

# Consumer Behavior Towards The Green Marketing Of Organic Products: A Study In The Municipality Of Três Rios, Brazil

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**Abstract:** The Present Research Aimed To Understand Consumer Behavior Towards The Green Marketing Of Organic Products In The Municipality Of Três Rios, Brazil. For This Purpose, A Quantitative Exploratory Research Was Applied Using A Questionnaire Answered By A Non-Probabilistic Sample Of One Hundred And Twenty People. The Questionnaire Addressed Several Aspects Related To The Green Marketing Of Organic Products, Including Consumers' Perception Of Sustainability, The Influence Of Environmental Labeling Information, And Willingness To Pay A Higher Price For Organic Products, Among Others. The Respondents Were Selected From Food Companies In The City That Sell Organic Products, Such As Markets, Fairs And Specialized Stores. After The Analysis, It Was Possible To Verify That Consumers Did Not Seek To Verify The Environmental Origin Of The Products, And The Main Purchase Motivations Were Linked To Health Issues And The Elements Price, Place, Promotion And Product Of The Marketing Mix. In Addition, It Was Also Found That Personal And Social Variables Proved To Be Factors Susceptible To Changing The Respondents' Consumption Habits. Consumers, Characterized Predominantly As Female, Middle And Lower Class, With Complete College Education And Age Between 20 And 40 Years, Showed That They Would Sometimes Be Willing To Pay More For Organic Products, Which Corroborates That The Environmental Issue Is Not The Focus At The Time Of Purchase.

**Key Words:** Consumer Behavior; Green Marketing; Marketing Mix.

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## I. Introduction

The advent of the industrial revolution, which occurred at the end of the 18th century, brought the perception that natural resources are finite, which accelerated environmental degradation due to unlimited human actions to consume these resources. However, after the 1970s, this conviction began to be questioned and resulted in societies inquiring about what, how much, how and for whom to produce goods and services (VASCONCELLOS, 2008).

In view of these conjunctions, sustainable practices became part of the organizations' management systems and, thus, "green marketing" emerged with the purpose of informing people about the environmental origin of products and services. These changes brought implications to the market dynamics, affecting, above all, consumer behavior. Currently, consumers are increasingly aware of the products/services offered by companies, which requires organizations to adopt socio-environmental practices in their production processes to meet this new emerging demand (PORTILHO, 2005).

In this perspective, organic foods have been an option for sustainable consumption, given that they are grown through a production that does not harm the environment (MELO NETO; FROES, 2002). In Brazil, the organic food segment has, according to the Association for the Promotion of Organics (2020), been growing at a rate since the year 2014, and this sector had a turnover of around R\$ 5.8 billion in the year 2020.

As a result of people's interest in consuming organic food, the investment made by company managers in marketing strategies that allow consumers to verify the environmental origin of the products has increased in the same proportion. Among such strategies, one can mention the environmental labeling of organics, which shows that a given product contains all the environmental norms concerning agroecology (MELO NETO; FROES, 2002).

However, it is observed that marketing actions, many times, do not provoke the desired effects on the demanding agents, which requires a greater need of understanding around the purchase decision process of these consumers. Thus, understanding how consumers of organic products buy, consume and discard these "green products" may help marketing professionals to identify the needs and desires of these consumers and allow the development of new strategies to retain and satisfy them, in a scenario based on ecological sustainability (STRINGHETA; MUNIZ, 2003).

Given the above, this research aimed to analyze how the purchase decision process of consumers of a green food store in the city of Três Rios/RJ that uses the ecomarketing strategy is configured, in order to identify the purchase motivations and the influences that these people suffered for the purchase of organic food.

## **II. Theoretical Axis**

### **Consumer behavior**

For Medeiros and Cruz (2006) one of the greatest misunderstandings of managers in the corporate environment focuses on the ignorance of who their consumers are, their habits and the ways in which they behave. In this view, knowing the variables of influence on buying behavior, as well as the use of its products becomes an agenda of paramount importance when aiming for organizational success and qualification of its products/services, effectively considering the desires and needs of the consumer and the orientation of its offerings to the market.

Given the above, Richers (1984) characterizes consumer behavior by the mental and emotional activities performed in the selection, purchase, and use of products/services to satisfy needs and desires.

For Kotler and Keller (2006), since the purpose of marketing focuses on meeting and satisfying the needs and desires of consumers it becomes essential to know their buying behavior. In this continuity, soon after Holbrook's (1987) publication, the consumer behavior field as a marketing area solidified and grew even more, receiving supporters from several areas, such as macro and micro economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, among others.

Furthermore, Enoki *et. al* (2008) states that the variables that shape purchase behavior can be divided into three categories: individual differences, environmental influences and psychological processes. Individual differences, according to the author, can be divided into consumer resources, knowledge, attitudes, motivation and personality, values and lifestyle. Environmental influences are guided by culture, social class, personal influence, family, and situations in which consumers are inserted. While the psychological processes category is related to information processing, learning and attitude and behavior change.

Given this, consumer behavior is an essential topic for different areas of study and emerges as intrinsic mechanisms in understanding behavior, which makes the constant study of these mechanisms essential to build the logic behind consumer behavior. Finally, regarding the changes that have been observed in environmental values in a short period of time, where consumers are increasingly concerned with subsistence and the protection of their lives, they have decided to react using their purchasing power by acquiring products considered environmentally healthy and rejecting others. Such reaction has led business managers to observe new trends and create strategies to meet such demands (ENOKI *et. al*, 2008).

