

Consumer Behavior and Psychological Empowerment: Proposing a Measurement Scale

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Abstract- *This paper proposes a new conception of consumer psychological empowerment while substantiating and defining its different facets. To this end, we conducted 18 interviews with biological food consumers which have been recorded and transcribed and analyzed using the Sphinx software. The results indicate how this new concept behaves and which consists of four dimensions and two sub-dimensions issued from the literature and the exploratory research: meaning, impact, self-determination, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and competence. These dimensions interact with each other to form the concept of consumer psychological empowerment (CPE). This latter may be taken as a new element in understanding consumers' expectations towards organic food consumption.*

Keywords- *Psychological empowerment, consumer behavior, new concept, organic food, « Sphinx Plus » software, measurement scale.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Consumers have become more and more demanding, thus we witness a shift in power position from producers to consumers[25]. A new type of consumer is born, the “consumactor” who is conscious of his/her importance and power and tends to resist marketing efforts[24]. Then, the consumer took power and exhibited a feeling of controlling, understanding and influencing the environment. With this new confidence in their abilities and competences, reinforced by development of Internet and democratization of technology access, emerged the concept of “empowerment”. This concept is defined as a psychological state that leads to a structural change which pushes some consumers to adopt particular consumption models[11]. Nevertheless, there is to empowerment than that as it considers the power the consumactor exerts on himself/herself during consumption. In this line of thinking, empowerment includes an engaged and cooperative consumption behavior[11]. The psychological aspect of empowerment is the fundamental key stone of empowerment in general[34]. It stands as an important factor which influences individuals' or employees' behavior in a variety of contexts (social, management...etc). ([9], [12]). Marketing-wise, empowerment has been linked to consumer behavior through the concept of “consumer empowerment” which generally influences consumers' behavior and more specifically their long-term consumption habits. This awareness of the environment is in symbiosis with the

increasing pattern of biological agriculture across the globe. Most consumers have positive attitudes towards biological food [19], and the proportion of consumers who regularly buy them remains poor in European biological food markets. First, several studies have focused on comprehending consumers' motives behind selecting bio food ([3], [23], [17], [1], [21], [7]). Second, an important number of studies examined the relationship empowerment-individual in the management[12] and social spheres and in marketing as “consumer empowerment” ([24], [9]). Still, other studies focused on the relationship psychological empowerment-individual, patients behavior [2], bankers banque[15] and travel agents [5]. However, few studies have examined the conceptualization and measurement of consumer psychological empowerment. Accordingly, we propose this concept as a result of a review of the relevant literature and of an exploratory study which we think would improve our understanding of consumer behavior. As the concept is a new one, we developed a measurement scale to test its relevance in a model that integrates psychological empowerment and consumer behavior. The aim of this paper then is to present in detail the different stages followed to develop this measurement scale. The “sphinx Plus” software was used to accurately code and interpret our data and reduce subjectivity related to analyzing qualitative data.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature proceeds twofold. First, we define the concept psychological empowerment and its dimensions.

2.1 Psychological Empowerment

The notion of empowerment may be extended to mean the acquisition process, even a “power appropriation” through which an actor takes in charge his/her own professional, economic, family and social issues. Empowerment has been treated by many disciplines like political sciences, psychology, sociology, management and marketing [30]. This concept has been subject of research since many years. Since the end of the 1980s, we have noticed an exponential increase of studies, papers and projects directly treating this topic. There is no simple or a general consensus on the concept of empowerment [12], and several definitions within the same area of research have been proposed [21], [34]. [32] propose « consumer empowerment » as the marketing conception of “empowerment”. The authors mainly focus on the power aspect of the concept as consumers may value their power through market economy. This suggests that the more consumers have the choice in their purchases, the more they are in a position to exert power through their consumption choices [26]. In line with [12], consumer empowerment is an important factor which generally influences consumers’ behavior and decisions, and in particular consumption of durable energy. [22] define empowerment in psychology as « the appropriation of power which enables any individual self-confirmation, autonomy and detachment from the community”. It allows individuals to exist as a social entity, to respond to his/her needs and ambitions while respecting the values and norms of the community in which he/she lives, even going beyond and changing them”. Referring to [22] definition, individual empowerment calls back individual attributes like personal competence, conscientiousness of and motivation for social action, a process through which the individual reinforces his/her abilities favoring self-esteem, initiative and control. Psychologically speaking, empowerment is translated by a feeling of confidence in one’s ability or what is referred to in the literature as “claiming power” (and the perception of degree of self-

