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Towards sustainable and healthier food consumption: Factors influencing organic vegetables purchase intention of Chinese consumers

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Abstract
Purpose: This study examines the factors influencing Chinese consumers' purchase intentions towards organic vegetables through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory.
Design/methodology/approach: This research involved gathering quantitative data from 305 participants via an online questionnaire and testing the hypotheses through structural equation modeling.
Findings: Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, the model reveals that consumers' trust, food safety concerns, health consciousness, and organic vegetable knowledge positively influence purchase intentions. However, price sensitivity negatively impacts purchase intention, and perceived quality seems to have an insignificant effect on it.
Research limitations/implications: The focus is on preferences for organic vegetables, stressing the importance of adherence to production standards and the role of technology. The study's methodological constraints and its narrow scope underscore the need for more extensive international research.
Practical implications: Our research offers vital insights for companies in the food safety and organic sectors. By understanding consumer preferences, companies can tailor their strategies to boost consumer trust and awareness. Emphasizing rigorous certification, comprehensive supervision, and focused communication can ensure food safety, uphold organic standards, and promote the benefits of organic products, paving the way for a health-conscious and sustainable future.
Originality/value: This research contributes to the literature on sustainable food consumption by exploring the direct impacts of factors like health consciousness, food safety concerns, price sensitivity, knowledge of organic vegetables, perceived quality, and consumer trust on the intention to buy organic vegetables.

Keywords: Organic Vegetable, Consumers' Trust, Health Consciousness, Food Safety Concern, Purchase Intention, Price Sensitivity.

Introduction

The United Nations "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" represents a significant global shift towards sustainable practices, encompassing various goals aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth and responsible consumption. Particularly relevant to our study is Goal 12, which seeks to "ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns." Our research on organic vegetables directly contributes to this goal by examining factors that influence the shift towards more sustainable and healthier food choices among Chinese consumers. Understanding these factors can help drive changes in consumption patterns that are critical for achieving sustainability objectives set forth in the agenda (Koff, 2021). A key aspect of these goals is the emphasis on altering consumption patterns, particularly regarding organic food consumption, which stands as a pivotal element. Organic food, widely believed to be free from harmful chemicals and pesticides, is viewed as a healthier and more eco-friendly alternative (Das et al., 2020). Studies like Gamage et al. (2023) and Reganold & Wachter (2016) accentuate the environmental advantages of organic food over conventional counterparts, emphasizing its potential to diminish the environmental toll of traditional agriculture. By understanding the drivers behind organic vegetable consumption in China, this study provides insights that could help policymakers and businesses promote organic food more effectively, thereby aligning with global sustainability efforts.

The palpable consequences of chemicals and pesticides in conventional agricultural methods are well-documented. Such methods have led to challenges like soil degradation, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, and direct pesticide-related damages (Devi et al., 2022; Sud, 2020). Additionally, the repercussions on human health have been stark, including the elevated risks of ailments like cancer and endocrine disruptions. This interplay between dietary choices, individual health, and environmental well-being is aptly summarized by Ludwig Feuerbach's adage, "You are what you eat" (Ansari et al., 2021; Cech et al., 2023). Given these consequences, apprehensions regarding the environmental and health impacts of synthetic methods in food production are mounting.

China's organic vegetable market provides an illuminating case study in this context. In China, vegetables are not only an everyday necessity but also highly valued. Organic vegetables, in particular, rank foremost in consumer preferences (Yue et al., 2021). These vegetables, certified by the Chinese government, epitomize nutrition, safety, and quality. They adhere to sustainable development principles and conform to specific organic food quality standards. As a result, vegetables certified as organic are perceived to be superior in quality and sustainability (Yin et al., 2022).

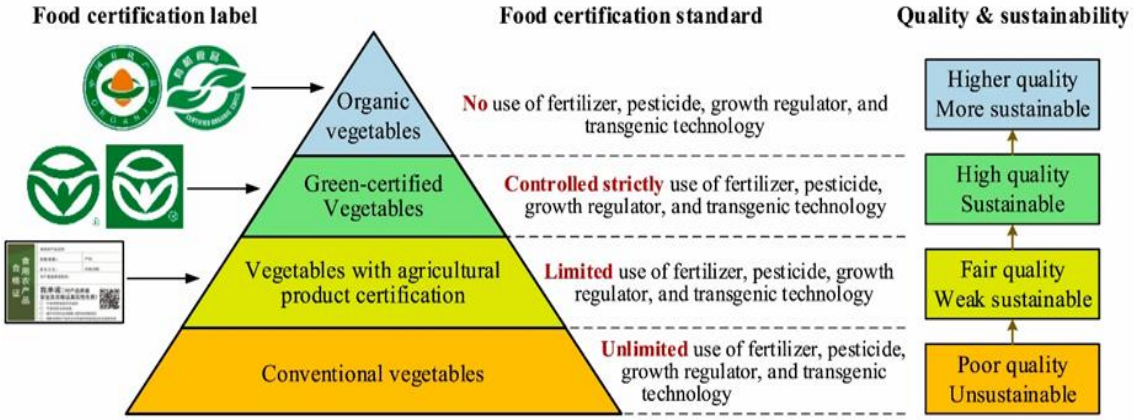

Figure. 1 Classification and differences in China's vegetable quality and sustainability certification.

