

Men's loss of prestige

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ABSTRACT

The market shows the effects of changed economic circumstances. Today's "crisis-learned" consumer is more conscious than a few years ago: the aspects of store and brand choice have changed, and the expected quality of the product differentiated as well. To process social come-down it is really complicated.

This phenomenon affects male consumers as well. Men do not stick to lots of product but it is the toughest to give up the consumption of those which they do stick to. For a man who finds his identity in the job, if it is linked with the job loss, it means a catastrophe. In order to mitigate the effect of this phenomenon the male consumer tries to create different kinds of strategies. Beside financial considerations these strategies contain emotional processing as well. In our research we aim to present the changed consumer behaviour of male consumers stressed by the phenomenon of social come-down which means a financial and economic instability.

In order to reach our research aims we present the results of an online questionnaire of 2000 respondents.

Key Words: male shoppers, new consumer decisions, trends, crisis-learned consumer, social come-down

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Worldwide economic crisis have changed the financial situation of people. Because of the changes lots of consumers have less income and/or budget to spend, that is why they had to change their shopping habits and their way of living.

We are inclined to believe that the changes in shopping habits effect negatively women, but the aforementioned changes have effect on males, male shoppers as well. We call this phenomenon social come-down.

Our aim is to compare the different groups of men within those who are involved in social come-down. In this sense the grouping factor is the involvement of male respondents in the phenomenon. We aim to demonstrate that the male members of consumer society also feel the effects of the changes in economic circumstances and they try to develop different strategies to reduce the impact of that. These strategies include financial considerations and actions, but emotional issues are also parts of this new way of thinking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Male shoppers are becoming a more and more important market segment: Brosdahl and Carpenter (2011) recognized this as well. They say that this is an important and distinctive market segment. According to lots of writers the male shopper segment is a single,

homogeneous market segment. Brosdahl and Carpenter recognized that this segment should be identified as the sum of smaller and more homogeneous sub-segments.

Bauer Media’s research (2010) is called 4D Men. It was designed to highlight the new aspects of men’s motivations, needs and pressures. The study searched for insights by using a complex research design. It included focus groups, online blogs, video diaries and a brand tracking study. 1500 men between their age of 15 and 40 participated in the research.

According to this research nowadays men try to live a more health conscious life. There is also a gender crisis which means that men do not feel themselves safe in their position; they feel stressed about their identity, their masculinity and their gender roles. They are pressed by the side of women, the family and by their job as well; they have to behave as other members of the society would like to.

According to GfK NOP research (2010) men are more confident about the recovery after the crisis than women. This research examines the different attitudes of men and women about the consumer behaviour after the crisis. For example they found that 19% of men stated that the impact of the crisis will affect them after the crisis ends. 28% of women think the same, so the proportion of uncertain people is higher in the women group.

METHOD

In our research we asked 2000 people with a face-to-face questionnaire in late spring of 2013 in Hungary. This research method represents the Hungarian population by the following factors: gender, age, education, region and the residence’s type of settlement. The main topics which we examined were the followings: openness, financial situation, shopping and saving attitudes. At the end of our analyses we identified different groups of the examined segment with multivariate analysis. We used SPSS 16.0.

At the beginning of our research we identified two groups within men to compare them to each other:

1. those who were affected by the phenomenon of social come-down (n=590),
2. those who were not affected by the phenomenon (n=334).

The first group contains those respondents who felt that nowadays they have to budget their money more efficiently than before and who have to cut their expenses. In the second group we have respondents who do not need to change the shopping habits and those who can even spend more than before.

On Figure 1 these groups are shown by the genders: 69,4% of women are affected by the aforementioned phenomenon. This proportion is 61,7% in case of men.

