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Traballo de
fin de grao

The purchase
behavior for
sustainable
products: The case
of Ecoalf

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Resumo

Nas sociedades desenvolvidas existe unha preocupación crecente polo deterioro do medio ambiente. Por este motivo, está a xurdir un segmento de mercado que reflicte os valores relacionados co coidado do medio ambiente no seu proceso de decisión de compra e nas súas decisións de consumo. Este traballo céntrase en primeiro lugar no concepto de produto sostíbel e nas variábeis que afectan ao seu consumo.

Posteriormente, lévase a cabo unha investigación co fin de analizar como as variábeis calidade, imaxe do produto, produto sostíbel e produto seguro inflúen na satisfacción do consumidor e na intención de mercar este tipo de produtos, para o cal o traballo centróuse na marca de moda sostíbel Ecoalf.

Os resultados obtidos suxiren que algunhas das variábeis estudadas afectan ao consumo de produtos sostíbeis. En concreto, a imaxe de produto sostíbel, seguida da percepción de produto seguro ou fiábel son as variábeis que máis inflúen tanto na satisfacción do consumidor como na intención de mercar produtos da marca sostíbel Ecoalf. A principal contribución deste traballo trátase do estudo empírico das variábeis que inflúen na satisfacción e na intención de mercar unha marca sostíbel.

Palabras chave: *Comportamento de compra, Consumidor, Sostibilidade, Ecoalf.*

Número de palabras: 14.516

Resumen

En las sociedades desarrolladas existe una preocupación creciente por el deterioro del medio ambiente. Por este motivo, está surgiendo un segmento de mercado que refleja los valores relacionados con el cuidado del medio ambiente en su proceso de decisión de compra y en sus decisiones de consumo. Este trabajo se centra en primer lugar en el concepto de producto sostenible y en las variables que afectan a su consumo.

Posteriormente, se lleva a cabo una investigación con el fin de analizar cómo las variables calidad, imagen del producto, producto sostenible y producto seguro influyen en la satisfacción del consumidor y en la intención de comprar este tipo de productos, para lo cual el trabajo se ha centrado en la marca de moda sostenible Ecoalf.

Los resultados obtenidos sugieren que algunas de las variables estudiadas afectan al consumo de productos sostenibles. En concreto, la imagen de producto sostenible, seguida de la percepción de producto seguro o fiable son las variables que más influyen tanto en la satisfacción del consumidor como en la intención de comprar productos de la marca sostenible Ecoalf. La principal aportación de este trabajo consiste en el estudio empírico de las variables que influyen en la satisfacción y en la intención de comprar una marca sostenible.

Palabras clave: *Comportamiento de compra, Consumidor, Sostenibilidad, Ecoalf.*

Número de palabras: 14.516

Abstract

In developed societies there is a growing concern for the deterioration of the environment. For this reason, is emerging a market segment that reflects its values related to the care of the environment in its purchase decision process and in its consumption decisions. This project focuses firstly on the concept of sustainable product and on the variables that affect its consumption.

Afterwards, a research was carried out to analyze how the variables quality, product image, sustainable product and safe product, influence on consumer satisfaction and on the intention to purchase this type of products. For this purpose, the project has focused on the sustainable fashion brand Ecoalf.

The results obtained suggest that some of the variables studied do affect the consumption of sustainable products. In particular, the image of sustainable product, followed by the perception of safe or reliable product are the variables that most influence both consumer satisfaction and the intention to purchase products from the Ecoalf sustainable brand. The main contribution of this project consists in the empirical study of the variables that influence the satisfaction and the intention to buy a sustainable brand.

Keywords: *Purchase behavior, Consumer, Sustainability, Ecoalf.*

Number of words: 14.516

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Introduction

In developed societies, there is currently a rising concern about the deterioration taking place in our environment. This may explain why a new market segment that reflects its environmental-care-related values in its purchasing decision process is beginning to emerge. As a result of this increase in the environmental awareness of consumers, each passing day sees more and more companies trying to promote their brands as “green” in order to make their products look more desirable than those of the competition.

The main interest of studying the purchase behavior of consumers in regards to sustainable products is enabling the identification of which variables influence the decision process. Knowing these variables is enormously useful for companies, as it allows them to adopt appropriate marketing actions in order to lead purchase decision towards a particular brand or type of product. Additionally, companies should keep in mind that sustainable marketing acts as an agent of change within society and performs a role beyond the purely business-oriented one.

The main objective of this project is to ascertain which of said variables (perceived quality, product image, sustainable product and safe/reliable product) have a more significant influence over consumer satisfaction and the purchase intention of sustainable products.

To address this goal, this project begins with a literature review, in an attempt to define some key concepts. Secondly, each one of the aforementioned variables considered in the present project will be analyzed and explained. Thirdly, the methodology employed during the research will be explained in detail. And finally, the results obtained are exposed and the main conclusions are presented, as well as the implications of the results obtained.

1. The concept of “sustainable” product

1.1. “Sustainable marketing” and “Green marketing”

The concept of Marketing recognises that organisations success in the marketplace determining the current needs and wants of their target customers and fulfilling those needs and wants more effectively and efficiently than other competitors (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018, p.574). More precisely, Marketing focuses on meeting customers' needs and wants and giving them what they want, so that companies increase their sales and profits. However, satisfying consumers' immediate needs and desires does not always serve the long term interests of either customers or the business (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 599).

In this context, arises the concept of ***sustainable Marketing***, which understands that all human activity is dependent on the existence of the natural resources provided by the planet; and acknowledges that long-term, sustainable economic viability only derives from both environmental stability and societal equity. In fact, the sustainable Marketing orientation aims to address these challenges (Emery, 2012, p. 24). Further, the concept of *sustainable Marketing* is closely related with socially and environmentally responsible actions developed by companies that meet the actual needs of consumers and companies, while also preserving or enhancing the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 599). Martin and Schouten (2014) indicate that *sustainable Marketing* could be conceptualized as the

process of creating, communicating and delivering value to customers in such a way that both natural and human resources are preserved or enhanced throughout these processes. Considering the role of *sustainable Marketing* as the interface between companies and society, it has two main goals. First goal is *Marketing sustainably*, which means designing and supporting organizational cultures and processes, so that all the Marketing processes are environmentally and socially benign. Second goal is *Marketing sustainability*, which is related with advancing and supporting a global culture of sustainable consumption; that is, a concept of cultural value and a set of consumption practices which help sustainable consumption (Schouten, 2014).

Schouten (2014) defined *sustainable Marketing* as a means of doing things differently in order to help society in striving for environmental sustainability and social justice as the norms (p.108). Similarly, Emery (2012) conceptualized *sustainable Marketing* as a holistic approach whose aim is to make sure that Marketing strategies and activities are specifically designed to develop a company that is socially equitable, environmentally friendly, economically fair and viable, in order to achieve benefits not only for current generations, but also for future customers and employees, as well as for the society as a whole (p.24).

According to Mitchell, Wooliscroft and Higham (2010), the sustainable Marketing orientation is a type of Marketing management whereby the company uses sustainable management principles to anticipate and meet customers' needs through the effective integration of comprehensive environmental intelligence with operational and Marketing systems; apply profitable, socially and environmentally responsible value systems; generate positive long-term outcomes in economic, social and environmental terms that are acceptable for stakeholders, who obtain direct profits from companies and who also obtain indirect economic, social and environmental profits.

It is also important to remark that sustainable Marketing is a much more broader concept than conventional Marketing, since sustainable Marketing develops a role in society that goes beyond the purely business-oriented role (Kotler et al., 2008). In fact, sustainable Marketing acts as an agent for change within society. But the central premise of past conventional Marketing definitions was satisfying customer needs while making a profit for the business (Emery, 2012, p. 7). Thus, “conventional Marketing entails developing products that meet consumers’ needs at affordable prices and then communicating the benefits of those products in a compelling way” (Ottman, 1998, p. 45). In this vein, Table 1 shows some of the main implications of the shift of paradigm from conventional to sustainable Marketing orientations.

Table 1: *Comparison of conventional and sustainable Marketing orientations*

| STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS | | |
|---|---|--|
| Conventional Marketing | Sustainable Marketing | |
| Industrial capitalism neoclassical economic theory simply liquidates non-renewable resources to produce income and profit. | Natural capitalism | Recognition of the interdependency between production of man-made capital and the maintenance and supply of natural capital (resources) from the planet. |
| Maximise shareholder value. | Satisfy stakeholder needs | Planet and people are the most important stakeholders, not profit for the sake of shareholders. |
| Competitive strategy. | Coopetitive strategy | Sustainability is addressed by both competing and cooperating in the marketplace and including non-business partners such as NGOs. |
| Short- and medium-term vision. | Long and longer term | Benefits of sustainable consumption on people and planet may take years to take effect and become apparent. |
| THE ROLE OF MARKETING | | |
| Conventional Marketing | Sustainable Marketing | |
| Marketing drives consumption and encourages consumer attitudes and behaviour to continue to consume without considering the consequences. | Marketing drives resource efficiency | Marketing allows to change consumer attitudes and behaviour towards sustainability and adopting sustainable consumption habits and practice. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Marketing tactics are seen as complicit with the problems of overconsumption. | Marketing is seen to be a significant part of the solution. | |
| PRODUCT AND PRODUCTION SYSTEM | | |
| Conventional Marketing | Sustainable Marketing | |
| From non-compliance to compliance with legal restrictions. | Beyond compliance | Moving beyond legal compliance presents business with new opportunities for product design and production techniques. |
| Take-make-waste energy/resources intensive. | Resource productivity | Energy and resource depletion and pollution reduced by the more effective use of natural and human resources. |
| Reactive pollution and waste control through “end-of-pipe” technology. Greening. | Cyclical, cradle to cradle PLC Closed-loop processing Sustaining | Proactive pollution and waste control with businesses responsible for whole product lifecycle (PLC) including pollutants, waste and recycling. |
| Supply chain efficiency | Supply chain sustainability | Social and economic equity in the supply chain and environmental control. |
| MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS | | |
| Conventional Marketing | Sustainable Marketing | |
| Exaggeration in relation to product claims and benefits often accepted by consumers as normal practice. | Exaggeration seen as greenwash | Increasingly marketing savvy public, cynical of company claims. |
| Green positioning often just a gesture or an appeal to a niche target market. | Repositioning of green as mainstream | Marketing communications will not only persuade, they will inform and educate into sustainable consumption habits and dissuade from unsustainable practice. |
| Aim to persuade. | Aims to educate | |

Source: Emery (2012). *Sustainable Marketing* (p. 24).

Conversely, the term **Green Marketing** appear in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The American Marketing Association (AMA) held the first workshop on “Ecological Marketing” in 1975 and the proceedings incorporated one of the first books about Green Marketing, titled “*Ecological Marketing*” (Laheri, Dangji, & Vohra, 2014).

Likewise, according to the American Marketing Association, the term Green Marketing could be defined as three concepts: (1) *Retailing definition*, related with the Marketing of products that are assumed to be environmentally safe; (2) *Social Marketing definition*, related with the development and Marketing of products designed to minimize the negative impact on the natural environment or to improve its quality; and third (3) *Environments definition*, meaning the efforts of organizations to produce, promote, package, and commercialize products in such a way that is sensitive or responsive to the ecological and environmental concerns (IGI Global, 2017, p. 185).

