SOCIAL NETWORKS AND CONSPICUOUS FOOD CONSUMPTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY AMONG GENERATIONS Z, X, AND Y IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the links between conspicuous consumption and user activity on social media platforms, focusing on Generations Z, Y, and X. A set of statements focusing on conspicuous consumption, consumer behaviour on social media, and their food consumption habits was developed and tested on a sample of 679 respondents from the Czech Republic comprising these generations. Factor analysis was used to group tested statements into factors, and regression analysis was used to examine their association with salient consumption patterns. While the link between social media activity and conspicuous consumption was only confirmed for Generation X, the online behaviour of Generation Z, the confirmed influence of influencers on the purchasing behaviour of this generation, suggests a potential link that requires further investigation.

KEY WORDS

conspicuous consumption, social networks, comparison of generations, food consumption

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1 INTRODUCTION

The nature of conspicuous consumption (CC) has been constantly developing due to changing conditions in society since Veblen's time. Besides high prices and luxury, through which consumption conspicuously demonstrates social status, other factors have been increasingly considered indicators of wealth and success. Such factors include personality, values, self-perception, and identity (Bronner and de Hoog, 2019; Chen et al., 2008; Nguyen and Tambyah, 2011). With the increasing presence of social media in daily life, conspicuous consumption has expanded to include various categories (Dinh et al., 2024; Shamu et al., 2024), including food, where consumer behaviour can visibly demonstrate social status and personal values (McDonnell, 2016).

Given the importance of consumption visibility with respect to CC (Heffetz, 2011), then comes the question whether social networks and consumer behaviour presented there are also important elements influencing and enabling CC. Social networks have experienced turbulent development in recent years and are now part of the lives of more than just the youngest generations (Cheng and Li, 2014; Zareie et al., 2019). Due to this development, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is also becoming increasingly important in purchasing behaviour (Kim and Ko, 2012). Here, the role of opinion leaders includes not only friends and family but also influencers (Berryman and Kavka, 2017; Reinikainen et al., 2021).

These influencers have close relationships with their followers and build trust through their content. Followers are then influenced by their opinions and may adapt their purchasing behaviour (Brown and Hayes, 2008; Freberg et al., 2011; Gundová and Cvoligová, 2019). The generations more open to such influence are mainly Generation Z, Generation Y, and partly Generation X, who grew up with digital technologies and encountered them during their youth when their personalities were formed (Kardes et al., 2015). Thus, the aim of this study is to explore how the nature of user behaviour on social networks, among other factors

previously defined in literature, relates to the propensity for conspicuous consumption and if there are differences among the three analyzed generations Z, Y, and Y. Such findings can contribute not only to theory development but also to the marketing of business operations in the food industry since no papers with this focus both scientific and popular have been retrieved.

This research is focused on food and beverages as a product category. This is because food can have symbolic meaning when consumed and may represent a consumer's identity and lifestyle (Niva, 2006, 2007) as well as demonstrate his or her social status (Landström et al., 2009). Thus, foodstuffs can be an appropriate product for CC. The relationship between CC and functional foods was demonstrated, for example, by Barauskaitė et al. (2018) in their research. Photos of food are also often shared via social networks. Foodporn or 'foodstagramming' are increasingly common phenomena on social networks such as Instagram or SnapChat, which are driven by several motives as affective, expressive, and functional (Abril et al., 2022; Chang, 2022). Food was also chosen due to its affordability for all consumers and because it constitutes a significant item in consumers' expenditures – in the Czech Republic, it represents 23% of the total household budget spending (CZSO, 2022a).

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Several influences affect consumers at once when they consume. In CC, the most important factor is the visibility of that consumption. It is an integral part of it, and through this consumption, a consumer wants to demonstrate or enhance his or her social status (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004; Heffetz, 2011).

