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## ETHICAL CONSUMPTION IN SERBIA: ANALYSING ITS PREVALENCE AND DISTINCTIVENESS

### Etička potrošnja u Srbiji: analiza rasprostranjenosti i specifičnosti

**ABSTRACT:** *Ethical consumption refers to the conscious decision of individuals to purchase or decline to purchase particular goods, in which their choice is guided by certain values rather than financial considerations. In this case, the decision to purchase a product (buycott) or to avoid purchasing a product (boycott) does not depend on price or availability but is instead an expression of moral attitudes, cultural preferences and distinct lifestyle choices. This paper analyses the prevalence of ethical consumption in Serbia, as well as the impact of the following factors on ethical consumption: demographic and socio-economic factors (gender, age, education, place of residence, economic status, occupation and employment status); trust in institutions (national and supranational); level of interest in politics (as well as assessment of ability to influence politics but also assessment of the 'openness' of the political system to citizen participation); political activism and political orientation and values. The analysis is based on the data of the European Social Survey (ESS) conducted in 2018.*

**KEY WORDS:** *ethical consumption, boycott, Serbia, ESS*

**APSTRAKT:** *Etička potrošnja odnosi se na svesne odluke pojedinaca da (ne)kupe neku robu, a njihovi izbori rukovode se neekonomskim razlozima i određenim vrednostima. Odluke o kupovini nekog proizvoda (bajkot), ili izbegavanje kupovine određene robe (bojkot) u ovim slučajevima ne zavise od visine cena i/ili njihove dostupnosti već predstavljaju izražavanje moralnih stavova, kulturnih preferencija i specifičnog životnog stila. U ovom radu se na osnovu podataka Evropskog društvenog istraživanja (EDI) koje je sprovedeno 2018. godine, analizira rasprostranjenost etičke potrošnje u Srbiji, kao i uticaj sledećih faktora na etičku*

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*potrošnju: demografskih i socio-ekonomskih (pola, starosti, obrazovanja, mesta stanovanja, ekonomskog položaja, zanimanja i radnog statusa); poverenja u institucije (nacionalne i nadnacionalne); zainteresovanosti za politiku (kao i procene sposobnosti uticaja na politiku, ali i ocenu "otvorenosti" političkog sistema prema participaciji građana); političkog aktivizma i političkih i vrednosnih orijentacija.*

KLJUČNE REČI: *etička potrošnja, bojkot, Srbija, EDI*

## Introduction

Ethical consumption refers to the conscious decision of individuals to purchase or decline to purchase particular goods, in which their choice is guided by certain values rather than financial considerations. Moreover, this practice could also pertain to other forms of non-market economic interaction. Even though the influence of economic capital is by no means negligible, to better understand the phenomenon of ethical consumption, attention is paid principally to the influence of cultural capital. The decision to purchase a product (buycott) or to avoid purchasing a product (boycott) does not, therefore, depend on its price and/or availability but is instead an expression of cultural preferences, political or ethical identity and distinct lifestyle choices.

Buycott refers most commonly to organic produce or goods labelled as *fair trade*<sup>3</sup> – i.e. those that are usually produced in exceptionally arduous and unfavourable working conditions, such as coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, bananas, cotton, rice, etc. Other kinds of products subject to buycotts are those that are recyclable, those that do not pollute the environment and/or are less environmentally harmful, and also the products of companies that donate to charity or employ people who are otherwise marginalised in society.<sup>4</sup>

The practice of critical consumption is, thus, no longer merely an economic activity<sup>5</sup> but becomes also political – it can be observed as an aspect of political or environmental activism and it represents a new form of political participation. Most commonly, this kind of consumption is directed towards the products of certain companies and/or the companies themselves, in some cases it takes in whole industrial sectors but also takes place at various levels of government (local, national, supranational) and can target the adoption of legislation or the lack thereof. It can, therefore, be directed at actors beyond nation states – at international corporations and institutions (Micheletti, 2003; Yates, 2011; Stolle, Micheletti, 2013).

3 The basis of buycotts are labelling schemes: ecolabels, fair trade labels and certification schemes.

4 In addition to boycotting and buycotting as forms of political consumption, there are also lifestyle and discursive strategies (Boström et al. 2019).

5 Since consumption was defined by particular class/status attributes even before the industrial age, it cannot be reduced merely to economic activity. The spread of consumerism accompanied the emergence of industrial societies and, over time, the practice of consumption became increasingly important, which is particularly evident in post-industrial societies.

In Serbia this phenomenon has not thus far been studied extensively (Brković, 2013, 2015; Backović, Spasić, 2018; Petrović, Stanojević, 2019), so the aim of this paper is to use data gathered for the European Social Survey (2018) to analyse the prevalence of ethical consumption in Serbia.<sup>6</sup>

## Analytical and Theoretical Framework

The spread of postmaterialist values – the values of self-expression and attaching worth to quality of life – that emerged in the West at the end of the 1970s was accompanied by the growth of new forms of collective action and participation in various protests (Inglehart, 1977; Della Porta, Diani, 2006). The trend was to include as many people as possible in making important political decisions. In terms of the relationship between postmaterialist values and critical consumption, research has shown that individuals who adopt postmaterialist values also practice ethical consumption (Stolle, Micheletti, 2013).

