



**ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN OR HEDONISM? ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR AT THE FREE FAIR IN DOM PEDRITO – RS**

**PREOCUPAÇÃO AMBIENTAL OU HEDONISMO? ANÁLISE DO
COMPORTAMENTO DO CONSUMIDOR DA FEIRA LIVRE DE DOM PEDRITO –
RS**

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Abstract

Knowing the motivations of consumers to consume at free fairs is very important for farmers and managers. The objective of this study was to analyze the influence of environmental concern and hedonism on free fair consumer behavior in the municipality of Dom Pedrito - RS. This is an exploratory, descriptive study with a quantitative approach. The method used

was the Survey, through a questionnaire composed of sociodemographic questions, frequency of going to the fair, indicators of environmental concern (EC), and hedonism (HE) applied to 113 consumers. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, t-test, and Pearson's correlation. Consumers at the fair are motivated to consume by EC and HE, but especially by the indicators related to EC, which showed greater influence ($P < 0.05$). EC and HE were strongly and positively correlated ($r = 0.70$; $P < 0.05$), demonstrating that they are associated. EC and HE were not influenced ($P > 0.05$) by sociodemographic variables and the frequency of going to the fair. Knowing the motivation to consume at the city's free fair allows managers to define strategies that encourage consumption at the fair.

Keywords: Family farming; Consumption; Environment; Motivation; Pleasure.

Resumo

Conhecer as motivações dos consumidores para consumir em feiras livres é de suma importância para agricultores e gestores. O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a influência da preocupação ambiental e do hedonismo no comportamento do consumidor da feira livre do município de Dom Pedrito - RS. Trata-se de um estudo exploratório, descritivo, com abordagem quantitativa. O método utilizado foi o Survey, por meio de um questionário composto por questões sociodemográficas, frequência de ida a feira, indicadores de preocupação ambiental (PA) e de hedonismo (HE) aplicado a 113 consumidores. A análise dos dados foi realizada por meio de estatística descritiva, análise de variância, teste-t e correlação de Pearson. Os consumidores da feira são motivados a consumir pela PA e pelo HE, mas especialmente pelos indicadores relacionados a PA, que apresentaram maior influência ($P < 0,05$). A PA e o HE foram forte e positivamente correlacionados ($r = 0,70$; $P < 0,05$), demonstrando que estão associados. A PA e o HE não foram influenciados ($P > 0,05$) pelas variáveis sociodemográficas e frequência de ida a feira. O conhecimento da motivação de consumir na feira livre do município permite aos gestores definir estratégias que estimulem o consumo na feira.

Palavras-chave: Agricultura Familiar; Consumo; Meio ambiente; Motivação; Prazer.

1. INTRODUCTION

The free fair represents one of the oldest forms of commercialization of agricultural products, with notorious social, economic, and cultural importance. In Brazil, the history of

the free fair is intertwined with national history, having gained strength and protagonism in the colonization process, where it contributed to the social and economic organization of the populations of the first settlements (Sacco dos Anjos, Godoy & Caldas, 2005). Over the years, the expansion of this marketing channel has been gaining ground, playing an important role in urban supply, with a wide variety of agricultural products (Rockenbach, Nascimento, Hanke, & Becker, 2021).

In the South of Brazil, this scenario is very similar, as the free fair represents the commercial link between the producer and the consumer who resides in urban centers (Dorneles, Cassanego, Bettencourt, Floriano, Bandeira & Cezar, 2018; Pires & Waquil, 2021; Rockenbach *et al.*, 2021). Consumers are attracted to the fair for several reasons, such as the wide variety of agricultural products that can be found in one place (Paulino, Dias, Murta, Morais & Pires, 2015). In addition to aspects related to food, such as quality and freshness (Forte & Melo, 2020), and reasonable prices compared to other marketing channels. In this space, food is purchased directly from the producing source, without the participation of middlemen (Watanabe, Luiz & Abreu, 2018).

In a literature review about the quality turn movement, Dorneles, Silva, Schinaider, and Bettencourt (2017) observed that the consumption of traditional and spatial proximity foods has increased substantially in recent decades, as so much information has never been sought about the form of production and the quality of what is consumed. In this perspective, Alternative Agrifood Network (AAFN), such as short marketing circuits, exemplified by free fairs, and other re(connection) strategies between producers and consumers are gaining more and more space. The free fairs represent a commercialization channel that has fundamental importance for the economic consolidation and maintenance of the ways of life associated with family farming, so, as in any business, the fair must guarantee its maintenance, survival, and competitiveness market (Sales, Rezende & Sette, 2011), since the impact of street markets is even greater in smaller municipalities (Ribeiro, Castro, Silvestre, Calixto, Araújo, Galizoni & Ayres, 2005).

