

Young People's Willingness to Pay for Healthy and Functional Products: An Analysis of Their Choice Preferences

Disposición a pagar de los jóvenes por productos saludables y funcionales: un análisis de sus preferencias de elección

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the desire to lead a fuller and healthier life has transformed eating habits, prompting consumers to carefully examine their nutritional choices. People are no longer simply seeking to satisfy their hunger but also to nourish their bodies responsibly, thus showing a preference for foods that have a positive impact on health and the environment. This study aims to analyze the relationship between young people's food preferences and their willingness to pay for healthy products compared to conventional options, as well as the factors that influence their decision-making. The study employed a quantitative approach using a questionnaire carefully designed to address the research objectives. A total of 150 students volunteered to participate, and surveys were administered both online and in person. Participants received an introduction to the topic and the research objectives to ensure the study's validity. The results showed that purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by visual and informational elements of the products, with students associating healthy eating with detailed nutritional information, packaging design, and attributes such as the

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absence of preservatives or local origin. There is a clear willingness to incorporate healthy products into their daily diet, driven by perceived benefits for personal health and nutritional knowledge. Although they view these products positively, price remains a determining factor, with students showing price elasticity for a small premium at most -especially for frequently consumed products- thereby maintaining a balance between wellness aspirations and financial constraints.

Keywords: Willingness to pay, healthy products, food preferences, purchasing decisions.

RESUMEN

En las últimas décadas, el cuidado y la búsqueda de una vida más plena y saludable ha transformado los hábitos alimentarios, situación que ha provocado a consumidores examinar detenidamente sus elecciones nutricionales, los individuos no solo buscan saciar el hambre, sino también nutrir el cuerpo de manera responsable, manifestado así preferencia por alimentos con impacto positivo en la salud y el medio ambiente. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar la relación entre las preferencias alimentarias de los jóvenes y su disposición económica hacia productos saludables en comparación con opciones convencionales, así como los factores que influyen en su toma de decisiones. El estudio empleó un enfoque cuantitativo mediante un cuestionario diseñado cuidadosamente para responder a los objetivos de esta investigación, seleccionando 150 estudiantes participantes de manera voluntaria y aplicando encuestas tanto online como presenciales, donde los participantes recibieron una introducción sobre el tema y objetivos de la investigación para garantizar la autenticidad del estudio. Los resultados evidenciaron que las decisiones de compra están fuertemente influenciadas por elementos visuales e informativos de los productos, donde los estudiantes asocian la salud alimentaria con información nutricional detallada, diseño del empaque y atributos como ausencia de conservantes u origen local. Existe clara disposición a incorporar productos saludables en su dieta diaria,

motivada por beneficios percibidos para la salud personal y conocimiento nutricional. Aunque valoran positivamente estos productos, el precio sigue siendo determinante, mostrando elasticidad a un pequeño sobreprecio como máximo, especialmente para productos de consumo frecuente, manteniendo equilibrio entre aspiraciones de bienestar y limitaciones económicas.

Palabras clave: Disposición a pagar, productos saludables, preferencias alimentarias, decisiones de compra.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the quest for a fuller and healthier life has led people to take a closer look at what they include in their daily diets. It's not just about satisfying hunger, but about nourishing the body and mind—and doing so in a way that aligns with personal and collective values. Consumers have become increasingly responsible, showing a preference for foods that have a positive impact on health, society, and the environment. In particular, consumers are showing a growing interest in food innovation and in products that offer health benefits, such as fortified foods, which can be considered functional foods. Understanding this dynamic is essential for the food industry to innovate effectively and sustainably, offering products that are not only nutritious but also align with today's society's aspirations for well-being and responsibility.