The study of this form of consumption began in 1974 with the *Political Action Survey* (Stolle, Micheletti, 2013: 49) and research of this phenomenon continued through the *World Values Survey* and the *European Social Survey*. On the basis of data gathered by these studies, Stolle and Micheletti observed a steady increase in the number of people practicing political consumption from 1975 to 2010. In Europe in the 21st century, ethical consumption has become an integral component of consumption itself, which has been accompanied by growth in the market for organic goods<sup>7</sup> and for those products that are manufactured in a manner that takes into account their environmental impact and fair treatment for workers and farmers (Zagata, 2014; Summers, 2016).

In the literature on boycotts and buycotts of certain goods, one encounters various concepts. Critical consumption can stem from a variety of causes and

6 Several studies have been conducted in which Food Choice Questionnaire has been applied. Although the questionnaire contained items dedicated to the ethical concern, the main goal of the research was to determine motives for food choice. Research findings in Serbia have shown that ethical concern is rated the least important. (For a more detailed see Milošević et al. 2012: 208–211). The finding was also confirmed in other studies (for example Gagić et al. 2014). Also, the Generation Z research showed that they do not recognize ethical issues either. Low average values were recorded on the items used to measure ethical concern (“Is packaged in an environmentally friendly way (2.9373), Has the country of origin clearly marked (2.7143), and Comes from countries I approve of politically (1.8223)” (Mitic, Vehapi, 2020: 132).

7 In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is estimated that this market has great potential for growth in South Eastern Europe. A survey of organic food consumers in the region conducted in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that participants were most satisfied with the quality of the produce but least satisfied with the customer service provided. Additionally, most participants were dissatisfied with the number of shops selling organic goods (Cerjak et al., 2010). In Hungary, the influence of foreign entrepreneurs was identified as a factor initiating the sale of organic products (Dombos, 2008). The market in Serbia is relatively underdeveloped. Even though a large number of shops have opened (marketed as selling “bio” or “health” food), they mostly do not sell only products certified as being organic (Sudarević, Radojević, 2018: 55). Supermarkets usually do have aisles devoted to certified products.

the following types can be distinguished: ethical, political and environmental/sustainable consumption. In summarising the issues critical consumption addresses, Yates (2011: 6) cites: people, environment and politics. The first category subsumes human rights, labour rights and issues of trade. Environment refers to how consumption impacts habitats, the natural environment and the man-made environment. Additionally, it also includes animal rights. Politics includes political activities: from corporate donations to political parties and lobbying activities, to the activities of governments and their impact on human rights. This category also includes issues pertaining to marketing and corporate social responsibility in promoting goods and services.

Stolle and Micheletti single out the political aspect of this practice as decisive and refer to it as political consumerism. The marketplace began to be seen as a political arena in the mid-1980s when environmental groups in Sweden began using consumer power to influence environmental legislation. They focused their activities on fostering green production, issued a *Green Shopping Guide* and organised boycotts of products that did not conform to environmental standards. Even though consumer choice did achieve a certain impact at the time, it had yet to lead to changes to people's lifestyle – such as reducing individual consumption and increasing reuse (Stolle, Micheletti, 2013) – that would emerge later.

In addition to diet and the purchase of organic goods, sustainable or ecological consumption also includes the practice of equipping homes with devices that save energy or renew resources in order to reduce global warming. Critical consumption is a broader category and contains another, higher level of criticality, the analysis of which requires more information and data on the values and lifestyle of the individual. Given that analysis of political consumption focuses more on political participation (Micheletti, 2003)<sup>8</sup>, for the purposes of this paper, we chose the term ethical consumption.

In terms of products and services<sup>9</sup>, not all industrial sectors are involved in ethical, political and environmental consumption in equal measure. Indeed, certain industries are rather overrepresented. The products of the food industry are the most frequent subject of boycotts and buycotts. Even though some boycotts have targeted the fashion industry, the practice here remains at a low

8 Due to changes in the political sphere brought about by the entrepreneurial model of governance (Harvey, 2005), globalization and risk society, Micheletti (2003) introduces the concept of individualised collective action. Among other things, the characteristics thereof are: "Use of established political homes as base and point of departure to decide own preferences and priorities and create and develop individualized political homes, e.g., home pages; Involvement in networks of a variety of kinds that are not based in any single physical territorial level or structure, subpolitics; Self-assertive and direct involvement in concrete actions and settings; Responsibility is not delegated to leaders and officials, it is taken personally and jointly, self-actualization; Everyday activism in variety of settings; low threshold for urgent involvement; urgent involvement may be high cost in terms of being time-consuming and requiring considerable effort on the part of individuals" (Micheletti, 2003: 27).

