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# SUNDAY CHRISTIAN SIGNIFICANCE AND THE SAINTS DAYS SHOPPING BEHAVIOUR

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## Abstract

The authors are dealing with the Sunday Christian' significance and the celebrations of other Saints Days in Christian families. They focus on the definition of Sunday' significance from the biblical point of view and also on the selling and shopping behaviour on Sundays in Slovakia and other countries as well. The survey is targeted on the current generation and its aim is to detect the importance of Sunday as a Christian feast more often linked with Sunday shopping, than to going to Church.

*Keywords:* leisure time, shopping, Christian faith, consumer, lifestyle

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## 1. Introduction

We often witness the discussion about selling/shopping and working on Sundays. The society narrowed the perception of Sunday as a relaxing day from the everyday exhaustion and the role of Sunday as a feast is fading. Sunday means for many people a day of rest, when they do their hobbies as walking, shopping, doing sports. It is being considered as the day of 'the weekly distraction' [J. Paul II, *The apostolic letter Dies Domini on Sunday The Day of Lord*, online at <http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117285446>]. There has been a change of Sunday' importance in the current thinking, argued John Paul II, who discussed the Sunday observance in the apostolic letter 'Dies Domini', 1998 [<http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117285446>]. The conclusions of John Paul II were influenced not only by religious, but also by social aspect as well.

Both believers and non-believers tend to consider Sunday as a day of rest. The social aspect of Sunday is continually disappearing. The attitude to the work as not the highest value in our lives is reflected in our physical work avoidance. The believers prefer relaxing in nature, walking, shopping, and participating to cultural events with their families. However, Sunday celebrated in a Church is getting scarce. Previously, the believers tried to arrange their programs so as they had enough time to go to Church and celebrate a mass. The current trend is quite the opposite. They attempt to get through the mass quickly so they can

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spare their leisure time to other activities. The profession of faith is influenced by the current way of life and the age we live in. Due to a high unemployment rate and the necessity to save a certain standard of living, people are forced to accept conditions such as: longer working hours, working during bank holidays etc. On top of that, the Internet society changes the way of communication among people and forms on a continuous way: "Gradually, it became a world of its own, generating daily habits, specific mentalities and new ethical codes" [1].

## **2. Sunday Christian significance**

The topic of relaxation, spending leisure time and their place in our life is often discussed. Leisure time is defined as follows "a time of freedom dedicated to the individuals for their self-realization and self-expression according to their own interests and needs besides their duties" [2]. J. Pávková [3] differentiates between a leisure time and a time for duties. The correct time's exploitation is highly important mainly for children and youth as it significantly influences their personality and education. Its incorrect use and misunderstanding may lead to a socio-pathological phenomenon among children and in the society as well.

On the other hand, the Third Commandment reminds us about the obligation for Sunday blessing. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." (Exodus 20.8-10) This decision is explained in the 11<sup>th</sup> verse: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Exodus 20.11)

This Commandment requires blessing Sundays and commanded holidays by participation in the holy mass and the avoidance of hard work. These two fundamental principles are the base for the following secondary (social) ones. Sunday should be the day which we should devote to ourselves, visit our relatives and ill ones, read the Word. Also John Paul II in the apostolic letter, there he emphasizes the importance of the Sabbath mentioned as the Third Commandment of God [<http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117285446>]: "The Sabbath precept, which in the first Covenant prepares for the Sunday of the new and eternal Covenant, is therefore rooted in the depths of God's plan. This is why, unlike many other precepts, it is set not within the context of strictly cultic stipulations but within the Decalogue, the 'ten words' which represent the very pillars of the moral life inscribed on the human heart."

The Genesis Book terminates the Creation narrative by: "And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation." (Genesis 2.2-3) The name 'Saturday' comes from the Hebrew word

*shabbat* meaning *day of rest*. Jewish Saturday is influenced by the remembrance of the creation.

