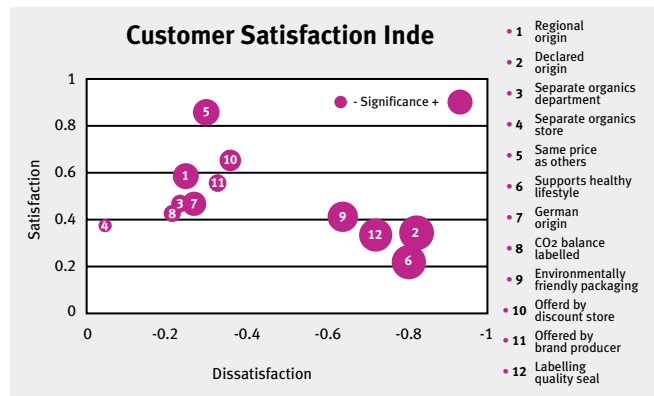


A willingness to pay more

Two research projects have focused on the question of whether consumers are willing to pay more for organic food. The study conducted at the University of Alberta, Edmonton,

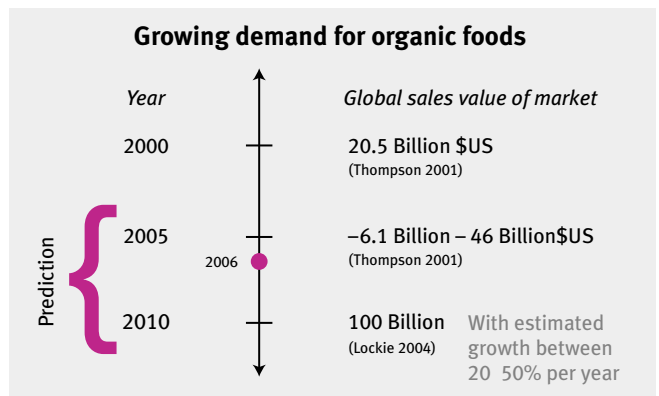


Canada, attempted to find out the correlation between sensory experience and the willingness to pay (WTP) and focused on the example of organic wheat bread. The results are very interesting as described by the authors: "The results suggest that in the absence of taste information respondents' WTP when environmental information was provided was greater than WTP when health information was given. When sensory taste information was included, however, the WTP estimates, under the health information treatment were about twice those under the environmental information." A second study conducted by CC&C, Bad Homburg, Germany, revealed that the consumers would be happy if organic food products had the same price as conventional food, but they do not expect it. Only 28.8% of the respondents were bothered by the price difference.



There are four product properties which are an absolute must for the consumers. Absence or neglect of one or more of these properties courts strong resentment. First of all, the consumer must be convinced that the product is promoting health. In particular for younger consumers (87.2%), this "trust in wellness" is very important. Secondly the country of origin must be stated; otherwise 79.4 % of the consumers will be dissatisfied. Thirdly, 71.3% of the consumers expect organic food to be marked with an organic label, and finally 63.4% request

environmentally friendly packaging materials. The latter two properties are an indication of one central consumer concern: organic or not? This insecurity is currently placated only if the organic origin is labeled on the packaging. The consumers in Germany seem to trust the declaration "organic". They also preferred, but did not consider it mandatory that the claim "made in Germany" was indicated. This property seems to be a warranty for quality. 59.2% of the consumers are pleased when the organic product is of regional origin, for 23.6% this is mandatory. However, 43.8% feel it is ok when the food product is not from Germany. Surprisingly, none of the four properties examined have reached the status of a so-called performance request (the more the better). Currently the consumers have no definite idea on which properties of an organic food would satisfy them sustainably. This provides a large differentiation po-



tential for producers and traders. The opportunities appear to be good for discounter and brand producers. Predominately, the younger generation is interested in buying their organic food at the discount store, while the older consumers, who also have more money available, would appreciate a growing market differentiation. They also prefer brand products. However, all these attributes are so called enthusiasm properties. They are well appreciated, but one can also do without. To the majority of consumers, a separate organic food section in the store is not required. +++

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