

## ANTECEDENTS OF ORGANIC FOOD PURCHASE INTENTION: DOES IT MODERATE BY THE RECEPTIVITY TO GREEN COMMUNICATION?

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**Abstract:** Given the global environmental degradation due to conventional food consumption and demand, sustainable food consumption (organic food) counters the deterioration by increasing consumers' sustainable food consumption. As organic food development in Malaysia remains in its infancy as a niche market, research on green marketing with localised applications remains scarce and does not significantly catalyse organic food demand. The study investigates the consumers' attitudes, perceived social pressure, autonomy, and receptivity to green communication toward organic food purchase intention. The study applied a causal analysis where a quantitative method was employed. Purposive sampling was employed in the study, where primary data was used for analysis through an online survey. The survey employed 5 Likert scale measurements where data were collected in Malaysia, and 268 valid responses were obtained. The data were analysed using SPSS and AMOS software. The finding revealed a significant influence of personal attitude, perceived autonomy, and receptivity to green communication on organic food purchase intention. Perceived social pressure did not indicate a statistically significant relationship towards organic food purchase intention. Receptivity to green communication was found to be statistically insignificant as a moderator. Stakeholders and organic food producers may benefit from the study's detailed analysis of the market's current state to better predict its growth and ensure the industry's long-term viability.

Keywords: Organic food, purchase intention, receptivity, green communication.

### Introduction

In recent years, food consumption in industrialised economies has shifted towards a range of socially balanced and diverse food options, including organic food (Latip *et al.*, 2020; Naja & Hamadeh, 2020). The sustainability effort of market players in promoting their products and services is closely associated with green marketing, which includes a distinctive environmental sustainability element and effort that enables an understanding of consumer green purchase intention and decisions (Latip *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, concerns about food safety, nutrients, and additives contribute to increased green consumerism besides sustainability reasons (Hassan *et al.*, 2015; Bernal Jurado *et al.*, 2019; Švecová & Odehnalová, 2019). Such concerns have contributed to increased organic

farming in the primary sector (Bernal Jurado *et al.*, 2019). They have been supported by a relative rise in organic agricultural land between 1999 and 2015, from 11 million hectares to about 51 million hectares worldwide (Willer *et al.*, 2017).

However, organic food consumption is more trivial in the local setting than in the global trend (Willer & Lernoud, 2019). The 2017 global retail sales reached 108.56 billion US dollars, with 11.328 billion US dollars denoting Asian revenues (Willer & Lernoud, 2019). Somehow, the Malaysian organic market was valued at approximately 2.5 million US dollars in 2017 (merely 0.0221% of the total Asian market value) (Euromonitor International, 2017, as cited in Jaafar *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, based on the Department of Agriculture Malaysia

statistics, there are 144,843 local fruit farmers in Malaysia, producing 1,616,723 metric tons annually. However, only 63 farms are certified under the myOrganic scheme (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2021).

Therefore, compared to conventional food products, the attractiveness of the Malaysian organic food market to market players is presently low. It is potentially due to insufficient data on local consumer perceptions, which undermines market attractiveness because of the related business risks, profitability, and sustainability reasons (Latip *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b). In addition, information and evidence of Malaysian consumer purchase decisions regarding organic food are unclear (Chen *et al.*, 2010; Latip *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b). Purchase intention is critical as it contributes to purchase behaviour and consumer perception. It is also a valuable indicator of purchase behaviour (Yzer, 2017). Hence, examining organic food purchase intention is crucial (Latip *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the green marketing facet is among the most significant challenges facing local organic farmers because local consumers are unaware of the health benefits of consuming organic food (Tiraieyari *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, green communication is vital in boosting consumer awareness of organic food. Nonetheless, Malaysian consumers' receptivity to green communication regarding organic food is still being determined. Subsequently, it impedes market players and marketers from effectively segmenting and communicating with consumers (Chekima *et al.*, 2015; Paço *et al.*, 2019). A green business framework is a competitive strategy in strategic marketing by influencing consumers through commercial communications (Amatulli *et al.*, 2019). With that, the memory effect is theoretically significant to receptivity to green communication, as communication mainly occurs in the non-purchase context (Weber & Schweiger, 2017).

Therefore, the primary purposes of this study are: (1) to investigate the factors influencing organic food purchase intention; (2)

to examine the moderating effect of receptivity to green communication on organic food purchase intention.

This study offers a systematic context as organic food intake requires a dynamic decision-making mechanism to examine the relationships among consumers' attitudes, perceived social pressure, perceived autonomy, and receptivity to green communication regarding purchase intention of organic food to bridge the knowledge gaps of this study. The outcome of this study will significantly impact various sectors, including academics, government institutions as the decision-makers, industry players of the business chain, and the entire community. Data analysis will provide an optimised comprehensive understanding of customer organic food consideration variables, which would theoretically influence the purchasing intention for organic food.

