

Basic food purchasing habits of young people in dimension of price inflation

Tímea Juhasz

Budapest Business University, Budapest, Hungary
Sopron University, Sopron, Hungary

Abstract

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Corresponding author:

Tímea Juhasz
E-mail:
juhasz.timea@
uni-sopron.hu

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Introduction. The aim of the research was to examine how inflation affects the basic food purchasing habits of a given consumer group and how they perceive and evaluate government measures aimed at reducing inflation.

Materials and methods. The target group examined consists of students studying at Hungary's largest economic university. The method examined is questionnaire-based research, in which the author evaluated the results using single and multiple variable methods.

Results and discussion. The analysis began with an overview of students' general food purchasing habits under the influence of recent price inflation. The findings revealed notable behavioral adjustments reflecting both economic constraints and changing consumption priorities. Many respondents reported that they now pay closer attention to prices, seek promotions more actively, and substitute more expensive products with cheaper alternatives. These adaptations suggest that young consumers are sensitive to even moderate price changes in essential food categories. The inflation had a negative impact on the purchasing habits of the young people participating in the study in the case of several basic foodstuffs. Students rated on a five-point Likert scale how their purchasing habits had changed after the introduction of inflation measures, where a score of 1 represented a decrease in overall purchasing and a score of 5 represented an increase in overall purchasing. The averages showed that purchases of the following products had decreased somewhat: homemade pork leg (M: 2.82), refined sunflower seed oil (M: 2.90), granulated sugar (M: 2.91), and plain wheat flour (BL 55) (M: 2.98). The study also confirmed that Pearson's correlation showed a very strong positive significant relationship between granulated sugar and flour (r : 0.800) and cooking oil (r : 0.726). Furthermore, there was a correlation between cooking oil and flour (r : 0.727), pork and flour (r : 0.564), and pork and oil (r : 0.572). The price trends of these foods also had an impact on the consumption and willingness to purchase foods used in combination with them. The measures introduced by the government, such as price caps and online price monitoring systems, did not have a significant positive effect on purchasing behaviour among this group of shoppers, which is due to their low awareness and infrequent use among the surveyed group.

Conclusion. Very high inflation has a negative impact on the purchases of basic foodstuffs among the young people surveyed, and that the impact of the government measures developed was not significantly noticeable for this group during the period of the study.

Introduction

In today's fast-changing world, food consumers face numerous factors that significantly influence their purchasing intentions and habits. This article presents selected results from a Hungarian study that examined the basic food purchasing habits of a group of higher-education students studying economics, focusing on their awareness of the government's inflation-control measures amid drastic price increases, and how these factors affect their food purchasing decisions.

From the early years of the second decade of the millennium onwards, Hungary's population has faced a combination of circumstances that have profoundly affected everyday life. In previous decades, such factors had never occurred simultaneously. Armed conflicts have erupted in several parts of the world, some directly impacting Hungary as a neighboring country. The effects of the Russian–Ukrainian war have been particularly significant since 2022, as rising energy and raw material prices led to a drastic increase in logistics costs. Unsurprisingly, these developments triggered an upward trend in food prices. While the average inflation rate in the European Union in October 2022 was 11.1%, Hungary's rate was nearly double that figure.

The situation was further aggravated by extremely drought-prone agricultural conditions (Szűcs-Kovács, 2023). In addition, the price of imported energy commodities almost tripled, which was reflected in the costs of numerous goods and services. These challenges emerged just as the country was recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like elsewhere, COVID-19 disrupted Hungary's food supply chain by restricting the free movement of goods (Cappelli and Cini, 2020; Cullen, 2020) and triggering panic buying of many staple products, especially during the initial phase of the outbreak, when empty shelves in shops became a common sight (Power et al., 2020).

In 2023, production chains were affected to a lesser extent and in different ways, leading to a significant increase in Ukrainian exports and a consequent decline in Hungarian producer prices. Moreover, weather conditions in Hungary became much more favorable for crop production after 2022, which contributed to a decrease in food inflation to 4.8 percent by the end of 2023 (Világgazdaság, 2024). It is therefore evident that a combination of external and internal factors contributed to the emergence of high inflation in Hungary (levels that also exceeded the European Union average) and that several government measures were implemented to mitigate its effects.