The Pope John Paul II in the apostolic letter *Dies Domini* reminds [<http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117285446>]: “The divine rest of the seventh day does not allude to an inactive God, but emphasizes the fullness of what has been accomplished. It speaks, as it were, of God’s lingering before the ‘very good’ work (Genesis 1.31) which his hand has wrought, in order to cast upon it a gaze full of joyous delight. This is a ‘contemplative’ gaze which does not look to new accomplishments but enjoys the beauty of what has already been achieved. It is a gaze which God casts upon all things, but in a special way upon man, the crown of creation. It is a gaze which already discloses something of the nuptial shape of the relationship which God wants to establish with the creature made in his own image, by calling that creature to enter a pact of love.” Under these circumstances we are asked to reflect on how the real Christian Sunday should look like. This day’ sanctity in the creator’s authentic creation and salvation plan is disappearing. John Paul II emphasizes the importance of this cult community dimension preservance: “The custom of the ‘weekend’ has become more widespread, a weekly period of respite, spent perhaps far from home and often involving participation in cultural, political or sporting activities which are usually held on free days. This social and cultural phenomenon is by no means without its positive aspects if, while respecting true values, it can contribute to people’s development and to the advancement of the life of society as a whole. All of this responds not only to the need for rest, but also to the need for celebration which is inherent in our humanity. Unfortunately, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a ‘weekend’, it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see ‘the heavens’. Hence, though ready to celebrate, they are really incapable of doing so.” [<http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117285446>] Many aspects as a fast pace of life, a lack of free time to spend with our families or just to dedicate to ourselves, prolongation of working time, all of these lead us to consider Sunday as one of the common workdays. Sunday means for many a day of big shopping or relaxing in shopping malls.

### **3. Shopping and working on Sunday and during Saints Days**

The shop opening hours are not set by any EU directives. However, several member states adjusted the selling on certain hours per week, besides the tourist resorts, restaurants and gas stations. According to the customary law in European Union countries, shops are closed on Saturday after 5 p.m. and the whole day on Sunday. The restrictions are initiated by the unions lobby. They support the employees in order to prevent them from 24-hour-shopping culture. Sunday selling is therefore the matter of national legislative regulations.

The Slovak Republic is bound by the Treaty with the Holy See to respect the following days as the Saints Days [Ministerstvo kultúry, *The Treaty of the Slovak Republic with the Holy See*, online at [45](http://old.culture.gov.sk/cirkev-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

nabozenske-spolocnosti/legislatva/zkony/zakladna-zmluva-medzi-slovenskou-republikou-a-svatou-stolicou]: 1<sup>st</sup> January - the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Feast of the Circumcision of Christ and Basil the Great; 6<sup>th</sup> January - Epiphany; Good Friday; Easter Monday; 5<sup>th</sup> July - Saints Cyril and Methodius Day; 15<sup>th</sup> September - Day of Blessed Virgin Mary, patron saint of Slovakia; 1<sup>st</sup> November - All Saints' Day; 24<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas Eve; 25<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas Day; 26<sup>th</sup> December - Saint Stephen's Day, first martyr, feast of the Mother of God. The Slovaks cannot do the shopping on Christmas Eve after 12 a.m.; during Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and Epiphany, when shops are closed. The exception was given to pharmacies, airports, ports, other means of transport, hospitals, gas stations and small shops ran by the owners. People are also allowed to buy travel tickets and souvenirs.

The European Social Charter from 1961 states [*Founding statement*, online at <http://www.europeansundayalliance.eu/site/foundingstatement?SWS=2aeb4fc50dead8d8c42556bd68387b3b>] that all workers have the right to just conditions of work i.e. to ensure a weekly rest period which shall, as far as possible, coincide with the day recognised by tradition or custom in the country or region to be a day of rest. According to this statement, the day of the Lord (Sunday) is devoted to serve as this day in Slovakia.

Free Sunday and reasonable working hours significantly influence the citizens in Europe. The alliance, which requires declaring Sunday as a work-free day in European legislation, was founded in Brussels in 2011. The European Sunday Alliance was established as the initiative of the trade unions, civil society organizations and religious communities. The founders and supporters state that the free Sunday initiative is important not only for decent working conditions, but it also provides a space for healthy family relationship development between parents and their children. They also refer to the fact that Sunday is declared as the day of rest for children and adolescents in European legislation. Sunday is defined as a work-free day for public institutions as well.

