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Characterising convinced sustainable food consumers

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Transformation of Global Agri-Food Systems:
Trends, Driving Forces, and Implications for Developing Countries

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Characterising convinced sustainable food consumers

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Abstract
The objective of this article is to identify the distinguishing socio-demographic and psychographic features of convinced sustainable consumers in contrast to convinced conventional consumers. Furthermore, it contributes to the sparse literature about tea consumption. This study is based on data collected via an online consumer survey. First respondents took part in a choice experiment with tea varying in its price (four levels) and quality (conventional / organic / fair trade / organic & fair trade). Then they had to complete a questionnaire about their attitudes towards food consumption. Respondents, who always chose sustainable tea, at no matter what price, were grouped and those that always chose the conventional tea. T-Tests and bivariate logistic regression are used to analyse the influencing socio-demographic and attitudinal dimensions that characterise the two groups of convinced consumers. Convinced sustainable consumers are more often female than male and perceive that their personal purchase decision has an impact on overall sustainable development. They show a higher willingness to increase sustainability through their consumption behaviour. They are very much interested in high food quality and are not as much influenced by advertisements and offers in their purchase decision-making as convinced conventional consumers. The main contribution of this study is to provide practical information for actors in the field of sustainable food marketing about how to target their most relevant segment, the convinced sustainable consumer.

Keywords: sustainable food consumption; convinced consumers; heavy buyers; tea consumption

JEL-classifications: Q 13; Q18

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1 Introduction

Since 1992, when the UN Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, sustainability has become an international political objective. Given its importance for sustainable development, food consumption behaviour is a central area of sustainability (Dolan, 2002; Tanner and Wölfing-Kast, 2003; Abeliotos et al., 2010; Verain et al., 2012; Garnett, 2013). Thus today sustainable food production and consumption has also become one of the major management and marketing issues in the agri-food business sector (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Grunert, 2011; Verain et al., 2012).

One comprehensive definition of sustainable food consumption was developed by Reisch 2010: “For food consumption to be sustainable it has to be safe and healthy in amount and quality; and it has to be realized through means that are economically, socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable – minimizing waste and pollution and not jeopardizing the needs of others.”

There are many different ways not only to define, but also to promote sustainability in the food market. Labelling is one of the most popular instruments to communicate the sustainability of food products, as a credence attribute, to consumers (Akerlof 1970; Caswell and Padberg, 1992; Jahn et al., 2005; Grolleau and Caswell, 2006; Franz et al., 2010; Eberle et al., 2011). The two best known and widely used sustainability labels in Germany are organic (i.e. the ecological dimension of sustainability) and Fair Trade (the social dimension) (Fair Trade International, 2013; von Meyer-Höfer and Spiller, 2013). European organic labels guarantee the production of food according to (at minimum) the objectives and principles for organic production set in the Council Regulation (EC) 834/2007. It defines organic food production as a “sustainable management system” (EC 834/07/II,3) “for farm management and food production that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preference of certain consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes” (EC 834/07/I1). The Fair Trade label ensures the trading of food products according to the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO, 2013) that defines fair trade as a “trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seek greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the south.”

The impact of both labels on the global food market has grown continuously in recent decades, not only separately but also in combination (BÖLW, 2012; Fair Trade International, 2013; Sahota, 2013). Today, around 65% of the food under the fair trade label is also labelled with an organic label (Forum Fairer Handel, 2012). Although a number of studies about organic and/or fair trade consumption are available, many questions concerning the characteristics of consumers that prefer sustainable food products remain. This is because most studies focus either on profiling organic consumers or on the analysis of consumers’ willingness to pay for fair trade products. To our knowledge, there has so far been only few comprehensive characterisation of sustainable food consumers looking at their preferences for organic and/or fair trade labelled products (Loureiro et al., 2001; 2002; 2005; Conner and Mabaya, 2006; Tagbata, 2008; Bre cardi, 2012). Moreover, we know from marketing practice that an in-depth picture of core consumers’ characteristics is often missing (Rapacz and Reilly, 2009). This might not be surprising when looking at the size of this core consumer segment, which is often below 10% of the total number of consumers, but it should be considered that these usually generate the majority of revenue and profit (Michels et al., 2003; Lüth et al., 2005; Rapacz and Reilly, 2009).