Therefore, according to the American Marketing Association, Green Marketing could be considered as the Marketing of those products that are assumed to be environmentally safe; and in turn, the Green Marketing incorporates a broad range of activities, including product modification, changes to the production processes, sustainable packaging, as well as a modification of the advertising campaigns. More precisely, the term Green Marketing refers to a holistic Marketing concept, wherein the production, Marketing, consumption and disposal of products and services take place in such a way that is less harmful to the environment, with an increasing awareness of the implications of the global warming, the issue of non-biodegradable solid waste, and the harmful impact of pollutants and so on. Hence, both marketers and consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the need for a switch into green products and green services (Miriyala & Mennakanti, 2016, p. 148).

In the early 90s authors such as Peattie (1992) highlighted the concept of Green Marketing. Peattie (1992) reported that the evolution of Green Marketing has three stages. The first stage is labelled as **ecological** Green Marketing, and during this stage all the marketing activities are concerned with environment issues, providing some solutions for them. The second stage is named as **environmental** Green Marketing,

and is characterized by the shift on the focus to clean technology, which involves designing innovative new products, which are beneficial to pollution and waste issues. Finally, the third stage is named as **sustainable** Green Marketing, which arises in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Laheri et al., 2014).

Later, Polonsky (1994) tried to provide a broad definition of Green Marketing. More specifically, this author considers Green or Environmental Marketing consist of all those activities designed in order to generate and ease any exchanges that satisfy human needs or wants; so that these needs and wants are covered with a minimal harmful impact on the natural environment (Gupta, Jankowska, & Maiti, 2007, p. 3).

However, there is a lack of consistency regarding the term Green Marketing, since this is the term used by the industry to describe those activities which attempt to reduce the negative effect of the products/services offered by companies, and that aims to make the industry environmentally friendly (Miryala et al., 2016, p. 148).

Finally, it can be stated that the emergence and evolution of Green Marketing has changed the concept of Marketing; and nowadays, companies have started promoting their products and services including some green claims on them (Laheri et al., 2014, p.148).

1.2. The concept of “sustainable” product

The Marketing mix is the set of marketing tools, namely product, price, placement and promotion, that companies manage to obtain the required response from the target market (Kotler et al., 2008). Moreover, the Marketing mix consists of every action that

companies can do in order to influence their products' demand (Kotler, Armstrong & Harris, 2013, p. 53).

In this context, the variable *product* could be defined as “*anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need*” (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 238). The product is the most tangible and important component of the marketing plan, given that without a product, there is nothing to distribute, nothing to promote or nothing to price (Hundekar, Appannaiah, & Reddy, 2009, p.48). So, if the product fails to satisfy the consumers' demand, no other contributions of any of the other variables of the Marketing mix will improve the product performance in the marketplace (Hundekar et al., 2009).

More precisely, the concept of *sustainable product* is broadly defined as the product that embraces positive social, environmental, ethical attributes; and is in essence, associated with moral principles (Lluchs et al., 2010). These product attributes are closely related to a variety of social issues, such as for example, fair labour practices or adequate animal treatment; as well as environmental issues such as recycling or reducing pollution (Luchs et al., 2010). In the same vein, Kang and Choi (2016) consider sustainable products as those products manufactured taking into consideration the social, environmental, and other ethical consequences (p. 305).

The concept of *sustainable product* transcends any individual product dimension, such as packaging or recycled content. In this vein, authors such as Emery (2012) explain that in order to consider a product as completely sustainable it should contribute to the achievement of the sustainability agenda comprised in the Triple Bottom Line, term coined by John Elkington in 1994 (p. 178). The Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1994) is emerging as a popular conceptualization in order to frame corporate, social,

environmental, and economic performance of companies; and is receiving significant attention related with its efficacy as a means for reporting the extent to which an organization meets societal and environmental responsibilities (Brown, Marshall, & Dillard, 2006, p. 3).

Regarding the three ***dimensions of products*** proposed by Kotler (1960), every product incorporates three different dimensions. First dimension is the *core product*, which consists of the need that the product covers; for example, resting in a hotel. The second dimension is the *actual product*, which is related with all the functional attributes of the product, such as the quality, the brand, the packaging, the style and design. Finally, the third dimension is the *augmented product*, which consists of all aspects incorporated by the company to the real product in order to increase the added value provided to customers, such as additional customer services, maintenance, warranty, installation, delivery and financing (Camino & Garcillán, 2007, p. 268).

The sustainable products would be framed in the *augmented product* dimension; that is, the environmental issue could be considered as an additional benefit provided to consumers, built on the basis of the core and actual product, since it fulfils the same functions as similar non sustainable products, but the harm to the environment would be lower throughout its life cycle (Díaz, 2002, p. 9).

One related term is the concept of ***ecological product***. Some authors give the adjective of ecological to products, regarding to the concept of the product life cycle. According to Calomarde (2000), there is not an *ecological product* by itself, since being ecological depends on the product environmental behavior throughout its entire product life cycle: from the incorporation of the raw materials that compose it, its production process, its use, the waste generated throughout its distribution and transport; and

finally, the product's reuse or disposal. Therefore, a product could be considered as ecological when it fulfills the same functions as the non ecological products, but when the product's environmental damage is lower throughout its life cycle (p.57). Similarly, Fraj and Martínez (2002) highlight the need to consider the ecological product based on the examination of the product life cycle (p. 89).

However, it should be remarked that the product's damage to the environment entails a complex calculation, and that in many phases this is a subjective calculation. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly evaluate the ecological and non-ecological products by means of the analysis of their product life cycles. Nowadays, Marketing authors and scholars have not formally established a technical methodology for evaluating the environmental impact of products (Calomarde, 2000, p. 61). Nevertheless, authors such as Wicke (1990) and Calomarde (2000) provide some general criteria in order to evaluate the environmental impact of the product life cycle (Table 2).

Table 2: Environmental criteria

| Production phase | Phase of sale, use and consumption | Phase of elimination |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of non-polluting materials with low energy consumption. -Use of raw materials available in abundance. -Minimal exploitation of resources. -Enable a long life of the products. -The contribution of the product to an ecologically correct production in terms of emissions and energy. -If possible, encourage production not only of clean | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Packaging not harmful to the environment or to health. -Reuse or harnessing of the packaging. -Product and package of the smallest volume possible. -Safety in use and consumption. -Null or non-harmful emission of gases in the use and consumption. -Null or scarce emission of harmful liquids -Energy-saving use and consumption. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reduced volume of waste. -The possibility of composting, incineration or depot without problems. -Minimization of disposable volume thanks to the possibility of reuse (of parts, for example). -Possibility to recycle waste products. -In the case of hazardous waste, to facilitate the new use or selective collection and disposal. -Energy-efficient use thanks to the incineration of waste. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>"relatively" products (e.g. cars with catalyst) but of clean products per se (e.g. bicycles, biologically grown foods).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Silent use and consumption. -Provide the most economical and clean possible use (instructions for use, service, advice). -Increased ease of repair and maintenance and replacement of parts. -Increased durability (delaying stylistic, functional and material obsolescence). | |
|--|--|--|

Source: Wicke (1990); Calomarde (2000).

From the above, it can be assumed that in the Marketing area an *ecological product* is understood as the product that addresses the same needs and has the same functionality than those non-ecological products; and at the same time entails a less negative environmental impact throughout its production process, its use and its disposal, compared to other products (Calomarde, 2000).

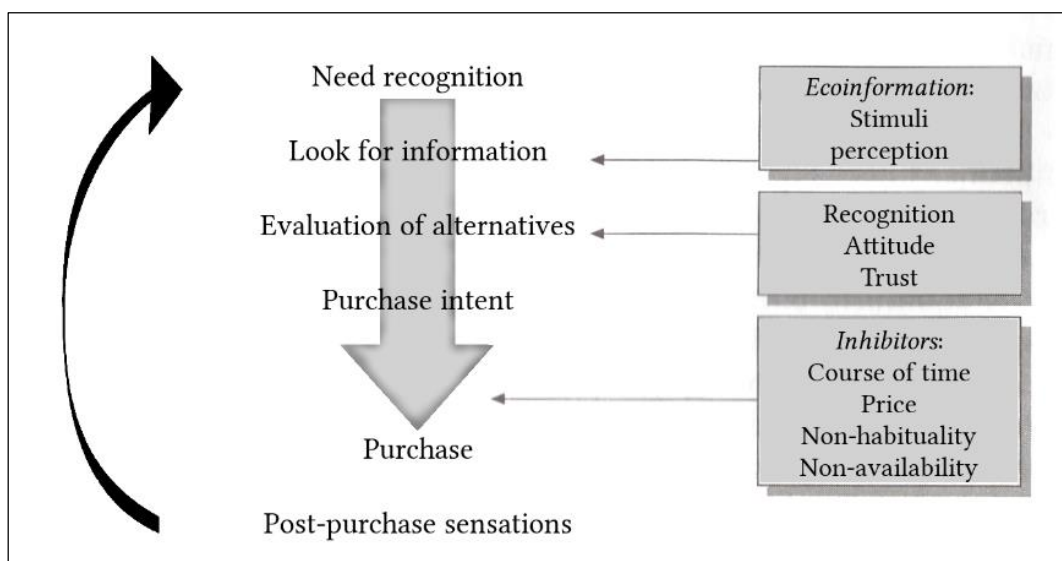
From the economic standpoint, there has been an increasing interest in reaching a global agreement on the conceptualization of sustainable and ecological products, as well as on developing a list of the environmental products. More precisely, this interest emerged in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Hamwey, Pacini, & Assunção, 2013, p. 158).

The participants, including the European Union, engaged in the negotiation of the Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) (since July 2014) trying to eliminate tariffs on a number of important environment-related products. These include products that can help achieve environmental and climate protection goals, such as generating clean and renewable energy, improving energy and resource efficiency, controlling air pollution, managing waste, treating waste water, monitoring the quality of the environment, and reducing noise pollution. The trade liberalization of these products seeks to stimulate

trade and the dissemination of the use of such goods, giving an special treatment to products that may contribute to sustainable development. The focus of the Environmental Goods Agreement (being negotiated since July 2014) is to become a dynamic list which would allow the incorporation of new products in future; but to date there is a lack of an international definition or list of environmental products.

1.3. The market's growing demand for "sustainable" products

The growing concern of developed societies for the environmental spoilage is not only a social trend, but also a Marketing phenomenon. This concern is giving rise to a market segment that reflects this environmental issue in its purchase decision process (Mera & Palacios, 2004, p. 171). More specifically, the purchasing decision process consists of five stages, namely the *need recognition*, *information search*, *evaluation of alternatives*, *purchase decision* and *post-purchase behavior* (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 161). In this context, the major interest of the research on consumer purchase behavior of sustainable products is that it allows the identification of those variables that influence the decision process, and also it allows the adoption of effective Marketing actions, so that the purchase decision is oriented towards certain brands or type of products. Likewise, Calomarde (2000) identifies the variables that are considered as relevant in the consumer's purchasing decision process of ecological products (p. 24) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The *Ecological purchase decision process*

Source: Calomarde (2000)

This process comprises five different stages, as follows. The first stage of the consumer decision-making process is the **need recognition** that happens when consumers are faced with an imbalance between their actual and desired states. Further, the need recognition is triggered when a consumer is exposed to either an internal or an external stimulus. *Internal stimuli* are those situations experienced by the own individual, such as hunger; while the *external stimuli* are influences from an external source, such as someone's recommendation of a restaurant (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2008, p. 140).