The present study aimed to examine the impact of inflation on the food purchasing decisions of higher education students and to assess how well these government measures, particularly those targeting price stabilization, are known and perceived among economics students.

Factors that influence consumers' purchasing decisions. In 2019, the Hungarian National Chamber of Agriculture published a study on the factors influencing food choices. Based on this study, researchers mention sociological factors among the variables that influence consumers' purchasing decisions. In particular, the group of which the individual is already a member or to which the consumer would like to belong may be of particular importance. The closest and immediate circle is the family, which functions as a collective decision-maker on the issue in question. The other circle is that of the so-called opinion leaders, who play a decisive role in shaping and influencing opinions within a group and in the flow of information.

Other variables that emerge, according to the study, are the psychological characteristics of consumers, which play a role in whether they reject or accept certain foods. This decision may be expressed through the sensory attributes of the product, the symbols associated with the food (e.g. brand names, trademarks), or the perception of the expected

consequences. Other factors may include consumers' values, lifestyle and current trends that affect them.

Of course, the economic situation of the buyer cannot be ignored, either. However, the fact is that households' financial reserves are beginning to erode during a prolonged period of sustained high inflation, which causes people to increasingly look for bargain food products. However, Tambassur and Jabim (2020) point out that there are products for which people are willing to pay even more. For example, 44% of the consumers surveyed consented to pay an average of 9% more to buy the health and wellness food they wanted. Their regression analyses confirmed that income and education are important influencing variables when buying healthy foods. Health consciousness is the most important psychological characteristic of these shoppers, followed by product quality, taste, packaging, price, etc. in their decision to buy health and wellness foods.

Meanwhile, the research of Buglyó-Nyakas-Gál in 2023 highlighted that most households are affected by price rises. At the same time, they argue that food price rises do not always fundamentally change purchasing and consumption patterns. This can be explained by the fact that some people, known as traditionalists, cling to their old way of life even if they do not have outstanding material assets. However, it is also evident from their studies that there is a kind of action-seeking behaviour, looking for cheaper shopping opportunities, whereby consumers try to maintain the quality of food consumption and the options they were used to.

Finally, Kovács et al. (2022) point out that especially the younger generations (Millennials and Centennials) are increasingly aware of the ethical, environmental and social impacts of their food choices. In their opinion, studies on younger generations also suggest that emotional factors such as nostalgia for buying local products, entertainment, memories of old times, novelty, and the desire for experience are also included.

Government measures to curb food prices. As the author pointed out above, the inflation rate in Hungary increased significantly in 2022-2023 and was well below the EU average. Figure 1 shows the inflation rates between January 2022 and February 2024 in the EU and Hungary and demonstrates that there is a large difference between the values for the given months.

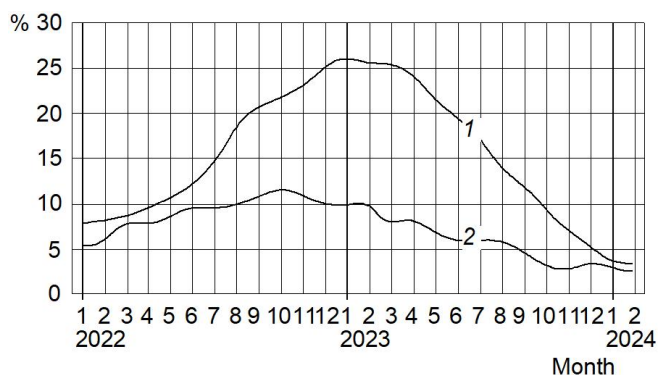


Figure 1. Inflation in Hungary (1) and the EU (2) (HICP, yr/yr, %)

Source: Eurostat, Portfolio (2024) <https://www.portfolio.hu/en/economy/20240318/hungarys-inflation-remains-in-top-third-of-eu-ranking-675437>

In the last three years, the Hungarian government has taken several direct measures to curb prices. These have been aimed at reducing the magnitude of inflation in the purchase of basic foodstuffs.

