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A Study on the Impact of Covid-19 on Organic Food Purchase Intentions among Malaysians

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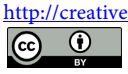


Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the factors affecting purchase intention towards organic food purchase: in particular, how do individual attitudes about trustworthiness of organic foods, subjective norms of social pressure and self-efficacy affect individual intentions to consume organic food, and the impact of the moderating role of perceived trust on purchase intention. To answer this question, a theoretical framework of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) has been established. Using measurement scales in order to measure different aspects of trustworthiness, attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms, a survey instrument has been developed to examine the several associations implied by the model of TPB. Data were collected in seven shopping malls in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Respondents were interviewed face-to-face to collect information on a structured questionnaire. Data (n = 700) were analyzed using a research framework formulated based on the TPB through the structural equation modelling procedure. The findings of the study indicate that health consciousness, organic product knowledge, organic food quality, perceived personal values and perceived social lifestyle have a significant positive effect on consumers' purchase intention. Furthermore, perceived trust does not moderate health consciousness, environmental concerns, organic product knowledge, organic food safety, organic food quality, perceived social pressure, perceived personal values and perceived social lifestyle with purchase intention. The study offers value to the study of organic food theme post pandemic in the Malaysian scenario even with the market in an increasing pattern, as well as the combination of attributes, trust and purchase intention as variables in a single prediction model.

Subject Areas

Consumer Behavior, Marketing

Keywords

Organic Food Purchase Intention, Attitude, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control, Perceived Trust

1. Introduction

The demand for organic food is increasing due to a widespread belief that anything labelled "organic" is natural, healthier, and safer compared to conventional agricultural products [1]. Consumers perceive that consumption of organic food contributes to the prevention of illnesses and increases the quality of one's life. According to Misner and Florian [2], there are three reasons for consumers to consume organically produced food. First, health-conscious consumers feel it is safer as there is little or no pesticide residue left on the food products. Second, their desire to support industries that have less or no negative impact on the environment, especially water and soil contamination. Third, consumers believe that organic food has higher nutrient value. Other reasons are, fourth, the organic content used by farmers will enrich the soil and increase its fertility, leading to less pollution [3]. Fifth, organic food tastes better as it does not contain artificial flavours [4].

Yet, there are also rationales why non-organic food is preferred. First, organic food is very expensive compared to conventionally farmed non-organic food. For instance, a consumer pays RM3.20 for 500 g non-organic carrots, while the organic carrot costs RM9.45 for 200 g [5]. Second, organic grains have a shorter life span as they are not treated with chemical-based preservatives to extend their life span. Third, organic food is only available in selected supermarkets and farmer's markets. Moreover, these supermarkets only carry a small and limited selection of organic vegetables, fruits and meat [3]. According to Kavaliauske and Ubartaite [6], the principal reasons that keep consumers from purchasing organic food are excessive cost, absence of accessibility, fulfilment with traditional food, lack of trust, restricted decision and absence of self-esteem. Besides, organic food is commonly associated with a selective lifestyle that includes dynamic environmentalism, vegetarianism and a luxurious lifestyle [7].

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, organic food transitioned from a lifestyle preference to a perceived dietary necessity. Heightened fear of illness, amplified health consciousness, and an unprecedented public focus on immunity and nutrition collectively elevated organic food's symbolic and functional value in the minds of Malaysian consumers. Yet the pandemic has now receded. Five years on, the conditions that once positioned organic food as an urgent priority have given way to a different set of pressures—persistently high price premiums [1], limited product variety across mainstream retail channels, and a cost-of-living environment that continues to strain household budgets.

This creates a substantive and unresolved empirical question: has pandemic-

induced health consciousness produced a durable shift in Malaysian consumer behaviour, or has the gradual return to normalcy eroded whatever organic food adoption the crisis temporarily accelerated?

On one hand, residual health anxiety—even if no longer acute—may continue to operate as a background motivator, quietly sustaining consumers' willingness to absorb the price premium associated with organic produce. On the other hand, the removal of the pandemic's immediacy may have dissolved the psychological justification for that premium, particularly among lower and middle-income consumers who face meaningful trade-offs between food quality and affordability. The question is whether fear, once experienced, leaves a lasting imprint on purchasing behaviour, or whether it dissipates when the perceived threat does.

This study aims to identify the antecedents of organic food purchase intention among Malaysian consumers in the post-COVID-19 period. Specifically, it examines the roles of health consciousness, residual pandemic-related health concern, price sensitivity, perceived product availability, and social normative influence as predictors of purchase intention. The study further investigates whether consumers' organic food decisions reflect autonomous health motivations or are shaped by social conformity. In the post-pandemic period, with social pressure around health behaviour somewhat reduced, it becomes possible to examine whether sustained organic food purchasing reflects autonomous consumer conviction or the residue of a social trend. Using a quantitative survey approach, it also examines consumers' willingness to pay a price premium for organic food over conventional alternatives, and whether pandemic-era health concerns have translated into sustained behavioural change five years after the crisis.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Malaysian Consumers and Organic Products

Misner and Florian [2] define organic food as food grown without using chemicals such as synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, genetic engineering, and/or pesticides. Meza and Park [8] define organic food as items produced and handled without the use of dangerous synthetic inputs or additives, irradiation, or genetically engineered organisms. Organic food is considered to have a higher dietary benefit compared to conventional food, as organic food is produced without using harmful pesticides or synthetic compounds [9].

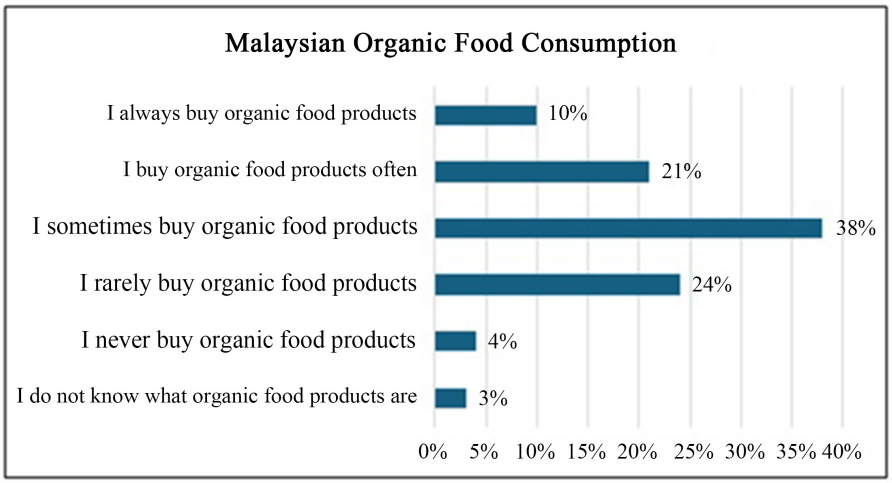
There are two types of organic food: 1) fresh organic food: products containing 95% to 100% certified organic ingredients, known as the "true organic", and 2) manufactured organic food: products containing at least 70% certified organic ingredients, labelled as "made with organic ingredients" [10]. Yet the word "organic" creates manifolds of confusion [11]. Even though many consumers are familiar with its key features, such that it is chemical free but there exist many who are still unfamiliar with the terms used to describe "organic food" [1]. Some of the organic labels on the packaging are:

- Genetically Modified Organism-free (GMO-free): Food products that are not

genetically modified by biotechnology method and are remaining in its original state.

