



## Research Article

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# Recognition of the Consumer's Attitude Towards Organic Products and Its Relationship with the Selection Criteria for Sales Personnel in the Biggest Peruvian Bio-Fair

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## Abstract

*The main objective of this research was to determine the relationship between the acknowledgement of the consumer's attitude towards organic products and the selection criteria for sales personnel at the largest bio-fair in Lima, Peru. A quantitative approach, with an applied type, a correlational level, a non-experimental, and a cross-sectional design was used in the research technique. In this context, the population consisted of 78 organic product sales managers. The survey technique was applied, and the author's questionnaires were used as an instrument, yielding good findings in terms of validity, reliability, and confirmatory factor analysis. A multiple correlation matrix with Spearman's rho statistic was constructed and interpreted. The results obtained showed a moderate positive relationship between consumer attitude acknowledgement of organic products is and sales personnel selection criteria ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $r = 0.568$ ), giving validity to the general hypothesis. Similarly, bilateral asymptotic significance values of less than 0.001 allowed the acceptance of the specific hypotheses proposed by the researchers.*

**Keywords:** organic products, consumers, sales, bio-fair

## 1. Introduction

The literature related to strategies to achieve business success is constantly being updated, the environment is extremely changing and because of this, the plans that led to the success of companies that today are leaders have ceased to have the same effectiveness today. Studies by show that today's consumer's show purchasing preferences that are difficult to predict, have a highly fickle

personality, and also show little reaction to stimuli in the form of traditional marketing strategies (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2007).

Globally, it is recognized the need to conduct research on new trends that generate particular changes in consumer attitudes and the way in which companies are prepared to take advantage of them (Dhir et al., 2021; Macall et al., 2021; Sánchez-Bravo et al., 2021).

In this way, the consideration of ecology has emerged as a new concept of business and personal philosophy, which gives pass to green marketing and sales (Aitken et al., 2020; Castellano et al., 2015; Fraj et al., 2011; Gao et al., 2022; Hernández & Danny, 2012; Heydari et al., 2022; Monteiro et al., 2015; Oliveira Duarte et al., 2022; Roh et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2022).

Organic products are obtained through a production methodology considered environmentally friendly, in which one or more standards that aim to achieve sustainable agro-ecosystems in the social and ecological approach must be respected (Iskandar et al., 2021; Modebelu & Nwakpadolu, 2013; Pons & Silvadiere, 2002).

Recent research (Mercado et al., 2019; Vargas Bianchi, 2019) concluded that consumers select products based not only on the extent to which they meet their basic needs, but also adhere to the application of certain mental filters that are related to their own beliefs or attitudes.

Topics related to green marketing, sustainability, eco-friendly companies, and collaborative economies among others are a current trend in the field of research, due to the demand for knowledge related to it, some recent research are (Fernández-Bedoya et al., 2021; Fernández Bedoya, Gago Chávez, et al., 2020; Novillo Díaz et al., 2018; Saini, 2014; Sharma et al., 2015). There are authors who even indicate that in 2010 a new era began, in which many companies worldwide began to adopt eco-friendly postures in order to be in tune with the current consumer and increase their affinity (Koch et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2012; Petitjean, 2019).

Among the current trends shared by today's consumers is the consumption of organic products (Jensen et al., 2019; Mercati, 2016; Ranjbar Shamsi et al., 2020; Robina-Ramírez et al., 2020). This trend is characterized by the concern for the consumption of food that is not harmful to health, that is in harmony with the environment, that comes from an eco-friendly community that can be supported for its economic development and that at the same time generates curiosity among the young population (Fernández Bedoya, Esteves Pairazamán, et al., 2020; Simeone & Scarpato, 2020). It should be noted that organic production is recognized and promoted by the Peruvian State (Diario Oficial el Peruano, 2008).

On the other hand, companies are constantly seeking to select the right personnel to perform increasingly specific tasks, since this process is often the factor that generates prosperity in the company, while converting this investment into a satisfactory return that allows it to achieve its organizational objectives (Atalaya Pisco, 2001).

