

Factor Influencing Young Consumers' Intention to Purchase Organic Food

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Abstract

Following the researcher's preliminary study involving customers of AEON stores in Batu Pahat, the research findings revealed significant price disparities between organic food and conventional food in Malaysia, with organic food being considerably more expensive, often ranging from 100% to 300% higher in price. When national statistics were compared, it was observed that most deaths in Malaysia were attributed to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), specifically diseases related to the circulatory system. In that study, the researcher aimed to conduct an initial investigation that focused on examining the level of awareness of organic food among young consumers. Additionally, the study sought to identify the various factors that influenced the purchase intentions of young consumers toward organic food at AEON SDN BHD Batu Pahat. The study targeted customers who had previously bought organic products at AEON SDN BHD in Batu Pahat. The sample size for this study is 320 respondents who participated in this research. It utilized a questionnaire as its research tool and analyzed the gathered data through IBM's SPSS Statistics version 27. Both research objectives and the four hypotheses were satisfactorily fulfilled. The initial aim to gauge awareness of organic products revealed a high level of recognition, albeit influenced by various factors impacting young consumers' inclination to buy organic food. Additionally, the second objective pinpointed determinants affecting young consumers' intent to purchase organic products, demonstrating significant correlations with their purchase intentions. This study was significant in the context of Malaysia as it provided valuable evidence that could contribute to a better understanding of organic food.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been a notable rise in public consciousness regarding agriculture, health, and the global environment. This surge in awareness has been accompanied by the emergence of promoting a healthy lifestyle and environmental consciousness. As a result, consumers worldwide who prioritize a healthy way of living are modifying their behaviors to support the development of environmentally friendly products. Organic products have become a viable option for individuals concerned about chemical residues and the adverse effects they may have on the environment. The organic food industry is experiencing significant growth and is considered one of the largest expanding markets globally (Sobhanifard & Eshtiaghi, 2021). The shift in the

food industry has prompted the adoption of modern marketing practices that prioritize environmentally friendly products, aiming for sustainable growth. These practices are particularly focused on fostering a positive global consumer perception of organic foods (Mughal *et al.*, 2021).

The introduction and commercialization of the concept of organic food took place during the period spanning the 1940s to the 1950s (Pearson *et al.*, 2011). The term "organic" is widely recognized and sought after by numerous consumers. Organic agriculture has become the fastest-growing sector in the food industry in North America and Europe (Seufert & Ramankutty, 2017). Consumers who possess positive attitudes toward buying organic food are generally more inclined to make such purchases. An individual's intention to purchase a product reflects their personal decision and the underlying reasons motivating their choice of that brand. Several studies have verified the aspects that influence the purchase of organic food. However, there is a discrepancy in the definition of the determining factors that lead consumers to have favorable attitudes toward the purchase intention of these foods. By identifying a comprehensive set of factors influencing the intention to purchase organic food, it becomes feasible to formulate targeted marketing strategies tailored specifically for the green consumer segment (Melović *et al.*, 2020). Few researchers acknowledged the assertion that organic food has health benefits for individuals (Koswatta *et al.*, 2022).

In Malaysia, the recent change in consumer demand is being embraced as the population becomes wealthier and more educated about health and wellness matters. This has resulted in increased awareness and mindfulness when it comes to making food choices. Furthermore, Malaysians have developed a heightened awareness regarding the direct correlation between a healthy lifestyle and the food they consume. As a result, there has been a shift in perspective toward the consumption of organically grown foods (Yeo *et al.*, 2022). In this view, Malaysia, a multi-racial country with a population of approximately 30 million people, holds significant potential for the growth of the organic food industry. This shifting perspective towards the consumption of organically grown foods has led to increased awareness. As a result, the organic food industry is anticipated to experience significant market growth soon (Yeo *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the findings from this study will provide valuable insights into the level of awareness toward organic foods in Malaysia and the factors that influence young consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food in Malaysia. One way to overcome these problems is to examine the level of awareness toward organic food and to recognize factors that influence young consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food. Numerous researchers have explored the influence of regional factors on consumers' decisions regarding organic food (Szolnoki & Hauck, 2020).

The study will primarily concentrate on Batu Pahat, a state situated in Peninsular Malaysia. One of the factors is that Batu Pahat residents have a health-conscious mindset, which is evident in the proliferation of organic stores or shops in Batu Pahat. Furthermore, suppliers of organic food like Zenxin Organic Food Malaysia, BMS Organics, Q Organic Valley, Turn Organic Shop, StemLife Batu Pahat, Belacah Wellness, and YMM Organic World are flourishing in Batu Pahat. They have successfully garnered a substantial following of organic food enthusiasts among both the local population and tourists. Therefore, the data obtained from this study holds high authenticity, as most respondents were well acquainted with the term "organic food." Consequently, they were able to offer reliable feedback regarding consumers' purchase intentions toward organic produce. This study is aimed at examining the level of awareness toward organic food and recognizing whether environmental concerns, health factors, organic food knowledge, and the perceived value of organic food will affect young consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. This objective of the study has received substantial interest and has attracted more attention in the field of organic food.

