INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT, KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING
ISSN 2232-5697, Vol 15, No. 1, 2026, pp. 160–172

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Consumer Behaviour and the Role of ECO Labels: Insights into Local and Sustainable Food Purchasing Habits

Keywords:
Eco-Labels; Sustainable Consumption; Consumer Behaviour; Trust; Willingness To Pay; Slovenia.

Abstract

The food retail sector is increasingly shaped by changing consumer preferences towards sustainable, locally sourced, and organically certified food products. This study examines consumer purchasing behaviour in Slovenia, with a particular focus on the role of ECO labels in influencing food choice decisions. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through an online survey conducted among 200 consumers aged 18–65. The analysis evaluates the relative impact of environmental, psychological, and economic factors on purchasing behaviour, as well as differences across age groups. The results indicate that environmental responsibility and psychological factors, especially trust in ECO labels, have a statistically significant and stronger influence on purchasing decisions than economic considerations such as price sensitivity. Younger consumers demonstrate higher levels of environmental awareness and place greater importance on eco-friendliness when selecting food products. Although ECO labels are perceived as influential by a substantial share of respondents, limited familiarity and partial skepticism towards label credibility remain evident. The findings highlight the importance of transparent, standardized, and credible ECO labeling systems, alongside targeted consumer education initiatives. This study contributes empirical evidence from a smaller European market and provides practical implications for policymakers and food retailers aiming to promote sustainable consumption and environmentally responsible purchasing behavior.

https://doi.10.63069/10.53615/2232-5697.15.160-172

1. Introduction

In recent years, the food retail sector has undergone major structural changes, accompanied by new challenges and opportunities related to globalization, climate change, rising food prices, and increasing consumer concern for food quality and safety. Consumers are becoming more informed and more prudent in their purchasing decisions, with growing attention devoted to healthy eating, production methods, and the environmental and social impacts of food consumption (Vermeir et al., 2020). Modern lifestyles and changing dietary patterns have intensified interest in how food is produced and processed, and in the role of certified quality schemes in ensuring food safety, traceability, and sustainability; in Slovenia, agricultural products and foodstuffs covered by quality schemes are produced according to regulated procedures and subject to additional controls by certification bodies (MKGP, 2022).

Within this broader context, research on ecological and sustainable food consumption has expanded rapidly in recent years, reflecting growing societal concern about environmental degradation, climate change, and the long-term sustainability of food systems. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that consumers' purchasing decisions regarding ECO-labelled food products are shaped by a complex combination of environmental values, health motivations, trust in certification systems, and economic considerations (Testa et al., 2015; Gracia et al., 2022; Vermeir et al., 2020).

Eco-labels play a central role in this process as key informational instruments that communicate credence attributes related to environmental protection, production methods, and product quality (Potter et al., 2021). A growing body of evidence indicates that the effectiveness of eco-labels depends critically on consumers' trust in labels, their understanding of certification schemes, and their perceived credibility of labeling institutions (Taufique et al., 2017; Annunziata et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2024). Recent research further shows that credible sustainability signals and consistent green branding significantly strengthen consumer trust and positively influence purchase intentions for sustainably labelled food products (Singh et al., 2023). At the same time, consumers' willingness to pay for ECO-labelled food has been found to vary systematically with income, price sensitivity, environmental values, and perceived label credibility (Gracia et al., 2022).

Despite the growing interest in sustainable consumption and the increasing use of eco-labels in food markets (Vermeir et al., 2020; Potter et al., 2021; Singh et al., 2023), empirical evidence comparing the relative influence of environmental, psychological, and economic factors on consumers' purchasing decisions remains limited, particularly in smaller European markets, which are still underrepresented in eco-labelling and sustainable consumption research (Gracia et al., 2022). Moreover, age-related differences in eco-conscious purchasing behavior are still insufficiently explored within an integrated analytical framework (Vermeir et al., 2020; Vukasović & Stanton, 2017).

Against this background, the present study examines the relative influence of environmental, psychological, and economic factors on consumers' purchasing decisions regarding ECO-labelled food products in Slovenia. The primary aim of the research is to identify which factors exert the strongest statistically significant effects on purchasing behavior, with particular emphasis on trust in eco-labels and generational differences. By combining these perspectives within a single empirical model, the study seeks to contribute to the literature on sustainable consumption and to provide practical implications for policymakers and businesses seeking to promote environmentally responsible food choices.