Second, we examine consumers’ purchasing behavior of bio products.

achievement). A process in which individuals discover their own power sources on the basis of their experience and actions. This latter depends on personal development, experience and ability to organize and support or on mutual group support. Psychological empowerment is then necessary to individuals. [16] defines empowerment in management as the “ability to leverage human and material resources for things to be done”. This ability exists when the working environment allows employees to have access to information, support, resources and opportunities to learn and develop their knowledge. According to this thesis, empowerment is then born in supervisors’ behavior which has to create a fulfilling organizational context that influences employees’ working attitudes. First, the studies of ([16],[6]) highlighted the concept of “psychological empowerment” as a creator of motivation, and then came [31] who subscribed to the work of [31] and defined psychological empowerment as “an intrinsic increase of motivation towards the task”. [28] was the first to clearly use the term « psychological empowerment ». The author mainly re-took [31] definition and kept three dimensions. Psychological empowerment is defined as a motivational construct manifested through four cognitive elements, which are: meaning (the value of a task given by the employee’s ideals and standards), feeling of competence (feeling of an individual’s personal efficiency in the task), auto-determination (feeling of autonomy which is directly linked to the fact of reacting either because of an interest for the task, or because of the values the individual adheres to), and the perception of the impact (the degree to which behavior may make a difference within his/her own environment). These dimensions combine with each other to yield a general conception of psychological empowerment motivation which is considered as a cognitive state known by a feeling of perceived control and competence and by exerting an impact on others. Much of measuring psychological empowerment in management is summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Summary of psychological empowerment measurement

Construct	Author	Definition	Dimensions	Field
Psychological Empowerment	Menon (1999)	A three-dimension psychological state.	(1) perceived control (2) feeling of competence (3) internalization of objectives	Management: Concept related to employees’ attitudes and behavior

	Spreitzer (1995b)	A motivational construct manifested in four cognitive elements : the individual's feeling of being able to build his/her role and working environment.	(1) meaning of work. (2)feeling of competence (3) level of impact (4) auto-determination	inside the working environment
	Thomas and Velthouse(1990)	« an intrinsic increase of motivation for the task » which results in four cognitive states.	(1) meaning (2)competence (3) the impact (4) the choice	
	Conger and Kanungo, 1988).	A creator of motivation « a process of increasing the feeling of efficiency by members of the organization thanks to identifying the conditions which encourage not working and eliminating these conditions through formal organizational practices and informal efficient information sharing techniques.	Not mentioned	
	Kanter (1979)	«ability to leverage human and material resources for things to be done »	Not mentioned	

2.2 Consumer behavior and organic food

Organic food industry is more and more increasing across the globe. This expansion should be understood as a sign of good comprehension of consumer behavior, explaining the several studies which focused on the determining factors of consumers' decisions. These studies tried to reveal the role played by psycho-graphic, demographic and socio-economic factors in consumers' choices [7],[19].[19]align with researchers' belief that most consumers have positive attitudes towards biological food but the proportion of consumers who regularly buy them remains low, hence the interest for consumer psychological empowerment which could be an important determinant of consumers' purchasing behavior. Psychological empowerment as a creator of motivation has been examined by psychology, sociology and mainly by management sciences, yet it was recently that researchers started to examine this phenomenon in a systematic fashion. It is highly possible that this scarcity of empirical studies reflects a lack of measurement of empowerment. In Table 1 above, there is only one measurement which is that of [29] in management. This confirms the relevance of developing a measurement scale of psychological empowerment in view of responding to the limits of the literature at this level. The following section will present the different stages undertaken to develop a measurement scale of consumer psychological empowerment (see appendix III for its conceptualization).

