

## MARKETIG AND GREEN BUYING BEHAVIOR. THE CASE OF ALBANIA

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**Abstract:** The philosophy of introducing environmentally friendly products in the market has become more and more a socio–economic and legal necessity nowadays. This paper focuses on marketing strategies which involve green deal policies in their approach towards a green economy. It studies the impact such strategies, mainly advertisements, including green deal messages to the customers, or green deal brands, have on the buying behavior of customers in a transition country such as the Republic of Albania. By means of a structured questionnaire, spread to students and young to middle–aged professionals of different fields in the capital city, Tirana, data were collected on demographic aspects of the respondents, exposure to advertising and other communication means, and on the attention that Albanian consumers pay to bio brands and the respective advertisements. It is investigated whether using a bio products–oriented advertising and brand strategy, has a direct impact on sales of the respective products and services. The used regression analysis shows if Albanian customers are affected by such strategies in their buying behavior. The results of the study indicate that the Albanian society is beginning to become sensitive to environmental issues and is paying more attention to marketing strategies on

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this regard. Due to the fact, that this isn't an explored field in Albania, their importance reaches out to the business community, to the academic milieu, and to the legislative aspect regarding subsidies for bio products, as well as their import/export.

**Keywords:** marketing, green, sustainability, bio/organic products.

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to research the influence that different marketing strategies have on the increase of sales of bio products and the awareness on environmental issues related to the production, packaging, transport, and sale of these products. The first objective is to identify the various types of advertising and channels of getting to know with these kinds of products, such as online or word of mouth etc. Then a picture of the legislative and practical aspects of labeling them as bio products will be presented, involving the chain of offering the product in the market, from the production to the sale. Coming from a minimum waste socialism, Albanians emerged quickly and unprepared into a massive consumption (Özcan S. & Bora A., 2014) of low quality goods economy, from which they are gradually moving away, by becoming aware of the materials, pesticides, plastic used, and other ways of sustainable production.

The general research question of concern for this work is whether advertising of bio and environmentally friendly products and the use of brands bearing this message increase the consumption of these products. After this section, literature review will follow, presenting the state of the research on bio and environmentally friendly products' advertising, the various types of ads common for this industry, and various channels consumers inform themselves about them. It will also include the Albanian legislation protecting bio products and consumers. It will be studied how much trust they have on these marketing strategies, translated in increased sales. The demographic factors will be studied too, which will give a better understanding of consumer behavior on this regard. Sections of methodology, analysis, results and conclusion

will follow, which will be closed by some recommendations, emphasizing the importance of the findings for the Albanian consumers and the economy, which needs to be backed up more and more by scientific research.

## **2. Literature Review**

Bio labels are becoming a trend nowadays. Marketing managers are using them to increase the product's value and the purchase intention (Zugravu *et al.*, 2011). A problem consists in the authenticity of the labels (Rumm, *et al.*, 2013), especially in a country with an informal economy like Albania and a partially approximated legislation on organic farming according to the EU Acquis. There do exist a variety of terms to describe bio products such as biological, organic, and ecological. People often get confused between these terms by being exposed through different communication channels such as TV advertisements, online ads through social networks or dedicated websites, but also word of mouth and other ways, such as local villagers promoting their own uncertified products grown in their fields or backyards as bio products. According to the US practice and to the general opinion Bio labels ensure that producers do not use chemicals to grow their products or in feeding their animals, by also avoiding GMOs as much as possible, while organic is a certification guaranteeing that a product is made with as little impact on the environment as possible. At the other hand according to the Albanian legislation, precisely Law n. 106, date 27.10.2016 "On biological production, labeling of biological products and their control" which is based on Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, a biological production occurs when there are used by law the respective production methods during production, preparing and distribution. Further on it stipulates that biological / organic / bio, and/or eco product is a product obtained or related to biological production. The general principles on biological production stipulated by this law are the following:

- a. Biological processes on ecological systems using natural resources, with methods of:
  - i. living organisms and mechanical production methods;
  - ii. sustainability;
  - iii. no use of GMOs;
  - iv. based on risk assessment / precautionary and preventive measures.
- b. Limited outside inputs.
- c. No chemically synthesized inputs.
- d. Adaptation, to the rules of biological production, considering the state of health, regional climate change and local conditions, stages of development, as well as special breeding practices.