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical framework, the study formulates four testable hypotheses. These hypotheses concern the relative effects of psychological, environmental, and economic factors on

consumers' purchasing decisions regarding ECO-labelled food products, as well as age-related differences in eco-conscious behavior. The hypotheses are tested using quantitative statistical analyses, as presented in the Results section.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature on eco-labelling and sustainable food consumption, with particular emphasis on environmental, psychological, and economic determinants of consumer behaviour. Section 3 describes the research design, data collection process, measurement scales, and analytical methods. Section 4 presents the empirical results, including descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, and regression analyses. Section 5 discusses the main findings in relation to existing literature and outlines theoretical and managerial implications. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper by summarising key contributions, acknowledging limitations, and suggesting directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical background: TPB, VBN and signalling

Consumer responses to ECO-labelled food products can be anchored in several established behavioral and economic frameworks. One of the most widely applied approaches is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly shape behavioral intentions and actual purchasing behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of ECO-labelled food, attitudes towards environmental protection, perceived social expectations regarding sustainable consumption, and perceived control over purchasing decisions are therefore key antecedents of purchase intentions.

Complementarily, the Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) theory provides a normative explanation of pro-environmental behavior, emphasizing the role of personal values, environmental beliefs, and moral norms in guiding environmentally responsible actions (Stern et al., 1999; Stern, 2000). According to VBN theory, consumers with strong biospheric values and activated moral norms are more likely to engage in sustainable consumption, including the purchase of ECO-labelled food products.

From an economic perspective, signaling theory and the concept of information asymmetry offer an important framework for understanding the role of eco-labels in food markets (Akerlof, 1970; Spence, 1973). Many environmental and production attributes are credence attributes that cannot be directly verified by consumers at the point of purchase. Eco-labels therefore function as market signals that reduce information asymmetry between producers and consumers by credibly communicating compliance with environmental and organic production standards. These theoretical perspectives provide a conceptual foundation for examining the role of environmental, psychological, and economic factors in consumers' purchasing decisions regarding ECO-labelled food products.

2.2 Psychological and informational determinants: trust and label literacy

In recent years, a growing body of international empirical research has examined consumers' responses to ECO-labelled and sustainability-certified food products. Recent studies consistently show that environmental values, health motivations, and trust in certification systems are among the most important determinants of purchase intentions and actual purchasing behavior (Testa et al., 2015; Vukasović and Stanton, 2017; Gracia et al., 2022). These findings highlight that sustainable food consumption is shaped by a complex interaction of psychological, environmental, and economic factors rather than by price considerations alone.

Eco-label trust has emerged as a central construct in this literature. Empirical evidence indicates that higher perceived credibility of certification bodies and clearer labeling systems significantly increase consumers' confidence and reduce perceived risk associated with ECO-labelled products (Taufique et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2015; Gorton et al., 2021). In markets characterized by a high degree of information asymmetry, trust in eco-labels plays a particularly important role in guiding consumer choice.

Label literacy has been identified as a key moderator of eco-label effectiveness. Recent studies show that limited understanding of label meanings and the proliferation of sustainability claims lead to confusion and weaken the impact of labels on consumer decision-making (Annunziata et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2024). Improving consumers' ability to correctly interpret sustainability labels has therefore been highlighted as a prerequisite for the successful promotion of sustainable consumption.

2.3 Environmental and economic determinants: values and willingness to pay

Alongside psychological and informational determinants, environmental values and motivations are repeatedly identified as key drivers of ECO-labelled food purchasing. Prior research suggests that consumers who place greater importance on environmental protection and sustainability are more likely to express positive intentions and behaviors towards ECO-labelled products (Testa et al., 2015; Vukasović and Stanton, 2017; Gracia et al., 2022).

From an economic perspective, willingness to pay (WTP) and price sensitivity remain relevant predictors of ECO-labelled food choices. Empirical research provides that consumers' readiness to pay a price premium for ECO-labelled food depends not only on income and price sensitivity, but also on trust in labels, environmental values, and perceived label credibility (Asioli et al., 2017; Potter et al., 2021; Gracia et al., 2022). Consumers' willingness to pay more for sustainably labelled foods is further supported by meta-analytical evidence (Potter et al., 2021). Overall, this evidence suggests that multiple economic, psychological, and informational considerations can simultaneously matter for sustainable purchasing decisions.