However, even though the free fair is considered an old trade modality, it was forgotten by researchers for a long time (Cassol & Schneider, 2017), which was reflected in the small number of studies with links in the chain, especially with a marketing bias. In this sense, knowledge about the behavior and motivations of consumers at free fairs can contribute to marketing strategies developed by family farmers and managers, to increase and/or maintain consumption in these alternative spaces.

Hawkins, Mothersbaugh, and Best (2007) explain that consumer behavior analyzes people, groups or organizations in which they belong; the processes they use to choose, acquire and use products and services; the experiences and new needs that may arise; and the impacts that purchasing processes have on consumers and society. In this perspective, studies indicate that different factors influence consumer behavior, citing culture, reference groups, and aspects of the individual's personality (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000; Hawkins *et al.*, 2007; Abdu & Purwanto, 2013; Solomon, 2016). For example, it has been shown that hedonism can be used as a determinant or predictor of food-related attitudes (Audebert, Deiss & Rousset, 2006). Hedonistic consumption refers to facets of consumer behavior that relate to the multisensory, fanciful, and emotional aspects of their product experience (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Based on this, marketing practitioners can seek attributes that involve all the consumer's senses, instigating a deep connection between the consumer and the product (Topping, 2007).

On the other hand, there is evidence that the number of consumers who take into account aspects related to concern for the environment is increasing. Several authors (Shaw & Newholm, 2002; Szmigin & Carrigan, 2005; Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Barros, Tucci & Costa, 2010) present the consumer as a mediator between market and environmental aspects, having the role of the one who dictates the market demand to minimize environmental problems. The authors emphasize this consumer profile by pointing to him as a conscious individual for adopting a behavior aimed at reducing environmental impacts, denoting his choices with a socio-environmentally responsible bias. In this context, this study sought to answer the following question: what is the influence of environmental concern and hedonism on the consumer behavior of the free fair of Dom Pedrito - RS?

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of environmental concern and/or hedonism on free fair consumer behavior in the municipality of Dom Pedrito, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The originality of this study focuses on the analysis of consumer behavior in a free fair – in particular, addressing environmental concerns and hedonism as a motivation for consumption in this type of marketing channel. Practically, this work will contribute to a better understanding of the motivation of the consumer of the fair, helping managers - in this case, farmers, city halls, and development agencies - to define strategies and actions aimed at stimulating the motivational factors of consumers.

2. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

2.1 Consumer behavior

Since the mid-1950s, several authors have sought in their studies (Uncles, Ehrenberg & Hammond, 1995; Simonson, Carmon, Dhar, Drolet & Nowlis, 2001; Hawkins *et al.*, 2007; Abdu & Purwanto, 2013; Solomon, 2016) to understand consumer behavior. These authors present in their research, from a chronological perspective, the evolution of scientific research on consumer behavior (Faria, Giuliani, Cunha, Souza & Freitas, 2015).

In the 1950s, research [...] explored the psychological determinants of consumer behavior, social determinants [...] and the consumer's decision-making process. [...] 1960 there was the entry of new researchers, coming from other scientific areas, in the field of consumer behavior research. New themes and methodologies began to be explored, such as: theory of perceived risk in consumer behavior, introduction of the experiment methodology in consumer behavior research, studies of loyalty to product brands. [...] 1970s new lines of research were introduced, such as: the behavior of consumption of public services, family buying behavior, industrial buying behavior, information processing, relationship between attitude and behavior. [...] 1980 there was a reaction to quantitative research, valuing qualitative research. Research topics, at that time, were more linked to Anthropology. [...] 1990, with the development of effective software for more robust analysis of data, there is a new wave of studies of a quantitative nature. At the same time, studies on relationship marketing enter the main role of consumer behavior research. In this context, the themes of consumer attitudes and personal relationships are explored. [...] from the year 2000, the Experiential Marketing theme comes into vogue in studies on consumer behavior (Faria *et al.*, 2015, p. 2).

According to Faria *et al.* (2015), the scientific production on consumer behavior in Brazil is expressive. For the authors, research in the area may have relevance, both for academics and professionals, as it reveals a variety of strategic information. In this context, all information about consumers assists in decision making, optimizing organizational strategies and companies must be able to understand how their products or services are acquired and used by consumers, also identifying the value for the customer and the best opportunities to create it (Crosby & Johnson, 2001; Almquist, Heaton & Hall, 2002).

