

Title Consumer preferences and choices of fruit: current knowledge and future trends
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Abstract

Postharvest researchers are increasingly finding themselves involved in projects that require knowledge of consumer behaviour and market opportunities, as well as their expertise in product biology. Research on consumer behaviour is a central focus of many disciplines, including sensory science, marketing, psychology, experimental economics and anthropology. Each of these disciplines has their own collection of methodologies that provides different types of insight into consumer behaviour. There is a need to consider the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative data collected from consumers by the various methods and the extent to which consumers provide responses that are biased towards the behaviour that is more socially desirable and prestigious. They may behave quite differently when observed selecting and consuming foods.

These methodological issues should be considered alongside the knowledge that fruit and vegetable consumption rates are static or falling in much of the western world, and that significant numbers of consumers fail to eat the recommended 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables each day. This is occurring despite a substantial proportion of consumers indicating that they want to eat more fruits and vegetables. In this presentation, the role of appearance, flavour and price on consumer choice of fruit are considered. Underpinning consumers' decisions on product attributes and value (quality in relation to price) are changes in the marketplace associated with megatrends for increasing convenience and health in foods, which represent both opportunities and risks for the fruit and vegetable industries. The barriers to consumption of produce are also considered. These often then relate to familiarity with products, but also to consumers' values and behavioural traits. The presentation uses examples from our own research, which highlight the different research methodologies available when investigating consumer preferences and choices of fruits and vegetables.