Although the international literature on eco-labelling and sustainable food consumption has expanded rapidly, several gaps remain. In particular, relatively few studies simultaneously examine environmental, psychological, and economic factors within a single analytical framework, and evidence from smaller European markets remains limited. Furthermore, age-related differences in eco-conscious purchasing behavior are still insufficiently explored in an integrated empirical model. Based on these gaps, the present study develops and tests a set of hypotheses to examine the relative influence of environmental, psychological, and economic factors on consumers' purchasing decisions regarding ECO-labelled food products.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1 Research design

To conduct the research, we employed a quantitative survey-based research design. Since the study involved collecting original data, it is based on primary research.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

Data were collected during September 2024 through an online survey questionnaire created using Google Forms. The sample comprised 200 consumers aged 18–65 who participated voluntarily in the online survey. The sampling procedure can therefore be classified as a non-probability, convenience self-selected sample rather than a probabilistic random sample. Of the 200 collected questionnaires, some demographic variables contained missing values. Analyses involving age (e.g., comparisons across age groups) were therefore

conducted on a valid subsample of 120 respondents. All other analyses were conducted on the full sample (N = 200), unless stated otherwise. The survey was distributed via social media, and because the questionnaire was openly accessible, an exact response rate could not be calculated. The final sample therefore represents a self-selected group of respondents rather than a probability-based sample. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population, but provide indicative insights into the relationships between the studied variables. Participants responded to Likert-scale questions measuring perceptions of organic labels, environmental responsibility, and purchasing habits. The survey design drew on validated frameworks from consumer behaviour literature (Stankevich, 2017).

In this study, the term "ECO label" was used as a general designation for sustainability and environmental certification labels applied to food products. No specific certification scheme was emphasised, and respondents were asked to evaluate ECO labels in a general sense, based on their own understanding and prior experience with environmental labelling. The independent variables in this study include economic factors (price sensitivity), psychological factors (trust in labels), and environmental factors (sustainability concerns), while the dependent variable is the likelihood of purchasing products with the ECO label.

3.3 Measures and questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 20 substantive items and 2 demographic questions. The substantive part included (i) questions capturing general awareness and perceptions of ECO labels, (ii) items assessing purchasing behaviour and related barriers, and (iii) items measuring the key explanatory constructs used in the empirical analysis. Unless otherwise stated, attitudinal statements were assessed on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger agreement.

Dependent variable. The dependent variable, purchase likelihood of ECO-labelled food products, was measured using a Likert-type item capturing respondents' self-reported likelihood/frequency of purchasing ECO-labelled food products (higher values indicating a higher likelihood/more frequent purchasing).

Independent variables (composite/latent constructs). Three multi-item constructs were used as predictors in the regression models: environmental, psychological, and economic factors. The environmental factor captured respondents' sustainability-related concerns and the importance of environmental responsibility when purchasing food products (e.g., "Environmental responsibility is important to me when purchasing food products"). The psychological factor focused on trust and perceived credibility of ECO labels (e.g., "I trust ECO labels when choosing food products"). The economic factor captured price sensitivity and willingness to pay considerations (e.g., "Price is a decisive factor when purchasing food products").

Construction of composite indices. For each construct, a composite index was calculated as the mean of the corresponding item scores, so that each index ranged from 1 to 5. Higher values indicate a stronger presence of the respective factor (greater environmental concern; higher trust; greater price sensitivity). Items were coded in the same direction (no reverse-coded items). Respondents with missing values on an item were retained where possible; the composite index was calculated when sufficient item responses were available for that construct.

Reliability. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The environmental factor scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.81$), as did the psychological factor scale ($\alpha = 0.78$) and the economic factor scale ($\alpha = 0.74$), indicating acceptable to good levels of internal consistency.

3.4 Data quality and ethical considerations

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and that their responses would be used exclusively for research purposes. No personal

identifying information was collected. Data were screened for completeness and consistency prior to analysis, and questionnaires with excessive missing values were excluded from the relevant analyses.