### **Consumer purchasing decision process**

According to Kotler and Keller (2006), the purchase decision process consists of five stages, which concern needs recognition, information search, alternatives evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior.

The recognition of a need occurs when the consumer perceives a difference between his actual state and a desired state. After that, he or she may take action if he or she recognizes its importance and finds a possible way to meet it. At this point, marketers have the mission to stimulate consumers to recognize a need not previously perceived, in order to influence them to react and make a possible purchase (KOTLER; KELLER, 2006).

The second step of the process is the search for information about how the consumer can satisfy this need. In this step, the consumer searches in their previous experiences and sensations, and may also look for external information, including the evaluation of brands and certain benefits arising from the products (KOTLER; KELLER, 2006).

After the assimilation of this information, the evaluation of possible alternatives occurs, where the consumer will pay attention to the benefits that he considers a priority to meet his need, using his own criteria.

Attributes such as price, brand, warranties, quality, reliability, functionality, among others, are analyzed (KOTLER; KELLER, 2006).

The product or service that comes closest to their expectations and desires and that is within their temporal and financial possibilities will be chosen, that is when the purchase decision is made (KOTLER; KELLER, 2006).

The last stage of the process is the post-purchase, where the consumer may feel satisfied if the product has met his needs according to his expectations, or dissatisfied if not. At this moment the opinions about the brand or product will be defined, which, in turn, may influence other individuals through the aforementioned "word of mouth". In this case, a positive experience will inhibit the choice of competitors in the next purchase, thus making the consumer a loyal customer (KOTLER; KELLER, 2006).

### **Influences on consumer behavior**

For Kotler and Keller (2006), there are four (macro) factors that influence the consumer in the purchase decision process, namely: cultural, social, personal and psychological. The first factor mentioned (cultural) refers to the values that provide individuals with a direction and meaning during the purchase. It is, all the beliefs and habits rooted in the consumer's life. Within culture, there are subcultures, which in turn can be classified based on nationality, religion, social class, racial groups, and geographic regions.

Also according to the authors, the second factor (social) is given by the reference groups, family, roles and social positions that the individual is inserted. As the human being lives in society, contact with other people is essential, and so there are several groups capable of influencing the consumer, directly or indirectly, for the acquisition of a particular good and/or service. The direct reference groups are characterized by having an informal and continuous contact with consumers, i.e., they include family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. On the other hand, groups with indirect influence maintain a smaller relationship with consumers and are usually more formal.

Nevertheless, Kotler and Keller (2006) reiterate the personal factor as a third factor capable of persuading the consumer to buy, which concerns the particular characteristics of the individual. The personal factor has six elements, namely:

- a) stage in the life cycle and age (as a person's needs and wants change over the course of his or her life);
- b) economic circumstances (comprises disposable income, assets, savings and credit conditions);
- c) occupation (concerns the individual's profession, which interferes with his income and, consequently, his consumption behavior);
- d) personality (referring to the set of characteristics of a person, that is, the way he thinks, acts and feels);
- e) lifestyle (the way an individual leads his or her life) and
- f) psychological factors (which encompass aspects such as motivation, learning, beliefs and the consumer's perceptions).

Motivation refers to an intrinsic need that pushes a person to act, while learning constitutes the changes caused in an individual's behavior due to his or her past experiences. Belief, on the other hand, is the descriptive thought that a person holds about something and, finally, perception is characterized as a stage where the individual elaborates the information to give meaning to the world.

### **Green Marketing**

The term "green marketing", also known as environmental marketing or ecological marketing, has its origin, according to Lopes and Pacagnan (2014), in the 1970s, when a workshop promoted by the American Marketing Association took place. On that occasion, there was a discussion about the impact of marketing in relation to the environment and, thus, such an ecological strategy emerged, which came to be defined as "the study of the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities in relation to pollution, energy depletion, and the depletion of non-renewable resources" (LOPES; PACAGNAN, 2014, p. 118).

Since then, other analogous denominations have emerged over the years (environmental marketing or ecological marketing), and it is possible to see that all these designations understand "green marketing" as the practices that incorporate environmental concern so that there is a reduction in the impact to the ecosystem, where managers must consider activities around the production process, logistics, planning, creation of new merchandise, pricing, packaging, promotion, and distribution (FERREL; PRIDE, 2001).

Green marketing, besides being based on a sustainable approach, is also a competitive differential. As explained by Zilli and Vieira (2015, p. 61), green marketing "is nothing more than a marketing tool that uses environmental benefits provided by a product, thus standing out ahead of competitors. Every company aims to stand out from its competitors, taking into account the economic, social, and environmental aspects. To do so, it is necessary to deliver an innovative and differentiated product or service to the consumer market, and it is precisely in this aspect that green marketing enters as a competitive differential.

In this logic, Day, Reibstein, and Gunther (1999, p. 59) say that "strategy is to seek a competitive advantage over competitors and, at the same time, reduce the erosion of current advantages. Thus, the adoption of

"green marketing" strategies should not be used only thinking of financial returns, but that, currently, it is necessary for companies to be directed towards a socio-environmental responsibility. When the "green marketing" does not match the posture adopted, the company cannot maintain itself for a long time, because it is necessary the commitment and responsibility to grow in this area (DAY; REIBSTEIN; GUNTHER, 1999).