It is known that for any for-profit company, the constant flow of monetary income through sales activities is a key and strategic aspect (Esteves Pairazamán & Fernández Bedoya, 2019), therefore, the personnel recruitment area must use extremely fine and personalized criteria to identify certain skills, aptitudes, and knowledge desired in applicants who wish to fill positions for customer service.

In Lima, the capital of Peru, there is a bio-fair, which serves as a plaza where national producers of organic food and consumers who follow this trend meet.

It has been identified as a problem that, despite the existence of a positive consumer attitude towards organic products, it has not been possible to determine whether the sales managers have identified this, and whether it is related to their criteria for selecting sales personnel.

As background research, it is pertinent to cite previous research that sought to characterize the consumer of organic products in Latin America (Jager, 2000; Salgado-Beltrán & Beltrán-Morales, 2011; Vázquez et al., 2012); however, these were unable to determine correlations between these characteristics and the selection criteria of sales personnel, due to a different methodological design.

As for the factors (or dimensions) that generate a change in the attitude of consumers of organic products, we have:

- a. Concern for consumption of food that is not harmful to health (Baudry et al., 2021; Hansen

- et al., 2018; Hughner et al., 2007; Lamonaca et al., 2022; Mohamad et al., 2014; Stolz et al., 2011).
- b. Environmental conservation (Baudry et al., 2021; Boobalan et al., 2022; Eberle et al., 2022; Funk et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2018; Hughner et al., 2007; Lamonaca et al., 2022; Mohamad et al., 2014; Sadiq et al., 2021; Stolz et al., 2011).
  - c. Concern for product provenance (Danner & Menapace, 2020; Funk et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2018; Hughner et al., 2007; Kirmani et al., 2022; Mohamad et al., 2014; Stolz et al., 2011).
  - d. Desire to contribute to the local economy (Danner & Menapace, 2020; Feucht & Zander, 2018; Funk et al., 2021; Hughner et al., 2007; Kirmani et al., 2022; Mohamad et al., 2014; Neumayr & Moosauer, 2021; Stolz et al., 2011).
  - e. Curiosity about the product (Bozga, 2015; Eberle et al., 2022; Hughner et al., 2007; Sadiq et al., 2021; Septianto et al., 2019).

On the other hand, it is well known that the business world is constantly changing, and adaptation to the market is key for any company to maintain or gain market leadership, and thus obtain market share.

Lately, the concept of quality has surpassed the idea of offering a product or service with better characteristics than the one expected by the client. Companies are aware that their workers contribute with knowledge, skills, abilities and other human characteristics to the improvement of the goods offered, thus adding quality (Ceccagno & Gao, 2022; Hendarman & Tjakraatmadja, 2012; López Gumucio, 2010).

Companies, with the aim of increasing the quality offered with their products, try not to make mistakes when selecting personnel, they are oriented to the search for the most competent worker available in the market, their objective is to select the most suitable worker to fill a vacancy with well-defined characteristics (López Gumucio, 2010; Werther, 1996).

The personnel selection criteria are oriented to the identification of skills, aptitudes and acquired knowledge of the product and market, which will make him or her perfect for an extraordinarily defined job position (Jericó, 2011). The work of the person who selects personnel is synthesized in choosing, for a specific position, the ideal candidate following certain criteria (Chiavenato, 2017).

The personnel selection process is key for the company, since it has the opportunity to choose, from among a group of stakeholders, the people who will integrate its organization, so it is of utmost importance to create carefully designed selection criteria that are aligned with organizational objectives (Petrescu et al., 2015; Snell, 2013).

Other authors (Cooper et al., 2004) exercise an administrative vision related to the personnel selection process and its criteria. Management has as one of its objectives the allocation of scarce resources to the purposes required by the manager, human resources would become manageable and their allocation even before entering the company, through a strict selection process, which takes into account various criteria in order to select those who fit these criteria to the best extent (Cooper et al., 2004). The selection criteria must be precise and very well elaborated, since there are several proven situations in which newly hired workers admit to having deceived recruiters (Frank, 2005).

Taking into consideration what was previously reviewed, in terms of personnel selection criteria seeking to choose the ideal candidate, we chose the dimensions identified in academic literature (Frank, 2005), which oriented towards the sales area are the following four:

- a. Selling abilities.
- b. Selling aptitudes.
- c. Product knowledge.
- d. Market knowledge.

