



**INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

Consumer Perception of Green Marketing in Agriculture Industry: The Case of Turkey

Mehmet Şahabettin Alataş

Extended Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation in Business Management

Tbilisi, 2016

Scientific Supervisor: Kakhaber Djakeli

(full name)

Professor Doctor at International Black Sea University

(academic title)

(supervisor's signature)

Experts (full name & academic title):

1. Prof. Dr. Tinatin Iashvili

2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shota Shaburishvili

Opponents (full name & academic title):

1. Prof. Dr. Shed True



2. Prof. Dr. Giorgi Berulava

3. Prof. Dr. Charita Jashi

(if any)

Introduction

It is not a surprise that this ever changing world is continuously altering our purchasing habits and behaviors. The commerce world and marketing science itself can be divided into two main areas- before and after the Internet! The profile of the consumers has immensely changed based on the before and after effect. The power of information available globally to consumers anywhere, anytime, after the Internet, created a highly aware and knowledgeable consumer mind. Prior to this change, consumers were at the mercy of the suppliers to make a purchasing decision. One of the best examples of this effect is probably within the travel industry. In the past, the travelers completely relied on the travel agents to make travel plans, whereas, now, everything is at the fingertips of each and every consumer clicking from one site to another to make a decision on their own. It is definitely a different world! This new generation of knowledgeable consumers wants to know everything beforehand to make a purchasing decision and they have also developed different priorities based on their perception of each brand and the value they perceive to have. While the consumer mind changed over the years, as the new trends emerged and became a major focus globally, a fresh and futuristic outlook came about. Sustainability of the earth we all live on became a major focus by businesses as they try to develop innovative ways of combating some of the problems. While new technologies brought new opportunities, they also impacted our lives in a more negative way. The most stunning example for this situation occurred in the agricultural industry. As new chemicals started to be produced for better and more profitable harvesting, adverse effect on human health emerged. New agricultural pesticides improved the “produce” while cancer rates dramatically increased simultaneously, over the years. Now, people have concerns about their food, their apparel, their furniture, vehicles, etc. They might have luxury, but luxury at what cost? Overexploitation or misuse of the natural resources started to hurt our environment as they also became a concern.

Statement of the Problem

It is paramount that green marketing and the perception by the consumers need to be understood clearly in order to take the right steps towards a more sustainable environment for generations to come. As is the case in Turkey, the culture, the environment, and the economic situation also effect the formation of this perception and the “how” will be analyzed in this paper. Only when we understand this behavior, we can be in a better position to develop effective marketing strategies.

United Nations “30 Dec 2015 - The new year ushers in the official launch of the bold and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders last September at the United Nations. The new Agenda calls on countries to begin efforts to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next 15 years. “The seventeen Sustainable Development Goals are our shared vision of humanity and a social contract between the world's leaders and the people,” said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. “They are a to-do list for people and planet, and a blueprint for success”.

The Purpose and the Task of the Study

My study in this paper will reveal the impact of socio-economic factors in forming a positive (or negative) perception in developing a strategic road map for a sustainable environment specifically in the agriculture industry.

Turkish agricultural system has been a historical part of the country and has always been a major part of the economic growth. However, during recent years, new efforts towards a more sustainable environment have been penetrating the consumers' minds as well as businesses and the farmers themselves have found themselves with strict conformity requirements to the newly developed rules. In the meantime, Turkey's push to join the EEC has also fueled these activities.

According to the Turkey's Sustainable Development Report: Claiming the Future, “sustainable development and green growth attempts of Turkey will focus primarily on energy, water, food and industry sectors and will be supported through R&D activities and related expenditure. In this scope, it is aimed that the share of R&D expenditures in GDP will be increased to 3 percent in 2023 which was 0.84 percent in 2010.”

“Furthermore, protection of agricultural lands, efficient use of water for irrigation, productive use of soil resources and rational agricultural product planning will be realized to support sustainable development process. In this context, rural development and green growth potential of agricultural industry will be supported as much as possible.”

While the Turkish businesses as well as the Government started developing new plans on this issue, the change in the perception by the consumer is not that easy to be permanently formed to produce good results as perceptions take a long time to form.

In order to suggest improved ways of planning for this change, it is important to understand first the current situation on the perception issue. Once clearly defined, better and more effective ways

of planning can be developed by all interested parties. This study will help improve these methods of planning as well as shed a better light to the future as it impacts the sustainability project mandated by the UN. Although there have been a lot of studies on this issue, the perception analysis has not been done. Lack of analysis on this issue can create a problem for the implementation plans as they are finalized and can negatively affect the use of resources to achieve the targets set by the Turkish Government.

In my paper, I have raised the issue of the perception by the end user which will have a final say on the success of green marketing within the agricultural industry in Turkey. After all, it is the end user that can make it or break it for the development of a profitable business as the compliance to the sustainability rules is enforced.

