

Consumer culture of social classes in terms of food purchasing and consumption habits

Monika Novotná

Abstract

This work deals with historical and sociological view on the issue of grocery obtaining and consumption between the end of World War II to the present. Grocery obtaining and consumption is understood as a symbolic expression of social status in society. The work is divided into two parts. Theoretical-historical part examines how food consumption is linked to changes of social stratification. Research part of thesis builds on the theme of food consumption by examining the shopping habits in relation to social class.

The main question of theoretical-historical part is whether and how food consumption, relates to social differentiation. Trend of convergence of differences in consumption and rate of consumption stratification of social classes are monitored in time series in two eras – the communist period and the period after 1989. For both periods, a secondary analysis of historical data on the consumption of specific types of food that aims to detect differences or similar trends between social classes. While in the period of communism different social strata tend to converge their consumption, with the exception of the cooperative farmers, whose consumption is influenced by self-supplying, after 1990 in the class-stratified society allocates consumption convergence trend higher and middle classes, while the working class increases the consumption of cheap food.

The research part analyzes data from research on purchasing behavior of consumers in 2009. Analysis of the shopping behaviour of social classes is carried out from perspectives in terms of purchasing strategies, convenience while shopping and grocery prices and quality. By using these criteria main hypothesis about higher social class differences in shopping behavior and preferences from lower social classes is evaluated, that aims to detect differences or similar shopping habits and preferences among social classes and their symbolic definition in relation to their social status. This hypothesis was confirmed, upper class shopping behavior differs by higher quality food preferences, comfort while shopping food with lower price sensitivity, especially from the working class, which is in their food consumption focused on low price of food with lower demands on the quality or comfort while shopping. The intermediate class is characterized by an attempt to converge the shopping habits of the upper classes.