Furthermore, within organizations, marketing professionals along with managers also focus their studies on consumer behavior, seeking to understand which factors lead consumers

to make their purchases by choosing a product and/or service “a” or “b” among many others. (Schinaider, Fagundes & Schinaider, 2016).

Consumer behavior, as explained by Kasarklian (2013), differs according to the personality and preferences that each individual presents, thus, the perception that each one has of a product or service will lead to different attitudes and behaviors. Other factors such as influence due to social and cultural circle, ethical values, and learning, that is, the knowledge that the consumer has of a product, service or even the point of sale influences their behavior (Kasarklian, 2013).

Hawkins *et al.* (2007) explain that consumer behavior includes the analysis of individuals, groups or organizations and the process they use to choose, buy, use and dispose of products, services, experiences or ideas to satisfy needs and the impact that these processes have on consumers and society.

However, before finding the assumptions that theorize consumer behavior, it is necessary to understand the human being and, later, define it (Giglio, 2010). The same author presents three characteristics as the best known that define the human being: rational, emotional, and social; respectively motivated by: reason, affective feeling, norms and culture. After defining the human being, it becomes possible to predict their consumption behavior, and thus, the strategies to be adopted. The subjective norms and culture refer to “beliefs about other people's normative expectations” (Ajzen, 2002) and, therefore, are heavily influenced by external factors that will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 External influences

It is observed that society is evolving from mass culture, in which many consumers have the same preferences, to a diverse culture, where there is an almost infinite number of options (Solomon, 2016). However, despite the new consumer culture, society buys with the same assumptions, through satisfaction. The author argues that purchase choices continue to be actions influenced by factors that permeate between influences of the internal and external environment.

Gutman and Alden (1985) emphasize that the purchase can be influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic evaluative characteristics, such as: price, advertising, brand, and point of sale; these extrinsic. Physical elements and functional characteristics such as product design, coloring, resistance, flavor, and raw material, represent the intrinsic characteristics.

In addition to the factors referring to the characteristics of the products, which may influence consumer behavior, there are also others that circulate in social variables, and

among the main points that influence the individual in his choice at the time of purchase are past events or cultural and social influences of reference groups and personality traits (Monteiro & Veiga, 2009; Rani, 2014). Solomon (2016) endorses those individuals are constantly influenced by the opinion of others when choosing and using products and services. Kotler (2000) emphasizes that culture and the contexts that emerge from it are determinants in people's behavior and desires.

Hawkins *et al.* (2007) treat external influences as macro groups that include culture, demographic factors, social classes, reference groups, family and marketing actions. In this way, culture can be understood as the personality of the society. Furthermore, Solomon (2016) presents culture as the accumulation of meanings, rituals, norms, and traditions that are shared among the members of a community or society.

In the context of the culture variable, the consumer can be influenced through family, beliefs, customs, values, gender, and race, that is, everything that somehow impacts the formation of their personality (Medeiros & Cruz, 2006). Abdu and Purwanto (2013, p. 71) claim in their study that “culture is the most basic cause of a person's desires and behavior”. Thus, according to Kotler (2000), the cultural factor is essential in the study of human behavior, because it is through the culture that people fulfill their role as social beings.

For Abdu and Purwanto (2013), among the social factors, reference groups stand out as a direct influence on people's behavior. The author points out that reference groups “expose a person to new behaviors and lifestyles, influence the person's attitudes and self-concepts, and create pressures to conform that can influence brand and product choices” (Abdu & Purwanto, 2013, p. 71).

Serralvo, Sastre and João (2010) argue that the consumer can be influenced by reference groups in different ways, such as through conversations, suggestions, invitations, compliments, and other sources. These influences can occur through communication, dialogues, and conversations that the consumer experiences together with other people who are included in reference groups. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000), along with Solomon (2016), understand that influences can be psychological, personal, social, and cultural.

There is another factor that influences purchase decision making, which arises intending to minimize environmental problems, where the consumer assumes the role of mediator between organizations and the environment. Consumer interest in the market linked to environmental issues began to receive various terminologies, including green consumption, conscious consumption, and responsible consumption. (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2005; Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Barros *et al.*, 2010).

Some authors point out that the conscious consumer adopts a behavior that aims to alleviate their concerns about issues involving the environment, or even social issues. In this way, it can be seen that consumption in this aspect is influenced, and it is suggested that with these purchase choices, it subsequently reduces impacts and endorses socio-environmental responsibility (Shaw & Newholm, 2002; Barros *et al.*, 2010; Barros & Ayrosa, 2012).

Concomitant with the mediation of the consumer between producer and the environment, organic products appear as a tool for this action, because being concerned with both the impacts on the natural environment and their health, the consumer started to acquire a greater number of products with an organic origin. (Darolt, 2002).