The research for the paper has focused on this specific issue.

I believe once this is determined, developing strategies that will be effective will also reinforce all the governmental efforts as part of this global project.

The Goal

The goal of the thesis is to figure out how a Turkish consumer decides to buy a green product and whether their socio-economic conditions and some basic demographic features -such gender, age, etc. - affect their purchasing decision? Furthermore, it also will analyze other criteria specific to the Turkish marketplace and its impact on this perception formed by the consumers. Are those habits directly related to the main purpose of green marketing as it relates to the sustainability of our planet or did these habits emerge from the requirements of individuals for individual needs?

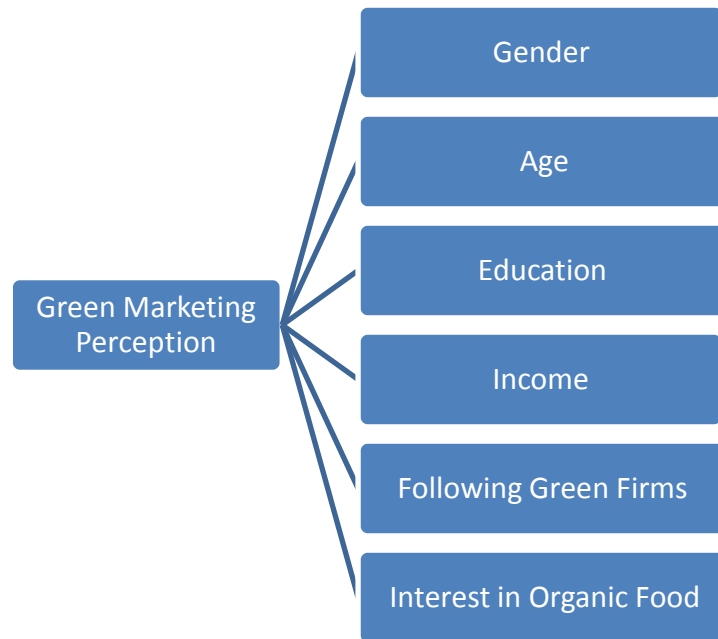
Volume of the study is 116 pages that is written in APA style, there are four chapters and a survey including in the thesis. Other than introduction, the goal, hypothesis, literature review, research methodology and conclusion are also the other parts of the study.

Hypothesis

The survey was prepared for evaluating perceptions and ideas of consumers about green marketing activities within the Turkish agriculture industry. The survey is prepared to understand whether there are differences of ideas and perceptions in terms of demographic differences. That survey is done face to face. It is a practical tool to understand their sociocultural status and their perception of green marketing. Model of the study is as followed:

H0: Turkish consumer's perception of green marketing is related only to individual needs (health, longevity) as opposed to the overall objective of creating a sustainable global environment (earth) by the year 2030 as indicated by United Nations and the perceptions are restricted to short-term goals

H1: Turkish consumer's perception of green marketing is related to the overall objective of creating a sustainable global environment (earth) by the year 2030 as indicated by United Nations, and the perceptions are related to long-term goals



H2: Turkish consumer's perception of green marketing is related both to individual needs (health, longevity) as well as the overall objective of creating a sustainable global environment (earth) by the year 2030 as indicated by United Nations and the socio economic status and buying power determines the focus on H1 and H2.

Based on the study of these hypotheses through the research, we can conclude that:

When tested, although the general perception was thought to be the use of green products based only on individual needs rather than long term sustainability objectives in mind, the study showed that within the study group that included different scales of people, there was also a growing concern about the environment and not just restricted to personal well- being. This proved the first hypotheses to be just partially valid.

When tested, the study also found out that the individual objectives were actually combined with overall environmental concerns. And this was specifically apparent with the differences of the age groups where people older than 50 represented a very concerned group within the population about the future generations making the second hypotheses to be partially valid.

Therefore, study clearly showed that the Turkish consumer population as represented in the study is focused both on the long and short term goals, both on the individual needs and objectives as well as overall concerns about the planet for the future sustainability and their socio-economic background was the foundation for the differences.

Practical importance of these findings is paramount because the environmental issues are real, need to be focused on for the sustainability targets to be achieved for generations to come. The only set back is the lack of sufficient education as well as the need for controls to implement by the official organizations.

So therefore, this kind of study is helpful in setting the road map to plan for the actual implementation to increase the awareness even more by getting the academic world, the governmental organizations as well as other organizations to establish the overall environmental goals.

Research Methodology

During the study, a survey form is used as a data collection tool. The survey form consisted of two parts in accordance with the aim of the study. It was conducted face to face. 748 participants from different educational levels, different age groups and from different sociocultural backgrounds took part in the survey. The first part includes demographic data of the participants (age, gender, education, income) and perceptions about buying organic product of participants. The second part includes questions to understand the perception of consumers about green marketing.