In the present research, the author has examined the following, without claiming completeness:

Price stop. The Hungarian government temporarily introduced a price freeze on certain staple foods in the autumn of 2021, and in November 2022 the government extended the price freeze on certain staple foods. Accordingly, the price control was extended to the following products: granulated sugar, plain wheat flour (BL 55), refined sunflower oil, domestic pork legs, chicken breast, chicken rump, chicken skin, chicken tail, chicken wings, ultra-high temperature treated cow's milk with 2.8% fat content, chicken eggs, table potatoes, excluding new potatoes. Government Decree 279/2023 (29.VI.) was related to the phasing out of the food price freeze, so the food price freeze was in force until 31 July. This intervention in market prices lasted for a total period of 1.5 years, and there is no consensus among experts on the success of its price suppressive effect. According to Balaton (2022), this measure could have a long-term negative impact on the market, distorting it and thus further worsening the competitiveness of the food industry.

Price monitoring system. To further reduce food prices and increase competition in the retail sector, the government has introduced a compulsory promotion for retail outlets from June 2023 and has agreed to the introduction of an online price monitoring database. Initially, the online price monitoring system, launched by the Office of Economic Competition, will allow consumers to find out the prices of more than 60 categories of food products. The largest retail chains with a turnover of more than HUF 100 billion were obliged to provide data, but the Hungarian government also made it possible for traders who did not have such an obligation to join voluntarily.

According to Világgazdaság (2024), the targeted government measures, the central bank's actions and the intervention of the competition authority were among the reasons why the monthly food price increase in March 2024 was only 0.7%, the lowest in almost eight years.

In the following, the author presents some results of a study conducted last year among students at a business university in Hungary. The target group was chosen deliberately. The author of the study believed that the individuals in the sample had a good basis in terms of knowledge and understanding of basic economic processes and causality, as they were students in higher education in economics, and could therefore realistically base their decisions and evaluations on this knowledge.

The aim of the research was to show how young Hungarians make decisions about purchasing basic foodstuffs in an economic environment burdened by very high inflation. It also sought to determine how aware they are of the government measures designed to curb inflation.

Materials and methods

Sample collection

The study was conducted in the second half of 2023 at the Faculty of Foreign Trade and Finance of Budapest Business University, Hungary's largest business university, and students completed a questionnaire that had not been validated before and had not been used in another research. At the beginning of the study, a test questionnaire was administered to check that all questions were understandable to the respondents. Five students participated in this process. To validate the questionnaire, after the large sample had been interviewed, a further 20 students completed the questionnaire, and the results were like those completed by the large sample. The responses were voluntary and anonymous, and the research respected

GDPR regulations. The questionnaire was posted on a social media platform and on the university's internal student platform, so it was not possible to measure the willingness to complete it. The questionnaire was eventually completed by 380 students. To determine the sufficient sample size, the author used the sample size calculator. Based on this, the institution had nearly 18,000 students at the time of the research (the university with the largest number of business students in Hungary). According to the calculator, at least 377 or more measurements/surveys are needed to get a true value within $\pm 5\%$ of the measured value at a 95% confidence level (calculator.net, 2024). Since the sample size was more than this, the author considered the sample size to be sufficient.

Sample

The sample specification is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample specification

Property	Frequency (%)
No	45.5% Male 54.5% Female
Place of residence of respondents	45.3% Budapest 54.7% Rural areas
Living with parents	48.8% Living apart from parents 51.2% Living with parents
Personal monthly living expenses paid by	66.9% Independent of parents 33.1% Dependent on parents

The average age of the students was 25.56 years, with a standard deviation of 11.771. Cross tabulation analyses showed that 42% of women lived in Budapest, while 42% of men did. 46.3% of girls lived apart from their parents, while the proportion for boys was 51.8%. Almost 88% of students living apart from their parents were able to support themselves. 52.5% of students living independently lived in Budapest and 68% of those living in Budapest were also able to be economically independent from their parents.

Questionnaire and statistical analysis

The questionnaire administered to students typically consisted of closed questions (18) and only 2 questions were open-ended. The questions were based on categorical variables and interval scales, including a five-point Likert scale. Following Josh et al. (2015), the author of this study interpreted the Likert scale as an interval scale. In the study, he tried to combine all the items to produce a composite score for an individual (Bone, 2012; Carifio, 2007). The author used SPSS version 29 to evaluate the questionnaire. Univariate and multivariate methods, i.e., frequency, mean, standard deviation, as well as cross tabulation analysis, correlation cluster analysis and factor analysis were used.