Finally, it is possible to notice from the analysis of studies in the area of consumer behavior, that the purchase can be influenced by different variables, and many changes can occur until the decision is made. In addition to environmental factors, such as people, culture, and situations, individual reasons also impact the purchase decision, such as hedonism and environmental concern, theories arranged in the following topics.

2.3 Hedonism

The term hedonism is an assumption of fundamental psychology that explains reasons for having motivation as a whole, not only from the psychological point of view of happiness and well-being (Fenouillet, 2012). Arruda-Filho and Lennon (2011) emphasize that the greater the hedonic factor, the greater the tendency of consumers to make purchases for pleasure. Liu (2002) adds that consumers who practice hedonism choose what they will buy based on the possibility of receiving them as a gift, through promotions, or when the social group, where the consumer is inserted, already has the same item.

In this sense, buying instigates emotions in the consumer, and Tamir, Mitchell and Gross (2008), report that emotions are part of human beings, and people want to feel them. The hedonic shopping experience reflects emotion, in addition to having a personal and subjective sense, manifesting the psychological value of the purchase, where, from it, values such as the joy of the emotion of having made purchases or the escape from the routine become experiences appreciated by the consumer (Carpenter & Moore, 2009).

Brentano (2009), together with Abbagnano *et al.* (1999), explain that people are constantly looking for pleasant feelings, especially pleasure. And in terms of pleasure, consumers have numerous ways to reach it, and one of them is through the acquisition of products or services that aim to meet needs and desires. In this context, Fonseca, Porto and Barroso (2012) highlight that hedonism is one of the ten motivational values of life, the others

being: power, achievement, stimulation, self-knowledge, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.

Grappi and Montanari (2011, p. 1130) identified that “hedonism is the aspect of the consumption experience that relates to the multisensory, imaginative and emotional elements perceived by consumers”. In summary, several authors reach the same conclusion, revealing that hedonism represents the pleasure of acquiring a product or service (Tamir *et al.*, 2008; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Allam & Shoib, 2013; Dhurup, Mafini & Dumasi, 2014; Baba, Kallas, Gil & Realini, 2016).

2.4 Free fair

Free fairs are described as a channel that promotes the direct relationship between producer and final consumer, aiming at facilitating the identification of customers' needs and desires by the producer, thus resulting in an improvement in production and its structure of commercialization (Colla, Staduto, Rocha & Rinaldi, 2008; Coêlho & Pinheiro, 2009).

Free fairs have as a characteristic the issue of geographic proximity, that is, where they take place is easily accessible for the consumer, and this same perceived spatial distance makes it possible to establish agreements between banking neighbors, where from that, the construction of rules that seek to harmonize coexistence occurs, however, they are valid only for the vendors who build and define them (Sato, 2007). For the author, these rules include times for assembling and disassembling the stalls and even the price range practiced at the fair.

The fair transcends a symbol of life improvement, influencing the lives of those who seek to improve their family income, obtaining it with activities developed at the fair. The space where the fair is located, popular and free, represents a place of socialization, provision of information, and consumption (Ângulo, 2011). Pereira, Castro, Rosinha, Rodrigues and Pereira (2016) reinforce that fairs are public spaces loaded with symbolism and forms of commerce, whose dynamics reveal territories that have been modified.

According to Ribeiro, Ângulo, Noronha, Castro, Galizoni, Calixto and Silvestre (2003), the fair sells basic necessities and services between people from the countryside and the city who participate in it, between sellers and buyers. Marketers also sell finished or semi-finished consumer goods with no stocks. The authors also point out that the fair aims to move products in economically deprived areas.

Regarding the people who attend the fairs, Brandenburg, Rucinski and Júnior (2008) point out that they are people with a higher education level and socioeconomically higher than

the standards presented by the Brazilian average, looking for products for a healthier diet, however, Ribeiro *et al.* (2005) emphasize in their study that the fair goers are from different social classes, with the lowest income standing out.

The free fairs have a history of a strong presence in the daily lives of consumers, and today it continues to play an important role in the sale of products, such as vegetables. Public organizations constitute mini-projects aimed at the low-income rural population that use the spaces of fairs to help them, encouraging activity, in addition to valuing the bonds that exist between farmers and consumers (Ângulo, 2011).