Recent theoretical developments have revealed that there is a growing interest in organically grown foods that are garnering attention in both developed and developing countries (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). The relevance of organic foods is increasing, as highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its 2021 report on organic agriculture. The report reveals that approximately 187 countries globally engage in organic agriculture, utilizing around 72.3 million hectares of arable land and involving approximately 3.1 million farmers (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2023). With the growing awareness surrounding topics like the environment, naturopathy, and the green movement, marketers are actively promoting organic products. Consumers, being increasingly conscious of their health and the preservation of the environment, are showing a preference for environmentally friendly products. Despite this, young consumers may have multiple reasons for opting to purchase organic food.

Recent theoretical developments have revealed that health awareness, price perception, subjective norms, and knowledge levels toward organic food will affect young consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. Consumers' preference for organic food over conventional food products stems from a range of factors, extending beyond personal health and well-being. However, the primary driving force behind consumers' choice to purchase organic food is the belief that organic food is healthier and possesses a superior nutritional profile (Vigar *et al.*, 2020). Individuals across various age groups, including the elderly, children, and teenagers, all place significance on consuming organic food. In their daily lives, individuals incorporate organic food into nearly every meal, emphasizing its role in maintaining a healthy routine. Despite its relatively small market share within the overall food industry, organic food has experienced rapid growth, capturing the attention of

consumers, companies, and academics. The demand for organic food has surged, particularly in industrialised nations, and this trend has also spread to emerging nations like Malaysia (Vigar *et al.*, 2020).

In the present day, the researcher observes a significant presence of organic stores in Malaysia, and even hypermarkets or supermarkets have dedicated sections offering organic products and can see organic labels everywhere. This exemplifies Malaysia's strong promotion of healthy and organic products to decrease prevalence in Malaysia. The popularity of organic stores in Malaysia has become more popular. We can find organic products in stores in Malaysia.

AEON CO. (M) BHD. is a prominent retail chain in Malaysia, excelling in both general merchandise stores (GMS) and supermarkets (Our Business, AEON Corporate, n.d.). AEON holds a prominent position as a general merchandise store and supermarket chain in Malaysia. It operates a total of 35 AEON stores, 28 AEON malls, 21 AEON BiG outlets, 8 AEON MaxValu stores, and 62 AEON wellness establishments across the country. According to the AEON website, AEON aims to meet the demands of its customers by creating safer, more delicious, and environmentally conscious food products. AEON's efforts extend not only to Japan but also to other countries. This includes the promotion and development of AEON's private brand, the Topvalu Gurinai Organic series. AEON remains committed to the ongoing development of products that are both eco-friendly and beneficial to humanity, with the ultimate goal of achieving a sustainable society (Considerate Meals for Our Future, 2023), so it seems that with the increasing affluence and education among young consumers regarding their food choices, it is only natural for them to gravitate towards organic food as a fundamental component of a healthy lifestyle (Shamsi *et al.*, 2019).

AEON exclusively offers a range of organic products for sale. AEON has demonstrated that the organic fruits and vegetables available in their supermarkets are certified under the Malaysian Organic Scheme Certification (SOM). SOM is a certification programme established by the Department of Agriculture to verify farms that follow organic farming practices following the criteria and guidelines outlined in the Malaysian Organic Scheme Standard (SOM). The SOM Standard is based on the Malaysian Standard MS1529:2001, which governs the production, processing, labelling, and marketing of plant-based organic food products.

Over the past few years, there has been a noticeable surge in socially responsible consumption due to the growing demands of conscientious consumers who prioritize social and environmental responsibility (Pang *et al.*, 2021). In this study, the researcher aims to conduct an initial investigation that focuses on examining the awareness of organic food among young consumers. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the various factors that influence the purchasing intentions of young consumers toward organic food at AEON SDN BHD Batu Pahat. According to Lee (2022), a preliminary study refers to an initial examination conducted to identify potential issues or challenges in a quality review 4 or evaluation process. The objective of undertaking a preliminary study is to offer an overview and ensure that the evaluation encompasses pertinent areas of study (Lee, 2022). Hence, the researcher performed a preliminary study by conducting interviews with young consumers who have purchased organic food from the organic food department at AEON store to examine the awareness of organic food among young consumers and to identify the various factors that influence the purchasing intentions of young consumers towards organic food at AEON SDN BHD.

Following the researcher's preliminary study involving customers of AEON stores in Batu Pahat, the research findings revealed significant price disparities between organic food and conventional food in Malaysia, with organic food being considerably more expensive, often ranging from 100% to 300% higher in price. Despite organic food being promoted as a superior option for both health and the environment, the comparatively higher cost poses a barrier to purchase for certain individuals (Ol, 2021). However, it was observed that, for certain buyers, the benefits associated with organic food were not substantial enough to influence their final decision to purchase organic food (Ol, 2021). Due to their limited financial resources or lower purchasing power, young consumers in Batu Pahat are reluctant to pay for organic food products. As a result, significant challenges emerge in this realm, primarily due to the various factors that impact the purchasing intentions of young consumers toward organic food.