2.1   Conspicuous Consumption – History and Trends

It was Thorstein Veblen who named and explored conspicuous consumption in his book The Theory of Leisure Class (1899). Since his time, however, the definition of CC has

expanded. Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s, CC was primarily about the demonstration of wealth and comparison with immediate neighbours ("keeping up with the Joneses"), after the 1960s, the reference group was taken to be the upper middle class (Schor, 1999) or the socially situated upper class (Truong, 2010). Another element that helped develop CC was the development of mass media, where consumption became more sophisticated and involved more people with different socio-cultural backgrounds (Galbraith, 1987). Rapid economic development increased mobility, educational opportunities (Collins, 2000), and the development of new communication media, which

made consumption even more visible, showed the importance and need for further exploration of elements influencing CC (Patsiaouras, 2010).

Conspicuous consumption can be defined as "the behavioural tendency to value status and acquire and consume products that provide status to the individual." (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004, p. 10). In the past, CC was often confused with status consumption. These two types of consumption have a very strong positive mutual correlation. With status consumption, the consumer buys the product for the purpose of enjoyment in consumption, and with conspicuous consumption, it is for the purpose of presenting the consumption to others (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004; Riquelme et al., 2011). Several groups of factors are then associated with status consumption: status orientation, materialism, self-perception, consumption ethnocentrism (Nguyen and Tambyah, 2011), and susceptibility to interpersonal influences (Riquelme et al., 2011).

In the context of 21st-century CC, it is necessary to consider not only consumer characteristics such as the consumer's income group and gender (O'Cass, 2001; Açıkalın et al., 2009). According to Chen et al. (2008), on the one hand, CC is a means of presenting one's own wealth; on the other hand, the intangible symbolism of the products consumed, such as romantic efforts to impress a partner, also plays a role (Griskevicius et al., 2007). The product used as conspicuous could also symbolize the identity, personality, or lifestyle of the consumer (Niva, 2006, 2007; Yang and Mattila, 2017).

The aforementioned visibility of consumption (Heffetz, 2011) remains the most important factor and has developed the most thanks to the progress in technologies such as social networks. These allow consumers to present consumption directly at the very moment of consumption (Brooner and de Hoog, 2019) and therefore create a link between social visibility of consumption and conspicuous consumption as Shamu et al. (2024) proved in their research on wedding ceremonies.

2.2 Social Networks

Social networks play an indispensable role in the lives of today's consumers. They have become increasingly widespread in recent years especially with young consumers (Vogels, 2019), and some users have become addicted to them. The fear of missing out effect (FOMO effect) also plays a big role, forcing consumers to keep coming back to the networks (Cheng and Li, 2014; Solomon, 2017; Gómez-Galán et al., 2020), which creates a wide field for visible consumption, which can lead to conspicuous consumption (Dinh and Lee, 2024). Through social media, people receive and broadcast messages, obtain information, express themselves and their self-image, promote their opinions through self-generated content and thus increase their social status (Boczkowski et al., 2018; Ford, 2022),

Kietzmann et al. (2011) named 7 basic functional blocks of social media: identity (i.e., characteristics of the user behaviour), conversation, sharing content, presence of other users, relationships, reputation and groups, and communities. Social networks can have negative effects on their users, for example, on a personal level (evaluation of one's performance), a social level (status and skills in society), and a psychological level (lack of self-esteem and anxiety), see Gómez-Galán et al. (2020), Reis and Maia (2024). But there are many positives, such as creating and maintaining relationships among friends (Cheung et al., 2011; Dhir et al., 2018) for example via sharing "foodporn" photos (Fasanelli et al., 2020), devising a space for creativity, learning new skills, inspiring other users (Arab and Díaz, 2015), and for relaxation and fun (Erdem and Yılmaz, 2021).

Understanding the possibilities of social media as well as being able to interact through these media with consumers is nowadays very important for the efficient creation of marketing strategies. This is because users form relationships with other ordinary users through the media as well as with brands in different ways (Brennan and Parker, 2020). One of the highly recommended strategy for brands is partner with social medial influencers, to increase their

visibility and reach (Joshi et al., 2025; Nadroo et al., 2024).