Within this changing landscape, the choice of retail outlets for healthy foods becomes a crucial factor shaping the population's dietary habits. The way consumers navigate diverse retail environments—from traditional markets to large supermarkets—reveals a complex interplay of individual, social, economic, and institutional factors. Understanding these dynamics is essential for promoting healthier consumption patterns and enabling retailers to effectively adapt their offerings. They highlight this complexity by stating that “retail outlets play a fundamental role in shaping healthy dietary patterns, which calls for a more in-depth analysis of consumer behavior in various retail settings.” In this context, the present study aims to analyze the relationship between young people's food preferences and their willingness to pay for healthy products compared to conventional options, as well as the factors that influence their decision-making. Young people constitute a key demographic segment; currently, the decisions they make regarding their diet will not only influence their own long-term health habits but will also have a significant impact on shaping future food market trends. For this reason, it is essential to conduct in-depth research into the motivations that drive young people to choose certain foods, as well as the barriers they face in purchasing healthy options. Understanding these factors will enable the design of effective strategies tailored to their

needs and preferences, with the goal of promoting more nutritious and sustainable diets. Furthermore, by focusing on this vital demographic, we can foster positive change that benefits both individual health and collective well-being. Ultimately, studying the eating habits of young people is key to advancing policies and programs that help improve quality of life and build a healthier and more environmentally responsible future.

Food production and consumption patterns have been shaped by the economic and social changes of recent decades. While it is true that these changes have increased access to and availability of food, they have also generated negative social, environmental, and health impacts, as an agricultural model based on intensive production on large tracts of land using chemical inputs has been adopted, thereby spanning the value chain that extends over long distances until consumption.

Another impact is the increase in the production and consumption of ultra-processed foods, which contain large amounts of sugar, sodium, and fats, thereby contributing to and increasing the prevalence of chronic noncommunicable diseases.

Literature Review

Consumer Choices for a Healthy Diet.

Current generations of consumers have experienced changes in their awareness and consumption habits. In recent years, studies have clearly demonstrated that replacing animal-based foods—particularly red and processed meats—with plant-based alternatives in daily diets has considerable beneficial effects on both human health and environmental sustainability. For this reason, individuals are acting more consciously and seeking more information about the benefits of a healthy diet; as a result, they choose to make changes to take better care of their health.

Choosing a healthy diet is a complex process involving multiple factors, ranging from health awareness to social and cultural influences. Authors such as , reveal that the willingness to pay for healthy food products is strongly related to health awareness, which is defined as the degree to which consumers value the benefits of a balanced and nutritious diet. Furthermore, this study reveals that consumers who are better informed about the effects of diet on their health tend to make healthier choices, suggesting that education and information are crucial for fostering positive eating habits. In this regard, young people—being more receptive to available information on health and nutrition—are more likely to adopt diets that prioritize fresh and nutritious foods.

In addition to the influence of social media and digital culture—which has transformed the way young people perceive and choose their food—there are other channels through which communication and influence shape the selection of healthy and sustainable foods. As mentioned, nutritional and health profiles have been systematically used in various applications, including front-of-package food labeling in Europe and Australia, in compliance with regulatory standards implemented in Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. Various nutrient profiling methods—including the Choices International logo, the

Nordic Keyhole, the Nutrient Profile Scoring Criteria, the Health Star Rating system, and SAIN-LIM—have been developed worldwide to distinguish between healthy options. However, young people face significant challenges when trying to implement these changes in their daily lives. Research on gender-based behavioral patterns revealed that women expressed a greater interest in consuming fruits and vegetables compared to men; and while both men and women agree that organic foods are produced sustainably, their high price, limited access, irregular supply, and availability in only a few stores were highlighted as the main limiting factors preventing them from consuming organic foods. A similar study conducted in Spain and Thailand on consumer perceptions and attitudes, as well as retailers' attitudes toward green, smart, and organic (GSO) foods, showed similar results, with cost being a key factor.

In addition, social pressure and cultural norms also play a crucial role in choosing a healthy diet. Young people are often influenced by their peers' expectations and cultural trends that may favor certain types of foods or diets.

According to the study, functional foods (FF) represent one of the most interesting areas of research and innovation in the food industry. For example, in Europe, sales have increased significantly: Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands are the most important countries within the functional foods market. Other European markets are experiencing high growth rates, such as the Netherlands and Spain. Research by Euromonitor predicted that sales of functional foods would increase moderately between 2005 and 2009 in the emerging markets of Hungary, Poland, and Russia.