Sources: Yin, Z., Li, B., Li, S., Ding, J., & Zhang, L. (2022)

The prominence of organic vegetables in China cannot be understated. As a main type of organic food, organic vegetable resonates with the principles of sustainable development, making them invaluable to the UN's SDGs (Stefanovic, 2022). From a consumer's perspective, these vegetables are nutrient-rich, offering myriad health benefits. Environmentally, they curtail Nitrogen surplus, diminish pesticide usage, enhance soil quality, and augment biodiversity (Awasthi et al., 2022). Collectively, the organic vegetable industry in China contributes significantly to various SDGs, including food security, improved nutrition, sustainable agriculture, health, and sustainable consumption patterns (Gamage et al., 2023; Tobler et al., 2011).

Yet, challenges persist in the organic vegetable sector. A glaring issue is the disconnect between consumer demand and product supply (O'Kane, 2016). This misalignment is evident in the purchasing intentions of organic vegetable consumers (Wu et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018). Thus, discerning consumer preferences becomes pivotal, especially in understanding the drivers of organic vegetable consumption. After all, consumers dictate the endgame in the vegetable industry chain, and their quality preferences reverberate throughout the supply chain, influencing production and marketing strategies (Nguyen et al., 2019).

In the larger picture, China's burgeoning population and evolving consumer tastes place it at the epicentre of this sustainability narrative. With its dominant economic footprint, China's consumption habits have a profound ripple effect on global sustainability trends (Abbott et al., 2021). The Chinese populace's growing predilection for organic vegetables, fuelled by heightened health and environmental awareness, signifies a monumental shift towards green and sustainable consumption. However, the nuanced factors influencing organic food purchase intentions among Chinese consumers remain underexplored. This research seeks to unpack these nuances, focusing on the interplay of factors such as purchase intentions, health consciousness, food safety concerns, perceived quality, and consumer trust. In doing so, it aims to offer insights that could refine marketing strategies and shape policies to mirror China's escalating demand for sustainable consumption (Nagaraj, 2021; Thøgersen & Zhou, 2012).

Literature Review

Social Cognitive Theory

Sustainable food consumption models, such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Theory of Action Reaction, have historically emphasized individual internal or psychological factors. However, these models often overlook the potential influence of non-psychological determinants on sustainable consumption behaviours (Wang et al., 2019). In contrast, the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) not only acknowledges individual psychological factors but also emphasizes the role of external environmental factors in shaping personal beliefs and, subsequently, sustainable purchasing intentions (Mazhar et al., 2022).

As the theoretical backbone of our study, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) provides a framework for understanding how environmental factors, personal cognition, and behaviours interact to influence the sustainable consumption behaviours of individuals, such as purchasing organic vegetables. SCT asserts that individual behaviour results from a complex interplay among personal, environmental, and behavioural factors. Rooted in the concept of reciprocal determinism, SCT posits that individuals are both influenced by and exert influence on their environments and personal characteristics (Bandura, 1986, 2001). As illustrated in Figure 2, the SCT comprises these core components. Crucially, SCT underscores that while the environment can shape behaviour, individual cognition remains paramount. Observational learning plays a key role here: individuals learn by observing others' behaviours with their environment, actions, and thoughts continuously interacting and influencing one another

(Wayne, 2019). An observed behaviour can subsequently modify an individual's cognition. Conversely, an individual's upbringing and environment can also influence future behaviours (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Therefore, SCT, as conceptualized by Bandura (1986), offers a nuanced perspective on human behaviour, emphasizing the intricate balance between environmental, psychological, and behavioural components.

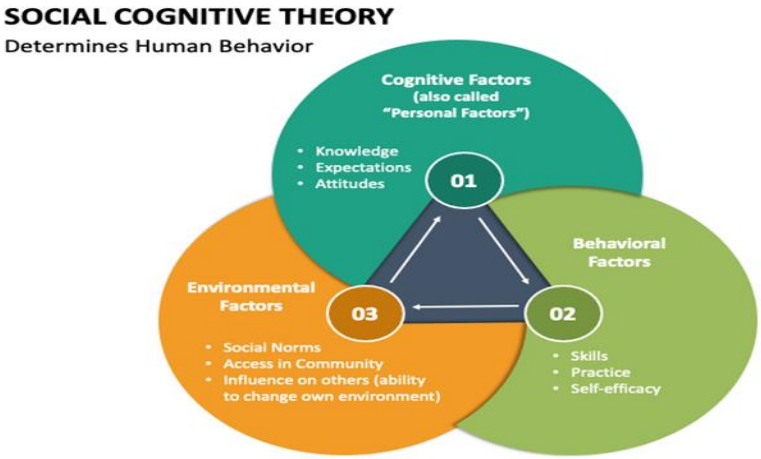

Figure. 2 The model of social cognitive theory
Source: Bandura, A. (2001)

Recent studies underscore a pronounced preference among consumers for organic vegetables. This inclination is underpinned by heightened health consciousness, concerns about food safety, and the perceived superiority of organic offerings. Notably, many consumers view organic vegetables as proactive shields against various ailments, including cancer (Ghorai et al., 2020). In China, these proclivities are accentuated by recurrent food safety debacles and escalating agricultural pollution, culminating in a pronounced tilt towards organic vegetables as safer alternatives. This shift not only symbolizes rigorous food safety standards but also mirrors a societal push towards enhanced quality of life (Rana & Paul, 2020). Such determinants of organic consumption, rooted in health awareness, food safety concerns, and perceived quality, align with the outcome expectations outlined in the SCT.