Next, in the current global context, the level of awareness, knowledge, and perception regarding organic food plays a crucial role in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviours toward organic food. This is because Malaysia is currently experiencing an epidemiological transition where the leading causes of mortality are shifting from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases (NCDs). S, specifically diseases related to the circulatory system. However, the reliability of mortality data might be compromised as not all coders adhere to the use of International Classification of Diseases (ICD) codes, which affects the comprehensiveness of the data (Goh *et al.*, 2020). Thus, "comfort food" typically contains high amounts of simple carbohydrates, which help reduce stress by promoting the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that positively influences one's emotions (Hamzaid *et al.*, 2022). The impact of "comfort foods" is directly linked to the glycemic index of the food, which is strongly associated with an elevated risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. These conditions are known to heighten the likelihood of experiencing complications. Furthermore, Noor presents findings on the transformations in eating patterns and the resulting health outcomes since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Poulain *et al.*, 2023). To prevent diseases caused by unhealthy diets, young consumers in

Malaysia are increasingly adopting the practice of consuming organic food. Hence, young people enhance their unhealthy eating habits by incorporating organic food into their diets, which in turn promotes a heightened level of awareness towards organic food. Hence, the researcher aims to examine the level of awareness regarding organic food and to recognize factors that influence young consumers' purchase intentions toward organic food.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Organic Food

During the early 2000s, organic food was recognized as a type of environmentally friendly product that is cultivated and produced using green technology without posing significant environmental risks. Despite its frequent mention in the literature, there remains a lack of consensus and agreement regarding a universally accepted definition of organic food (Chait, 2020). The relevance of organic foods is increasing, as highlighted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its 2021 report on organic agriculture. The report reveals that approximately 187 countries globally engage in organic agriculture, utilizing around 72.3 million hectares of arable land and involving approximately 3.1 million farmers (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2023).

Organic food encompasses a wide range of options beyond fruits and vegetables, including dairy, meat, fish, and seafood, which are conveniently available in grocery stores. While organic fruits are favoured for their minimal pesticide residue compared to conventional ones, organic vegetables are also popular due to their vulnerability to pesticide sprays on their peels and skins. Opting for organic vegetables significantly reduces exposure to pesticide residue. The increased popularity of organic dairy is attributed to its higher Omega-3 content, although some experts argue that the overall levels may be relatively insignificant. Nonetheless, the true value of organic milk, yogurt, and cheese lies in the absence of hormones and antibiotics in the cows' upbringing. Similarly, organic meat is sourced from animals raised without hormones, pesticides, or antibiotics, allowing for a natural growth rate and resulting in leaner meat with improved texture and taste. Overall, choosing organic options offers a range of benefits beyond reduced pesticide exposure, making it a preferred choice for health-conscious individuals (Hill, 2020).

Besides, organic food has gained significant popularity in the community, with a notable increase in consumer demand leading to a substantial surge in sales within the organic food market. Organic foods are devoid of synthetic additives like non-natural pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Organic food has gained significant popularity in the community, with a notable increase in consumer demand leading to a substantial surge in sales within the organic food market. The current trend of 6 consumers placing greater emphasis on the value of food and health has resulted in an upswing in the demand for organic food. Retailers and suppliers have taken notice of this trend, particularly regarding consumer purchases of organic fruits and vegetables. The rising popularity of organic food can be attributed to its reputation for being safer, more nutritious, and more flavourful when compared to conventional food (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2020).

According to scientists, consuming organic foods is beneficial as it lacks any potential side effects or risks associated with consumption. Several studies have provided evidence indicating that organic foods contain significant amounts of essential vitamins and proteins that are necessary for the body. References (Sikorsky *et al.*, 2018) explore the impact of cholesterol on human cells, while Zafar *et al.* (2019) examine the correlation between the younger generation's inadequate nutrition and dietary intake. The importance of nutritional value and food safety in healthcare has become crucial for consumers. Among various factors, consumers' purchasing intention plays a significant role in influencing their decisions (Yean *et al.*, 2019).

2.2 Purchase Intention

With the increase in purchasing power and consumer knowledge, there is a gradual shift in consumer demand toward safer and healthier products. Simultaneously, consumers are placing greater emphasis on organic food, directing their attention toward this particular category (Wang *et al.*, 2020). A series of recent studies have indicated the purchase intention of organic foods from the perspective of consumers (Eberle *et al.*, 2022). Multiple studies have corroborated the factors that impact the purchase of organic food. Singh and Verma (2017) assert that purchase intention serves as a critical and influential predictor of consumers' present buying behavior, thereby acting as a crucial precursor to their actual purchasing attitude.

Besides that, many existing studies in broader literature have examined the purchase intention toward organic food. According to the author's analysis, the constructs incorporated within this theory are not only crucial but also serve as indispensable factors that shape and condition individuals' green purchase intentions and subsequent behaviour (Sharma & Foropon, 2019). The research findings revealed a strong predictive relationship between organic food purchase intention and actual organic food purchase behaviour (Kaur *et al.*, 2021). For example, the aim of the study that has been done by Wang *et al.* (2020) is to gain valuable insights into the relationship between environmental consciousness and organic food purchase intention. The findings

not only provide clarity but also address a research gap in the existing literature, which has offered a limited understanding of this relationship.

A closer look at the literature on purchase intention toward organic food, however, reveals several gaps and shortcomings. For example, this groundbreaking study not only sheds light on the various influential variables that drive the purchase intentions of young consumers towards organic food in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia, but also serves as a significant contribution to filling a notable gap within the existing literature on this subject matter. The findings from this study provide valuable insights and a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape the purchasing behaviour of young consumers in the context of organic food.