It is important to note that demand for functional foods within the European Union varies considerably from one country to another, due to dietary traditions and cultural heritage; consequently, consumer interest in functional foods is greater in the central and northern member states than in the Mediterranean countries.

In this context, consumers' choices regarding a healthy diet are a multifaceted process influenced by health awareness, food availability, social and cultural influences, and access to information. To encourage healthier food choices among young people, it is essential to develop strategies that address these factors comprehensively, promoting not only nutrition education but also access to healthy foods and the creation of a social environment that supports responsible consumption decisions. Doing so can help foster eating habits that benefit both individual health and collective well-being.

Willingness to Pay for Healthy Products Among Young People.

Growing awareness of health and well-being has significantly transformed consumer purchasing behavior worldwide, driving an ever-increasing demand for healthy food products. In this context, the willingness to pay for these products emerges as a crucial indicator for understanding consumer preferences and the commercial viability of healthy offerings. The study underscores the importance of analyzing whether consumers are willing to pay a premium for foods that promise health and wellness benefits, revealing that a considerable percentage of consumers (44% in their study in

India) are willing to pay an average premium of 9% for the desired products. This willingness is not uniform and is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, making it essential to delve deeper into the mechanisms underlying the valuation of food attributes.

Particularly among young people, the willingness to pay for healthy products is shaped by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. The health-based approach to food, as evidenced in [source], suggests that individuals who prioritize health in their food choices tend to place greater importance on all extrinsic attributes. This pattern, observed among both Italian and French consumers, implies that health-conscious young people are more likely to make informed decisions and carefully evaluate product characteristics, which could translate into a greater willingness to pay for those attributes they perceive as beneficial to their well-being.

In conclusion, young people's willingness to pay for healthy products is related not only to the perception of direct health benefits but also to the valuation of extrinsic attributes associated with quality and ethical production. The authors note that health-conscious consumers also tend to place greater importance on attributes such as origin, organic status, and fair trade. This connection between personal health and ethical or sustainability considerations is a key aspect of young people's behavior, as they often demonstrate greater concern for the social and environmental impact of their consumption choices. Therefore, this demographic's willingness to pay for healthy products may be intrinsically linked to supply chain transparency, quality certifications, and sustainable production practices, representing an opportunity for producers and marketers of healthy foods.

Sociodemographic Factors and Their Influence on Preferences for Healthy Products

Sociodemographic factors play a fundamental role in shaping consumer preferences, especially in the context of healthy products. Research shows that variables such as age, educational level, and income are key determinants that influence young people's willingness to pay for healthy foods. According to the study by [source], due to strong social pressures stemming from health and environmental concerns, a considerable proportion of consumers remains unmotivated to significantly reduce their consumption of red meat. Recent studies indicate that, in developed countries, only a small percentage of people identify as vegan/vegetarian (less than 10%) or flexitarian (approximately 30%)—that is, people who intend to reduce their meat consumption. The author reiterates that more than 50% of consumers show resistance to change and do not report any intention to reduce their meat consumption, which is likely due to eating behaviors deeply rooted in Western society, along with the cultural and psychosocial attributes associated with red meat consumption—such as its symbolism of wealth, masculinity, and nutrition.

In today's food environment, consumers are inundated with tasty, convenient, and often unhealthy products, while at the same time being encouraged to increase their

consumption of healthier foods. However, other studies have identified a positive association between a larger number of household members and the consumption of functional foods. Along the same lines, other studies have specifically investigated the influence of marital status on consumer acceptance, highlighting that single people are more likely to incorporate functional foods into their diets than their married counterparts, while observing that married or widowed consumers show a greater willingness to invest in functional foods compared to single or divorced individuals. Studies on functional foods have undoubtedly attracted significant research attention, focusing primarily on consumer acceptance and the identification of influencing factors. Furthermore, health is one of the main variables in the study of consumer behavior toward functional foods.