3.5 Statistical analysis plan

Statistical analyses, including univariate, bivariate, and multivariate techniques, were conducted using SPSS. Hypotheses were tested using correlation and regression analyses. Descriptive statistics and model estimates are reported from the SPSS output and rounded to two decimal places for readability. P-values are reported using conventional significance thresholds (e.g., $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$). Composite indices (environmental, psychological, and economic factors) were entered as continuous predictors in the regression models.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Although 200 respondents participated in the survey, complete age data were available for 120 respondents. The demographic analysis presented in Table 1 is therefore based on this valid subsample (N = 120). Among them, 54% were female and 46% were male. The average age of respondents was 32.4 years (SD = 10.49), with a median age of 32 years. The youngest respondent was 18 years old, while the oldest was 65 years old. The demographic analysis presented in Table 1 is based on valid subsample. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) belonged to the 31–45 age group, followed by respondents under 30 years of age (37%). Overall, the sample primarily consisted of young to middle-aged consumers, which is appropriate for examining purchasing behavior related to ECO-labelled products.

Table 1: Age of respondents

N	**Valid**	120
	Missing	0
Average		32.40
Median		32.00
Standard deviation		10.487
Minimum		18
Maximum		65

4.2 Descriptive analysis of consumer perceptions and behavior

The responses collected through the research will be presented below using statistics analyses, which help us better understand, organize, and process the data. We will begin the analysis with the results of the first question and proceed to the last.

Descriptive statistics indicate that environmental responsibility is highly valued among respondents. Specifically, 70% rated environmental responsibility as important or very important (40% and 30%, respectively), while 15% expressed a neutral position. Only 15% considered it not important or only slightly important (5% and 10%, respectively), suggesting that pro-environmental values are prevalent in the sample. This aligns with research by Zavali and Theodoropoulou (2018), underscoring the growing ethical focus in consumer behaviour.

Purchasing frequency results show that 40% of respondents frequently or always purchase ECO-labelled products, whereas 25% rarely or never do so.

Trust in ECO labels was relatively high. In total, 62.5% of respondents reported that they trust or strongly trust ECO labels (40% and 22.5%, respectively), while 20% expressed a neutral view. A smaller share—17.5%—reported low trust (12.5% slightly trust and 5% not at all). Overall, the distribution suggests generally favourable perceptions of label credibility, although the sizeable neutral group indicates persistent uncertainty among a meaningful segment of consumers. However, a notable proportion of respondents remained neutral, suggesting potential uncertainty regarding label credibility.

Willingness to pay a price premium for ECO-labelled products was more moderate, as only 42.5% of respondents expressed willingness or strong willingness to pay more, indicating that price sensitivity remains a relevant factor.

Consumer familiarity with ECO labels was limited. Only 35% of respondents reported being familiar or very familiar with ECO labels, while 30% indicated neutral familiarity and 35% reported low familiarity. This finding suggests a knowledge gap that may constrain the effectiveness of ECO labeling. Educational campaigns are necessary to enhance consumer understanding of these certifications.

ECO labels were perceived as influential in food purchasing decisions by half of the respondents: 35% reported that ECO labels are influential and an additional 15% that they are very influential. A further 25% expressed a neutral position, while 25% perceived little or no influence (20% slightly influential and 5% not at all). Overall, the results suggest that eco-labels serve as an important decision cue for a substantial segment of consumers, although a sizeable group remains unconvinced.

Regarding barriers to purchasing ECO-labelled products, the most frequently reported obstacle was high price (45%), followed by limited availability (25%). Concerns about label credibility were also present, with 15% citing lack of trust in labels, while 10% reported insufficient information. Overall, the results suggest that both economic (price) and market-related constraints (availability), alongside informational and trust-related issues, continue to hinder wider adoption.

Perceptions of the environmental friendliness of ECO products were generally positive, with 60% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that such products are environmentally friendly. Nevertheless, 25% expressed neutral attitudes and 15% expressed skepticism. This pattern suggests that clearer communication and consumer education may help reinforce the perceived environmental value of ECO-labelled products.

4.3 Multivariate regression analysis

To examine the relative influence of environmental, psychological, and economic factors on purchasing behavior, a multivariate regression analysis was conducted. Multiple linear regression models were estimated, with purchasing behaviour towards ECO-labelled products as the dependent variable and environmental, psychological, and economic factors entered simultaneously as independent variables. The results are presented in Table 10, reporting standardised beta coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for the predictors included in the regression model.