2.3 Factors Influencing Young Consumer's Intention to Purchase Organic Food

By utilizing research evidence, we can gain insights into the factors that influence the purchase intention of young consumers to purchase organic food. This allows us to examine the level of awareness toward organic food, as well as recognize factors that influence young consumers' purchase intentions towards organic food. The primary objective of Dangi *et al.* (2020) is to explore and analyze the current body of research concerning the factors that influence the purchase of organic food, with a specific focus on eco-labels. Additionally, the study aims to determine the relative impact of different determinants on consumers' decision-making processes when it comes to purchasing organic food. By examining the literature in this area, the researchers seek to enhance our understanding of the key drivers that shape consumers' choices and preferences for organic products, particularly regarding eco-labeling practices.

2.3.1 Health Awareness

The organic products stand out due to their utilization of locally obtained ingredients, lack of synthetic additives, and commitment to fostering ecological balance and human health. According to Khan *et al.*, (2023), The concern about potential harmful impacts on an individual's health stemming from the consumption of inorganic and processed food. When it comes to organic food, individuals actively involved in the purchasing process exhibit heightened interest, driven either by amplified health concerns or social consciousness (Azzurra *et al.*, 2018).

According to Rana & Paul (2017), organic food is both better for the environment and healthier for humans. People prioritize organic food due to its recognized health benefits, making it a top choice in their dietary preferences (Watanabe *et al.*, 2020). Besides that, consumers favour organic food because of its numerous health benefits and the widespread social recognition of these advantages associated with consuming organic produce (Khan *et al.*, 2023). According to the study of Rehman *et al.* (2023), the researcher established the correlation between environmental concerns, organic food knowledge, food neophobia, food neophilia, health consciousness, social norms, and satisfaction regarding organic food.

Last but not least, purchase intention toward organic food is notably impacted by health consciousness (Singh & Verma, 2017). According to Kim & Chung (2011), the researchers highlighted that health consciousness significantly influences individual purchasing behaviour. Additionally, they found that when health consciousness was low, individual purchase intentions were weak.

2.3.2 Price Perception

The literature review shows that price denotes the amount consumers pay in return for purchasing a product or service. According to the American Marketing Association, the price ratio refers to the overall monetary cost associated with obtaining a specific quantity of a product or service. The price of a product or service plays a crucial role as it serves as a comprehensive evaluation of the consumer's willingness and financial capability to make a purchase. Furthermore, it possesses the potential to exert a substantial influence on consumers' intentions and inclination to buy organic products (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2020). As stated in reference (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2020), certain consumers hold the belief that organic food is significantly more expensive compared to conventional food. While environmental concerns can influence consumers' decision-making, the relatively high prices associated with organic products can act as a deterrent, particularly for price-sensitive individuals.

Prior research has shown that the likelihood of an individual adopting a particular behaviour is influenced by their perception of whether their close relationships, such as siblings, parents, or friends, would desire them to engage in that behaviour. To clarify further, if individuals believe that those who are important to them hold favourable attitudes and opinions toward organic foods, they are more inclined to develop similar attitudes themselves (Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020).

Although the organic food market has experienced substantial and rapid growth in recent years (Talwar *et al.*, 2021). This question has previously never been addressed because, despite the rapid growth of the organic food market, its consumption remains somewhat limited due to various factors. These include a lack of information regarding organic foods, the higher prices associated with them, and the limited availability of certified organic food options (Demirtas, 2019). To date, there has been a scarcity of prior research examining the myriad factors that influence the purchase intentions of young consumers toward organic food. This

knowledge gap highlights the need for comprehensive investigations in this area to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying determinants that shape the preferences and behaviours of this specific consumer segment.

2.3.3 Subjective Norm

Subjective norm refers to an individual's perception of social pressure or influence from others in their social environment to engage in a particular behavior. It reflects the extent to which an individual believes that people who are important to them, such as family, friends, or colleagues, expect them to engage in or support a specific behavior. Subjective norm encompasses the perceived social expectations, opinions, and approval/disapproval of others that can shape an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and intentions towards a particular behavior. It is a construct commonly used in social psychology and behavioral research to understand the social influences on individual decision-making and behavior (Boston University School of Public Health, 2022).

A series of recent studies have indicated that from the study of Hasan and Suciarto's (2020) findings, several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the study reveals that adherence to organic food practices and perceived behavioural control have a significant impact on buying intention for organic food. On the other hand, subjective norms were found to have no significant effect on buying intention. Among the variables examined, attitudes toward organic food were found to exert the strongest influence, while subjective norms had the lowest influence. This suggests that the pressure or influence from others to consume organic food does not play a significant role, as it is not driven by an individual's internal motivation or personal choice.

The research gap concerning subjective norms and purchase intention towards organic food lies in the limited understanding of the underlying factors that influence subjective norms and their impact on consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. Existing studies have primarily focused on examining the influence of subjective norms on general consumer behaviour, but there is a lack of specific research that explores the subjective norms specifically related to organic food consumption. Additionally, there is a need for further investigation into the contextual factors that shape subjective norms in the organic food domain, such as cultural influences, social networks, and peer interactions. Furthermore, exploring the mechanisms through which subjective norms interact with other variables, such as attitudes, perceived behavioural control, and environmental consciousness, can provide valuable insights into the complexity of consumers' purchase intentions toward organic food.