Organic vegetable knowledge, encapsulating essential aspects like product trustworthiness, certification protocols, and regulatory practices, serves as a vital foundation for consumers (Bezbaruah et al., 2021). Within the framework of the SCT, such knowledge is conceptualized as a cognitive factor. Furthermore, trust, characterized by the anticipatory beliefs' individuals harbour about others' intentions or actions (Rousseau et al., 1998), plays a central role in the positive perception of organic foods. SCT underscores trust as a salient cognitive factor.

Notably, organic vegetables often come with a premium price, potentially sidelining lower-income consumers (Yormirzoev et al., 2021). This elevated cost can deter potential buyers, presenting an impediment to organic food consumption (Melović et al., 2020). Within the SCT, the price barrier is contextualized under self-efficacy, as part of the behavioural factors, because it poses challenges to purchasing behaviours (Almrafee, 2019).

Purchase intention (PI)

Purchase intentions serve as credible precursors to future consumer actions and, as Karunarathna (2020) posits, are potent harbingers of ensuing behaviours. Intention, in the consumer behavioural landscape, reflects a predisposition towards acquiring a product or

engaging in purchase-related activities (Chaudhuri et al., 2021). The propensity for such intentions to materialize depends on their intensity (Wiyadi & Ayuningtyas, 2019).

In the domain of organic foods, purchase intentions signal an emergent demand for these products. Such inclinations can be conceptualized as psychological objectives, an idea reinforced by scholars like Bazhan et al. (2023) and Morwitz & Munz (2021). However, the resolve to opt for organic foods is intricate, influenced by a spectrum of elements that are not always straightforward to navigate. Even though procuring food is an intrinsic necessity, a plethora of determinants sculpt the intention behind specific food choices (Pop et al., 2020; Sharma & Lal, 2020).

Contemporary studies accentuate those factors such as health consciousness (Iqbal et al., 2021; Nagaraj, 2021), food safety concerns (Čolović & Mitić, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2019), perceived product quality (X. Wu et al., 2021), and the extent of consumer trust (Curvelo et al., 2019; Khalid, 2021) are instrumental in shaping the intent to purchase organic foods.

Consumers' Trust (CT)

Trust is a foundational element in consumer behaviour, symbolizing the positive anticipations individuals hold regarding the intentions or actions of others (Rousseau et al., 1998; Zhang & Yu, 2020). This sentiment mirrors a consumer's belief in an entity fulfilling their needs, ultimately engendering confidence in a company's competencies (Priscillia et al., 2021; Wetzels et al., 1998). Recent studies, including those by Xie et al. (2015) and Vega-Zamora et al. (2019), underscore the profound influence of consumer trust and distrust in the organic food sector. The scholarly discourse offers a plethora of trust definitions. In this study, we align with the definition posited by Hobbs and Goddard (2015), which construes trust as a heuristic employed in decision-making, particularly under circumstances characterized by limited product knowledge or familiarity. This interpretation encapsulates both the expectation of consistent actions from an entity and the intent to depend on them in spite of potential vulnerabilities (Canova et al., 2020).

The organic food market serves as a quintessential example of an arena where trust becomes paramount, primarily due to the information asymmetry surrounding product quality. Often, organic commodities command higher prices than their conventional analogy (Manning & Kowalska, 2021). And although there's a broad consumer consensus favouring organic products, discrepancies between attitudes and behaviours have been observed in certain regions. Such disparities are frequently linked to trust in organic standards. The crux of the issue surfaces when consumers question the authenticity of certifications or harbour suspicions that certified items may not genuinely uphold organic principles (Long & Murray, 2013; Sander et al., 2018).

Food Safety Concern (FSC)

Concerns regarding food safety predominantly arise from apprehensions about pesticide residues, chemical fertilizers, and food additives—factors often associated with conventional farming practices (Chen et al., 2022; Zhou & Ding, 2022). The escalation of food-related ailments has underscored the importance of food safety in consumer decision-making processes (Pandey et al., 2019). Consequently, organic foods, which are perceived to be free of detrimental chemicals and enriched with superior nutritional value, have experienced an increase in demand, particularly in regions like China (Lee et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2022).

Historical food safety breaches have intensified these consumer concerns, propelling a shift towards the organic sector, seen as a safer haven (Yang et al., 2021). Research substantiates that consumers are inclined to pay a premium for the perceived safety of organic products (Zhang et al., 2018). Demographic determinants, such as age, income, and family configuration, modulate the intensity of these concerns (Liu & Ma, 2016; Wilcock et al., 2004).