[8] proposes eight steps for scale development: (1) specify the domain of the construct, (2) generate sample of items, (3) collect data, (4) purify measures, (5) re-collect data, (6) assess reliability, (7) assess validity, and (8) develop norms. In this paper, concentrate on the two first steps as shown hereafter. Studying the psychometric features of the scale is in process. To reach our aim, we conducted an exploratory study. The items have been generated on the basis of the interviews conducted with consumers. The sample contained 18 semi-directive interviews of a 20-minute duration. Data collection has been done then on the basis of an interview guide listing the different themes to be treated (Table 2). The asked questions have been elaborated from the psychological empowerment dimensions issued from the literature. The collected data has been then transcribed in view of conducting a content analysis, using the "Sphinx Plus" software. The content analysis allowed us to generate a set of elements that would be used to measure consumer psychological empowerment (appendix II). Sphinx is a software which analyses qualitative/quantitative data. The generated data of our sample is mainly qualitative. The verbatim output has been transcribed, coded and analyzed in view of generating items that measure consumer psychological empowerment. The use of the Sphinx software may bring about tangible advantages, like shortening analysis time, more deep and accurate coding and interpretation and may provide researchers with better data management[14].The software allows also for a great

3. METHODOLOGY

precision and greater transparency[33].However, using subjective.
software, the researcher's task becomes easier and less

Table 2 : The Interview Guide

Dimensions of CPE	Interview Guide
Self-determination	General question : Q1) According to you: what is a bio product? Theme 1 : psychological empowerment and autodetermination Q2) Explain to us what motivates you to attend an international fair of bio products Q3) Do you consume/buy biological products? If Yes, why? If No, why?
Competence, meaning	Theme 2 : psychological empowerment, competence and meaning Q4) if you consume/buy biological products, which products do you consume? And why this choice? Q5) According to you, when consuming biological products, do you feel differently about other projects?
The impact	Theme 3 : psychological empowerment and impact Q6) Generally-speaking, do you influence your family/environment in their consumption patterns? Q7) Do you influence your environment to consume biological products? If yes, how?

4. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The following tables report the results of the content analysis of consumers' verbatim output which allowed us to classify the frequencies of the main "information units" (categories) mentioned by the interviewees[4] and the results of the Sphinx software (appendix I) and their interpretation. We proceed with the results of one category at a time and their respective interpretation.

4.1 Self-determination

- Explain to us what motivates you to attend an international fair of bio products
- Do you consume/buy biological products? If Yes, why? If No, why?

The respondents claimed they are free to choose bio products, which is related to the fact of reacting either according to interest, i.e. intrinsically-motivated (avoidance of chemical substances, life expectancy, good

health, avoidance of illnesses, and taste) or according to the values they adhere to, i.e. intrinsically-motivated (pleasure to protect the environment, return to nature, like bio products, enjoying the environment). For self-determination, we found two- sub-dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

4.1.1 Intrinsic motivation

The following classification table shows 4 main categories identified in consumers' discourse: "pleasure to follow our ancestors' consumption patterns and all that is related to nature", "like bio products", "pleasure to protect the environment" and "enjoying the environment".Some respondents indicated that they are motivated to buy bio products out of love for the bio domain; others said they feel pleasure protecting and enjoying the environment. Others declared they have pleasure when they follow their ancestors' consumption patterns and all that is related to nature (Table 3).

Table 3: Intrinsic motivation: reasons why consumers choose bio products because of the values they adhere to (the most cited words)

	Intrinsic motivation	Self-determination
	Pleasure protecting the environment	Pleasure when they follow their ancestors' consumption patterns and all that is related to nature
	Like bio products	Enjoying the environment
1		1
2	1	
3	1	1
4		2
5	1	
6		1
7	1	
8		1
9		1
10		1

11	1	1	1	1
12			1	
13				1
14		1		
15		2		
16			1	
17	1			1
18			1	
Total	6	7	8	7

The following table summarizes consumers' verbatim output in terms of the most cited words presented in the previous table (table3).

« I am pleased when i eat something that contributes to the protection of the environment »
« I consume bio because i enjoy the environment »
«I like all that is bio all my life is bio : well-being ; nature ; bio cosmetics ; bio clothes ; bio therapy »
« i think that bio products are good , it's nature itself, am always weak for nature and return to nature, consume bio, olive oil-bread I don't feel hungry for the rest of the day »

4.1.2 Extrinsic motivation

The following table reports five categories identified in consumers' verbatim output. However, "good health" and "avoidance of chemical products" were the most cited categories. Consumers explain their motivation towards 4).

purchasing bio products main by their taste and by avoidance of chemical products which make them later in good health "extrinsic motivation" (Table