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

In search of answers to the questions raised in this study, descriptive research was adopted. This, according to Gil (2002, p. 46), has “as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a certain population or phenomenon”, such classification is based on the analysis of the behavior of consumers at the free fair in Dom Pedrito - RS, identifying whether they carry out their activities. purchases by hedonic influence or through a perception of environmental concern. The municipality of Dom Pedrito was the object of study, primarily because of the location of the researchers. But also, because it is a typically rural municipality, with considerable agricultural production coming from family farming, and small, in terms of population (Dorneles, Mainardi, Bettencourt, Pires, Simões & Nascimento, 2018; Rockenbach *et al.*, 2021), which increases significantly the impact of this type of food marketing channel (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2005).

Regarding the method, the study is characterized as a Survey, of a quantitative nature. In the quantitative approach, knowledge is objective and quantifiable.

[...] in a quantitative study, the researcher conducts his work from a plan *established a priori*, with clearly specified hypotheses and operationally defined variables. It is concerned with objective mediation and quantification of results. It seeks precision, avoiding distortions in the data analysis and interpretation stage, thus ensuring a safety margin in relation to the inferences obtained (GODOY, 1995, p. 58, our translation).

The study sample included 113 consumers from the free fair in the municipality of Dom Pedrito, located in the Campanha Region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Fundação de Estatística e Economia, 2017), who frequent the place to purchase goods offered by small producers. The free fair was created in 2015, where initially about 30 registered farmers started to sell their products, distributed in: horticulture (vegetables), beverages (juices and artisanal wines), dairy products (cheeses and sweets), breads, handicrafts, and other products

related to family farming (Rockenbach *et al.*, 2021). Regarding vegetables, the municipal fair has organic and conventional producers (Duarte & Medeiros, 2018).

Data collection took place through the application of an online questionnaire constructed and distributed through the *Google Forms* tool, measuring consumers' environmental concerns in 10 items; in one item, the existence of reference group influence; and through four items, if the consumer of the free fair makes his purchases in a hedonic way. The scale used to measure these items was a five-point Likert scale, the same ruler adopted by Noronha (2008) and Grappi and Montanari (2011) in studies on consumer behavior. The Likert scale, according to Mattar (2005), consists of summation scales to measure attitudes, presenting as the main advantage a significant accuracy regarding the respondent's opinion about each statement.

The items for measuring consumer behavior regarding environmental concerns were based on Noronha (2008), where it was evaluated whether the consumer takes into account the perception he has about how much the product he is consuming impacts his life, society, and the environment. Hedonism was measured using the Grappi and Montanari (2011) scale, which evaluated the perception of hedonic purchases of these consumers.

It is important to note that the scale used to measure consumer behavior at the fair was the closest to the reality of the free fair in the municipality of Dom Pedrito-RS.

Table 1 – Variables used in the research.

constructs	Indicator	Questions that make up the constructs	authors
Environmental Concern	EC1	I buy at the free fair because there is an offer of organic products.	Noronha (2008)
	EC2	I buy products at the fair because I am concerned about social and environmental issues.	
	EC3	I buy products at the free fair because I care about my health and that of my family.	
	EC4	I consider organic products to be more nutritious when compared to other types of food.	
	EC5	I prefer the taste of organics when compared to the taste of other types of food.	
	EC6	I believe that organic foods provide greater health guarantees than conventional foods.	
	EC7	I believe that organics contribute to the conservation and preservation of the environment.	
	EC8	I believe that organics contribute to protecting future generations.	
	EC9	I believe that organic production helps to reduce global warming.	
	EC10	I believe that not using pesticides in organic production prevents soil contamination.	
Reference groups	RC1	I started to buy at the free fair on the recommendation of a neighbor, friends, or relatives.	Costa (2002)
Hedonism	HE1	I buy it at the free fair because it is a pleasant experience.	Grappi and Montanari
	HE2	I like to shop at the fair because it makes me feel good	

	HE3	I enjoy shopping at the fair	(2011)
	HE4	I feel like shopping at the fair is like an escape from my routine	

Source: Authors (2022).

A pre-test was applied to identify possible failures and thus minimize possible problems in the application of the research instrument. Fifteen respondents were selected to evaluate the questionnaire, selected from the researchers' contact network. According to Almeida and Botelho (2006), this number of respondents is the minimum number required for a consistent pre-test. After the adjustments were made after the pre-test, the research instrument was applied.

The sample of this study was a non-probabilistic sample for convenience since a social network frequented by the researchers was used to disseminate the questionnaire, where individuals from this network answered the questions between May 17 and 26, 2017.

The analysis of the results was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Editor for Data, version 20. For this study, the ANOVA technique and the T-Test were used to verify differences in means, and Pearson's Correlation to identify similarities between the constructs.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first point visualized in the sample of this study aimed to question whether or not to make purchases at the free fair in the municipality of Dom Pedrito, making the question a filter of this study. A total of 184 responses were obtained, of which 113 were affirmative.