Unforeseen events, like major food safety scandals, further accentuate the transition to organic foods. For instance, in the wake of a safety scandal involving pork in China, a conspicuous surge in organic pork sales was observed (Chai et al., 2022).

Health Consciousness (HC)

Health consciousness, characterized by deliberate health-oriented decisions, signifies an individual's propensity to engage in beneficial health behaviours (Pham et al., 2019). An escalating concern over residues from synthetic agricultural inputs has spotlighted health consciousness as a predominant motive behind organic food purchases (Cavite et al., 2022; Jitrawang & Krairit, 2019; Pattweekongka et al., 2019). This inclination is particularly pronounced in emerging markets where health considerations play a pivotal role in driving organic food purchasing intentions (Nagaraj, 2021). Basha and Lal (2019) contend that health consciousness stands as the paramount factor steering these decisions. This concept is further elucidated by Nicolosi et al. (2023) as an individual's "readiness to undertake health-related actions."

Organic Vegetable Knowledge (OVK)

Knowledge plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer decision-making (Said et al., 2014). Both Basha (2014) and Rana and Paul (2020) have identified education as a crucial determinant in organic product purchases. This decision-making is often guided by subjective knowledge, leading consumers to act in alignment with their acquired information. The initial catalyst for the demand for organic goods is a consumer's understanding of organic foods (Jie et al., 2022; Kianpour et al., 2014). Research indicates that consumers broadly associate the term "organic" with a lack of chemicals (Lang & Conroy, 2021). Götze et al. (2016) suggest that the preference for organic over conventional produce stems from its perceived natural, raw, and unaltered state. However, Murshed and Uddin (2020) assert that while consumers recognize the inherent qualities of organic products, they lack comprehensive insight into how organic farming methodologies diverge from conventional practices. Further supporting this, Nguyen-Viet (2023) found a correlation between consumer awareness of environmental matters and a heightened inclination towards environmentally-friendly products, especially those bearing eco-labels.

Perceived Quality (PQ)

Perceived quality is conceptualized by Lian and Rajadurai (2020) as a consumer's evaluation of product excellence. Within the organic food sector, this perception is shaped by attributes such as taste, freshness, and health benefits (Petrescu et al., 2020). Essentially, product quality encompasses the intrinsic features of a product, were superior quality signals dependability and optimal performance. Importantly, high-calibre products satisfy consumer demands, offering increased value (Ackaradejruangsri, 2013; Kotler et al., 2010; Moon et al., 2013). Given its absence of pesticides, bioengineering, and synthetic fertilizers, organic food is often esteemed higher than conventional alternatives (Suphaskuldamrong, 2020). This perception is bolstered by the ascribed health, safety, taste, and nutritional merits of organic produce (Sultan et al., 2020).

Price Sensitivity (PS)

Price sensitivity gauges the impact of price fluctuations on consumer purchasing behaviours (López-Fernández, 2020). Consumers with pronounced sensitivity may substantially alter their purchasing patterns due to marginal price adjustments (Wang et al., 2020). Within this context, price often serves as a product positioning determinant, with consumers correlating higher prices with enhanced quality and the inverse (Hsu et al., 2017).

Despite China's heightened awareness of food safety, stemming from previous incidents, price sensitivity remains influential. Many Chinese consumers, recognizing the health merits of organic food, may curtail their purchases when confronted with elevated prices (Aschemann‐Witzel & Zielke, 2017; Yang & Fang, 2021). Sirieix et al. (2011) underscored this dynamic, emphasizing health as a driving factor but price as a significant barrier.

Wealth does not invariably diminish price sensitivity. Nevertheless, price doesn't always serve as a deterrent; for instance, Lithuanian research suggested that the perceived value of organic food can mitigate price concerns (Dangi et al., 2020; Kavaliauske & Ubartaite, 2014).

Organic foods, often positioned as premium products (Dudziak & Kocira, 2022), typically command higher prices than their conventional analogy. This pricing paradigm often suppresses purchase intent, as documented in multiple studies, revealing that the premium associated with organic foods can deter even those initially inclined towards them (Hwang & Chung, 2019; Saleki et al., 2019).

Purchase intention (PI)

Purchase intentions act as a credible precursor to future consumer actions, and as Karunarathna (2020) posits, they stand as potent harbingers of ensuing behaviours. Intention, in the consumer behavioural landscape, reflects a predisposition towards acquiring a product or engaging in purchase-related activities (Chaudhuri et al., 2021). The propensity for such intentions to materialize depends on their intensity (Wiyadi & Ayuningtyas, 2019).

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Contemporary studies accentuate those factors such as health consciousness (Iqbal et al., 2021; Japutra et al., 2022; Nagaraj, 2021; Parashar et al., 2023), food safety concerns (Čolović & Mitić, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2019), perceived product quality (X. Wu et al., 2021), and the extent of consumer trust (Curvelo et al., 2019; Khalid, 2021) are instrumental in shaping the intent to purchase organic foods.