2.3.4 Knowledge Level

According to Nguyen *et al.* (2019), organic food knowledge encompasses consumers' comprehension and capacity to assess and evaluate the specific attributes of organic products. Knowledge of the purchase intention of organic food also refers to the level of information, understanding, and awareness that individuals have regarding organic food and its attributes, including production methods, certification standards, labeling, health benefits, environmental impact, and other relevant factors. It encompasses knowledge about the specific characteristics and qualities of organic food that may influence consumers' intentions to purchase and consume organic products. This knowledge is based on factual and subjective information, which can shape consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and ultimately their willingness to choose and buy organic food. According to the research of Bósquez & Bolzmann (2022), the existing knowledge gap regarding green consumption primarily revolves around understanding and analyzing consumers' actual purchasing behaviors about environmentally friendly products and practices.

One notable research gap in comprehending the knowledge surrounding the purchase intention of organic food is the observation that while young consumers may possess a level of awareness regarding organic food products, their understanding of the underlying concept and its various aspects remains comparatively limited. This limited knowledge among young consumers can potentially hinder their ability to make informed choices and fully grasp the significance of organic food in terms of environmental sustainability, health benefits, and implications for agricultural practices. It underscores the need for targeted educational initiatives and information campaigns to enhance young consumers' understanding and awareness of organic food, empowering them to make more informed and sustainable food choices.

2.4 Hypothesis Development & Conceptual Framework

The following hypotheses are aimed to be tested:

H1: The health awareness has significant relationships with young consumers' purchase intention

H2: The price perception has significant relationships with young consumers' purchase intention

H3: The subjective norm has significant relationships with young consumers' purchase intention

H4: The knowledge level has significant relationships with young consumers' purchase intention

Based on the literature review, this study is conducted to develop a research framework as Fig. 1.

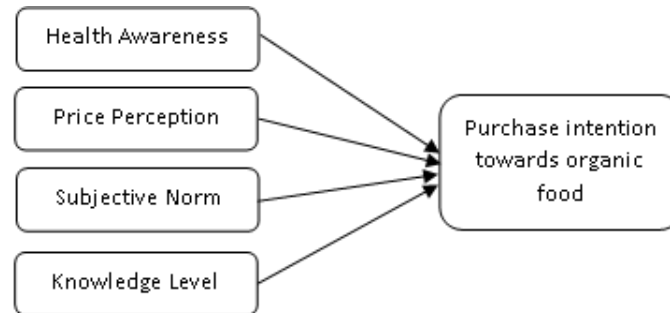


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework of relationships between organic food and purchase intention among young consumers in Malaysia

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The initial aim of this research is to examine the level of awareness of organic food. Additionally, the study seeks to recognize factors that influence young consumers' purchase intentions toward organic food, specifically in the region of Batu Pahat. In this study, the researcher employed a quantitative research approach to gather and analyze the data. The quantitative method involves a systematic and empirical analysis of phenomena by utilizing statistical techniques, mathematical calculations, and numerical data processing (Basias & Pollalis, 2018). Furthermore, in this research, descriptive analysis was carried out to calculate the mean and standard deviation of the collected data. Subsequently, correlation analysis was utilized by the researcher to explore the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

3.2 Target Population

The population of the study which is consisted of young consumer who has the intention to purchase green products in the AEON Mall in Malaysia. The scope of this study centers on young consumers who frequent AEON stores in Batu Pahat. In this research, "young consumers" specifically refers to individuals belonging to Generation Z, which includes those born from 1995 onwards. For this study, young consumers will be defined as individuals aged 18–30, encompassing high school, college, and university students who fall within this age range. The research focused on young consumers aged between 18 and 30 residing in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. The specific respondents targeted in this research were customers who had purchased organic food at AEON SDN BHD in Batu Pahat. The reason for choosing this location to conduct the survey is that it has an organic department. The self-administered questionnaires were distributed randomly, primarily in the AEON shopping mall, where the population is denser and more accessible. The selection of the age range is intentionally done to ensure a thorough understanding of the level of intention on green products among young consumers in Malaysia. This deliberate choice enables the researcher to gain comprehensive insights into the opinions and perspectives of this specific demographic group in the region.

3.3 Sampling Size

The sample size in the research refers to the number of individuals selected to represent a population. It is crucial to determine an appropriate sample size as it affects the validity and representativeness of the study. According to Roscoe (1975), it is recommended to have a sample size between 30 and 500, as a larger sample size can yield more precise and accurate data. In this research, the researcher selected a sample size of 350 respondents as adopted from the previous studies from Aigbe (2020) and Bestari & Butarbutar (2021) to answer the questionnaire. Employing the snowball sampling method aims to capture diverse perspectives on consumers' intention to purchase green products.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study utilizes a non-probability sampling approach to gather its samples, where individuals are not uniformly selected and do not have an equal likelihood of being chosen. For this study, a snowball sampling technique is employed as the research approach, which is acknowledged as a sampling method suitable for qualitative research involving a rare population. Snowball sampling employs a few initial cases to encourage the participation of other cases in the study, effectively augmenting the sample size (Taherdoost, 2020). The selection of this method was prompted by the challenges researchers encountered in securing the necessary number of respondents, given the limited size and dispersed geographical distribution of the population under scrutiny (Cam, 2023).