9 The commercialisation of tourism did spur the organisation of campaigns for sustainable tourism – among which initiatives such as boycotts, slow travel, conservation tourism and "volunteerism" stand out – but it is not a widespread practice (Lamers et al., 2019).

level. Toys and their manufacture occupies a special place in ethical consumption since these products are intended for children (Klintman, 2018).<sup>10</sup>

In terms of household appliances and electronics, in spite of the fact that these items are consumed in great numbers and that their production and use significantly impacts the environment, this is a sector in which political consumption remains insufficiently developed. However, there is an expectation that this will increase with the adoption of new technologies, particularly ICT in the energy sector and home-based energy devices such as smart meters, solar panels, and home batteries (Boström et al. 2019). In addition, only extreme examples of human rights, social justice and environmental standards violations have elicited a reaction from ethical consumers in the oil and mining extractive industries. Recently, the fossil fuel divestment movement has stood out (Boström et al. 2019).

The analysis of ethical consumption focuses on the characteristics of ethical consumers, as well as on the factors affecting this practice. Based on the European Social Survey Stolle and Micheletti<sup>11</sup> (2013) a profile of the political consumer has been formed that implies members of the middle (or upper) class; individuals with higher education and upper middle economic position. Political consumers possess, therefore, high levels of cultural and economic capital. Women and the middle-aged more likely practice political consumption. They show a greater interest in politics and political issues but to a greater degree through participation in new forms of political activism, rather than conventional forms, such as voting in elections and union membership. Also, they express distrust in existing political institutions as they are dissatisfied with how they tackle problems but have greater faith in emerging international institutions. As has been mentioned, in terms of values, they accept postmaterialist values, and they are also concerned with environmental issues and more tolerant of LGBT marriage (Stolle, Micheletti, 2013). Yates' (2011) analysis based on the 2002 ESS data confirms the influence number of years of education, class and employment have on ethical consumption. Women are somewhat more likely to participate but this does not apply to housewives<sup>12</sup>, hence in addition to the significance of gender, Yates also highlights the importance of employment status. His analysis also showed greater participation by the middle-aged.

Yates (2011) also suggested that there is a need to study boycotts and buycotts separately since education and class have more of an effect on buycotts. The impact of education is undeniable in both cases but Yates points out that different process are involved: despite the presence of labelling and advertising, education appears to have a greater impact on buycotts since the act of buying requires

10 In this regard, a number of issues arise: whether advertising is aimed at adults and parents or at children (legislation on whether directly targeting children is permitted differs from county to country); which values and behaviour is promoted by toys and games (particularly an issue for gender stereotypical toys); "chemical or other health hazards related to toys and environmental problems caused by toy production" (Klintman, 2018: 3–4).

11 They also used data gathered in two studies conducted in Sweden that focused on political consumption (Stolle, Micheletti, 2013).

12 The participation of housewives is low, as it is for those from the working class (Yates, 2011).

choosing a product that adheres to the buyer's attitudes/values. Education has a greater impact in such cases as the buyer needs to make a decision and choose the right product. According to Yates, Micheletti's concept of "individualistic collective action" is more applicable to boycotts than to critical consumption more generally. Boycotts are, therefore, more individualist, while boycotts are more influenced by the media and by movements (Yates, 2011).<sup>13</sup>

When analysis focuses on values, it should be borne in mind that the basis for boycotts and boycotts need not necessarily be *democratic values* or altruistic motives and that they can be entirely opposed values and prejudices. Various groups and/or individuals can, for conflicting and ideological reasons, boycott the same products and, similarly, there can also be various the catalysts for a boycott<sup>14</sup>. Hence, in addition to studying practice, it is also very important to study the values, motives and political affiliations (how individuals position themselves on the political spectrum) of ethical consumers so as to gain better insight into this complex phenomenon.

Zagata (2014) indicates the relationship between altruistic and egocentric motives of consumption. Motives for the purchase of organic products can be egoistic – i.e. the practice is motivated by personal gain (care for one's own health or a better quality and tastier product) rather than concern for the environment, animal welfare (Zagata, 2014) or the wellbeing of small-scale producers. The growth of ethical consumption can be linked to *alternative hedonism* (Soper), which means that concern for sustainability would not be so great were it not also accompanied by the notion of *living a good quality lifestyle*.<sup>15</sup>

Research conducted in Serbia has produced similar results: most respondents (69%) cited concern for their own health or that of their children as their motive for purchasing organic products, 24 percent cited taste and quality, while only seven percent cited support for local/small-scale farmers, the environment and animal welfare as reasons for buying these goods (Ćendić, Zarić, 2019:75).

In this paper we will analyse the prevalence of ethical consumption in Serbia based on data from the ESS, as well as the influence of various factors on ethical consumption. The following factors will be investigated:

- a) demographic and socio-economic factors (gender, age, education, place of residence, economic status, occupation and employment status);
- b) trust in institutions (national and supranational);

13 Summers (2016) analyses individual and country-level variables/predictors of ethical consumption separately.

14 Particularly fair trade products; anti-sweatshop products – e.g. clothes produced by American Apparel or No Sweat; local products – e.g. the Italian 'slow food' movement and local vegetable box schemes (Littler, 2010). However, Lekakis (2017) also indicates a specific modality of the cultural politics of consumption: ethnocentric consumption in Greece and the "I dress Greek, I eat Greek, I do Greek tourism" campaign – which is an expression of economic nationalism.