Hypothesis Development

Consumers' Trust and Purchase Intention

Trust is fundamental in influencing consumers' choices to purchase organic food (Canova et al., 2020; Keni, 2020). This trust is frequently anchored in certifications and labelling present on organic food packaging (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017). Chang et al. (2023) underscores the significance of credible labels in guiding purchase decisions, a sentiment echoed by Teng and Wang (2015) who argue that trust effectively mediates the relationship between consumer information and purchase intentions.

Building on this, our hypothesis posits:

H1: Consumers' trust positively influences their intention to purchase organic vegetables.

Food Safety Concern and Purchase Intention

Drawing upon previous research, it's evident that the choice to consume organic food is rooted in a comprehensive grasp of food safety (Zheng et al., 2021). Safety concerns combined with personal health views shape consumer preferences (Iqbal et al., 2021). With the surge in demand among Chinese consumers for nutritious and health-focused foods, it becomes

imperative to delve into food safety apprehensions and their implications for organic food consumption (Akber et al., 2022).
Building on these insights, the following hypothesis is advanced:
H2: Food safety concern positively influences the purchase intention of organic vegetables.

Health Consciousness and Purchase Intention

Research spanning diverse nations, from China to beyond, consistently identifies a relationship between health consciousness and the propensity to purchase organic foods (Liu et al., 2021; Teixeira et al., 2021). This correlation is accentuated by studies indicating that health-conscious consumers have a preference for organic products and often experience an enhanced quality of life (Lee et al., 2023). Further cementing this understanding, Gundala and Singh (2021) emphasize the paramount role of perceived health benefits in consumers' inclination towards organic food choices.
Given these insights, we propose the subsequent hypothesis:
H3: Health Consciousness positively influences the Purchase Intention of organic vegetables.

Organic Vegetable Knowledge and Purchase Intention

Chinese consumers who are well-informed tend to exhibit a willingness to invest in organic foods, cognizant of their inherent benefits and long-term health implications. Research by Hoque et al. (2018) demonstrated a strong relationship between consumers' knowledge about organic foods and their purchasing intentions. By characterizing organic foods as credence goods, the importance of information in guiding purchase decisions becomes evident, particularly when juxtaposed against more economically priced conventional foods (Roy et al., 2022; Yiridoe et al., 2005). This perspective is reinforced by Yang et al. (2014), who argue that a knowledge deficit can impede organic food purchases. Intriguingly, Li et al. (2019) identified that within the umbrella of Chinese safe food categories, organic foods command limited recognition, with awareness levels lingering at merely a quarter of the surveyed population. This underscores the imperative for marketers to elevate consumer education regarding organic foods. Wang et al. (2019), in their exploration of organic food consumption, discerned that consumer knowledge exerts a direct impact on purchase intention for organic products. Building on these observations, the ensuing hypothesis is formulated:
H4: Knowledge of organic vegetable positively influences the purchase intention of organic vegetables.

Perceived Quality and Purchase Intention

Singh and Verma (2017) posit that perceived quality serves as a pivotal determinant in consumers' preferences for organic products, a perspective that resonates with the observations of Jánská et al. (2020). In their study, a significant portion of respondents lauded the inherent attributes of organic food. Elaborating on this understanding, researchers such as Walia and Kumar (2022) and Wee et al. (2014) argue that perceived quality lays the groundwork for consumer satisfaction, subsequently influencing behavioural intentions and purchase decisions. Informed by these insights, we put forth the subsequent hypothesis:
H5. Perceived quality positively influences the intention to purchase organic vegetables.

Price Sensitivity and Purchase Intention

Price sensitivity, as delineated by Cakici & Tekeli (2022) and Munnukka (2008), reflects the extent to which fluctuations in product prices influence consumer purchasing behaviour. This sensitivity could elucidate the variable impact of price on organic food consumption, as noted by Xing et al. (2022). Typically, organic foods, often priced higher than conventional counterparts, may deter the more price-sensitive consumers (Yeh et al., 2020). Conversely,

consumers less influenced by price might be swayed by other organic food attributes, such as quality, safety, trust, or personal norms, as suggested by Molinillo et al. (2020). When these consumers perceive value in organic food's attributes, they may overlook its price premium. Based on this understanding, we posit the subsequent hypothesis:
H6: Price sensitivity negatively influences the purchase intention of organic vegetables.

