Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
EUROPEAN IMPORTER BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMPORTING FRESH APPLES FROM CHILE

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Applied Science in Agribusiness

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to understand the attitudes European importers hold towards importing fresh apples from Chile. The purpose is to assist Chilean exporters to formulate adequate marketing strategies aimed at importers, in order to maintain and develop further competitiveness. The research examines the determinants of overall attitude towards the behaviour of importing apples from Chile. The analysis shows which beliefs and/or evaluative attitudes need to be changed in order to improve importers' overall attitude.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) have suggested a theory of reasoned action that can be used to predict and understand behaviour. In this research the theory of reasoned action was applied to examine attitudes of European importers towards importing apples from Chile and to expose to Chilean exporters the key areas in which positive changes can improve importers attitudes leading to a more favourable behaviour, i.e. increasing the likelihood of importing apples from Chile. In contrast to other models of organisational buying behaviour, the theory of reasoned action presents a conceptual framework that is practical to use for empirical research.

The research findings suggest that attributes related to the product such as quality and condition of apples as well as the infrastructure and capabilities of Chilean exporters to achieve good quality and condition were the attributes that most contributed to a favourable attitude. Exceptions were the specific cases of Bitter Pit and yellowing in Granny Smith apples and the proportion of new varieties (bicoloured apples) Chilean suppliers have available.

In relation to attributes that were exporter oriented, in general these contributed less towards a positive attitude. However, it can be concluded that improvements in the service exporters give to their importers could improve importer attitudes substantially. The key areas were fulfilment of pre-established shipping programmes, flexibility to
adapt to market dynamics and/or customer needs and in general a long term business commitment to the importer.

The study also indicates further possibilities for research on this subject.
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