

Consumer knowledge, information sources used and predisposition towards the adoption of wood pellets in domestic heating systems

Abstract

Previous work on consumer psychology has focused on social attitudes towards environmental concerns through a behavioural perspective. In order to complete and verify the outcomes and statements of such research, this study used a perception-based approach involving a focus group and personal interviews to provide a more holistic understanding for adopting wood pellet-based heating systems or boilers. Concretely, the study probed the following issues: (i) the knowledge level of end consumers concerning biofuels in general and pellets in particular; (ii) main information sources; (iii) the level and intention of biofuel and pellet use among end consumers; (iv) the influence of subsidies or funding support for the purchase of pellet boilers/stoves; and (v) the influence of consumers' environmental concerns on their biofuel and pellet consumption. These variables were crossed with a set of socio-demographic variables of the sample population. The statistical analysis verified that knowledge about biofuels was directly related to knowledge about pellets. Most respondents knew very little about pellets, largely due to a lack of information and communication. Friends were the principal information source, followed by family members. Finally, while environmental concern may bear some weight in the decision to adopt these heating systems, the existence of subsidies for their purchase was more important in consumers' ultimate decision.

Keywords

Consumer knowledge, Information sources, Adoption of heating system, Wood pellets, Socio-demographic variables