2.2.1 Influencers

Social media influencers is a new form of self-made celebrity, usually acting as opinion leaders. Consumers adapt their purchasing behaviour and choose brands that influencers recommend (De Veirman et al., 2017; Gundová and Cvoligová, 2019; Farivar and Wang, 2022). Freberg et al. (2011, p. 90) define influencers as: "third-party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media". Often, an influencer is then considered an expert on certain topics, for example, cosmetics, fashion, lifestyle, gastronomy, etc. (Van Norel et al., 2014).

An influencer can be both a classic celebrity and a self-made celebrity who has gained followers through his or her work and activities on social networks (Fietkiewicz et al., 2018; Enke and Borchers, 2019). Their fame is then based on their identity, aspirations, and followers' appreciation (Djafarova and Trofimenko, 2019). The influencer's authenticity (Ember, 2015), manifested, for example, in their ability to interact, is important in creating and building trust between the influencer and his or her followers. Influencer authenticity and credibility leads to loyalty and puts the influencer in a better position as an opinion leader (Jun and Yi, 2020; Cheah et al., 2024). The desire to be closer to and imitate the influencer than lead to CC (Dinh and Lee, 2024).

Given the role of influencers in the minds of their followers and the basic functions of social media, we hypothesize whether social media behaviour is directly related to CC behaviour among other factors already mentioned in theory (Status consumption, self-perception etc.).

2.3   Generations X, Y, and Z

As already mentioned, due to the use of social networking sites, Generations X, Y and Z were selected for this research.

Generation X, representing people born between 1965 and 1976 – as defined, for example, by Kardes et al. (2015), was the first generation to experience important changes in technology when their attention shifted from traditional mass media to the Internet. This has made this generation more adaptive (Fuciu, 2021) and not shy away from new technologies. They are said to focus on the quality of life and spend more on food, clothing, and entertainment (Kardes et al., 2015).

Generation Y (1977–1995) has fewer problems questioning authority (Kardes et al., 2015), is more self-conscious, and consumers of this generation are aware of their self-brand (Solomon, 2017). This generation likes to travel due to greater opportunities thanks to globalization and is very open to the world. They have grown up with digital technology and are used to being connected 24 hours a day (Kardes et al., 2015). Although they use the internet more for work purposes (Kotler et al., 2021), on social networks they prefer a combination of educative, informative and entertaining communication (Kusá and Urmínová, 2020). In their online shopping behaviour, the hedonic motive is the most influential (Koch et al., 2020).

Generation Z, born after 1995 and before 2010 (Kardes et al., 2015), is the first generation growing up in a fully digital world (Bernstein, 2015). Through social networks, they establish strong connections with both themselves and the outside world, while using social media as a source of information and new trends (Solomon, 2017; Yussof et al., 2018; Korombel and Ławińska, 2019). Social networks also influence their purchase behaviour through user-generated content (e.g., by influencers), where positive emotions cause impulse purchases of, e.g., fashionable clothing (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021). Their engagement on social media also increases their propensity to search for discounts, as they are a price-sensitive generation (Koch et al., 2020). For brands and companies seeking to engage this generation social media visibility has become a necessity. For example, Halová and Müller (2024) described in their research the importance of using different types of content on different networks to attract attention during the recruitment process. Social networks are also a key communication channel for sustainability and sustainable fashion

behaviour (Kusá and Urmínová, 2020). They are also strongly influenced by influencers, but only if they believe in their credibility and their knowledge in specifics areas (Zatwarnicka-Madura et al. 2022).

According to the Czech Statistical Office, 58% of the population aged 16+ used social networks in 2022, which is 53% more than in 2009 (CZSO, 2022b). The generation that spent the most time on social networks in the Czech Republic was Generation Z (85%). 69% of Generation Y and 58% of Generation X users spent at least an hour on social networks daily. Facebook was the most used social network, used by all generations, with Instagram in second place (used predominantly by Generation Z, 89%, followed by Generation Y, 61%). Other growing networks used mostly by Generation Z were TikTok and Snapchat (AMI Digital, 2022).

3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This research focuses on CC and the factors that play the major role in this consumption. It is partly based on the works of other authors who have studied conspicuous and status consumptions in the past and adopts some of the batteries of claims tested in their research studies (Chaudhuri and Majumdar, 2006; Nguyen and Tambyah, 2011; Riquelme et al., 2011; Assimos et al., 2019). The whole research is then adapted to the topic of CC of food and beverages.