Consumers exhibit more positive attitudes toward these products and are more likely to purchase them when they are presented as healthy and have favorable nutritional information. Despite consumers' negative perceptions of genetically modified foods, functional foods—which provide health benefits to those who consume them—are generally viewed positively. Therefore, this highlights the importance of effectively communicating these positive health effects. Within this framework and based on the study of functional foods in the Spanish market, it is concluded that health and safety are the most relevant factors for consumers when choosing healthy and functional foods. By recognizing that education, income, and age influence willingness to pay, marketers can design campaigns that specifically address the concerns and motivations of young people. For example, initiatives that promote nutrition education and access to healthy products can be particularly effective in low-income communities. In summary, sociodemographic factors not only influence the willingness to pay for healthy products but also offer an opportunity for companies and policymakers to encourage healthier and more sustainable consumption among young people.

Behavioral Factors in Healthy Food Choices

Healthy food choices are influenced by a variety of behavioral factors that affect consumers' purchasing decisions. Among these, health consciousness stands out as a key driver that motivates young people to choose products they consider beneficial to their well-being. Health consciousness not only affects willingness to pay but also shapes attitudes toward diet and lifestyle. Young people who are better informed about the effects of diet on health tend to be more selective in their food choices, prioritizing products that offer nutritional benefits and align with their personal health goals. This trend is reinforced by access to information through digital platforms and social media, where young people can learn about the latest trends in nutrition and health.

Actively seeking information about food products—including reading labels, researching ingredients, and checking online reviews—has become common among young people. In addition to health awareness, other behavioral factors, such as information-seeking and social influence, play a crucial role in choosing healthy foods. This observed behavior reflects a desire to make informed and responsible decisions, which in turn can increase

the willingness to pay for products that meet their expectations for quality and health. It is noteworthy that consumers who engage in information-seeking tend to place greater value on product attributes, which can lead to a greater willingness to pay for those they consider to offer added value.

Social influence is also a key factor in healthy food choices. Young people are often influenced by the opinions and behaviors of their peers, as well as by cultural and social trends that promote a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, social pressure can motivate young people to adopt healthier eating habits as they seek to align with the expectations of their social group. This is reflected in the growing popularity of specific diets, such as veganism or vegetarianism, which have gained acceptance among younger generations. These dynamics within their social environment can be a powerful driver for promoting healthy food choices and, consequently, increasing the willingness to pay for them.

Behavioral factors in healthy food choices are also related to the perception of risk and reward. Young people tend to evaluate the short- and long-term benefits of their food choices, considering how these decisions impact their health and well-being. According to [source], young people can be motivated to invest in products they consider beneficial—even if this involves an additional cost—due to a strong belief that healthy foods contribute to a better quality of life and disease prevention.

In this regard, education and awareness about the benefits of healthy eating are essential for fostering purchasing behaviors that prioritize health. By understanding these behavioral factors, marketers and policymakers can design more effective strategies to promote the consumption of healthy foods among young people, helping to create an environment that supports healthier and more sustainable food choices.

Product and Market Attributes in the Preference for Healthy Foods

The preference for healthy foods is deeply influenced by both product and market attributes. Product attributes—such as quality, taste, packaging, and nutritional information—play a crucial role in consumers' purchasing decisions; consumers value health and tend to prioritize products that not only offer nutritional benefits but also meet standards of quality and freshness. Perceived quality becomes a determining factor in willingness to pay; consumers are willing to spend more on products they consider superior in terms of ingredients and health benefits. This is particularly relevant for young people, who—being better informed and more health-conscious—seek products that align with their quality expectations.

Packaging also plays a significant role in the preference for healthy foods. Attractive and functional packaging can influence the perception of the product and, consequently, the purchasing decision. Consumers value packaging that clearly communicates information about the product's benefits, such as its origin, ingredients, and health certifications. Packaging that highlights attributes such as “organic,” “additive-free,” or “low-calorie” can capture the attention of young people and motivate them to choose those products over others. Likewise, packaging design can convey a message of sustainability, which

is especially appealing to younger generations who value the environmental impact of their consumption choices.

On the other hand, market attributes such as availability, price, and accessibility also play a key role in the preference for healthy foods. The ease of access to healthy products in supermarkets and local stores influences purchasing decisions. If young people notice that healthy products are easily accessible and available in their local area, they are more likely to choose them. However, price remains a critical factor; young people may be willing to pay more for healthy products, but only up to a certain limit. The perception that healthy products are overpriced can deter consumers from choosing them, highlighting the importance of pricing strategies that make these products more affordable and competitive in the market.