Table 4. « extrinsic motivation »: expected benefits of consuming bio products (the most cited words)

	Extrinsic motivation			Self-determination	
	Life expectancy	Good health	Avoiding illnesses	Taste	Avoiding chemical products
1				3	
2		3			1
3		5	4	3	4
4	1	1	1	2	3
5		2			
6		3		1	2
7					3
8		1		3	
9		2	1		2
10			1	2	1
11	1	1	1	1	1
12		1		3	

13		1			1
14		2			
15		2	1		1
16		1		3	
17		2		3	1
18	1				
Total	3	27	9	24	20

The following table summarizes consumers' verbatim output in terms of the most cited words presented in the previous table:

« ...I am 63 years old and I look 50 years old. I have no illness and my mother has 98 years old and she is well thanks to bio food".
« I consume bio because it is safe, with no additives and products which bother the stomach »

4.2 Competence

According to you, when consuming biological products, do you feel differently about other products? And why?

In most cases, the interviewees declared that by consuming bio products, they feel some degree of personal efficiency, which was cited 17 times and they

used 9 times the term "control", i.e. they control Table 5: Personal efficiency, consumers' personal control of their behavior (the most cited words) what they consume. For instance, one respondent declared: " I feel that I master all, I control all,...etc" (Table 5)

Competence		
	Control	Personal Efficiency
1		1
2	1	1
3	3	
4		1
5		1
6		1
7	2	1
8		1
9	1	1
10		1
11	1	1
U12		1
U13		1
U14		1
U15		1
U16		1
U17	1	1

U18		1
Total	9	17

The following table summarizes examples of consumers' verbatim output in terms of the most cited words presented in the previous table:

« I have a feeling of control over my life; I am in the process of purifying my body, doing good to my body, I feel different from others by improving my body ».

« I am satisfied by the quality of the product, as I often buy my polishing cream from a bio producer to make bio creams at home, then I feel some degree of personal efficiency ».

4.3 Meaning

-If you consume/buy biological products, which products do you consume? and why this choice?

Analysis of consumers' output allowed us to highlight the importance of consumers' judgment of the objectives from purchasing bio products according to their values

and beliefs. Table 6 below shows that 2 main categories have been identified. However, "values" have been cited 12 times and "beliefs" 28 times.

Table 6.Importance of consumers' judgment of their reasons for consuming bio products<< meaning>>(the most cited words)

Meaning		
	Values	Beliefs
1	1	1
2		2
3	1	2
4	3	3
5		1
6		1
7	2	3
8	1	2
9		1
10		1
11	1	1
12		3
13		1
14	1	2
15	1	1
16		1
17		1
18	1	1
Total	12	28

The following table summarizes consumers' verbatim output in terms of the most cited words in the previous table:

«I love nature, and I believe so much in agriculture, since I was a kid I tend to consume all that is bio and I am very much convinced of this life style ».

« I am convinced given the taste and its quality allows me to feel it is bio because there is a difference between bio and normal, by tasting I feel a great difference at the level of taste and even the shape ».

4.4 The Impact

- Do you influence your environment to consume biological products? If yes, how?

Consumption of bio products influences others' consumption patterns as respondents declared they have an impact on their children, families and work colleagues

in terms of consuming bio products. Nineteen (19) respondents mentioned the word "influence" and 17 of them mentioned the word "advice" (Table 7).

Table 7: Impact of bio consumers on others (the most cited words)

Impact		
	Influence	Advice
1	1	1
2	1	1
3	2	2
4	2	1
5		2
6	2	
7	1	1
8	1	1
9		1
10	1	1
11	1	1
12	2	2
13		1
14	2	1
15		1
16	2	
17	1	
18	1	
Total	19	17

The following table summarizes consumers' verbatim output in terms of the most cited words presented in the previous table:

« When I buy bio my daughter becomes happy by consuming it (bio tomatoes..) (because i influenced her since she was a kid) ».

« I advise my entourage to consume bio, and I wish there are centers, clubs, doctors, lawyers premises to elaborate cultivation contracts with farmers to boost the local market even before thinking of export in order to encourage consumers ».