Thus, for a new paradigm of sustainability, guided beyond the economic aspects, Maimon (1996) described a guide for the implementation of green marketing to act as a competitive differential, in which there must be an adequacy of the company's marketing policy to the environmental aspects, planning of marketing actions together with production, development, and research, implementation of efficient advertising, and the consolidation of an ecological action.

### **Marketing Mix**

Currently the world lives in a service economy (LOVELOCK; WIRTZ, 2006; ZEITHAML; BITNER, 2003), where in many countries (Uruguay, Venezuela, Paraguay, Mexico) and among them, Brazil, more than 60% of GDP comes from this sector (AGÊNCIA BRASIL, 2020). Since the 1980s, when the service sector in the economy began to grow rapidly, several authors have suggested using marketing strategies, or marketing mix expanded for services (LOVELOCK; WIRTZ, 2006; ZEITHAML; BITNER, 2003; HOFFMAN; BATESON, 2006),

Thus, it is of utmost importance for the development of the organic products market the adoption of the 7P's of the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence). Thus, Las Casas (2008) emphasizes that it is necessary for marketing to develop some roles so that certain services can be made available to customers correctly. Therefore, it is up to the professionals in this area to develop strategies to develop, insert, price and make services known in the market. These four factors determine what are called tactical elements, which are necessary for the development of the products /and or services demanded.

Also according to the author, by virtue of its specialties, service marketing presents a mix, which can be classified as a set of tools that companies use to produce the desirable responses. In addition to the elements that form the product mix (product, price, place, and promotion), the service mix adds 3 more P's, namely: people, processes, and physical evidence.

The first item that stands out in services marketing is the product that, according to Las Casas (2008), represents the tangible part of the service. The product is a material (tangible) or immaterial (intangible) good that is offered to a market in order to meet the satisfaction and needs of customers. In the case of services, as Zeithaml and Bitner (2003, p.41) point out, "there is an intangibility of services, that is, in order for them to be understood and evaluated before hiring, customers will always be looking for some indicator that is tangible."

Generally, when working on the product issue, companies must be concerned with the formulation of a brand, because it can be considered a way to make the service tangible. For Kotler (2008, p 393) the brand "is a name, term, sign, symbol, or combination thereof, which is intended to identify a seller's goods or services and differentiate them from their competitors." Given this, a well-defined and established brand in the market allows services to transpire credibility, because individuals choose products and services where they place their trust.

Price, in turn, is intended to generate revenue. In services, customers use price as a way to measure quality, so when the price charged for the service is too low, customers may see it as a low quality service; and if the price is higher, they may see it as a good quality service. Therefore, it is important to analyze the price that will be assigned to the products/services so that consumers do not create wrong expectations. In this sense, some strategies can be adopted so that the price is delimited, such as: flexibility, price range, differentiation, discounts, and sales margins.

Regarding the third item mentioned (square), this is considered to be the distribution, i.e., how the product is geographically located in relation to the customer. For services, this is no different, since the purpose also consists in positioning oneself in the best way in the market. But according to Kahtalian (2002), the distribution of a service is complex, and to provide it, a whole structure is required to meet the proposed demand. Thus, the market in the service sector involves distribution channels, market logistics, and other variables.

On the other hand, the attitude of communicating (promotion) can be understood as a set of necessary activities that will lead the product or service to be perceived by customers. This promotion is not limited to just informing the market about services/products, what is expected is a communication that leads the consumer to acquire the product or service. In this way, the customer's needs will be met and the company will maximize its profit. It becomes necessary to analyze the company's target audience and assess whether the actions taken will be able to reach a certain audience with the promotional tools used (advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, among others).

As services are usually produced and consumed simultaneously, customers are almost always present in the production unit, interacting directly with the company's personnel and being present in the production process. With reference to relations with the public, Cobra (2005) states that it aims to achieve the cooperation of people with whom the entity relates.

Based on these aspects, Las Casas (2008) points out that people are so important in the service that their actions need to be planned, since their actions can generate a good or bad impression, directly influencing the quality of services. It is important to detail that service providers and their employees are responsible for transmitting the company's image, because they are the ones who will interact directly with the customer. This means that well-looking, polite, dedicated, and motivated employees will provide better services, thus creating a positive image and respect for the company among customers. Bitner (1990) adds that the first interactions of the consumer and the service provider are critical to the creation of first impressions, since the consumer has no history of interaction.

In the service industry, for the customer to feel closer to the company, it is necessary to describe the entire flow of performance in order to achieve customer satisfaction. For this reason, Las Casas (2008, p. 291-292) emphasizes that:

More than ever companies are looking to streamline their offerings by differentiating themselves in their processes. An initial step in developing this concept is the service cycle. The service cycle seeks to identify all the points of interaction that a customer has with the organization and that cause a good or bad impression.

Finally, Zeithaml and Bitner (2014, p. 232) define physical evidence as the "environment where the service is performed and where the company interacts with the customer, that is, any tangible component that facilitates the performance or communication of the service". Shostack (1977) states that these tangible elements help companies to differentiate themselves before other companies, since the image created by the consumer is a process based on impressions created through these evidences. For Baker et al (2002), the physical evidences are formed by design, social and environmental factors, being the aesthetic elements important in the initial contact.

Considering the above, it becomes evident that the marketing mix is important for the positioning of service firms vis-à-vis their target market. Consequently, companies in the service business must combine marketing with their compounds in order to assign an appropriate price, strengthen the brand, provide training to employees, and manage processes and physical evidence well.