In summary, both product and market attributes are interrelated factors that influence the preference for healthy foods, and understanding this dynamic is essential for developing effective strategies to promote the consumption of healthy products among young people. Additionally, promotions and marketing strategies also play an important role in shaping perceptions of market attributes. Campaigns that highlight the benefits of healthy products and use testimonials from influencers or celebrities can increase the visibility and appeal of these products among young people.

Young People's Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Health and Food Sustainability

Today, young people are more aware of the relationship between diet and health, which translates into a greater willingness to adopt eating habits that prioritize healthy products. Perceptions and attitudes toward health and food sustainability are constantly evolving, driven by a growing interest in personal well-being and the environmental impact of their consumption choices. This new generation tends to value not only the nutritional benefits of food but also its origin and production process. Against a backdrop of concern for public health and disease prevention, many young people are seeking foods that are not only nutritious but also contribute to a healthy and active lifestyle.

Furthermore, food sustainability has emerged as a central theme in discussions about responsible consumption among young people; as a result, they are increasingly interested in the environmental impact of their food choices, as reflected in their preference for organic, local, and fair-trade products. These young people are more likely to consider factors such as carbon footprint, pesticide use, and animal welfare when making purchasing decisions. This shift in perception has been driven by information they find on social media and digital platforms, where knowledge about sustainable practices and their benefits is shared. Thus, sustainability has become a key criterion influencing their willingness to pay for products that meet these standards.

The influence of social media and digital culture has also shaped young people's attitudes toward health and sustainability. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have allowed young people to connect with communities that promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles, which in turn reinforces their own beliefs and behaviors. However, they are

also exposed to advertisements for unhealthy foods. Teenage consumers, known for their impulsive nature and susceptibility to peer influence, are particularly vulnerable to advertising on television and social media; therefore, studies suggest that the number of hours spent in front of screens could contribute to increased consumption. Reduced screen time could increase and reinforce adherence to healthier eating patterns. Although parental control over meals decreases as adolescents gain more autonomy in food choices, their eating patterns are determined in part by the availability, accessibility, and parental education regarding the different types of foods present in their homes. Challenges still persist for young people trying to adopt healthier and more sustainable eating habits; for example, the availability and cost of healthy products can be significant barriers, especially in low-income communities. Additionally, information overload and misinformation online can make it difficult to make informed decisions. Therefore, it is crucial that education and awareness initiatives focus on providing clear and accessible information about health and food sustainability. By addressing these challenges and fostering an environment that supports responsible consumption decisions, we can further encourage young people to choose products that not only benefit their health but also contribute to a more sustainable future.

MATERIALS Y METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with the aim of analyzing the factors that influence college students' willingness to pay for healthy products. To achieve this, key variables were identified through a questionnaire designed based on the specific objectives outlined in a review of the most relevant research articles on the topic.

A sample of 150 participants was selected from among university students. Participation was strictly voluntary, and to ensure the study's authenticity, surveys were conducted both online and in person. Additionally, before the survey began, participants received a brief introduction to the topic and the research objective.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 items designed to gather the information necessary to achieve the research objective. To ensure that the questionnaire was aligned with the study's objective, the questions were formulated based on the specific objectives and a review of a series of scientific articles selected as references.

Data collection was carried out using a form on the Google Forms platform, which was available for one week to allow sufficient time for respondents to answer. This tool was extremely helpful for the efficient collection and organization of data.

After reaching 150 surveys, the data were exported to Excel for subsequent processing in SPSS. This analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of the variables studied, thereby enabling an optimal interpretation of the collected data.

RESULTS

To analyze the results, data were collected through field and online research, based on the aforementioned sample of 150 people. SPSS software was used to process the information, which facilitated the accurate tabulation of the data obtained. The tables presenting the study results are provided below.

Table 1. Demographics.