The current market conditions and developments may be mirrored in business strategies, where the concerned parties can take advantage of the details. The green marketing strategy, focusing on aspects that impact customer purchasing intention and choice about organic food, may be comprehended and will aid producers in addressing challenges of consumer unawareness toward organic food. Moreover, the differences between customer expectations and real organic food distribution would be minimised. It will also assist in regulating and improving the organic food industry and Malaysia's economy through future opportunities with potential market investors (Latip *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b).

## Literature Review

### *Theory of Planned Behaviour*

The study adapted and applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to understand consumer behaviour, specifically purchase intention. The theory concerning attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control influences individual intention toward specific behaviour that is then translated into

actual conduct with due time (Ajzen, 1991, 2020). Individuals are generally sensible in their choices by assessing the information and weighing the potential outcomes of specific behaviour to determine whether to perform a particular behaviour (May & Latip, 2021). The TPB uses the behavioural disposition concept to predict and explain human intention and behaviour, including the external influences in many behavioural domains (Ajzen, 2020), including sustainable purchase behaviour. Ajzen (2020) supported that although attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control are enough to predict intention and behaviour or assumption of sufficiency, the theory is still open to include additional predictors or factors if it is not redundant to the existing variable. Thus, the receptivity to green communication is proposed in this study.

#### ***Individual Green Consideration Model***

The Individual Green Consideration Model (IGC) is used as the study's underlying model. The model involves four exogenous variables that influence individual sustainable behaviour intention: personal attitude, perceived social pressure, perceived autonomy, and perceived green trust. Moreover, the model includes the perceived greenwashing as a negative element moderator, weakening the relationship between exogenous variables and sustainable behaviour intention (Latip *et al.*, 2020). Due to the model's emphasis on the endogenous variable of behaviour intention, the word 'perceived' was used to refer to variations in the pressure individuals feel in light of the postulated exogenous factors.

#### ***Application of TPB and IGC Model in the Context of the Study***

The framework of this study adopted TPB to examine the intention of Malaysian consumers to purchase organic food. The TPB model can effectively predict consumer intention (Chen & Tung, 2014). It leads to a better result that predicts green purchase intention and behaviour (Paul *et al.*, 2016). Besides, TPB has a well-established

foundation (Ashraf *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, the literature suggests that future research should develop a better understanding by involving relevant variables (Biswas, 2017). The theory has also been shown to be applicable and reliable in other areas of consumer behaviour, such as green lodging and organic food. Nonetheless, it has the potential to be expanded beyond the three main underlining variables by incorporating other domain-specific factors to improve model predictive power in organic food studies. Although TPB is not designed to explain media effects, it has important implications that advance the understanding of media effects, as sustainable food choices are derived from different factors (Abrahamse, 2019). This is because these sustainable food choices and consumption promote consideration for various interventions aimed at enhancing consumer awareness of the significance of sustainable food choices about their impact on the climate and the future of humanity. Therefore, the IGC model is incorporated to examine the effect of green communication.

#### ***Personal Attitude***

Personal attitude denotes an individual's psychological evaluation towards favourable or unfavourable judgement based on factors that potentially influence thinking and perception, including personal values, knowledge, experiences, and personalities (Koklic *et al.*, 2019; Qi & Ploeger, 2019). Based on the dominant principle of TPB, the individual's purchasing intent may be assessed by the individual's attitude towards the behaviour intention. Attitude corresponds to the dynamic relationship construct that arises from experiences determining a person's favourable or unfavourable tendencies (Latip *et al.*, 2020; Yzer, 2017). Thus, personal attitude is a unique determinant of intention without social influence from the surroundings (Ajzen, 1991).

Attitude is significant toward organic food purchase intention, and the attitude itself can be influenced by past organic food consumption (Koklic *et al.*, 2019). It is also supported by the

study conducted in India, as attitude significantly influences individual intention (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018). Moreover, attitude also influences individual knowledge regarding organic food, affecting purchase intention (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, attitude is the most robust antecedent of behaviour intention (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018; Koklic *et al.*, 2019), although it is not necessarily translated into actual behaviour (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019).

However, a study conducted in Malaysia highlighted a contradicting finding as the environmental attitude does not influence green food purchase intention (Auroomooga Putten & Nair, 2019). Although many factors influence a sustainable food decision, the individual's attitude is theoretically strongly influenced, as the decision is an individual-centric focus. Therefore, individuals' beliefs and attitudes about organic foods are important antecedents for predicting and explaining consumers' buying choices. However, previous studies found attitude significant and insignificant toward purchase intention. Therefore, personal attitude should be explored based on today's market and recent consumer perceptions to interpret the translation of human expectations into either constructive or destructive behaviour.

