some extent (Low & Davenport, 2005; Sirieix et al., 2013; Banet-Weiser, 2012). This can be counterproductive to some extent.

For 70% of Germans, ethical criteria have become an integral part of their purchasing decisions. Of those surveyed, 20% even said that since the COVID-19 crisis, they have become even more conscious of buying according to ethical criteria. COVID-19 has led to a rethinking among many people, purchasing decisions are better thought through and checked for necessity, and they seem to take on a different significance in the individual's life (Otto Group, 2021). Koptyug (2022) presented the results of a research study "Willingness to pay higher prices for green products in Germany 2017-2021" on Statista.com. As of 2021, 9.65 million Germans fully agreed that they would be willing to spend more money on an environmentally friendly product, while the number of those who agreed mostly, somewhat or hardly, perhaps wishing to be certain whether an eco-friendly label was validated, was still higher. Environmentally friendly products are manufactured in a way that does not have a harmful impact on the environment. The extent of environmental damage is as extensive as the measures taken to control it. Examples include reducing parts of the production process that ultimately contribute to air and water pollution, deforestation and waste. A growing number of German consumers agree that it is important to buy products from companies that behave in a socially and environmentally responsible way. Purchasing decisions such as the above are part of a bigger picture that will be debated for years to come. Although the numbers of deaths caused by air pollution have fallen significantly in Germany, these deaths are still occurring. At the same time, an encouraging trend is the growing consumer awareness of sustainable habits. Based on the 2021 survey, 80% of respondents were prepared to change their daily behaviour to help protect the environment.

Although customers are willing to consider whether their choice of a particular product may benefit, for example, non-profit organisations, fair trade, charitable activities, public benefit schemes, etc., only a small proportion of respondents buy ethical products frequently. So,

there is a difference between general willingness and will and actual purchase. Sekerka et al. (2015) came to the same conclusion. According to White et al. (2019a), few consumers who express positive attitudes towards environmentally friendly products and services also demonstrate these attitudes through actual purchases. Consistent with recent findings (Klein et al., 2020; Niedermeier et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020a), the green consumption values factor significantly differentiates consumers who intend to make pro-environmental purchases from those who do not. One possible rationale for this result could be that higher involvement amplifies the influence of values towards intention (Wang et al., 2020a).

Supporting local producers is one of the many components of green purchasing. As McCaffrey and Kurland (2015) confirmed, consumers who patronize local businesses instead of multinational chains gain broad economic, social and environmental benefits for their home communities. Likoudis et al. (2016) also confirmed that willingness to buy products associated with a particular country's territory is an important factor in purchasing.

The role of businesses that can take advantage of the growing trend of ethical perceptions of many consumers as a competitive advantage can be crucial in promoting and influencing ethical purchasing. More and more producers are signing up for ethical brands, and hypermarkets and supermarkets are not only commercialising these brands but also creating their own house brands of ethical products, making them ethical, affordable and accessible to a wider range of consumers (Karsaklian & Fee, 2016). The results of an experiment by Guyader et al. (2017) showed that retailers can capture consumers' visual attention and increase the purchase of appropriate products through various practices such as providing relevant information, orienting consumers in the shop and offering a range of environmentally friendly products. Despite the existence of different approaches to promoting ethical consumption, the problem remains to identify which ethical characteristics of a product are really important for consumers in their decision-making (White et al., 2019b). Hasanzade et al. (2018) found that information on animal welfare is most likely to increase consumer choice, followed by information on labour and human rights and environmental protection. Equally important is the ethical behaviour of the retailers themselves, which can have a positive impact on customers' perceptions of ethics (Cheung & To, 2021; Kumar & Mokhtar, 2016). Consumers' perception of retail business ethics also has a positive effect on consumer loyalty (Diallo & Lambey-Checchin, 2017; Hassan et al., 2016). Identifying the specific reasons and causes for this difference in willingness and purchase behaviour may be the subject of further follow-up research.

4.1 Using research findings in university teaching

The Faculty of Economics and Management of the Czech University of Agriculture in Prague does not teach any specific course directly focused on the issue of sustainable consumption. At the Department of Trade and Finance, we try to talk to students about topics related to ethical purchasing and the broader context of sustainable development and consumption in the form of sub-topics within the teaching of business-oriented subjects. This issue is closely linked to business activities in local and international trade.

At the University of West Bohemia, the research results will be presented and discussed in the courses of Marketing Management and Marketing Studies and Analyses within the Master's Degree programme at the Faculty of Economics. In a cross-sectional manner, the

University of West Bohemia makes an effort to follow the latest development trends and incorporates the sustainable development topics into its educational activities.