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
Edad	21-23 años.	87	58%
	18-20 años.	30	20%
Genero	Masculino.	83	54.7%
	Femenino.	67	44%
Facultad en la que pertenecen	Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales.	79	52.7%
	Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación.	23	15.3%
	Facultad de Ciencias Agropecuarias	15	10%
Nivel académico	7 en adelante.	66	44%
	4-6 semestre.	57	38%
	1-3 semestre	27	18%

Table 1 shows that most respondents are between 21 and 23 years old, confirming that the surveyed population consists of young adults. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are male; however, the difference compared to females is not significant, so the opinions of each gender were obtained in a practically balanced manner. Among the respondents are college students from whom we also gathered information; the majority of these college students are from the School of Business, where they are already pursuing higher levels of academic study. Most of these students are in their 7th semester or higher, ensuring that the information provided is well-founded, as accurate and reliable as possible, and as objective as possible in this context.

Table 2. Consumer Beliefs About Health in Food Products

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
Considero que los productos con etiquetas "orgánicas" son más saludables que las alternativas convencionales.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	57	38%
	De acuerdo.	53	35.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	37	24.7%
La presencia de una tabla de información nutricional influye significativamente en mi percepción de un producto como saludable.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	57	38%
	De acuerdo.	51	34%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	34	22.7%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	57	38%
	De acuerdo.	47	31.3%

Asocio los productos con menos empaque con una mayor salud.	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	38	25.3%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	57	38%
Creo que los productos etiquetados como "bajos en azúcar" son generalmente opciones más saludables.	De acuerdo.	50	33.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	38	25.3%

Note: Results on consumer perceptions of health in products.

Table 2 examines consumers' perceptions and beliefs regarding the health benefits of food products associated with different product characteristics. Based on this set of questions, it was found that young people's beliefs regarding the health benefits of food products are strongly influenced by labels that provide detailed nutritional information—specifically, which nutrients are present and in what quantities—as well as by the product's packaging, including its color, design, and materials, and the products' caloric content, since people who are mindful of their diet seek to reduce calorie intake; therefore, knowing a product's caloric content greatly aids them in choosing and consuming it. These perceptions are key factors that drive the preference for healthy products.

Table 3

Influence of Product Characteristics on Consumer Perceptions of Health

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
La presencia de conservantes artificiales en un producto me hace percibirlo como menos saludable.	De acuerdo.	51	34%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	46	30.7%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	42	28%
Asocio los colores brillantes y naturales en los envases con productos más saludables.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	55	36.7%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	48	32%
	De acuerdo.	41	27.3%
Considero que los productos de origen local son más saludables que las alternativas importadas.	De acuerdo.	62	41.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	42	28%
	Totalmente de acuerdo	39	26%
Asocio los productos que enfatizan su origen vegetal con opciones más saludables.	De acuerdo.	54	36%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	47	31.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	43	28.7%

Note: Results on how product characteristics influence health.

Table 3 analyzes in greater detail how specific characteristics—beyond general labels—influence consumers' perception of a product's health benefits. It shows that both intrinsic characteristics, such as the absence of preservatives, and extrinsic ones, such as

packaging design, local origin, and the fact that it is a plant-based product, play a fundamental role in this perception. These factors significantly affect how young people value the product, leading them to consider it a healthier option. Thus, it is not only general labels that are decisive, but also the specific attributes the product possesses. Consequently, the combination of these elements helps consumers form a more positive and trustworthy image of the product. This highlights the importance of paying attention to both content and presentation to influence purchasing decisions. Thus, the perception of health is built on multiple aspects that go beyond the superficial.

Table 4

Determinants of Willingness to Pay More for Healthy Products

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
Estoy dispuesto a pagar más por productos que creo que tendrán un impacto positivo en mi salud.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	66	44%
	De acuerdo.	51	34%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	29	19.3%
Mis conocimientos de nutrición influyen en cuánto más estoy dispuesto a pagar por opciones más saludables.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	64	42.7%
	De acuerdo.	50	33.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	34	22.7%
Reviso regularmente noticias e información sobre salud, lo cual influye en mis decisiones de compra de alimentos.	De acuerdo.	57	38%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	53	35.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	34	22.7%
Mis objetivos personales de salud justifican gastar más dinero en productos más saludables.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	56	37.3%
	De acuerdo.	54	36%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	36	23.3%