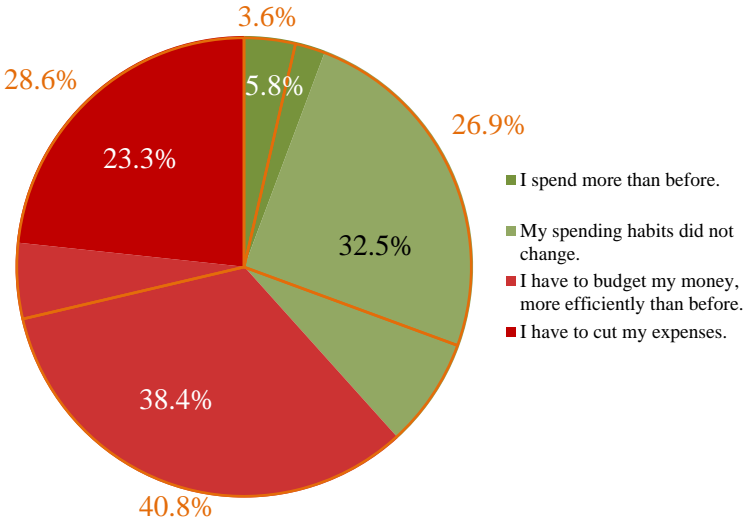


Figure 1 Involvement of men (n=956) and women (n=1044) in the phenomenon of social come-down

FINDINGS

Sample demographics

We asked 2000 people in Hungary. In the sample we had 956 men. Based on the grouping question we identified two groups of men. The demographic differences (Figure 2.) show that in the group of men who are involved in social come-down there are more old people than in the other group (who are not involved in social come-down): the proportion of men between 40 and 59 is higher than the average. In contrast, in the not involved group the proportion of young people is higher than the average. Men who are involved in social come-down have lower education, but we cannot distinguish about their residence's settlement type. There are a higher proportion of men with a higher education in the group of not involved men. Their proportion is higher than the average in case of county towns and small villages.

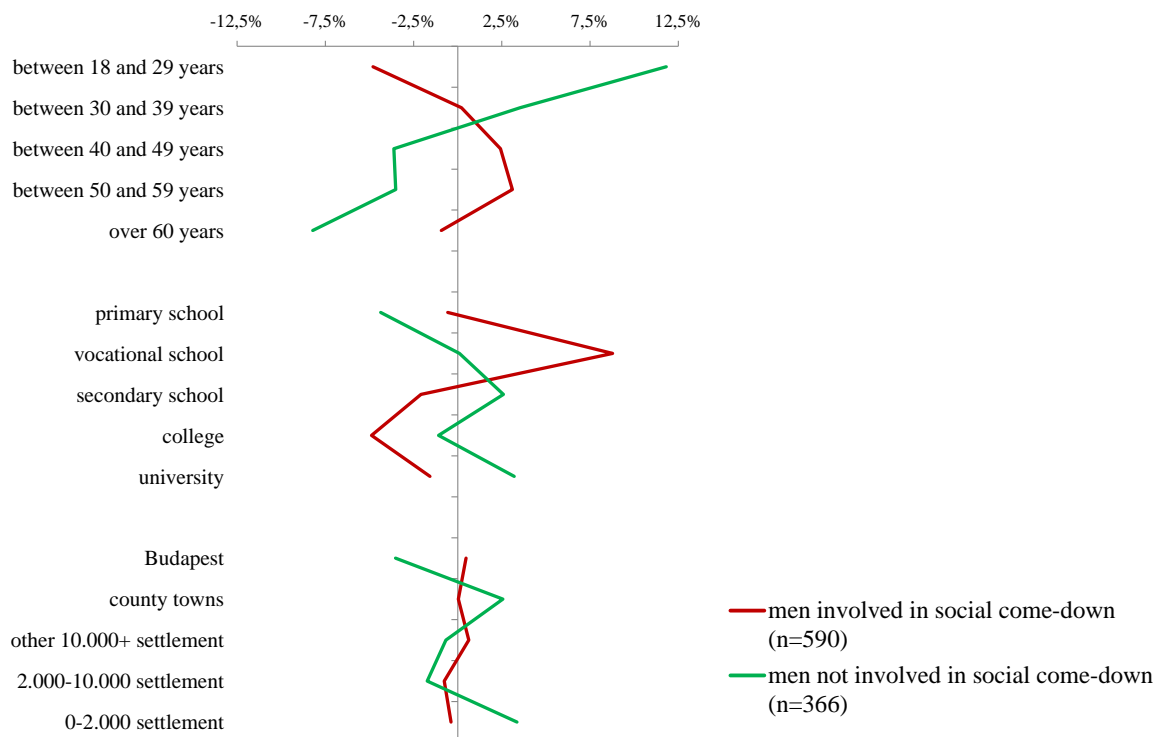


Figure 2 Differences of demographic characteristics of men who are involved in social come-down and who are not

Openness

We made examinations about openness (Figure 3.). It is important to see the attitudes of the different groups of men about openness: how opened they are if there is a new product or service appears on the market. We were curious if they accept new products easily or not.