The questions of the questionnaire for the present study are presented by the author in three major groups (Table 2).

Table 2

Group structure of questions: Questionnaire structure

First group of questions. Student specific questions	Second group of questions. Trends in the purchase of basic foodstuffs because of government measures	Third group of questions. The price monitoring system
No Age Family status? Customer type Who pays the cost of living? Personnel costs in line with inflation?	Buying basic foodstuffs because of online price monitoring Buying basic foodstuffs because of the price freeze Knowledge of government measures to fight inflation	Using the price monitoring system Factors affecting the use of price monitoring

Aims and hypothesis

In the current study, the author explores and analyses the results along the following lines:

The aim of the study is to find out how the purchase of basic foodstuffs was affected by the price freeze measure and the online price monitoring system in the sample.

The aim of the study is to find out whether gender, place of residence and who pays the cost-of-living effect perceptions of the success of the two measures.

The purpose of the survey is to find out how aware the student is of the online price monitoring system, and whether gender, place of residence, whether the student lives apart from his/her parents and who pays the living costs affect the perception of the tool. Along the above objectives, the author examines the validity of the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The willingness of the students in the study to buy basic foodstuffs was positively influenced by the price freeze and the online price monitoring system.

Hypothesis 2: For the students in the study, awareness of the government measures used is significantly influenced by gender, place of residence and who pays for the cost of living.

Hypothesis 3: The students in the study typically use the online price monitoring system, and satisfaction with the system is influenced by gender, place of residence, whether the student lives apart from their parents, and who pays their living costs.

Results and discussion

Testing the first hypothesis

The first hypothesis of the study was to examine the impact of the government's inflation-suppressing measures on the purchase of the basic foodstuffs that appeared in the regulations. The author listed a number of these for the students, who rated on a five-point Likert scale how their shopping habits changed after the measures were introduced, with a value of one indicating less shopping overall and a value of five indicating more shopping overall. The author summarised in Table 3 the general pattern of consumption of each product and the impact of the measures on the consumption of these products.

Table 3
Effectiveness of measures affecting the purchase of consumer goods (M, SD)

Food	How have consumer price increases affected shopping?		Price stop		Online price monitoring system		Difference Mean
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Granulated sugar	2.91	0.741	2.98	0.777	2.03	1.174	0.95
Plain wheat flour (BL 55)	2.98	0.722	3.00	0.737	2.02	1.174	0.98
Refined sunflower seed oil	2.90	0.739	2.97	0.730	2.01	1.153	0.96
Homemade pork leg	2.82	0.762	2.88	0.725	2.03	1.181	0.84
Chicken breast, chicken tail, chicken skin, chicken tail, chicken wing ends	3.21	0.774	3.13	0.784	2.19	1.277	0.94
Ultra-high temperature treated cow's milk with 2.8% fat content	2.96	0.830	2.99	0.835	2.06	1.208	0.94
Hen's egg	3.12	0.786	3.07	0.715	2.12	1.221	0.95
Potatoes for human consumption, other than new potatoes	3.04	0.636	3.03	0.633	2.05	1.166	0.98

The data in the table show that, basically, consumer price increases had a neutral or negative effect on students' basic food purchases, i.e. they bought the same or less food. In the case of meat, pork purchases were reduced, and the situation was similar for granulated sugar, milk, flour and cooking oil. Overall, the two government measures did not have a positive impact on student purchases. The average difference between the two measures shows that the price freeze still had a more positive incentive effect than the online price monitoring system. One reason for this larger average difference may be that the online price monitoring system was a relatively recent measure at the time of the study, and therefore its awareness and impact may not yet have been as widespread and effective as that of the price freeze. The author also looked at which food purchases were strongly correlated with other consumer products. Pearson's correlation showed a very strong positive significant correlation between granulated sugar and flour (0.8), between refined oil (0.726), between refined oil and flour (0.727), between pork and flour (0.564), and between pork and oil (0.572). The price of these foods also affected the consumption and willingness to buy of the paired foods.