Data is analyzed with SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) with a 95 percent reliability level. Parametric tests are used for hypothesis. Those parametric tests are:

- Independent Samples T Test: That technique is used for comparing two independent groups in terms of a quantitative variable. There is a need for assuming normal distribution at both groups in order to use that technique.

- One-Way ANOVA: That technique is used for comparing independent k group ($k > 2$) in terms of a quantitative variable. There is a need for assuming normal distribution at both groups in order to use that technique.

Green marketing perception scale factor loads consist of 18 items ranging between 0,337 and 0.955. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.964. Based on this calculation set up, the level of trust for the scale is very high.

CHAPTER 1: GREEN MARKETING

The concept of “Green Marketing” is a trending hot topic in today’s world. Under the pressure of environmentally-friendly concerns, companies are being pushed to be more productive in this area.

1.1. Green Marketing

1.1.1 Green Marketing as a Term

As the deterioration in environment conditions such as visible climatic changes, global warming and increasing air and water pollution mostly caused by the energy misuse of increasing population continues and even the use of the high energy consuming, high greenhouse gases emitting, high air pollution releasing, high water pollution discharging, high resources using and high solid wastes producing steel and concrete products used in increasing construction activities, the concerns on preserving the environment have begun to increase (Alberto & Gonzaga, 2005, p. 353; Zhang, 2010, p. 177; Mayank & Amit, 2013, p. 1; Synodinos & Bevan-Dye, 2014, p. 101). Especially right after the worldwide energy crisis in the mid of 1990s, green marketing is accepted as fundamental in preventing environmental pollution (Sun et al., 2012, p. 4210). By means of this increase in the public’s environmental awareness, the popularity of green marketing and the green industry has increased in recent years (Chen L., 2013, p. 342; Wu & Chen, 2014, p. 81) and become popular almost as positioning strategy (Ryan, 2012, p. 19). In the last three decades, the environmental consciousness’s of consumers have dramatically increased as the environment has become one of the main issues that encourages rethinking of individuals, governments and companies (Chen Y.S., 2013, p. 294; Luck & Ginanti, 2013, p. 1).

According to Kurkoon, Pimchangthong and Boonjing (2015, p. 393), green marketing is the marketing of products that cause less or no harm to the environment and integrates activities such as modification of products, packaging, production processes and advertising. According to other definitions in the literature, green marketing – also expressed as ecological marketing, eco-

marketing, environmental marketing or sustainability marketing- can be defined as marketing of packages or products which are more durable, reusable, less toxic and recycled (Young et al., 2010, p. 21; Sachdev, 2011, p. 281; Kinoti, 2012, p. 264; Mei, Ling & Piew, 2012, p. 249; Bryła, 2015, p. 80). So, the use of at least one of the main 6R activities which are remanufacturing, repairing, reconditioning, reusing, recycling and reducing is important for the success of green marketing plans (Zwerg-Villegas, 2011, p. 138; Akgün, Zerenler & Şahin, 2013, p. 758). Environmentally-responsible or green marketing is a business concept that takes into account customer concerns about promoting, preservation and conservation of the natural environment. Therefore, green marketing can be defined as combination of all activities aiming to satisfy needs of consumers while taking care of the environment at the same time. Those activities both satisfy consumer needs and protect environmental sources as much as possible (Kinoti, 2012, p. 264). However, green marketing is not limited within this concept and it is possible to apply it not only to consumer goods, but also industrial goods and even services (Polonsky, 1994, p. 1; Kanonuhwa & Chimucheka, 2014, p. 2785).

Today green marketing usually begins due to increasing media exposure and pressure on corporates to present eco-friendly behavior (Cherian & Jacob, 2012, 9. 118). So, it is expected that green products must have minor negative effects on nature. In fact, green marketing has similar properties with traditional marketing. Adding to traditional marketing, it also takes care of environment (Kinoti, 2012, p. 264). Actually there is no consensus on what exactly is green or no accepted definition of green product. However, it is possible to give the general characteristics of these products (Broaddus, 2013, p. 2) as follows:

On the other hand, in their book “The Green Consumer”, John Elkington, Julia Hailes and John Makower (2003) contended that a green product should not:

- Endanger the health of people and animals
- Damage the environment at any stage of its life, including manufacture, use and disposal
- Consume a disproportionate amount of energy and other sources during manufacture, use and disposal
- Cause unnecessary waste, either as a result of excessive packaging or a short useful life
- Involve the unnecessary use or cruelty to animals