The socioeconomic profile of the 113 consumers who responded to this study can be seen in Table 1. The sample consisted mostly of female consumers (85%). Although the application of an online questionnaire is not the most appropriate way to assess this, as this result may have been influenced simply by the fact that women were more interested in opening the questionnaire. Vargas, Dorneles, Bettencourt and Kratz (2018), in a study carried out in Dom Pedrito, but with a questionnaire applied *in loco* in supermarkets and butchers, also had a sample composed mostly of women (72% vs 28%). The authors attributed it to the fact that women are still responsible for most of the daily activities, such as going to the supermarket and butchers.

The age groups highlighted in the analysis were 19 to 29 years old (31%), followed by people aged 30 to 39 years old (29.2%). Regarding education, it was noted that 29.2% of respondents have a graduate degree, 22.1% have completed higher education and 20.4% have already completed some degree, identifying a high level of education among the consumers of

this research. The level of schooling found in the present study is in agreement with that pointed out by Brandenburg *et al.* (2008) who obtained a high level of schooling when compared to the Brazilian average.

Table 2 – Socioeconomic profile and frequency of visit of free trade fair consumers.

Variables	Number	Share (%)
Genre		
Female	96	85.0
Male	17	15.0
Age group		
Under 18 years old	4	3.5
From 18 to 29 years old	35	31.0
From 30 to 39 years old	33	29.2
From 40 to 49 years old	25	22.1
From 50 to 59 years old	11	9.7
More than 60 years	5	4.4
Schooling		
Incomplete Elementary	2	1.8
Complete Elementary	3	2.7
Incomplete High School	4	3.5
Complete High School	23	20.4
Incomplete Graduation	25	22.1
Graduated	23	20.4
Postgraduate studies	33	29.2
Family income		
Up to R\$ 1.500	30	26.5
From R\$ 1.501 to R\$ 2.500	17	15.0
From R\$ 2.501 to R\$ 3.500	15	13.3
From R\$ 3.501 to R\$ 4.500	18	15.9
More than R\$ 4.501	33	29.2
Frequency of going to the Free fair		
Every week	25	22.12
Every 15 days	14	12.39
Eventually	74	65.49

Source: Authors (2022).

The vast majority of consumers (65.49%) said they eventually attend the free fair, but only 22.12% attend every week. This frequency of going differs from that found in other studies (Costa, Andrade & Felipe, 2016; Lobo, Cavalcante, Albuquerque & Calheiros, 2020), since the products offered at the fair, such as vegetables, dairy products, and bread (Rockenbach *et al.*, 2021) are perishable and consumed daily, making consumers tend to return to the place more often. In a study carried out at the free fair in Maceió - AL, the frequency of weekly visits was 64.7% and, of these, 94.2% state that the visit is due to the need for the products offered (Lobo *et al.*, 2020). In a free fair in the municipality of Formiga - MG, Costa *et al.* (2016) observed that 82.5% of the people interviewed attend the free fair every week, while 17.5% said they go only two or fewer times a month. The findings of the aforementioned authors reinforce the idea that the free fair is a space for socialization and not

just for consumption (Ângulo, 2011). The findings of this study regarding the frequency of going to the free fair may be linked to the municipality (Dom Pedrito) being typically rural and with a small population, allowing direct contact between producer and consumer. According to Maia, Nascimento and Hanke (2019), most of the farmers who offer their products at the fair live within the urban perimeter, which can favor direct or custom sales to part of the population, which consequently contributes to less need to go to the fair.

The socioeconomic profile of consumers at the Dom Pedrito free fair differs in some aspects presented by other studies that analyzed the profile of consumers in other cities. Rocha, Costa, Castoldi, Cecchetti, Calvete and Lodi (2010) show that the profile of those who go to the free fair in the city of Passo Fundo is between 40 and 60 years old, and the male consumer is the one who has the highest frequency of visits to the place in the city of the Production mesoregion (Fundação de Estatística e Economia, 2017) in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. On the other hand, Chaves (2011) found age rates that are similar to those found in this study, verifying that in Remígio, a city in the state of Paraíba, 38% of consumers of the fair are aged between 30 and 49 years.

The research participants evaluated fifteen items using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items presented in the survey aimed to measure the level of agreement that the respondent had with each statement. Therefore, the mean, standard deviation and normality test are presented in Table 2.

Table 3 – Normality test of items influencing purchase based on asymmetry and kurtosis.