- Natural: Food products are produced without preservatives or flavouring.
- Organic: Food products containing more than 70% of their components are organic. But, there are chances that other minor components might not be organic. On the other hand, poultry that is declared as organically bred means they are given organic feed and are not given growth hormones.
- 100% organic: Food products are totally organic. This type of label is normally used for single-ingredient food like organic eggs, fruits and vegetables [3].

The organic food industry in Malaysia is worth RM20 million annually with demands expected to rise by 12.4% a year [12]. There are many organic food brands in Malaysia, such as Country Farm, Matahari Organic, Organic Forest, Radiant Whole Food, Agape Organic, D'Lonek, DQ Farm, etc. Besides that, consumers are able to purchase organic food products online—Organic Express, Grocer Express, Signature Market, Why Not Organic; or through local supermarkets such as Tesco, Jaya Grocer, Village Grocer, Hero Market and Aeon. Although organic food categories and retail outlets are expanding but the market for organic food remains small and the proportion of consumers who regularly consume organic food is low even though consumers are relatively interested in consuming organic food products [13]. This is relatable to Henryks and Pearson's [14] finding which indicated that relatively small actual purchase despite positive attitudes towards organic food was due to discrepancies in understanding the actual use of organic food by consumers.



Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1010541/frequency-buying-organic-food-malaysia/.

Figure 1. Frequency of purchasing organic food among consumers in Malaysia as of September 2024.

The most purchased organic food by Malaysians is organic fruits and vegetables followed by bread, cereals and meat; organic rice [15]; organic vegetables followed by fruits and meat [12]; organic fruits followed by vegetables and meat [16]. This

shows that the acceptance of organic food products in Malaysia is not restricted to fresh agricultural products only but extended to multiple food groups irrespective of frozen, dried or fresh. A survey on organic food consumption by Hirschmann [17] indicated that 31% of Malaysians are organic food product purchasers. In comparison, only 7% stated that organic food products are not something they would consider purchasing while 24% rarely purchase organic products and 38% are occasional purchasers (**Figure 1**). These figures paint a picture of a market that remains at the periphery of everyday consumer behaviour, with habitual, committed organic food buyers shrinking.

This pattern raises a pointed question: if pandemic-era health anxiety was genuinely catalytic, where is the evidence of sustained adoption four years later? One interpretation is that the pandemic's effect was always conditional driven by an acute and temporary fear stimulus rather than by a fundamental realignment of consumer values. Once that stimulus receded, so did the behaviour it had temporarily amplified. The low frequency of organic food purchasing observed in 2024 is consistent with this interpretation; it suggests that for the majority of Malaysian consumers, the crisis created awareness and momentary intent, but not durable habit.

2.2. Overview of Prior Studies on Organic Food Consumption

Increasingly higher numbers of studies are investigating organic food consumption because of the rising interest in sustainable food, healthy lifestyles and effects of Covid-19 [18]. These studies report the influence of multiple antecedents on the increased buying behaviour for organic food products, including nutritional values [19]-[21], health consciousness [22]-[24] and environmental concerns [25]-[27].

Research has also considered the predictive effect of product-related attributes such as affordability [28] [29], product experience [30] and perceived value [29] [31] [32]. Additionally, studies have explored the influence of emotional health [33] [34] social values, social pressure [35] [36], social motives [37]-[39] and trust [22] [40] on individuals' intent to purchase organic food products.

Another critical notation about prior research relates to the investigated dependent variable which indicates enhanced emphasis on purchase intention [41] [42] and attitude [43]-[45]. Purchase intention is an individual's conscious plan to purchase a product [46] consisting of attitudes and behaviours that are required to implement the behaviour [47]. Shamsi *et al.* [48] and, Singh and Verma [41] posit that intentions may be a preceding factor to actual consumption, and it may not fully explain consumers' decision-making processes for organic food products. To address this gap, Ishak [49] called for research focused on the motives affecting actual consumer behaviour. The present study attempts to address this, by using TBP to investigate the antecedents that facilitate actual organic food consumption in Malaysia.

2.3. Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour [50] posits attitude, subjective norm, and per-

ceived behavioural control as the principal determinants of behavioural intention. However, the original conceptualisation of subjective norm as a unitary construct reflecting undifferentiated social pressure [51] has attracted sustained theoretical criticism for collapsing qualitatively distinct normative mechanisms into a single dimension. This reductionism is particularly problematic in consumption contexts where multiple, structurally dissimilar sources of social influence operate concurrently. To address this limitation, the present study draws on Taylor and Todd's [52] decomposed TPB framework, disaggregating subjective norm into peer influence, reflecting expectations from social equals, and superior influence, reflecting expectations from authority figures. This decomposition enables more precise examination of how hierarchically differentiated social referents shape purchase intentions [53].

The second normative incorporates Schwartz's [54] norm-activation theory, conceptualising moral norms as internalised ethical obligations distinct from both interpersonal expectations and evaluative attitudes. Such moral norms have demonstrated incremental predictive validity across pro-environmental and ethical consumption domains [51] [55].

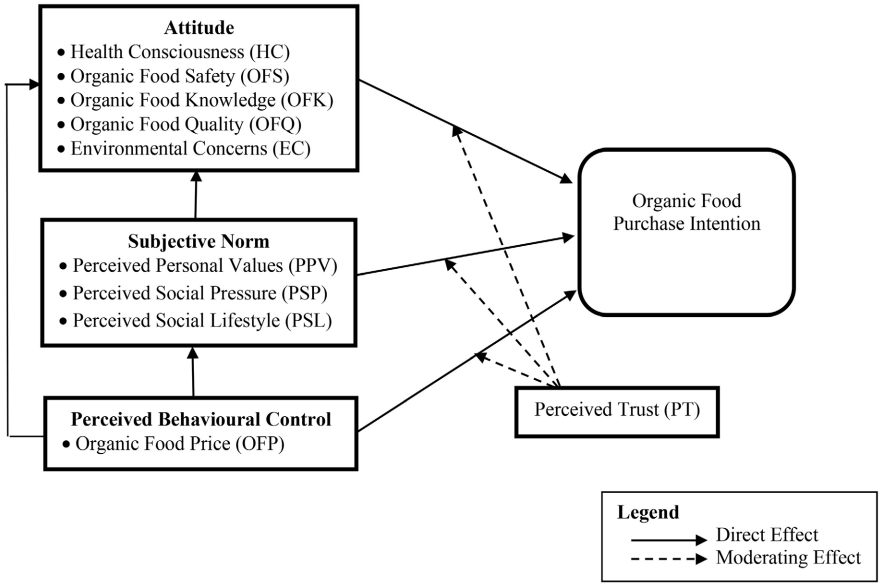
A third normative extension incorporates lifestyle-congruence norms, derived from Cialdini *et al.* [56] injunctive-descriptive distinction, representing perceived behavioural typicality within an identity-relevant lifestyle community. Unlike peer or superior influence, this dimension operates through identity-based motivation rather than direct social approval, exerting normative pressure independently of specific interpersonal expectations.