Note: Results on the determinants of willingness to pay more for healthy products. Table 4 focuses directly on identifying the factors that motivate students to pay a slightly higher price for healthy products. It clearly shows that the willingness to pay more is closely related to the health benefits the product offers to the consumer. Furthermore, students' level of nutritional knowledge significantly influences this decision, as those with more information tend to value healthy attributes more highly. Clear and accessible information about health benefits also plays a key role, as it enables students to make informed decisions. On the other hand, personal wellness goals—such as maintaining a balanced diet or improving quality of life—are determining factors that drive this willingness to pay a little more. Taken together, these elements show that economic motivation is linked not only to perceptions of the product but also to individual health awareness and priorities. Thus, Table 4 demonstrates that the value students assign to healthy products goes beyond price, incorporating aspects related to knowledge and personal goals.

Table 5*Cognitive Factors Influencing Willingness to Pay for Healthy Products*

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
Creo que existe una correlación directa entre el precio de un producto y sus beneficios para la salud.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	53	35.3%
	De acuerdo.	47	31.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	41	27.3%
Mi conocimiento de las enfermedades crónicas influye en cuánto más estoy dispuesto a pagar por opciones más saludables.	De acuerdo.	57	38%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	49	32.7%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	42	28%
Estoy más dispuesto a pagar precios más altos por productos saludables cuando entiendo sus beneficios específicos para la salud.	De acuerdo.	61	40.7%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	42	28%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	40	26.7%
Mi exposición a la educación para la salud influye en mi disposición a pagar más por productos con beneficios adicionales para la salud.	De acuerdo.	62	41.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	47	31.3%
	Totalmente de acuerdo	35	23.3%

Note: Results on the factors influencing willingness to pay.

Table 5 examines in depth the cognitive processes and information that students use to justify higher spending on healthy products. It reveals that various cognitive factors play a crucial role in this willingness to pay more. Among these factors, students' perception of the relationship between price and health benefits stands out, as it directly influences their assessment of the product. Likewise, their knowledge of chronic diseases allows them to better understand the importance of choosing healthy options. Understanding specific benefits, such as risk reduction or nutritional value, is also essential in supporting their purchasing decision. Furthermore, health education significantly contributes to students making more informed and conscious decisions. Taken together, these cognitive elements form the basis on which students justify the additional expense for products they consider beneficial to their well-being. Therefore, Table 5 highlights the importance of information and knowledge in motivating investment in health through diet.

Table 6**Influence of Price on the Choice Between Healthy and Conventional Products**

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
Comparo regularmente los precios de los productos convencionales y sus alternativas más saludables antes de comprarlos.	Totalmente de acuerdo.	68	45.3%
	De acuerdo.	48	32%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	30	20%
Aunque el precio de un producto saludable suba ligeramente, sigo prefiriéndolo antes que una alternativa convencional más económica.	De acuerdo.	56	37.3%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	56	37.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	36	24%
Mi comportamiento de compra cambia más drásticamente con los cambios de precio de los productos convencionales que con los productos saludables.	De acuerdo.	53	35.3%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	53	35.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	41	27.3%
Las promociones de precios de los productos saludables influyen significativamente en mi decisión de comprarlos en lugar de las alternativas convencionales.	Totalmente de acuerdo	57	38%
	De acuerdo	52	34.7%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	40	26.7%

Note: Results on how price influences the choice between healthy products.

Table 6 analyzes how price serves as a decisive factor when choosing between healthy products and their conventional alternatives. Although students view healthy products positively, they are cost-conscious and tend to compare different options before making a decision. Despite this consideration, there appears to be a certain degree of price inelasticity regarding healthy products, indicating that, although students are willing to pay more for these products, they do not accept excessive price increases. In other words, students show a willingness to pay a higher price for products they consider beneficial to their health, but this additional price must be reasonable and not too high compared to conventional products. This dynamic reflects a balance between perceived value and price sensitivity, where cost remains an important factor but is not the sole determinant. Therefore, Table 6 shows that price significantly influences choice, although the preference for health moderates this influence. Thus, students seek healthy options that are affordable and justify their financial investment.

