Values-Based Food Consumer Behavior Patterns Among the Z Generation in Terms of Health Nutrition

Monika Garai-Fodor [*]

Keleti Karoly Faculty of Business and Management, Obuda University, Budapest, Hungary

Abstract: The topicality and theoretical basis of the topic are represented by two pillars: value-based consumer behaviour theories and generation marketing. Among the theories of consumer behaviour, my focus is on value-based theories, which have common features between the motives of the consumer's choice of products and services and the value system. This basic concept inspired us to analyze the relationship between the value system and consumer behaviour in the context of our primary research by analyzing the attitude of Z-generation's food consumption habits. The other pillar of the topic is generation marketing, which, as the ultimate result of differences between different generations, also calls the value system. Considering that the Z generation will be the consumer base of potential future solvent demand, we think it is useful to learn about the specific food consumer preferences of the generation. A standardized questionnaire survey was conducted in the quantitative research framework, which resulted in the analysis of more than 500 evaluable questionnaires. It was a condition for the subject to get out of the Z generation by age. Based on the results, it can be concluded what value orientation the future generation has, and how important it is for health, what it does to protect it. In addition, the results of the research will help to identify relevant food consumer behaviour patterns among the Z generation, which can help define the target groups of healthy nutrition and health promotion campaigns for the Z generation. The current studies provide some important information about marketing strategies that can be used to learn about the generation's specific food consumer preferences.

Keywords: Values-based food consumer behaviour, primary research, Z generation

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Role of the Value System in Food Consumer Behaviour

One of the pillars of the theoretical background of the study is value-based consumer and food consumer behaviour theories. The common basis of these theories is that customer, and consumer decisions are interpreted as the external dimension of their value system. Accordingly, among the factors determining consumer behaviour, I treat the value system as a key determinant of the internal context of consumer behaviour. According to the interdisciplinary approach of consumer behaviour, the value system can be linked to two environmental elements, cultural and social factors. Each society within its own sphere develops a system of values and standards of its culture, which determines the behaviour to be followed by its members within certain limits. And social values can be linked to value through lifestyle and status dimensions.

However, sociological and consumer sociological approaches differ in the importance of cultural, social, or individual determinants of value. According to Hofmeister-Toth (2003), value is a long-term concept or belief, a

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[*]Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Monika Garai-Fodor, Keleti Karoly Faculty of Business and Management, Obuda University, Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: fodor.monika@kgk.uni-obuda.hu

belief based on the relative importance of the desired behavioural form or lifestyle in different situations. The cultural determinacy of value is emphasized by Giddens (1990), Rudolf (2006), who regards value as a cultural principle and idea.

In their approach, the different values are key aspects of the diversity of human culture.

The value is nothing more than a generally accepted system of beliefs and an idea that determines what is considered desirable, important, good, or bad in a given society.

In their opinion, the values and their order are different in societies and ages. In contrast, there are authors who emphasize the individual definition of value. For example, the subjectivist approach is characterized by Peter and Olson (1987) definition that the value is a cognitive representation of the consumer's basic needs and goals. Other authors, in contrast to individual determination, emphasize the value of the social determinacy. Gauthier (1986) emphasizes the normative power of value when he calls value the norm of decision. Similarly, in Hartmann (1972) theory, they say that the value is the source of standards. The social definition is also emphasized by Muller (1986) when he defines value as a positive or negative perception of society, a kind of social, personality psychology category. Similarly, Pataki (1977) and Lukacs (1976) believe that value orientation is a kind of reaction to a socially valid preference system.

Perczel (1990) considers the concept of value as a social expectation, and draws attention to its symbolic content and symbolic meaning. In his view, the value is a symbol of the cognitive representation of social expectations. Hankiss (1977) also refers to the social definition of value; in his view, he says that beliefs about own values depend on elements of the social value system. At the same time, he uses a different approach to the previously mentioned authors: he distinguishes between objective and subjective values. The objective value is all that a particular system needs to exist, function, and develop.