In this research, health consciousness, environmental concern, organic product knowledge, and perceived food safety and quality constitute attitudinal antecedents; personal social pressure operationalises subjective norm; perceived cost categorised as behavioural control; and additionally perceived personal values (norm-activation theory) and perceived social lifestyle congruence (injunctive-descriptive) function as extended subjective norm components. Perceived trust is introduced as a moderating variable between these antecedents and organic food purchase intention among Malaysian consumers, hence, in this study perceived trust will be moderating the antecedents and organic food purchase intention among Malaysian consumers.

2.4. Moderated by Perceived Trust

Trust is considered a predictive element in explaining individual purchase intention [57]. Trust is related to risks and uncertainty, where the individual's mental state enables the individual to disregard uncertainty and act in a way where the situation is rationally possible without undesired outcomes. In general, trust plays a pertinent role in influencing consumer decision-making process on food purchase, hence positively contributing to behaviour in action [40] [58]. This element is especially critical in view of food scandals, food safety, and other negative issues such as greenwashing practices, leading to skepticism among consumers. This is

attributable to trust's role as one of the psychological factors guiding consumers in their organic food products purchase decision [57]. Moreover, it is critical to understand the effect of the "new norma" lifestyle caused by COVID-19 as the pandemic has affected social life. In this context, positive influence from one's social circle will build their trust in organic food products, thus leading to shifting purchase intentions [24] (see **Figure 2**).



Source: Framework adapted for the current study from Ajzen (1991), Schwartz (1977), Conner & Armitage (1998) and Carfora *et al.* (2019).

Figure 2. Theoretical framework of the study.

2.5. Antecedents Towards Food Purchase Intention

2.5.1. Health Consciousness

Health consciousness refers to the concern people have about their health, that motivates to improve or maintain their quality lifestyle as well as preventing illnesses by engaging in healthy activities [59]. Today, the pandemic had created a health fear and inadvertently to stay healthy and prevent illnesses, consumers are becoming concerned about their food choices. Although the awareness of organic produce in Malaysia is relatively low [60] but health concerns could lead to higher demand of the organic food compared to conventional food. Consumers perceive organic food to contain higher nutrient in context of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals as compared to conventionally grown food [26]. Purchasing organic food because of the reduced presence of artificial ingredients and other harmful residue is a step towards a healthy lifestyle [13]. In addition, the consumption of organic food does not just bring benefits to those who are concerned about their own health, but also the well-being of their children [61], as it is safer and healthier than conventional food. As Malaysians are concerned about their health and perceive organic food to be nutritional than conventional food; therefore, organic food is seen as a mean to stay healthy and combat illnesses.

2.5.2. Organic Food Knowledge

The amount of product knowledge can influence the way consumers perceive the product attributes and understand the full potential of the product [62]. Knowledge pertaining to organic food can be sourced from many places such as the familiarity of the product, the information label, the certification of the organization and word-of-mouth from family, relatives and friends [30] [45]. Consumers are interested in "natural" food and are searching for information about the certification and labelling to ensure the food they consume is safe. Md Jusoh and Mohamad Zailani [23] discovered consumers' willingness to purchase organic food is due to the acquired health knowledge of organic food which had increased their confidence. Such knowledge would lead to stronger individual beliefs and contribute to the intention of purchasing organic food products during the COVID-19 pandemic [22]. However, insufficient information on agricultural processes may deter consumers from purchasing organic food [63]. According to Hassan *et al.* [25] consumers do not purchase organic food for two reasons—1) lack of knowledge and 2) their inability to distinguish the unique attributes of organic food products from the conventionally grown due to insufficient information.

2.5.3. Food Safety Concern

The increase of growth hormones and antibiotics residues in animal, pesticide residues in food, artificial additives, fear of the agro-biotechnology and Covid-19 have alerted consumers on food safety. Consumers are worried regarding the impact of agro-chemicals in animal production as well as genetically modified fruits and vegetables; hence they believe that organic produce are safer than non-organic produce. Similarly, Michaelidou and Hassan [59] pointed out food safety as one of the most important motivators that affects consumers' attitude towards organic produce. The usage of correct labelling of organic produce, logo, safety certification relating to organic produce's quality, no hazardous chemicals and its nutritional value is able to strengthen consumer's confidence in the safety of organic food [64]. Contrarily, Ishak *et al.* [49] revealed that during the pandemic Malaysian consumers perceive food safety as least important in their intention to purchase organic food products because their priority was to obtain food. However, the knowledge of food product safety can potentially influence individual perception and purchase decision, especially when health issues.

2.5.4. Organic Food Quality

Alamsyah and Angliawati [65] elucidated quality as the degree of superiority possessed by a product. The quality of organic products can be subdivided into several categories, such as the nutritional value, health value, sensory properties and the organic properties available. According to Braga *et al.* [66], quality of the organic product is important towards consumers' judgment and perceptions, and it affects their decisions to purchase or not. However, the perception of quality can be affected by several factors including their past experience, education and the perceptions of surrounding individuals [65]. Onurlubas and Ozturk [13] state that consumers perceive organic food as high quality due to lower level of pesticide

residues. Therefore, consumers perceive that organic food products are natural and are of good quality, fresher, tastier, safer and have more nutritional value compared to the conventionally produced food products [25]. As the COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis, consumers perceive by consuming organic food it diminishes their exposure to diseases [63].

2.5.5. Environmental Concerns

Environmental concern shows the extent of consumers' awareness towards environmental issues and their willingness to take part in resolving these issues [67] [68]. Environmental concerns and perceived environmental benefits influence the purchase decisions of organic food products [31]. Basha *et al.* [26] and Çabuk *et al.* [69] claim that the desire to protect the environment creates a positive attitude leading towards the preference to purchase organic food products. According to Zanoli and Naspetti [70], organic food is perceived as more environmentally friendly and less harmful to the environment. Salleh *et al.*, [60] and Irianto [71] proved that those who are involved and concerned regarding environmental issues are the ones likely to consume organic food products. In addition, according to Hassan *et al.* [25] as consumers' knowledge and environmental awareness increases, this concern is influencing their intention to purchase organic food products. Furthermore, previous studies by Zsuzsa [72], and Saleki *et al.* [24] demonstrate that customers with a higher concern and interest for the environment are inclined to purchase and consume products that reflect this interest.

