

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0950-3293(17)30144-1

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2017.06.008>

Reference: FQAP 3342

To appear in: *Food Quality and Preference*

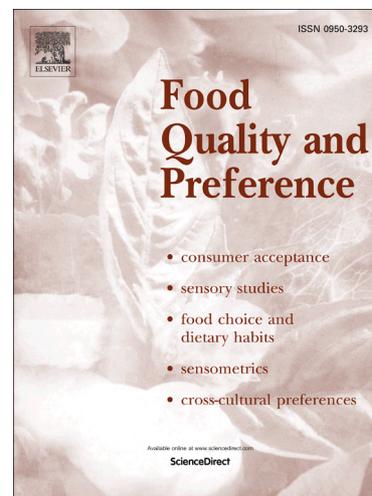
Received Date: 9 February 2017

Revised Date: 12 June 2017

Accepted Date: 13 June 2017

Please cite this article as: Hidalgo-Baz, M., Martos-Partal, M., González-Benito, O., Assessments of the Quality of Organic versus Conventional Products, by Category and Cognitive Style, *Food Quality and Preference* (2017), doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2017.06.008>

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**ASSESSMENTS OF THE QUALITY OF ORGANIC VERSUS CONVENTIONAL PRODUCTS, BY
CATEGORY AND COGNITIVE STYLE**

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Funding

This research was supported by Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, Grant ECO2014-53060-R (Spain).

Abstract

Product quality is a key determinant of a firm's competitiveness, though previous literature lacks a clear definition of product quality for organic markets. This study proposes a new model that highlights consumers' perceptions of specific organic product attributes: environmental protection, health, and hedonic aspects. Quality assessments based on these three perceptions depend on other factors too, such as the product category and the cognitive style consumers use to process information. A study with 209 respondents offers empirical evidence that environmental protection, health and hedonic perception positively affect quality perception and that the effect of perceptions of environmental protection on perceived quality is greater for organic products in a virtue category (e.g., yogurt) than a vice category (e.g., chocolate). Hedonic perceptions also have a greater impact on perceived quality when consumers are intuitive versus analytical. These findings suggest some important theoretical and managerial implications.

Keywords: organic food, perceived quality, product category, cognitive style

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