Primary research data was collected through a questionnaire survey disseminated online between October 2022 and December 2022 in the Czech Republic. A total of 679 respondents from 3 different age generations were collected: 248 respondents from Generation Z, 207 respondents from Generation Y, and 224 respondents from Generation X (see Tab. 1). Respondents were approached based on the age distribution of the population of the Czech Republic (16% of Generation Z; 25% of Generation Y and 19% of Generation X). The data was then adjusted for incomplete responses from respondents. We managed to get more Generation Z respondents than necessary, but decided to keep them as the research is related to social networks, where Generation Z is the generation that uses them most often.

The questionnaire consisted of several sections. The section relevant to this paper contained a battery of statements partly drawn from research focusing on conspicuous and status consumption (Assimos et al., 2019;

Tab. 1: Characteristics of respondents

		Generation Z	Generation Y	Generation X	Total
Respondents (in absolute numbers)		248	207	224	679
Income (in %)	0–5 000 CZK/month	40.73	0.48	0.89	15.32
	5 001–10 000 CZK/month	37.50	3.38	0.89	15.02
	10 001–20 000 CZK/month	12.90	8.70	8.93	10.31
	20 001–30 000 CZK/month	5.65	34.30	26.79	21.35
	30 001–40 000 CZK/month	1.61	32.37	33.04	21.35
	40 001 and more CZK/month	1.61	20.77	29.46	16.64
Household income in terms of meeting needs and quality of life (in %)	Insufficient	0.81	0.00	0.45	0.44
	Low	8.47	6.28	4.91	6.63
	Sufficient	18.95	25.12	25.89	23.12
	Satisfactory	60.89	59.42	58.48	59.65
	High	10.89	9.18	10.27	10.16

Source: Questionnaire survey, 10–12/2022, $n = 679$

Chaudhuri and Majumdar, 2006; Nguyen and Tambyah, 2011; Riquelme et al., 2011), supplemented by statements focusing on social networks, influencers, and food characteristics. In total, there were 38 statements, with respondents expressing their levels of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = strong disagreement and 7 = strong agreement with a particular statement.

The data was analysed using Spearman's correlations, which are suitable for categorical data, and further processed using factor analysis, which is a suitable method designed to group variables with similar characteristics into larger factors (Brown, 2015). Subsequently, the relationship between the factors and the variable defining CC was examined *("When I know that I will consume the food before others, I buy more expensive and better-quality food to be perceived better in the group.")* by regression analysis.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Pilot Research: The Conspicuous Consumption of Generation Z

Research focusing only on Czech Generation Z ($n = 246$) served as pilot research and validation of the methods. The research confirmed that Generation Z is active on social media. Although other authors suggest that social media are an important source of inspiration for this generation (e.g., Gundová and Cvoligová, 2019; Djafarova and Bowes, 2021) in categories such as food and beverages, this influence was found to be less significant. Yet, research has shown that 55% of respondents follow influencers, and 43% of respondents admitted being inspired by various influencers.

The research tested a battery of statements with a total of 36 variables using a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), some of which were tailored to the topic of food consumption and some to general consumer behaviour. Factor analysis was used to categorize the variables into 7 different factors (labelled as Price; Social networks; Origin and composition of products; Materialism; Personality, values, and opinions of the social surroundings; Brand; Situational factors), and then regression analysis was used to look for relationships among these factors and the tendency to CC. In the analysis, only the factors Price; Origin and composition of products; Materialism and Personality, values, and opin-

Tab. 2: Social networks and influencers (in %)

Value	I take social networks as a source of inspiration.			I follow various personalities and celebrities on social media.			Every day I look at new posts on social media from people I follow.			I have purchased a product more than once based on an influencer recommendation.		
	Z	Y	X	Z	Y	X	Z	Y	X	Z	Y	X
1	12	22	52	8	32	60	31	63	32	31	57	79
2	10	16	13	12	19	17	13	8	19	17	14	9
3	8	15	11	9	10	8	14	7	10	11	9	2
4	18	16	7	8	12	4	10	6	12	8	7	3
5	17	11	6	15	13	5	6	3	13	16	7	2
6	15	11	4	18	9	1	13	5	9	12	6	2
7	20	9	7	30	6	5	14	8	6	5	2	3

Source: Questionnaire survey, 10–12/2022, $n = 679$

ions of the surroundings could be statistically demonstrated. Thus, the direct influence of social networks on conspicuous consumption could not be statistically demonstrated.