The proportion of men who involved social come-down is higher among those who are not that opened for new things and who usually do not like to try new things or they do but just after the mass have tried it.

Those men who are in a good situation like to get to know new things on their own and like to give advices about that things with a higher proportion than those who are in a poor financial situation.

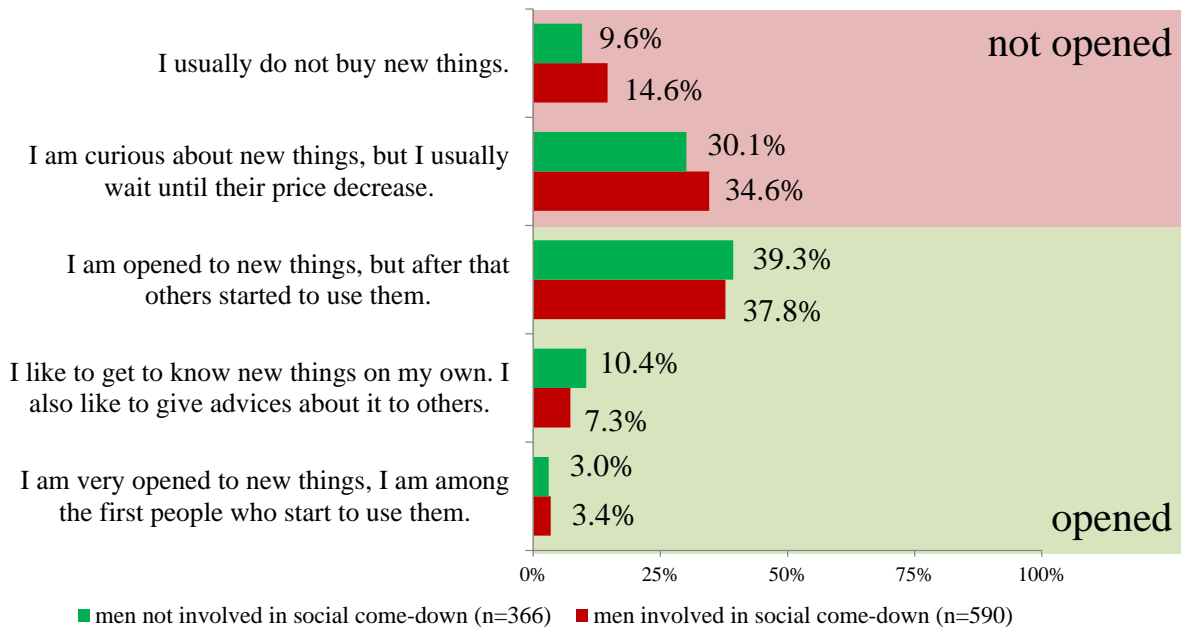


Figure 3 Differences of the examined segments about openness

Financial situation

We asked the respondents about their disposable money in a month (Figure 4.). This is the amount of money which can be spent without limitations. We registered the answers from the respondents in Hungarian Forint, but for the easier understanding we present the result in Euros (the exchange rate is 300 HUF=1 EUR).

Men who are involved in social come-down have less disposable money in average: they have 229 euros. In contrast, the disposable money of not involved men is 35% higher: they can spend 308 euros every month.

