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Exploring consumer preferences for quality labels on extra virgin olive oil: Accounting for stated versus inferred attribute non-attendance

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The significance of search, experience, and credence attributes in influencing consumers' acceptance and preferences for extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) has been extensively explored. However, empirically, only a limited body of literature has investigated consumers' willingness to pay (WTP) for more than one protected designation of origin (PDO) within the same region. Methodologically, only a few studies that use choice experiments in food economics have estimated attribute non-attendance (ANA), which helps offer results that are more closely aligned with reality. The objective of this research is to examine how consumers living in a Spanish region trade-off between two different local versus other PDOs and the European Union organic label. To address this objective, a choice experiment explored consumer utilities and their WTP for the selected EVOO attributes included in the study. Additionally, we advance methodologically, and measure stated versus inferred ANA for the different attributes. The results indicate that consumers were willing to pay higher prices for one liter of EVOO with the PDO and organic label than without them. The highest WTP was received by the local PDOs and the lowest by the organic label. ANA estimates suggest that indeed respondents ignored several attributes during the evaluation. Stated ANA performed better than the inferred ANA model. The most ignored attribute was the organic certification, followed by PDO and price, and 30% of the sample fully attended all the attributes from the choice experiment. These results show the importance of ANA in consumer behaviour, demonstrating that not accounting for ANA affects coefficient estimates and the WTP for the considered attributes. Our results can help EVOO producers feature important attributes to consumers and highlight consumers' preferences towards food products with quality certifications.