Once the need has arisen, the individual needs to satisfy it, and for this purpose, the individual **looks for information** that allows identify the possible alternatives to cover that need, through the desire of an ideal product. In this stage, the perception of the previously received stimuli remains in the mind of the consumer as a set of complex memories and images (Calomarde, 2000). If the company wants to stimulate the individual again, it will be necessary to offer additional information that begins the evaluation process. In the case of ecological products, the product benefits are

deferred in time and, in general terms, these benefits are related to the higher order in the Maslow scale (Calomarde, 2000). These benefits influence events in the sphere of self-esteem evaluations, since they produce self-satisfaction, because when the individual develops ecological actions he/she protects the environment in the future; and therefore, future generations will benefit from this action (Calomarde, 2000, p. 25).

The next stage consist on the **evaluation of alternatives**, whereby the consumer uses information to evaluate alternative brands/products in the choice set (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 162). The evaluation of alternatives depends on three interrelated variables:

- **Recognition.** The information gathered by the consumer engenders recognition of brands and products, and the individual evaluates them according to his/her needs, adopting an attitude towards these products or brands, and creating a level of confidence in his/her mind. The recognition allows the inclusion of the product or brand in the specific product category, in this case "ecological", to develop an evaluation and differentiation from other products/brands in the same product category (Calomarde, 2000, p. 26).

- **Attitude.** The attitude is a predisposition to act in a certain way before a stimulus (Kotler et al., 2008), and is influenced by the extent to which the individual expects that a certain brand/product meets his/her needs. By identifying the relevant attributes and assessing the resulting benefits, the consumer developes a judgment about the product/brand. The result of the evaluation varies according to the importance given to each benefit; and this is the reason why promotion of ecological produts and brands is so important for companies.

The ecological benefits are not perceived physically and directly by the consumer. In fact, these benefits are perceived as the removal of a perceived risk of a future damage, such as preserving the biodiversity or natural resources in the future. The belief of the individual that his/her behavior can contribute to solve a specific environmental issue creates an attitude, which has been named as the “*perceived efficiency of the consumer*” (Berger & Corbin, 1992). Previous empirical evidence reveals the existence of a positive relationship between the “*perceived efficiency of the consumer*” and the behavior of conscious ecological consumption (Olaizola & Molina, 2008, p. 2).

Finally, authors such as Santos (2002, p. 87) notes that consumers can be grouped according to their attitude, their predisposition towards a specific behavior, to a set of beliefs, valuations and to their tendency to act. The application of these components of the attitude to the ecological purchase provides the following categories: beliefs (cognitive component) would be considered as *ecological consciousness*; the valuation (emotional component) would be considered as a *ecostance*; and finally the tendency to act (active component of attitude) is considered as *ecoactivity*.

- **Trust.** Is considered as the degree of certainty that the consumer attributes to the evaluation made about the product or brand (Calomarde, 2000). Trust is both influenced by the information received in a consistent way by the individual, and the individual's own knowledge about the product or brand. The lack of confidence decreases the purchase intention, so the gathering of information and control of the ecological products, helps individuals to reduce their uncertainty and increase their level of confidence. For this purpose, the eco-labeling systems have been created, as well as the environmental standards for companies (norms ISO-14000), and the

Integrated Management Systems packaging and packaging waste collection (Calomarde, 2000, p. 27).

Then, the next stage of the purchase decision process is the **purchase decision** of the consumer or the non purchase decision (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 162). More precisely, once the consumers' evaluation of alternatives has been made, the purchase or non-purchase intention arises. However, there is a span of time between the evaluation of alternatives and the physical purchase of the product or brand. Further, a series of inhibitory factors negatively affect to the final completion of the purchase (Kotler et al., 2013). Among these factors the following should be remarked:

- **Course of time.** As a general rule, the purchase intention weakens in the course of time; and this is more or less as relevant for ecological products as it is for other product categories, since it depends on the consumer involvement in the purchase decision.
- **Price.** The way in which price influences the purchase of ecological products is different in each purchase situation. Some previous research proposes that consumers are willing to pay more for a product that is ecological, but there are other purchase situations whereby the price prevents the purchase.
- **Lack of regularity.** The lack of regularity of the product is also a strong inhibitor of purchase decisions. Different presentations of the same product or brand, which improve the product from an ecological viewpoint, require an additional communication effort so that consumers classify and evaluate these new presentations positively in their minds, generating a favorable attitude towards them.
- **Non-availability of the product.** When products or brands are new, they require time for their acceptance by the distribution channels, which are usually

reluctant to modifications that may affect their control positions or profit margins. This factor negatively affects ecological products, as it also affects any new product (Calomarde, 2000, p. 28).

Finally, the last stage of the purchase decision process is the **post-purchase behaviour**. The reason is that after purchasing the product, consumers will experience some level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Kotler et al., 2008). Therefore, the marketer's job does not end when the product is bought, but continues into the post-purchase period. Consumer may evaluate all aspects of the purchase process, ranging from the availability of information, the product's price or the retail service to the product's performance (Cant et al. , 2009, p. 71).

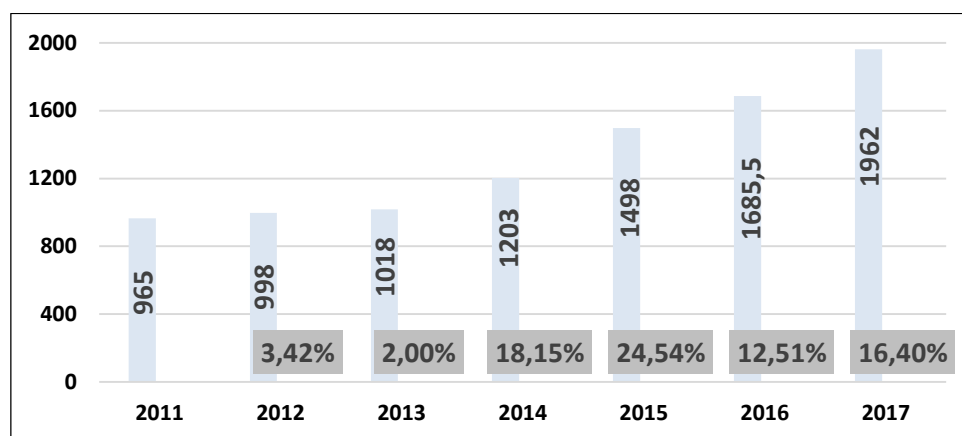
1.3.1. The growing market share of sustainable products in Spain

Some previous studies report the importance of sustainable products for Spanish consumers. More precisely, the study conducted by the Observatorio Cetelem (2018) shows some interesting data regarding the frequency of sustainability and ecology consideration by Spanish consumers. This study reports that the 41% of consumers only sometimes consider the product's sustainability or ecology, while the 20% never consider sustainability in their purchase decisions, followed by the 16% of consumers who rarely consider these issues (Observatorio CETELEM, 2018).

Regarding food products, according to the studies conducted by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fishing and Food (MAPA), the total amount of consumption of ecological or organic food products by Spanish consumers accounts for 1.962 million of euros in year 2017. This amount of consumption is 16.4% higher than the total amount consumed in year 2016, and almost doubles the amount of more than one million consumed in 2013 (Figure 2). This figures confirm that the ecological food products are

increasingly present in the Spanish consumers' shopping basket, and in turn, it can be stated that this is a food sector increasing strength and business options, economic activity and job creation in our country.

Figure 2: Ecological food consumption in Spain (millions of €)

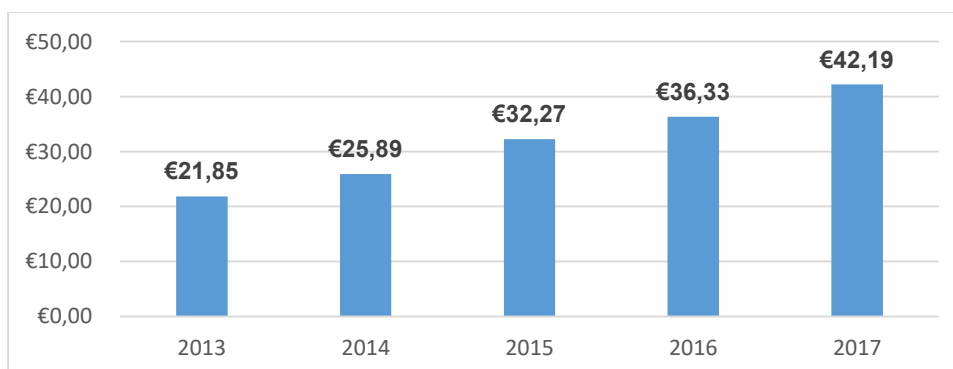


NOTE: % Percentage increase in consumption over the previous year.

Source: own elaboration based on MAPA (2018).

The consumption of sustainable and ecological food products in Spain is still far away from other European countries. However, there is a change in this trend and this food sector has great capacity for growth. For example, in year 2013 Spanish consumers spent 21,85 €/per capita/year in organic food products; while in year 2017, according to MAPA the expenditure on organic food products increased up to 42,19 €/per capita/year (Figure 3).

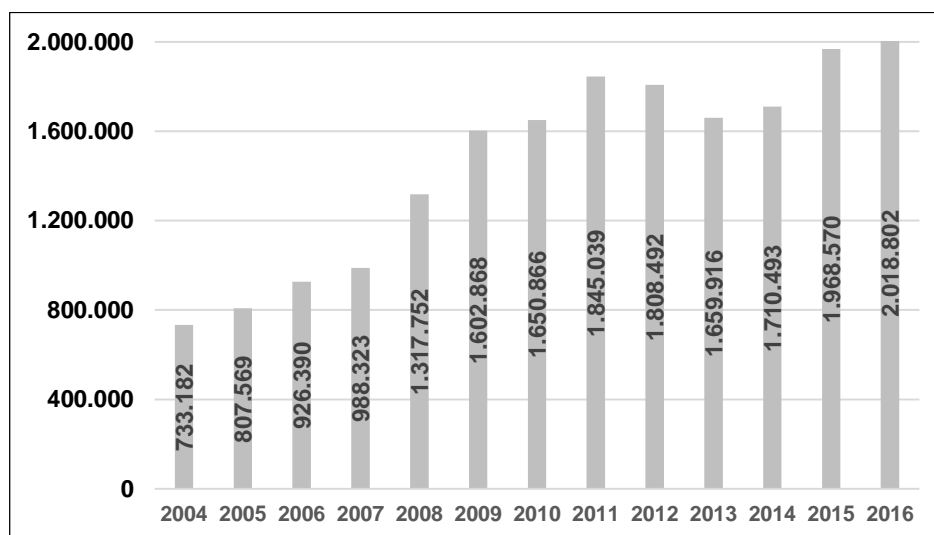
Figure 3: Per capita expenditure on ecological products 2016



Source: own elaboration based on MAPA data.