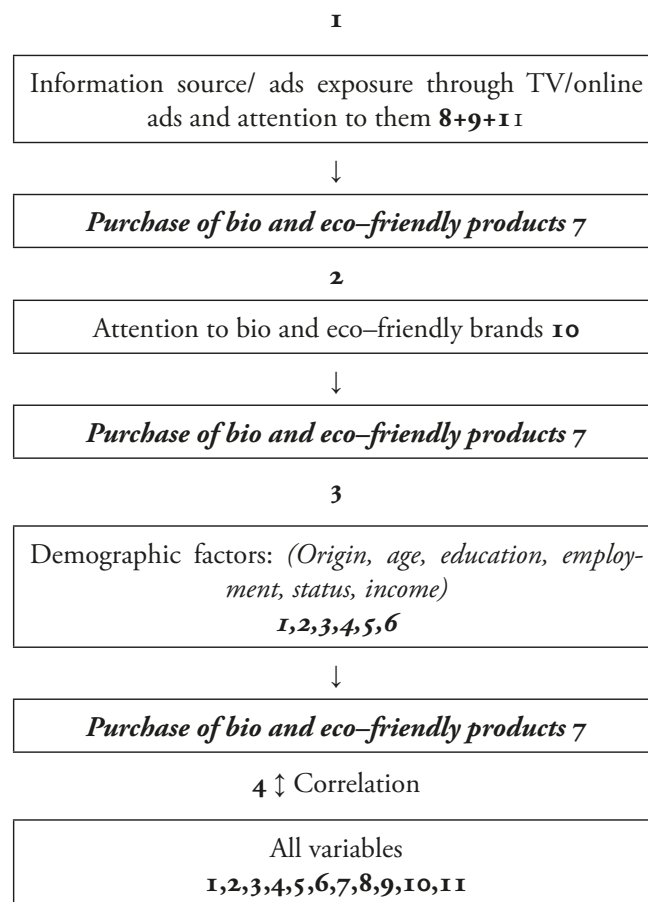
The concept of green marketing and green buying behavior emerged in 1970s and green products became popular during 1990s. Nowadays consumers are becoming more and more aware of the environment and their health (Paettie & Crane, 2005), especially after the Covid-19 Pandemic (Grodzinska-Jurczak *et al.*, 2020). There do exist different factors influencing consumer behaviour when it comes to buy bio products (Chovancová & Huttmanová, 2014). The quality and the label itself might for eg. very strong predictors of the willingness to pay (Situmeang, 2016). Bio is more than just a product description, it is also a lifestyle (Pagalea & Uta, 2012). Green marketing mix with a focus on green advertising and green production processes is of an increased interest for the scientific milieu too (Ansar N., 2013; Khan Y.H. *et al.*, 2018; Mahmoud T.O. *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, in Albania exists a lack of research in the field, and the legal framework lacks an exhausting and clear terminology. Demographic aspects are important too regarding the green buying behaviour (Khare A., 2014; Jain S.K. & Kaur G., 2006; Kaufmann H.R., 2012).

The above literature review gives enough evidence for the following hypothesis:

- *Hypothesis 1*: Advertisement exposure through different communication means to bio/ eco products and paying attention to these kind of advertisement increases their sales.

- *Hypothesis 2*: The use of bio/ eco brands increases their sales.
- *Hypothesis 3*: Demographic factors such as country of origin, age, civil and parental status, academic title, employment, and income influence the sales of bio/ eco products.
- *Hypothesis 4*: There is a strong correlation between the demographic factors, ads exposure/ attention to bio/eco ads, use of bio/eco brands and purchase of such products.