3.5 Research Instrument

This research was conducted with a quantitative survey method by using a self-administered questionnaire to collect the data from the respondents. This questionnaire has been designed in both English and Malay versions. The questionnaire was separated into three sections, i.e. Section A, Section B, and Section C. Section A consisted of respondent demographic and general information. Section B has investigated the level of green purchase intention among Generation Z. Section C aimed to assess the environmental knowledge, environmental concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness on green purchase intention. Section A incorporated both dichotomous and multiple-choice questions. Dichotomous questions are designed to provide survey participants with only two possible responses, commonly presented in the format of either "Yes" or "No", while multiple-choice questions offer respondents multiple options to choose from. In Section B and Section C, the researcher utilized a structured questionnaire comprising multiple-choice questions and 5-point Likert scale questions. The Likert scale comprises a series of statements that enable respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the respective questions, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree.

3.6 Pilot Study

For this pilot test, a total of 30 respondents were selected by the researcher and they were invited to participate in the questionnaire analysis aimed at assessing their green purchase intentions. To reach potential participants, online platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and WeChat were employed for questionnaire distribution. After analyzing the questionnaire using SPSS, it was found that the reliability value, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, indicated a favorable level of consistency for all the variables.

3.7 Data Collection

In this research, the researcher selected the survey method and used it in descriptive research to collect primary data. Thus, a self-administered survey was employed for the collection of primary data. The quantitative method was developed in this data collection to obtain the primary data. The researcher only employs primary collection methods to gather the necessary information for this study. A set of questionnaires has been approached as an online survey by using Google Forms and distributed to the consumer via WhatsApp, Telegram, and WeChat or distributed physically in the AEON shopping mall. The period of data collection for the pilot study was conducted in two months while the actual study was conducted for three months which took longer time than the pilot study due to a large number of respondents.

3.8 Data Analysis

The researcher adopted descriptive analysis and inferential analysis to carry out the process of data analysis. The first research objective should use descriptive analysis to evaluate the level of green purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia. Inferential analysis, including correlation analysis, can be applied to identify the second research objective which is the relationships between environmental knowledge, environmental concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness on green purchase intention. These analyses assist in simplifying the analysis process and effectively communicating the results. All the statistical analyses such as descriptive analysis, reliability testing, normality testing, and inferential analysis were performed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a widely used software program in the field of social sciences for data analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

Researchers distributed 350 questionnaires to consumers whether as an online survey or in the AEON Shopping Mall. Overall, a total of 350 sets of questionnaires were successfully received back to the researcher. Based on that, the response rate of this study is 100% and the number of sets distributed aligns with the number of sets returned.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

4.1.1 Pilot Study

In this research, a pilot study was undertaken to assess the questionnaire by using SPSS software. The results of the reliability analysis for the pilot study are presented in Table 1. Firstly, Cronbach's alpha for environmental knowledge with five items is 0.858 and the result was considered good. Next, the Cronbach's alpha for five items of environmental concern was 0.852 and the result was considered good. Besides that, Cronbach's alpha for perceived consumer effectiveness was 0.834 with five items and it can be interpreted as a good result with high

reliability. Regarding the dependent variable of green purchase intention, there are six items with Cronbach's alpha value of 0.853. The result of this variable displays that all the items are good.

Table 1 Reliability analysis for pilot study

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Environmental Knowledge	5	0.858	Good
Environmental Concern	5	0.852	Good
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	5	0.834	Good
Green Purchase Intention	6	0.853	Good

4.1.2 Actual Study

The actual study took place following the pilot study, which confirmed the reliability and validity of the questionnaires. In Table 2, Cronbach's alpha for the first variable, which is environmental knowledge was 0.889. The result indicates that these five items for this variable were considered good. Besides that, Cronbach's alpha for environmental concern with five items was 0.896, and it can be interpreted as a good result with high reliability. In addition, Cronbach's alpha for perceived consumer effectiveness was 0.897 consisting of five items, which ranged in a good result. Lastly, Cronbach's alpha for green purchase intention with six items was 0.895. The result for the dependent variable which is green purchase intention was considered as good.

Table 2 Reliability analysis for actual study

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Environmental Knowledge	5	0.889	Good
Environmental Concern	5	0.896	Good
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	5	0.897	Good
Green Purchase Intention	6	0.895	Good

4.2 Demographic Analysis

Based on the result that shows all 350 respondents are consumers of green products in Malaysia. The number of respondents is based on gender with a total of 210 female (60%) and 140 male (40%) out of 350 respondents. Besides, the age range between 15 to 17 years old was the lowest number and percentage with a total number of 48 respondents (13.7%). The age range between 18 to 20 years old was recorded as 107 respondents (30.6%). The age range between 21 to 23 years old was recorded as the highest among these age ranges which is 120 respondents (34.3%). The age range of 24 to 26 years old involved 75 respondents (21.4%). From the result of ethnicity, the number and percentage of Malay respondents had a total of 109 respondents (31.1%) while the total of Chinese respondents was 151 out of 350 (43.1%). The Indian respondents have the lowest number and percentage of respondents which is 90 respondents (25.7%).