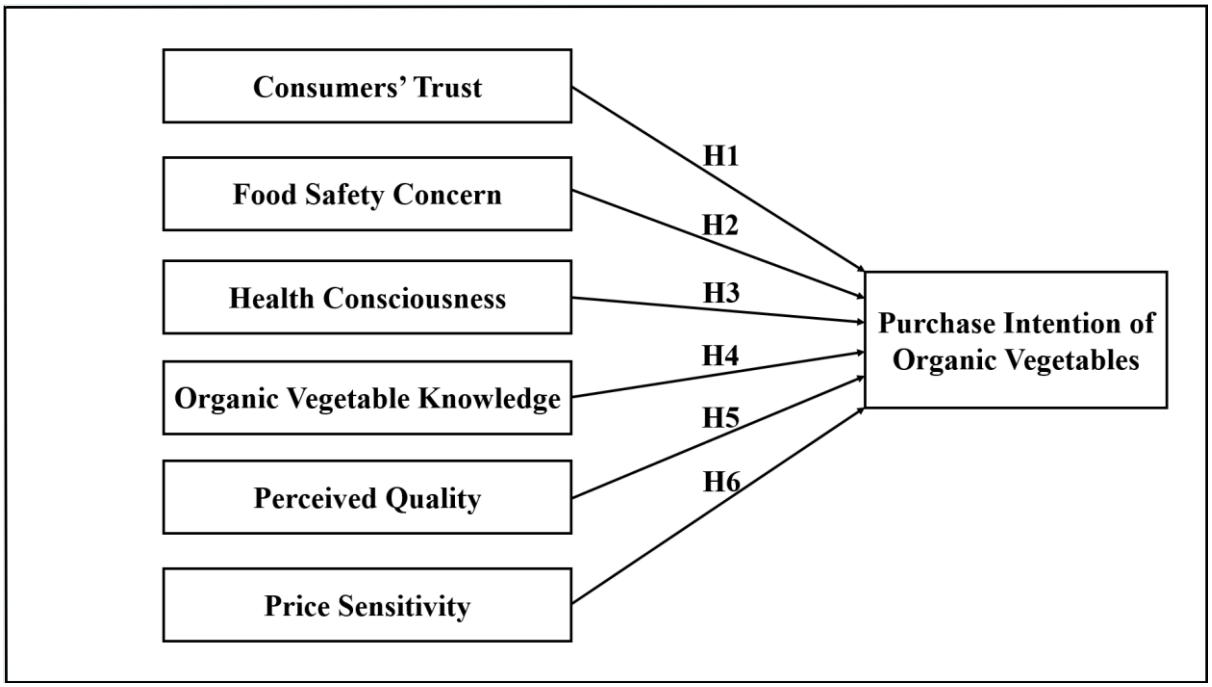

Figure. 1. Research framework

Methods

Measures

In formulating our methodology, we utilized well-validated scales from prior research to construct our variables. Purchase intention was gauged using a four-item scale, adapted from Shaharudin et al. (2010), while health consciousness was measured based on criteria from Gracia and de Magistris (2007), Yadav and Pathak (2016), and Kutnohorska and Tomšík (2013). The construct for perceived quality was informed by a three-item scale from Bao et al. (2011) and Aulia et al. (2016). Price sensitivity was determined using items from both Wang et al. (2020) and Ghali-Zinoubi and Toukabri (2019). Organic vegetable knowledge was captured through a four-item scale inspired by Joshi and Rahman (2017) and Aertsens et al. (2011). To measure consumer trust, we incorporated five items, drawing from the works of Benson et al. (2020), Gefen et al. (2003), and Hassanein and Head (2007).
For evaluating constructs like consumers' trust, food safety concern, health consciousness, knowledge of organic vegetable, perceived quality, price sensitivity, and purchase intention, a five-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data and sample collection

Our study employed an online survey directed at mainstream consumers to explore the determinants influencing the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Chinese consumers. Distributed through WeChat, the survey garnered a significant number of responses. After thorough scrutiny, 305 valid responses were selected for comprehensive

analysis.

Participant Demographics

A glimpse into Table 1 reveals the diverse attributes of our participants. Females slightly surpassed males in participation, with 52.1% compared to 47.9%. In terms of age demographics, the 18-25 age bracket was the most represented at 31.5%, trailed by the 26-35 category at 23.3%. Examining monthly incomes, a significant 25.9% of participants earned between 3,000 - 5,000 RMB, while those earning between 5,001-8,000 RMB and 8,001-10,000 RMB were represented at 23.3% and 19.3% respectively. Educational backgrounds showed a balanced representation, with college diploma holders leading at 28.9%, closely followed by Bachelor's degree holders at 28.5% and Senior High School graduates at 27.5%. Occupation-wise, office workers were the predominant group, accounting for 17.7%, with factory workers and the self-employed represented at 11.8% and 11.1% respectively.

Table1. Demographic information of the sample of respondents

Characteristic	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	146	47.9
	Female	159	52.1
Age	18-25	96	31.5
	26-35	71	23.3
	36-45	55	18
	46-55	45	14.8
	>56	38	12.5
Income	<3000	46	15
	3000-5000	79	25.9
	5001-8000	71	23.3
	8001-10000	59	19.3
	10001-20000	31	10.2
	>20000	19	6.2
Education Level	Junior High School	21	6.9
	Senior High School	84	27.5
	College diploma	88	28.9
	Bachelor’s degree	87	28.5
	Master’s degree	25	8.2
Occupation	Government Employee	15	4.9
	Business Managers	10	3.3
	Office Workers	54	17.7
	Professionals	13	4.3
	Factory Workers	36	11.8
	Salesperson	58	19
	Self Employed	34	11.1
	Agricultural Workers	4	1.3
	Retire	4	1.3
	No Occupation yet	11	3.6
	Current Students	32	10.5
	Others	11	3.6

Findings

Data analysis was conducted using SEM-PLS (4.0) software, a commonly utilized tool in social science investigations, as highlighted by Nisa & Anisah (2023) and Ong & Puteh (2017).