Environmental factors emerged as the strongest predictor of purchasing behavior ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), followed by psychological factors ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$). Economic factors also had a statistically significant but weaker effect on purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). These results indicate that while economic considerations remain relevant, environmental and psychological factors play a more prominent role in shaping consumers' decisions to purchase ECO-labelled products

Table 10: Multiple linear regression predicting purchasing behaviour towards ECO-labelled food products

Variable	Beta	t-value	p-value
Environmental Factors	0.42	5.3	0.001
Psychological Factors	0.32	4.1	0.002
Economic Factors	0.18	2.9	0.010

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Based on the results obtained from the research, it is possible to test the hypotheses.

H1: Psychological factors have a greater impact on purchasing decisions than economic factors.

Hypothesis H1 was tested using multiple linear regression analysis. As shown in Table 10, psychological factors exert a stronger and statistically significant effect on purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$) than economic factors ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is supported. These findings suggest that consumers place greater emphasis on trust and responsibility than on price considerations when purchasing ECO-labelled food products, consistent with Schnurr (2017).

H2: Younger consumers prioritize eco-friendliness more than older consumers.

Hypothesis H2 was tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), with age groups as the independent variable and eco-friendliness scores as the dependent variable. The results reveal statistically significant differences between age groups ($F = 7.89$, $p = 0.010$). Respondents aged 18–35 reported the highest mean eco-friendliness score ($M = 4.2$), followed by those aged 36–50 ($M = 3.8$) and 51–65 ($M = 3.4$) (Table 11). These findings support Hypothesis H2. Younger consumers appear to be more environmentally oriented than older age groups, which suggests that communication emphasising environmental benefits may resonate particularly well with younger segments. For older consumers, sustainability messaging may be more effective when combined with other value cues, such as health-related benefits.

Table 11: One-way ANOVA results for eco-friendliness by age group

Age Group	Mean Score
18–35	4.2
36–50	3.8
51–65	3.4

ANOVA: $F = 7.89$, $p = 0.010$, $N = 120$.

H3: Consumers who have higher trust in ECO labels perceive these products as more important in their purchasing decisions.

Hypothesis H3 was tested using Pearson's correlation between trust in ECO labels and the perceived importance of ECO-labelled products in purchasing decisions. The analysis shows a statistically significant positive influence between the variables ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$; Table 12). Thus, Hypothesis H3 is supported. Consumers who trust the authenticity and credibility of ECO labels are more likely to consider these products as integral to their purchasing decisions. This aligns with existing literature, such as Schnurr (2017), which highlights the importance of trust in certification systems in influencing consumer behaviour. The analysis confirms that trust in ECO labels significantly influences how consumers perceive the value and importance of these products, reinforcing the need for transparency and credibility in certification systems to encourage sustainable purchasing behavior.

Table 12: Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Trust in ECO labels	4.10	0.85
Perceived Importance of ECO Products	4.00	0.90

Pearson correlation: $r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$

H4: Environmental factors have a stronger influence on purchasing decisions than economic factors.

Hypothesis H4 was evaluated using multiple linear regression analysis. As shown in Table 10, environmental factors exert a stronger and statistically significant influence on purchasing decisions ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) than economic factors ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis H4 is supported. In the bivariate model comparing environmental and economic factors, the model explained a substantial proportion of variance in purchasing behaviour ($R^2 = 0.52$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.50$). These findings align with Zavali and Theodoropoulou (2018), who noted the growing impact of environmental awareness on consumer behaviour.

4.5 Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the central role of environmental and psychological factors in shaping consumers' purchasing behaviour towards ECO-labelled food products. Environmental factors emerged as the strongest predictor of purchasing decisions, highlighting the increasing importance of sustainability awareness among contemporary consumers. This result supports previous research indicating that environmental responsibility has become a key motivator in sustainable consumption behavior (Zavali & Theodoropoulou, 2018; Schnurr, 2017). The dominance of environmental considerations over economic factors suggests a shift towards value-driven rather than purely price-driven decision-making.

The present findings are broadly consistent with recent international studies on eco-labelling and sustainable food consumption. Our results confirm that trust in eco-labels plays a central role in shaping purchase intentions in markets characterized by information asymmetry (Taufique et al., 2017; Potter et al., 2021). Similarly, the strong effect of environmental factors is consistent with the evidence reported by Gracia et al. (2022), who found that environmental values are among the strongest predictors of willingness to pay for ECO-labelled food.