Overall, it can be concluded that the government measures did not have a significant positive effect on the purchasing behaviour of the students studied, and thus the first hypothesis is rejected.

Testing the second hypothesis

The second hypothesis concerned the factors that influence the visibility of government measures. On the popularity measure, respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale the extent to which they were aware of how prices were evolving and the extent to which they were informed about government measures. Among the factors influencing awareness, the authors looked at gender, place of residence and who pays for living costs (i.e. whether the student lives with or without parents).

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation and independent sample T test results. The author has indicated where the groups' knowledge of a given instrument was significantly different and has noted which group had the highest mean in these cases.

Table 4
How aware are students of the extent of food inflation and the government measures to curb it?
(M, SD, T-test, significance: 0.05)

Findings	Mean	SD	No	Residence	Cost of living
			T- test	T- test	T- test
I am aware of how inflation in food is evolving in Hungary.	3.91	0.925	t: 2.584 sign: .005 Men M: 4.05	No significant difference	t: 1.818 sign: 0.035 Own M: 3.98
I am aware of the products affected by the government's price freeze.	3.88	0.958	No significant difference	No significant difference	t: 2.378 sign.: 0.009 Own M: 3.97
I am aware of the online price monitoring system that was introduced from 1 July 2023.	3.19	1.317	t: 2.597 sig.:0.005 Men M: 3.39	No significant difference	t:2.971 sig.:0.002 Own M: 3.34
I am aware of the compulsory promotion in retail shops that started on 1 June 2023.	3.39	1.253	t: 1.965 t: 0.025 Men M: 3.53	No significant difference	t: 3.599 sign.: 0.001 Own M: 3.55

The average values calculated for the statements in the table show that students are familiar with both the price evolution of basic foodstuffs and the price freeze measure. However, they have less information about the price monitoring system and the compulsory action. This can be explained, among other things, by the fact that, as the author has already pointed out, this government regulation came out later than the price freeze and it is possible that more students were not yet aware of these possibilities. However, it can also be seen from the data in the table that the standard deviation values for these two measures were higher than for the price freeze, i.e. there was less unanimity among students in these cases. The author has examined whether for some factors singly significant differences in the perception of statements can be identified.

First, the writer analysed the gender gap. For almost all statements, men were more strongly aware of the issue than women, except for the dimension of the price stop.

Whether someone lived in the countryside or the capital had no significant effect on how clearly they perceived the issue. The residence variable was felt by the author to be worth investigating because living in Budapest is more expensive than in the countryside (KSH, 2023), and therefore she thought that this might be reflected in the knowledge of the measures, but this assumption was not supported.

The author of the study also looked at the livelihood situation to see who is aware of the problem and how they see it. She distinguished two groups. On the one hand, there are students who cover their own living expenses, and on the other hand, those whose parents bear the costs, either fully or partially. Many university students work while studying, primarily to pay tuition fees and support their living expenses. The institution provides several opportunities to combine work and study, organising classes as flexibly as possible to accommodate students' work schedules. For instance, many online classes are held on Fridays and can be watched at a convenient time.

The livelihood sources showed a divergence of views on several issues. This is not surprising, since students who rely only on their own resources tend to have a better understanding of the prices and trends of basic foodstuffs, since they basically buy their own products and must manage their own resources.

It can be seen, therefore, that gender and whether a student is trying to make a living on their own or with the help of their parents has an impact on their awareness of how food prices are evolving and how governments are trying to control them. Based on the results for this sample, the author only partially accepts her second hypothesis.

Testing the third hypothesis

The third hypothesis related entirely to the relatively recent introduction of online price monitoring. The research made statements about this to the students, who had to decide how true the statement was in their case. One was not true at all, while five was absolutely true. The author examined the averages and standard deviations of the students' opinions and then factorised the statements. All variables were suitable for factorization. The KMO and Barlett's test: KMO: 0.923 Khi-square: 4859.151 df: 55 sig.:0.000. Factors were constructed using Varimax rotation and three factors were constructed (Sajtos-Mitev, 2007). The explained coefficient of variance was 86.8%. In Table 5, the author presents the mean standard deviation of the variables, the factor weights and the Cronbach's alpha values of the constructed factors (Table 5).