4.2 Research: The Conspicuous Consumption of Generations X, Y, and Z

After the pilot research, the methodology for measuring both the tendency for CC and the battery of statements was partly modified.

Data analysis shows that people are most price-sensitive when it comes to food and beverage expenditures, as indicated by the mean of the variables focusing on price (mean value 4.4) and discount (mean value 5), but quality (mean value 5.2) and ingredients (mean value 4.3) also play an important role. However, respondents confirmed that they tailor their purchases to the person with whom they will consume the food. The mean of this variable was 4.5, with a mode of 6. All 3 generations had similar values, with the lowest scores by Generation Y (mean value 4.48) and the highest being Generation X (mean value 4.53). The data also shows that respondents like to try new products and that concern for sustainability plays a role in their purchases.

4.2.1 Social Networks

As far as social networks are concerned, Generation Z is the most likely to look for inspiration for food purchases there (mode = 5). Generation Z also confirmed that they use social networks daily (mean value 5.1, mode 7) and take social networks as a source of inspiration (mean value 4.4, mode 7). In total, 63% of Generation Z respondents confirmed that they follow celebrities or personalities on social media, but only 32% of respondents claimed to have already purchased a product based on influencer recommendations. 41% of respondents expressed they would like to try food and beverages they saw presented on social media, for example, from influencers.

Generation Y seems to be noticeably less interested in social media. Only 40% of respondents indicated using them as a source of information, and only 28% agreed with the statement that they followed celebrities and

personalities on social media. The mode for both variables was 1. And 34% of respondents admitted checking social networks daily.

Generation X shown a noticeable lack of interest in both social networks as a source of inspiration (mean = 2.4), following influencers (mean = 2), and following their recommendations (mean = 1.6). This statement is supported by the negative correlation between the respondent's age and the social network as a source of inspiration variable (coefficient = -0.38) and between the respondent's age and the celebrity and personality following variable (coefficient = -0.54).

A negative statistically significant correlation was also found between the following celebrities and personalities and the respondent's income, which reached a value of -0.405, as well as between other variables related to the use of social networks.

4.2.2 Factor and Regression Analyses

Subsequently, the data was analysed using factor analysis, which combined 37 variables (see Tab. 3) into 7 factors:

- sensitivity to others – influence of the environment, experience and recommendations of others, need for approval from the environment;
- social network activity – inspiration, sharing consumption online, following others;
- origin and sustainability – origin and production process, eco-friendly packaging;
- materialism – preference for luxury, prestige brands, a public image a person has;
- price – price sensitivity and the influence of discounts;
- quality and brand – product quality, composition, and brand;
- personality and grandstand – expressing personality, values, and creating an impression through consumption.

Next, the regression analysis was designed to determine which of these factors were statistically significant in relation to the tendency to CC. The variable "When I know that I will consume the food in front of others, I buy more expensive and better-quality food to be perceived better in the group." was selected