This explorative study generates deeper insights into the distinguishing characteristics of convinced sustainable consumers with regard to their demography, attitudes, shopping
behaviour, perceived consumer effectiveness and perceived barriers to sustainable food consumption. The main contribution of this study to the existing literature is to provide practical information for actors in the field of sustainable food marketing about how to target their most relevant segment, the convinced sustainable consumer. Moreover, this study is based on a choice experiment with conventional and sustainable tea (organic label, fair trade label, organic and fair trade label), so it also contributes to the sparse literature of sustainable tea consumption. Respondents that always chose sustainable tea no matter at what price are grouped (convinced sustainable consumers) and compared to those respondents that always chose the conventional tea (convinced conventional consumers). In the following, the literature about profiling and segmentation of sustainable food consumers is reviewed. In the methodological part of the paper, the empirical study, data collection procedure and sample are described. The data was analysed using binary logistic regression, the results of which are presented and discussed at the end of the paper.

2 Literature review
Segmentation and profiling of consumers by socio-demographic characteristics is a common method, because data are easy to obtain and measure (Myers, 1996). However, a number of studies conclude that the influences of socio-demographic features on consumption behaviour are either insignificant or contradictory (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972; Gil et al., 2000; Dickson, 2001; Loureiro and Lotado, 2005; Jain and Kaur, 2006; Doran, 2009; Verain et al., 2012). Socio-demographic factors are therefore considered to be insufficient to describe consumer behaviour, and it is recommended that they are complemented by psychographic characteristics of consumers (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Dagevos, 2005; Doran, 2009; Verain et al., 2012). In the literature on consumer behaviour, attitudes are among the most frequently examined psychographic characteristics. In particular Ajzen and Fishbein (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1973; Fishbein, 1967; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1972; 1974; 1975) found that a person’s attitude widely affects his or her behaviour.

In Europe, the level of consumer understanding about the exact meaning of organic food is low, but consumers nevertheless have a generally positive attitude towards it (Lockie et al., 2002; Saba and Messina, 2003; Hughner et al., 2007; Aertsens et al., 2009). They generally relate direct health benefits and better taste to organic products, but also indirect benefits for the environment or animal welfare standards (Wier and Calverley, 2002; Johnston, 2008). A common focus of studies about organic food consumers is the differentiation between occasional and frequent buyers, who often show significant differences concerning their levels of involvement, motivations and willingness to pay (Magnusson et al., 2003; Lüth et al., 2005; Padel and Foster, 2005; Padilla-Bravo et al., 2013.). In spite of the positive attitudes of many consumers towards organic food consumption and the growing market for such products, some consumers are also skeptical with regard to organic products. This is due to their lack of trust in the certification and labeling schemes, but also due to a lack of availability of organic food products and their often higher price compared to conventional food (Torjusen et al., 2004; Thogersen, 2009; v. Meyer-Höfer and Spiller, 2013).

The literature about fair trade food consumption shows that this form of consumption is influenced by ethical and environmental concerns as well as a feeling of social responsibility (Tanner and Wölfing-Kast, 2003; Loureiro and Lotado, 2004; De Pelsmaker, 2006; Andorfer and Liebe, 2012). Fair trade consumers are usually segmented and profiled according to their willingness to pay for the fair trade premium price (for a detailed literature review see: Andorfer and Liebe 2012). Only few studies compare consumer attitudes or behaviour for more than one specific label. In most cases, these studies target organic and / or fair trade as well as eco-label products (Loureiro et al., 2001; 2002; 2005; Conner and Mabaya, 2006; Tagbata, 2008; Brecard, 2012). Although the majority of consumers have a positive attitude
towards fair trade in general, there are still barriers to actual fair trade consumption. Among these are the price and availability of fair trade products (Tanner and Wölfing-Kast, 2003; De Pelsmaker, 2006; Young et al., 2010; Andorfer and Liebe, 2012). The body of literature analysing organic or fair trade consumer segments is quite extensive; however, there is a lack of studies focussing on more than one sustainable food product group. To our knowledge, until now no study has been published characterising the convinced sustainable food consumer according to demographic and psychological variables from a survey combining a choice experiment with questions about organic, fair trade and organic and fair traded food. It is also a common phenomenon in marketing practice that there is no in-depth picture available of the most important but relatively small segment of convinced consumers or heavy buyers (Rapacz and Reilly, 2009). Nevertheless, those convinced consumers deliver the majority of revenue and profit for their preferred products. Moreover, these core consumers are generally more committed, with a greater knowledge about and a deeper involvement in the label or product category compared to conventional consumers (Rapacz and Reilly, 2009; Lüth et al., 2005). Furthermore, heavy buyers often show a higher willingness to accept price premiums and their purchasing is less dependent on special offers (ibid.). This study thus focuses on the characterisation of convinced sustainable food consumers in order to enable marketers to identify their most valuable consumer segments and to fulfil their needs.