Affirmatives	Average	Standard deviation	Asymmetry	Kurtosis
EC1	3.34	1.360	-0.330	-1.143
EC2	3.33	1.333	-0.370	-1.063
EC3	3.73	1.262	-0.686	-0.682
EC4	3.67	1.285	-0.623	-0.696
EC5	3.83	1.157	-0.687	-0.613
EC6	3.78	1.178	-0.559	-0.843
EC7	3.72	1.145	-0.548	-0.751
EC8	3.40	1.207	-0.222	-1.023
EC9	3.80	1.240	-0.718	-0.698
EC10	3.71	1.280	-0.605	-0.821
RG1	2.70	1.439	0.141	-1.439
HE1	3.47	1.370	-0.624	-0.880
HE2	3.48	1.330	-0.519	-0.954
HE3	3.56	1.343	-0.632	-0.865
HE4	2.65	1.451	0.195	-1.434

Source: Authors (2022).

In Table 3 it is possible to observe how much each item influences the consumer's purchase motivation at the Dom Pedrito free fair. It is worth noting that all statements are in accordance with normality, as demonstrated by asymmetry and kurtosis, which should not

exceed the value of 3 and 10, respectively (Kline, 2011). Items related to environmental concern (EC) had higher averages when compared to the reference group (RG) and hedonism (HE). The highest averages were for items EC5 (3.83), EC9 (3.80), and EC6 (3.78), which concern, respectively, taste, health assurance, and the potential for reducing global warming of products organically grown. These results are in agreement with those found by Lea and Worsley (2005) in Australia, where most consumers believe that organic foods are better for health and the environment, in addition to having a pleasant taste. Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz and Stanton (2007), in an extensive literature review on the subject, also found health, taste, and concern with environmental issues as motivating factors for the consumption of organic foods. Although the free fair in Dom Pedrito is not characterized as a fair for organic products, consumers often associate food purchased at the fair with family farming, low use of pesticides and greater freshness (Carvalho, Rezende & Rezende, 2010) in line with research findings.

Among the hedonic statements, HE3 had the highest average (3.56), followed by HE2 (3.48). The first concerns consumers' pleasure in shopping at the free fair and the second, how much buying at the fair makes them feel good. Costa *et al.* (2016) also found that consumers at the free fair in Formiga, in the interior of the state of Minas Gerais, seek, in addition to the commercialized products, sensations related to pleasure, such as walking, meeting friends and snacking. Hedonistic consumption refers to the multisensory aspects of the consumer, such as fantasies and emotions related to experiences with products (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982) and places. Knowledge about this type of consumption at the fair can help farmers and managers to develop marketing strategies that involve consumers' emotions, making the place and consumption a unique experience (Topping, 2007).

There was a significant difference ($P < 0.05$) between the constructs through the t-test, demonstrating that environmental concern is the factor most considered by consumers when making their purchases (Table 4).

Table 4 – T-test of the constructs mentioned in the study.

Constructs	Average	Standard deviation	P value
Environmental concern	3.77	1.114	0.000
Hedonism	3.42	1.340	

Source: Authors (2022).

Environmental concern is an important attribute that represents an individual's compassion for the environment (Dagher, Itani & Kassar, 2015), directly impacting

consumers' decision-making so that highly concerned consumers are more likely to assess the impact their purchases have on the environment (Follows & Jobber, 2000; Nath, Kumar, Agrawal, Gautam & Sharma, 2013).

Regarding the frequency of the consumer going to the free fair of Dom Pedrito, Table 4 presents the results of the ANOVA test, demonstrating that there was no significant difference ($P>0.05$) within the constructs studied.

Table 5 – Frequency of going to the free fair.

Constructs	Frequency	Average	Standard deviation	P value
Environmental concern	Every week	4.20	1.000	0.074
	Every 15 days	3.46	1.307	
	Eventually	3.68	1.087	
Hedonism	Every week	3.70	1.266	0.467
	Every 15 days	3.46	1.433	
	Eventually	3.31	1.351	
Reference Group	Every week	2.72	1.542	0.987
	Every 15 days	2.64	1.499	
	Eventually	2.70	1.412	

Source: Authors (2022).

The frequency of going to the fair was not related to the constructs studied, in other words, a consumer who is concerned about the environment does not go to the fair more or less often because of this, as well as consumers with hedonic motivation. These results suggest that consumers go to the fair according to the need to consume the products offered and not because of their motivations and/or personal sensations, as verified by Lobo *et al.* (2020).

There was no significant difference ($P>0.05$) for gender within the constructs studied, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 – T-Test for consumer gender.

Constructs	Gender	Average	Standard deviation	P value
Environmental concern	Male	3.97	1.096	0.433
	Female	3.73	1.119	
Hedonism	Male	3.70	1.225	0.343
	Female	3.36	1.359	
Reference group	Male	2.82	1.629	0.701
	Female	2.68	1.410	

Source: Authors (2022).