2.5.6. Perceived Social Pressure

Perceived social pressure reflects an individual's social influence that governs his/her purchase intention, whereby one's social weight will influence them to either perform or not to perform a specific behaviour in mind. A number of studies have underlined the relationship between social pressure and organic food purchase intention [24] [73] is due to Malaysia's collectivistic culture, which indicates that society's perception and approval is much desired by its people [74]. However, social pressure is also influenced by potential barriers, such as food adulteration [75], access to quality food [76], and availability factor [77]. Social pressure will potentially shift consumers' desirability towards the product championed [37]. In the context of this study, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting "new norma" caused various restrictions, including the availability of food which rendered it essential to examine the perceived social pressure impact on purchase intention of organic food products.

2.5.7. Perceived Social Lifestyle

Social lifestyle factors relate to how peers and the people surrounding a person affect his or her decision. Organic food has a social value [34]. Consumers who have been convinced of these social values have adopted organic lifestyle and were able to accept the higher price [36]. Organic food is seen as more of a "luxury good", where higher price tag gives the purchaser a feeling of higher quality and social esteem [35]. Additionally, organic food products are seen as representing

status symbols or an affluent lifestyle [35] [63]. Social status and self-esteem were often found to be a determinant influencing people's decision to consume organic products rather than their non-organic counterparts. Saleki *et al.* [24] explained that by purchasing organic food products, Malaysians are demonstrating that they are environmentally conscious consumers; thus, making them feel like a "good person" who cares about the environment.

2.5.8. Perceived Personal Values

According to Schwartz Value Inventory [54], values can be categorized into conservatism, self-enhancement, self-transcendence and openness to change. Self-enhancement focuses on consumers who prioritized social status as their motives to purchase organic food. Conservatism refers to the belief to support stability of society and social relationships, such as supporting the growth of local organic food industry. Self-transcendence advocated universalism by focusing on contributions towards environmentally friendly, ecology and protecting animal welfare. Openness to change relates to the desire to change their lifestyle, practice healthier eating habits, or try new innovative organic food. Several studies [26] [68] [78] have asserted that environmental concern was a major determinant of purchasing organic food. According to Basha *et al.* [26], the increasing awareness of environmental degradation has changed consumer attitude to purchase more environmental-friendly and organic products. Saleki *et al.* [24] reported that Malaysians perceive by purchasing organic food would help save the environment and the more environmentally concerned they are, the more positive their attitude towards purchasing organic food products.

2.5.9. Organic Food Price

According to Ahmad [31] price is considered one of the barriers when deciding to purchase organic food, affecting purchase intention. Organic food is often associated with higher prices as compared to nonorganic products because of its high quality and the strict farming standards that are imposed on organic food producers [32]. Consumers are really concerned about money when they need to spend more to buy organic products that are expensive. The most important characteristic of quality aspects that are given attention by consumers are credence values such as healthiness, environmental friendliness, animal welfare and sensory value including taste and freshness [79]. These considerations on environmental well-being is driving them to purchase organic products. However, the high prices of organic food products may limit their ability to buy those products. Chen *et al.* [80] explain that highly educated consumers are willing to pay premium price for organic product and older consumers are not willing to pay such price due to their limited disposable income. Contrarily, Md Jusoh and Mohamad Zailani [23] expound that Malaysian women are willing to pay higher for organic food as their concern for their health and well-being during the pandemic was dominant. Consumers on the west coast were concerned about the money spent on organic products. But if the quality of the organic products is good, then it was considered

worthwhile buying them. However, consumers from the east coast were price conscious and therefore, they could not afford to buy organic food, which was usually sold at much higher prices, regardless of its abundance benefits [29]. Consumers have pointed out that premium price was the main problem in their decision not to purchase organic food. Yet Song [30] confirmed that price has no significant effect on consumers' perceived value of organic food.

2.6. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

This study proposes a conceptual model to explore the relationship between research, health consciousness, environmental concern, organic product knowledge, and perceived food safety and quality constitute attitudinal antecedents; personal social pressure, perceived personal values and perceived social lifestyle operationalise subjective norm; perceived cost categorised as behavioural control; and moderated by trust (see Table 1).

Table 1. Hypothesis.

Dimension	Hypothesis
Direct Relationships Between antecedents and Purchase Intention	H_1: Health consciousness has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_2: Organic food knowledge has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_3: Organic food safety has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_4: Organic food quality has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_5: Environmental concerns have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_6: Perceived social pressure has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_7: Perceived social lifestyle has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_8: Perceived personal values have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_9: Organic food prices have a positive relationship with consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products.
Between Dimension	H_{2A}: Organic food knowledge has a positive relationship with organic food safety. H_{3A}: Organic food safety has a positive relationship with health consciousness. H_{4A}: Organic food quality has a positive relationship with health consciousness. H_{6A}: Perceived social pressure has a positive relationship with environmental concern. H_{7A}: Perceived social pressure has a positive relationship with perceived social pressure. H_{7B}: Perceived social pressure has a positive relationship with environmental concern. H_{8A}: Perceived social pressure has a positive relationship with health consciousness. H_{8B}: Perceived social pressure has a positive relationship with environmental concern. H_{9A}: Organic food prices have a positive relationship with perceived social lifestyle. H_{9B}: Organic food prices have a positive relationship with perceived personal values. H_{9C}: Organic food prices have a positive relationship with organic food quality. H_{9D}: Organic food prices have a positive relationship with health consciousness. H_{9E}: Organic food prices have a positive relationship with environmental concern.

Continued

Moderating Effects of Trust	H_{1A}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between health consciousness and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_{2B}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between organic food knowledge and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food productsH_{3A}: Organic food safety has a positive relationship with health consciousness. H_{3B}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between organic food safety and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_{4B}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between organic food quality and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_{5A}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between environmental concerns and consumers' consumption towards organic food products. H_{6B}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship perceived by social pressure and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_{7C}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between perceived social lifestyle and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_{8C}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between perceived personal values and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. H_{9F}: Perceived trust moderates the relationship between organic food prices and consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products.

Source: Author's own work adapted for the current study.

3. Methodology

A quantitative study was conducted in the Klang Valley, the most populated area in Malaysia to investigates whether Malaysian consumers perceive their organic food purchasing behaviour to have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and whether pandemic-induced health concerns and economic pressures remain salient determinants of purchase intention in 2024-2025. Data were collected in 2024-2025, a period in which Malaysia had resumed near-normal social and economic activity following the COVID-19 pandemic. The study therefore adopts a post-pandemic framing, measuring current purchase intentions and attitudes rather than retrospective pandemic-era behaviour. Residual pandemic health concern is operationalized as a present-day attitudinal variable—the degree to which respondents continue to perceive health risk as a salient motivator—rather than as a recall of past behaviour.