The subjective value is all that a system feels to itself, consider it necessary for its development. With this approach, you can distinguish between what is needed and what seems to be needed. In practice, the two values do not overlap, but they interact with each other. In my opinion, on the basis of theories, it can be concluded that the values are produced by the culture of the given group, but the group values are influenced by the conditions and circumstances that determine everyday life. Among the value measurement methods used in psychology, one of the best known in marketing science is the Rokeach value system as cited in Horváth (1996) and Mitchell's "Values and Value Styles" as cited in Horváth (1996). Kahle's List of Values (Kahle, Beatty, & Homer, 1986), a method that is well suited to the specifics of marketing research and is well applicable to consumer behaviour research (Anwar & Talib, 2018; Hofmeister-Toth, 2003). Valuing methods play an important role in expanding the range of marketing research tools, enabling them to base their analysis on a consumer-specific feature that explains consumer preferences and customer decision-making. With some further consideration of the value measurement methods, the values-based consumer behaviour models were born, which were based on the value measurement enabled by the above-mentioned methods. These models, based on measuring values, wanted to explain the reasons for choosing a product and service. The relationship between the value system and consumer behaviour is also true for the analysis of food consumption and nutritional habits.

This is evidenced by models that lead nutrition decisions, food choices to the value system and lifestyle. A common feature of these models is that they start from the abstract values of products or services and get to the specific characteristics of a particular product, food, or service. Gutman's chain theory as cited in Lehota (2001), as a hierarchical model, sheds light on the relationship between values, consumption, and specific product characteristics. By rethinking this, Grunert as cited in Lehota (2004) created the food-oriented lifestyle model, which also explains the specific positives of food consumption based on the value system, such as the way of purchasing, the quality of the product, the ways of preparing food, consumer situations, and customer motivation. According to the theory of value-based food consumer behavior, the effect of values on food consumption preferences is realized at three levels.

On the first level, the consumer's basic set points take places such as peace, security, and time. On the second level, consumer habits are determined by value systems such as quality consciousness, hedonism, and time awareness. These testify about the consumer's social situation, preferential system, and living conditions. Finally, the third level contains the values of the specific product and service, such as product and service choice motives (Horváth, 1996; Humphreys & Wang, 2018). The basic concept of these theories inspired me to examine the relationship between the value system and consumer behaviour. For the first time, this was done in a research conducted on a domestic sample in 2008, the results of which have shown that value-based consumer behaviour theories apply to food consumption and a special branch of it, the provision of catering at work (Fodor, 2009). As a result, we have succeeded in creating a model of

consumer behaviour based on the value of food at work and, in the light of the results of my research, we validate this model. The same system of correlations was proved during a 2016 research when we found a correlation between the value of money and the way financial management and the financial decision was made. This confirms that the fundamental relationship between value-based consumer behaviour theories is also valid for money-related decisions (Bilog, 2017; Garia-Fodor et al., 2018; Goodman & Paolacci, 2017; Kang & Ogawa, 2017).

Characteristics of the Z Generation from the Aspect of Generation-Marketing

Another important theoretical basis for the study is the concept of generation-marketing, in which I seek to describe the consumer characteristics of the Z generation. According to the basic concept of generation-marketing, the generations can be characterized by common values that are specific to them. Values, common experiences, identities that enable them to characterize a generation, since these criteria connect people, represent a sort of organizing principle among the many individual fate, story, and characteristic. The identities found within generations frame the decisions of the people belonging to it and distinguish it from other generations (Morales, Amir, & Lee, 2017; Torocsik, 2003). An important aspect of generational behaviour testing is the value orientation analysis and the definition of its differences (Schewe & Noble, 2000). The essence of the concept is that, in addition to the strict limitation of age, it should be taken into account that the generations have different group experiences. The starting point of a marketing approach based on generation theory is that the major and decisive events experienced during socialization, the "spirit of the ages" accompany people to the end of their lives, and affect their choices. In our study, we focus on Y and Z consumers, so we give a brief description of these generations.