15 In addition to satisfying their own needs (tastes, choices), when buying organic foodstuffs consumers also emphasise certain collective responsibilities (protecting natural resources and reducing harm to the environment) but do not make the link with social goals and protecting public goods (Zagata, 2014: 249).

- c) level of interest in politics (as well as assessment of ability to influence politics but also assessment of the ‘openness’ of the political system to citizen participation);
- d) political activism;
- e) political orientation and values.

The basic starting assumption is that ethical consumption will not be widespread in Serbia due to the country’s lower level of economic development but also due to low levels of other forms of political activism.

- a) Regarding demographic and socio-economic factors affecting ethical consumption, we started from the following assumptions. Based on insights from previous studies, we expect a higher level of ethical consumption among *women* (a greater degree of participation in this kind of consumption is expected on the basis of this group’s greater participation in consumption generally), *young people* (older people will be more passive due to disappointments with the outcomes of previous engagement), *the better educated* (exposure to the effects of the education system influences the development of critical thinking and awareness of the importance of environmental issues), *hierarchically more highly positioned social groups* – experts and managers (due to a higher level of education, greater autonomy in the workplace and also a more favourable economic status), *city dwellers* (due to better educational structures, more varied social contacts and greater access to information technologies), those *with a higher economic status* and those in *permanent employment*.
- b) Regarding the relationship between trust and participation in ethical consumption, we expect that individuals with lower levels of trust in national institutions and greater levels of trust in supranational institutions will be more likely to participate in ethical consumption.
- c) With regard to the relationship between interest in politics and ethical consumption, our starting point is the assumption that those participating in ethical consumption will be more likely to number among citizens proclaiming to be interested in politics and among those who deem themselves capable of participating in political life.
- d) We expect a high degree of connectedness between ethical consumption and other forms of political activism: *conventional*, such as voting in elections, membership of organisations; *unconventional*, such as participation in protests; *civic activism*, participation in non-political organisations (such as voluntary organisations); and *digital activism*<sup>16</sup>.
- e) We expect that participation in ethical consumption will be mediated both by political orientation and values, so that ethical consumption will have greater support among the bearers of redistributive values (i.e. values that emphasise the importance of equality and fairness in income distribution). Given the rise in the number of movements and

16 For more detail on forms of political activism, see Petrović, Stanojević, 2019: 171.

protests that have stressed the increase in social/economic inequality, the assumption here is that ethical consumers will be more likely to express these values.

- f) Finally, bearing in mind that ethical consumption is not only an economic activity (that it is not affected solely by socio-economic status) and that it is also an expression of environmental activism, we assume that this kind of consumption will be linked to the individual's environmental values – in other words, ethical consumers will express a greater concern for environmental issues.

Analysis of ethical consumption in Serbia will be conducted on the basis of the ninth round of the European Social Survey, which was implemented in Serbia for the first time in 2018. On the other hand, changes to the prevalence of ethical consumption in other European countries will be tracked on the basis of three rounds of the European Social Survey (2002, 2010 and 2018)<sup>17</sup>.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the ESS data for the period 2002–2018, shown in the following table, there is an increase in boycotts in almost all countries. The increase is most pronounced in those countries that had the most widespread boycott practices in 2002: Sweden, Finland, Germany, France and Denmark. On the other hand, a smaller increase in boycott of products was evident in Austria, while a small decrease was noted in Great Britain.<sup>18</sup> The finding that there were no major changes in Switzerland over the past decade and a half is also significant – following a small reduction in participation in ethical consumption in 2010, eight years later participation returned to practically the same level recorded in the first survey from 2002.

Table 1. Percentage of Individuals who boycotted certain products during the last 12 months

	2002		2010		2018	
	Da	Ne	Da	Ne	Da	Ne
Austria	22.1	77.9	-	-	24.9	75.1
Belgium	12.8	87.2	9	91	15.9	84.1
Bulgaria	-	-	4.3	95.7	3.3	96.7
Switzerland	31.1	68.9	28	72	31.6	68.4
Cyprus	-	-	5.3	94.7	9.9	90.1
Czechia	10.5	89.5	10.4	89.6	14.6	85.4
Germany	25	75	29.5	70.5	36.5	63.5
Denmark	22.8	77.2	20.9	79.1	25.9	74.1
Estonia	-	-	9.6	90.4	9.3	90.7
Spain	8.1	91.9	11.7	88.3	14.2	85.8

17 The design weights are used in the analysis (DWEIGHT).

18 A question on boycotts was included only in the 2002 ESS, so it is not possible to track this activity across European countries longitudinally.