The alliance referring to the scientific studies (e.g. Deloitte Study for European Commission) claims that working in non-standard time period influences the psychological well-being and therefore comprehensive understanding of worker's health. According to the social lifestyle, Sunday is determined as the most appropriate day for a social interaction [The European Sunday Alliance The free-Sunday supporters are mobilising in EU, online at: <http://www.euractiv.sk/slovensko-v-ep/clanok/v-eu-sa-mobilizuju-zastanci-volnej-nedele-017326>].

Professor Michael Bittman also examined the impact of the Sunday working on employees and their lives in the survey done for The Social Policy Research Centre of the University of New South Wales in Australia. Sunday is still considered as a special day as confirmed in the above mentioned study. Many activities are especially reserved for Sundays, notably rest, recreation and association with significant others, celebrations. Sunday workers do indeed miss out key activities with their families, especially their children. Their conviviality, the ability to associate with friends and colleagues, is also seriously

compromised. The community also suffers because Sunday workers have reduced levels of civic engagement. These workers have less time for catching-up on essential domestic chores, which lowers their standard of living compared with those with more time to produce domestic goods and services of a higher quality [M. Bittman, *Sunday working and Family Time*, online at <http://www.europeansundayalliance.eu/site/studies/article/59.html>].

Similar activities have also been overtaken by Slovak organisations. E.g. The Independent Christian Unions of Slovakia started a leaflet action “The Sacred Right of Children” in 2002 – Sunday with families in order to advocate legislative norms maximally limiting the Sunday work. The further focus of the Unions was aimed not only to the shops but also to other economy sectors, where people work on Sundays although the Sunday work is not inevitable [B. Tancerová, *It should be closed on Sundays*, online at <http://www.sme.sk/c/767536/ked-je-nedela-ma-byt-zatvorene.html>].

The permission and prohibition of Sunday selling is given on national level by each country separately. Nowadays, besides Slovakia the Sunday shopping is allowed on the Saints Days and on Sundays in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Portugal, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and Italy. Despite the strict protests of Vatican against Sunday shopping, it was approved in Italy in 2012 mainly due to the economic situation. Some retailers consider those working on Sundays as ‘the Sunday slaves’ [A. Speciale, *Vatican works to stop Sunday shopping in Italy*, online at <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/vatican-works-stop-sunday-shopping-italy>], those with a lack of time for their families and other social activities. Special opening hours may be noticed in other countries, e.g. in Germany. The weekend-selling is limited to several Sundays each year. Specific Sundays and the opening hours are set on a local level.

According to the Infratest dimap study made in July 2012 73% of all Germans were against the Sunday opening hours to be similar to those during the week [P. Neuman, *Deutsche wollen am Sonntag nicht einkaufen gehen*, online at <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article108356783/Deutsche-wollen-am-Sonntag-nicht-einkaufen-gehen.html>]. Only 25% of all 1,000 respondents aged over 18 agreed with Sunday shopping. The results were influenced by the respondent’s age – the younger the respondent, the stronger support of the opening hours liberalization. The percentage of those who agreed with the shops opened on Sundays differs by the age group as follows: 40% of the respondents aged 18-29, 19% from the respondents aged 30-44 and only 19% of the respondents aged 60 plus [<http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article108356783/Deutsche-wollen-am-Sonntag-nicht-einkaufen-gehen.html>]. Only several countries as France, Netherlands and Spain allow the shops to be opened on the Saints Days in the centres of tourism and the capital cities. Unlike Australia, several states in the US accepted the restrictions. According to the law adopted in Sweden, the shops are closed between midnight and 5 a.m.

A significant change in the shopping behaviour occurred due to the globalisation trends, with hypermarkets and supermarkets coming to our

markets. “Current corporations dispose with sufficient financial and human potential in order to amend the social values of each company and create the homogenised enjoyment culture, which is brought to fulfil the human hedonistic desire. This summary leads to the customer costs increase, the retention and development of customer habits and subsequently the company revenues and turnover increase.” [4] Hypermarkets attempt to attract the customers and lead them to the shops in the evening, during the weekends and the Saints Days by intense marketing activities and promotion. Their intention is to create a commonly accepted new cultural behaviour [4].