From the result of education level, the majority of respondents are SPM holders which are 149 respondents (42.6%). The following respondents are from STPM and Matriculation backgrounds which are 51 respondents (14.6%) and 40 respondents (11.4%) respectively. The respondents with a diploma certificate are 37 respondents (10.6%). There are 60 respondents (17.1%) who are degree holders. The respondents who have a Master's and Ph.D. background are 9 respondents (2.6%) and 4 respondents (1.1%) respectively. For occupation, there are 85 out of 350 respondents (24.3%) work in the private sector while 90 respondents (25.7%) as workers in the government sector. The majority of respondents were students, and it has the highest number and percentage which was 161 respondents (46.0%). The number of unemployed respondents was 14 respondents (4.0%) which was the lowest number of respondents. Through the result of monthly income, the majority of respondents have an income of less than RM1000 which was 115 respondents (32.9%). 101 respondents had a monthly income between RM1000 to RM1999 (28.9%). The monthly income between RM2000 to RM2999 involves 98 respondents (28.0%). The respondents who have a monthly income between RM3000 to RM3999 included 28 respondents (8.0%). Lastly, the respondents who have more than RM4000 were 8 respondents (2.3%).

Based on the result, there are 197 respondents (56.3%) have prior experience in purchasing green products while there are 153 respondents (43.7%) do not have prior experience in purchasing green products. It indicates that there are majority of the respondents who were Generation Z have prior experiences with purchasing green products. Besides, there are 238 respondents (68%) believe that green products are important for the environment meanwhile there are 112 respondents (32%) do not believe that green products are important for the environment. The result of the research displays the majority of the respondents who were

Generation Z believe that green products are important for the environment. Furthermore, there are 223 respondents (63.7%) agree that green products are more expensive than non-green alternatives. While there are 127 respondents (36.3%) disagree with this statement. The result of the research illustrates the majority of the respondents who were Generation Z believe and agree that green products are more expensive than non-green alternatives. The table for a summary of the demographic and general information of the respondents is listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Summary of the demographic and general information of the respondent

Variable	Detail	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	210	60.0
	Male	140	40.0
Age	15 – 17 years old	48	13.7
	18 – 20 years old	107	30.6
	21 – 23 years old	120	34.3
	24 – 26 years old	75	21.4
Ethnicity	Malay	109	31.1
	Chinese	151	43.1
	Indian	90	25.7
Education Level	SPM	149	42.6
	STPM	51	14.6
	Matriculation	40	11.4
	Diploma	37	10.6
	Degree	60	17.1
	Master	9	2.6
	PhD	4	1.1
Occupation	Private Sector	85	24.3
	Government Sector	90	25.7
	Student	161	46.0
	Unemployed	14	4.0
Monthly Income	< RM1000	115	32.9
	RM1000 – RM1999	101	28.9
	RM2000 – RM2999	98	28.0
	RM3000 – RM3999	28	8.0
	> RM4000	8	2.3
Have you had prior experiences with purchasing green products?	Yes	197	56.3
	No	153	43.7
Do you believe that green products are important for environment?	Yes	238	68.0
	No	112	32.0
Do you think green products are more expensive than non-green alternatives?	Yes	223	63.7
	No	127	36.3

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

Based on Table 4, perceived consumer effectiveness has the highest average mean value, recording $M = 3.7394$ with the standard deviation of $SD = 0.92380$. Conversely, environmental knowledge exhibits the lowest average mean value $M = 3.6383$ with a standard deviation of $SD = 0.92480$. Environmental Concern has the average mean value $M = 3.6766$ with a standard deviation of $SD = 0.93470$. Through these results, the perceived consumer effectiveness was the key factor that has positively influenced green purchase intention among Generation Z due to it having the highest mean among these factors.

Table 4 Overall mean and standard deviation score of factors

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Environmental knowledge	3.6383	0.92480	Moderate
Environmental concern	3.6766	0.93470	Moderate
Perceived consumer effectiveness	3.7394	0.92380	High

4.4 Normality Test

Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used in this study since the sample size of this study was 350 respondents which represents more than the sample size of 50. Based on Table 5, the p-value for the dependent variable which is green purchase intention was 0.000 which indicates $p < 0.05$. Since the significant value of $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), therefore the data of this research is not normally distributed. As a result, a non-parametric test of the Spearman correlation test was conducted in this study to test the research hypothesis.

Table 5 Test of normality for green purchase intention

Dependent Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Green Purchase Intention	0.161	350	0.000	0.911	350	0.000

4.5 Correlation Analysis

In this research, Spearman correlation analysis was employed due to the data not normally distributed. Based on Table 6, it shows the value of Spearman's Correlation Coefficient, r was 0.774 which shows that there is a strong positive relationship between environmental knowledge and green purchase intention. Besides that, the result shows the value of Spearman's Correlation Coefficient, r was 0.803 which shows that there is a strong positive relationship between environmental concern and green purchase intention. Furthermore, the result shows the value of Spearman's Correlation Coefficient, r was 0.792 which shows that there is a strong positive relationship between perceived consumer effectiveness and green purchase intention. Thus, all independent variables have a strong positive relationship with green purchase intention representing all hypotheses that are acceptable in this study.