In view of the above, the researchers proposed the following research objectives: To determine the relationship between consumer attitude and acknowledgement of organic products (and its dimensions) and the selection criteria of sales personnel in a bio-fair located in Lima, Peru.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research took place in a bio-fair located in Lima, Peru, in the first two months of year 2020. This place was chosen because it meet the necessary conditions for the development of the research: sales managers who recognize the existence of the trend towards food based on organic products and therefore make use of special criteria for the selection of sales personnel, who have direct contact with this specialized public. It is necessary to point out that the place is the largest organic products fairground in Lima, with 78 operating stands.

In this study, we took into consideration the sales managers of each of the organic product stands, being the population (census) 78 people. The choice of taking sales managers as the population is because these individuals not only know the market perfectly well, but also have the responsibility of recruiting, managing, training and motivating the sales team, which makes them the only people empowered to answer the questionnaire developed coherently.

The research approach was quantitative, applied, correlational, non-experimental cross-sectional design.

Based on the theory, the following variables, dimensions, indicators were identified, assigning items for each indicator (See Table 1). It is pertinent to indicate that the instrument used (questionnaire) was submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis, validity and reliability tests, obtaining satisfactory results.

**Table 1:** Variables, dimensions, indicators and items of the investigation

Variables	Dimensions	Indicators	Item
Acknowledgement of the consumer's attitude towards organic products	Concern for consumption of food that is not harmful to health	Acknowledgement of low-fat food consumption concerns	1
		Acknowledgement of concern about consumption of low-calorie foods	2
		Acknowledgement of concern for low sodium food consumption	3
	Environmental conservation	Acknowledgement of concern for the non-use of non-natural fertilizers	4
		Acknowledgment of concern for non-use of herbicides	5
		Acknowledgment of concern for non-use of pesticides	6
	Concern for product provenance.	Acknowledgement of concerns about the geographical location of the product	7
		Acknowledgment of concern about the product's distribution chain	8
		Acknowledgement of concern about the date of product cultivation	9
	Desire to contribute to the local economy	Acknowledgement of the desire of support to the equitable economy	10
		Acknowledgement of the desire of support to the emergence of new community enterprises	11
		Acknowledgment of the desire to respect local traditions and cultures	12
	Curiosity about the product	Acknowledgement of the desire to explore new food options	13
		Acknowledgement of the desire to experience new experiences	14
		Acknowledgement of the desire to follow healthy eating trends	15

Variables	Dimensions	Indicators	Item
Sales personnel selection criteria	Selling abilities	Identification of the ability to relate to other people	1
		Identification of mental quickness	2
		Identification of verbal fluency	3
	Selling aptitudes	Identification of motivation to work	4
		Identification of empathy	5
		Identification of confidence transmission	6
	Product knowledge	Identification of basic product knowledge	7
		Identification of knowledge of product properties	8
		Identification of product application knowledge	9
	Market knowledge	Identification of product supply knowledge	10
		Identification of product demand knowledge	11
		Identification of knowledge of the product's average price	12

### 3. Results

Table 2 shows the results of Spearman's rho test, in which the correlations between variable one "consumer attitude acknowledgement of organic products" (and its dimensions), versus variable two "sales personnel selection criteria" were determined.

**Table 2:** Results of Spearman's rho test

Variable	Detail	Results of Spearman's rho test with sales personnel selection criteria
Acknowledgement of the consumer's attitude towards organic products	Correlation Coefficient	0.568
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Concern for consumption of food that is not harmful to health	Correlation Coefficient	0.378
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Environmental conservation	Correlation Coefficient	0.431
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Concern for product provenance	Correlation Coefficient	0.539
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Desire to contribute to the local economy	Correlation Coefficient	0.457
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Curiosity about the product	Correlation Coefficient	0.445
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

According to Table 2, it was determined that there is a relationship between variable one "consumer attitude acknowledgement of organic products" (and its dimensions) and variable two "sales personnel selection criteria". All the results of Spearman's rho test showed medium or moderate correlations, with bilateral asymptotic significance less than 0.05.