"Z-Generation" Characteristics, Consumer Specifications

The members of the Z-generation are the target group of my primary research. In Hungary, Tari (2010, 2011) psychologist worked in depth about the Y and Z generation. Typically, the Z generation is known as "neo-conservatives", "Facebook generation", digital natives, "Instant online" age groups, net generation, iGeneration. Because of the former, they are often referred to as the C generation, which was named after the English connection, or D, which refers to the digital word, but also to R, which is derived from the English responsibility word. With regard to the Z generation, it is important to emphasize that they should not be seen, as a generation among the others, as they are the world's first generation to grow on the same culture and love the same foods, fashion, and places. Globality is also characteristic of their language tools. They use words and phrases that are not or hardly understood by other generations. The Z generation has the same problems as the young people of the previous period, the search for identity, the big issues of life, compliance, etc., but the technical possibilities give them a new framework that suddenly makes their behaviour even more incomprehensible to the elderly.

Members of the Z generation prefer outdoor activities (61.5%) and fitness (52.3%). Team sports (56.7%) are more favoured than individual physical activity (43.5%). The main difference between the Y and Z generations is that Y like fitness and Z prefer team sport and outdoor exercise. For the leaders of the town of Kecskemet, we recommend placing Teqball tables, outdoor sports equipment at various points of the city, in parks favoured by young people (near bicycle paths and running tracks). They can educate young people to do sports, spend their leisure time actively, and strengthen the community spirit among the two studied generations. The value system of the generation is well reflected in the culture of spending leisure time. In terms of the consumption of culture, it can be stated on the basis of national and international research results that visiting the elite stages is not very characteristic of young people. However, visiting pubs, ruin pubs, and cafes, which provide an excellent opportunity for social gathering, friendly gatherings, is a particularly popular leisure time alternative for them. Going to the mall was pushed back to this generation, preferring to spend so-called quality time with their friends. According to the Hungarian Youth Research in Hungary, among the eight thousand Hungarians between the ages of 15 and 29, screening activities continue to dominate the leisure time structure of young people. However, it is also a very important and remarkable result, that this young generation has a significant amount of time spent on sports, which we believe is related to their judgment of value: health conscious and more attentive to their nutrition and regular movement than the members of the older generation (Torocsik, 2017; Willy, 2017).

In my opinion, the fact that this generation is more environmentally conscious and sensitive to social issues than any of the previous generations can also be associated with downward pressure on shopping. In line with this, traditional shopping is no longer dominant for young people, and the shopping scene has also moved into the online world

shopping, walking in shops is not typical in their case and also not a great experience for them. According to expert opinions, we can best fit the needs of the new generation if the activities that we want to involve them in can be made more communal, as it can be a community experience for them. For the younger generation, the experience is needed: tasting, touching, amazement, admiration, jealousy, so entertainment is the keyword for the services placed on them, product experiences (Eletforma.hu, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, focusing on the Z generation, I want to prove the basic relationships of food consumption and value system in generational-specific illumination. One of the hypotheses of my research (H1) is that consumer segments can be distinguished from each other on the basis of food consumption and value system on the analysed sample.

My second hypothesis (H2) is that even in the case of the analysed sample the value orientation of the groups formed according to the food consumer preference is significantly different, so the value-based consumer behaviour theories are valid in that sample.

During my primary study, I analysed the value system, food consumer behaviour, and opinion of health and healthy nutrition in the framework of qualitative and quantitative data collection focusing on the members of the Z generation. In the framework of qualitative research, I conducted twenty mini-focus group interviews with a semi-structured interview. In the framework of quantitative research, I conducted a standardized questionnaire survey, which resulted in more than 500 evaluable questionnaires. For quantitative research, the recruitment of subjects was achieved by a snowball sampling method. In both studies, it was a condition for the subjects to be a part of the Z generation by age.