Using mall intercept approach, data collection was conducted in 7 malls in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The malls were chosen based on the Top 20 Malls in Klang Valley listed by TripAdvisor [81]. To achieve a high response rate, researcher-administered interviews were conducted in Suria KLCC, 1 Utama Shopping Centre, Mid Valley, Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall, Setia City Mall, Subang Parade Shopping Centre and The Starling. A total of 700 respondents were generated. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling [82], whereby respondents who reside in Klang Valley were selected. Mall intercept interviews were conducted with respondents immediately upon exiting supermarkets following their grocery shopping, ensuring that purchasing experiences and consumption-related cognitions were contemporaneous with data collection and minimizing retrospective recall bias.

The target population for this study comprises Malaysian adults identified within the generational cohort designated "The Developers" [83] encompassing individuals born between 1982 and 2004. This cohort is characterised by relatively privileged access to higher education, expanded occupational opportunities, and heightened receptivity toward technological adoption compared to preceding generations. Both male and female respondents are included to ensure gender representativeness within the sample. This cohort was selected on theoretically and empirically grounded criteria. As financially independent working adults, members of this group exercise autonomous purchasing discretion, rendering them an appropriate population for examining purchase intentions. Their economic agency is particularly relevant in the context of organic food purchase decisions, where price sensitivity and disposable income are established determinants of behaviour.

Furthermore, this cohort experienced the COVID-19 pandemic as economically active adults, a circumstance of considerable analytical significance. The pandemic has been widely associated with heightened health consciousness, shifting food safety perceptions, and reconfigured consumption priorities among working-age populations. Examining this cohort therefore permits investigation of whether pandemic-era attitudinal shifts have produced durable changes in organic food purchasing behaviour, or whether pre-pandemic consumption patterns have since been reasserted. This temporal dimension strengthens the study's contextual relevance and contributes to understanding post-pandemic consumer behaviour within the Malaysian market.

The primary constructs were created by adapting information obtained from previous well-published studies, which had been fairly tested for their reliability and validity to ensure a valid conclusion. The study features ten constructs as follows: health consciousness (HC), organic food safety (OFS), organic food knowledge (OFK), organic food quality (OFQ), environmental concern (EC), organic food price (OFP), perceived trust (PT), perceived social pressure (PSP), perceived social lifestyle (PSL) and perceived personal value (PPV). The survey questionnaire for this analysis was to measure the impact of the pandemic on the change of perception towards organic food purchase intentions among Malaysians. The research instruments for the current study were adapted from Auroomooga Putten and Nair [38] and Braga Junior, Martínez, Correa, Moura-Leite and Da Silva [66]. All the measurement items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (*i.e.* 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to express the statement of agreement. Using SEM Partial Least Square as a statistical analysis method, both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to examine the impact of Covid-19 on organic food purchase intention and to analyze the relationship between its various constructs.

4. Analysis

4.1. Measurement Model Analysis

The reliability of the measurement model was examined based on confirmatory

factor analysis (CFA) and composite reliability (CR). As illustrated in Table 2, the factor loading for all items exceeded the threshold value of 0.70 [84], and composite reliability for all constructs surpassed the acceptable value of 0.60 [85]. Construct validity was assessed based on convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was measured using Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (rhoA), Cronbach alpha (CA) and average variance extracted (AVE) [86]. As shown in Table 2, the values of AVE and CA of all constructs exceeded the recommended value of 0.50 and the values of rhoA of all constructs exceeded the recommended value of 0.60 [85] [87]. This ascertains the reliability of measurement model at the construct and item level, as the result confirms a high level of internal consistency for all the items.

Table 2. Measurement model.

	CFA	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
HC	0.837	0.981	0.755	0.833	0.755
OFS	0.875	0.911	0.821	0.806	0.689
OFK	0.813	0.945	0.847	0.875	0.750
OFQ	0.758	0.936	0.985	0.984	0.688
EC	0.721	0.783	0.962	0.882	0.754
PSP	0.735	0.722	0.720	0.827	0.627
PSL	0.764	0.718	0.710	0.727	0.603
PPV	0.762	0.707	0.711	0.714	0.619
OFP	0.884	0.819	0.849	0.808	0.747
PT	0.833	0.847	0.799	0.795	0.785

4.2. Structural Model Analysis

In evaluating the structural model, the overall fit of the estimated model, the path coefficient estimates, their significance and the coefficient of determination (R^2) were examined [84]. R^2 is used to assess the extent of variance that all exogenous constructs explained in the endogenous constructs. Table 3 indicates the R^2 value in this model is 53.5% for HC, 37.5% for OFS, 53.5% for OFQ, 34.5% for EC, 35.5% for PSP, 21.5% for PSL, 20.4% for PPV and 47.7% for PI.

Table 3. R Squared.

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
HC	0.535	0.533
OFS	0.375	0.376
OFQ	0.535	0.533
EC	0.345	0.342
PSP	0.355	0.352
PSL	0.215	0.211
PPV	0.204	0.201
PI	0.477	0.473

Table 4. Goodness of fit model.

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.041	0.110
d_ULS	4.011	13.758
d_G	1.334	1.480
Chi-Square	1766.583	1768.122
NFI	0.855	0.844

SRMR and Normed Fit Index (NFI) Normed Fit Index (NFI) is a goodness of fit measure to avoid model misspecification. SRMR shows a value of 0.026, which postulates the path model as acceptable model fit (less than 0.08) whereas NFI with a value of 0.875 is posited acceptable (closer to one, better the fit); hence the proposed model is well suited for confirming and explaining the impact of Covid-19 on organic food purchase intentions (Table 4).

5. Discussion

5.1. Respondent Profile

As one of the most prosperous areas in Malaysia, Klang Valley was selected as the main cluster to analyze the consumption behaviour towards organic food products. There were 363 males (51.9%) and 337 females (48.1%) who had participated in the survey (Table 5).

Table 5. Gender of respondents.

	Gender		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
Age (26 - 35 years) The Developers	363	337	700

Source: Data collected by author from November 2024 to November 2025.