#### **4. Christianity and a consumerism**

Nowadays, whereas a hectic lifestyle puts aside the basic pillars of the Christian belief, it supports the consumerism as lifestyle. The Sunday and the Saints Days sanctity belongs to these basic Christian pillars. It may be more convenient for people to go on Sunday shopping rather than to keep the Christian Sunday tradition. This happens to be the most crucial problem in defining whether the cross-quarter evolution of the chosen economy parameters is influenced by the flexible number of Sundays and the workday Saints Days (or Saints Days). In this article, there we refer to the quarter data evolution of 2010–2012, provided by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

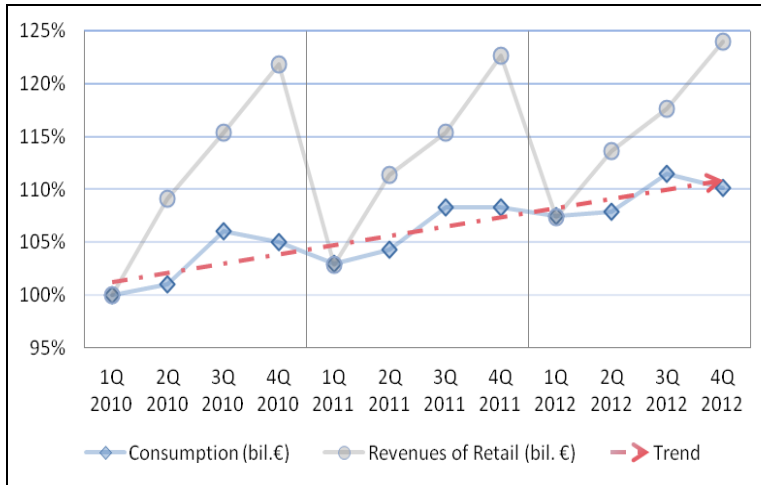
In order to identify the influence of the unstable number of the Saints Days on the economy parameters results, several indicators were chosen e.g. undifferentiated goods and services producing activities of household for own use, retail trade excluding motor vehicles and motorcycles (SK NACE Rev.2).

The household consumption index indicates the final household consumption defined by GDP spendings method. The mentioned indicator takes into account the household spendings on the consumer goods and services purchase. In 2012, the expenditures of Slovak households reached 40 billion €. This shows that the average household monthly expenditures achieved the level of 1 760 EUR (aggregated data based on the Census from 2011). Another significant indicator is the parameter of the retail trade revenues. This shows the increase and decrease of the retail revenues and therefore the increase and decrease of the household expenditures [5].

The diagram from Figure 1 refers to the basic indexes of the chosen economy indicators. The basic index measures the development of the household consumption and the retail revenue values in the separate quarters compared to the basic period (year 2010 is set as the basic period in this article). This entails that both the household consumption and also the retail revenues show the increasing trend year on year, which positively influences the overall GDP increase and possible standard of living increase in Slovakia.

During 2012, 195 Saints Days (including Sundays) were celebrated in Slovakia. People in Slovakia usually celebrate 65 Saints Days each year in average. In order to identify the influence of the flexible number of the Saints Days on the economy indicators results year on year, the mutual relationship has

to be evaluated by the regression analysis. The regression analysis allows us to estimate the correlation between the explicating and explicated variables. The defined economy parameters as the retail revenues and the household consumption represent the dependant variable compared to the number of the Saints Days, which is considered as the independent variable. This causes the modifications of the dependant variable. Using the correlation analysis, we are able to define the linear relationship between the dependant and independent variables.



**Figure 1.** Indexes of the chosen economy indicators.

As mentioned above, the household consumption signifies the indicator reflecting the household expenditures on the consumer goods and services. In order to confirm the assumption of the correlation between the Saints Days number and the household consumption amount, the modification in the Saints Days number has to cause the alteration of the household expenditures. The regression model (Figure 2) exploitation enables us to explain the correlation between the Saints Days number per year (SDN) and the household consumption indicator as illustrated by the linear model ( $y = a + b \cdot X$ ). The result of the calculation gives us the possibility to identify the assumption of the straight line, with the formula compiled as: Household consumption = 7 + 0.17\*SDN. The constant expressing the average expenditures in billions €, which we can expect when zero days of the holidays, is marked as (a). However, this constant provides just the information for the regression line position. The regression coefficient, which indicates the slope of the line, is marked as (b). To conclude, the coefficient rate provides us the information that one more Saint Day celebrated on a workday causes the increase in household consumption by 17 millions €.

