



Understanding the Factors Influencing Generation X Consumers' Purchase Intention Towards Organic Vegetables in Chiang Mai: A Focus on Health Consciousness and Subjective Norms

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The escalating use of agrochemicals in vegetable cultivation has raised concerns about potential harm to human health and the environment, thus fueling a rising demand for organically grown vegetables. Notably, Generation X consumers, demonstrating a heightened awareness of the health and environmental consequences of their food choices, are at the forefront of this movement. This study investigates the impact of health consciousness and subjective norms on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province.

Materials and Methods: This study investigates the influence of health consciousness and subjective norms on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among 400 Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai, Thailand. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Results: The findings reveal that both health consciousness and subjective norms significantly influence the purchase intention of organic vegetables. Subjective norms, particularly the perceived social pressure to consume organic produce, emerged as a slightly stronger predictor of purchase intention compared to health consciousness.

Conclusion: This study underscores the importance of considering both health-related concerns and social influences in promoting organic vegetable consumption among Generation X consumers. Targeted marketing strategies that emphasize the health benefits of organic produce and leverage social reinforcement can effectively enhance purchase intention.

Keywords: Health Consciousness; Subjective Norm; Purchase Intention; Organic Vegetables; Generation X

Introduction

The "Four Necessities" of life – clothing, food, shelter, and medicine – are fundamental for human well-being (Yue & Tong, 2009). Among these, food serves a critical role in nourishing the body, with vegetables and fruits being particularly vital sources of essential nutrients (Sivathanu, 2015). However, the pervasive use of chemicals and pesticides in conventional agriculture has raised significant health concerns, propelling a growing consumer preference for organic produce, notably organic vegetables cultivated without synthetic chemicals (Rahman et al., 2021).

Recent studies (Kamkankaew et al., 2023b; Savelli, Murmura & Bravi, 2023; Wathanakom, 2023) indicate a higher propensity for home cooking and meticulous ingredient selection among Generation X consumers, underscoring their heightened emphasis on health and nutrition. Organic vegetables, free from harmful chemicals and pesticides, align seamlessly with their preferences for clean, hygienic, and health-promoting produce (Ghvanidze et al., 2019).

The increasing reliance on agrochemicals in vegetable cultivation, while boosting yields, has raised significant concerns regarding their long-term impact on human health and the environment (Jiang, Thanabordeekij & Chankoson, 2018). Studies have linked exposure to certain pesticides with neurological disorders, hormonal imbalances, and cancer (Son & Kijboonchoo, 2016; Nakasiri, Soottitnantawat & Sangsuwan, 2019; Huang et al., 2024). Furthermore, the environmental consequences of chemical runoff, such as soil degradation and water pollution, cannot be ignored. These concerns have fueled a growing demand for organically grown vegetables, cultivated without synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

A notable demographic driving this trend is Generation X consumers, particularly in Chiang Mai. This cohort, raised amidst escalating environmental concerns, demonstrates a heightened awareness of the health and environmental implications of food choices (Kamkankaew, Thongyoy & Phonracharn, 2024). Their discerning preferences and purchasing power have spurred significant growth in the organic vegetable market within the region (Polyorat & Amatyakul, 2023). This data underscores the economic viability of organic agriculture and reflects a paradigm shift in consumer behavior towards healthier, more sustainable food choices (Wanitchakorn & Muangasame, 2021). Further research is warranted to quantify the potential health benefits of organic vegetable consumption and to investigate the socio-economic factors underpinning these evolving consumer preferences. In addition, an

exploration of the long-term health effects of pesticide exposure, particularly in vulnerable populations, could inform public health initiatives and policy decisions.

Thailand's agricultural sector has undergone a substantial transformation, evolving from traditional practices to modern methods and, more recently, embracing sustainable agriculture (Chitov, 2020). This progression has facilitated the promotion of clean, safe, and non-toxic vegetables, benefiting both producers and consumers (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2015). Nonetheless, a deeper understanding of the factors influencing Generation X consumers' purchase intention towards organic vegetables is warranted (Uthai & Boonrahong, 2023).

Health consciousness, a multifaceted concept, encompasses an individual's awareness and concern about their overall well-being, influencing their choices regarding diet, lifestyle, and consumption patterns (Hong, 2009). Extensive research has explored the determinants and implications of health consciousness, revealing its significant impact on various domains of life (Sakib, Zolfagharian & Yazdanparast, 2020).

Therefore, this research endeavors to investigate the impact of health consciousness and subjective norm on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. By elucidating the key determinants of their purchasing behavior, this study aims to provide actionable insights for the development of targeted marketing strategies and the enhancement of organic vegetable product standards. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to the continued growth and prosperity of the organic vegetable market in Chiang Mai, fostering a mutually beneficial ecosystem for consumers, farmers, and the environment.

Objectives

This research aims to investigate the impact of health consciousness and subjective norm on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province.

Literature review

This section elucidates the conceptual underpinnings of this research, outlining the key constructs and their theoretical relevance.