To predict a specific behaviour, an exact dimension of attitude is suggested as a general attitude unable to predict a specific intention and real behaviour decisively (Ajzen, 2008; Chekima *et al.*, 2019). Thus, personal attitude is applied in the study. Henceforth, the following hypotheses are proposed below:

**H1:** Personal attitude significantly influences organic food purchase intention.

### ***Perceived Social Pressure***

Perceived social pressure denotes the social pressure experienced by individuals from family, friends, and society, potentially affecting their judgment to purchase or otherwise (Ajzen, 1991; Latip *et al.*, 2020a). It represents people's emotions because of definite social pressure on the consumers' social image to

reflect in their reference group (Sun & Wang, 2019a). Correspondingly, individual evaluation of a certain behaviour, either positively or negatively, is based on the individual's perceived social pressure from the surroundings (Latip *et al.*, 2020b). Individuals who sense social pressure to conduct the action, have optimistic expectations toward the behaviour, and believe that executing the behaviour is within their influence with autonomy are more likely to perform the behaviour based on this threefold conceptualisation. It then correlates with the individual's purchase intention and real behavioural results (Latip *et al.*, 2020).

A study in Croatia discovered a significant link between subjective norms and buying intention of organic food (Ham *et al.*, 2018). The respondents were regarded as socially desirable as they wanted to correspond to social norms positively. It is strengthened by a similar finding of the study conducted among students. Theoretically, as students have limited knowledge about the product, the family members strongly influence their decision (Švecová & Odehnalová, 2019). The perceived pressure from society is even higher in a collectivist country such as China. A collectivistic society cares about social conformity, influencing individual opinion and concern regarding the green food market (Qi & Ploeger, 2019).

However, a contradicted finding was highlighted by a study conducted in India. The subjective norms were found to be insignificant toward the purchase of green food, although attitude and perceived behavioural control were significant (Paul *et al.*, 2016). Surprisingly, India is classified as a collectivistic cultured society genuinely concerned about public and societal opinion and perception (Gupta & Shukla, 2019).

As consumers are occasionally affected by social pressure, the study must examine the effect of perceived social pressure on Malaysia's organic food purchase intention. Past studies have also backed this viewpoint, as individuals are exposed to societal pressure and are influenced by societal judgement and individual beliefs to suit societal values (Ham

*et al.*, 2018; Qi & Ploeger, 2019). Subsequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2:** Perceived social pressure influences organic food purchase intention positively.

### ***Perceived Autonomy***

Perceived autonomy denotes the degree to which individuals possess the necessary self-control and specific behavioural performance capability directly or indirectly influenced by non-motivational factors, such as the availability of resources and opportunities. Perceived autonomy is underlined by the perceived behaviour control characterised by a person's understanding of the significance of desired actions and implications based on available resources and opportunities to execute the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Latip *et al.*, 2020). Previous studies have consistently indicated that the more discretionary power an individual maintains, the more likely they are to purchase a sustainable good (Latip *et al.*, 2020; Sun & Wang, 2019b). Indeed, it is also the strongest influence on purchase intention, as highlighted by a previous study (Periyayya *et al.*, 2016). Prior research has also rendered price perception as one of the primary barriers to buying organic goods. For customers intending to consume organic products, a premium price may be willingly paid. However, for various reasons, like an economic downturn or financial difficulties, they could not purchase (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

Furthermore, a study conducted in China found a significant relationship between perceived behavioural control and green food purchase intention (Qi & Ploeger, 2019). It is potentially influenced by the government's aspiration toward a sustainable food chain due to the massive population of China. These initiatives have been supported by an improved standard of living and food safety issues, strengthening consumer acceptance of green products (Qi & Ploeger, 2019). Hence, individuals with greater control over their decision and positively perceived autonomy tend to purchase green food allied with growth

and the standard of living, as supported by Latip *et al.* (2020).

The perceived autonomy is critical to be investigated, as previous studies discovered that price and availability potentially strengthen or weaken consumer intention and decision in sustainable purchase intention (Latip *et al.*, 2021a, 2021b; Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). To a certain extent, resources and opportunities likewise influence the likelihood of behavioural achievement (Ajzen, 1991). It then led to the proposal of the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Perceived autonomy influences organic food purchase intention positively.

### ***Receptivity to Green Communication***

Receptivity to green communication denotes individual readiness to accept, pay attention, and address green messages in marketing communications, including advertisements and posters (Bailey *et al.*, 2016; Paço *et al.*, 2019). According to the hierarchy of effects in advertising theory, individual awareness and knowledge influence individual perception and behaviour (Correa *et al.*, 2017). A well-informed customer will have good fundamental knowledge about organic food, which will assist and alter the individual perception of the product (Latip *et al.*, 2021; Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). Somehow, it is still strongly influenced by an individual interest factor. Therefore, individual receptivity to green communication potentially affects individual purchase intention, which is critical to investigate, as the message conveyed will largely influence individual interest (Bailey *et al.*, 2016; Paço *et al.*, 2019). It will help identify the best platform to be used by the marketers to favour the message in the consumer's mind (Paço *et al.*, 2019).

As highlighted by Weber & Schweiger (2017), receptivity of information carries a vital position because the individual readiness toward communication has a significant relationship towards individual memory effect in response to the advertisement. Even more critical, based on consumer routine, most communication



occurred during non-purchase periods, such as at home or the workplace.