The choice experiment in this survey focuses on tea. Studies about tea consumption in general are scarce, and those considering sustainable tea consumption are especially rare. According to Trevisanato and Young In Kim (2009), tea is a popular product enjoyed by hundreds of millions of people every day. Tea is available in different amounts and varieties as well as from different origins and production backgrounds. These characteristics and its popularity make tea a suitable product for research on sustainable consumption, especially for choice experiments. Moreover, its production is related to organic, fair trade and ethical issues (Strong, 1997; Gilg et al., 2005; Raynolds and Ngcwangu, 2010), making it particularly suitable for this survey. In Germany 18,490 tonnes of tea were consumed in 2011. Black tea was the most popular and accounted for 76.5% of total tea consumption in Germany (Deutscher Teeverband, 2013).

3 Methodology

3.1 Data
This article is based on an online survey of respondents that consume tea more than once a week. The study was conducted in Germany during February 2012. The survey consists of two parts: a choice experiment and a questionnaire. The total sample number is 300. The Indian black tea variant Darjeeling First Flush was used in the choice experiment, because it is available in all combinations of organic and fair trade, and popular among German tea consumers. The tested attributes were the production and trading mode (conventional, labelled organic, labelled fair trade, labelled organic and fair trade) and price / 10 g (0.49 €, 0.69 €, 0.99 € or 1.19 €). Due to the fact that the number of all possible groupings of the attributes and levels would have been too high to test in the experiment \((2 \times 2 \times 4)^2 = 256\) we reduced the number of choices by using an efficient design. This final main effect design consists of eight choice sets with a total of 16 choices, as shown in Table 1.
Table 1: Choice Sets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>Tea A (10g)</th>
<th>Tea B (10g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production / trade</td>
<td>Price (€)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fairtrade</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fairtrade</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Organic &amp; Fairtrade</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own data, 2012

For each of the randomised choices, respondents had to decide whether to choose Tea A or B or none of them. The choice experiment was carried out in a hypothetical setting for half of the participants (N=150), and for the other half in a non-hypothetical setting (N=150). For this survey, the results of both experimental methods were combined, because we are interested in segmenting the respondents into two different extreme groups concerning their tea choice, no matter which monetary consequences. Only participants who always decided for a certain kind of tea were chosen. Consequently, the absolutely convinced consumers were selected, which are 126 out of 300. The participants who in all eight choices decided for either organic (11), fair trade (23) or organic and fair trade (92) tea no matter at what price are considered to be convinced sustainable consumers (126). In 18 cases, respondents always chose the sustainable variant but varying between organic, fair trade and organic and fair trade. To avoid distraction by these indifferent sustainable consumers, we decided to exclude them from further analysis and to calculate with 108 convinced sustainable consumers. The participants who always chose conventional tea (31) were supposed to be convinced conventional consumers. The total sample size for the following analysis is thus 108+31 = 139.

After segmenting the participants, the two consumer groups were profiled by analysing the second part of the survey. In this part, respondents had to answer a questionnaire evaluating their general knowledge about food production and agriculture, their attitudes and intentions towards sustainable food consumption as well as the perceived barriers towards sustainable food consumption. In addition, we collected data about their shopping routines, habits and socio-demographic characteristics.