In addition, Spain is the main producer and supplier of organic food products in Europe. More precisely, in year 2016 the area destined to ecological agriculture in Spain has reached the amount of 2.018.802 hectares (Figure 4).

Figure 4: *Evolution of the ecological production area in Spain (hectares)*



Source: own elaboration based on MAPA data.

1.3.2. Future trends in sustainability

Today there is a growing trend in the consumption of sustainable and ecological products, since consumers are increasingly aware and concerned about environmental issues and the climate change. In this context, ecological products under an effective control which guarantees a production respectful with rural and environmental development, as well as with human health, is experiencing an increasing growth in consumption, greater than for conventional food products (González-Adalid & Munuera-Alemán, 2005, p. 50). Further, according to Schmid, Fontguyon and Sans (2007) the factors influencing the purchase of organic products are health, animal welfare and the products' organoleptic qualities (p. 17). Consumers of organic products "give greater importance when making purchases to the fact that the products they consume are beneficial to their health, are less harmful for the environment, and do not

create social injustice" (Olaizola & Molina, 2008, p. 12). In the same vein "*people who consume ecological products do so, because of strong personal convictions about healthy nutrition or environmental protection*" (Gallo, Marín, & Flores, 2014, p. 148).

A key problem that consumers of sustainable products currently have is the large number of labels that identify this type of products. Even though these labels are created to provide higher levels of guarantee and credibility, the great variety of labels can be a source of confusion for consumers. In this context, authors such as García (2016, p. 100) highlight that the "*clear environmental information is required by the environmentally conscious consumer, as their consumption habits go beyond the act of purchase. This type of buyer acquires the product based on its environmental concern, and they experience a process of acquisition that is characterized by analyzing the whole cycle of life, from the cradle to the tomb of the product*" (García, 2016, p. 100).

Therefore, it can be stated that ecological labelling is fundamental for the purpose of selecting the desired ecological products. Consequently, the EU created its own ecological label in 1992 (Figure 5), with the purpose of being an instrument to help companies and consumers to improve their environmental performance, and provide guidance and accurate, non-misleading and scientific-based information on products that reduce the environmental impact, compared to other products of the same category. Moreover, this ecological label is used for electronic equipment, cleaning products, gardening products, furniture, paper, clothing or even services.

Figure 5: EU Ecolabel



Figure 6: EU organic logo



Regarding ecological food products, there is an official logo that identifies organic food in the EU, which is compulsory from 1 July 2010, in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 271/2010, 24 March 2010 (Figure 6). Interestingly, in Spain this EU logo coexists with each one of the logos created by the autonomous communities, since these communities have the competence to certify and authorize organic food (Figure 7). Furthermore, some stamps have also been authorized by some control agencies which coexist with the official labels. Therefore, it can be highlighted that this lack of uniformity in ecological labelling leads to great misunderstanding.

Figure 7: Galicia's ecological logo



1.4. Current legislation on “sustainable” products

1.4.1. Sustainable food products

What does ecologic, organic or biologic mean for the current legislation?

The Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament will be compulsory from year 2021, and defines organic product “*as a product resulting from organic production*”. In addition, this norm defines *organic production* as the “*use of production methods that comply with this Regulation at all stages of production, preparation and distribution*”. Likewise, the norms states that products derived from hunting or fishing of wild animals could not be considered as organic products.

Some of the general principles of organic production state that sustainable management systems are based on the preservation of natural landscape elements, such as natural heritage sites; the responsible use of energy and natural resources, such as water, soil, organic materials and air; as well as highlights the exclusion of the use of genetically modified organisms and the animal cloning from the whole organic food chain.

It must be noted that in the EU the terms organic, ecologic and biologic are considered as synonymous terms, as it can be derived from the Annex IV of the aforementioned Regulation. Additionally, their derivatives and diminutives, such as “bio” and “eco”, whether alone or in combination, may be used indistinctly in the EU for the labelling and advertising of products.

On the other hand, in Spain, the Real Decreto 833/2014, of October 3rd, which establishes and regulates the General Registry of Ecological Operators and creates the Coordination Table for organic production is referred to the Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28th June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products in order to define the concept of ecologic product.

The Council Regulation (EC) takes the definition of “organic production” from the mere fulfillment of it. Thus, organic production could be described (not defined) as “*a general system of agrarian management and production of agro-food products that combines the best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources and the application of stringent animal welfare standards, in accordance with the preferences of certain consumers for products obtained from natural substances and processes*”. So, according to this Council Regulation ecologic, biologic and organic could be considered synonymous in every EU country. However the Real Decreto 833/2014 is compulsory, the Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and the Council of 30th May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products has repealed the Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007.

1.4.2. Sustainable non-food products

There is a lack of definition for sustainable or ecologic non-food products. In fact, according to Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25th November 2009 on the EU Ecolabel, the EU sustainability label can be granted on the basis of criteria that will be based on the environmental performance of the products. In order to determine such criteria, shall be considered for example: the impact on climate change, the impact on nature and biodiversity, energy and resource consumption, generation of waste, emissions to all environmental media and so on.

1.5. Ecoalf: making products from recycled garbage

Ecoalf is a Spanish sustainable fashion company, founded by Javier Goyeneche and set up in year 2009. The company mission is to create the first generation of recycled fashion products with the same quality, design and technical properties as the best

non-recycled garments and accessories. Further, the company vision is to stop using natural resources in a careless way.

So, Ecoalf uses high quality recycled fabrics to create eco-friendly products; turning garbage into raw materials that are transformed into fabrics, soles, labels and recycled linings. More precisely, this company uses different types of garbage in its manufacturing process, as explained below:

- **Discarded plastic bottles.** The company obtains a 100% recycled polyester filament from discarded plastic bottles that are used for making fabrics. With 70 PET plastic bottles this company obtains one meter of fabric, and through recycling bottles they save 20% of waste water, 50% of energy, 60% of air pollution.
- **Discarded fishing nets.** The company obtains recovered nylon from the discarded fishing nets. Similarly, the company Ecoalf reduces the consumption of energy and water, because recycled nylon requires half the amount of manufacturing stages compared to the conventional chemical process. More precisely, with 135 grams of discarded fishing nets Ecoalf obtains one meter of fabric. Through recycling nets, the company contributes with the following environmental benefits: 27% less consumption of natural resources, 28% reduction of green house gas emissions, prevents marine pollution; every 1000 Kg of fabric reduces the equivalent CO₂ emissions of a car driving 9800 Km, or production of 1000 Kg of fabric saves the equivalent of 955 Kg of crude oil.
- **Seaweeds.** The seaweeds are used in the manufacture of the sole of some of the shoes produced by Ecoalf.
- **Coffee grounds.** These grounds are collected in Taiwan through an alliance with a chain of restaurants. The humid coffee grounds are dried and turned into dust,

which mixed with the leftovers of discarded plastic bottles are turned into recycled cloth.

- **Used tires.** The used tires are quite difficult to recycle because they contain metals. After two years of research, Ecoalf created a clean powder which is used in order to manufacture recycled flip-flops that come from 100% recycled tires, that do not incorporate glue in their manufacturing process.
- **Recycled wool and post-industrial cotton.** The recycled wool is one of the most recycled fibres, due to its long durability. Because of the low environmental impact, the mechanical recycling process is a well-known process to re-use wool fibres. Similarly, through the use of recycled cotton Ecoalf saves 2500 litres of water in the manufacturing process of every cotton T-shirt.

In addition, Ecoalf does not incorporate natural fur or leather in its garment collections. The main reason is that the company is not able to guarantee the lack of use of chrome in furs, as well as the origin of the animals and the non-abuse of them. Nowadays, Ecoalf uses feathers certified with the Responsible Down Standards (RDS), a standard that safeguards the welfare of geese and ducks that provide feathers and follows the chain of custody from the farm to the product. However, Ecoalf has committed to continue increasing the use of synthetic padding in order to become 100% feather-free in all product ranges by 2020.

Finally, it should be remarked one of the most ambitious projects of the company: “*Upcycling the Oceans*”, a project that started in year 2015. This project has been developed with a goal that is threefold. In the first place, this project aims to remove from our oceans all the wastage that damages the marine ecosystems. Secondly, the project aims to give a second life to the wastage recovered through the *circular economy*; finally, aims to raise awareness about the global issue of marine debris.

Currently, this project has involved more than 3.000 fishermen in 37 Spanish ports, and more than 330 tons of garbage have been recovered from the sea.

Considering all the reasons explained above, this company has been selected in order to examine the sustainable Marketing orientation, since Ecoalf produces what the consumers demand, while benefiting society and helping the environment. In the sustainable Marketing orientation, the customer and societal welfare concerns strongly influence business activities and also alter the companies' strategic planning (Viswanathan et al., 2009).

2. Theoretical foundations

2.1. Variables influencing the purchase of “sustainable” products

2.1.1. The perceived product quality

Following Zeithaml (1988) quality can be defined broadly as superiority or excellence. Accordingly, perceived quality can be conceptualized as “*the consumer’s judgment about a product’s overall excellence or superiority*”. Therefore, perceived quality is different from objective or real quality. In fact the concept of perceived quality entails a higher level abstraction than a specific product attribute or a global assessment that in

some situations resembles attitude, and an evaluation often made within the consumer's evoked set (Zeithaml, 1988). Likewise, regarding the concept of quality, Santesmases-Mestre (2012) distinguishes between the *objective* quality of the product or service, which has a technical nature, is measurable and verifiable; and the *perceived* quality, which is a subjective perception, being the evaluation of the consumer. That is, the objective or real quality aims to measure the objective and verifiable characteristics of the products; while the perceived quality is the consumer's appraisal of the superiority of a product. From the Marketing viewpoint, the perceived quality is the most important, since it influences the consumer behavior (p.392).

Product quality is a complex and multidimensional concept, configured and conditioned by a great number of attributes, that are specific for each product category or service. The quality of a product is closely related with the compatibility and purpose of the product itself, as well as with the consistency of the production with the desired or expected level of quality (Talaya, 2008, p. 490). There is often a positive association between quality and price; and for this reason, for many customers the price of a product is a good indicator of quality.

Similarly, Kotler et al. (2013) highlights two different dimensions of the product quality: level and consistency. When developing a product, the marketer in the first place must choose a **quality level** that will support the product's positioning. So, product quality means *performance quality*; that is, the ability of a product to perform its functions. Companies rarely try to offer the highest possible performance quality level; given that only few customers could afford the highest levels of quality offered for any kind of products, such as for example luxury products. On the contrary, companies choose a quality level that matches their target market needs, and the quality levels of competing products (Kotler et al., 2013). High quality also can mean high levels of **quality**

consistency. In this context, product quality means *conformance quality*, that is, freedom from defects and *consistency* in delivering a level of performance; and for this reason, all companies should offer high levels of conformance quality (Kotler et al., 2013). In this sense, a non-luxury product can have just as much quality as a luxury product. That is, even though a non-luxury product does not perform at the same quality level as a luxury product, it can deliver the quality that customers expect and have paid for.

From the consumer standpoint a high quality product does not necessarily mean a luxury product, but simply a product that satisfies him/her; that is, a product that responds to the needs and expectations of a target market. Accordingly, product quality can be defined as the characteristics of a product or service that bear its ability to satisfy stated customer needs (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 244).