Several studies have been conducted to understand the profile of organic consumers particularly in terms of sociodemographic. According to studies by Wong *et al.* [16], Song [30], Luqman *et al.* [29] and Md Jusoh and Mohamad Zailani [23] support that consumption of organic food is more commonly found among female consumers compared to males. The current study found that both gender is equally involved in the purchase and consumption of organic food products. Is this a direct impact of Covid-19? Organic food consumers were also reported to be among older people [30] [88] as they were more concerned about their food consumption which may affect their health status. However, the studies conducted during the pandemic has shown a swift change, whereby it is the younger people who are showing a higher concern for the type of food consumed [22] [24] [49]. The current study found that the younger consumers aged 26 to 36 years are

very concerned about what they need, the nutrient level consumed, the level of pesticide content and whether the food they eat is healthy to fight unseen illness. As organic food is commonly associated with premium priced food products, the majority of organic consumers in Malaysia were reported to be from higher income groups [23] [29]. The target respondents for this study were "The Developers" [83] who are technologically savvy, has obtained higher education and currently have a well-paid job. Moreover, studies by Sia *et al.* [78], Saleki *et al.* [24] and Shafie *et al.* [20] found that the consumers' attitudes towards organic food products were influenced by education level. During the pandemic, Malaysians regardless male or female, ultimate concern were to stay healthy as to prevent Covid-19. Hence, they became cautious of what they ate and what they bought to cook their food, and they were willing to pay for this benefit.

5.2. Consumer Organic Food Purchase Intention

Based on Table 6, the respondents (Developers) consider organic food products to have fewer chemical residues, natural and fresh, hence packed with nutrients; and this is seen as quality product. Due to the pandemic, consuming organic food has also become a trend, and everyone is jumping the organic bandwagon. Yet not many considered organic food products to be cheap, easily available or tastier than conventional food products; at the same time, by purchasing organic food products they never felt they were being environmentally friendly, nor did they feel morally pressurized to purchase it either. The respondents have high awareness on the variety of organic food and the required safety labelling due to their educational background. Moreover, the pandemic has increased their health consciousness, their need to ensure the well-being of their family and shield them from Covid-19 by providing healthy organic food full of nutrients. The high content of vitamins and minerals in organic food will lead individuals to form favourable attitudes towards organic food products. Respondents agreed that purchasing organic food products means they are providing healthier food for their family and improving their quality lifestyle.

Table 6. Consumers' perceptions of organic food perceptions toward organic food.

Reasons for purchasing organic food products	
Healthier	60.5%
Less chemical in production	18.8%
Natural	21.6%
Fresher	34.1%
Environment friendly	1.2%
Family Influence	12.9%
Tastier	5.5%
Status	19.3%
Sales promotion	5.3%

Continued

Easily available	2.2%
Knowledge of organic goodness	18.7%
Quality product	24.8%
Social pressure	8.3%
Moral pressure	3.7%
Trendy	28.1%
Cheap	0.25%

Source: Data collected by author from November 2024 to November 2025.

5.3. Direct Antecedents of Organic Food Purchase Intention

The analysis of direct relationships between antecedent constructs and organic food purchase intention (Table 7) yielded a substantive insight into the motivational architecture underlying consumer behaviour within the Malaysian Developer cohort.

Table 7. Direct antecedents of organic food purchase intention.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	
HC -> PI	0.440	0.426	0.093	4.729	0	H_1 Supported
OFK -> PI	0.665	0.671	0.044	15.132	0	H_2 Supported
OFS -> PI	0.015	0.016	0.038	0.397	0.691	H_3 Not Supported
OFQ -> PI	0.311	0.359	0.454	1.858	0.043	H_4 Supported
EC -> PI	0.021	0.021	0.062	0.341	0.733	H_5 Not Supported
PSP -> PI	0.311	0.214	0.420	5.858	0.050	H_6 Supported
PSL -> PI	0.285	0.407	0.062	4.566	0.016	H_7 Supported
PPV -> PI	0.139	0.239	0.239	2.708	0.042	H_8 Supported
OFP -> PI	0.075	0.273	0.177	1.363	0.039	H_9 Supported

Source: Data computed by author using PLS-SEM.

Health consciousness (H_1) was confirmed as a significant positive predictor of purchase intention, consistent with a substantial body of literature across organic food consumption contexts [23] [24] [29]. This finding is theoretically coherent within the norm-activation framework [54], wherein heightened awareness of health consequences activates internalised personal obligation norms that subsequently channel behaviour toward health-protective consumption choices. The COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a significant contextual amplifier of this relationship: pandemic-era anxieties elevated the subjective salience of personal health maintenance among working-age consumers, intensifying dietary scrutiny and restructuring the motivational salience hierarchy such that health protection displaced competing considerations as the primary driver of organic food pur-

chase.

Organic food safety (H_3) similarly received empirical support, with respondents systematically prioritising safety certification and regulatory compliance as foundational decision criteria. This finding reflects the characteristic dynamics of credence good markets, wherein consumers are structurally unable to independently verify product attributes prior to or even following consumption, rendering third-party certification a critical heuristic for quality inference [69] [70] [80]. However, this finding simultaneously raises important questions regarding consumer vulnerability to certification fraud.

Organic food quality (H_4) was confirmed as a significant predictor of purchase intention. Respondents demonstrated robust associations between organic food and perceived superiority across multiple quality dimensions, including nutritional value, freshness, taste, and freedom from chemical contamination. This finding is consistent with established literature documenting consumers' quality-based organic food perceptions [69] [80]. Notably, the salience of quality perceptions within this sample may partly reflect a price-quality heuristic effect: elevated organic food prices within the post-pandemic Malaysian market may have reinforced quality attributions and a norm among purchasers if it is on the shelf then it has fulfilled all safety requirements of the country.

Organic food price (H_9) emerged as a significant positive predictor of purchase intention, a finding that contradicts Song [30] who indicated that price has no significant effect. Supply chain disruptions and logistical constraints associated with the COVID-19 pandemic elevated organic food prices considerably within the Malaysian retail environment. Contrary to conventional price sensitivity predictions, this price elevation did not deter purchase; rather, consumers appeared to employ price as a surrogate quality signal, interpreting higher prices as indicative of greater organic integrity and reduced pesticide exposure [23] [29] [31].

Perceived social pressure (H_6), perceived social lifestyle (H_7), and perceived personal values (H_8) all demonstrated significant positive effects on purchase intention. The significance of perceived social lifestyle provides empirical support for the lifestyle-congruence norm construct derived from Cialdini *et al.*'s [56] descriptive norm framework. Most of the respondents reported that they choose to purchase organic food products because their social circle perceives organic food as very healthy, fresh and natural. This finding is consistent with the findings of earlier studies, which stated that, generally, consumers perceive organic food to be more nutritious and safer than conventionally produced food products [32] [63]. This finding shows that Malaysian consumers have a good Perceived Personal Value of organic food, and this could bring insights to market practitioners. To portray a social lifestyle, consumers feel the need to conform to social pressure by consuming natural, organic pesticide free products to be healthy.

By contrast, two hypotheses within the direct antecedent dimension were rejected. Environmental concern (H_5) failed to reach significance, a null finding that challenges prevailing myths that consumers tend to purchase organic food be-

cause organic farming methods are known to have a lower impact on the environment compared to the conventional agricultural practice that might use chemical substances, has been proven to be not true during the pandemic. Since the multiple lockdowns, Malaysian Developer cohorts were more concerned about their health and safety; hence the environmental concerns or issues were the least of their concerns.