RESULTS

In order to examine my first hypothesis (H1) for the first time, I analysed the food consumer preferences among the sample members (Table 1). Based on the results, I found that the most important aspect in choosing food was its freshness. The second most important factor to consider is the value of the price followed by the good taste and smell of food. The fact that the cheapness of food has pushed the content values (vitamin-mineral content, free of artificial substances) and external marks into the background, shows that price sensitivity is less characteristic for this generation. Of course, this is not only a function of individual food consumer preferences but also presumably related to the fact that most of the subjects do not manage their own income but live with their parents in a common household.

In order to be able to justify segmentation based on food consumer preferences, factor analysis was performed on the factors involved in food selection. I analysed the results of three, four, and five-factor tests, and the best explanation was professionally provided by the four-factor solution. As a result, I was able to define the following factors (Table 2):

- "Health and environmental consciousness": where the ingredients of food, high vitamin, and mineral content, such as recyclability, geographical origin, and bio quality also have big roles. These factors are already a conscious factor that takes into account the common aspects of health and environmental protection.
- "The time and price" to which the shelf life, the quick to prepare, i.e., the time, the time-related elements have been added to the price factors.
- "Organoleptic elements" that include visible, perceptible properties such as freshness, taste, and fragrance.
- "Design and communication", a factor group in which the practicality, the exterior, and the brand have been accepted.

In order to segment the food consumption aspect according to the system, the sample was examined by cluster analysis carried out using the K-means method for the entire list of factors (Table 3).

As a result, I was able to separate the following segments:

- "Health and environmentally conscious segments" that have assessed the aspects of the health and environmental awareness group over other segments and patterns.
- "Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers", who, apart from the criterion of cheapness, considered all aspects more important than the sample average.
- "No preference" for whom no aspect was more important than the total sample average. They are consumers who presumably do not yet have a mature pattern of behaviour; their preference system is undeveloped and can be influenced.
- "Time and price conscious people" who have played an important role in food selection in addition to averages, time-related elements and price-related factors.

Table 1 *FOOD CONSUMER PREFERENCES IN THE SAMPLE*

Aspects of food choice	Average (Where 1 = not important, 4 = very important)	Dispersion
Freshness	3.68	0.60
Low calorie content	2.33	0.91
Bio quality	2.11	0.88
Cheapness	2.75	0.82
Good taste, smell	3.62	0.62
Nice exterior look	3.11	0.80
Geographical origin, place of origin	2.31	0.96
High nutritional value	2.74	0.88
Vitamin, mineral content	2.88	0.90
Practical packaging	2.64	0.84
Quick preparation	2.92	0.90
Brand	2.44	0.90
The food is free from artificial materials	2.78	0.91
Long shelf life	2.71	0.86
Worth the price	3.63	0.65
Right size of pack	3.18	0.77
Recyclable, environmentally friendly packaging	2.71	0.93

Source: Own research, 2019 *N* = 546

Table 2 *ROTATED FACTOR MATRIX OF FACTORS INVOLVED IN FOOD SELECTION*

Aspects of food choice	Health and environmental consciousness	The time and price	Organoleptic elements	Design and communication
Vitamin, mineral content	0,78676	0,037005	0,128931	-0,00616
The food is free from artificial materials	0,76487	0,040316	0,07004	0,150526
Bio quality	0,74578	0,071571	-0,1266	0,009187
Recyclable, environmentally friendly packaging	0,70652	0,085475	0,136874	0,026998
High nutritional value	0,698	0,061657	0,084324	-0,06675
Geographical origin, place of origin	0,60981	-0,25351	0,024441	0,358147
Low calorie content	0,39509	0,361324	-0,1959	0,019246
Quick preparation	-0,1071	0,68764	-0,09003	0,216979
Long shelf life	0,159716	0,67593	0,027882	0,106936
Worth the price	0,105523	0,59541	0,485745	-0,00733
Cheapness	-0,09438	0,53456	0,252734	-0,11076
Right size of pack	0,175099	0,48357	0,267709	0,268561
Good taste, smell	-0,02398	0,173588	0,80037	0,145475
Freshness	0,163343	0,044012	0,77329	-0,06164
Brand	-0,01639	0,183361	-0,12872	0,80903
Nice exterior look	0,022518	0,010986	0,469521	0,63328
Practical packaging	0,338598	0,364455	0,086516	0,46666