The respective conceptual framework follows:



### 3. Methodology

A qualitative research method was used in this study. A questionnaire using Google Forms was spread through different communication apps and networks to students and professionals of different fields mainly in the Capital City, Tirana. As emigration is an increasing phenomenon in Albania it was spread also to Albanians living abroad or native Albanians in the neighbouring countries in order to obtain an overview of experiences from countries with a better established culture and regulatory framework in this direction. The primary data obtained through this questionnaire were processed and analysed using SPSS.

The questionnaire was distributed to 700 people from Albania, Kosovo, the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as a few of them living in other countries of the European Union. The social network Facebook, but also other electronic communication means like WhatsApp, Viber, and emails were used for the distribution.

A regression analysis and a correlation were conducted to analyse the results and to assess which of the hypothesis stand. The questions were consulted first with a pilot group who tested their validity and afterwards some of them were reformulated to serve better the objectives of the variables. They were measured using the Likert Scale.

For this study were also used Secondary Sources mainly articles using Google Scholar, as well as part of the Albanian, US and EU legislation.

### 4. Results and analysis

The three tables below show the results for the *first and the second hypothesis*. Table 1 shows that 55,9 % of the variance in the dependent variable “Purchase of Bio and eco-friendly products” is determined by the impact of the independent variables on “Being informed about bio and eco-friendly products through advertisement etc.”, “Paying attention to bio and eco-friendly brands” and “Following advertisement appealing bio and eco-friendly products”.

**Model summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,559 <sup>a</sup>	,312	,283	,691

a. Independent variables : (Constant), 11. Attention to bio/eco ads, 9.Info and purchase\_TV + online ads; 10. Attention to bio/eco brands, 8.Info and purchase\_Word of Mouth\_Occasionally.

**Table 1.** Model summary.

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Modell		Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19,986	4	4,996	10,454	,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	43,973	92	,478		
	Total	63,959	96			

a. Dependent Variable: 7.Purchase of bio/eco products.

b. Independent variables : (Constant), 11. Attention to bio/eco ads, 9.Info and purchase\_TV + online ads; 10. Attention to bio/eco brands, 8.Info and purchase\_Word of Mouth\_Occasionally.

**Table 2.** ANOVA.

Based on the ANOVA table above, the Significance Value of 0,000 shows that it does exist a linear regression equation and a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Eventhough only 28,3 % of the independent variables explain the dependent variable (see Table 1, Model summary), with an R value of 0,559 it is shown a strong relationship between them. Also the low standard error of estimation of 0,691 shows that the independent variables are reliable.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1,230	,298	4,121	,000
	8. Info and purchase_Word of Mouth_Occasionally:	,065	,192	,340	,735
	9. Info and purchase_TV + online ads:	,246	,189	1,300	,197
	10. Attention to bio/eco brands	,403	,086	4,702	,000
	11. Attention to bio/eco ads	,123	,092	1,331	,187

a. Dependent Variable: 7.Purchase of bio/eco products.

**Table 3.** Coefficients.

The coefficient for the first independent variable is 0,065, for the second is 0,246, for the third independent variable is 0,403 and for the fourth independent variable is 0,123, but only for the third independent variable of “Paying attention to bio and eco–friendly brands” the Sig. Value is 0,000, showing a strong connection between this independent variable and the dependent variable of “Purchase of bio and eco–friendly products”, which means that only the second hypothesis stands. For one unit increase of the variable “Paying attention to bio and eco–friendly brands”, the dependent variable increases with 40,3 %. It shows also the lowest standard error and highest T value (4,702), making this coefficient the best predictor for this equation.

#### Model summary

Model	R	R–Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,242 <sup>a</sup>	,059	–,003	,813

a Independent Variables : (Constant), 1. Origin, 2. Age, 3. Education, 4. Employment, 5. Status, 6. Income 6.

**Table 4.** Model summery.

#### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3,758	6	,626	,947	,466 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	60,201	91	,662		
	Total	63,959	97			

a. Dependent Variable: 7.Purchase of bio/ eco–friendly products.