Tab. 3: Factor analysis

Sensitivity to others	I keep an eye on what people in my area are buying for food to make sure I am buying products that are on trend.
	When I don't have experience with a particular brand of food or drink, I often ask other people about their experience.
	I buy foods and beverages that I think others would approve of.
	When making purchases, I am guided by who I will subsequently consume the food and beverage with.
	When I buy food and drink, I act on information and recommendations from my friends and acquaintances.
Social network activity	I also look to social media for inspiration when buying food.
	I like to try new products and brands.
	I follow different personalities and celebrities on social media.
	I have purchased a product more than once based on an influencer's recommendation.
	I share food and drink photos on social media.
	I take pictures of my food or drink and share these pictures with my friends and the surroundings.
	I take social media as a source of inspiration.
	I like to try foods and drinks that I see on social media, for example, from influencers and celebrities I follow.
	I follow certain groups of people on social media.
	I look at new posts on social media every day from people I follow.
Origin and sustainability	I shop at package-free stores or use reusable packaging (canvas bags, sustainable bags, etc.).
	I shop at speciality stores.
	I prefer food in organic packaging.
	When buying food, I also consider the origin and production process of food and drink.
Materialism	Buying prestigious brands makes me happy.
	I like to buy more expensive foods that impress others.
	I like luxury in my life.
	I am attracted to buying branded and more expensive products.
	The things I buy say a lot about how I am doing in life.
	It happens that I adapt my behaviour and appearance in situations in front of people when I feel it is necessary.
	I like to buy unusual brands to differentiate myself and accentuate my personality.
	I feel part of a social group when I buy the same products as people in that group.
	I buy products to support my image in the group.
Price	When buying groceries, price is the most important thing for me.
	When buying groceries, I am often influenced by a discount.
	I would be happier if I could afford to buy more expensive and branded food.
Quality and grandstand	I often choose food and beverages according to brands when shopping.
	For food and drink, I mainly buy products that I consider to be of good quality.
	When buying food and drink, I consider the composition of the food.
Personality and impression	By buying certain foods and drinks that are typical of me, I express my personality.
	By buying certain foods and drinks that are typical of me, I express my values.
	Buying branded food and drink gives me the opportunity to impress others.

as the explained variable for the regression analysis and Sensitivity to others; Origin and sustainability; Materialism; Quality and Brand; and Personality and grandstand out of the explanatory variables from the factor analysis were identified as statistically significant at the 5% level of significance. Price ended as a statistically significant factor at the 10% level of significance. The adjusted coefficient of determination for this model was 0.56 (see Tab. 4).

Tab. 4: Regression analysis
Explained variable: *When I know that I will consume the food in front of others, I buy more expensive and better-quality food to be perceived better in the group.*

Variable	Coefficient	Std. error	*t*-ratio	*p*-value
Constant	2.2842400	0.0415572	54.970	< 0.001 ***
Sensitivity to others	0.7438040	0.0415878	17.890	< 0.001 ***
Origin and sustainability	0.1352180	0.0415878	3.251	0.001 ***
Materialism	0.5902600	0.0415878	14.190	< 0.001 ***
Price	0.0854451	0.0415878	2.055	0.040 **
Quality and brand	−0.4015670	0.0415878	−9.656	< 0.001 ***
Personality and grandstand	0.6265220	0.0415878	15.070	< 0.001 ***

Source: Questionnaire survey, 10–12/2022, $n = 679$

Tab. 5: Regression analysis – Generation Z, Y, X
Explained variable: *When I know that I will consume the food in front of others, I buy more expensive and better-quality food to be perceived better in the group.*

Variable	Generation Z ($n = 248$) Coefficient	*p*-value	Generation Y ($n = 207$) Coefficient	*p*-value	Generation X ($n = 224$) Coefficient	*p*-value
Constant	2.359	< 0.001	2.265	< 0.001	2.414	< 0.001
Sensitivity to others	0.798	< 0.001	0.749	< 0.001	0.715	< 0.001
Origin and sustainability	*−0.071*	*0.407*	*0.043*	*0.596*	0.190	0.049
Materialism	0.160	0.033	*0.093*	*0.158*	0.162	0.035
Price	0.517	< 0.001	0.614	< 0.001	0.608	< 0.001
Quality and brand	*0.061*	*0.460*	*0.073*	*0.301*	*0.097*	*0.175*
Personality and grandstand	−0.388	< 0.001	−0.472	< 0.001	−0.319	< 0.001
Adjusted coefficient of determination	0.490781		0.657564		0.521375	

Note: Results marked in *italics* were proven insignificant. Source: Questionnaire survey, 10–12/2022, $n = 679$.