Organic food knowledge (H_2) similarly yielded a non-significant direct effect on purchase intention. Within this well-educated cohort, awareness of organic food's nutritional superiority, pesticide-free cultivation, and safety standards appears to have achieved a degree of normalisation such that knowledge no longer functions as an active differentiating motivator at the moment of purchase; hence this factor has become irrelevant.

5.4. Between-Dimension Relationships among Antecedent Constructs

The present study examined a series of hypothesised structural relationships among the antecedent constructs themselves (Table 8), offering a more nuanced and theoretically enriched account of the pathways through which organic food-related beliefs, values, and perceptions interact and mutually reinforce one another within the consumer decision-making system.

Table 8. Antecedents between dimensions.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	
OFK -> OFS	0.418	0.422	0.131	1.275	0.025	H_{2A} Supported
OFS -> HC	0.069	−0.072	0.074	0.929	0.353	H_{3A} Not Supported
OFQ -> HC	0.255	0.263	0.072	3.541	0	H_{4A} Supported
PSP -> EC	0.067	0.070	0.056	1.181	0.238	H_{6A} Not Supported
PSL -> PSP	0.075	0.273	0.177	1.363	0	H_{7A} Supported
PSL -> EC	0.501	0.627	0.275	1.551	0.601	H_{7B} Not Supported
PPV -> HC	0.173	0.140	0.040	4.360	0.001	H_{8A} Supported
PPV -> EC	0.058	0.055	0.611	1.050	0.294	H_{8B} Not Supported
OFP -> PSL	0.392	0.336	0.281	5.281	0	H_{9A} Supported
OFP -> PPV	0.074	0.085	0.319	4.5224	0	H_{9B} Supported
OFP -> OFQ	0.133	0.294	0.059	2.275	0.023	H_{9C} Supported
OFP -> HC	0.478	0.435	0.393	4.829	0	H_{9D} Supported
OFP -> EC	0.015	0.016	0.038	0.397	0.691	H_{9E} Not Supported

Source: Data computed by author using PLS-SEM.

Organic food knowledge was confirmed to positively predict organic food safety perceptions (H_{2A}), a finding consistent with the theoretical proposition that greater product knowledge enables consumers to appreciate and evaluate safety-

related attributes more accurately and confidently. Organic food quality was confirmed to positively predict health consciousness (H_{4A}), suggesting a cognitively coherent pathway through which quality perceptions reinforce health-oriented motivational orientations. Consumers who perceive organic food as nutritionally superior and free from hazardous chemicals appear more likely to maintain or intensify health-conscious attitudes, creating a self-reinforcing cycle in which quality belief and health motivation mutually strengthen one another over time.

The significant H_{7A} relationship suggests that broader social pressure from authority shapes the lifestyle norms that consumers perceive as characteristic of their identity communities, indicating that top-down normative influence may be partially mediated by identity-based lifestyle congruence mechanisms. The significant H_{8A} relationship similarly suggests that social pressure from authoritative referents reinforces the internalisation of health and ethical values as personal normative standards, consistent with social learning and norm-internalisation accounts of value formation [54].

Perceived social pressure was also found to positively predict environmental concern in two tested pathways (H_{6A}, H_{8B}), suggesting that normative influence from peers, superiors, and social lifestyle communities extends beyond health-specific domains to encompass broader ecological orientations. This finding is noteworthy given that environmental concern did not emerge as a significant direct predictor of purchase intention, raising the possibility that social normative influence activates environmental attitudes that, while genuinely held, remain motivationally subordinate to health-protective concerns within the specific purchase decision context.

Organic food prices demonstrated significant positive relationships with perceived social lifestyle (H_{9A}) and perceived personal values (H_{9B}), consistent with the broader price-quality heuristic interpretation advanced in the direct antecedent analysis. These between-dimension findings suggest that price elevation does not merely influence purchase intention directly but operates through attitudinal and normative pathways: higher prices appear to signal lifestyle-congruent consumption identity and to reinforce personal value orientations centred on health and quality, creating indirect pathways through which price influences purchase intention beyond its direct effect.

Organic food price also demonstrated a significant positive relationship with organic food quality (H_{9C}), corroborating the price-quality heuristic mechanism at the construct level: consumers who perceive organic food as more expensive also perceive it as higher in quality, a relationship that reflects the inferential reasoning characteristic of credence good evaluation. The further significant relationship between price and health consciousness (H_{9D}) extends this logic, suggesting that elevated price signals not only quality but health-protective attributes specifically, thereby reinforcing the salience hierarchy in which health motivation dominates purchase decision-making within this cohort.

Several between-dimension hypotheses were rejected. Organic food safety did

not emerge as a significant predictor of health consciousness (H_{3A}), suggesting that safety perceptions and health consciousness, while conceptually related, operate as functionally independent attitudinal dimensions within this sample. This non-significant finding may reflect the previously noted normalisation of safety knowledge: for Developer-cohort consumers, organic food safety has become a taken-for-granted baseline assumption. Similarly, H_{7B}—the hypothesised relationship between perceived social lifestyle and environmental concern—was not supported, further reinforcing the interpretation that environmental motivation occupies a peripheral rather than central position within the normative structure governing organic food consumption in this context. The rejection of H_{9E}, the hypothesised positive relationship between organic food price and environmental concern, is similarly consistent with the broader pattern of environmental concern's motivational marginality within this cohort.

5.5. Moderating Effects of Perceived Trust

The third analytical dimension examined the moderating role of perceived trust across all antecedent-purchase intention relationships (Table 9). The overarching pattern of results was striking and theoretically consequential: with a single exception, perceived trust failed to moderate any of the hypothesised antecedent-intention relationships, a finding that diverges substantially from prior literature identifying trust as a critical boundary condition in organic food consumer behaviour.

Table 9. Moderating effects of trust.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	
PT * HC -> PI	0.021	0.021	0.058	0.358	0.721	H_{1A} Not Supported
PT * OFK -> PI	0.128	0.125	0.080	1.603	0.110	H_{2B} Not Supported
PT * OFS -> PI	0.042	0.035	0.072	0.593	0.554	H_{3B} Not Supported
PT * OFQ -> PI	0.048	0.521	0.062	2.341	0.031	H_{4B} Supported
PT * EC -> PI	0.067	0.070	0.056	1.181	0.238	H_{5A} Not Supported
PT * PSP -> PI	0.304	0.079	0.192	3.370	0.057	H_{6B} Not Supported
PT * PSL -> PI	0.173	0.044	0.258	3.911	0.084	H_{7C} Not Supported
PT * PPV -> PI	0.491	0.372	0.057	8.663	0.595	H_{8C} Not Supported
PT * OFP -> PI	0.069	-0.072	0.074	0.929	0.353	H_{9F} Not Supported

Source: Data computed by author using PLS-SEM.