	2002		2010		2018	
	Da	Ne	Da	Ne	Da	Ne
Finland	26.7	73.3	33.1	66.9	39	61
France	23.9	76.1	27.1	72.9	32.9	67.1
United Kingdom	26	74	16.9	83.1	24.3	75.7
Greece	8.8	91.2	11.3	88.7	-	-
Croatia	-	-	9.5	90.5	13.1	86.9
Hungary	4.7	95.3	6.1	93.9	3.7	96.3
Ireland	13.9	86.1	10	90	16.2	83.8
Iceland	-	-	-	-	42	58
Italy	7	93	-	-	7	93
Israel	15.2	84.8	6.4	93.6	-	-
Lithuania	-	-	3.7	96.3	4.5	95.5
Latvia	-	-	-	-	7.8	92.2
Luxembourg	15.4	84.6	-	-	-	-
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	8.1	91.9
Netherlands	10.6	89.4	10.2	89.8	13.7	86.3
Norway	20	80	19	81	29.5	70.5
Poland	3.6	96.4	4.8	95.2	5.9	94.1
Russian Federation	-	-	2.3	97.7	-	-
Portugal	3.1	96.9	2.3	97.7	9.4	90.6
Serbia					12.2	87.8
Sweden	33.1	66.9	34.8	65.2	49.8	50.2
Slovenia	5.1	94.9	5.9	94.1	10.4	89.6
Slovakia	-	-	6.8	93.2	4.8	95.2
Ukraine	-	-	1.8	98.2	-	-
Total	17.1	82.9	13.1	86.9	21.3	78.7

When it comes to Serbia, analysis of the prevalence of ethical consumption and its specific local characteristics can be conducted only on the basis of data from 2018. As can be seen from the preceding table, participation in ethical consumption in Serbia stands at 12.2 percent. It is important to note that a similar percentage was recorded in countries in South Eastern Europe, such as Croatia and Slovenia (13.1% and 10.4% respectively), while in Montenegro this percentage is somewhat lower (8.1%) while still being somewhat higher than in other postsocialist countries: Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. The research findings further show that statistically significant differences are not recorded only between Serbia and other former socialist countries (Czechia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Latvia and Estonia) but also that Serbia does not differ from Belgium, Cyprus, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and the Netherlands (see the analysis of variance in Table 1 in the appendix).

While the relatively low prevalence of ethical consumption as a form of political activism in postsocialist countries in 2002 can be explained by the impossibility of developing an active civil society under socialism<sup>19</sup>, recent findings (from 2018) suggest that one ought to include also the broader social

19 Kin states that "one party systems destroy civil society by entirely absorbing it into the bureaucratic structures of the state apparatus controlled by the party. Consequently, it is

context. In addition to economic development, the characteristics of the political system and cultural context (dominant values) also determine the similarities and differences in ethical consumption between European countries.

In the following sections of the paper we will examine the effects of various factors, from which we will be able to track the potential differences in the prevalence of ethical consumption in Serbia.

As was indicated in the theoretical framework, we will first analyse the effect of demographic and socio-economic factors, then subsequently the impact of trust in institutions, interest in politics, political activism and, finally, political orientation and values. In addition to analysing the impact of these individual factors, we will use a binary logistic regression model to determine whether the effects of these factors remain significant when other factors are controlled for.

Analysis of the research findings indicates that only some of the initial assumptions were confirmed.

In terms of the impact of demographic factors, the findings indicate that the gender of respondents is a statistically significant factor. However, contrary to expectations, men are more likely to practice ethical consumption than women. The difference is weak, although statistically significant ( $\text{sig} = 0.015$ ). The proportion of men who decline to purchase certain goods is 13 percent, while for women this percentage is somewhat lower: 9.6 percent. Slightly higher participation of men in ethical consumption can be explained by the fact that men are more active in all forms of political participation (both conventional and unconventional).

The next important finding pertains to the differences in ethical consumption that result from place of residence ( $\text{sig} = 0.000$ ). Urban residents boycotted the purchase of certain goods twice as often as residents of rural areas (13% vs. 7.2%). This finding can be explained by, among other things, the somewhat greater access to information in urban areas but also by the greater range of choice on offer (hence making boycott possible) to those living in towns and cities.

Another significant factor affecting rates of ethical consumption is the level of education of the respondents, which confirmed the initial assumption about the relationship between the practice of ethical consumption and cultural capital. The data presented in Table 2 clearly illustrate that the effect of education as a factor is linear, meaning that the longer individuals spend in education, the greater their likelihood to participate in ethical consumption. Thusly, only eight percent of respondents with the lowest educational attainment boycotted certain goods, followed by those with completed secondary education (11.0%), while the most critical attitude to consumption was evident among respondents who had completed higher education (15.4%). When it comes to examining the effect of this factor, it is important to note one thing. Even though education results in statistically significant impact, the value of Cramér's  $V$  indicates that there is a relatively weak relationship between these two attributes.

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thought that the basic divisions between political and social authority, between public and private law have been annulled..." (Kin, 2003: 31)

Table 2. Participation in Boycott by educational attainment level

Education	Participation in Boycott		Total
	No	Yes	
Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education	91.5%	8.5%	100.0%
Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education	89.0%	11.0%	100.0%
Tertiary education	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%

Cramer's  $V = 0.075$ ; sig=0,004

The fourth factor the effect of which was examined was age. The assumption we started from is that older respondents will be less likely to engage in ethical consumption as a new form of political participation, probably as a result of more pronounced resistance to change that typically characterises older age groups but also as a result of disappointment with the outcomes of previous attempts at political engagement. Contrary to expectations, however, when it comes to the importance of the age of the respondents, the findings show that the effect of this factor is not statistically significant.