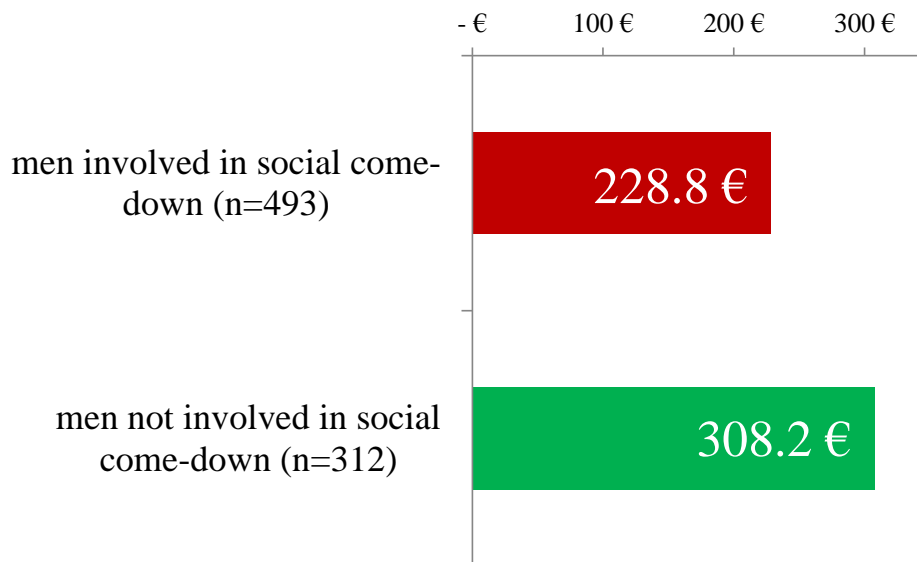


Figure 4 Differences in the average disposable money (1 €=300 HUF)

We asked the respondents to tell us about the financial situation of their household (Figure 5). We found that those men who are involved in social come-down have dominantly a poor financial situation; their proportion is 54.1%. Who are not involved in this phenomenon they mostly have a good financial situation; 66.6% stated this.

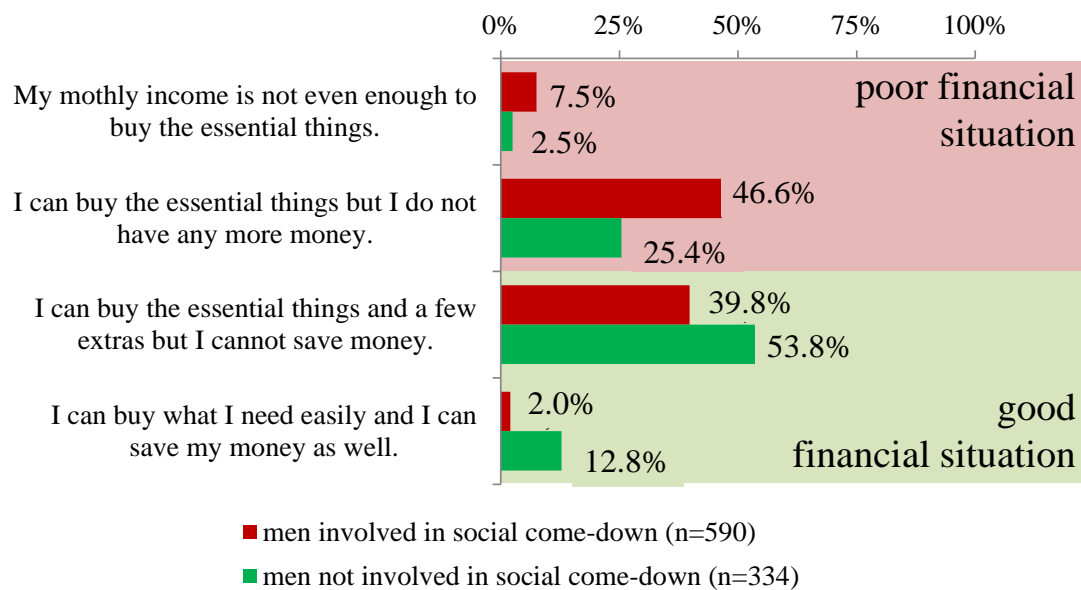


Figure 5 Financial situation of male groups (1 €=300 HUF)

Saving and shopping attitudes

We also examined the saving and shopping habits of men. We found that men who are involved in social come-down are more dependent on their needs if we talk about shopping. This group of men do more planning and budgeting before shopping (Figure 6.)