- Use materials derived from threatened species or environments

As a result, it is seen that there is not a generally accepted definition of green and green marketing. On the other hand, products called as “green” have some characteristic properties. Those properties can be listed as follows (Muldoon, 2006, p. 6; Howe, 2010, p. 8; Broaddus, 2013, p. 2; Suki, 2013, p. 51; Manchanda, 2014, p. 174; Sharaf, Muhammed, Isa & Al-Qasa, 2015, p. 472):

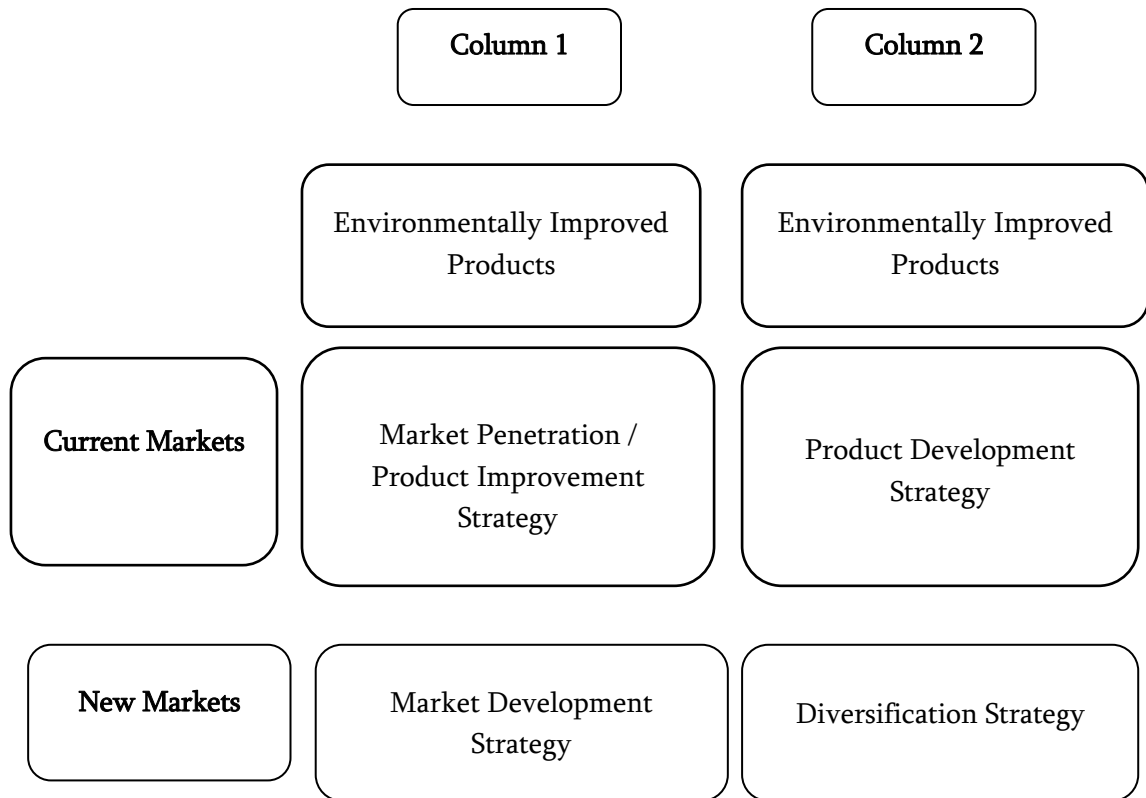
- Energy efficient (both in use and in production),
- Recyclable and/or with recycled content,
- Renewable,
- Low impact products (life cycle analysis),
- Water efficient (both in use and production),
- Low emitting (low or no VOCs, formaldehyde, or other hazardous emissions),
- Durable (long-lasting),
- Biodegradable,
- Reused products,
- Safe and/or healthy products,
- Third party certified to public or transparent standard (e.g., organic, certified wood),
- Locally produced.

1.1.2 Benefits of Green Marketing

Effects of green marketing are generally positive. It has many benefits. There are three parts facing with benefits of green marketing activities. At that part of the study, benefits of green marketing will be divided in to three subtitles. Benefits of green marketing may be studied in terms of benefits for environment, benefits for firms and benefits for consumers.

During previous pages, it is seen that green marketing is a set of activities aiming to “protect environment”. Strategy matrix of environmentally improved and reinvented products can be presented as Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Strategy Matrix of Environmentally Improved and Reinvented Products



Source: Awam and Raza, 2010, p. 12

According to Stein and Koontz (2009), there are green market opportunities that can benefit development and conservation, but one has to appreciate that “green” is a wide and diverse set of practices, with biodiversity conservation still poorly appreciated by most consumers and companies. Change out the language slightly and use wildlife conservation with images of charismatic animals and then buyers’ appreciation and interest in biodiversity conservation increases dramatically. It is for this reason that in this document, “wildlife conservation and wildlife friendly” will be the “marketing terms” used to refer to biodiversity conservation. This guide provides an overview of green market trends with practical advice on how wildlife friendly products from around that world can best access the growing US green markets (Stein and Koontz, 2009, p. 4).