Measurement Model

This research evaluated a reflective measurement model, utilizing a range of metrics to assess intervention effectiveness. The metrics encompassed reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, adhering to the framework provided by Hair et al. (2019). Evaluating composite reliability is essential, as it gauges indicators based on their respective loadings and the reliability methodology adopted (Wong, 2019). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, a method underscored by Hilkenmeier et al. (2020).

Table 2 delineates findings from the confirmatory factor analysis executed on the measurement model, displaying the standardized factor loadings of items within each construct. Ensuring convergent validity entails satisfying three criteria concerning factor loading, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability, as posited by Purwanto (2021) and Hair and Alamer (2022). Specifically, as per Hair et al. (2019), each construct item's factor loading should be no less than 0.60. Additionally, the AVE of every construct should exceed 0.50, and its composite reliability should be above 0.70.

As presented in Table 2, standardized factor loadings range between 0.667 and 0.921, indicating their satisfactory nature. The constructs' AVE values were compliant with the stipulated threshold, and the composite reliability values, which varied from 0.765 to 0.846, surpassed the recommended 0.70 benchmark, attesting to their appropriateness.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Item	Factor loadings	Composite Reliabilities	Average Variance Extracted
CT1	0.688	0.834	0.502
CT2	0.716		
CT3	0.709		
CT4	0.699		
CT5	0.73		
FSC1	0.921	0.846	0.583
FSC2	0.718		
FSC3	0.669		
FSC4	0.721		
HC1	0.723	0.82	0.533
HC2	0.701		
HC3	0.741		
HC4	0.754		
OVK1	0.737	0.825	0.542
OVK2	0.804		
OVK3	0.702		
OVK4	0.697		
PQ1	0.765	0.791	0.558
PQ2	0.712		
PQ3	0.762		
PS1	0.791	0.765	0.521
PS2	0.667		
PS3	0.703		
PI1	0.733	0.821	0.534
PI2	0.734		
PI3	0.717		
PI4	0.738		

The model exhibits discriminant validity, conforming to the criteria delineated by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Within their criterion matrix, the diagonal elements pertaining to individual

variables denote the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). This value should surpass the correlations among the latent variables. Echoing Ab Hamid et al. (2017), our findings show that the square root of the AVE for each construct surpasses its inter-construct correlations, as detailed in Table 3. This substantiates the distinctiveness of each construct, affirming its discriminant validity.

Before progressing to the analysis of the structural model, it is imperative to validate the reliability and representativeness of the latent constructs for the variables, as emphasized by Hair et al. (2019).

Table 3. The Fornell-Larcker of each of the variables.

	CT	FSC	HC	KOF	PI	PQ	PS
CT	**0.708**						
FSC	0.696	**0.763**					
HC	0.703	0.727	**0.730**				
OVK	0.701	0.757	0.680	**0.736**			
PI	0.693	0.759	0.688	0.692	**0.731**		
PQ	0.678	0.703	0.655	0.616	0.628	**0.747**	
PS	0.675	0.692	0.603	0.653	0.655	0.540	**0.722**

Structural Model

Upon validating the measurement model, we proceeded to assess the structural model. Drawing from academic benchmarks, R^2 values are generally classified as weak (0.25), moderate (0.50), and strong (0.75) (Hair et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2023). As delineated in Table 4, the model accounted for 65.7% of the variance in the intention to purchase organic vegetable within the Chinese context. This underscores the model's robust explanatory power.

Table 4 The coefficient of determinants

	R-square	R-square adjusted
PI	0.657	0.65

The hypotheses of this research were evaluated employing the bootstrapping method with 5,000 subsamples and a 95% confidence interval, following the approach outlined by Hair et al. (2019). The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between consumers' trust, food safety concerns, health consciousness, organic vegetable knowledge, and their intention to purchase organic vegetable. Conversely, price sensitivity exhibited a significant negative impact on purchase intentions. Interestingly, perceived quality did not manifest a discernible influence on the intent to buy organic food. A comprehensive presentation of these results is available in Table 5.

Table 5. Hypotheses Test Results

Path	Path coefficients	T statistics	P values	LLCI (5.00%)	ULCI (95.00%)	Result
CT -> PI	0.143	2.419	0.016	0.048	0.239	**H1 Supported**
FSC -> PI	0.308	4.868	0	0.201	0.41	**H2 Supported**
HC -> PI	0.121	2.017	0.044	0.023	0.222	**H3 Supported**
OVK -> PI	0.131	2.357	0.018	0.043	0.225	**H4 Supported**
PQ -> PI	0.077	1.494	0.135	-0.007	0.163	**H5 Unsupported**
PS -> PI	0.145	2.619	0.009	0.054	0.238	**H6 Supported**

Discussion and Conclusion

Our study proposes that variables such as consumer trust, food safety concerns, health awareness, and knowledge of organic vegetables have a significant positive correlation with the willingness to purchase these products. In contrast, price sensitivity negatively correlates with this intention. Interestingly, perceived quality did not have a significant impact on purchase intention among our research sample.