However, research on receptivity to green communication in consumer green consumption fields, including organic food remained scarce. Following past studies, no efforts were made to appropriately measure receptivity to green communication and marketing in the green advertising and marketing context (Bailey *et al.*, 2016). Regardless, a potential effect of green communication was identified on consumer attitude, intention, and buying behaviour (Bailey *et al.*, 2016). The Malaysian organic food industry is a niche market (Chekima *et al.*, 2015; Somasundram *et al.*, 2016), with limited studies on receptivity to green communication and consumer purchase intention. Studies involving the communication process's impact on consumers' purchase decisions, particularly the external receptivity to green communication factors in the organic food context, remain lacking (Paço *et al.*, 2019).

Consumers' responses to green communication varied among these individuals. Several factors influence the individual response to green communication, including how it appeals to the individual, the perception and attitude of the individual (Bailey *et al.*, 2016). Indeed, a stimulus such as a logo on packaging leads toward perceived quality and could influence consumer purchase intention (Lian & Rajadurai, 2020). Limited studies are investigating the receptivity of green communication toward an individual purchase decision. However, a study conducted in 2005 found that individual attitude influenced individual receptivity toward communication and purchase decisions (Souza & Taghian, 2005).

Additionally, highly engaged consumers perceived green communication through advertisements as more favourable than counterparts with low attitude levels. Nevertheless, both groups reflected neutral responses to the persuasiveness of advertisements (Souza & Taghian, 2005). The result paralleled Bailey *et al.* (2016), where a significant correlation was identified between receptivity

to green communication, attitude, and purchase intention. Therefore, the receptivity of green communication could strengthen the factors influencing purchase intention. Thus, it is vital to examine a potential moderating effect of the variable, which was lacking in the previous study. It then led to the proposal of the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Receptivity to green communication influences organic food purchase intention positively.

**H5:** Receptivity to green communication strengthens the relationship between personal attitude and organic food purchase intention.

**H6:** Receptivity to green communication strengthens the relationship between personal attitude and organic food purchase intention.

**H7:** Receptivity to green communication strengthens the relationship between personal attitude and organic food purchase intention.

### **Research Framework**

Specifically, the framework proposes two models assessing receptivity to green communication as a direct predictor and moderator. The first model proposes that receptivity to green communication directly predicts organic food purchase intention. This model suggests that consumers who are more receptive to green communication are more likely to have the intention to purchase organic food.

The second model proposes that receptivity to green communication moderates the relationship between personal attitude, perceived social pressure, and perceived autonomy toward organic food purchase intention. This model suggests that the effectiveness of green communication strategies in promoting sustainable behaviours is contingent upon the target audience's receptivity level. This model assumes that highly receptive to green communication individuals are more likely to be influenced by the message and, therefore, more

likely to engage in sustainable behaviours such as organic food purchases.

**Methodology**

The study applied a causal study where a quantitative method was employed in this study, and a non-contrived and cross-sectional method was involved. Purposive sampling was employed in the study with a criterion of 18 years old and above respondents, as there is an inaccessible sampling frame of the targeted population. Purposive sampling under non-probability sampling is the most practical sampling technique for the study. Primary data was used for analysis through an online survey. The survey employed 5 Likert scale measurements. The research items were adapted and adopted from previous empirical studies (Auroomooga Putten & Nair, 2019; Bailey *et al.*, 2016; Ham *et al.*, 2018; Paço *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2019).

Malaysian consumers that are of 18 years old and above are the target population of the study. Considering the size of the study population and the prevalence of COVID-19-related concerns with physical distancing as well as the Movement Control Order (MCO), an online survey is the most practicable form of data collection. The link to the survey was distributed through online groups, mainly on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms. The public social group, public online webinar organisers

and unbiased online advertisement through social media pages are among the platforms used in data collection. Specific measures were taken to ensure respondents did not repeatedly address the survey and affect data reliability for generalisation. For example, respondents needed to provide email addresses. Filtration was then performed post-data screening to alleviate possible redundancies. A total of 268 valid responses were received after the data was cleaned and redundant outliers were removed to facilitate the normality of the data. Maximum and minimum analyses were conducted to ensure accurate decoded data. Therefore, a minimum sample size for this study is achieved, as the study required 240 respondents based on 24 items in the survey (Hair *et al.*, 2010). The study utilised the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) through Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS) for data analysis. The normality of the data was achieved as the maximum negative score of skewness and kurtosis was -.934, while the maximum positive score of skewness and kurtosis was 0.639. Thus, it is within the range of +1 to -1, which indicates a normal data distribution, as Hair *et al.* (2017) support. The common method bias was conducted through Harman’s Single Factor Test to ensure the instrument did not cause variations in responses but was driven by the actual predispositions of the respondents. A final tally of 41.125 was reached. If the score