1.2. Green Marketing in Turkey

Green marketing was not a popular term in Turkey as in other countries until recently. Environmental problems were not being recognized by the Turkish public as a real danger previously. However, negotiations with European Union for full membership resulted in increasing awareness of environmental topics in Turkey. After starting negotiations with European Union, environment has been a real debate in business life. Despite the fact that Turkey has not been a member of European Union, people have been interested in environmental problems and sensitiveness started. Consequently, that situation also started to force firm to take care on environmental problems. CE and ISO 14000 Certificates have been certificates mainly desired by Turkish firms (Üstünay, 2008, p. 128).

A Study held by Boztepe in 2012 showed that people are aware of the importance of green marketing. Majority of 540 participants in Istanbul expressed that green marketing is something necessary. Sustainable development has a vital importance for majority of participants. According to results of the study, green buying behaviors of consumers are directly affected by:

- Green promoting activities,
- Prices,
- Features of green products,
- Environmental awareness,
- Demographic properties (at moderate level) (Boztepe, 2012).

Especially at the last decade, there has been an interest in green marketing. Number of studies held about green marketing started to increase. At another study held by Sarı (2010), it is aimed to understand determinants of attitudes towards green marketing. Demographic characteristics of consumers, perceived consumer effectiveness, environmental concern and consumer behavior are also studied. 300 young people living in Istanbul attended to the survey. Results of the study showed that psychographic variables which are perceived consumer effectiveness and environmental concern were correlated with ecologically conscious consumer behavior (Sarı, 2010).

Literature review shows that there may be different results of similar studies sometimes. Despite the fact that many studies show how people are aware of the importance of green marketing

activities in Turkey, study held by Kasalı (2010) showed that in Turkey, many people are not aware of the differences between traditional marketing and green marketing. Many other studies show that people are sensitive to environment in Turkey. For example, recycling is a very important topic in Turkey and all people are aware of the importance of recycling. There are many campaigns prepared by private firm and non-governmental organizations as well as municipalities about recycling in Turkey. There are recycling boxes in majority of streets (Üstünay, 2008, p. 128).

Popularity of public desire for recycling and other activities show that firms must focus on green marketing in Turkey. Green marketing is usable for firms operating in Turkey. Moreover, there are many educational programs and people are getting more and more aware of importance of sustainable development. It can be claimed that green marketing will gain a really impressive popularity in Turkey because of increasing sensitiveness towards environmental issues in Turkey. For example, there are some studies focusing on green marketing activities in some sector. Reviewing the literature, this study will be the first study focusing on green marketing in agriculture.

CHAPTER 2: TURKISH CONSUMER AND THE TURKISH AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

In this part of the study, we will examine how the Turkish agriculture industry and its environment effect the perception of the consumers.

1.1. Agriculture in Turkey

In general, Turkey is one of the few countries that are self-sufficient when it comes to food. The factors that lead to this positive environment can be listed as follows:

- Variety of climate across the country,
- Fertile soil,
- Climate with no extremes,
- Hardworking, dedicated farmers and make up the economic history of Turkey
- Easy access to water,
- Wide agricultural land that is suitable for production

Because of having different climates, there is a wide range of crop ranges in the country. In North African and Near East Regions, Turkey is one of the most important agriculture producers and exporters. Considering fruit, wheat and cotton, Turkey is one of the ten biggest producers in the world. More impressively, it ranks among the top 5 producers of vegetables, tea, and raw wool. As a result of this massive production base, Turkey enjoys a comparative advantage in many agricultural products, and a positive trade balance in agriculture that contributes significant relief to an overall trade deficit (Encyclopedia of Nations, 2014).

According to a report prepared by Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency (2014), Turkish agriculture has significant qualities. Those qualities may be listed as follows:

- Especially in Asian countries, agriculture is a growing market,
- Turkey has a 7,2 percent market size with a growing rate in European agriculture.
- Turkey is the fourth largest producer in Europe.
- Turkish agriculture is good at fish species. 13 percent of the European sea bass/sea bream market is dominated by Turkish agriculture. In Europe, fish species is the second fastest growing segment.
- Growing local market supports Turkish agriculture.
- Turkey is good at providing low-cost production opportunity especially at sea products.
- Agriculture is important for exportation and it is supported by the governments significantly.
- Low-cost production is a well-known property of Turkish agriculture.
- Coasts and regulations are suitable for large-scale companies (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency, 2014, p. 46).

An important strength of Turkish agriculture is the amount of available soil. Turkey has a great amount of available agriculture land. Moreover, soil can be used for different segments.