Companies manage *total* quality, prioritizing the integration of the quality of the good or service offered (objective aspect) and customer satisfaction (subjective) (Talaya, 2008, p. 491). More precisely, *total quality management* involves breaking down the total quality into different dimension, so that performance standards can be established for each component. In this context, Garvin (1987) proposes eight dimensions of total quality, which are the following:

- Product or service **performance**, that is related with the ability of the product to correctly perform their basic function.
- Product **features**, which is related with the range of other advantages of the product, delivered with the basic service.
- Product or service **reliability**, which means the absence of faults in a given time.

- **Conformance**, that is related with the respect for policies and standards corresponding to a certain level of excellence.
- **Durability**, which could be understood as the duration of the product or the frequency of use before deterioration.
- **Serviceability**, that means the amplitude, speed and efficiency of the services offered with the product, before, during and after the purchase.
- **Aesthetics**, that are related with the design, appearance, color or taste of the product; thus, being the more subjective components.
- **Perceived quality**, which is the reputation or perceived image of the product or brand.

Traditionally, quality management and control have been considered as purely defensive actions, whose objective was to prevent manufacturing defects and the reduction of damaged products. This function was usually developed in the production department. However, today, following the example of the Japanese industry, quality management is increasingly seen as a competitive strategic weapon. Accordingly, quality management is developed in strategic Marketing, in order to define the level of excellence expected for the products or services offered (Lambin, 2003, p. 568).

Chen and Chang (2013) report that environmental consciousness is more popular today, and accordingly, they propose a new construct, *green perceived quality*. These authors refer to Zeithaml (1988) to define the concept of green perceived quality as “*the customer’s judgment about a brand’s (or a product’s) overall environmental excellence or superiority*” (p. 66). Similarly, the study carried out by Chen, Lin, and Chang (2014) indicates that green perceived quality is negatively related with greenwash. The term greenwash is used in this research to express any communication that misleads individuals in the adoption of positive beliefs about an organization’s

environmental performance, practices, or products (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015, p. 226). Moreover, this study suggests that companies should decrease their greenwash behaviors, and enhance their consumers' green perceived quality. Furthermore, companies may want to increase their customer's "green word-of-mouth", that is defined as "the extent to which a customer would infer friends, relatives, and colleagues about positive environmental message of a product or a brand". In order to increase the "green word-of-mouth" companies need to improve their customer's green perceived quality.

2.1.2. *The product image*

Santesmases-Mestre (2012) highlights that product image is a mental representation of the attributes and perceived benefits of the product or brand, being a multidimensional phenomenon that depends on how such attributes and benefits are perceived (p. 414). More specifically, the product attributes are those descriptive features that characterize a product or service; that is, what a consumer thinks the product or service is or has and what is involved with its purchase or consumption. The benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes; that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them.

One related concept of product image is brand image. Following Keller (1993) brand image or brand associations refer to "the set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory" (p. 2). More precisely, the brand associations can be classified into three major categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Similarly, according to Kotler (2013), the brand image should incorporate the product's distinctive benefits and positioning. Even when competing product offerings look quite similar, consumers may perceive differences based on the company or on the products' brand image differentiation (Kotler et al., 2013; p. 223). Other authors such as Chan, Boksem

and Smidts (2018, p. 600) highlight that brand image is an imprecise construct, which is generally understood as a broad set of mental associations that consumers have related to a brand, through either exposure to Marketing or due to prior interactions with the brand, during and after purchase.

Interestingly, the halo effect that product image exerts on consumers' perceptions of product attributes is described as "*a subjective bias that causes the individual's evaluation of one characteristic to impact his or her evaluation of other characteristics*" (Aghekyan, 2009, p. 2). Thus, consumer's appraisal of specific product attributes of branded products can be achieved by the overall impression of the general brand image. For example, a favorable (or unfavorable) brand image can influence positively (or negatively) on the evaluation of other product attributes of a branded product. As a result, a strong and favorable brand image will positively bias consumers' impression of other attributes of the branded product. This phenomenon makes product brand image one of the key elements leading to increase consumers' purchase intentions (Aghekyan, 2009).

Regarding the sustainable products, the concept of *green brand image* refers to "*a set of perceptions of a brand in the consumer's mind that are linked to environmental commitments and environmental concerns*" (Chen et al., 2016, p. 1798). According to Aghekyan (2009), green brand image is positively related to green brand equity (p. 20). Green brand equity refers to "*a set of brand assets and liabilities about green commitments and environmental concerns linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service*" (Chen et al., 2016, p. 1799). The research developed by Olsen, Slotegraaf and Chandukala (2014) offers insights into the consequences of companies' investments in developing

environmentally sustainable new products, revealing that an emphasis on green new products is not misguided, because it positively influences the change in brand attitude.

Similarly, according to Lin, Lobo, and Leckie (2017) more companies increasingly want to place their brands as *green* brands, because of the increasing environmental awareness of consumers (p. 434). However, the opportunistic behaviour of some companies which practice “greenwashing”, may lead to an increasing scepticism towards green brands (Parguel, Benoît-Moreau, & Larceneux, 2011), weakening the green brand image.

2.1.3. The product sustainability

There are different variables related with the purchasing process that influence consumers when buying sustainable products. However, companies can manage and take decisions on some of these variables (Olaizola & Molina, 2008, p. 1). Among these variables the perceived consumer effectiveness and the perception of the product and the marketing-mix variables should be highlighted.

- ***Perceived Consumer Effectiveness***

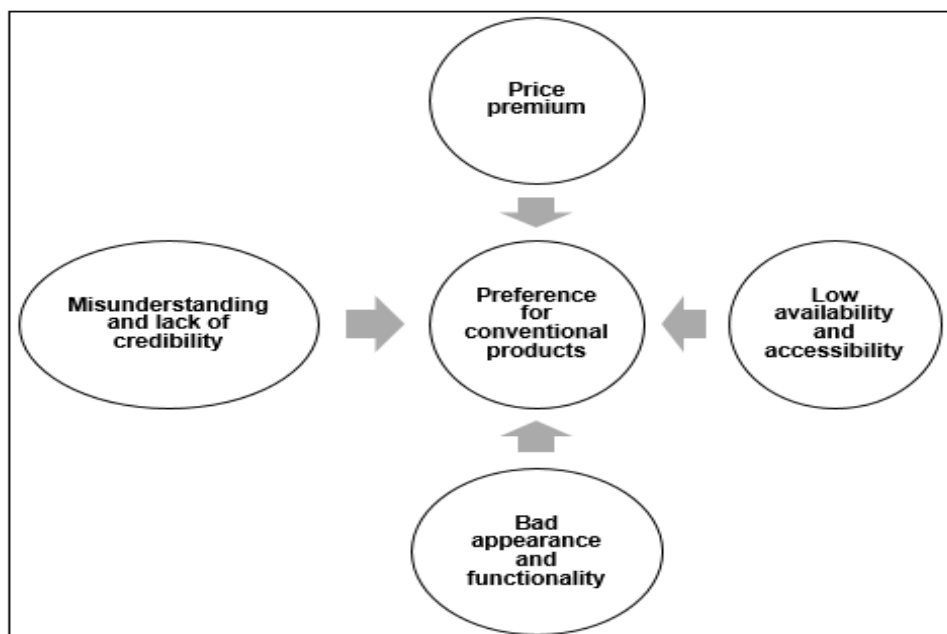
A study conducted by Roberts (1996) revealed that the *perceived consumer effectiveness* was the most relevant and most accurate predictor of ecological consumption, with greater influence on the sustainable products’ purchasing process than the socio-demographic variables -such as gender, age, level of education or social class-, or psychographic variables -such as lifestyles, personality or attitudes. More precisely the research developed by Roberts (1996) highlights that the *perceived consumer effectiveness* was indentified as the most promising variable in explaining the ecologically conscious consumer behavior; as well as the strength of the relationship between *perceived consumer effectiveness* and the

ecologically conscious consumer behavior advertising implications (Roberts, 1996, p. 228). More precisely, the individual's belief that individuals could play an important role in tackling environmental destruction (*perceived consumer effectiveness*) is likely the driving force behind ecologically conscious consumer behavior (Straughan & Roberts, 1999, p. 570).

- **Perception of the product and the marketing-mix variables**

Sometimes, even though individuals show a favorable attitude towards the environment, and to the purchase of organic products, and despite individuals could perceive that this behavior can be effective for the protection of the environment, the same individuals do not get to develop those actions, due to the presence of a series of ***inhibition factors*** (Olaizola & Molina, 2008, p. 2), which are explained below (Figure 8).

Figure 8: *Main inhibition factors in the consumption of sustainable products*



Source: Own elaboration from Olaizola and Molina (2008)

▪ **The price of the sustainable product**

When the price of these products are premium prices or high expensive prices, then the product price can act as an inhibitor of the purchase (Meneses & García, 2004, p. 41). More precisely and following Calomarde (2000) “setting prices higher than the competition for organic/sustainable products may be necessary for companies, because of their higher costs (...) But it must be remarked that there is an upper limit of the high prices, which is the value perceived by the consumer. Above this level, the inhibitory effect of the purchase will be effective and the product will not be sold” (Calomarde, 2000, p. 89). In this context, Gali (2013) reports that “a higher price is applicable only if it matches its perceived value in the customer's minds. This implies that sustainable products should be perceived as having higher value than conventional products”.

▪ **The low availability and accessibility**

Authors such as Bañegil & Chamorro (2002) emphasize that “the ecological consumer finds it difficult to find in the sales lines products with the ecological attributes he/she is looking for (...). Further, it is not known if the organic product is not successful because the ecological demand is very weak or because the ecological consumer does not have the possibility of expressing their awareness in the sales lines” (p. 81). Likewise, Ruiz and Quesada (2000) emphasize the ignorance of the existing offer and the limited offer. In this vein, Segador (1998) points out the difficulty in finding organic foods as the major reason for not consuming them.

▪ **The functionality and appearance of organic products**

According to Molina, (2002) “companies must sell products that take care of the environment to the same consumers who have been convenience consumers, who

often purchase products, use them and finally throw them out (...). An individual could value more the benefits of their convenient behavior -comfort, time-saving-, than the benefits of socially responsible behavior that may require greater effort and cost" (p. 44). Similarly, Grunert (1993) suggests as another possible inhibitory factor of ecological purchase the "bad appearance" of organic products. Accordingly Molina (2002) indicates that "the self-service distribution of certain ecological products, such as organic food products that often are commercialized with higher prices and worse appearance than those obtained through industrial agriculture (with employment of fertilizers and pesticides) does not seem the most appropriate, especially if the consumer is little or not used to its consumption" (p. 49).

- ***The misunderstanding and lack of credibility***

Carrero & Valor (2012) indicate that there is a low knowledge about the legal processes for organic certification; and in turn, the type of labelling that these products must carry in order to identify them is unknown. Therefore the goal of providing consumer information at the point of sale fails, as most of the consumers do not understand the organic certifications; and in addition, most of the consumers do not believe those labels. In this context, "Marketing tools must play a crucial role in helping companies to overcome these barriers, and achieve a more direct contact with potential customers, making them real customers" (Olaizola & Molina, 2008, p. 3).

