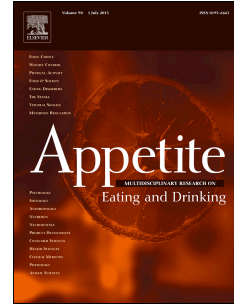


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Stephan Meyerding



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Consumer Preferences for Food Labels on Tomatoes in Germany – A Comparison of a Quasi-Experiment and Two Stated Preference Approaches

Stephan Meyerding

Center for Business Management in Horticulture and Applied Research

Institute of Horticultural Production Systems, Leibniz University Hanover

Herrenhaeuser Str. 2

30419 Hannover

Germany

Tel.: +49511/762-2669

Fax: +49511/762-19245

Email: meyerding@zbg.uni-hannover.de

Highlights

- ▶ The results support the assumption of a social desirability effect, as results differ between the quasi-experiment and the two stated preference approaches.
- ▶ The use of a combination of methods to get an understanding of the true behavior of consumers is important as demonstrated by this paper.
- ▶ The participants in the quasi-experiment preferred tomatoes without a label to those with carbon footprint labels.
- ▶ The characteristic “grown locally” shows the highest utility in the quasi-experiment after price, indicating that local origin is preferred to organic production.

Keywords: conjoint analysis, consumer marketing, sustainability, social desirability, purchasing behavior, carbon footprint label, local production

Abstract

In many studies, consumer preferences are determined by using direct surveys. For this method social desirability is problematic. This leads to the effect that participants answer in a way that they perceive as desired by society. This leads to the stated importance of certain features in these studies not being reflected in real purchasing decisions. Therefore, the aim of the study is to compare consumer preferences measured by a quasi-experiment to those quantified by direct questions. Another objective is to quantify the part-worth utilities of product characteristics such as origin, price and food labels. Part-worth utilities are estimated on an interval scale with an arbitrary origin and are a measure for preferences. The real purchasing situation was simulated in a quasi-experiment using a choice-based conjoint analysis. The part-worth utilities were then compared with the results of a conventional preference assessment (Likert scale). For this purpose, 645 consumers from all over Germany were surveyed in 2014. The participants were on average 44 years old and 63% were women. The results of the conjoint analysis report the highest part-worth utility (2.853) for the lowest price (1.49€), followed by the characteristic “grown locally” (2.157). For the labels, the German organic label shows the highest part-worth utility (0.785) followed by Fairtrade/“A heart for the producer” (0.200). It is noticeable that the carbon footprint labels have negative part-worth utilities compared to tomatoes without a label (-0.130 with CO₂

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