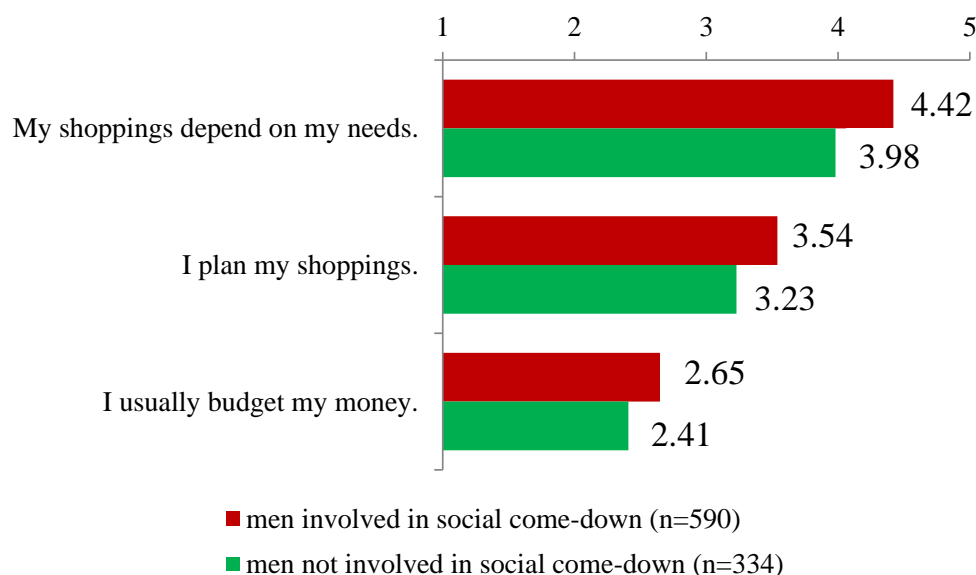


Figure 6 Differences of the examined segments in saving habits

Men involved in social come-down react more sensitively to statements about shopping. On figure 7 there are results connected to this statement. Males rather:

- look for sales and discounts,
- try to avoid not planned shopping,
- spend less on entertainment,
- buy a “no-name” brand instead of buying a more expensive famous brand,
- work more to ensure the standards of living,
- choose cheaper brands,
- quit the consumption of several products,
- manufacture/make things at home instead of purchasing them,

Those men who are not involved in social come-down were more sensitive about only one statement: this statement is about environment. It seems that those men who are in a good financial situation pay more attention on environment.