The data further show that the effect of activity status is weak and is at the edge of statistical significance (sig = 0.05). Even so, as we assumed, this factor has the expected effect: those in employment are the most likely to engage in ethical consumption, followed by students and pupils, while housewives are least likely to practice this kind of consumption (Table 3). This finding can certainly be explained by the effect of individuals having "settled" their employment status – i.e. who are relatively stably employed and are, therefore, in more favourable economic circumstances. That economic status significantly determines ethical consumption is confirmed by the results of research in Serbia, which show that ethical consumers are most often individuals whose income (in this case household income) is in the upper deciles (Cramér's  $V = 0.116$ ; sig = 0.015). This once again indicates the significance of financial means, particularly in less developed societies, such as Serbia.

Table 3. Participation in Boycott by main activity

Main activity last 7 days	Participation in Boycott		Total
	No	Yes	
Paid work	86.2%	13.8%	100.0%
Education	88.7%	11.3%	100.0%
Unemployed	91.5%	8.5%	100.0%
Housework	92.2%	7.8%	100.0%
Retired	89.3%	10.7%	100.0%

Cramer's  $V = 0.070$ ; sig=0.05

When it comes to examining the effect of the respondents' occupation, the findings show that this factor is not statistically significant, which suggests that our initial assumption – that ethical consumption will be more prevalent among experts, managers and company directors – has not been confirmed.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the findings show that participation in ethical consumption by experts and managers is at around 17 percent, while this practice is least prevalent among unqualified workers (around 10%) and agricultural workers (5%).

In line with our initial assumption about the relationship between ethical consumption and trust in institutions, the results of the Independent-samples t-test show that there is a statistically significant difference in trust in institutions between those who have boycotted certain goods and those who did not engage in this form of consumption (Table 4). The respondents who had participated in boycotts of certain goods not only had a lower level of trust in national institutions (parliament, the police, political parties) but, contrary to the findings of international studies, this group also had a lower level of trust in supranational institutions (the European Parliament and the EU).

Table 4. Trust in institutions, Independent-samples t-test

	Participation in Boycott	Mean	Std. Deviation
Trust in country's parliament	No	3.95	3.161
	Yes	<b>3.14</b>	3.103
Trust in the legal system	No	3.95	3.003
	Yes	<b>3.34</b>	2.965
Trust in the police	No	5.12	3.047
	Yes	<b>4.32</b>	3.120
Trust in politicians	No	2.78	2.937
	Yes	<b>2.00</b>	2.796
Trust in political parties	No	2.59	2.8560
	Yes	<b>1.93</b>	2.6430
Trust in the European Parliament	No	3.16	2.879
	Yes	<b>2.30</b>	2.723
Trust in the United Nations	No	3.56	2.973
	Yes	<b>2.98</b>	2.977

p<0.05

Another factor that further determines the likelihood of participation in ethical consumption is an individual's perception in their own ability to actively engage in politics and make a difference. As can be seen from the following table (Table 5), participation in boycotts is linked to a somewhat higher level of trust in one's own ability and potential for participation in politics (the difference between the two groups is statistically significant). On the other hand, when it comes to the "openness" of the political system to citizen activism, ethical consumers not only have little faith in the political system but also do not differ in this regard from those who do not engage in ethical consumption.

Table 5. Assessment of ability to influence politics,  
Independent-samples t-test

	Participation in Boycott	Mean	Std. Deviation
Political system allows people to have a say in what government does ( $p > 0.05$ )	No	1.83	.974
	Yes	1.85	1.030
Able to take active role in political group ( $p < 0.05$ )	No	1.75	1.055
	Yes	2.36	1.332
Political system allows people to have influence on politics ( $p > 0.05$ )	No	1.82	.935
	Yes	1.79	1.025
Confident in own ability to participate in politics ( $p < 0.05$ )	No	1.74	1.016
	Yes	2.13	1.214

Interest in politics also has a statistically significant impact on ethical consumption. As can be seen from Table 6, the differences between ethical consumers and those who do not engage in this kind of consumption are particularly evident in the category very interested in political goings on: among those who had participated in boycotts of goods interest in politics is two and a half times as prevalent as it is among those who have not boycotted goods (10.6% vs. 4.2%). The differences are somewhat less evident in the categories of quite and hardly interested, only for a pronounced difference to emerge again at the other end of the scale, among those professing to be not interested (while the proportion of those not interested in politics among ethical consumers is 27%, this percentage is closer to 40% among those who have not boycotted goods).

Table 6. Participation in Boycott by interest in politics

Boycott	How interested in politics			
	Very interested	Quite interested	Hardly interested	Not at all interested
No	4.2%	17.2%	40.4%	38.2%
Yes	10.6%	18.6%	43.8%	27.0%

Cramer's  $V = 0.110$ ;  $\text{sig} = 0.000$

The data shown in the following tables clearly indicate links between ethical consumption and various forms of political participation and activism. As a form of conventional activism, union membership is a significant factor not only for civic activism<sup>20</sup> but also largely determines participation in new forms of political activism (Table 7). The data show that among ethical consumers there are twice as many members of unions and similar organisations than among the respondents who have not participated in boycotts. On the other hand, one of the most basic forms of conventional activism, voting in elections, is not a statistically significant factor for ethical consumption.