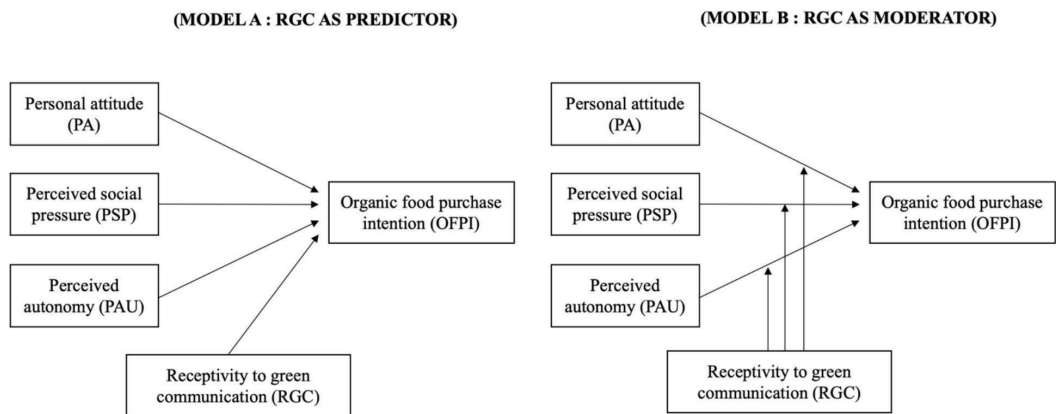


Figure 1: A research framework

is less than 50%, then there is no issue with the data set being affected by common method bias (Eichhorn, 2014).

**Respondent’s profile**

Most of the respondents are female (67.9%) while 32.1% of respondents are male. Meanwhile, most of the respondents (53.4%) were of the age range between 18 to 30 years old, followed by 22.4% of the age range between 31 to 40 years old. In addition, 13.8% of respondents are between 41 to 50 years old, and 0.5% of the respondents are 51 years old and above. Meanwhile, the education level of the respondents is mainly bachelor’s degree holders (47.4%), followed by Master’s Degree or Doctorate holders at 28%, and 24.6% with Diploma, certificate or SPM qualifications.

Furthermore, 37.6% of respondents with a monthly income between MYR0.00 to MYR2,000, followed by 27.6% of respondents who received a monthly income range of MYR4,001 to MYR8,000 per month, 22.4% of the respondents earned MYR2,001 to MYR4,000 per month, and lastly, 12.4% earned MYR8,001 and above. Moreover, 92.5% of the respondents are Malaysian citizens and 7.5% are non-Malaysian citizens. Indeed, all the respondents were familiar with the definition of organic food and had purchased any organic food before.

**Results**

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Reliability, and Validity Analysis**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to verify the instrument’s psychometric characteristic items. The CFA analysis of the model is shown in Figure 2. It can be seen that all loading factors of instrument items scored 0.60 and above (Table 1). Thus, the instrument has a good psychometric characteristic. Importantly, the CFA analysis found a Chi-square/Degree of Freedom (CMIN/DF) score of 2.835 and a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) score of 0.913, demonstrating good model fitness. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) score of 0.083 indicated a good model fitness with the level of freedom (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Meanwhile, the composite reliability and validity analysis of the construct can be seen in Table 1. The Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) results indicated proper construct validation. The CR of all contrasts scored above 0.60 and achieved a minimum requirement to measure the internal consistency of the items. The AVE score of all constructs scored 0.50 and above. Importantly, the discriminant validity of the instrument is achieved because the diagonal square root of AVE is higher than compared to its correlation. Therefore, the constructs were deemed valid as an instrument for this study (Table 2).

Table 1: Items standardise loading factor and convergent validity analysis.

No	Items	Std. beta	CR	AVE	MSV
<b>Personal attitude (PA)</b>					
A1	The purchase of organic food is a good idea.	.808	.914	.680	.580
A2	The purchase of organic food is exciting.	.750			
A3	The purchase of organic food is important for everyone.	.815			
A4	The purchase of organic food is beneficial.	.868			
A5	It is a wise decision to purchase organic food.	.877			



<b>Perceived social pressure (PSP)</b>					
S1	My friends think I should purchase organic food.	.652	.924	.672	.181
S2	I want to purchase organic food because my friend bought it.	.848			
S3	My family members think I should purchase organic food.	.719			
S4	I want to purchase organic food because my family members bought it.	.871			
S5	My relatives think I should purchase organic food.	.879			
S6	I want to purchase organic food because my relatives bought it.	.915			
<b>Perceived autonomy (PAU)</b>					
AU1	I have enough money to purchase organic food.	.887	.864	.682	.176
AU2	My income is enough to buy a few organic food products monthly.	.898			
AU3	I have enough time to purchase organic food.	.674			
<b>Receptivity to green communication (RGM)</b>					
R1	I support a brand that promotes environmental sustainability.	.673	.912	.634	.446
R2	I tend to pay attention to advertising messages that talk about the environment.	.833			
R3	I am excited when I see an advertisement about green products such as organic food.	.830			
R4	Green messages in advertisements affect my attitude towards the advertisements.	.835			
R5	I respond favourably to brands that use green messages in their advertising.	.855			
R6	I think green advertising is effective in influencing consumer purchase intention.	.737			
<b>Organic food purchase intention (OFPI)</b>					
I1	I intend to purchase organic food next time because of its positive environmental contribution.	.907	.873	.697	.580
I3	I will buy organic food even if I need to spend a few extra Ringgit.	.814			
I4	I plan to purchase more organic food compared to regular food.	.779			