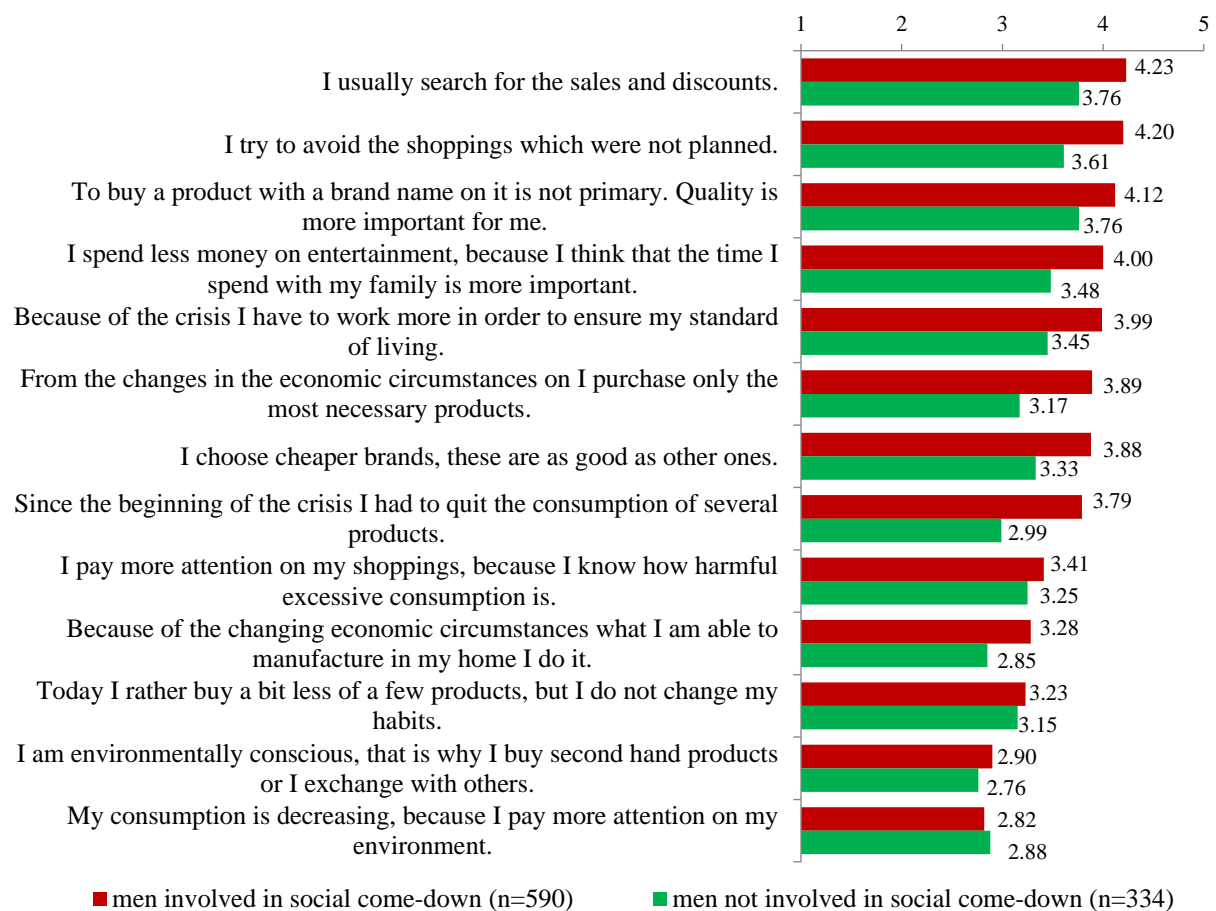


Figure 7 Differences of the examined segments in shopping habits

Groups of men who are involved in social come-down

One of our research aims is to identify groups of men who are in poor financial situation. To reach this aim we use multivariate analysis: first, to identify the main trends of men’s attitudes we perform factor analysis. Second, by using these factors we perform a cluster analysis to identify different groups of poor situation men.

We involved 13 variables into the factor analysis. The cumulatives were all suitable for the analysis. As a result of this method we identified four different factors. These factors include

the 13 variable which we involved into the analysis. We named the factors based on these variables (indicated on Figure 8):

1. shopping strategies
2. consciousness
3. rational decisions
4. satisfaction

Rotated Component Matrix				
	Component			
	shopping strategies	consciousness	rational decisions	satisfaction
My shoppings depend on my needs.			0.5966965	
I usually budget my money.			0.7572837	
I plan my shoppings.			0.7666770	
I choose cheaper brands, these are as good as other ones.	0.6202256			
From the changes in the economic circumstances on I purchase only the most necessary products.	0.6272833			
To buy a product with a brand name on it is not primary. Quality is more important for me.	0.6396260			
I spend less money on entertainment, because I think that the time I spend with my family is more important.	0.7160220			
I try to avoid the shopping which were not planned.	0.6924732			
I am environmentally conscious, that is why I buy second hand products or I exchange with others.		0.7342094		
I pay more attention on my shoppings, because I know how harmful excessive consumption is.		0.7755816		
My consumption is decreasing, because I pay more attention on my environment.		0.8425856		
Satisfaction with life.				0.7985080
Job satisfaction.				0.8279294
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

Figure 8 The results of the factor analysis (Rotated Component Matrix)

To identify groups of males with a poor financial situation we performed k-means cluster analysis. We involved the factors from the previously presented factor analysis. As a result of this analysis based on four factors we found five different groups (clusters) of the target segment (Figure 9.):

- Cluster 1: the members of this cluster are not interested in any shopping and saving strategies. At the same time they are not satisfied generally.
- Cluster 2: those who are in this factor are mostly having rational decisions during their shopping and they are conscious as well.
- Cluster 3: the members from this cluster usually apply shopping strategies to mitigate the effects of the changed circumstances. At the same time they are satisfied with their life and job.
- Cluster 4: men in this cluster are conscious shoppers and they try to use shopping strategies as much as they can.
- Cluster 5: men from this cluster apply shopping strategies and they strive for making rational decisions as well.