20 Research of civic activism in Serbia has shown that members of organisations are three times more likely to engage in civic actions as compared with those who are not members (for more on this, see Petrović, 2016: 392).

Table 7. Participation in Boycott by Trade union membership

Boycott	Member of trade union or similar organisation			
	Yes, currently	Yes, previously	No	Total
No	6.3%	22.7%	71.0%	100%
Yes	13.2%	27.8%	59.0%	100%

Cramer's V = 0.100; sig=0.000

There is a somewhat greater link recorded between unconventional forms of participation (particularly signing petitions and participation in protests) and ethical consumption (Table 8). This finding can largely be explained by the prevalence of these forms of activism – i.e. the possibility of participating in these kinds of activities. The close relationship between the form of political activism analysed here (*boycotts*) and other forms of political engagement was also indicated by the findings of a study of the *Against Dictatorship* protest in mid-2017 (for more, see Backović, Petrović, 2017: 447).

Table 8. Participation in Boycott by political participation and civic engagement

Boycotted certain products last 12 months	Contacted politician or government official last 12 months <sup>21</sup>		Worked in political party or action group last 12 months <sup>22</sup>		Worked in another organisation or association last 12 months <sup>23</sup>		Signed petition last 12 months <sup>24</sup>		Taken part in lawful public demonstration last 12 <sup>25</sup>		Posted or shared anything about politics online last 12 months <sup>26</sup>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Yes	18.9	81.1	17.0	83.0	23.7	76.3	42.5	57.5	20.2	79.8	29.5	70.5
No	9.2	90.8	5.2	94.8	9.9	90.1	13.9	86.1	3.6	96.4	8.9	91.1

Finally, it remains to be seen to what extent the practice of ethical consumption by the citizens of Serbia is determined by their political orientation and values.

When it comes to the impact of political orientation, which was analysed on the basis of self-classification on a left to right spectrum, surprisingly, the differences between the two groups of consumers are not statistically significant (sig = 0.078), with the proviso that respondents who engaged in boycotts were somewhat more likely to report leftward leanings. The absence of a difference between these two groups may be explained by the different motives and values that underlie the boycott of certain goods. Given that this research determined only participation or non-participation in boycotts but not the reasons or motives for the boycott or the types of products being boycotted, it is not possible to draw more robust conclusions about the lack of differences in political orientation of these two groups.

21 Phi= 0.101; sig=0.000

22 Phi= 0.151; sig=0.000

23 Phi = 0.136; sig=0.000

24 Phi = 0.241; sig=0.000

25 Phi= 0.232; sig=0.000

26 Phi = 0.206; sig=0.000

While political orientation does not statistically significantly differentiate participation in ethical consumption, redistributive values do to an extent result in a statistically significant effect.

If we observe the first two statements in the following table, we can see that there is no statistically significant difference between respondents who have participated in boycotts and those who have not. This finding requires particular attention. When evaluating the income of the top 10 percent of employees by income in Serbia (over 100,000 RSD per month), most people in Serbia believe that these incomes are unfairly high. On the other hand, when it comes to evaluating the income of the bottom 10 percent (less than 25,000 RSD per month), people believe that these incomes are unfairly low (the average rating on a 0–10 scale is less than 2).

However, if we observe the difference between these two groups in evaluating overall wealth inequality in Serbia, we can note the presence of a statistically significant difference between ethical consumers and those who do not engage in this practice. Even though both groups see wealth inequality as unfairly high, the average value for ethical consumers is somewhat higher, which confirms the assumption that ethical consumers adhere to the values of equality and fairness

Table 9. Wealth differences and fairness,  
Independent-samples t-test

	Participation in Boycott	Mean	Std. Deviation
Top 10% full-time employees in country, earning more than [100.000 rsd], how fair ( $p > 0.05$ )	No	5.65	2.169
	Yes	5.68	2.352
Bottom 10% full-time employees in country, earning less than [25.000 rsd], how fair ( $p > 0.05$ )	No	1.89	1.672
	Yes	1.91	1.947
Differences in wealth in country, how fair ( $p < 0.05$ )	No	6.76	2.636
	Yes	7.48	2.428

Finally, it remains only to show whether in addition to supporting the values of equality and fairness, ethical consumers also support environmental values – i.e. whether they emphasise the importance of protecting the environment.

In accordance with our initial assumption, ethical consumers are more likely than others to emphasise the importance of protecting the environment. As is clearly evident from the following table (Table 10), more than half of respondents who have participated in the boycott of certain goods also stated that they individuals who care about the environment are very similar to them<sup>27</sup>, while the proportion of those who do not see such similarities is only one percent. If we assume that environmental reasons are one of the key reasons to boycott certain goods (in addition to values and politics), this finding, which indicates how entrenched environmental attitudes are among ethical consumers, seems entirely logical.

27 The relevant question in the questionnaire was formulated as follows: I will now briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how similar each of them is to you.