Perceived trust did not significantly moderate the relationships between purchase intention and health consciousness (H_{1A}), organic food safety (H_{3B}), organic food quality (H_{4B}), environmental concern (H_{5A}), perceived social pressure (H_{6B}), perceived social lifestyle (H_{7C}), perceived personal values (H_{8C}), or organic food price (H_{9F}). The breadth and consistency of these null moderation effects cannot

reasonably be attributed to measurement artefact or statistical power limitations; rather, they suggest a theoretically meaningful shift in the structural role of trust within post-pandemic Malaysian organic food consumer culture.

This pattern is best interpreted through the lens of pandemic-induced epistemic normalisation. The Malaysian Developer cohort experienced multiple consecutive lockdown periods during which public health messaging consistently and prominently associated dietary health with organic food consumption. Sustained exposure to this messaging, combined with the heightened salience of personal health during a period of significant public health threat, appears to have transformed trust from an actively evaluated prerequisite for organic food purchase into a normatively embedded cultural assumption. In other words, within this cohort, the question of whether organic food is trustworthy appears to have been effectively resolved—not through a deliberative trust assessment process, but through a form of enforced acceptance in which repeated exposure under conditions of health anxiety produced internalised convictions that organic food is inherently safe, healthy, and beneficial.

This conceptualisation—trust as normalised acceptance rather than active evaluation—has profound implications for how trust is theorised and operationalised in organic food research. Traditional trust measurement instruments, developed in pre-pandemic contexts where organic food represented a novel or niche consumption category requiring active credibility evaluation, may lack construct validity when applied to post-pandemic populations for whom organic food has achieved mainstream legitimacy. The apparent redundancy of trust as a moderator in this context suggests that trust, in its conventional operationalisation, may have undergone a qualitative transformation: from a variable that modulates the strength of antecedent-intention relationships to a stable contextual background assumption that is uniformly held at sufficiently high levels to preclude meaningful variation.

The sole exception to this pattern—perceived trust was found to significantly moderate the relationship between organic food knowledge and purchase intention (H_{2B}). This isolated significant moderation effect is theoretically interpretable as follows: organic food knowledge, having lost its direct predictive utility through normalisation, may retain conditional relevance under circumstances where trust provides a context within which knowledge-based elaboration is reactivated. For consumers whose trust is relatively lower or more contingent, organic food knowledge may serve a reassurance function, supplementing trust where it is insufficiently established. This interpretation implies a compensatory interaction structure—in which knowledge and trust function as partial substitutes in the formation of purchase confidence—a dynamic with precedent in information processing literature on credence attribute evaluation.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the associations among HC, OFK, OFQ, EC, PSP, PSL, PPV and OFS and organic food purchase intention. Additionally, the moderating

influence of PT was examined. The study utilized the TPB model to build a research model and evaluated it with 700 consumers through PLS. Results allude to the supposition that, with respect to organic food items, consumer purchase intention is determined by HC, OFK, OFQ, PSL, PPV and OFP. However, OFS, EC, PSP and PT are posited to have no association with purchase intention. The results further indicate that the pandemic has changed the conduct of consumers' favourable attitude towards the purchase intention of organic food products. The emergent significance of these implies the need to promulgate consumer actions that were found to significantly influence the potential increase in buying of organic food products. The understanding of such associations' buying behaviour raises significant theoretical and practical inferences for marketers and policymakers who handle the promotion of organic food products.

7. Theoretical Implication

The study has resulted in significant theoretical contributions to the extant body of knowledge. First, unlike most prior literature, the current study has focused on purchase intention, *i.e.*, the purchase of organic food products. It answers the call of recent studies that have suggested scholars' need to focus on actual behaviours instead of intentions. This study has contributed to existing theoretical knowledge by bringing focus on the factors that translate into purchase intention.

Second, the current research tried to develop a holistic understanding of consumer decision-making processes for organic food aftermath of Covid-19. The designed research model thus provides a better explanation of consumer actions for organic food products. The insignificant association between food safety, environmental concerns and perceived social pressure and purchase intention suggests that several factors may directly influence consumers' buying decisions, regardless of their product knowledge. This implies the need to further extend the current boundaries of research to incorporate more individual and personal factors in order to narrow the extant gaps between consumer purchase intention toward organic food products. The insignificant moderating role of trust suggests the need for examining the moderating effect of other variables that could affect organic food purchase intention. Potential moderators may include variables such as income, educational level, ethnicity, and buying involvement, which could further explicate consumer processes during decision-making for organic food.

8. Managerial Implications

The most significant practical implication of this study is awareness towards organic food products. Its benefits have been well used by Malaysians during the pandemic to be safe. Therefore, there exist psychological needs and personal goals influencing consumer purchase intention, such as the need to be healthy, safe and protected from illness.

Second, organic food marketers can utilize the study findings to design marketing campaigns that would heighten consumers' intrinsic and extrinsic motiva-

tions. Such campaigns could further induce consumers' buying behaviour by focusing on the intrinsic benefits of organic food, e.g., personal and health-oriented benefits. This could be especially useful for markets wherein food safety and contamination are primary concerns among consumers. Additionally, campaigns could also focus on extrinsic benefits such as building individual self-esteem by gaining social status (or positive sanctions), which could appeal to consumers' need for communal or social approval. Such campaigns should also account for the cultural aspects of a market, *i.e.*, the importance of communal well-being, which could potentially influence consumers' motivational levels and, subsequently, their buying behaviour.

Third, marketers could converge attention to connecting the consumption of organic food with a sense of duty and personal achievement. This could promulgate the intention to consume organic food as an outcome with significant personal value to the consumer. Such consumer-oriented campaigns could also be undertaken by the government to try and induce the feeling of doing the right thing by consuming organic food among the populace. This could motivate consumers through the perceived gain of positive social sanction and credibility among social/peer groups, thereby affecting their attitudes, intentions, and actual consumer behaviour.

9. Limitations and Future Research

The present research is mainly constrained by two key limitations. First, the findings may be limited in generalizability as its scope is constrained to Klang Valley. Second, the current study is focused on the Developers, consumers dwelling in metropolitan area. The results may be different from findings based on populations dwelling in semi-urban and rural regions. Future studies may concentrate on the following aspects: First, cross-ethic studies may be conducted to investigate whether and how ethnic differences affect organic food consumption. Second, similar studies among consumers dwelling in smaller towns as such towns traditionally have more exposure to locally produced food, and they may be more positively oriented towards organic food purchase. In addition, the results obtained in the present situation do not mean that environmental concern and trust does not have any impact on consumers' purchase intention. Future research should further investigate their influence in different research contexts, such as different demographic settings.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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