Table 7**Tolerance for Price Premiums and Differential Behavior by Healthy Product Category**

VARIABLE	DESCRIPCION	FRECUENCIA	RESULTADOS
Al comparar productos similares, puedo identificar un porcentaje específico de sobreprecio que estoy dispuesto a pagar por la opción más saludable.	De acuerdo.	55	36.7%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	53	35.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	35	23.3%
Mi respuesta a los cambios de precio difiere entre las categorías de productos saludables (por ejemplo, productos orgánicos frente a suplementos naturales).	De acuerdo.	56	37.3%
	Totalmente de acuerdo.	52	34.7%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo.	39	26%
Volvería a los productos convencionales si la diferencia de precio entre estos y las alternativas saludables fuera demasiado grande.	De acuerdo	53	35.3%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	47	31.3%
	Totalmente de acuerdo	47	31.3%
Estoy dispuesto a pagar un precio más alto (por ejemplo: 9% de diferencia) por las versiones saludables de los productos que consumo con más frecuencia.	De acuerdo.	63	42%
	Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo	42	28%
	Totalmente de acuerdo	42	28%

Note: Results regarding how much more students are willing to pay for healthier products.

Table 7 examines students' willingness to pay a 9% premium for healthy products, as well as whether this tolerance varies by product type. The results show that, although students are willing to accept a small price increase, this tolerance is limited and depends on the product category in question. There is a specific price threshold beyond which students would prefer to choose conventional options, as they consider that the additional cost does not justify the perceived benefit. Furthermore, the willingness to pay a higher price is concentrated primarily on those healthy products that are consumed most frequently, indicating that familiarity and consumption habits influence the acceptance of the price premium. Therefore, Table 7 reveals that, although there is a willingness to pay slightly more for healthy products, this flexibility is moderate and is influenced by both the type of product and the frequency of consumption. In summary, tolerance for the price premium is a key factor that can limit the choice of healthy products over their conventional alternatives.

CONCLUSIONS

En relación al estudio de las preferencias de los jóvenes y su disposición a pagar por productos saludables, se evidencian que las decisiones de compra están fuertemente influenciadas por elementos visuales e informativos presentes en los productos. Los estudiantes demuestran una clara tendencia a asociar la salud de los alimentos con características específicas como la información nutricional detallada, el diseño del empaque, y atributos como la ausencia de conservantes o el origen local y vegetal. Estos hallazgos revelan que los jóvenes han desarrollado criterios específicos para identificar productos saludables, utilizando tanto señales externas como características intrínsecas del producto para tomar sus decisiones de consumo.

Respecto a la aceptación de alimentos saludables en la dieta de los jóvenes, los resultados muestran que existe una clara disposición a incorporar estos productos en su alimentación diaria. Esta aceptación está motivada principalmente por los beneficios percibidos para su salud personal, el nivel de conocimiento nutricional que poseen, y sus objetivos individuales de bienestar. Además, se identificó que los procesos de decisión de estos estudiantes están respaldados por factores cognitivos importantes, como su comprensión de la relación entre precio y beneficios para la salud, el conocimiento sobre enfermedades crónicas, y su nivel de educación en temas de salud, lo que demuestra un enfoque reflexivo hacia sus elecciones alimentarias.

En cuanto a los factores que determinan la disposición a pagar por productos alimenticios saludables, se encontró que, aunque los estudiantes valoran positivamente estos productos, el precio sigue siendo un factor determinante en sus decisiones de compra. Los jóvenes muestran una disposición moderada a pagar un sobreprecio por productos saludables, específicamente tolerando diferencias de 20 a 30 centavos adicionales, pero esta tolerancia tiene límites claros y varía según el tipo de producto. Es notable que la disposición a pagar más es mayor para aquellos productos saludables que consumen con mayor frecuencia, lo que sugiere que los estudiantes priorizan la inversión en salud para los alimentos que forman parte regular de su dieta, manteniendo un equilibrio entre sus aspiraciones de bienestar y sus limitaciones económicas.

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