The averages of the statements show that, in principle, the sample does not show that the online price monitoring system is used in practice by students, even via a popular device such as a mobile phone. The question arises whether this could be due to a lack of confidence in the system, given the small number of goods that are on the system on the one hand, and the lack of confidence in the authenticity of the information on the other. At the same time, price is more important than quality for most of the sample under consideration.

Three factors were created from the items by the author, which were found to have high reliability values (Cronbach's alpha). These factors were related to the use of and satisfaction with the online price monitor. For further analysis, the author of the study formed homogeneous groups or clusters using the three factors. Three clusters were created using a K-means procedure. The final cluster centres are shown in Table 6.

Table 5

Factors associated with online price monitoring, Cronbach alpha, and components

Factors	Claims	M	SD	Cronbach alpha	Component		
					1	2	3
Using the online monitoring system	I also use the price monitoring system while shopping.	1.78	1.09	0.97	0.905		
	I also use the shop filter function on the map in the price monitoring system.	1.77	1.13		0.895		
	I have the price monitoring system app on my phone.	1.81	1.18		0.881		
	I check the price monitoring system before buying.	1.90	1.18		0.816		
	I consciously shop at chains that are on the price watch list.	1.86	1.18		0.815		
Satisfaction with the online price monitoring system	Authentic price information is included in the price monitor.	2.38	1.23	0.94		0.840	
	I consider the use of a price monitor to be a good savings tool.	2.38	1.26			0.838	
	The price monitor is a very convenient tool.	2.18	1.19			0.760	
Dissatisfaction with the online price monitoring system	The price monitoring system is difficult to use while shopping.	2.25	1.28	0.86			0.830
	I consider the range of products that are in the price watch to be small.	2.26	1.25				0.811
	Despite the price watchdog, quality is still important to me, not price.	2.43	1.32				0.674

Final cluster centres

Table 6

Factors	Cluster	
	1	2
Using the online monitoring system	-1.19598	-0.98957
Satisfaction with the online price monitoring system	-2.16828	2.66676
Dissatisfaction with the online price monitoring system	3.71067	-2.04362

Source: author's own research

Cluster characteristics based on cluster centres:

1. *Cluster*: includes those who, although they do not typically use the online price monitoring system regularly, do not have a good opinion of it. 105 respondents can be classified here.
2. *Cluster*: those who, although not typically using the online price monitoring system regularly, consider it a good and credible tool. 275 respondents are in this group.

The author has examined how gender, place of residence, whether the student lives apart from his/her parents and who pays for his/her living expenses affect clustering. Only for place of residence was a significant association found (Chi-square 5.886 df: 1 sig.:0.015 $p < 0.05$). 78.5% of those living in the capital belonged to the satisfied group, while 21.5% belonged to the dissatisfied group. The same proportion for rural residents: 67.3% were satisfied with the system, while 32.7% were less satisfied.

Overall, it can be concluded that many students are not yet active users of the system, which makes it difficult for them to form a reliable opinion about it, and therefore the third hypothesis is rejected.

Hypotheses and thesis

In the light of the results of the study, the following theses can be drawn from the results (Table 7).

Table 7

Hypothesis-Thesis table

Hypothesis	Decision	Thesis
The willingness of the students in the study to buy basic foodstuffs was positively influenced by the price freeze and the online price monitoring system.	Rejection	The willingness of the students in the study to buy basic foodstuffs was not affected by price freeze and online price monitoring systems.
For the students in the study, awareness of the government measures used is significantly influenced by gender, place of residence and who pays for the cost of living.	Partial acceptance	For the students in the study, gender and who pays the cost of living significantly influenced the awareness of the government measures used.
The students in the study typically use the online price monitoring system, and satisfaction with the system is influenced by gender, place of residence, whether the student lives apart from their parents, and who pays their living costs.	Rejection	The students in the study do not typically use the online price monitoring system, and satisfaction with the system is influenced by whether the student lives in the capital or in the countryside.