The above mentioned statement and the statistical significance of the estimated model are confirmed by the Fisher's distribution characteristics with 95% reliability. By the correlation coefficient estimation (0.708), we are able to

deduce the linear dependence range. Based on the determination coefficient, it is possible confirm the statement that the Saint Days variable determinates the household consumption variability with up to 71% reliability.

Based on the assumption that the household expenditures increase influences the retail trade revenues increase, the regression analysis has been applied in order to compare the dependence between the retail trade revenues and the Saints Days number. Whether the annual modification of the Saints Days number generates the changes in retail trade revenues value should be determined by the former relation explained. The diagram from Figure 3 indicates the straight line shape as follows:

$$\text{Retail trade revenues} = 1.499407 + 0.178519 \cdot \text{SDN}$$

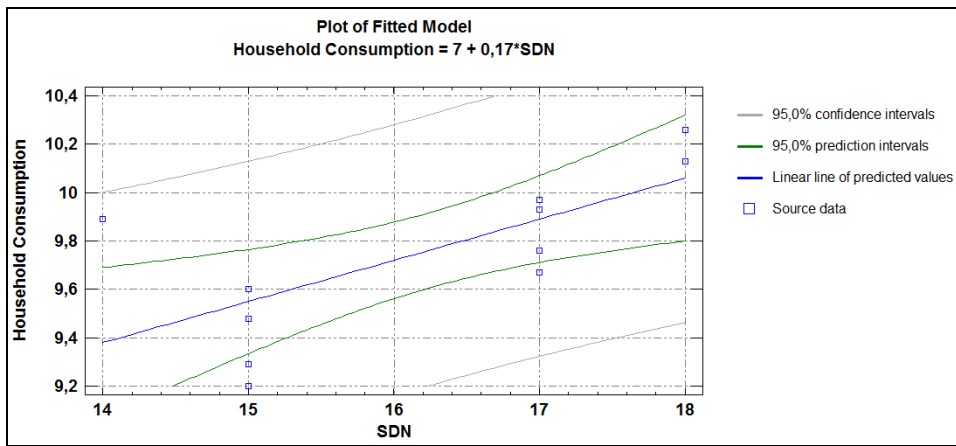


Figure 2. Regression model of the household consumption.

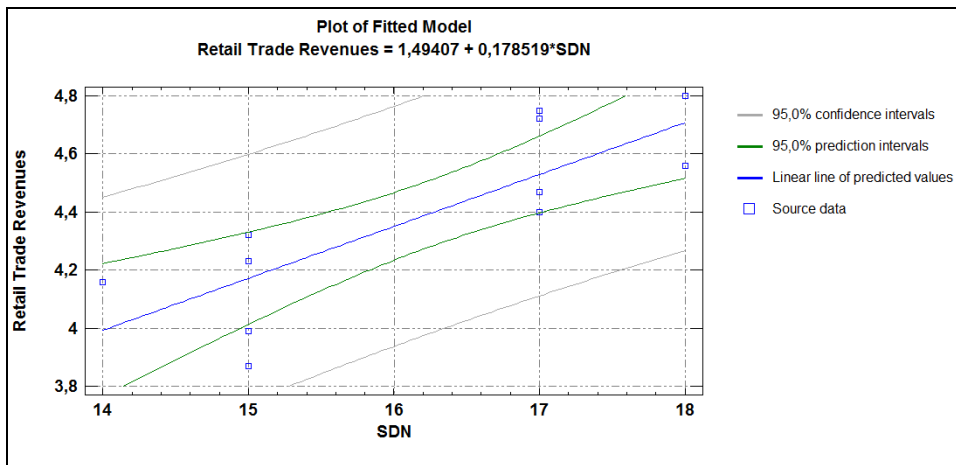


Figure 3. Regression model of the retail trade revenues.