Table 2: The discriminant validity of the instrument

<b>Construct</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>PSP</b>	<b>PAU</b>	<b>RGC</b>	<b>OFPI</b>
<b>PA</b>	<b>.825</b>				
<b>PSP</b>	.426***	<b>.819</b>			
<b>PAU</b>	.249***	.254***	<b>.826</b>		
<b>RGC</b>	.663***	.284***	.204**	<b>.796</b>	
<b>OFPI</b>	.762***	.374***	.420***	.668***	<b>.835</b>

**Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Analysis**

**Model A (Direct Predictor of RGC)**

The direct path analysis was carried out through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for hypothesis testing. The model shown in Figure 2 and the summary outcome of the analysis can be accessed in Table 3. Based on the analysis, personal attitude is statistically significant towards organic food purchase intention, as the *p*-value score is less than .05 ( $\beta = .514$ ; CR = 7.319; *p* = .001). When personal attitude increases by one standard deviation, the organic food purchase intention will rise by .514. Therefore, H1 is supported. Meanwhile, there is no statistically significant relationship between perceived social pressure and organic food purchase intention, as the *p*-value score is more than .05 ( $\beta = .019$ ; CR = .377; *p* = .706). Thus, H2 is not supported.

Perceived autonomy is statistically significant towards organic food purchase intention, as the *p*-value score is less than .05 ( $\beta = .231$ ; CR = 4.608; *p* = .001). When perceived autonomy increases by one standard deviation, organic food purchase intention will rise by .231. Hence, H3 is supported statistically. Lastly, receptivity to green communication is statistically significant toward organic food purchase intention because the *p*-value score is less than .05 ( $\beta = .275$ ; CR = 4.229; *p* = .001). When the receptivity to green communication increased by one standard deviation, organic food purchase intention up-surged by .275. Thus, H4 is supported statistically.

**Moderation Interaction Path Analysis**

**Model B (RGC as moderator)**

In this study, the model aimed to examine the moderating effect of receptivity to green communication on the relationship between personal attitude, perceived social pressure, perceived autonomy, and organic food purchase intention. To test this moderating effect, the AMOS software was utilised. The related variable had been standardised first before the interaction analysis was conducted. Standardisation of the variable allowed for an equal comparison between the effects of the predictor and moderator variables on the outcome variable of organic food purchase intention.

By standardising the variable for receptivity to green communication, we transformed the data to a common scale, which allowed for a more accurate comparison of the effects of different variables on the outcome variable. This standardisation method also helped to reduce the influence of scale differences between the variables and enabled us to obtain a more precise estimate of the effect size of the moderator variable. The standardised variables were performed (PA\_x\_RGC, PSP\_x\_RGC, and PAU\_x\_RGC) to examine the interaction effect of receptivity to green communication on the relationships between personal attitude, perceived social pressure, perceived autonomy, and organic food purchase intention.

However, based on the direct path relationship (Table 3), H6 is unsupported as

Table 3: Hypothesis testing of direct relationship (Model A)

H	Direct path relationship		Std.Est.( $\beta$ )	C.R.	P	Result
H1	Personal attitude	→ Purchase intention	.514	7.319	***	Supported
H2	Perceived social pressure	→ Purchase intention	.019	.377	.706	Not-supported
H3	Perceived autonomy	→ Purchase intention	.231	4.608	***	Supported
H4	Receptivity to green communication	→ Purchase intention	.275	4.229	***	Supported

Note: \*\*\*= $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*= $p < 0.010$ ; \*= $p < 0.050$