2.1.4. Reliable/safe product

According to Kotler et al. (2006) the concept of product reliability could be defined as "*the measure of the likelihood that a product does not work properly or breaks down in a specific period of time*" (p. 393). Similarly, Rao (1986) defines this concept as "*the*

probability that an item will perform the function required from it under specified conditions for a stated period of time". So, these two authors understand product reliability as a Marketing tool, because the reliability of a product could be created and managed by the company.

In this context, authors such as Garvin, (1987) indicate that reliability "*usually becomes more important to consumers as downtime and maintenance become more expensive*". For example, farmers are especially sensitive to downtime during the short harvest season; and reliable equipment can make the difference between a good year and a year of spoiled crops. Similarly, other market such as the computer systems and copying machines also value the product's reliability, given the expensive maintenance. Likewise, often "*consumers pay an additional price for more reliable products*" (Kotler et al., 2006, p. 393). More precisely, for the consumer to be willing to pay a premium price for the organic product, it is essential that he/she recognizes them as products of higher quality; and additionally, that the consumer may have confidence in the real ecological characteristics of the product (Meneses & García, 2004, p. 47).

In this context, the eco-labeling is a certification system by which a group of consumers confirm the environmental quality of the acquired products; thus, providing reliability to consumers (Burguillo & Maneiro-Jurjo, 2007, p. 43). Likewise, Mollá-Bauza and Vilas, (2001) explain that "*a higher level of product knowledge, decreases price sensitivity and increases predisposition to purchase ecological products*" (p. 116). Regarding the purchase of ecological products, Zanolli and Naspetti (2002), state that consumers ask for more information and want to chose products with more freedom and knowledge. However, these authors report that consumers are also interested in more "natural" products; and in this context, certification and labelling is a starting point and product safety is a desirable target; but most of them want to understand and to be aware

about how organic production and processing works, as being different from the conventional production process.

Finally, Hopfenbeck (1993) and Mera and Palacios (2004, p. 172) note that *pseudoecological Marketing* takes place when companies indicate ecological aspects of a product unilaterally, without any external control by any independent organism. The question is whether these environmental statements, are not properly issued to be understood and valued by the consumer, who could regard this information as misleading, since it does not allow the consumer to make a full and real assessment of the commercial offer.

2.2. Consequences of consumer's behavior

2.2.1. Consumer satisfaction

According to Oliver (2010) the concept of satisfaction could be defined as "*the consumer's fulfillment response. It is a judgment that a product/service feature, or the product or service itself, provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment*" (p. 8). Consumer satisfaction could be also defined as "*the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches the buyer's expectations*" (Kotler et al., 2013, p. 13). Similarly, Zeithaml and Bitner (2002) explain that *satisfaction* is "*the customer's evaluation of a product or service, in terms of whether the product or service meets the customer's needs and expectations*" (p. 95).

Hence, customer satisfaction depends on the product's perceived performance relative to the buyer's expectations: if the product's performance falls short of expectations, the consumer will be dissatisfied; if the performance matches expectations, the customer

will be satisfied; while if performance exceeds expectations, then the customer will be delighted (Kotler et al., 2013). Interestingly, Anderson and Sullivan (1993) indicate that the effect that customers' expectations have on satisfaction is greater when these expectations are not fulfilled, than when the expectations are exceeded. That is, Anderson and Sullivan (1993; p.141) make reference to the greater impact that negative results have over the positive results.

Finally, Chen (2010) proposed the new construct of "*green satisfaction*", that is defined as "*a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment to satisfy a customer's environmental desires, sustainable expectations, and green needs*" (p. 309). This concept is based on the concept of satisfaction but applied to the environmental context. That is, "*green satisfaction*" refers to the satisfaction obtained through the fulfillment of the expectations related to the environment; so the concept of "*green satisfaction*" becomes part of the total satisfaction of consumers. Chang and Fong (2010) also refer to this concept as "*green consumer satisfaction*", conceptualizing this term "*as the customer sense that consumption fulfilled some needs, goals and desires about environmental or green concerns, and that this fulfillment was pleasurable*" (p. 2837).

2.2.1.1. The relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty

According to Stanton, Etzel and Walker (2000) "*the most reliable test of customer satisfaction is the fact that the customer re-buys the product a second, third or fourth time*" (p. 18); then, developing customer loyalty. In fact, outstanding companies keep their customers satisfied, because higher levels of customer satisfaction lead to greater customer loyalty; which in turn results in better company performance. Further, smart companies aim to delight customers by promising only what they can deliver, and then delivering more that they have promised (Kotler, 2013, p. 13).

According to the consumer satisfaction level, several types of customers are identified. In the first place, fully satisfied consumers can be **loyal** and continue buying the products or brands; or they can be **fans** of the product, when their experiences exceed their expectations and give very positive feedback to other consumers about the company. Secondly, consumers can be **deserters** who feel neutral or simply satisfied and who are likely to end purchasing products and brands from the company. Third, consumers can be **terrorists**, who have had very unpleasant experiences with the company, and only give negative judgments and evaluations. In the fourth place, consumers can be **captives**, consumers who are unhappy with the company but keep purchasing products from the company because it is a monopoly or because it offers low prices. These consumers are difficult to manage and costly, because of their frequent claims. Finally, consumers can be **mercenaries**, those consumers who are very satisfied with the product or service, but who do not feel true loyalty towards the company; and maybe stop purchasing products and brands from the company finding lower and cheaper prices elsewhere or defying the rationality of the satisfaction-loyalty relationship (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2005, p. 15).

Previous research shows that a high degree of satisfaction drives the increase of the customer's loyalty; and in turn, loyalty is a key variable for the financial results of the company in the long term. The relationship between satisfaction and loyalty has been established empirically (Jones & Sasser, 1995; Lambin, 2003, p. 250) as depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9: *The relationship between satisfaction and loyalty*



Source: Lambin (2003). *Marketing estratégico* (p. 250).

In general terms, the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty should be a simple linear relationship: as satisfaction increases, so does loyalty. But the research of Jones and Sasser (1995) shows us a rather more complex relationship. The two curves in the preceding figure represent two different competitive situations:

- **Non-competitive markets.** In this competitive context satisfaction does not have a great impact on loyalty. These markets are often monopolies, such as the telecommunications or electrical market; or market situations where brand switching costs are high. So, customers have no choice and they're captive customers. However, this situation can change rapidly if the origin of the monopoly disappears, either by deregulation or by the emergence of alternative technologies.
- **Competitive markets.** In this markets competition is fierce, with many alternatives and low costs to switch brand. So, there is a big difference between the loyalty of "satisfied customers" and "dissatisfied customers".

2.2.2. *Consumer's purchase intention*

Consumers make their consumption decisions based on the outcome of a balanced *trade-off* between what they expect to receive and what they must necessarily give in return. Thus, when faced with a range of alternative options, consumers evaluate the advantages and costs associated with the purchase of each of them; so what consumers intent to purchase is directed towards the option which provides the best advantage-costs relationship; or either the highest *perceived value* (Martín & Cillán, 1992, p. 10). The concept of purchase intention can be defined as “*the likelihood that consumers will plan or be willing to purchase a certain product or service in the future*” (Wu, Yeh, & Hsiao, 2011, p. 32). So, an increase in purchase intention means an increase in the possibility of purchasing (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991).

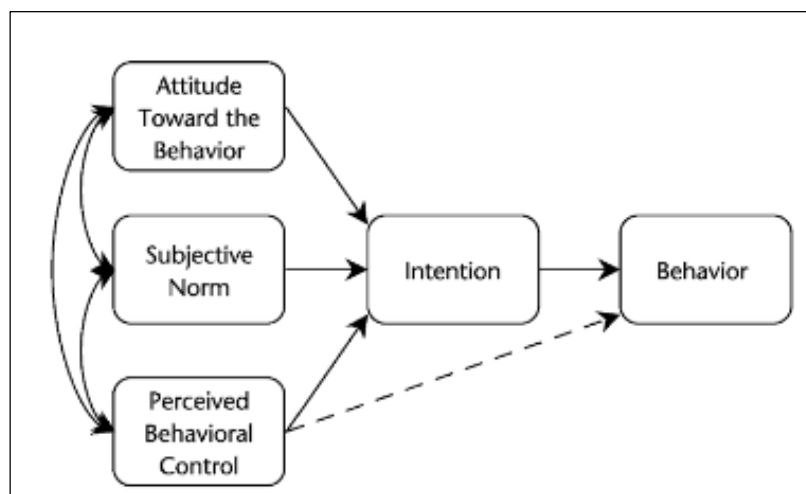
In the field of purchase intention research, the Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior is considered to be one of the most powerful models, since the “*intention is the most important predictor of consumer behavior*” (Deng, 2013).

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, intentions (and behaviors) depend of three main factors: one personal factor in nature; other factor reflecting social influence, and a third factor related with control issues.

The personal factor is the individual's *attitude toward the behavior*. Unlike general attitudes toward institutions, people, or objects that have traditionally been studied by social psychologists, this attitude could be considered as the individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing the particular behavior or interest (Ajzen, 2005). The second factor determining the intention is the individual's perception of the social pressure to perform or not perform the behavior under consideration. Since this factor is closely related with the perceived normative prescriptions, this factor is labelled as

subjective norms. Finally, the third determinant factor of intentions is the sense of self-efficacy, or the ability to perform the behavior, which is labelled as *perceived behavioral control*. In general terms, individuals tend to perform a behavior when they evaluate this behavior positively, when they experience social pressure to perform it, and when they believe that they have the means and opportunities to do so (Ajzen, 2005, p. 117) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: *Theory of Planned Behavior*



Source: Ajzen (2005).

According to Schwartz (1973) some other variables influence the Theory of Planned Behavior, such as the personal norms. The *personal norms* are defined as “*expectations that individuals hold for themselves*” (Olbrich, Quaas, & Baumgärtner, 2014, p. 4993).

The research developed by Onel (2017) examines the value of personal norms in addition to the Theory of Planned Behavior (i.e., attitude toward behavior, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention) in order to explain the consumers’ pro-environmental purchasing behavior. The obtained findings suggest that while personal and subjective norms, attitudes toward behavior and intention can

explain consumers' pro-environmental purchasing behavior; conversely, the perceived behavioral control does not explain the behavior-related intention (p. 103).

Accordingly, practitioners and Marketing managers can focus on promoting consumers' intentions to purchase environmentally friendly products, by activating their personal and subjective norms; as well as by strengthening their attitudes regarding pro-environmental purchasing behavior (Onel, 2017). The results imply that activating personal norms to act in an eco-friendly way, rather than influencing control over perceived behaviors, can be especially crucial in enhancing these behaviors. Further, in order to activate the individuals' personal norms, Marketing professionals can focus on communicating different consequences of certain purchasing behaviors, such as the favorable consequences of eco-friendly purchasing -messages may include reducing water pollution from chemicals, saving wildlife-; or the harmful consequences of non-eco-friendly purchasing -messages may include increasing air pollution and landfills-.

When individuals see the close connection between their behaviors and environmental damage, their personal norms will be environmentally inclined; and therefore, this connection can be considered an important requisite to displaying eco-sensitive purchase behaviors (Onel, 2017, p. 117).