### **Organic Food**

For Neto and Froes (2002), organic foods are differentiated from others by the way they were cultivated, i.e., the way agricultural products called "organic" are cultivated is when no synthetic substance, hormones or genetically modified organisms are used. In this sense, cultivation focuses on the use of natural fertilizers, from food scraps to manure, to fertilize the soil and prepare the land for future plantings. Organic agriculture seeks not only to reduce consumer contact with pesticides and fertilizers when eating, but also to improve soil quality, conserve groundwater, reduce pollution, and help preserve the environment.

Given this perspective, when compared to non-organic agricultural crops, organics are produced on a smaller scale by small producers and require a longer period for development, because they are based on natural and manual processes, justifying the lack of scalability that, consequently, results in an increase in product prices for the final consumer. Stringueta and Muniz (2003) emphasize that, for products to be considered organic, producers must prove that their plantation is free of artificial food additives, such as preservatives, dyes, artificial sweeteners, flavorings and monosodium glutamate.

Furthermore, certification is, according to Ottman (2012), a tool, usually presented in the form of a seal affixed or printed on the product label or packaging, which guarantees that the labeled organic products have been produced according to organic farming standards and practices. There are different mechanisms for obtaining certification, such as certification by audit and Participatory Guarantee System. With regard to certification by auditing, this means that any farmer or food producer selling organic food must undergo an assessment by an accrediting body registered with the Ministry of Agriculture. Once approved according to the established criteria and procedures, they receive the seal of the Brazilian System for the Evaluation of Organic Conformity (SisOrg). The Participative Guarantee System (SPG), on the other hand, works through the commitment and collective awareness of the participants (producers, technicians, and consumers) in complying with the criteria for receiving the SisOrg seal.

Also according to the author, organic products have more nutrients, are tastier, ensure a healthy source of food and also contribute to a more sustainable way of life, since farmers treat the environment with the necessary respect. In this vein, one of the main reasons people choose organic food is to avoid the ingestion of artificial chemicals, which reduces exposure to chemicals and superbugs.

In addition, organic food in natura is considered tastier in view of the concentration of nutrients in relation to food produced by traditional means. Another point highlighted by the author is the absence of pesticides, used in traditional agriculture in order to protect crops from pests and weeds. However, the frequent use of pesticides increases the risks of contamination, for example, of agricultural soils, groundwater, and food. In this context, there are alternatives to the use of pesticides in order to contribute to the quality and safety of the harvest, which can be exemplified by crop rotation, alteration of the planting season, and manual harvesting (OTTMAN, 2012).

In this continuity, a survey conducted by the Brazilian Council for Organic and Sustainable Production (Organis) in 2019 revealed that 1 in 5 Brazilians already consume some organic food in the country. On the world stage, the average annual growth of organic sales was over 11%, which shows the dynamism of the sector. At this juncture, what explains the growth, in Brazil and worldwide, of the consumption of organic products are the various benefits of organic food and agriculture, which are associated with a higher level of safety and health to consumers and lower social and environmental impacts.

Finally, it is evident that organic agriculture uses these and other strategies for the healthy and sustainable development of the food that reaches the consumers' table. In sum, the set of practices used by organic farmers, such as the manual techniques of land retention, provide healthier, more vital and tastier foods. (NETO; FROES, 2002)

According to Stringueta and Muniz (2003), four nutrients present, in most cases, higher values in organic cultivation than in traditional cultivation, they are: phosphorus, vitamin C, iron and magnesium. On the other hand, for the only toxic compound, nitrates, organic crops presented lower levels of concentration of the compound. Thus, as previously explained, the positive values of organic culture are directly related to the cultivation practices, always aiming at the best for the environment, the consumers and the organic producer.

### **III. Material And Methods**

Depending on the definition of the objectives, it was necessary to follow a method for conducting the present research. In this study, exploratory research was used, which allows the discovery and/or explanation of certain phenomena, thus enabling greater knowledge about the facts. Thus, as the intention is to explore the research universe to obtain more precise information and acquire familiarity with the problem, exploratory research does not always require the elaboration of hypotheses (VERGARA, 1998).

Regarding the approach, this research was characterized as quantitative, where there was the quantification of data through mathematical resources to describe a given phenomenon. It was, therefore, an empirical-descriptive investigation that sought to relate the causes and effects of variables through resources such as tables, charts, standard deviation, averages, frequencies, etc. (FERREIRA, 2015).

The study was conducted through a non-probabilistic sampling that, according to Pires et. al (2006), refers to a way to calculate the sample without using statistical methods. Thus, 120 consumers were approached with the prerequisite that they were buying organic products with the green marketing strategy in food companies in the city that sell organic products, such as markets, fairs, and specialized stores. The selection was made through convenience, i.e., taking into consideration the existing accessibility in relation to the elements under study.

As for data collection, we used a questionnaire divided into two parts, which was composed of a script with multiple choice questions and an open question. The first part of the research instrument enabled the identification of the respondents' profile through demographic variables (gender, income, education, and age), as well as the factors that motivated them to purchase green food products. The second part of the questionnaire, in turn, evaluated the positioning of consumers regarding the proposed statements by applying a Likert-type scale, in order to analyze the influence of green marketing on consumption and verify whether such individuals were concerned with the environmental issue during the purchase decision process.

The Likert scale assumes that attitude cannot be captured by a single item. In this sense, multi-items were considered to measure the attitudes of respondents simultaneously. This scale was developed by Rensis Likert and is based on a psychometric method that combines applied mathematics with psychology, which has a two-dimensional perspective with a neutral intermediate point (LIKERT, 1932).