Table 6 Result for correlation analysis

		Green purchase intention	
Spearman's rho	Environmental knowledge	Correlation Coefficient	0.774
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	Environmental concern	Correlation Coefficient	0.803
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	Perceived consumer effectiveness	Correlation Coefficient	0.792
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Level of Awareness Toward Organic Products Among Young Consumers

The first objective of this study was to identify the level of awareness toward organic products. It was performed by using descriptive analysis. Table 7 indicates the mean and standard deviation for the items of level awareness. The mean values ranged from 3.77 to 3.90. Meanwhile, the standard deviation values were in the range of 0.97 to 1.06. The result indicated that the level of awareness toward organic products is high although numerous determinants might influence young consumers' purchase intention to purchase organic food. According to Wang *et al.* (2020), with the increase in purchasing power and consumer knowledge, there is a gradual shift in consumer demand toward safer and healthier products. Simultaneously, consumers are placing greater emphasis on organic food, directing their attention toward this category. Numerous researchers have explored the influence of regional factors on consumers' decisions regarding organic products (Szolnoki & Hauck, 2020). Singh & Verma (2017) assert that purchase intention serves as a critical and influential predictor of consumers' present buying behavior, thereby acting as a crucial precursor to their actual purchasing attitude.

Table 7 Summary of descriptive analysis

Purchase intention items	Mean	Std. deviation
PI1	3.82	0.98
PI2	3.78	1.06
PI3	3.83	0.97
PI4	3.79	1.05
PI5	3.79	1.05
PI6	3.77	0.99
PI7	3.90	0.98

4.6.2 Factors That Influence Young Consumers' Purchase Intention Toward Organic Food

The second objective of this study was to identify factors that influence young consumers' purchase intention in AEON SDN BHD Batu Pahat. According to Table 8, the results showed that all the determinants were correlated with young consumers' purchase intention to purchase organic food. There is a significant correlation between all the independent variables towards purchase intention to purchase organic food, especially for knowledge levels, which had a strong positive correlation with purchase intention to purchase organic food. In other words, health awareness, purchase intention, price perception, and subjective norms are correlated to purchase intention to purchase organic food. Earlier research has observed that consumers' health concerns can positively influence their attitudes toward organic products (Sobhanifard & Eshtiaghi, 2021). Hence, a clear correlation exists between health awareness and the demand for organic, green, and natural food. Furthermore, the escalating prevalence of non-communicable diseases has made consumers more mindful of their food consumption habits (Yeo *et al.*, 2022). According to Hassan *et al.* (2015), consumers' intention to purchase organic food is positively influenced by their knowledge of organic food. Besides that, consumers' purchase intention towards organic food becomes more positive as their knowledge (subjective knowledge, prior experiences).

According to Dangi *et al.* (2020), there exists a notable and favorable association between subjective norms and the intention to purchase organic food products. Consumers' intention to purchase organic food is adversely influenced by price perception (Roseira *et al.*, 2022). The previous study by Nguyen *et al.* (2019) concluded that consumer attitudes toward purchasing organic products are adversely affected by price perception. However, the research findings revealed a strong predictive relationship between organic food purchase intention and actual organic food purchase behavior.

Table 8 Summary of the results of the hypothesis

Purchase intention items	Mean	Std. deviation
PI1	3.82	0.98
PI2	3.78	1.06
PI3	3.83	0.97
PI4	3.79	1.05
PI5	3.79	1.05
PI6	3.77	0.99
PI7	3.90	0.98

5. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the objectives of the research have been achieved with positive outcomes. The first research objective was to identify the level of green purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia. The results indicated that the level of green purchase intention was high although several factors influenced the intention of Generation Z to purchase green products. The following research objectives were to investigate the relationship between environmental knowledge, environmental concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness on the green purchase intention of Generation Z in Malaysia. The result of correlation analysis showed that all the independent variables have a strong positive relationship with green purchase intention. The research's findings concluded that environmental concern has the strongest positive relationship with green purchase intention among Generation Z in Malaysia. In short, the study successfully attained its objectives.

This study is significant in raising awareness among young consumers regarding organic food, particularly in terms of their awareness, attitudes, behaviors, and preferences. Additionally, it aims to provide Malaysians with comprehensive information about organic food, fostering a deeper understanding of its daily benefits. By increasing awareness, individuals with unhealthy diets can better appreciate the value of incorporating nutritious organic food into their routines. Consequently, adopting organic food may contribute to better health, potentially reducing the average age at death.

This research suggests several recommendations to enhance findings and address study limitations. Firstly, future research should include participants from a wider range of age groups and generations, such as Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of green purchase intentions across different demographics in Malaysia. This broader participant pool would improve the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, due to the dynamic nature of green purchasing intentions, it is recommended that future studies adopt a longitudinal approach. Collecting data over multiple time points would allow researchers to track changes and trends in green purchase intentions over time, providing deeper insights. Lastly, future research should combine quantitative and qualitative methods to offer a more comprehensive

perspective. This integration would enable a thorough statistical analysis and a deeper exploration of underlying factors, enhancing the validity and understanding of the research area.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm their contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** Yi Joe Kang, Shiau Wei Chan; **data collection:** Yi Joe Kang; **analysis and interpretation of results:** Yi Joe Kang; **draft manuscript preparation:** Shiau Wei Chan, Fadillah Ismail, Rosmaini Tasmin, Md Fauzi Ahmad. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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