3.2 Description of the sample

Respondents of the survey were members of an online access panel of a market research institute. They were 18 years and older, as well as at least weekly consumers of tea. The total number of valid cases of this survey is 300. For the analysis in this paper, we use the 139 cases that belonged to one of the extreme groups (convinced sustainable consumer / convinced conventional consumer). The sample differs from the German population average in age, education level as well as in net-income and in type of household. The results of this study are thus biased but still useful for preliminary marketing implications. Table 2 gives an overview about the socio-demographic characteristics of the convinced consumer groups and the German population.
Table 2 Socio-demographic characteristics of the consumer groups and the German population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-demographic factors</th>
<th>Sustainable (%) N=108</th>
<th>Conventional (%) N=31</th>
<th>Averages in Germany (%)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 54</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest educational achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary general school-leaving</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate school-leaving</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University entry qualification</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No educational achievement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net income (€)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1000</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000 - 1999</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 - 2999</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3000 - 3999</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 4000</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Person</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-person household with children</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-person household without children</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing situation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5000 Residents</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5000 - 20.000 Residents</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.000 - 100.000 Residents</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 100.000 Residents</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data are based on Destatis, 2011

3.3 Method of analysis
The empirical analysis was carried out using the statistical program SPSS Version 17.0. Differences between sustainable and conventional consumers were examined using a binary logistic regression analysis to generate information about the dimension of influence of each item on the sustainable group. Table 2 gives an overview of the psychographic items included in the analysis.

The convinced sustainable consumer group was defined as the target category, and the convinced conventional group was used as reference category. In addition, variables with the same context were reduced using indices. Out of 139 cases, 125 were used in the analysis; 100 convinced sustainable and 25 convinced conventional consumers.
4 Results

4.1 Results of the t-test
In the following, the results of the items scored on five-point Likert scales are presented. The differences between groups were examined using t-tests. The description is accompanied by table 3, in which the significant results are displayed in detail (mean, standard deviation, t-value and significance level).
To all questions, whether they display significant differences or not, the mean values indicate that convinced sustainable consumers have a more positive attitude towards food issues, sustainability and sustainable consumption. Highly significant differences can be observed between convinced sustainable and convinced conventional consumers’ attitudes about the importance of their own sustainable food consumption. Means indicate that it is more important for convinced sustainable consumers to consume sustainable food than for convinced conventional consumers. In addition, convinced sustainable consumers agree much more strongly with the idea that consumers can enhance sustainable development by their food purchase than convinced conventional consumers. Accordingly, sustainable and convinced conventional consumers also differ in their estimation of their own intention to contribute to an improvement of sustainable development, with a high willingness among convinced sustainable consumers and an intermediate willingness among convinced conventional consumers.
Looking at the differences in the food shopping behaviour of both groups, results show that sustainable consumers rely significantly more on food labels than conventional consumers. Convinced sustainable consumers attach more importance to food quality and are more willing to pay higher prices for food specialties. Convinced conventional consumers are instead more price-conscious than convinced sustainable consumers. While shopping, convinced sustainable consumers read the product information significantly more often before making their purchase decision. The two consumer groups do not differ significantly their general information level, knowledge about organic agriculture and food production, perception of taste, advertisement or offers as influencing factors of their buying behaviour. The two analysed groups differ significantly in three out of six analysed barriers towards sustainable food consumption. These significant differences are found for the price barrier, the lack of knowledge where to buy sustainable food and the perceived lack of consumer effectiveness. Convinced sustainable consumers do not agree with the statement that sustainable products are too expensive. They seem to have a certain reason why to buy such products and also know where to find them. The two groups also differ in their general food shopping behaviour, whereby convinced sustainable consumers buy sustainable food products more frequently and as a greater proportion of their shopping.
Table 3 Results of the t-test showing the significant differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Consumer group</th>
<th>Mean value</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it to you to consume sustainable products?</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>-5.162</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>-4.492</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your attitude towards the assumption that consumers can improve sustainable development through their purchase decision?</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>.137</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you evaluate your own willingness to improve sustainable development?</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>-5.815</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>-5.559</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food shopping routines / habits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How reliable do you think labels are?</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>-2.640</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td>-2.707</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While shopping, price is the most important factor.</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>4.220</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>4.603</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While shopping, I always look for high quality food</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>-3.650</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>-3.420</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to pay a price premium for gourmet products.</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.837</td>
<td>-3.776</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.871</td>
<td>-3.691</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before making my decision, I compare the food product information.</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.881</td>
<td>-2.682</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barriers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think products with high ethical and ecological standards are too expensive.</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.939</td>
<td>3.808</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.875</td>
<td>3.960</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know where to buy food which is produced sustainably.</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>-3.353</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>-3.442</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know why to products with high ethical and ecological standards.</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>3.521</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.087</td>
<td>3.286</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How high is your own consumption of sustainable products?</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>.763</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SD= Standard deviation; p= significance level
Scales: 5-point Likert Scales (e.g. 1=very important; 2=important 3=neither nor; 4=unimportant; 5=not important at all)
Source: Own calculations, 2012
4.2 Results of the binary logistic regression analysis