At the same time, our results partially diverge from studies that emphasize the strong role of price sensitivity in food choice (Asioli et al., 2017). In our sample, economic factors exerted a statistically significant but comparatively weaker effect than environmental and psychological factors. This suggests that in the context studied, non-economic motivations may play a more prominent role than has been reported in some other markets.

Trust in ECO labels was identified as a significant psychological factor influencing purchasing behavior. Consumers who expressed higher levels of trust in ECO labels perceived these products as more important in their purchasing decisions, confirming the critical role of credibility and transparency in labeling systems. This finding reinforces prior studies emphasizing that trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty associated with sustainable products and enhances consumers' willingness to engage in environmentally responsible purchasing behavior.

The results further indicate that younger consumers demonstrate higher levels of environmental awareness compared to older age groups. This generational difference aligns with existing literature suggesting that younger consumers tend to be more environmentally conscious and more receptive to sustainability-related messages. These findings imply that age plays an important moderating role in sustainable consumption behavior (Vermeir et al., 2020) and should be considered in both theoretical models and practical applications.

Although economic factors were found to have a weaker influence than environmental and psychological factors, their effect remained statistically significant. This indicates that price sensitivity continues to represent a relevant barrier for certain consumer segments. While sustainability motivations may dominate decision-making for some consumers, economic considerations still constrain purchasing behavior, particularly in contexts where ECO-labelled products are perceived as premium-priced.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on consumer behaviour and sustainable consumption by empirically comparing environmental, psychological, and economic determinants within a single analytical framework. The findings demonstrate that environmental and psychological factors exert a stronger influence on purchasing decisions than economic factors, particularly in the context of ECO-labelled food products. Additionally, the study extends existing research by providing empirical evidence from a smaller European market, which remains underrepresented in sustainability-focused consumer behaviour research.

From a practical perspective, the results suggest that increasing consumer awareness and trust in ECO labeling systems is essential for promoting sustainable purchasing behavior. Clear, standardized, and transparent labeling practices may enhance consumer confidence and reduce confusion caused by the proliferation of sustainability labels. Furthermore, targeted communication strategies that emphasize environmental benefits and credibility may be particularly effective among younger consumer segments, while alternative approaches addressing health and value considerations may be more suitable for older consumers.

Overall, the findings highlight the multifaceted nature of sustainable purchasing decisions and underscore the importance of integrating environmental, psychological, and economic perspectives when examining consumer behaviour towards ECO-labelled products. These findings should be interpreted in light of the study's methodological scope, as discussed in the conclusion.

5. Conclusion

This study examined consumer purchasing behaviour towards ECO-labelled food products, focusing on the relative influence of environmental, psychological, and economic factors. The results show that environmental and psychological factors play a more prominent role in shaping purchasing decisions than economic considerations, highlighting the central importance of sustainability awareness and trust in ECO labels in contemporary food markets.

The study contributes to the literature by empirically comparing multiple determinants of sustainable purchasing behavior within a single analytical framework and by providing evidence from a smaller European market that remains underrepresented in eco-labelling research. The findings support theoretical perspectives suggesting that sustainable consumption is increasingly driven by values and ethical considerations rather than solely by price sensitivity.

From a practical perspective, the results underline the importance of clear, credible, and standardized ECO labeling systems for strengthening consumer trust and reducing confusion. Policymakers and businesses may benefit from initiatives that improve label transparency and consumer education, while communication strategies that emphasize environmental credibility may be particularly effective in promoting sustainable food choices.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The use of a non-probability, self-selected sample and the focus on a single national context limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, although the study simultaneously includes environmental, psychological, and economic factors as predictors of purchasing behaviour, the empirical analysis does not explicitly examine interrelationships among these determinants; the regression approach focuses on their relative influence rather than on potential causal pathways or interactions between constructs. Future research could build on this study by employing probability-based

sampling designs, including more diverse populations, and using longitudinal or experimental approaches to better capture causal mechanisms and changes in consumer behaviour over time. Future studies could also apply structural equation modelling to examine how environmental, psychological, and economic determinants jointly shape eco-labelled food purchasing.

Acknowledgements: This research is part of the project *Changes in Consumer Purchasing Behavior Habits: Ecological Consumption and Green Marketing* (BI-US/24-26-04), supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

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