On the other hand, according to Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), even though the public interest in sustainability increases and consumer attitudes are mainly positive, behavioral patterns are not univocally consistent with attitudes. In fact, these authors explored the potential gap between favorable attitude towards sustainable behavior and behavioral intention to purchase sustainable food products. Their findings reported some public policy and Marketing recommendations in order to stimulate sustainable

food consumption among young consumers, who can reasonable be assumed to constitute the main market of sustainable food products in the future.

This study shows that more sustainable and ethical food consumption can be stimulated through increasing consumer involvement, perceived consumer effectiveness, certainty, social norms, and perceived availability. Most importantly, this study notes that some of these key determinants -namely involvement, perceived availability, and perceived consumer effectiveness- can be successfully influenced through communication efforts.

Further, results showed that all these variables have a significant impact on attitude towards buying sustainable products, being strongly related with the intention to buy. Conversely, the low perceived availability of sustainable products explains why some consumers' intention to buy remain low, although their attitudes might be positive (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). However, other consumers experiencing social pressure from peers (social norm) show high intentions to buy, despite their negative attitudes.

3. Empirical study

3.1. Research objectives

The objective of this research is to develop an empirical study of the purchase behavior of ecologic products. For this purpose, the most important variables in the purchase of

ecologic products have been selected according to the theoretical foundations. More precisely, the research will examine whether the variables product perceived quality, the product image, the perception of the product as a sustainable product and the perception of the product as a safe/reliable product influence the consumers' satisfaction and their purchase intention of sustainable products.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Sampling and fieldwork

The information needed to carry out the research was obtained through a questionnaire conducted between the 10th and the 16th of May, 2019. This questionnaire was prepared using the survey administration app Google Forms, which is included in the Google Drive office suite and it was distributed through WhatsApp, a free messaging application for phones. This method was used for the collection of information because it was considered a quick, simple method and with which a more active participation of consumers could be obtained.

The questionnaire was made up of 16 statements, related to the aforementioned Marketing variables. The respondents were asked to assess their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert type scale, in order to evaluate their opinion in relation to the variables included in the research. The questionnaire also contained 5 sociodemographic questions, in order to obtain information about gender, age, educational level, family income level and the place of residence of the respondents. Finally, a total sample of 161 individuals was gathered for the research.

3.2.2. Description of the sample

The most important information regarding the research sample is comprised in Table 3.

Table 3: Description of the sample

| Variable | Indicator | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | Male | 51 | 31,7% |
| | Female | 110 | 68,3% |
| | Total | 161 | 100% |
| Age | 20-29 | 58 | 36,0% |
| | 30-39 | 16 | 9,9% |
| | 40-49 | 34 | 21,1% |
| | 50-59 | 35 | 21,8% |
| | 60-69 | 18 | 11,2% |
| | Total | 161 | 100% |
| Level of Education | Primary studies | 6 | 3,7% |
| | Secondary education | 17 | 10,6% |
| | Professional Training | 18 | 11,2% |
| | University studies | 116 | 72% |
| | Doctorate | 4 | 2,5% |
| | Total | 161 | 100% |
| Household income per year | 6.000-12.000 €/year | 16 | 9,9% |
| | 12.000-18.000 €/year | 26 | 16,1% |
| | 18.000-24.000 €/year | 32 | 19,9% |
| | 24.000-30.000 €/year | 20 | 12,4% |
| | 30.000-36.000 €/year | 24 | 15% |
| | + 36.000 €/year | 43 | 26,7% |
| | Total | 161 | 100% |
| Place of residence | Galicia | 128 | 79,50% |
| | Madrid | 20 | 12,42% |
| | Aragón | 1 | 0,62% |
| | Islas Baleares | 1 | 0,62% |
| | Andalucía | 5 | 3,11% |
| | Cantabria | 1 | 0,62% |
| | Places outside Spain | 5 | 3,11% |
| | Total | 161 | 100% |

In terms of gender, most of the respondents are women, since women are the 68,3% of the sample, compared to the 31,7% of male participants. In terms of age, the range with the highest percentage of participation is the one including the ages between 20 to 29 years old, with a 36% of participation. The level of studies that predominates is participants with university studies, being more than half of the sample (72%). The household year income level most frequent among participants is the one that exceeds the 36.000 €/year, followed by the income level of 18.000 to 24.000 €/year. Regarding the place of residence, most of the respondents reside in the autonomous community of Galicia (79,5%), followed by respondents residing in Madrid (12,42%).

3.2.3. Variables and measurement scale

The Table 4 includes the variables examined in the research, along with the codes and the different items used to measure them.

Table 4: Variables and measurement scale

| Variables | Code | Item |
|------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Perceived Quality | QUAL1 | Ecologic products have good quality |
| | QUAL2 | Ecologic products have excellent quality |
| | QUAL3 | Ecologic products have a quality similar to that of products that are not ecologic |
| Product Image | IMG1 | I have a positive image of ecologic products |
| | IMG2 | Consumers of ecologic products “know how to buy” (buy intelligently) |
| | IMG3 | Ecologic products have a favorable image in the market |
| Sustainable Product | SUST1 | Ecologic products respect the environment |
| | SUST2 | Ecologic products involve an efficient use of natural resources |
| Safe/Reliable Product | SAF1 | Ecologic products are safe for the consumer |
| | SAF2 | The production process of ecologic products is safe and reliable |
| | SAF3 | I fully trust ecologic products |
| Satisfaction | SAT1 | I am satisfied with ecologic products |

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--|
| | SAT2 | The ecologic products give me the result that I hope |
| Purchase Intention | INT1 | I will buy ecologic products in the future |
| | INT2 | It makes sense to buy ecologic products, although there are other options at the point of sale |
| | INT3 | I will continue buying organic products because they are positive for the environment |

The questionnaire developed for the empirical research was a structured questionnaire, anonymous and contained 16 items from the literature review on the topic, corresponding to the main four variables previously examined: perceived quality, product image, perception of the product as sustainable and perception of the product as safe/reliable. The questionnaire also included the consequences of consumer behavior, namely, consumer satisfaction and purchase intention. As already explained, in order to measure the influence of the different variables on the consumer satisfaction and on consumer purchase intention, a 5-point Likert type scale was developed to examine the level of agreement or disagreement of the respondents with the statements presented, being 1= “*totally disagree*” and 5= “*totally agree*”.

3.2.4. Data analysis

In the first place, the data collected in the questionnaire was codified and processed in an Excel spreadsheet. Next, the relationship between the variables was analyzed through the statistical software program SMART PLS, that runs its analysis through Structural Equation Modelling, based on the structure of covariances. This analysis allows to analyze the influences and relationships between the multiple variables under analysis.

4. Findings

4.1. Descriptive analysis

In the following table, the means and the standard deviations (SD) of the multiple items considered for the research are presented.

Table 5: Means and standard deviations of variables

| Variables | Code | Item | Mean | SD |
|-----------------------|-------|--|-------|-------|
| Perceived Quality | QUAL1 | Ecologic products have good quality | 3,818 | 0,744 |
| | QUAL2 | Ecologic products have excellent quality | 3,515 | 0,809 |
| | QUAL3 | Ecologic products have a quality similar to that of products that are not ecologic | 2,859 | 1,223 |
| Product Image | IMG1 | I have a positive image of ecologic products | 4,010 | 0,870 |
| | IMG2 | Consumers of ecologic products “know how to buy” (buy intelligently) | 3,273 | 0,983 |
| | IMG3 | Ecologic products have a favorable image in the market | 4,121 | 0,756 |
| Sustainable Product | SUST1 | Ecologic products respect the environment | 4,040 | 0,751 |
| | SUST2 | Ecologic products involve an efficient use of natural resources | 3,980 | 0,864 |
| Safe/Reliable Product | SAF1 | Ecologic products are safe for the consumer | 3,798 | 0,738 |
| | SAF2 | The production process of ecologic products is safe and reliable | 3,545 | 0,807 |
| | SAF3 | I fully trust ecologic products | 3,424 | 1,006 |
| Satisfaction | SAT1 | I am satisfied with ecologic products | 3,626 | 0,894 |
| | SAT2 | The ecologic products give me the result that I hope | 3,626 | 0,871 |
| Purchase Intention | INT1 | I will buy ecologic products in the future | 3,848 | 0,903 |
| | INT2 | It makes sense to buy ecologic products, although there are other options at the point of sale | 3,808 | 0,950 |
| | INT3 | I will continue buying organic products because they are positive for the environment | 3,808 | 0,961 |

The highest mean values correspond to *product image* (IMG1: mean=4,010; IMG3: mean=4,121). This implies that consumers have a positive image of ecologic products;

and that ecologic products have a favorable image in the marketplace. On the other hand, the variable with the lowest mean value but higher standard deviation is *perceived quality* (QUAL3: mean=2,859, standard deviation=1,223), meaning that consumers slightly disagree with the statement that ecologic products are similar in quality to non ecological products; and the high standard deviation suggest a great variability among consumers' perceptions. It must be highlighted that consumers consider ecologic products' quality good but not excellent (QUAL1: mean=3,818; QUAL2: mean=3,515).

Regarding the *sustainability* (SUST1: mean=4,040; SUST2: mean=3,980), the obtained mean values for both items are close to 4, which means that consumers consider that ecologic products respect the environment and involve an efficient use of natural resources. Conversely, the variable with lowest standard deviation is *safe product*, (SAF1: mean=3.798, standard deviation=0,738), meaning that consumers express a low variability in their perception of the safety of ecological products. Finally, the results obtained for consumer satisfaction (SAT1: mean=6,626, SAT2: mean=3,626) and purchase intention (INT1: mean=3,848, INT2: mean=3,808, INT3: mean=3,808) highlight that both variables reach high mean values, but similar to the other variables. This result may suggest that consumers feel satisfied with the ecologic products; and as a consequence, they will keep on buying them.

4.2. Relationships between variables

In the present study, the following research hypotheses are proposed regarding the consumer **satisfaction** with ecologic products:

H₁: The perceived quality of ecologic products positively influences the satisfaction experienced by the consumer.

H₂: The image of ecologic products positively influences the satisfaction experienced by the consumer.

H₃: The perception of the ecological product as sustainable positively influences consumer satisfaction.

H₄: The perception of the ecological product as safe/reliable positively influences consumer satisfaction.

Similarly, the following research hypotheses are presented regarding the consumer ***purchase intention*** for ecologic products:

H₅: The perceived quality of ecologic products positively influences the consumer's purchase intention.

H₆: The image of ecologic products positively influences the consumer's purchase intention.

H₇: The perception of the ecological product as sustainable positively influences the purchase intention of the consumer.

H₈: The perception of the ecological product as safe/reliable positively influences the purchase intention of the consumer.