In order to examine the relative influence of each variable, a binary logistic regression analysis was carried out. The overall variance explained of the model is 80% and the adjustment of the model, represented by Nagelkerke R², is .494 (table 4). The analysis was carried out in a stepwise manner. Five variables independently show a significant influence on the convinced sustainable consumer group when controlling for all other variables. In table 3, the final model is displayed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude: What is your attitude towards the assumption that consumers can improve sustainable development through their purchase decision?¹</td>
<td>-.955</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>3.916</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention: How do you estimate your own willingness to support sustainable development?¹</td>
<td>-.738</td>
<td>.401</td>
<td>3.386</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shopping routines and habits: While shopping, I always look for high quality food.²</td>
<td>-1.221</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>6.704</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shopping routines and habits: Offers and advertisements assist my purchase decision.²</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>.379</td>
<td>7.339</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>2.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender³</td>
<td>1.553</td>
<td>.660</td>
<td>5.547</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>4.727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.578</td>
<td>1.680</td>
<td>4.538</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>35.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly classified cases (%)</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerkes Pseudo- R²</td>
<td>.494</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omnibus of the model at step 5 (Chi-Quadrat)</td>
<td>46.836</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:  B=coefficient of regression; S.E.=standard error; Wald=wald test; Sig.=significance; Exp. (B)=coefficient of effect
Scales: ¹ 5-point Likert-Scale from “very high” (1) to “very low” (5);
² 5-point Likert-Scale from “It applies fully” (1) to “It does not apply at all” (5);
³ male (0); female (1).

Source: Own calculations, 2012

The first variable in the model (from a statistical point of view the most important predictor for the sustainable consumer) is “Intention: How do you estimate your own willingness to improve sustainable development?”. The second most important predictor for the sustainable consumer group is the item “Attitude: What is your attitude towards the assumption that consumers can improve sustainable development through their purchase decision?” After that, the variables “Food shopping routines and habits: While shopping I always look for high quality of food” and “Food shopping routines and habits: Offers and advertisements assist me with my purchase decision” were included in the model. Although gender was included only in the last step, it has the greatest influence on the convinced sustainable consumer group. Women are 4.7 times more likely than men to be convinced sustainable consumers (see table 4 coefficient of effect (c.f. Exp(B))).

Whereas gender is a categorical variable, the other variables are metric scaled, whereby every increase of one scale unit is a decrease of agreement to the statement. That means for the variable “Intention: How do you estimate your own willingness to support the sustainable development?” every increase of one scale unit implies a decrease in this intention, and reduces the likelihood of belonging to the convinced sustainable consumer group. The same goes for the second item, “Food shopping routines and habits: While shopping I always look for high quality food”. The third item “Food shopping routines and habits: Offers and
advertisements assist me in the purchase decision” has a negative relationship with convinced sustainable consumption. The chance of belonging to the convinced sustainable consumer group increases by 2.8 times if this item rises by one scale unit. Due to the fact that the logistic regression analysis is not linear, the “coefficient of regression” (B) and the “coefficient of effect” (Exp(B)) have different values at different positions of the equation. Hence, the figures displayed in table 4 ought to be read with respect to a potential over-interpretation. For detailed information about the binary logistic regression analysis please have a look at the appendix at the end of the document.