The significance in the constant explanation concentrates on just the regression coefficient explanation. The further conclusion based on the



regression coefficient explanation states that one more Saints Day dedicated to workdays causes the retail trade revenues increase by almost 17.9 millions €.

The previously mentioned statement and the statistical reliability of the estimated model are declared by the Fisher's method distribution characteristics with 95% reliability. The linear dependency significantly influencing the given model should be estimated by the correlation coefficient (0.819). The number of the Saints Days explains the variability of the retail trade revenues with 82% reliability, which is defined according to the determination coefficient.

To sum up, according to the above mentioned analyses, the increasing number of the Saints Days causes the household consumption increase and subsequently a noticeable increase of the retail trade revenues as well. Obviously, people spend more of their leisure time shopping.

Based on the regression analyses results showing the correlation between the household expenditures, retail trade revenues and the number of the Saints Days dedicated to workdays annually, the estimation has been deduced. This claims the increasing consumer interest in consumer goods and services purchase even during the periods set for the Christian holidays and Sundays blessing.

A survey dealing with the consumer behaviour recognition of the Slovak Christians in the consumer goods purchase was done in order to confirm the stated estimation. The relevant and objective survey results were determined by the sample range of 362 respondents, which was set based on the random selection and in correspondence with the statistical inference. (The number of the respondents – 362 – was chosen on the basis of the share of the Roman-Catholics among the Slovak population – 0.62, on the distribution function reliability interval of the standard normal distribution –  $\alpha$  0.05, displaying an accepted maximum error dispersion of 5%). The survey was realised by personal interviewing during the period 2<sup>nd</sup> half of February 2013 until the end of March 2013 (6 weeks). The personal interviewing of the sample was executed in Trnava. As the monitored parameters, there were defined the following: gender, age, Roman-Catholic religion of the respondents. The aim of the quota selection was the survey orientation on the relatively balanced sample. The accomplishment of the 362 questionnaires was set as a condition for the survey completion.

The interpretation of the results is applied on the Christian believers of the generation X and generation Y. The generation X is represented by male and female of the Christian religion, aged over 35 years, whereas the generation Y is represented by young Christian believers up to 35 years old. The consumers of both the generation X and Y are represented mainly by those with high-school education (Figure 4) and living in the cities. Only small deviations should be defined while comparing the highest achieved education of both target groups.

Figure 5 describes the net household income of both target groups. It shows that the major household group of the generation X and Y represents those with the monthly income above 1000 €. In comparison, the average net monthly income of the generation X households reaches the level of 767 €.

However, the net monthly income of the generation Y households is 94 € higher compared to the generation X. Based on the above mentioned, the generation Y tends to reach higher consumption level, and therefore higher expenditures on the consumer goods.

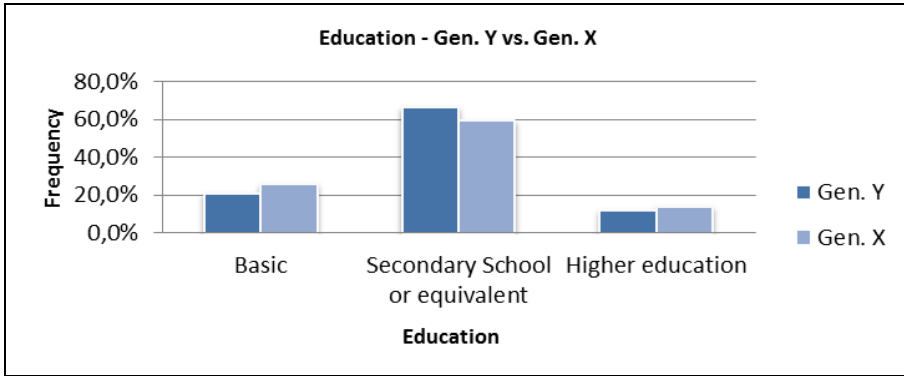


Figure 4. Education of the generation X and Y.