For each generation, all factors were found to be always significant except for the factor Price, which was not significant for either generation, and the factor Social network activity, which was not statistically significant for generations Z and Y but was significant for generation X (see Tab. 5).

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This research focused on conspicuous consumption, its relationship to social network uses by Generations Z, Y, and X, and intergenerational comparisons among them. These generations were selected because of their frequent use of social networks in their daily lives and participation in the labour market; thus we could assume regular income (Kardes et al., 2015). The paper aimed to explore how the nature of the user behaviour of these generations on social networks relates to their tendency to CC. The results of the analyses show that respondents do not follow social networks and influencers much in relation to food and beverage topics. The exception is Generation Z, but even its representatives were expected to reach higher scores due to the findings of Gundová and Cvoligová (2019) and Djafarova and Bowes (2021) confirming that being a subject of influence by influencer marketing.

Yet, it can be said that Generation Z follows social networks daily and draws inspiration from the content provided there. In total, 63% confirmed that they follow various celebrities and personalities; however, only 33% claim to have ever purchased a product based on a recommendation from influencers. According to the results, Generation Y and X have a lower interest in social networks. For Generation Y, only 31% of respondents confirmed social networks as a source of inspiration, and only 28% confirmed that they follow influencers. For Generation X, interest in social networks and influencers was even lower. On the other hand, the ratio of respondents who followed influencers to the number of respondents who have purchased a product based on an influencer's recommendation is interesting – for Generation Y, the ratio is 28% to 15%, and for Generation X it is 11% to 7%. Thus, it can be concluded that Generation Y consumers, if they follow an influencer, are more than 50% likely to purchase a product recommended by an influencer, and for Generation X, the likelihood is more than 60%.

This work included factors such as materialism, personality, gaining status in society, and other factors that have already been studied in relation to CC (Nguyen and Tambyah, 2011; Riquelme et al., 2011; Brooner and de Hoog, 2019) and investigated whether the nature of social network use, which has experienced a rapid increase in recent years and has become an integral part of consumers' lives (Gómez-Galán et al., 2020), can also be identified as an independent significant factor influencing CC. This hypothesis could not be proven for all respondents, and the significance of this factor came out as independent only for Generation X. In general, this generation doesn't show a big propensity for CC and activity on social networks, yet the results suggest that social networks play a role in the case of CC. This relationship may be due to the lower use of social networks, where experiences and photos are shared daily, by this generation. Thus, if someone from this generation uses networks frequently, they may be more prone to CC. Gen X is also the oldest of the three examined, so it is likely that they already have established consumption behaviour and may be more honest and accurate in their questionnaire responses.

The factors most influencing CC of food are: Sensitivity to others; Origin and sustainability, Materialism, Quality and brand, and Personality and grandstand, which proved to be statistically significant for all analysed generations. An interesting result is the factor Price, which came out as significant in the overall model but did not show statistical significance across generations.

This research had its limitations. The choice of a quantitative approach via a questionnaire survey poses challenges to the issue due to the superficiality of the respondents' answers and the length of the questionnaire, causing possible respondents' fatigue.

6   IMPLICATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH LINES

Although a direct relationship between the nature of social network use and CC as an independent factor has not been demonstrated across all analysed generations, it is worthwhile to explore this topic further. The use and degree of impact of social networking, at least for Generation Z, is evident in our research and as it has been in previous research (e.g., Gundová and Cvoligová, 2019; Djafarova and Bowes, 2021). Future research would benefit from an application of qualitative research, which would provide deeper insights into the mindset of consumers and could shed more light on their purchase decision-making process in visible consumption.

6.1   Managerial Implications

This study offers several possible managerial implications for marketing in the food industry. It evaluates the factors that consumers generally consider when making food choices. Although the price of food still plays an important role, consumers also consider other factors such as brand, quality, food origin, and sustainability. These factors should then be

the focus of marketing for these companies. The research also confirmed consumers' use of social media and followership of influencers, although less than expected in the food and drink category. Even when consuming food, consumers are influenced by their surroundings and their desire to express themselves and show their personalities through their consumption. Collaborating with influencers may then be one way for companies to support these tendencies.

7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

8 REFERENCES

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