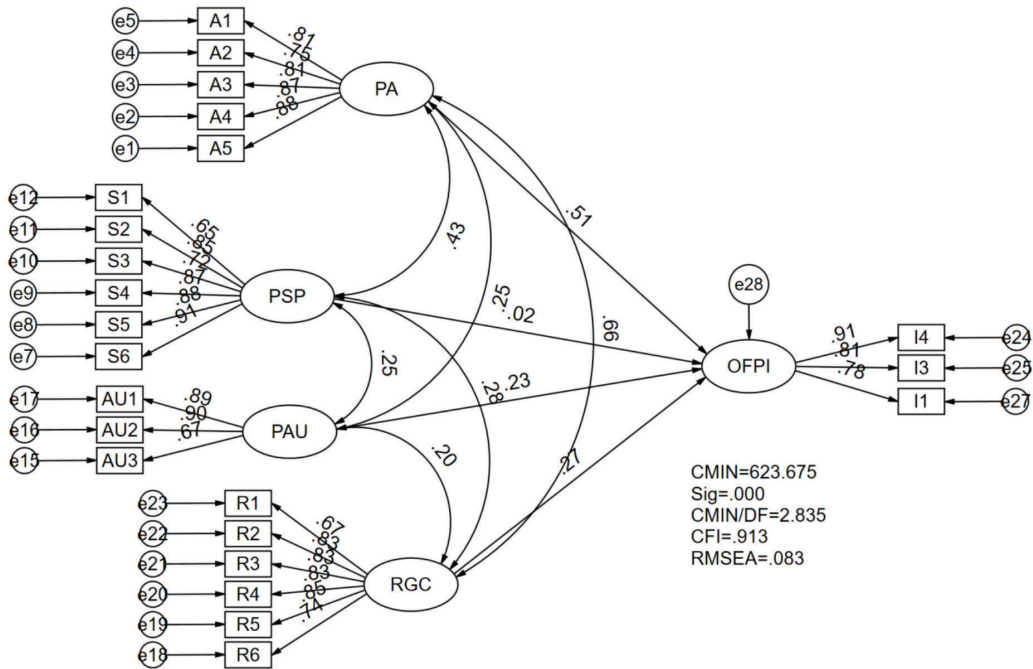


Figure 2: SEM modelling of direct hypothesis testing (Model A)

the direct relationship between perceived social pressure and organic food purchase intention is statistically insignificant. Therefore, only H5 and H7 are tested for moderation interaction. The summary of the findings can be accessed in Table 4.

The finding found that receptivity to green communication does not strengthen the relationship between personal attitude and organic food purchase intention, as the  $p$  is more than 0.10 ( $\beta = .005$ ; CR = .139;  $p = .889$ ). Similarly, receptivity to green communication does not strengthen the relationship between perceived autonomy and organic food purchase intention, as the  $p$ -value is more than .10 ( $\beta = -.015$ ; CR = -.489;  $p = .889$ ). Thus, no moderation interaction can be plotted.

**Discussion**

The data analysis verified the statistically significant relationship between personal attitude towards organic food purchase intention (H1). Personal attitude is the strongest influence on organic food purchase intention. As attitude is an individual-centric variable, it explains the significant relationship when tested. The finding corresponds with the proposition that attitude strongly influences an individual’s judgement (Ajzen, 1991). It is subsequently supported by recent studies on the strong relationship between attitude (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018; Koklic *et al.*, 2019; Latip *et al.*, 2021b). When the consumer has a positive personal attitude, it influences their purchase intention as it is related to the cognitive belief of individuals. Besides, as personal attitude denotes an individual’s psychological

Table 4: Results of moderating analysis

H	Moderation interaction	Std.Est.( $\beta$ )	C.R.	P	Result
H5	PA_x_RGC → OFPI	.005	.139	.889	Not-supported
H7	PAU_x_RGC → OFPI	-.015	-.489	.625	Not-supported

evaluation, including personal values, knowledge, experiences, and personalities, it is not directly influenced by respondent age and income level. Thus, it probably explains these results, although most respondents are between 18 to 30 years old and have an income of MYR2,000.00 and below monthly. However, the positive attitude regarding organic food and sustainable consumption could be influenced by respondents' academic background and awareness toward environment and health because 47.7% of the respondents are bachelor's degree holders, followed by master's degree or Doctorate holders at 28%. Importantly, individual beliefs and propositions could probably change individual perceptions and acceptance of certain things, especially in the context of the study, which is organic food. This justifies personal attitude as the strongest variable influencing individual decisions and intentions.

However, perceived social pressure is statistically insignificant toward organic food purchase intention (H2). The finding contradicts thoroughly with previous studies (Ham *et al.*, 2018; Qi & Ploeger, 2019). Although Malaysia is classified as a collectivist country, where social pressure from society is considered an important force that governs the individual perception of specific behaviour, the finding indicated an insignificant relationship. Theoretically, the social pressure will be more robust if an individual internal factor (personal attitude) is aligned with the specific behaviour (Latip *et al.*, 2020b). However, as Malaysia and numerous countries are battling the COVID-19 pandemic globally, social pressure might be heavily directed toward health matters. Therefore, it does not potentially influence individual perception from a societal perspective.

Moreover, perceived autonomy is statistically significant as, although personal attitude is the strongest antecedent, individual intention to behave will also influence the individual perception of available resources. The findings are then found to be parallel with previous studies (Latip *et al.*, 2021a; Qi & Ploeger, 2019). Based on the current pandemic

of COVID-19 with the implementation of a Movement Control Order (MCO) potentially influences individual perceived autonomy, as supported by Latip *et al.* (2021b). With higher levels of independence and control that individuals have over themselves, the stronger perceived autonomy influences individual purchase intention and behaviour.