Data were collected in the field, i.e., through direct interaction of the researcher with the interviewees in the natural environment of the phenomenon under study. In addition, a pre-test was initially conducted with 20 consumers in order to ensure the clarity and accuracy of the terms. After the pre-test, three questions were adjusted in order to maintain the clarity of the terms.

Data analysis consists of grouping and coding the data to enable the understanding of the phenomenon under study. Thus, descriptive statistical methods were initially applied for data analysis, thus involving the application of averages, standard deviations, frequencies, tables and percentages, as suggested by Silvestre (2007). In the descriptive statistics method, there was the organization, processing and description of data through three stages: the establishment of categories, coding/tabulation and statistical analysis.

To establish categories, the data were organized by means of a grouping. Subsequently, coding and tabulation was performed with the grouping of the raw data into symbols in order to count the frequencies. Finally, the statistical analysis was done, which involved the generation (application of statistical calculations), presentation (tables to expose the results), and interpretation of the data (description and analysis of the results). Since it is a questionnaire with a Likert scale, the method applied for the statistical analysis was the ordinal scale, now associated with the ordering of the data in relation to an assertion.

**Characterization of the municipality of Três Rios, Brazil**

The municipality of Três Rios is located in Brazil, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2020), the municipality has a territorial area of 322,843 km<sup>2</sup>, as well as an estimated population of 82,468 inhabitants. Located in the South-Central region of the state of Rio de Janeiro, the municipality of Três Rios is named after the three rivers that meet in the city and form the only triple river delta in Latin America: Paraíba do Sul, Paraíbauna and Piabanha.

With 0.725 of municipal human development index in 2010 and a GDP per capita in 2019 of R\$53,338.23 (fifty-three thousand, three hundred and thirty-eight reais and twenty-three cents), the municipality of Três Rios had, in 2019, 25,615 people formally employed earning an average of 1.9 minimum wages/month (IBGE, 2020). The companies and industries that stand out most in the municipality are plastic packaging, processed milk, coffee, vegetables and some legumes, cachaça manufacturing, canvas, noodles, steel, glass, among others. And regarding the macroeconomic data of the municipality of Três Rios, in 2010, the distribution of GDP was divided mainly among the following three sectors: services, industry, and agribusiness.

Currently, the municipality of Três Rios is a center of convergence in the Centro-Sul Fluminense region, being a growing stage of commercial and industrial development since 2012. The city also mobilizes its efforts to bring to the public's attention its potentialities in the development of tourism and other areas. Besides the sports and adventure tourism that is the city's trademark, the municipality has an important representation in cultural tourism, with the promotion of dance, theater, music, and local culture festivals; and also in cultural, historical, business, and religious tourism.

**IV. Result**

For this research, as mentioned in the methodology (topic 3), one hundred and twenty consumers were interviewed. Initially, it was possible to identify the profile of such individuals through the demographic variables, which constitute elements such as gender, monthly income, education and age. Thus, it is observed, as illustrated in table 1, that there is a predominance of female individuals, at a rate of 62.5%, while men represented only 37.5% of the sample, thus evidencing that women are more prone to sustainable consumption.

**Table 1.** Frequencies and percentages according to the variable sex.

Gender	Absolute	frequency	Proportion Percentage
Women	75	0.625	62.5%
Men	45	0.375	37.5%
Total	120	1,000	100%

**Source:** Research data (2021).

With regard to education (table 2), most of the interviewees have completed higher education (45%). This result shows that these consumers had an opportunity to access education and that, by having higher levels of education, they became susceptible to evaluate the best alternatives at the time of consumption. Only 2.5% have incomplete elementary school and 5% have incomplete middle school, with the remaining consumers having complete middle school (35%) and incomplete high school (12.5%).

**Table 2.** Frequencies and percentages according to the education variable.

Education	Absolute	frequency	Proportion Percentage
Primary school incomplete	3	0.025	2.50%
Incomplete high school	6	0.050	5,00%
High school complete	42	0.350	35.0%
Incomplete college degree	15	0.125	12.5%
College completed	54	0.450	45.0%
Total	120	1,000	100%

**Source:** Research data (2021).

Regarding income, most respondents are middle and lower class (52.5%), given that they receive between 1 and 2 minimum wages. It is important to note that the city where the study was conducted is located within the capital and is characterized by having a cheap labor force, with an average of 1.9 minimum wages according to data from IBGE (2020), which explains the data obtained. The other incomes of the customers were made up as follows: 20% receive from 3 to 4 minimum wages, 17.5% from 5 to 6 minimum wages, 2.5% from 7 to 8 minimum wages, 2.5% more than 8 minimum wages, and 5% claimed to be without income at the moment. The results can be seen in table 3 below.

**Table 3.** Frequencies and percentages of the income variable.

Income	Absolute	frequency	Proportion Percentage
No income	6	0,050	5,00%
From 1 to 2 minimum wages	63	0.525	52.5%
From 3 to 4 minimum wages	24	0.200	20.0%
From 5 to 6 minimum wages	21	0.175	17.5%
From 7 to 8 minimum wages	3	0.025	2.50%
More than 8 minimum wages	3	0.025	2.50%
Total	120	1,000	100%

Source: Research data (2021).