CHAPTER 3: PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PURCHASING HABITS

Green marketing started as a vast dream at first- Initially, the world was awakened by the scientists' claims of overuse and exploitation of natural resources leading to global warming, then with the increased threat to our planet and increasing poverty, hunger, inequality around the globe, the projects mandated by the United Nations under the "sustainability" project emerged. In addition, as we indicated in our introductory statement, the consumers were already more knowledgeable due to vast distribution of information over the Internet, and this new project became well known pretty fast. Everybody believed that consumers would cast a vote in favor of a more just and sustainable world whenever they shop. Did it work out that way?

2.1. Progression

Globally, the progression of green marketing has not taken off as predicted before by the organizations involved. There are many reasons for that. As related to this paper, let us look into the reasons as it directly impacts the consumer decision to buy green products. "Even where green products do seem to be selling, it's not primarily because of their environmental benefits. Organic foods? It's about what we put into our bodies. Hybrid cars? They reduce costly trips to the pump. TVs and appliances? They cut energy costs. It's not really about the planet. It is more about the benefits individually and not necessarily for the good of our planet." (Makower, 2013).

"Green marketing should not be confused with public service campaigns aimed at getting people to change habits and adapt a more environmental consciousness. Changing habits -- toting reusable shopping bags, biking or taking public transit instead of driving, conserving water and electricity, taking care of parks and green space, and all the rest -- is a fundamental part of cultural shifts. Green marketing, in contrast, is aimed at getting people to buy stuff that is better for the environment. Companies' marketing efforts have been largely half-hearted, humorless and uninspired. Green products themselves have been variously underwhelming, overpriced, inconvenient, ineffective or unavailable. Too often, green marketers have attempted to prod consumers to act by relying on guilt or by encouraging people to "save the Earth," neither of which has turned out to be particularly aspirational or appealing."(Makower, 2013).

Within the Turkish market, there is not enough exposure of the civil organizations, Governmental organizations and businesses. Therefore, the activity seems to be individual decisions for

individual preferences. The choice criteria, then definitely depends on the socio-economic background of these individuals- namely educational mindset that actually follow the information and adapt as it fits to their individual world. It is, to say, an emotional process rather a rational process.

2.2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

2.2.1. The Philosophic Approach to the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

It is not quite wrong to define philosophy as an art of decision making. All the philosophers try to understand the reasons behind people's choices. Are they rational? Or they are pure emotional calls? Every single human being thinks that, they make their decisions rationally somehow. But for another person, their decision seems quite broken or manipulated. To being honest, and fair, we need to admit that, all the modern relationships settled on manipulations and seductions. The business world, uses women body and sexuality to lure men's attention. On the other hand, it, again, uses the fashion icons or pop-stars to seduce women. Moreover, they allow the ones who are tricked to believe that, he was choosing with his freewill.

In this such a world, which is, our decisions became so vulnerable and manipulative, how can we sure our decisions are truly rational?

Maslow wished to know what motivates individuals. He believed that people possess a group of motivation systems unrelated to rewards or unconscious needs. Maslow (1943) expressed that people are intended to attain certain needs. Once one want is fulfilled an individual seeks to meet future one, and so on. The earliest and most widespread version of Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of wants includes five motivational needs, usually pictured as hierarchic levels inside a pyramid.

2.2.2. The Importance of Maslow's Theory in Decision Making Process

Maslow claims that, there is certain order in a decision process. People tend to fulfill first their most basic needs instead of their desires. But somehow, people are not very predictable. These characteristics are also manipulative.

Are there any other options to bypass those stages? This is the question we are looking for. Basic needs are compulsory to fulfill. But other stages can be skipped or bypassed. People can easily skip from belonging stage to esteem or self-actualization stage under certain motivators.

Physiological needs can be mixed with other needs. While someone tries to satisfy his very basic needs, it also can be the satisfaction for esteem level.

So let's back to our first question that we are looking for, can purchasing habits manipulated with those external forces? Which part of purchasing process is affected from the Maslow's hierarchy of needs? Following chapter is going to cite a research which tries to measure the consumer's behavior during the purchasing process.

CHAPTER 4: APPLIED RESEARCH ON DECISION PROCESS FOR PURCHASING BEHAVIOR OF GREEN PRODUCED PRODUCTS

This research is built and conducted to evaluate the factors of decision making process and its ingredients in "Green Products" which is put in the market via "Green Marketing".

3.1. Model of Questionnaire

The Questionnaire is built in Likert Scale method and conducted face to face. 748 participants from different educational levels, different age groups and from different sociocultural backgrounds. It's conducted in City of İstanbul in various locations. There are some control questions to eliminate sloppy answered participants.

During the study, a survey form is used as data collection tool. The survey form is consisted of two parts in accordance with the aim of the study. At the first part, demographic data of the participants (age, gender, education, income) and perceptions about buying online of participants. At the second part, there are questions for understanding perceptions and ideas of consumers about social media and online purchasing process.