One of the co-authors is actively involved in the Institute of Sustainability and Ethics at OTH Amberg-Weiden; therefore, the research results will be used in teaching as part of the international study programme International Management and Sustainability as well as the international project SDG Transformation Space. In a participative approach, the innovative "Open Space" didactic method is used, which allows bringing together large groups and dealing with complex issues. Thematically, the project focuses on sustainability dilemmas and conflicting goals both within and between the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as ethical challenges that may arise when meeting the SDGs. The project was funded by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU) for two years (2021 and 2022).

The information from the survey is an important tool for understanding respondents' perceptions of this issue and we can better tailor training content based on this information. The survey found that respondents often cited subjective lack of information, poor availability of "ethical" products in shops, lack of interest in ethical shopping and the higher price of ethical products as reasons for the lower frequency of purchasing ethical products. All these issues can be worked with in the classroom and explained to students. There is a growing number of people who actively monitor and seek data and information on ethical products. Therefore, it would be good to encourage this interest through teaching. Business subjects are highly suitable for this purpose and university students are a customer segment that has great potential in future responsible purchasing.

The theoretical contribution of this study can be seen, in addition to verifying the attitudes of Czech customers towards ethical shopping and their changes in the period under study, in the broadening of the perspective and emphasizing the importance of education of university students in the field of responsible consumption as an important future segment of ethically conscious customers. This is particularly true in the context that providing education and raising awareness are seen as effective tools to increase ethical consumption behaviour. Education in ethical shopping is crucial as attitudes and perceived behavioural control are significant predictors of intention to purchase food with provenance and ethical standards (Soon & Wallace, 2018).

Conclusions

As noted above, the consideration of ethical, environmental and social aspects in virtually all areas of life is important to an increasing number of people. However, a real willingness to buy ethical products is not yet very evident in these purchasing decisions. Based on the research results, the individual determinants influencing the willingness to prefer buying responsible/ethical products were described. Highlighting ethical elements in the sale of goods and services can be a source of competitive advantage for certain customer segments. These are customers for whom ethics and the desire to help or not to harm have become an important and integral part of their lifestyle. Similarly, ethical behaviour of the sales staff themselves when interacting with customers is a strong predictor of repeat purchase behaviour. It can therefore be said that a significant competitive advantage is currently represented by a wider range and relevant presentation of "ethical" products and services. It

is logical to assume that this trend will have increasing potential in the future. This creates space for cooperation between traders and producers who meet the parameters of "ethicality" of the products they produce, import or offer. Research has confirmed the willingness of consumers to buy ethical products. Retail is precisely the intersection that can be used to reach customers and foster their ethical perceptions so that theoretical willingness is realised through actual purchasing behaviour. This is a major competitive advantage for retailers, wholesalers, importers, exporters and manufacturers who have already established themselves on the market. The trend of producing, selling and buying ethical products could become a global phenomenon of the future. This trend would benefit everyone: customers would feel good about buying ethically, manufacturers and retailers would gain a competitive advantage and the idea of sustainable growth would be encouraged.

The importance of educating university students in the area of responsible consumption was confirmed by one of the study's findings: customers' interest in the production, processing and sale of so-called responsible products is growing, but this trend is not yet significantly reflected in the volume of purchases. Therefore, it is necessary to work with students to make them understand the wider context of consumption and purchasing of goods and to try to show them the possibilities of making realistic purchasing decisions in favour of ethical products. Providing information and raising awareness are considered to be effective tools for increasing ethical consumption behaviour.

Ethical consumerism is essentially the knowledge that one's own consumption has an impact on the world, both environmentally and socially. Consumers want the products they buy to be in line with their own values and therefore inform themselves about their production, disposal and transport. Enterprises must take more responsibility as customers rightly expect that the intrinsic value of goods is correct. Those who fail to do so will not be able to survive in the long term. However, the understanding and spread of the importance of ethical purchasing varies from country to country. This should be the subject of future research and a way to raise awareness of ethical consumerism and the achievement of sustainable development goals in general. Grasping sustainable behaviour on the production side is another demand for future research, building on this and previous research studies. By adopting the theme of ethical purchasing in education and research, universities will also be fulfilling their third mission internationally.

Although there are a large number of research studies focusing on ethical shopping and influences on consumer decision-making, sustainable consumption, ethical food consumption, etc., the possibilities of transferring this knowledge to the field of education are limited. The study presented the current aspects of ethical shopping in the Czech Republic and placed this issue in the broader context of university students' education.

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