Referring to the content analysis of the interviews, the analysis of consumers' verbatim output using Sphinx and the previous research on psychological empowerment and bio consumers' behavior; we examined the new concept of consumer psychological empowerment (CPE). It is defined as "the consumer's feeling of psychological control or the influence of his/her behavior and the perception of the competence that allows him/her to be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to adopt particular consumption

models". We proposed a 14-item measurement scale for CPE (appendix II).

5. DISCUSSION

Most research on psychological empowerment has been conducted mainly on employees. The scales of ([27], [31],and[20]) measuring psychological empowerment in organization explain employees' behavior and assimilate psychological empowerment with intrinsic motivation, which tends to exclude extrinsic motivation. [29]used her measurement scale in management contains "auto-

determination” which relates to the feeling of autonomy, a dimension directly linked to the fact of reacting by interest in the activity (extrinsic motivation) or by values to which the individual adheres (intrinsic motivation)[10]. For Spreitzer, auto-determination is the feeling of being free in initiating and regulating their activities. It relates to feeling of autonomy[27], which explains that auto-determination has been considered generally in measuring psychological empowerment by [27]. However, our measure of CPE includes the two sub-dimensions of auto-determination of “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivation. Our CPE measurement scale may represent a contribution to the marketing literature and may be to extend the literature on psychological empowerment and consumer behavior. It provides a new element for the comprehension of consumer behavior including the extrinsic side of it (appendix I) and helps adapt new offer strategies of bio food consumption.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper conceptualized consumer psychological empowerment. We proposed a measurement scale of CPE relying on interviews with consumers and the literature. The scale contains 14 items covering four dimensions which are: meaning, competence, impact and auto-determination and the two sub-dimensions of auto-determination “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivation. We can define CPE, inspired from the general concept of employees’ psychological empowerment as “the consumer’s feeling of psychological control over his/her behavior or his/her personal influence that enables him/her to be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to adopt particular consumption models”. The scale is raw and controlling its psychometric characteristics is still in progress. We can deliver a number of conclusions following these results. First, using CPE, the firm understands more consumers and encourages them to buy bio products, knowing that many consumers intend to buy but they fail to act. The firm should admit the importance of CPE while elaborating its strategies. Second, our measurement scale may be considered by organizations, institutions and farmers as a tool that enables them to guide and help their decision-making processes. Third, applying the four dimensions and the two sub-dimensions of CPE would enrich the literature on measuring psychological empowerment. Finally, despite the theoretical and managerial contributions of the paper, some weaknesses may be found. The scale is still raw and

other research is necessary to purify the scale and test its psychometric properties.

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Authors' Biography



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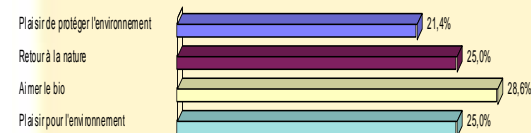
Abdelfattah Triki is a Professor marketing,Institut supérieur de Gestion(ISG)of Tunis University : was a Fullbright cholar at Boston University Business School in the USA in 1986-1987. He then obtained a PhD in marketing from Northumbria University at Newcastle in 1999. He is a member of the Academy of Marketing (GB) since 1997 and a reviewer for several British academic journals. He is presently a senior lecturer of marketing and of research methodology at the Institut Supérieur de Gestion of Tunis University. He also directs several doctoral research projects on information and communication technologies, innovation,renewable energy and knowledge management

Appendix I : Analysis of verbatim output using Sphinx

Dimension : intrinsic motivation

Figure 1: Sphinx output on consumers' reasons behind choosing bio products according to the values they adhere to « intrinsic motivation » (the most cited words)

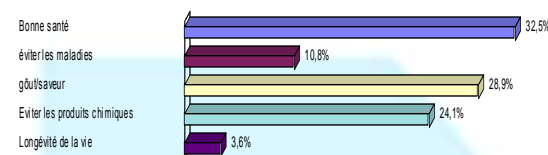
Dimension de la motivation intrinsèque	Nb. cit.	Fréq.
Plaisir de protéger l'environnement	6	21,4%
Retour à la nature	7	25,0%
Aimer le bio	8	28,6%
Plaisir pour l'environnement	7	25,0%
TOTAL CIT.	28	100%



Dimension « extrinsic motivation »