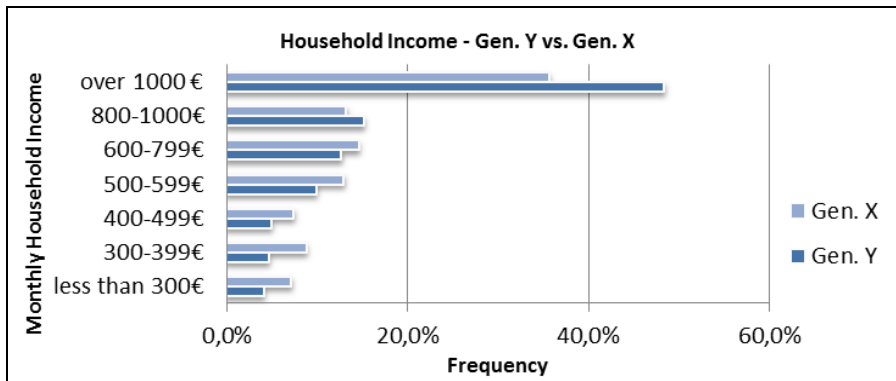


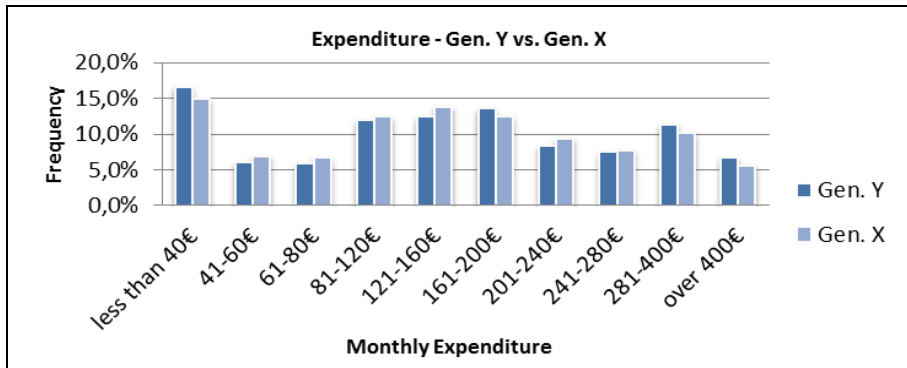
Figure 5. Net household income of the generation X and Y.

It is inevitable to define the monthly expenditures of the generation X and Y individual respondents in order to verify the higher tendency to the increased consumption of the generation Y. The diagram from Figure 6 describes that the most of the respondents spend less than 40 € monthly on the consumer goods purchases. However, the generation Y respondents buy the consumer goods in the amount of 163 € in average, which is 5 € more as the generation X. To conclude, generation Y shows a slightly higher tendency in consumption.

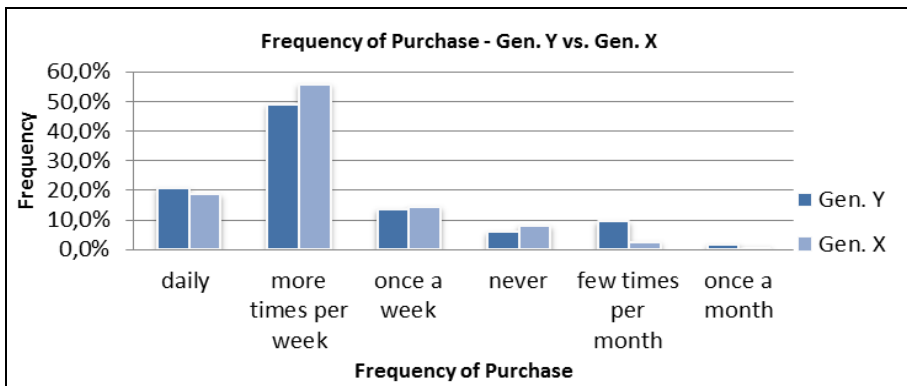
Considering the comparison of both generations, it was inevitable to identify the frequency of the consumer goods purchases. This parameter is almost equal by both mentioned target groups. As shown in Figure 7, the majority of the respondents tend to shop several times per week.

