The determinants of the intention to purchase animal welfare-friendly meat products in Spain

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the intention to purchase animal welfare-friendly meat products and determine the factors explaining this intention. Additionally, a model of the intention to purchase animal welfare-friendly meat products has been developed based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). This model has been specified as a two-equation multivariate ordered probit model and estimated using data from a survey conducted in Spain in 2008. Results indicate that one of the most important factors associated with the intention to purchase animal welfare-friendly meat products was consumer self-identification with ethical issues. Second, findings suggested that, as the Theory of Planned Behaviour states, other factors related to the intention to purchase these products were attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

Keywords: animal welfare, attitudes, consumer, ordered probit, subjective norms, Theory of Planned Behaviour

Introduction

Growing public awareness of farm animal welfare has led to an increasing number of initiatives promoting legislation that defines minimum standards of animal care across Europe (Lassen et al. 2006). The Treaty of Lisbon has created an explicit duty regarding animal welfare under EU law. Article 13 of the Treaty speaks of animals as ‘sentient beings’. However, the European Union interest in animal welfare is not new. The EU has been developing animal welfare legislation for 30 years (European Commission 2010). Moreover, the so-called ‘Five Freedoms’ are widely recognised as defining the ideal states of animal welfare and form the basis of EU policy. These Five Freedoms are: freedom from hunger and thirst (access to fresh water and a diet for full health); freedom from discomfort (an appropriate environment with shelter and comfortable rest areas); freedom from pain, injury and disease; freedom to express normal behaviour (adequate space and facilities, company of animals’ own kind); and freedom from fear and distress (European Commission 2007a).

The current EU regulatory framework stipulates the current minimum requirements and represents one of the most stringent animal welfare laws in the world. The main body of EU legislation on animal welfare applies to food-producing animals (calves, pigs, poultry, transport and slaughter) and to animals used for experimental purposes. The legal framework is based on Council Directive 98/58/EC (1998) that applies to all farmed animals, providing them with protection through general principles. In addition, there are four specific directives on the keeping of certain species: Council Directive 2008/119/EC (2008a) laying down minimum standards for the protection of calves; Council Directive 2008/120/EC (2008b) laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs; Council Directive 1999/74/EC (1999) laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens; and Council Directive 2007/43/EC (2007) laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production. Furthermore, there is a directive on the protection of animals at the time of killing (Council Directive 1099/2009/EC [2009] on the protection of animals at the time of killing), and a regulation on animal transport (Council Regulation [EC] No 1/2005 [2005] on the protection of animals during transport and related operations, and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation [EC] No 1255/97) in the context of an economic activity. Moreover, there has been an increasing demand for higher animal welfare standards beyond the minimum set by the EU regulation. The Eurobarometer results show that some 62% of European consumers have said they would change their shopping habits in order to purchase animal welfare-friendly products (European Commission 2007b). However, although a large number of empirical studies have been conducted in Europe to analyse concern about animal welfare (Bennett 1996, 1997; Bennett & Larson 1996; Bennett & Blaney 2003; Maria 2006; Tawse 2010), perception and attitudes towards animal welfare (Boogaard et al. 2006; Bock & Huik 2007; Kling-Eveillard et al. 2007;