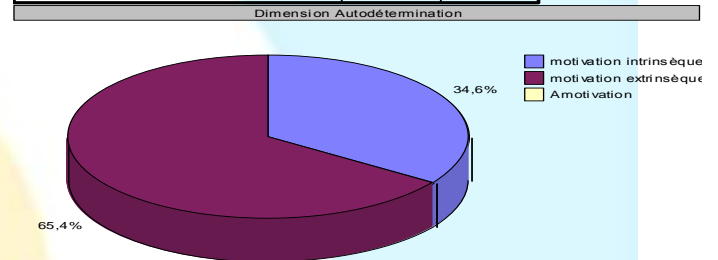
Figure 2: Sphinx output on the most cited words on consumers' expected benefits of consuming bio products, "extrinsic motivation" (the most cited words).

Dimension de la motivation extrinsèque	Nb. cit.	Fréq.
Bonne santé	27	32,5%
éviter les maladies	9	10,8%
gout/saveur	24	28,9%
Eviter les produits chimiques	20	24,1%
Longévité de la vie	3	3,6%
TOTAL CIT.	83	100%



Sphinx output on the importance of extrinsic motivation

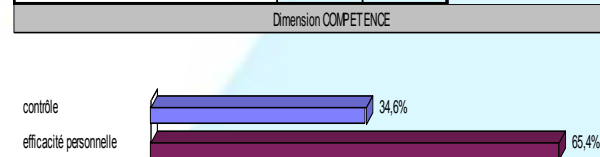
Dimension Autodétermination	Nb. cit.	Fréq.
motivation intrinsèque	9	34,6%
motivation extrinsèque	17	65,4%
Amotivation	0	0,0%
TOTAL CIT.	26	100%



Dimension « compétence »

Figure 3: Sphinx output on the most cited words on personal efficiency feeling, consumers' personal control over their behavior "competence" (the most cited words).

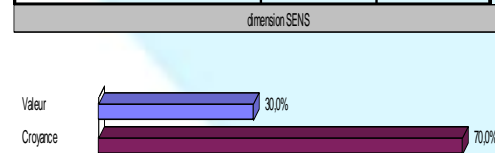
Dimension COMPETENCE	Nb. cit.	Fréq.
contrôle	9	34,6%
efficacité personnelle	17	65,4%
TOTAL CIT.	26	100%



Dimension « Meaning »

Figure 4: Sphinx output on the most cited words on the importance of consumers' judgment of the reasons why they consume bio products according to their values and beliefs "meaning".

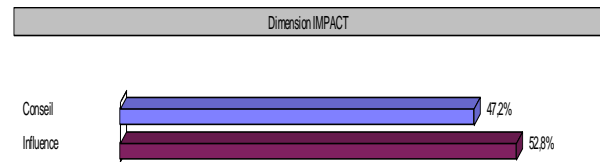
dimension SENS	Nb. cit.	Fréq.
Valeur	12	30,0%
Croyance	28	70,0%
TOTAL CIT.	40	100%



Dimension « Impact »

Figure 5: Sphinx output on the most cited words on the impact of bio consumers on others "impact".

Dimension IMPACT	Nb. cit.	Fréq.
Conseil	17	47,2%
Influence	19	52,8%
TOTAL CIT.	36	100%



Appendix II: CPE Measurement Scale

	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Totally agree
For me, purchasing these products is very important.					
I am confident of my ability to consume these products.					
I have the needed competence to use these products.					
I feel pleased when I contribute to the protection of the environment by buying these products.					
I feel pleased when I consume like our ancestors did.					
I feel pleased when i consume these products because they are close to nature.					
I like bio products					
Consumption of these products allows me to live longer.					
I feel in good health when I consume these products.					
I consume these products to reduce risk of getting ill.					
I consume these products for their unique taste.					
I consume these products to avoid all that is chemical.					
The impact of consuming these products on my entourage is important.					
By consuming these products, i feel I control the events in my entourage.					

Appendix III: The CPE centrality in a general model of Consumer behavior and Psychological empowerment

Figure represents a general model of consumer behavior based on psychological empowerment consumer

The components of the model are presented in terms of input, process and output, where the inputs are the sociodemographic factors of the consumer such as age ,sex, level of study, CSP...etc.and psychographic factors such

as self-esteem, locus of control and personal values. Process is defined as the dynamics between CPE and the organic knowledge and finally, the output is the consumer purchasing behavior.