Finally, the last question regarding the profile was related to age (graph 4). In this sense, the age ranges varied from 16 to 63 years, with only 2.5% of the interviewees being under 20. The indexes with higher frequencies were observed among people between 20 and 40 years old (55%), followed by those who reported being over 50 years old (22.5%) and those between 41 and 50 years old (20%). Thus, it can be seen that all generations consume the products, with the Y generation, that is, individuals born between 1977 and 1997 with a current age range between 22 and 42 years old, being predominant. This generation was born in a time of change and in the beginning of environmental movements, which makes such individuals more aware and susceptible to green consumption.

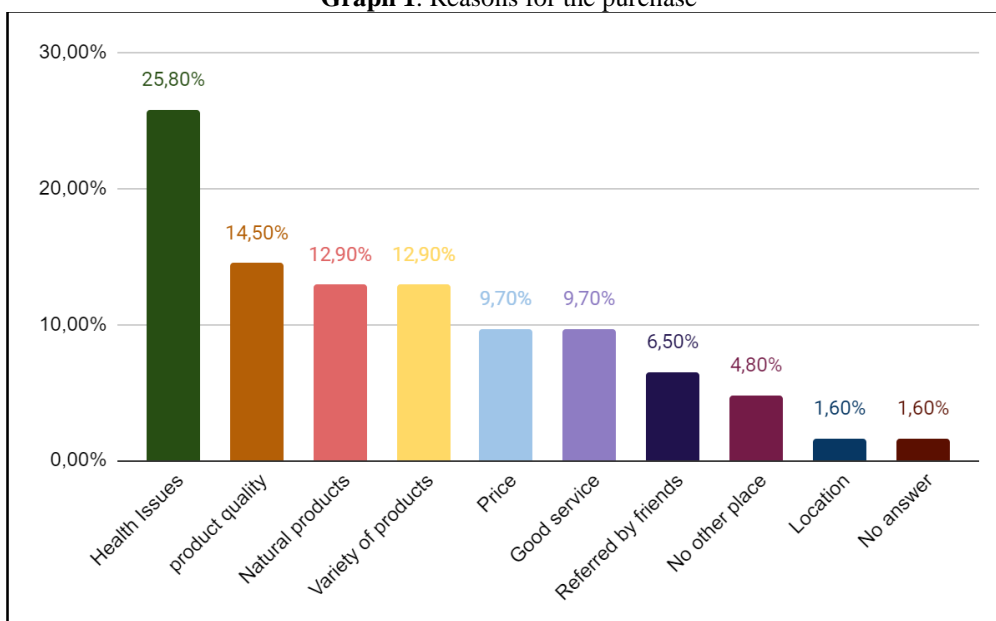
**Table 4:** Frequencies and percentages of the variable age.

Age	Absolute	frequency	Proportion Percentage
Less than 20 years	3	0.025	2.50%
20 to 30 years old	33	0.275	27.5%
31 to 40 years old	33	0.275	27.5%
41 to 50 years old	24	0.200	20.0%
Over 50 years old	27	0.225	22.5%
Total	120	1,000	100%

Source: Research data (2021).

Having seen the consumers' profile, the next question was related to the reasons that led such people to buy green products, where each participant could express more than one cause related to the consumption reason. Chart 1 shows the results found.

**Graph 1.** Reasons for the purchase



Source: Research data (2021).

Thus, ten answers were registered, being the main reason for purchase, at a rate of 25.8%, related to health issues. During the interview, the respondents reported that at a certain point in their lives they suffered from some disease and, as a result, they started to buy organic products to try to alleviate their health problems. In this



logic, organic products contribute to a healthier lifestyle, because in addition to not having pesticides, they have more vitamins and minerals than foods that have undergone some industrial process.

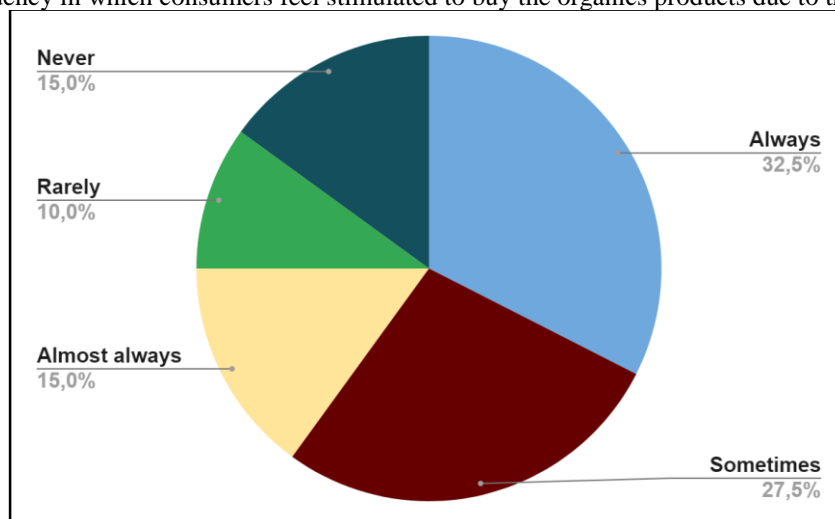
Given the preceding information, it is possible to verify that the personal and psychological factors are determining elements for the acquisition of products, since the respondents opt for a better lifestyle due to the experiences they have had. Personal factors, such as lifestyle, personal values and individual needs, play a significant role in the buying decision for organic products. Many consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of adopting healthy and sustainable eating habits, which directly influences their choice for organic products. These consumers may have previous positive experiences related to the benefits of organic products, such as improved health, reduced allergies, or a greater connection with nature. In addition, psychological factors also play an important role in the buying decision. Consumers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions towards organic products are influenced by green marketing and environmental awareness. Consumers who value sustainability and are concerned about the environmental impacts of their consumption habits tend to be more likely to choose organic products.

