

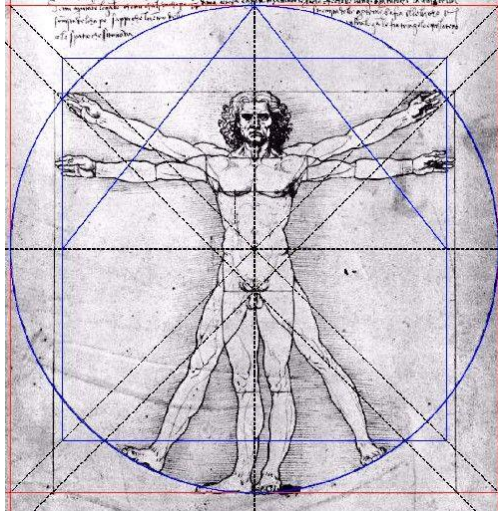
Consumer perspective: Irrational food choices

Marleen Onwezen 06-03-2019



We are irrational

Theory



vs

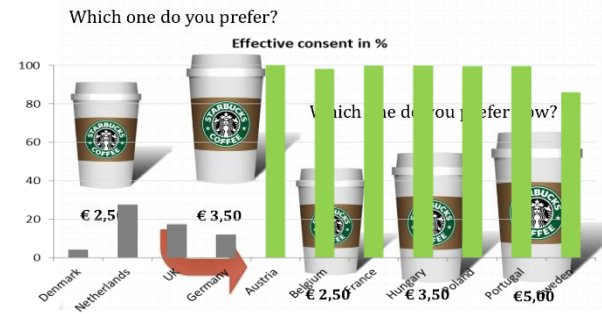
reality



...though behaviour is predictable

Heuristics and biases

- Some examples
 - Affect-as-information heuristic: decisions based on feelings
 - Decoy effect: adding an option increases attractiveness of middle option
 - Primacy and recency effect: First and last information
 - Default effect: decisions based on status quo



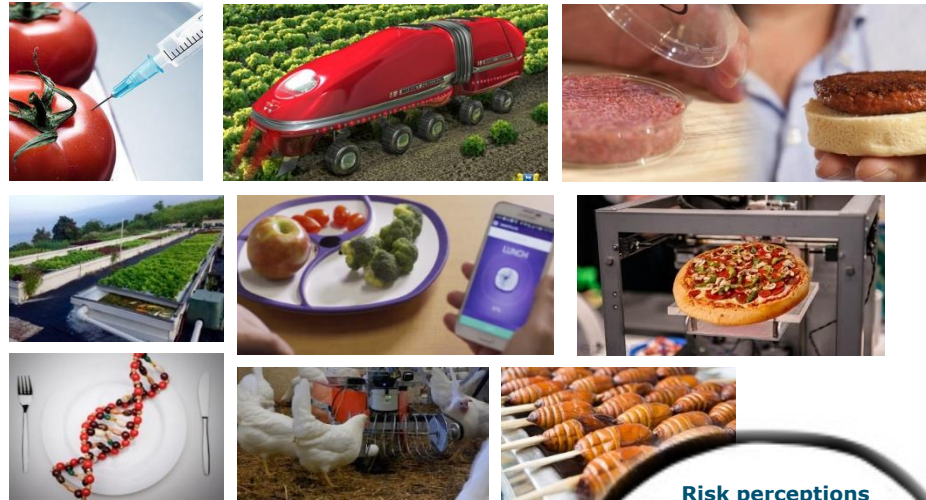
Irrational food choices

- Long-term health and environmental goals, though not translated in behaviour.
- Intention behaviour gap (Onwezen et al., 2013; 2014)
- Today three examples to illustrate irrational food choices.



I: Facing the Future: Food transitions 2030

Not all great innovations are readily accepted by consumers. Despite health and environmental benefits. (e.g., small market shares or resistance for novel proteins, Genetic Modification, nanotechnology, organic).



WHAT? Innovation features
WHO? Personal features
WHERE? Social system

HOW?
Communication

Risk perceptions
Benefit perceptions
Social/ moral norms
Perceived behavioral control

Response

I: Novel food product and technologies not always accepted by consumers

- Controversies, unfunded negative associations

- Natural is for example associated with a broad range of positive side effects (on the environment, tastiness and one's health), whereas pesticides are for example associated with a broad range of negative side effects (dangerous, environmentally unfriendly, unhealthy, biodiversity etc; Reinders & van der Berg, 2011).