3.2. Data Analysis

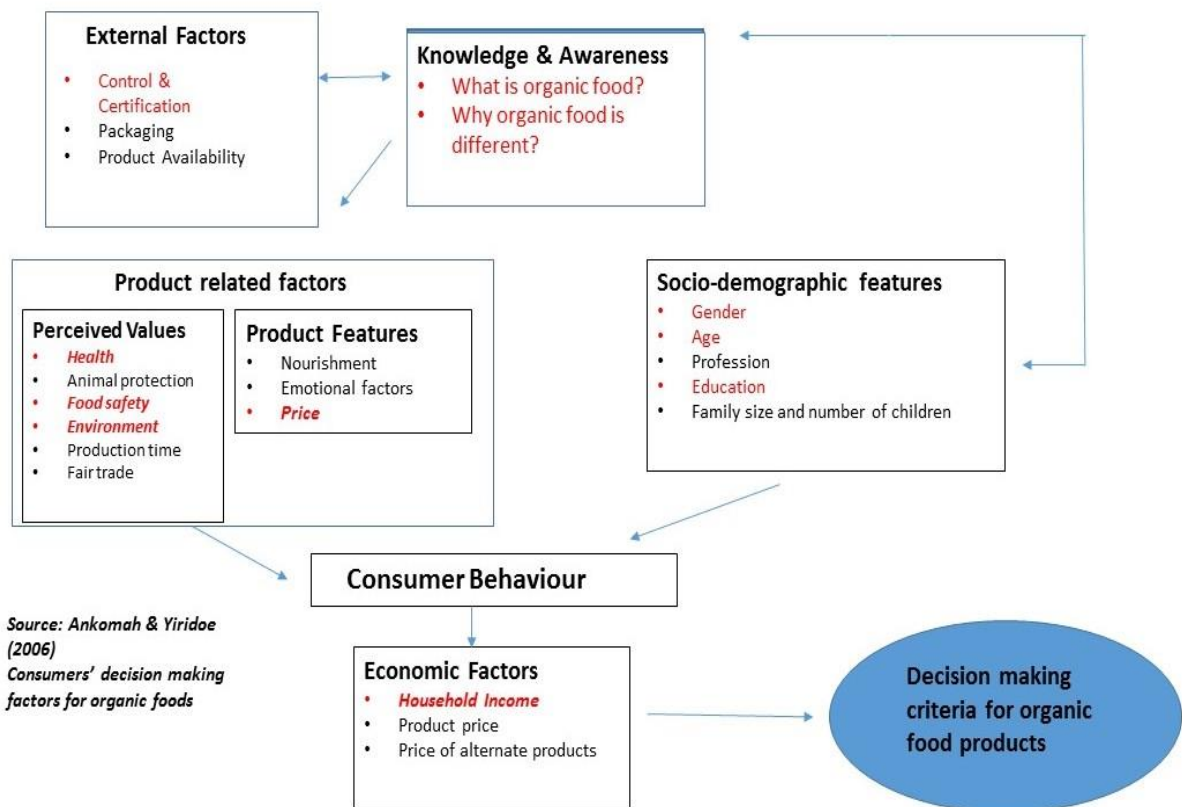
Data is analyzed with SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) with a 95 percent reliability level. Parametric tests are used for hypothesis. Those parametric tests are:

- Independent Samples T Test: That technique is used for comparing two independent groups in terms of a quantitative variable. There is a need for assuming normal distribution at both groups in order to use that technique.

- One-Way ANOVA: That technique is used for comparing independent k group ($k > 2$) in terms of a quantitative variable. There is a need for assuming normal distribution at both groups in order to use that technique.

CONCLUSION

Green marketing is unavoidable. It is a responsibility both of the businesses and the consumers. Green marketing can also lead to innovation because it requires renewed thinking- basically new ways of doing things- and that by itself, lead to more employment, more profits and more impact on a global basis.



In this study, we questioned the basic needs of the Turkish consumers and their perception of sustainability and green products specifically within the agricultural industry. Based on the graph above, the results can be summed up as:

- The awareness factor is definitely there... (This is a long term approach)

However, awareness is not enough to create a long term perception. So we also looked at the environment they are in and the things that might impact their thinking such as their socio economic background, age and gender. Awareness is specifically high in the major cities. The survey done for this study was developed in Istanbul, the biggest city, so it is a good representation of the population because it is not only the biggest city but it is also the most cosmopolitan metropolis.

Due to easy access to information, people are aware of the dangers awaiting the planet we live on. The survey showed that every one of them has clear sensitiveness to the environment. When we asked the participants “do you harm the environment on purpose?” with the question of “When I have two alternatives, I always choose the one that is more environment friendly.” almost 80 percent of them show their concern resulting in a 4,58 mean rate.