A conscious consumer is characterised by several qualities. Among others, consumers who are well informed, know their consumer rights and can assert them can be considered as knowledgeable (Kotler-Keller, 2013). However, many factors can influence a good purchasing decision (Andreyeva et al., 2010; Stone et al. 2024).

Recently, several factors have played a role in Hungary that have had a significant impact on consumers' consumption decisions. One such factor was food price inflation, which was triggered by international, domestic structural and cyclical factors. Without being exhaustive, such factors included, for example, global increases in crop prices, increases in energy prices, the energy intensity of the Hungarian market, exchange rate fluctuations, competitiveness gaps, etc. In the author's study, too, students cited rising food production costs, uncertain international economic relations and scarce energy supplies as the main reasons for the situation.

Inflation in Hungary has been higher than the European average for two years, with prices being 30% higher than two years earlier from November 2022 until the end of 2023 (KSH, 2023). It is no coincidence that this situation, for a conscious shopper, induces a constant rethinking of purchasing decisions. During inflationary periods, consumers switch to cheaper products and do not buy items they do not consider indispensable. This was also the case in Hungary. That is, customers, under the impact of inflation, choose cheaper products and buy from retailers where they can find discounted prices (IPSOS, 2022). At the same time, Sikos et al. (2022) stress in their study that the business success of enterprises today also depends on the extent to which retailers can adapt quickly and efficiently to market and non-market changes, including the challenges induced by inflation. In other words, whether they can move quickly ahead of their competitors, even in terms of action, whether they can develop innovative and digital solutions to reduce their production and logistics costs (Csekő, 2018), and whether they can manage and compensate for the negative effects of mandatory government measures (price freezes, mandatory action) in the long term.

The study conducted by the author also shows that the basic food purchasing habits of the university students surveyed in the study were negatively affected by inflation, and they either bought unchanged or fewer quantities of the indicated basic food items.

Molnár-Hajdú's (2023) study did not only cover staple foods when they looked at the impact of inflation on consumption. In the sample they analysed, they found a decrease in the frequency of purchases of vegetables/fruit, dairy products and bakery products. No significant shifts were identified for meats and alcoholic beverages, but they were found for sweets and desserts. Durable foodstuffs, and clothing in particular, tend to be hoarded and therefore less frequently purchased. This phenomenon was also confirmed during this period when purchasing these goods.

However, analysts are divided on the impact of government measures to curb inflation. The MNB's (Hungarian National Bank) 2024 study, *The Factors Behind Domestic Food Inflation* argues that price caps have not been effective in containing food inflation, as their market-distorting effects became evident during their period of enforcement, leading to a widening gap between domestic and regional food inflation. Moreover, companies sought to offset losses incurred on products subject to price freezes by increasing prices on other goods to recover lost revenues. In contrast, government measures aimed at enhancing competition among firms, such as the introduction of a price monitoring system, have contributed to a reduction in domestic food inflation. The author was also curious to know how successful the students she interviewed consider government measures to tackle inflation to be. On a Likert scale of one to five, respondents rated one as not at all successful and five as a complete success. Overall, measures to curb inflation were judged to be effective by 17% of respondents. The price freeze scheme was perceived by one in seven students, while the

online price monitor and compulsory sales promotion were perceived by one in five as good tools to achieve their objectives. It can be said, therefore, that student opinions on success and effectiveness were very mixed in the sample studied.

Conclusions

Current research has shown that inflation also influences students' consumption habits, as they tend to purchase less or approximately the same amount of basic foodstuffs in Hungary as before. These results are in several respects consistent with the findings of earlier and parallel studies on the topic, which were discussed in the previous section. Although students are aware of, or have heard about, government measures aimed at curbing inflation, they do not yet use, or only rarely use, the newly introduced online price monitoring system. Young people's opinions remain divided regarding the effectiveness of these governmental actions. However, this finding should be treated with caution, as many respondents had not yet experienced the system first-hand at the time of the survey. A follow-up questionnaire will therefore be distributed to assess how these measures may have influenced students' views now that their actual impact on reducing price inflation is becoming more evident. Furthermore, the next stage of the research will aim to include students with little or no background in economics, allowing for an analysis of their attitudes and experiences in comparison with those of students specializing in economics.

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