Trust significantly enhances the willingness to buy organic vegetables, confirming our first hypothesis (H1) and resonating with previous research (Ali et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2019). The empirical results of the study also validate our second (H2) and third (H3) hypotheses, indicating that health consciousness and concerns about food safety, especially related to chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and additives, significantly drive Chinese consumers to buy organic vegetables. These findings are consistent with observations by Hsu et al. (2016), Iqbal et al. (2021), and Nagaraj (2021).

Furthermore, knowledge about organic vegetables positively affects purchase intention, thus supporting our fourth hypothesis (H4). This aligns with the views presented by Kamboj et al. (2023), who noted that knowledge profoundly influences consumer decision-making. A notable result concerning our fifth hypothesis (H5), which involves the relationship between perceived quality and purchase intention, was found to be insignificant. This reflects the findings of Singh and Alok (2022) but contradicts the assertions of Ting et al. (2018). The relatively nascent nature of China's emerging organic vegetable market might explain this observed trivial phenomenon.

Lastly, consistent with our sixth hypothesis (H6), the study confirms a significant negative correlation between the price sensitivity of organic vegetables and purchase willingness, suggesting that concerns about price exacerbate barriers to purchasing organic vegetables. This is in line with patterns observed in earlier research.

Theoretical Implications

This study enriches our understanding of sustainable and health-conscious consumption by presenting a pathway model that connects consumer trust, food safety concerns, health consciousness, knowledge of organic vegetable, price sensitivity, and purchase intentions, specifically within the context of organic vegetable consumption. This framework holds significant implications for both marketing and consumer behaviour disciplines. By accentuating pivotal determinants like price, trust, health awareness, knowledge, and food safety considerations, we can better guide consumers towards purchasing organic vegetables, underscoring sustainable consumption trends, especially in developing economies. The insights derived from this research further deepen our knowledge about the primary drivers and resultant behaviours associated with organic vegetable purchasing intentions.

Practical and Social Implications

The findings of this research have profound practical implications for businesses, especially in the realms of food safety, health consciousness, price, consumers' trust, and knowledge of organic vegetables. Enterprises need to accentuate the importance of organic vegetable, aiming to elevate their consumption. By recognizing that organic vegetable are credence goods and that consumers largely depend on information to discern their production methods, businesses can optimize strategies to heighten consumer awareness and knowledge. This knowledge plays a pivotal role in purchase decisions. Hence, vegetable sellers can use these insights to target their consumers aptly and understand the factors that influence them. By segmenting the market astutely, producers, such as farmers, can plan and strategize using safer produce methods. The importance of implementing rigorous authentication and supervision methods cannot be

overstated; this would install confidence in potential consumers about the merits of organic vegetable.

Market regulators can use this study as a blueprint. The emphasis should be on market certification for cleaner and sustainable production labels to ensure the food safety of organic vegetable and compliance with all production standards associated with organic produce. There's an inherent need to flood consumers with information about organic vegetable through diverse media channels. On the production side, it's imperative to adopt green and sustainable methods that align with the standards for organic vegetable cultivation. This approach not only mitigates the use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, nitrates, and heavy metals but also promotes responsible water consumption. (Hassan et al., 2015).

Furthermore, for those in the organic vegetable sector, understanding the determinants influencing consumer intention to purchase is pivotal. It emerges that factors like trust, food safety concerns, health consciousness, knowledge about organic vegetable, and price are paramount. These insights can guide practitioners to devise strategic marketing plans, emphasizing effective communication messages. Such messages can elucidate the manifold benefits of consuming organic vegetable, championing the narrative of a healthier, more sustainable future.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has made noteworthy strides in unravelling the determinants influencing consumer preferences for organic vegetable. However, it is equally imperative to recognize the study's limitations and chart potential directions for future research. While our exploration was comprehensive, it predominantly centred on a few key factors shaping preferences for organic vegetables. There remains a wider spectrum of purchasing behaviours that merit deeper investigation in subsequent studies.

A significant facet of our research spotlighted the importance of farmers' motivations to maintain adherence to organic production standards, which directly impacts the quality of produce. In tandem with this, transparency in the organic produce journey plays a pivotal role. It not only enlightens consumers about the production process but also accentuates the myriad benefits associated with organic practices. These benefits span a broad range, from ensuring food safety to promoting holistic health. Complementing these findings, the study also underscores the indispensable role of technological innovations. Techniques like green pest control and efficient irrigation practices significantly enhance the safety and quality of produce, a notion supported by Zhang et al. (2018).

Methodologically, the study's dependence on self-administered questionnaires surfaced as a potential challenge. The reliability of the gathered data hinges on the participants' capacity to interpret and respond to the questions authentically. This observation suggests that future research could utilize a variety of data collection methods to derive more comprehensive and accurate insights. Another salient limitation was the study's sample size, potentially affecting the broader applicability of our findings. Future endeavours could benefit from a more expansive sample to draw more generalizable conclusions.

While the current research offers a nuanced understanding within the Chinese landscape, there's a pressing need to diversify this scope. Future studies should aim for a more global canvas, encapsulating perspectives from both developed and developing countries. To further enhance the depth of insights, it would be constructive to incorporate other organic food types, like organic rice. Moreover, a detailed examination of various sustainable food segments, such as green food, can enrich our comprehension of their potential impact on consumer purchasing decisions in the future.

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