The price of organic food in general is slightly higher than conventional food, which could probably influence consumer purchase decisions. Although the respondent profile reported that the majority of the respondents (37.6%) earn an average monthly income of below MYR2,000.00, 27.6% of respondents received a monthly income range between MYR4,001 to MYR8,000 per month, and 12.4% earned MYR8,001 and above, which was considered as medium and high-income consumers. As the research did not examine the influence of wealth, this likely explains the significance of the result between perceived autonomy and organic food purchase intent. In addition, given that the research examines the purchase intention of consumers and not their purchase behaviour, low-income consumers are reliable for the objectives of the study and its findings.

Furthermore, receptivity to green communication is statistically significant toward organic food purchase intention. Individual interest factors and readiness towards specific topics or products theoretically influenced the response and memory effect on an advertisement, commercial communication, and purchase behaviour (Weber & Schweiger, 2017). Similar situations could occur unconsciously (implicit memory), thus justifying the outcome. Moreover, when individuals pay attention to green communication from media platforms, it will affect their intent to purchase organic food. A stimulus such as the myOrganic logo on the packaging also potentially triggers consumer receptivity, as Malaysian consumers have a satisfactory level of knowledge regarding the myOrganic logo, which influences their purchase intention (Lian & Rajadurai, 2020).

However, receptivity does not strengthen the relationship between personal attitude, perceived social pressure, and perceived autonomy toward organic food purchase intention. Thus, it can be concluded that individual readiness and awareness of green communication will only directly influence purchase intention, and no moderating effects of green communication receptivity were significant. Several factors influence the individual response to green communication, which might strengthen or weaken individual purchase intention regarding organic food. It includes how green communication appeals to the individual and their perception (Bailey *et al.*, 2016). Thus, consumer groups prefer different communication aspects, such as packaging, benefits, accreditation, logos, contributions, and claims. As the respondents came from different backgrounds and levels of knowledge toward organic food, their readiness toward green communication might not indirectly influence their purchase intention regarding variables of the study (personal attitude, perceived social pressure and perceived autonomy). The findings are justified as individuals' readiness to absorb information is associated with the memory effect of individual-level advertising and communication (Weber & Schweiger, 2017). Indeed, the hierarchy of effects in the advertising theory highlights awareness as a crucial step to influencing and altering consumers' perceptions, purchase intentions, and behaviours (Correa *et al.*, 2017). Thus, it might justify the insignificant effect of receptivity to green communication as a moderating variable.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis, there is a significant relationship between personal attitude, perceived autonomy, and receptivity to green communication toward organic food purchase intention. The study confronted several limitations while conducting the study. The study focused only on four proposed exogenous variables that could affect individual purchase intention of organic food. However, other

factors could influence organic food purchase intention, which was not investigated in the study. The study faced difficult challenges in collecting the data due to the pandemic of COVID-19 and MCO. The present study used an electronic survey and distributed it online to obtain data. Hence, respondents who did not have an internet connection or a smart device could not participate. Future research can be conducted through self-administrative surveys and observations to obtain richer information.

Future research should include other variables that might influence consumer purchase intention regarding organic food and other sustainable behaviour. Future research should highlight the effect of message framing on a sustainable purchase decision. The consumer purchase intention related to organic food was debated in this study, while there are plausible diversity issues of organic food related to business, industry and the agricultural sector that need to be addressed in due time.

### **Recommendation and Implication**

The current study provides insightful information about the current situation of the organic food industry in Malaysia as it is still in its infancy stage. The finding is useful in providing information regarding organic food from the consumer's perspective. It contributes toward better understanding, especially in green consumerism, which is generally lacking in Malaysia and Asia. As the study investigates the perspective of green communication, specifically on consumer receptivity toward green communication, it provides insight for marketers and practitioners in planning their marketing and communication activities to attract consumers. The findings will direct marketers and practitioners to choose a suitable product promotion and communication platform during this 'new' normal. This is because of the lack of focus on consumers' receptivity to green communication and memory effect in a sustainable purchase decision in previous studies.



However, the strategic approach plan by the marketers and producers should consider a long-term strategy rather than a short-term one. Given the infancy of Malaysia's organic food business and the general lack of familiarity most Malaysians have with the concept, this is of paramount importance. Indeed, green consumerism and awareness among Malaysian and Asians are largely still at the beginning stage compared to European countries. Therefore, the changes in consumer preferences, lifestyle, and perception regarding sustainable food consumption should be assessed regularly to assist in understanding and improving the development of the organic industry locally. More work will need to be done to raise awareness and place a stronger focus on the benefits of eating the food product since consumers in Malaysia are typically unaware of the advantages of consuming organic food and are less exposed to the choice of organic food in the market. These actions will ensure a better understanding of consumer preferences and reduce the risk of failure for marketers and producers. Thus, this study is practical for the policymaker and market players to better understand the organic food industry from a consumer perspective, especially in Malaysia.

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