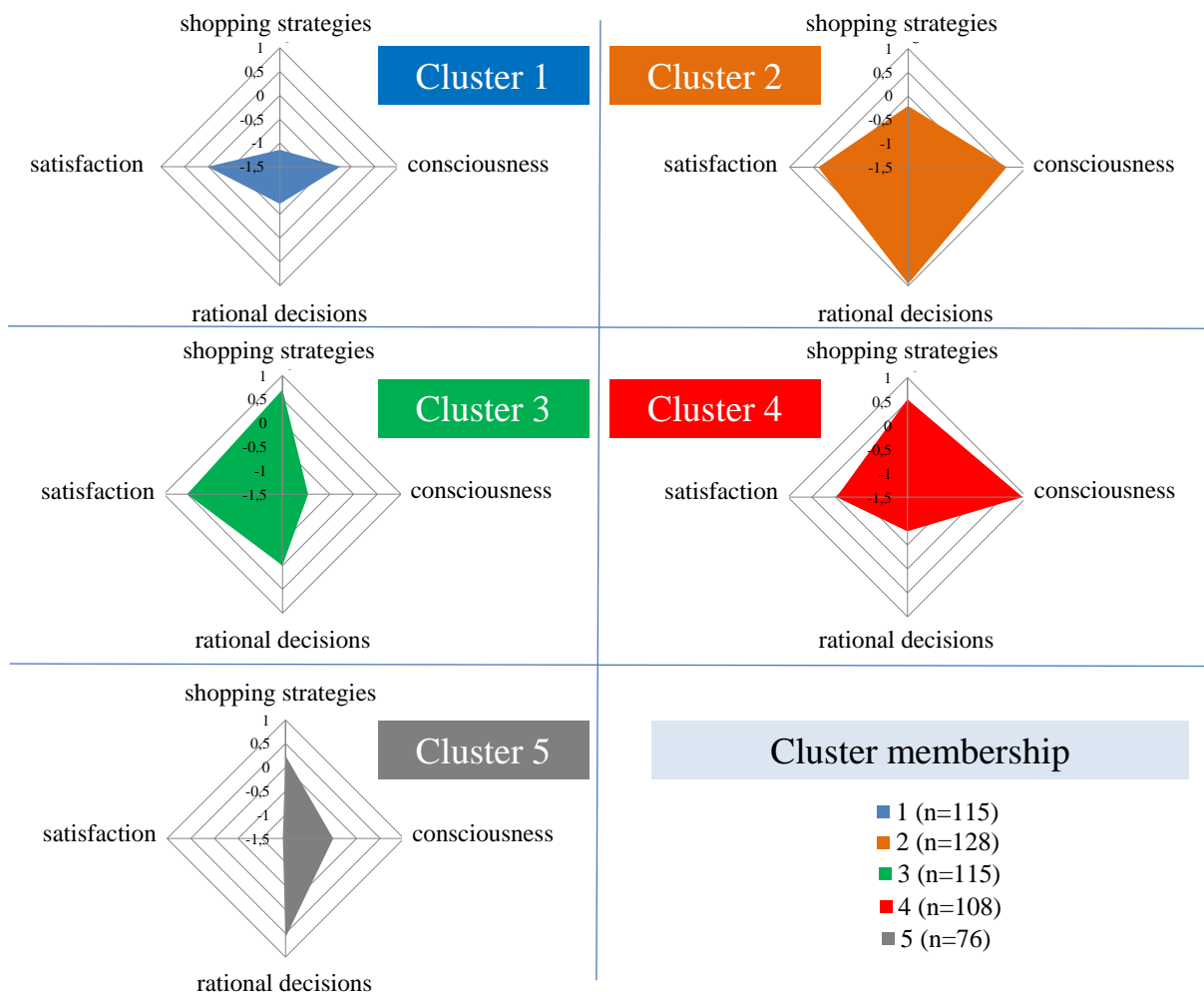


Figure 9 Results of the k-means cluster analysis – segments of poor financial situation men

We examined the differences in the demographic characteristics of the segments (clusters). Figure 10 helps to present the main characteristics of each cluster.

In cluster 1 the proportion of under 39 years and higher educated men is higher than the average of men in the sample.

Among the members of cluster 2 we found that higher educated men between their age of 30 and 49 who live in county towns or other 10.000+ towns are with a higher proportion than the average.

Cluster 3 includes men who are over 40 with secondary education living in middle sized settlements with a higher proportion than the average.

In cluster 4 we found those men with a higher proportion than the average who are between 50 and 59, who have low level of education and live in county towns or small settlement.

In cluster 5 there are men who are over 50 with low level of education living in Budapest with a higher proportion than the average.