Based on Maslow’s hypothesis of hierarchy of need:

- After satisfying their very basic needs, people feel responsible for the nature.

We can examine this approach in Maslow’s pyramid step by step or to be more precise, level by level. We asked our participant, “Are you willing to pay more to the green products instead of regular products?” almost all of them responded negatively. No one is willing to pay more than regular products. So, in basic needs, there is a certain agreement towards to not paying more. This is a very clear conclusion so far. But people do buy these products with higher prices. This dilemma shows us that the situation goes beyond the basic need stage.

This leads us to the next stage. Perceived values...

- People tend to buy green products (such as organic foods) to avoid any harm to their health.
This is a short-term approach

In addition to these arguments, there are gender differences:

- Women tend to purchase green products more than men. The main reason of this habit can be the instinct of protecting their family as well as themselves.

In the Turkish market, there are some unit criteria that emerge as part of the established culture:

- Turkish society tends to live based on short-term objectives. ‘Fate’ plays a big role in its social culture. This is also apparent within the business world where long term strategic plans are not the regular norm. And the business that are strongly committed to “sustainability” are mostly foreign-based companies.
- The geographical area Turkey is in also creates uncertainty that pushes people to live in the moment rather than plan for the future

As gender makes a difference, the survey also shows us that, in contrast to some surveys done in the USA, the age factor creates a unique situation in Turkey.

- The people that are most concerned with sustainability and the protection of the environment are among the 50+ population. We can assume that this is due to the fact 50+ population’s perception is more for the long term in order to assure the next generation (their children, grandchildren) have a better planet to live on. Turkey has a big “retired” population (as compared to its total population) as the retirement age can start as early as 50. This group has more disposable time and money to dwell on subjects that can make an impact on their children and grandchildren.

Lastly, the educational level makes a major difference in forming the perception for the short and the long term.

- Of all the classifications, the more educated one is, the more they seem to be concerned about their own well-being (and can afford it) for the short term while the educated older generation is concerned about the well-being of the next generation (long term)

On the other hand, the external factors as described in the graph above require more planned and strategic approach by the government. As indicated in some of the reference material used in this study, Turkish Government has been active in producing the long term plans especially under the

pressure of the EEC, however, the implementation and establishing control mechanisms have not yet reached the effective stage.

Therefore:

- < More education is needed both for the consumer and the businesses in escalating the importance of sustainability
- < Governments and civil organizations need to be more involved in activating and supporting the UN mandated projects
- < Turkish culture needs to evolve into being more long term planning than the immediate needs
- < Planning needs to take into account the differences Turkish mindset makes in developing a widespread acceptance of “sustainability” beyond the three major cities starting with the agriculture industry.

In our thesis, H1 was claiming that “Turkish consumer’s perception of green marketing is only based on short term goals of “individual well-being” focusing on organic food. Although this is the case with some, it is not the only criteria forming the perception.

In H2, we assumed that the Turkish consumers’ perception is directly related to the long term approach of sustainability and that they are committed to the long term plan. Although this is part of the perception, we clearly see that it is not the only principle forming the perception.

We then reach H3 which assumed that the Turkish consumers’ perception of green marketing is effected both by short term and long term goals, short term being serving their individual needs, and long term serving the needs of the next generation. Having said this, we clearly see the differences socio economic factors, age and gender make in developing the formation.

We can state that H3, presently, represent the perception that forms the platform among the Turkish population within the agricultural market sector.

Please note that the business world is very dynamic, technologies are continuously changing and so are the people's basic cultural values....

Furthermore, the geographical location and the issues it brings to people's daily lives are impacting some of the decision criteria mainly because of the uncertainty it is bringing to their lives. Uncertainty is a major road block to see the future clearly and priorities change based on this.

Overall, Turkish consumer is very aware of the sustainability requirement and green marketing as associated to it. However, taking action is slower than anticipated and it will require a lot of enhancement in the education and support of this issue by the businesses, by civil organizations as well as by the government.

Agricultural sector in Turkey has strategic importance because of its contribution to rural development and employment generation besides being a labor intensive and natural resource dependent sector. For this reason, increasing productivity and quality in the sector will support development process and green growth approach of Turkey.

List of Publications

Akbas, R. & Alatas M. S. (2015). Decision making process according the Maslow`s hierarchy of needs, *International Science Journal, Intellect*, 3(53), p. 16-19.

Akbas, R. & Alatas M. S. (2015). Agriculture in Turkey an aspect through green marketing. *International Science Journal, Intellect*, 3(53), p. 11-15.

Alatas M. S. (2015). Green Marketing and Green Product Perception among the Consumers in Turkey. *Journal of Business*, Volume 4, Issue 2, p. 5-15