Table 10. Participation in Boycott by the Importance to care for nature and environment

Boycott	Important to care for nature and environment					
	Very much like me	Like me	Somewhat like me	A little like me	Not like me	Not like me at all
No	38.7%	40.1%	11.5%	5.6%	3.4%	0.6%
Yes	53.1%	30.3%	8.8%	5.7%	0.9%	1.3%

Cramer's V = 0.100; sig=0.000

In addition to examining the effects of each individual factor on ethical consumption, we also sought to apply the binary logistic regression model in order to determine how their effects alter when other factors are controlled for. The results of the regression analysis show that the significance of most of the analysed predictors is nullified – particularly true of demographic and socio-economic factors. The only predictor variables to retain their explanatory power were those for certain forms of political activism, such as signing petitions, work in political parties or action groups, posting or sharing political content online.

## Conclusion

As can be seen from the analysis, a number of predictors that we assumed would significantly shape engagement in ethical consumption did not prove to be statistically significant or otherwise had a weak impact (age, occupation, employment status, etc.). This can largely be explained by the prevalence of this form of political engagement: the fact that ethical consumption is not widespread in Serbia means that differences between the two groups are less pronounced, as is the impact of the factors studied here. The existence of different motives and reasons underlying the boycott of products (environmental, national, value-based, etc.) – which are in turn determined by different factors – could also have acted to reduce intergroup differences. As a consequence, the expected intergroup differences in ethical consumption have largely been lost, which makes the task of drawing clear conclusions about the characteristics of ethical consumption in Serbia significantly more difficult. In that regard and in order to more completely understand the phenomenon of ethical consumption, more qualitative and quantitative research is required on the values and lifestyles of ethical consumers, as is more information on the products they purchase or decline to purchase and the reasons for their boycotts or boycotts.

Another aspect that signals the need for further research of this phenomenon is the fact that, in terms of the prevalence of ethical consumption, Serbia is in the same group of countries not only as Czechia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Latvia and Estonia but as Belgium, Cyprus, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and the Netherlands. It is precisely these kinds of research findings that indicate the need for further research of the local context – particularly bearing in mind that the boycott or buycott of goods is in many ways determined by the economic development of the country, the economic status of the population



and the possibility of producing fair trade goods (Brković, 2013). Additionally, it should be explored whether this practice is motivated by political engagement or if it is fostered by ethics such as thrift, patriotism and economic nationalism (Marinković, Stanišić, Kostić, 2011; Pellandini-Simányi, Gulyás, 2019; Lekakis, 2017, 2018).

Finally, it is worth particularly emphasising that the spread of ethical consumption gives rise to several dilemmas that should be taken into consideration in further analysis. One of these is that the rise in boycotts in Western countries raises the question of whether they result in the commercialisation of a product and whether this activity has now become mainstream. Additionally, the spread of ethical consumption raises the question of whether, due to changes in governance, political actors refrain from taking on responsibility for resolving certain political and environmental issues, which leads to the individualisation of responsibility and its transfer to individual consumers (Littler, 2010; Boström, Klintman, 2019).

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## Appendix

Table 1. Post Hoc Test – Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD						
(I) Country	(J) Country	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Serbia	Austria	-.32927468*	.02839982	.000	-.4352655	-.2232839
	Belgium	-.09571415	.03089510	.301	-.2110176	.0195893
	Bulgaria	.23070186*	.02944397	.000	.1208142	.3405895
	Switzerland	-.50352045*	.03208635	.000	-.6232697	-.3837712
	Cyprus	.05895339	.03992488	1.000	-.0900500	.2079568
	Czechia	-.06225527	.02868868	.936	-.1693241	.0448136
	Germany	-.62958789*	.02873407	.000	-.7368262	-.5223496
	Denmark	-.35588288*	.03191472	.000	-.4749916	-.2367741
	Estonia	.07613805	.03025971	.755	-.0367940	.1890702
	Spain	-.05282866	.03137894	.998	-.1699378	.0642805
	Finland	-.69612687*	.03095249	.000	-.8116445	-.5806092
	France	-.53605421*	.02988158	.000	-.6475751	-.4245333
	United Kingdom	-.31436539*	.02919800	.000	-.4233351	-.2053957
	Croatia	-.02387990	.03070455	1.000	-.1384722	.0907124
	Hungary	.22212089*	.03144120	.000	.1047794	.3394624
	Ireland	-.10399251	.02917046	.086	-.2128594	.0048744
	Iceland	-.77475994*	.03865526	.000	-.9190250	-.6304949
	Italy	.13570312*	.02780977	.000	.0319144	.2394918
	Lithuania	.19921867*	.03060283	.000	.0850060	.3134313
	Latvia	.11481151	.03789150	.348	-.0266031	.2562262
	Montenegro	.10658639	.03461145	.313	-.0225868	.2357596
Netherlands	-.03785575	.03134526	1.000	-.1548392	.0791277	
Norway	-.44885841*	.03303900	.000	-.5721631	-.3255538	
Poland	.16395690*	.03232468	.000	.0433182	.2845956	
Portugal	.07280181	.03603510	.972	-.0616846	.2072882	
Sweden	-.97704505*	.03212397	.000	-1.0969347	-.8571554	
Slovenia	.04642081	.03359547	1.000	-.0789607	.1718023	
Slovakia	.19204041*	.03576973	.000	.0585444	.3255364	

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.