Furthermore, it is observed among the answers that there was an influence of green marketing through the marketing mix, since 14.5% of the consumption causes are due to the quality of the products, 12.9% due to the variety of the products, 12.9% due to the fact that the products are natural, and 9.7% due to the price. It is also worth mentioning the factors related to the square element of the marketing mix, where consumers said they are buying organic products in the companies because they do not have them elsewhere (4.8%) and because of the location (1.6%). The data presented show that green marketing has influenced consumers to purchase organic products through the marketing mix. The quality, variety, and nature of the products, along with price and availability, are factors that play a crucial role in consumers' purchasing decisions. Green marketing has played a key role in raising awareness about the environmental and sustainable benefits of organic products, leading more and more consumers to opt for these alternatives.

In addition, there was an influence of the social factor, since 6.5% said they bought the product because of a friend's indication. The growing awareness of the benefits of organic food has led people to seek recommendations and opinions from individuals in their social circle. In this case, referrals from friends, who have already tried and approved the organic products, had a significant impact on consumers' motivation to purchase them. As friends recommended the purchase of organic products in the studied establishments, a sense of trust and validation was created, which can positively influence the purchase decision. Furthermore, by sharing their positive experiences, friends contributed to conveying additional information about the health benefits, environmental sustainability, and support for more ethical and responsible farming practices, further reinforcing the choice for organic products. The others listed aspects such as good service (9.7%) and 1.6% were those who did not answer.

Subsequently, in order to complement if the promotion element of the marketing mix is an influencing factor, it was sought to verify if consumers feel stimulated to buy the green products due to the advertisements (graph 2).

**Graph 2.** Frequency in which consumers feel stimulated to buy the organics products due to the advertisements



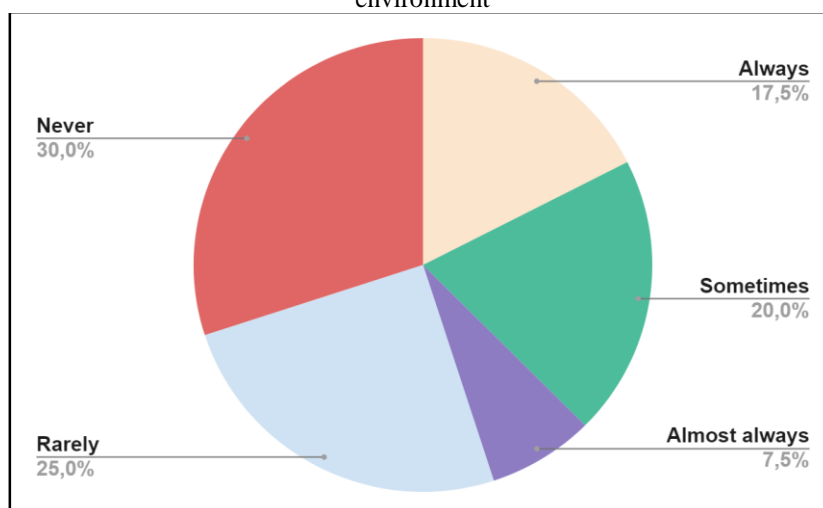
Source: Research data (2021).

In view of the above, 32.5% answered that they are always stimulated to buy by the advertisements of green products, 27.5% reported that sometimes they are stimulated, 15% almost always, 10% rarely, and 15%

never. Along these lines, the influence of such an ecological strategy is perceptible, since consumers buy natural products because of the promotional effort. It is evident that green marketing strategies have a noticeable impact on consumer preference and choice for organic products. Therefore, advertisements and promotions that emphasize the environmental and sustainable benefits of products have been effective in attracting attention and motivating consumers to opt for healthier and more environmentally friendly options. The results indicate a favorable consumer response to green marketing strategies, which may encourage companies to further invest in this type of promotional approach in order to meet the growing demands for sustainable products and gain the loyalty of conscious consumers.

Given the identification of the customers' profile, the purchase motives, and the investigation of the stimulus of green products advertising, we tried to investigate if they try to find out the damage that a certain product can cause to the environment when buying (graph 3), given the relevance of understanding if the consumer has a concern related to the environmental issue in the purchase decision process.

**Graph 3.** Frequency in which consumers usually observe the damage that products can cause to the environment

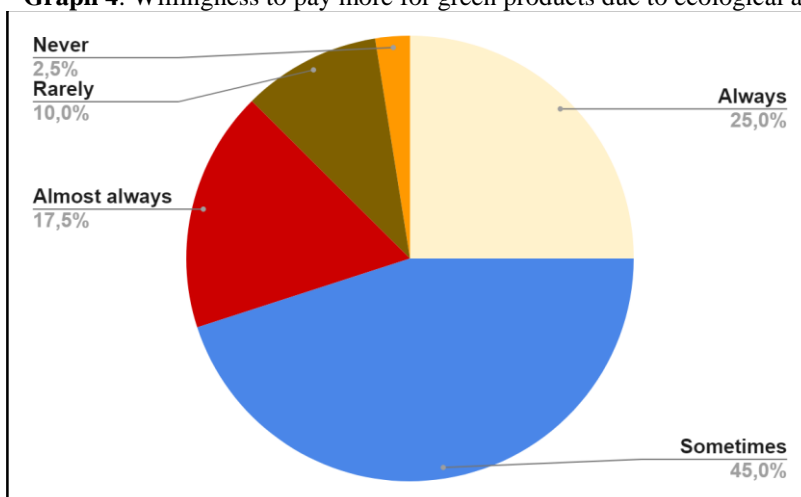


Source: Research data (2021).