→ *Stating that pesticides are not present or less harmful might therefore result in associations with negative side effects (e.g., no antibiotics in this meat resulted in decreased acceptance)*

- Emotions, ambivalence and distrust

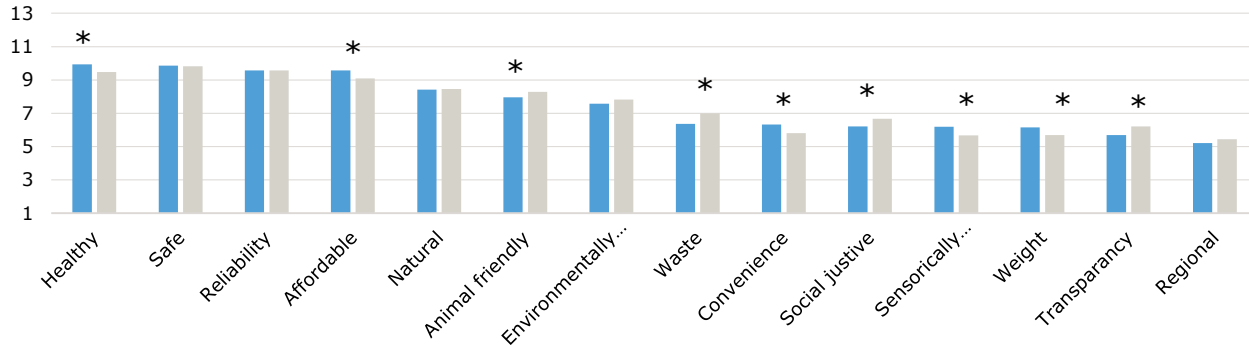
→ *negative norms: Stating too much pesticides are used sets a social norm*

- Anchored in cultural, social or religious values



II: Citizen consumer gap

Ranking (14 = most important and 1 = least important).



■ Consumer
■ Citizen

*Respondents randomly divided in two groups:
Consumer role: as a consumer it is for me personally relevant to choose food....*

Citizen role: as a citizen it is relevant for society as a whole to choose food....

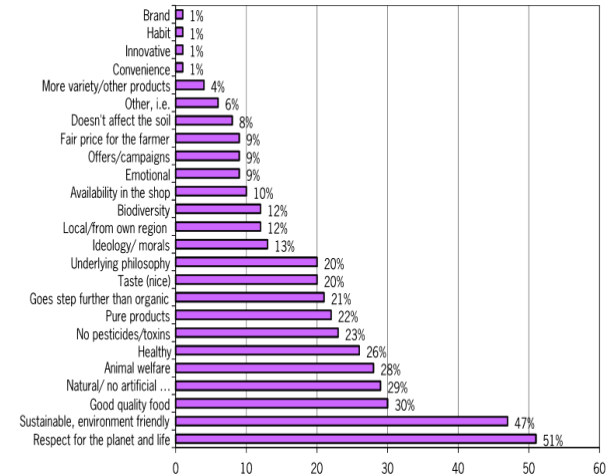
** = a significant difference*

- As a consumer egocentric values like health, convenience, affordability, sensorically attractive and weight are more relevant.
- As a citizen altruistic values animal welfare, social justice, food waste and transparency are more relevant (*Onwezen et al., 2018*).
- *Thus consumers make different choices when a different role is activated: consumer versus citizen roles. These roles can also be activated and used to communicate with consumers.*

III: Conscious deliberations versus reality

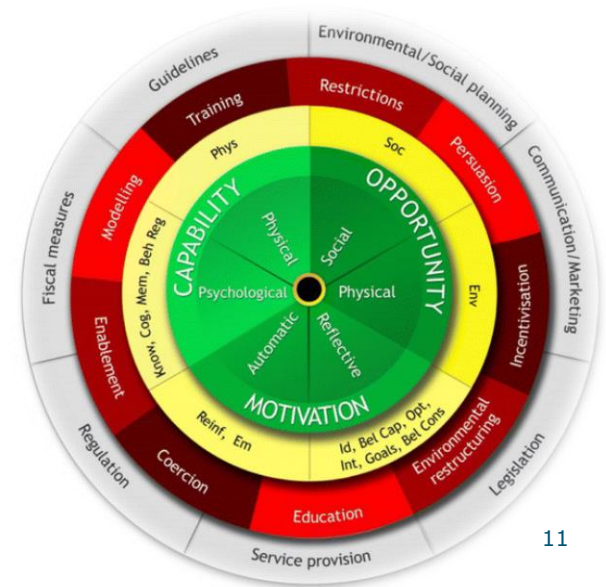
- Consumers perceived relevance of important indicators for their own food choices are not the most important explaining factors.
 - For example consumers state to make choices for biodynamic products for cognitive deliberations on respecting the planet, quality, healthiness and pesticides. Though these cognitive deliberations are only partially relevant, whereas habits explain a large amount of choices (*Reinders & van der Berg, 2011*).
 - For example consumers indicate to make their own choices which are not influence by others, whereas the social environment is highly relevant for their choices (*Onwezen, 2011*).

- Also in the context of natural or organic products consumers indicate reasons of health, environment, animal welfare and no pesticides, though analyses reveal unconscious affective processes (habits, social norms, emotions) are also highly relevant.
- Thus also include soft aspects in development and interventions.



Consumer acceptance is predictable so include these insights at an early stage

- Consumers are irrational though predictable
- Use consumer insights from beginning of innovation development (*reversed design, co-creation, multidisciplinary projects*)
- Consumer centred innovations



Questions or suggestions?

Marleen.Onwezen@wur.nl

+31703358175