5 Discussion
This section discusses the distinguishing features of the convinced sustainable consumers found in this investigation. First of all, it is clear that many respondents (N=108, i.e. more than one third) seem to have a high willingness to consume sustainable food. This confirms the growing demand for sustainable food.

Regarding the socio-demographic data, the only significant difference between convinced sustainable and convinced conventional consumers is gender. The regression analysis identified that being female is the greatest predictor for belonging to the convinced sustainable consumers when controlling for all other tested variables. Previous studies on organic consumers also found that more women than men buy organic food (Gil et al., 2000; Jain and Kaur, 2006). In contrast, Doran (2009) found no difference in gender when characterising fair trade consumers. Overall, previous studies have shown either no or contradictory influence of socio-demographics on characteristics of sustainable consumers (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Doran, 2009; Verain et al., 2012). For the characterisation of convinced sustainable consumers attitudinal aspects are however of high relevance. Convinced sustainable consumers believe more that their own consumption behaviour has an influence on sustainable development than convinced conventional consumers. This attitude is also known as “perceived consumer effectiveness”, which has previously been discussed in various studies (Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; De Pelsmaker, 2006; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006). For example, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) found that consumers who believe that their individual consumption behaviour can contribute to sustainable development are more likely to buy sustainable food. Moreover, convinced sustainable consumers have a significantly higher willingness to contribute to sustainable development by their food purchasing behaviour. Consequently, convinced sustainable consumers estimate their amount of sustainable food purchase higher than convinced conventional consumers do.

Convinced sustainable consumers rely more on labels than conventional consumers. Prior studies have pointed out that a lack of trust in labels is the main barrier to sustainable consumption (Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Hanss and Böhm, 2012). Moreover, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) argue that consumers who believe in the reliability of labels are also more involved in and have a more positive attitude towards sustainable consumption. In addition, they know where to buy sustainable products. These results are confirmed by Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), who established that purchase of sustainable food is positively correlated with the degree of sustainable involvement.

Even more, the logistic regression analysis displayed that a decrease of the preference for quality has a negative effect on the convinced sustainable consumer group. The difference between convinced sustainable and convinced conventional consumers in preferences for these product attributes is confirmed by previous studies. These illustrate that the preference for quality motivate consumers to buy sustainable products (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; Hanss and Böhm 2012). Moreover, the higher preference for quality than for other attributes
such as e.g. price is confirmed by the assumption that purchase decisions of convinced sustainable consumers are not guided by offers and advertisements.

Concerning the self-evaluation of general information / knowledge of food production and agriculture shows that these are not characteristics distinguishing consumer groups. This result contrasts with some studies on the influence of consumer knowledge, like the one of Haron et al. (2005), who assumed that environmental knowledge encourages pro-environmental attitudes, behaviour and consumption. In turn, Reisch (2010) argued that education about the consequences of food consumption behaviour can improve sustainable consumption. However, this does not mean that a change of preferences and habits automatically results from more knowledge (ibid.).

6 Conclusion

Based on an online consumer survey about sustainable food consumption using tea as an example, this article examined the socio-demographic as well as attitudinal characteristics in which convinced sustainable consumers differ from convinced conventional consumers. The group of convinced sustainable consumers is bigger than the group of convinced conventional consumers.

A major difference between both convinced consumer groups is that more sustainable consumers are female. No differences in other socio-demographic factors were found. Convinced sustainable consumers can, however, be characterised on the basis of their psychographic features, especially their attitude. They have a higher willingness to contribute to sustainable development by their consumption of sustainable food, because they believe in the effectiveness of their personal purchase decision. Therefore, they also look for higher quality food. Furthermore, they are significantly more influenced by food quality than by offers and advertisements or other attributes such as price. Interestingly, convinced sustainable consumers and convinced conventional consumers do not significantly differ in their knowledge about agriculture and food production in general.

Knowledge about the characteristics of convinced sustainable consumers helps to identify the needs of the core target group for increasing sustainable food consumption. The results of this study show that marketing actors who want to promote sustainable food consumption should focus on motivating and convincing consumers that their personal purchase decisions matter for overall sustainable development. Signalling the sustainability of food products via labelling can help to inform consumers where and how to make their choice, however a pure rational marketing approach might not be very effective. To really convince consumers, they should be addressed emotionally and personally to evoke their feelings of making a positive contribution to the goal of sustainable development.
References


Shaw, D. and Clarke, I. (1999). Belief formation in ethical consumer groups: an exploratory study, Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 17, 109 – 120.