Given that the objective of this study is to analyze how each of the selected Marketing variables influences consumer satisfaction and purchase intention towards ecologic products, the data obtained was analyzed through the SMART PLS program. This statistical software will allow the analysis of the research hypotheses, as well as the examination of the relationships among variables, as shown in the Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 11: *Hypoteses related to consumer satisfaction*

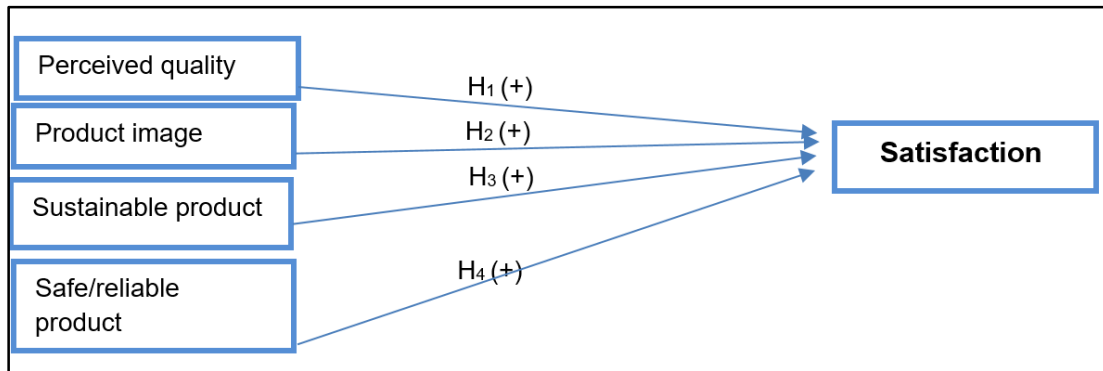
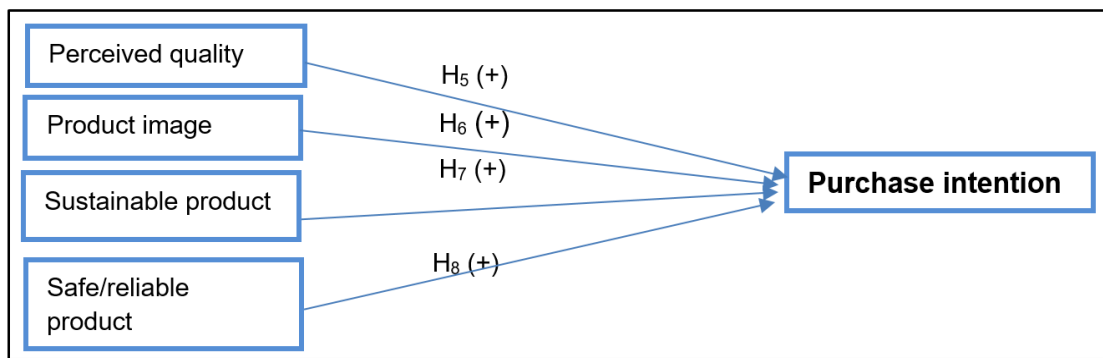


Figure 12 considers the relationships between the variables selected and the intention to purchase ecologic products by consumers.

Figure 12: *Hypotheses related to purchase intention*



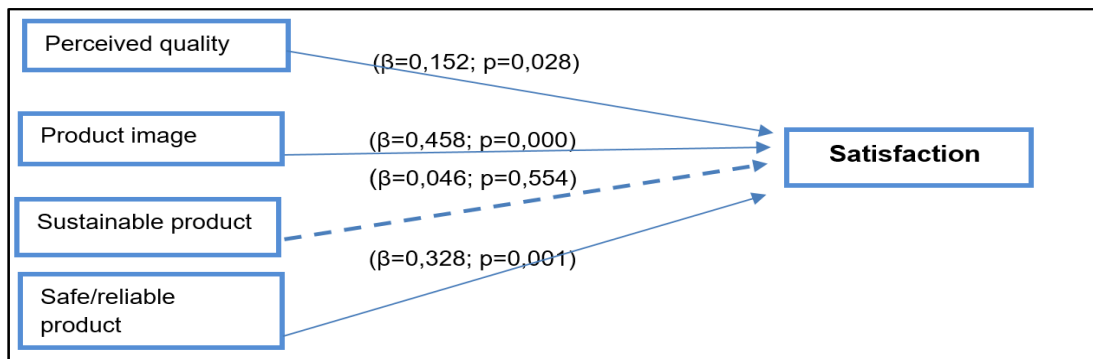
Figures 13 and 14 show the models proposed in the present study, which analyze the relationships between the selected variables and their influence on the satisfaction and the consumer purchase intention for ecologic products. The standardized weights (β) measure the weight or influence between the variables, taking values between 0 and 1. In addition, they show the direction of each relationship being either positive or negative (Hair, 1999). The significancy of the relationships between variables is set at ($p \leq 0,05$) given the 95% of the confidence interval.

4.2.1. Analysis of variables influencing consumer satisfaction

Research findings suggest that the *product image* of ecologic products have the most important influence on consumer satisfaction, being the most important variable since it

has the highest impact on consumer satisfaction ($\beta=0,458$). Similarly, the results regarding the variable *safe/reliable product* ($\beta=0,328$; $p=0,001$) show a positive and significant influence on consumer satisfaction. Regarding the *perceived quality* of the product, its influence is clearly lower on consumer satisfaction than image and safe/reliable product ($\beta=0,152$; $p=0,028$). Finally, even though it was not expected, the obtained findings show that the variable *sustainable product* does not have a significant influence on consumer satisfaction ($\beta=0,046$; $p=0,554$). Therefore, perceiving a product as sustainable does not make the consumer satisfied.

Figure 13: Relationship for consumer satisfaction



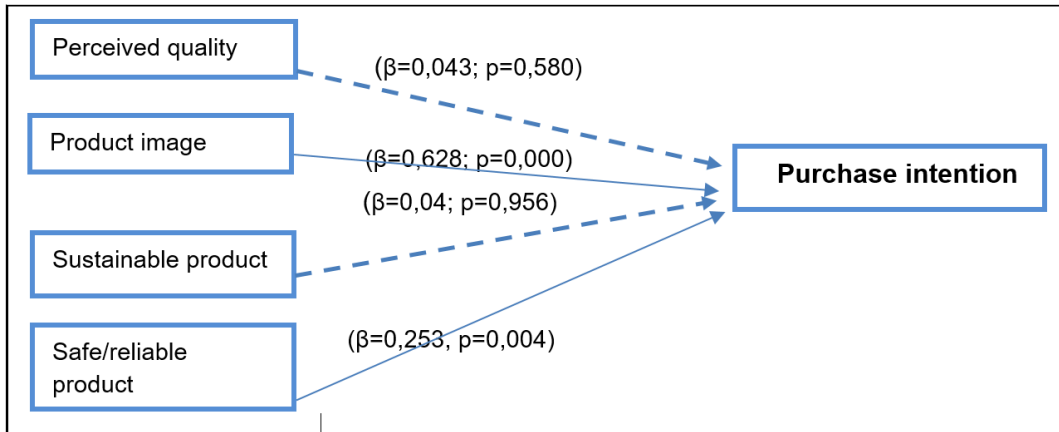
4.2.2. Analysis of variables influencing purchase intention

Regarding the purchase intention of sustainable products, the research findings show that the variables *product image* ($\beta=0,628$; $p=0,000$) and *safe/reliable product* ($\beta=0,253$; $p=0,004$) have a positive and significant influence on the purchase intention. The product image exerts the higher influence on purchase intention, followed by safe/reliable product. Based on these results it is suitable to propose that the purchase intention is mainly influenced by the product image.

As it was the case regarding consumer satisfaction, in the case of purchase intention, the sustainable product variable (dashed line) does not have a significant influence on the purchase intention ($\beta=0,04$; $p=0,956$). Therefore, the perception of ecologic

products as sustainable does not influence the purchase intention. The variable perceived quality does not have a significant influence either ($\beta=0,043$; $p=0,580$).

Figure 14: Relationships for purchase intention



Consequently, the research hypotheses test is showed in Table 6. Interestingly all the proposed hypotheses are supported, with the exception of H₃ for consumer satisfaction and H₅ and H₇ regarding consumer purchase intention.

Table 6: Final relationships and hypotheses test

| Relationship between variables | Standardized Weights (β) | Hypothesis Test |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Variables influencing consumer satisfaction | | |
| Perceived quality → Satisfaction | $\beta_1=0,152$ | H ₁ = Supported |
| Product image → Satisfaction | $\beta_2=0,458$ | H ₂ = Supported |
| Sustainable product → Satisfaction | $\beta_3=0,046^{ns}$ | H ₃ = Not Supported |
| Safe/reliable product → Satisfaction | $\beta_4=0,328$ | H ₄ = Supported |
| Variables influencing Purchase intention | | |
| Perceived quality → Purchase intention | $\beta_5=0,043$ | H ₅ = Not Supported |
| Product Image → Purchase intention | $\beta_6=0,628$ | H ₆ = Supported |
| Sustainable product → Purchase intention | $\beta_7=0,04$ | H ₇ = Not Supported |
| Safe/reliable product → Purchase intention | $B_8=0,328$ | H ₈ = Supported |

Conclusions

This research presents an empirical study on the purchasing behavior of sustainable products, given that in developed societies there is a growing concern for the deterioration of the environment. This social trend is also a Marketing phenomenon, that is given rise to a market segment that reflects this ethical concern in its purchasing decision process (Mera & Palacios, 2004). For that purpose and after the review of the theoretical foundations, four Marketing variables that could potentially influence both the consumers' satisfaction when buying sustainable products and the intention to purchase such products, have been selected. The variables analyzed are the perceived quality of the product, the image of the product, the perception of the product as sustainable and the perception of the product as safe or reliable.

Taking into account the results obtained, findings report that the image of ecologic products and the perception of ecologic products as safe have the greatest influence on satisfaction and purchase intention than the other variables under research, namely perceived quality of the product and the perception of the product as sustainable. Furthermore, based on the results obtained in this research, it seems that consumers have a positive image of ecologic products and that ecologic products have a favorable image in the marketplace in general terms.

The variable image of the product is the one that has the greatest influence on consumer satisfaction and also on the purchase intention. This fact allows to state that for the consumer it is more satisfying to know that a product with a bio or eco image is

being purchased, than knowing that the product is safe, has quality or is sustainable. These results may be related to the fact that 36% of the respondents during this investigation are under 29 years old. In the same vein, the study of Creusen (2010) found that for younger people symbolic aspects were more important, and that older people indeed paid more attention to functional aspects of products, such as the product quality.

Despite initially expected, the perception of the product as sustainable has turned out to have no significant influence on satisfaction or on the intention to purchase. This may be due to the fact that every day more companies want to place their brands as “*green brands*” in order to compete with other companies, because the environmental awareness of consumers is increasing, and consumers are also increasingly demanding green products. However, the opportunistic behaviour of some companies which practice “*greenwashing*” leads to an increasing scepticism towards “*green brands*”; that is, consumers may come to believe that products that are sold as ecologic do not really respect the environment or do not involve efficient use of natural resources. Therefore, it seems reasonable to think that in order to encourage the purchase of sustainable products through the increase in the number of consumers, the knowledge about these type of products should be improved. Besides, a key problem that consumers of sustainable products currently have is the large number of labels that identify these products. While they are created to give guarantee and credibility, so much variety of labels can create a great confusion for the consumer and generate distrust.

The most important limitation of this work is that the sample size which is small, and for this reason the results must be interpreted with caution. In addition, the study was conducted mainly among consumers in the autonomous community of Galicia (79.50%

of respondents are Galician), so the results should not be extrapolated to other regions. On the other hand, we could have chosen more variables to carry out the study, such as price. As future lines of work, it could be pointed out the possibility of expanding the sample, in order to know the perceptions of consumers at a national level with more precision. This study could also be replicated in other countries or even replicated for other brands or types of products, such as ecologic food products.

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