Accordingly, it can be seen that the participants are not concerned with the environmental issue at the time of consumption, since 30% reported that they never check the damage that a certain product can cause to the environment, followed by 25% who said they rarely check. Only 17.5% said that they always check, 7.5% that they look almost always, and 20% that they look sometimes. Analysis of the data indicates that most participants are not demonstrating significant concern about the environmental damage caused by the products they consume. The higher proportion of participants (30%) who stated that they never check the environmental damage caused by products reveals a lack of environmental awareness. These people may not be aware of the negative impacts that their consumption choices may have on the environment. This suggests a need for education and awareness to increase understanding about the environmental problems related to the products we consume. In addition, the 25% of participants who reported rarely checking for environmental damage demonstrate somewhat greater concern, but are not yet making a consistent assessment of the environmental impacts of the products they consume. This lack of consistent commitment may be a result of a lack of importance given to the environmental issue or simply a lack of knowledge about how to assess this damage.

Next, it was possible to see how often consumers are willing to pay more for a green product because of its ecological attributes (chart 4).

**Graph 4.** Willingness to pay more for green products due to ecological attributes

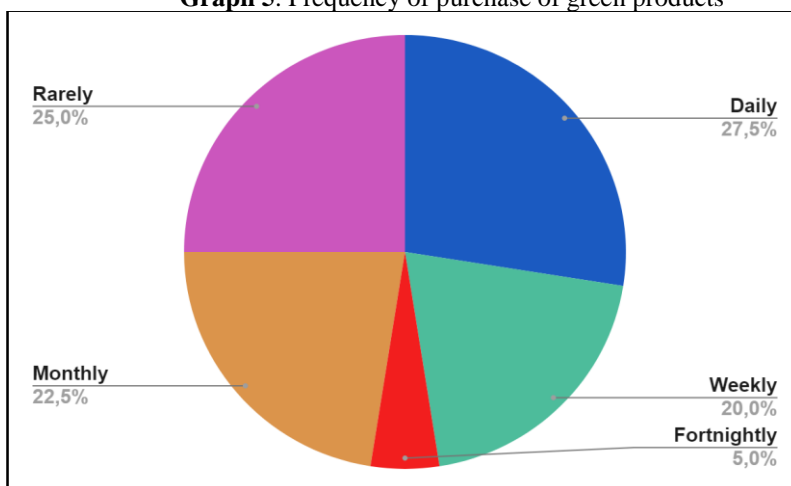


Source: Research data (2021).

In this sense, 45% said they are sometimes willing to pay, followed by 25% who said always, 17.5% almost always, 10% rarely, and only 2.5% said they are never willing. The data suggest that ecological attribution is not the primary focus of these shoppers at the time of purchase, as most indicated that they are willing to pay for green products only sometimes. However, the presence of significant groups who are always or almost always willing to pay for green products shows that sustainability is still considered relevant by a substantial portion of consumers. This analysis highlights the importance of an effective marketing strategy to communicate the environmental benefits of products in order to attract and educate a wider audience about the importance of sustainability.

Finally, the last question on the questionnaire, as shown in graph 5, aimed to verify the frequency of purchase of green products.

**Graph 5.** Frequency of purchase of green products



Source: Research data (2021).

As a result, it was possible to observe that 27.5% buy the products daily, 25% rarely, 22.5% monthly, 20% weekly, and 5% every other week. Therefore, it can be seen that there is a large number of people who buy the products constantly, as well as a high percentage who consume rarely, where many said they were buying the products in the store for the first time.

These results can be useful for understanding people's consumption habits regarding green products. In this case, the high percentage of people who buy green products on a daily basis suggests that there is a significant market for these products and that people may be willing to incorporate them into their daily routines.

On the other hand, the relatively low percentage of people who buy green products every other week may indicate that these products are not a priority for this particular group. This might suggest that there is an

opportunity to encourage these people to buy green products more frequently, perhaps through awareness campaigns or special discounts.

## V. Conclusion

By means of the study performed and portrayed in the article in question, through a quantitative research conducted in markets and companies belonging to the organics products sales branch, located in the city of Três Rios, one concludes that consumers are not concerned with investigating whether the product itself has an ecological character or if they have environmental provenance proposed in the organization's marketing. In addition, buyers would sometimes be willing to pay more for the sustainable attributes of the goods, which corroborates that the environmental issue is not the focus at the time of purchase.

However, it is possible to highlight the influence of green marketing on customers, since through the research and data belonging to the studies of this article it is evident an expressive weight of the marketing mix on the purchase decision of customers, since the elements square, product, promotion and price constituted as one of the main reasons for purchase. Moreover, issues related to health, good service from employees and indication of friends were also reasons for the purchase of natural products, explaining that the influence of marketing is not the only stimulus. In this perspective, psychosocial and personal factors have a determination in the final act of purchase.

Consumers are predominantly composed of women, evidencing a greater apprehension for the zeal for the aforementioned virtues. In the general aspect, men and women - in majority parameters - claimed to be over twenty years old, have completed college education, and monthly income between 1 and 2 minimum wages, which demystifies the idea that the consumer public of natural products has a high financial situation.

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