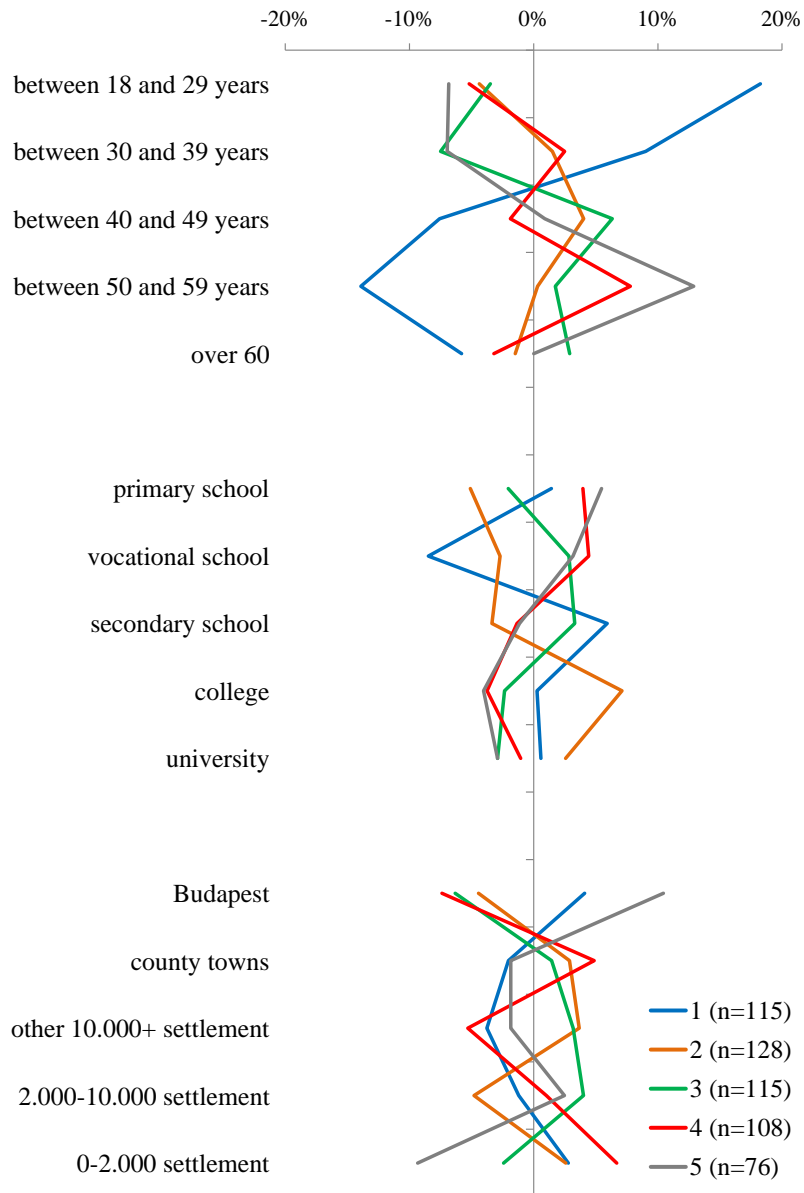


Figure 10 Demographic differences of the clusters

Based on the result of the cluster analysis and the demographic differences we named the clusters:

- Cluster 1: disinterested youth
- Cluster 2: conscious intellectuals
- Cluster 3: satisfied town residents
- Cluster 4: old economizers
- Cluster 5: rational old men from the capitol

LIMITATIONS

We analysed the changed and limited economic circumstances of men. It is important to note that economic crisis is not the only one reason of the aforementioned changes. These changes can be also because of a change in the life situation of men (e.g. marriage, birth of a child etc.).

We found that 54% of men in a poor situation said that they rather have bad financial circumstances, while two third of those who are not involved in social come-down said that they rather are in a good financial situation. Because of this we think that the subjective opinion of the individual affects their opinion about changed shopping habits more intensively than we would suppose.

FURTHER RESEARCH

It is important to see in the future the differences between men and women who are involved by social come-down.

It is also important that the shopping and saving habits of women have changed as well. This topic can be another examination: what differences and similarities can be found between men's and women's changed shopping habits.

Gender roles and the expectations about men and women are changing. Also the system of activities is changing (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2012). It is one more aim to make an examination about it.

We can see that this is quite a new segment to analyse, that is why it is important to have lots of different methods and examination about this segment, because that will help to find the place for the male shoppers and the changing roles and habits of theirs.

CONCLUSIONS

The segment of male shoppers is becoming more and more relevant segment on the consumer markets. On one hand it is because of the changes of the market, but on the other hand it is the result of the altering of this segment (roles, activities, requirements etc.).

Studies showed that men are in gender crisis about the roles as men. They feel stressed about their identity and masculinity as well. Because of these circumstances they are now more opened emotionally. On the other hand, men are more confident about the recovery after the economic crisis.

Furthermore, we can see that those men who are involved in social come-down tries to compensate the effects of changed economic and financial circumstances more than those men who are not involved at all. We can also see that men who are involved in social come-down are most likely to be older, but also they have lower educational level. If we examine them based on the settlement type of their residence we cannot find characteristic differences. It is important to see the trends of changings in the shopping and saving habits of males, because it helps to be able to better understand the main characteristics of this segment and also it helps to get closer to them.

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