Source: Own research, 2019 *N* = 546; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. KMO = 9.29 Sum variance: 64.8%

Table 3 *SEGMENTS FORMED ON THE BASIS OF FOOD CHOICE*

Aspects of food choice	Health and environmentally conscious segments (N = 220)	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers (N = 120)	People with no preferences (N = 56)	Time and price conscious people (N = 150)	Sample average (N = 546)
Freshness	3.81	3.72	3.11	3.67	3.68
Low calorie content	2.32	2.87	2.04	2.03	2.33
Bio quality	2.19	2.90	1.79	1.47	2.11
Cheapness	2.83	2.70	1.93	2.97	2.75
Good taste, smell	3.66	3.73	3.00	3.71	3.62
Nice exterior look	3.05	3.45	2.57	3.12	3.11
Geographical origin, place of origin	2.44	3.05	2.04	1.64	2.31
High nutritional value	2.92	3.55	2.39	1.97	2.74
Vitamin, mineral content	3.19	3.63	2.29	2.05	2.88
Practical packaging	2.52	3.45	1.71	2.53	2.64
Quick preparation	2.78	3.18	2.18	3.19	2.92
Brand	2.14	2.95	1.93	2.65	2.44
The food is free from artificial materials	3.00	3.58	2.00	2.09	2.78
Long shelf life	2.48	3.40	1.75	2.84	2.71
Worth the price	3.65	3.85	2.50	3.84	3.63
Right size of pack	3.22	3.53	2.18	3.23	3.18
Recyclable, environmentally friendly packaging	2.95	3.45	1.89	2.08	2.71

Source: Own research, 2019 *N* = 546

According to hypothesis H2, that there is a correlation between the value orientation of the Z generation and the pattern of food consumption behaviour, for the purposes of the study, the segments drawn according to the food consumer preferences were analysed by means of variance analysis to show that it is possible to differentiate individual food groups according to the value system. According to the significant result of the variance analysis (sig = 0.000), the food consumer segments differ significantly according to the value dimensions of each study (Table **??**). Based on the results, I have seen that for health, and environmentally conscious food consumers, freedom, friendship, calmness, balanced life, health, good human relationships, internal harmony, and calm life are important aspects. These are young people who, along with their career realization, are followers of traditional values, and who have a very close relationship between the behavioural pattern of consumers and their values and way of thinking. Time- and price-conscious food consumers, in terms of their values, are the circle of those who prioritize freedom, leisure, enjoyable life, material wealth, i.e., the followers of hedonistic values, which value orientation is in line with their food consumer attitude. Based on the results, I also found that those who overestimated all dimensions of food consumer preferences are similar in their values, and this is also true for those who didn't really care: they are characterized by this kind of non-preference for preferences in their food consumption habits, as well as in the judgment of human values.

Table 4 *CHARACTERIZATION OF FOOD CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS BASED ON THE VALUE SYSTEM*

Values	Clusters	Number of correspondents	Average
Freedom	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3,7818182
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3,7333333
	People with no preferences	56	3.3571429
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.7866667
	Sample	546	3.7289377
Enjoyable life	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.7727273
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.7833333
	People with no preferences	56	3.3214286
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.8266667
	Sample	546	3.7435897
Material wealth	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.5272727
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.65
	People with no preferences	56	3.2142857
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.8
	Sample	546	3.5970696
Real friendship	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.8363636
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.7666667
	People with no preferences	56	3.4285714
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.88
	Sample	546	3.7912088
Calm, balanced life	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.8363636
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.8666667
	People with no preferences	56	3.3214286
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.76
	Sample	546	3.7692308
Health	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.8909091
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.8666667
	People with no preferences	56	3.25
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.7866667
	Sample	546	3.7912088
Good human relationships	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.7909091
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.8
	People with no preferences	56	3.25
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.68
	Sample	546	3.7069597
Free time	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.4545455
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.5
	People with no preferences	56	3.1071429
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.4933333
	Sample	546	3.4395604
I can afford something good	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.5181818
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.6333333
	People with no preferences	56	3.1428571