### 4. Discussion

While it is true that previous authors in their research aimed to find out what is the purpose for consuming organic products in an eco-fair located in Xalapa, Mexico, it was found that 31% of

consumers surveyed do so because of their concern for environmental care (Vázquez et al., 2012). In this regard, this research found that from the point of view of sales managers regarding the acknowledgement of the attitude of consumers of organic products, the vast majority of customers do so also because of their concern for the care of the environment. In this investigation 80.8% said of sales managers surveyed that it is because they feel concerned or very concerned about the non-use of non-natural fertilizers, 68.0% because of their concern for the non-use of herbicides, and 69.2% for the use of pesticides.

With respect to the findings of a previous study in Sonora, Mexico (Salgado-Beltrán & Beltrán-Morales, 2011), that sustainable consumption of organic products is strongly related to the consumer behaviour of organic products; this investigation complements and increases the literature available regarding this thematic.

On the other hand, while it is true that a previous found compelling evidence that affirmed the existence of a growing trend towards healthy eating motivated by concerns about climate change, the devastation of biodiversity, among other concerns (Jager, 2000); this study found, from the perspective of the sales manager, that the vast majority of consumers of organic products do so because they are concerned about the consumption of food that is not harmful to health, the environment, the origin of the product, the desire to support the local economy and curiosity about organic products.

The background information reviewed did not allow the discussion of the inferential (correlational) results, because the topic investigated is unpublished and there is no previous research that sought to find the relationship between the acknowledgement of the attitude of the consumer of organic products and the criteria for the selection of sales personnel.

The research conducted found a considerable positive relationship ( $r = 0.568$ ) between the acknowledgement of the attitude of the consumer of organic products and the criteria for the selection of sales personnel by sales managers. It is a necessity to pay attention to trends to achieve business success, as suggested by previous authors (Dhir et al., 2021; Macall et al., 2021; Sánchez-Bravo et al., 2021), since market leadership will be destined to those companies that apply valid strategies in the increasingly changing environment.

The surveyed subjects, sales managers of companies dedicated to the sale of organic products located in Lima, demonstrated by answering the questionnaire without problems to be aware of the trend towards healthy eating, which is consistent with the theory (Castellano et al., 2015; Fraj et al., 2011; Gao et al., 2022; Hernández & Danny, 2012; Heydari et al., 2022; Monteiro et al., 2015; Oliveira Duarte et al., 2022; Roh et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2022). The consideration of ecology has emerged as a new concept of business philosophy, most especially in terms of offering organic products, and that the right customer service staff should be in place in order to improve customer relations and increase sales (Jericó, 2011; López Gumucio, 2010; Werther, 1996).

## 5. Conclusions

The general objective of the research was met, which was to determine the relationship between the acknowledgement of the consumer's attitude towards organic products and the selection criteria of sales personnel in a bio-fair located in Lima; determining that this relationship exists and is considerably positive, with a calculated correlation coefficient of 0.568.

The specific objectives were met, which were to determine the relationship between concern for the consumption of food that is not harmful to health, concern for the environment, the origin of the product, the desire to support the local economy, and curiosity about organic products, with the criteria for the selection of sales personnel in a bio-fair located in Lima; determining that this relationship exists and is positive, with correlation coefficients of 0.568, 0.378, 0.431, 0.539, 0.457 and 0.445 respectively.

At the business level, it is pertinent to recommend the review and, if deemed appropriate, application of the results of this research in companies dedicated to the production and/or marketing

of organic products, since it has been demonstrated that the acknowledgement of the attitude of the consumer of organic products by the owners of companies is considerably related to the criteria for the selection of sales personnel and therefore, the more one wishes to know the client, the more refined should be the search for human capital dedicated to customer service.

At the academic level, it is strongly recommended to further deepen the lines of research related to the acknowledgement of the attitude of the consumer of organic and/or healthy products, relating it to the various branches of business sciences, since the available literature in this field of study is almost nil. How does the acknowledgement of the attitude of the consumer of organic products relate to marketing strategies, and how does it relate to profitability, are just some questions that are still open and which it is hoped can be answered in future research.

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