**Table 5.** ANOVA.

At the three tables above are shown the results for the third hypothesis, regarding the impact of the demographic factors such as country of origin, age, education, employment, civil and family status and income have on the purchase of bio and eco–friendly products. The model summary shows that only 24,2 % of the variance in the dependent variable is determined by the impact of the independent

demographic variables on the purchase of bio and eco–friendly products. Based on the table of Coefficients below, the independent variable “Education” affects the dependent variable by 23,4 %, with a Sig. value of 0,059, which is slightly over the norm. Nevertheless, the Significance value of 0,466 in the ANOVA table 5 shows that there is no linear regression equation and no linear relationship between these variables.

From the Coefficients table 6 below only the independent variable of “Education” affects moderately the dependent variable by 23,4 % with a Sig. value of 0,059, which is only slightly above 0,005. It shows also a low standard error and the highest T value from the variables below, as a good equation’s predictor.

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	T	Sig.
1	(Konstante)	2,353	,452	5,206	,000
	1. Origin	–,133	,114	–1,166	,247
	2. Age	,082	,116	,713	,478
	3. Education	,234	,122	1,914	,059
	4. Employment	–,002	,025	–,074	,941
	5. Civil and family status	–,040	,039	–1,036	,303
	6. Income (Euro)	,048	,095	,508	,613

a. Dependent Variable: 7.Purchase of bio/ eco–friendly products.

**Table 6.** Coefficients.

Regarding the correlations between all variables above, the table 7 below shows that only the following variables are strongly or moderately correlated:

- Variable “Origin” with “Income”: Pearson Correlation of 0,243 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,016).
- Variable “Age” with “Status” and “Income” respectively with a Pearson correlation of 0,596 (Sig. 0,000) and 0,346 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,000).

- Variable “Education” with “Employment”: Pearson Correlation of 0.266 (Sig. 2 tailed 0.008), and with the dependent variable “Purchase of bio and eco–friendly products”: Pearson Correlation of 0,176 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,082).
- Variable “Employment” and “Income”: Pearson Correlation of 0,198 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,051).
- Variable “Status” and “Income”: Pearson Correlation of 0,253 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,012).
- The dependent variable “Purchase of bio and eco–friendly products” with “Education”: Pearson Correlation of 0,176 (Sig. 2 tailed 0.082); and with the variables “Attention to bio/eco brands” and “Attention to bio/eco ads”: Pearson Correlations respectively of 0,514 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,000) and 0,359 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,000).
- Variable “Attention to bio/eco brands” with “Attention to bio/eco ads”: Pearson Correlation of 0,484 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,000).
- Variable “Attention to bio/eco ads” with variable “Employment”: Pearson Correlation of 0,194 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,056).
- Variable “Info through Word of mouth/ occasionally” and variable “Info through TV/Online ads” with “Income”: Pearson Correlation respectively:  $-0,255$  (Sig. 2 tailed 0,011) and  $-0,189$  (Sig. 2 tailed 0,64).
- Variable “Info through Word of mouth/ occasionally” and variable “Info through TV/Online ads” between each other: Pearson correlation of 0,644 (Sig. 2 tailed 0,000).

The dependent variable shows the strongest positive relationship with the independent variable “Attention to bio/eco brands”, followed by “Attention to bio/eco ads”.