TABLE 4 CONTINUE...

Values	Clusters	Number of correspondents	Average
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.6933333
	Sample	546	3,5531136
Thrift	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.3181818
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.5166667
	People with no preferences	56	2.8928571
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.12
	Sample	546	3.2637363
Getting pleasure from others	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.5090909
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.6666667
	People with no preferences	56	3.2142857
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.48
	Sample	546	3.5054945
Internal harmony	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.7
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.7833333
	People with no preferences	56	3.1428571
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.5866667
	Sample	546	3.6300366
Happy family life	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.7363636
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.8333333
	People with no preferences	56	3.4285714
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.7733333
	Sample	546	3.7362637
Career, professional success, self-realization	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.7272727
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.6666667
	People with no preferences	56	3.3214286
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.6266667
	Sample	546	3.6446886
Hobby	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.3909091
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.35
	People with no preferences	56	3.0714286
	Time and price conscious people	150	3,.2133333
	Sample	546	3.3003663
Peaceful life	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.7454545
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.7833333
	People with no preferences	56	3.1071429
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.6266667
	Sample	546	3.6556777
Caring for others	Health and environmentally conscious segments	220	3.4090909
	Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers	120	3.65
	People with no preferences	56	3
	Time and price conscious people	150	3.2
	Sample	546	3.3626374

Source: Own research, 2019 *N* = 546

DISCUSSION

During my primary research, I followed the basic concept of value-oriented consumer behaviour models. Based on the primary research results, I was able to characterize well-separated consumer groups based on food consumer preferences. This confirms my hypothesis that, based on food consumer preferences, members of this generation can be well-defined. As a result of the clustering process, four consumer segments could be distinguished: "The health and environmentally conscious cluster" whose members reviewed the aspects of the health and environmental awareness group.

The "Overestimating non-price sensitive consumers", who, apart from the criterion of cheapness, considered all aspects more important than the sample average. The "No preference" for whom no aspect was really decisive; as well as "Time and price consciousness" for whom speed, time-related elements, and price-related factors have played an important role in choosing food.

For the purpose of examining my second hypothesis, these segments were also characterized by a value system. According to the significant result of the variance analysis (sig = 0.000), the food consumer segments differed significantly according to the value dimensions involved in each study. This confirms my second hypothesis, that the value orientation of the groups formed according to the food consumer preferences is significantly different. On the whole, it can be stated that each group is consistent with food consumer decisions and the judgment of basic human values.

The outline and characterization of the individual segments can provide a basis for developing a differentiated marketing strategy, which, in my opinion, can be a useful source of information for food distributors and manufacturers.

The limitations of the research are that the results are valid for the analysed sample. As a continuation of this research, I intend to resolve this constraint with a nation-wide representative sample. As a further step in the research, I plan to conduct a qualitative process to achieve deeper and more subtle results.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical basis of the topic studied was value-based consumer behaviour theories and generation marketing. According to the basic concept of value-based food consumer behaviour theories, there is a correlation between the motives of the consumer's choice of products and services and the perception of human values: that is, the choice of food leads back to the consumer value system.

Following this basic concept, I analysed the relationship between the value system and food consumer behaviour in the context of our own primary research.

Based on food consumer preference, I have defined four target groups as a result of primary research. Characterization of segments and description of their peculiarities in their values can help to identify the well targeted marketing activities, tools.

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