The respondents of both target groups commute to the distance of 0.5 up to 1 km to do the shopping (Figure 8). In comparison, the generation X respondents travel the distance of 3.2 km. The generation Y is willing to

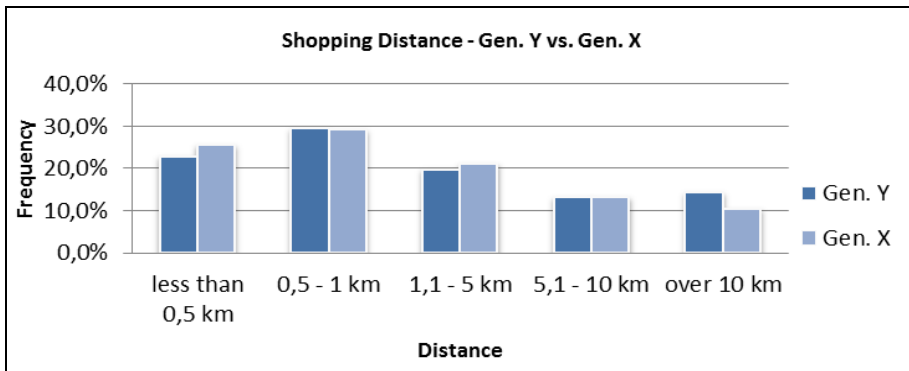
commute 0.5 km more in order to buy the consumer goods. The analysis corresponds mainly with the location of the shopping centres, which are predominately situated in the city suburbs.



**Figure 6.** Expenditures of the generation X and Y.



**Figure 7.** Frequency of the consumer goods purchases.



**Figure 8.** Shopping distance of the generation X and Y.

Considering the accomplished survey assumption, it was required to define the day when the respondents do the shopping most often. As shown in

Figure 9, Saturday and Sunday are the most preferred days by both target groups for consumer goods purchases.

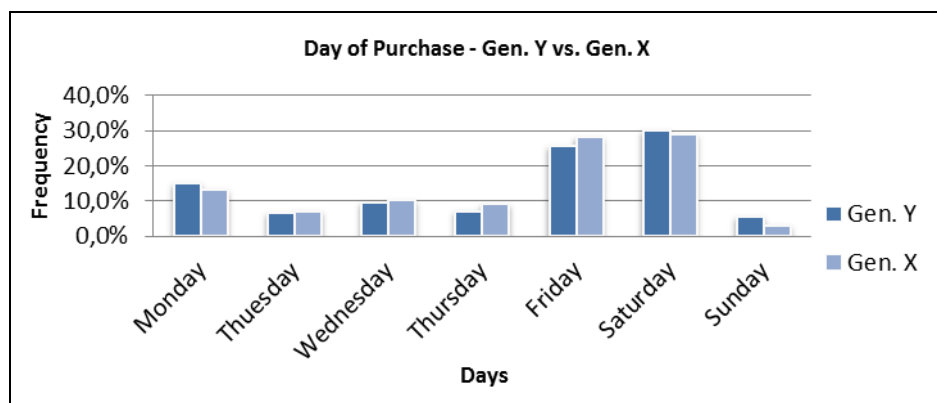


Figure 9. Purchase day of the generation X and Y.

Based on the last diagram, we are able to identify the shopping behaviour on Sundays among the Roman-Catholics. While comparing the shopping activities of both generations during the Sunday blessing, the generation Y shows a higher number of purchases than the generation X. According to these statements, we could assume the decreasing significance of Sunday blessing among young people.

## 5. Conclusion

Celebrating Sundays and Saints Days requires a common effort of all parties involved. However, the believers do not avoid shopping on Sundays. It is shown in our survey done on a sample of the generation X and Y respondents. Even the regression analyses outcomes, which served as a base for the survey itself, confirm the trend of increasing consumption on the work-free days. Subsequently, this causes the increase of retail trade revenues as people spend more time shopping. To sum up, the consumers are more interested in the consumer goods purchases even in the period dedicated to blessing. The Sunday and the Saints Day' spiritual dimension is diminishing mainly among the young Christians of the generation Y, aged up to 35 years.

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