Variables	1. Origin	2. Age	3. Educat	4. Empl	5. Status	6. Income	7. Purchase	8. Info WoM_ occasional	9. Info TV/ Online ads	10. Attention to bio/eco brands	11. Attention to bio/eco ads
<b>1. Origin</b>	Pearson	,206*	,206*	,115	,003	,243*	-,073	-,034	-,073	-,020	-,024
	Sig.2tail	,636	,042	,259	,977	,016	,473	,737	,476	,847	,812
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>2. Age</b>	Pearson	-,048	-,146	,024	,596**	,346**	,013	-,138	-,165	,112	,037
	Sig.2tail	,636	,152	,815	,000	,000	,901	,177	,107	,272	,716
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>3. Education</b>	Pearson	,206*	-,146	1	,266**	,010	,156	-,147	-,106	,076	-,034
	Sig.2tail	,042	,152	,008	,923	,125	,082	,149	,300	,459	,736
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>4. Employment</b>	Pearson	,115	,024	,266**	1	,119	,198	,032	-,002	-,084	-,194
	Sig.2tail	,259	,815	,008	,241	,051	,757	,392	,986	,408	,056
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>5. Status</b>	Pearson	,003	,596**	,010	,119	1	,253*	-,060	-,168	,070	-,006
	Sig.2tail	,977	,000	,923	,241	,012	,559	,500	,100	,496	,952
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>6. Income</b>	Pearson	,243*	,346**	,156	,198	,253*	1	,059	-,189	-,069	-,149
	Sig.2tail	,016	,000	,125	,051	,012	,561	,011	,064	,501	,144
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>7. Purchase</b>	Pearson	-,073	,013	,176	,032	-,060	,059	1	,110	,514**	,359**
	Sig.2tail	,473	,901	,082	,757	,559	,561	,481	,285	,000	,000
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>8. Info WoM_ occasional</b>	Pearson	-,034	-,138	-,147	-,087	-,069	-,255*	,072	1	,644**	,053
	Sig.2tail	,737	,177	,149	,392	,500	,011	,481	,000	,182	,605
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98
<b>9. Info TV_ Online ads</b>	Pearson	-,073	-,165	-,106	-,002	-,168	-,189	,110	,644**	1	-,053
	Sig.2tail	,476	,107	,300	,986	,100	,064	,285	,000	,246	,607
	N	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97	97
<b>9. Attention to bio/eco brands</b>	Pearson	-,020	,112	,076	-,084	,070	-,069	,514**	-,136	1	,484**
	Sig.2tail	,847	,272	,459	,408	,496	,501	,000	,182	,246	,000
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98
<b>10. Attention to bio/eco ads</b>	Pearson	-,024	,037	-,034	-,194	-,006	-,149	,359**	-,053	-,053	1
	Sig.2tail	,812	,716	,736	,056	,952	,144	,000	,605	,607	,000
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98	98	97	98	98

Table 7. Correlations.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

The results of this study show that Green Marketing does influence the purchase behaviour, but more in terms of the certified label, as the variable “Attention to bio/eco ads” appears to positively affect the consumer buying behavior. This implies that Albanian consumers are becoming more and more aware of the importance of the bio quality by not falling into the trap of believing blindly advertisements, or the promotion as bio products without the proper legally known label. This can be seen also in the independent variable “Eduaction” which eventhough moderately, it affects the most the purchase intention of bio/eco products compared to other demographic factors.

In the third hypothesis the negative Adjusted R Square shows the insignificance of the explanatory variables, and the need to increase the sample size in future studies.

Businesses should pay more attention to green marketing as part of their CSR policies (Corporate Social Responsibility): to increase sales through sustainability. The government should regulate this issue in a more clearly and detailed way as well as increase financial support for farmers and businesses wanting to operate in this field.

This shows that Albania needs to develop and bring further the regulatory framework regarding these issues, but it also needs the scientific support to consolidate the process from its roots. Studying the consumer behavior regarding bio and environmentally friendly products is of a crucial importance for the state institutions and legislative aspects, to adapt a regulatory framework which increases the consumer protection and simultaneously draft and implement a legislation incentivizing the bio production. This would give to the companies the opportunity to benefit from the intellectual property law, consumer protection and competition law. By protecting a brand with a registered trademark, getting the bio certificate, to adapt their production and marketing campaigns to the consumers’ needs, in the framework of a better implementation of this legislation, companies offering these products will be more willing to maintain their quality and increase profits from the increased sales. This should be also an appeal to the academic milieu for more research in this field of a strategic importance for Albania.

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