In this study, men and women were similarly concerned with the environment when consuming at the free fair. These findings differ from what is commonly found in the literature where women are often identified as more concerned with environmental issues. Laroche, Bergeron and Barbaro-Forleo (2001) found that women are more concerned about

the environment and willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products than men. Dagher *et al.* (2015) observed that environmental concern is related to the behavior of consuming “green products” and that this is stronger among women than men. This characteristic of women being more concerned with environmental issues is in accordance with the theory of socialization, which describes those women have an “ethics of care” that makes them more compassionate and caring (Beutel & Marini, 1995) and this feeling can extend to the environment.

Regarding hedonic motivation, the result of this study also diverged from what is commonly found in the literature. Women have greater hedonic motivation compared to men (Davis, Lang & Diego, 2014), as they focus more on the pleasant aspects provided by the purchase, having a stronger emotional motivation (Dittmar, Long & Meek, 2004).

As for the respondents' family income, based on the result of the ANOVA test, it was also identified that there was no significant difference ($P > 0.05$) within the constructs. These findings may suggest that the prices charged at the city's free fair are fair and/or better than other marketing channels, allowing low-income families to associate good prices with hedonic and/or environmental issues. Finally, the Pearson Correlation Test was carried out, seeking to identify the presence of an association between the two constructs presented in the study regarding the behavior of the consumer at the free fair in the municipality covered (Table 7).

Table 7 – Pearson correlation Test between the constructs.

Constructs	Environmental concern		Hedonism	
	r	P value	r	P value
Environmental concern	-	-	0.70	0.000
Hedonism	0.70	0.000	-	-

Source: Authors (2022).

There was a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.70$; $P < 0.05$) between environmental concern and hedonic motivation among consumers of the free fair of Dom Pedrito. The relationship between the two constructs is desirable and, as it is positive, it shows that as one increases, the other also increases, that is, the greater the concern for the environment, the greater the pleasure felt in the experience of consuming the products offered at the fair. Experiences are inherently emotional and personal, encompassing factors such as personal interpretations (Pullman & Gross, 2003). In addition, experiences are the result of the meeting and experiencing situations, with stimuli created for the senses, feelings, and the mind (Schmitt, 2000), which can be generated during consumption.

The result of this study is in line with what several authors point out, in which the consumer presents himself as a mediator between the market and the environment, having the role of the one who dictates the market demand with the intention of minimizing environmental impacts (Connolly & Prothero, 2008; Barros *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, when making their purchases, the consumer seeks to meet their needs through pleasant feelings that provide pleasure (Abbagnano *et al.*, 1999; Brentano, 2009).

5. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to analyze the influence of environmental concern and/or hedonism on free fair consumer behavior in the municipality of Dom Pedrito, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. Based on the results of this study, it was possible to verify that consumers of the free fair in the municipality of Dom Pedrito - RS consume at the fair mostly for issues related to environmental concerns than for hedonic factors. However, the correlation observed between the two variables demonstrates that the consumer who makes his purchases thinking about the environment also feels pleasure when making them.

In addition, there was no influence of the sociodemographic variables studied, such as age, gender, and family income, on the studied constructs. These findings suggest that the free fair, in general, tends to attract an audience that is concerned about environmental issues and, when consuming “conscious products”, they also feel pleasure, regardless of other issues such as age and gender. In relation to family income, the absence of a significant difference between the constructs suggests that the prices charged at the fair are fair, allowing lower-income consumers to also consume conscious foods, a fact that contributes to the democratization of food and food security.

As practical contributions, this research’s findings can be used in the area of marketing and strategic planning, as they bring results about the consumer profile of the fair. From the knowledge of consumers' motivation to consume in each place, it is possible that management strategies are drawn up for the dissemination of products and markets. In the case of the free fair in the city studied, it was evident that consumers consume in this space out of concern for the environment, but also because they feel pleasure. Thus, publicizing the way products are produced and/or manufactured, as well as their health and environmental benefits, can be strategies to encourage purchases in this space. Making the space more attractive, through the diversification of the offer of products and its physical structure itself, can also be a strategy to favor factors related to the hedonism of consumers in relation to the free fair.

This study has the limitations of being carried out in a single free fair and the use of non-probabilistic sampling, with no possibility of generalizations. As a suggestion for future studies, it is recommended to carry out an on-site study at the Dom Pedrito free fair, for a greater perception of consumer behavior and the trade practice of the marketers, in addition to analyzing other free fairs in neighboring municipalities to Dom Pedrito.

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