## Appendix

### Classification of Participants according to their choice behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants^</th>
<th>Choices</th>
<th>All sustainable without doubling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>Organic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 lfdn</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 lfdn</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>177^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 lfdn</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>199^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 lfdn</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 lfdn</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 lfdn</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 lfdn</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 lfdn</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 lfdn</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 lfdn</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>428^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 lfdn</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>325^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 lfdn</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 lfdn</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>344^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 lfdn</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>352^b</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 lfdn</td>
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<td>390</td>
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<td>17 lfdn</td>
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<td>18 lfdn</td>
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<td>450</td>
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<td>19 lfdn</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>480^b</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 lfdn</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>554^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 lfdn</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>570^b</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 lfdn</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>590^b</td>
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<td>595^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 lfdn</td>
<td>456</td>
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<td>25 lfdn</td>
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<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 lfdn</td>
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<td>186</td>
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<td>27 lfdn</td>
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<td>199</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 lfdn</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>201</td>
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<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 lfdn</td>
<td>607</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 lfdn</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34 lfdn</td>
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<td>37 lfdn</td>
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<td>38 lfdn</td>
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<tr>
<td>39 lfdn</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 lfdn</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 lfdn</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 lfdn</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^only participants who always selected a certain tea variety

^double because when possible participants chose organic plus fair
Binary logistic regression analysis

Case Processing Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Unweighted Cases</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Selected Cases</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Cases</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unselected Cases</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. If weight is in effect, see classification table for the total number of cases.

Dependent Variable Encoding

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Internal Value</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
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<td>Sustainable</td>
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</table>

Classification Table

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Purchase Difference</th>
<th>Percentage Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Constant is included in the model.

b. The cut value is .500

Variables in the Equation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 0</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.386</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>38.436</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Variables not in the Equation

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index_Evaluation of the own knowledge about food and food production</td>
<td>5.550</td>
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<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of the own knowledge about sustainability</td>
<td>1.665</td>
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<td>.197</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Index_Knowledge about sustainable consumption</td>
<td>5.380</td>
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<td>.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of the sustainable situation in developing countries and in Germany</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotions towards the sustainable situation in developing countries and in Germany</td>
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<td>.104</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estimation of the own willingness to contribute to sustainable situation</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index_Membership and donation to sustainable organizations</td>
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<td>.571</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude towards consumer effectiveness for sustainable development</td>
<td>8.170</td>
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<td>.004</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of own consumption of sustainable food</td>
<td>14.555</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index_Amount of own consumption of sustainable food</td>
<td>15.842</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliability about label</td>
<td>3.008</td>
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<td>.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To me, price is most important factor when buying food.</td>
<td>12.323</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To me, taste is the most important factor when buying food.</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always look out for high quality products.</td>
<td>16.674</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am willing to pay a price premium for gourmet products.</td>
<td>9.657</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Before taking my decision, I compare the food product information.</td>
<td>9.965</td>
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<td>.002</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offers and advertisements assist me at my purchase decision.</td>
<td>1.338</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When shopping I am a “creature of habit”?</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think such products are too expensive.</td>
<td>9.919</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would buy such products but I forget while shopping.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I need to spend more time for shopping if I buy sustainable products.</td>
<td>1.310</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.252</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Income</td>
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<td>.171</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>.050</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.918</td>
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<td>Overall Statistics</td>
<td>49.115</td>
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### Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients (Block 1: Method = Forward Stepwise (Conditional))

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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>Block</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>21.068</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>7.553</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>28.621</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>28.621</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
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<td>Block</td>
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*a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.  
b. Estimation terminated at iteration number 6 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.*

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*a. The cut value is .500*
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b. Variable(s) entered on step 2: I always look out for high quality products.  
c. Variable(s) entered on step 3: Gender  
d. Variable(s) entered on step 4: Offers and advertisements assist me in my purchase decision.  
e. Variable(s) entered on step 5: Index._ Amount of consumption of sustainable food

### Model if Term Removed

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### Step 4 Variables

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