Organic vegetables and Generation X

The increasing consumer interest in organic vegetables, driven by health and environmental concerns, has spurred research into consumption patterns across various demographics (Jiang, Thanaboradeekij & Chankoson, 2018). While Generation X constitutes a substantial consumer base, their specific attitudes and behaviors towards organic vegetables remain under-examined in current literature (Casini et.al, 2015; Rahmawati, Suroso & Ramadhan, 2018; Srinieang & Thapa, 2018; Molinillo, Vidal-Branco & Japutra, 2020). Existing studies primarily focus on broader generational differences in organic food consumption, often grouping Generation X with other cohorts or neglecting their unique characteristics (Molinillo, Vidal-Branco & Japutra, 2020).

Research exploring generational disparities in organic food consumption has revealed varying levels of willingness to pay premiums, trust in labeling, and perceived health benefits among different age groups. Studies suggest that while Generation X may exhibit greater price sensitivity than younger generations, they also demonstrate a heightened concern for food safety and environmental impact (Oliveira et.al, 2023). However, these investigations often lack a nuanced understanding of the specific factors influencing Generation X's organic vegetable choices, such as personal values, health concerns, or culinary preferences.

Furthermore, the existing literature on organic vegetable consumption predominantly focuses on Western contexts, with limited research examining the attitudes and behaviors of Generation X in other regions (Polyorat & Amatyakul, 2023). This gap in knowledge necessitates further investigation into the cultural and socioeconomic factors that may shape Generation X's preferences for organic vegetables in diverse settings. A deeper understanding of these factors is crucial for developing targeted marketing strategies and promoting sustainable agricultural practices that cater to the specific needs and preferences of this influential demographic.

Purchase intention

Purchase intention, a well-established concept in consumer behavior research, refers to an individual's self-reported likelihood or predisposition to buy a particular product or service (Younus,

Rasheed & Zia, 2015). It serves as a critical predictor of actual purchase behavior and has been extensively studied across various product categories (Kurdi et al., 2022).

Researchers (Mirabi, Akbariyeh & Tahmasebifard, 2015; Pena-Garcia et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2023) has identified numerous factors influencing purchase intention, including product attributes, price, brand image, perceived value, and social influence. Additionally, individual characteristics such as attitudes, beliefs, and personal values play a significant role in shaping purchase intentions (Ramayah, Lee & Mohamad, 2010). The Theory of Planned Behavior, a widely used model in consumer behavior research, posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively determine an individual's intention to perform a behavior, including purchasing (Wijekoon & Sabri, 2021).

In the context of this study, purchase intention has been examined as a key indicator of consumer demand and market potential. Studies have revealed a positive relationship between consumer attitudes towards organic food, perceived health and environmental benefits, and willingness to pay a premium, and purchase intention. However, the translation of purchase intention into actual purchase behavior can be influenced by situational factors such as price promotions, product availability, and competing alternatives. Understanding the determinants of purchase intention for organic food is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies and promoting sustainable consumption patterns.

Health consciousness

Health consciousness, a multifaceted concept, encompasses an individual's awareness and concern about their overall well-being, influencing their choices regarding diet, lifestyle, and consumption patterns (Hong, 2009). Extensive research has explored the determinants and implications of health consciousness, revealing its significant impact on various domains of life (Sakib, Zolfagharian & Yazdanparast, 2020).

Studies (Mai & Hoffmann, 2015; Al-Dmour et al., 2020) have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between health consciousness and healthy behaviors, such as increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, regular exercise, and adherence to preventive health measures. Moreover, health consciousness has been linked to reduced engagement in risky behaviors like smoking and excessive alcohol consumption (Xu, Wang & Yu, 2020). The influence of health consciousness extends to consumer choices, with health-conscious individuals exhibiting a preference for products perceived as healthier and more natural (Molinillo, Vidal-Branco & Japutra, 2020).

In the context of this study, health consciousness has emerged as a critical factor driving the demand for organic produce. Consumers with heightened health consciousness are more likely to perceive organic food as safer, more nutritious, and environmentally friendly. This perception translates into a greater willingness to pay a premium for organic products, contributing to the growth of the organic food market. However, the relationship between health consciousness and organic food consumption is complex, with other factors like price, availability, and perceived benefits also playing a role.

Based on the literature review conducted by Al-Swidi et al. (2014), Kusumaningsih, Irianto & Antriyandarti (2019), Hasan & Suciarto (2020), Nagaraj (2021), and Aprilia et al. (2024), several key findings and gaps have emerged that form the basis for developing the research hypothesis. These studies collectively highlight a consistent theme or pattern related to health consciousness have an impact on the purchase intention.

H1: Health consciousness have an impact on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province

Subjective norm

Subjective norm, a fundamental construct in social psychology and consumer behavior research, refers to an individual's perception of social pressure to perform or not perform a particular behavior (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2020). It encompasses the perceived expectations of significant others, such as family, friends, and peers, regarding a specific action (Xie & Madni, 2023). Extensive research has explored the role of subjective norms in shaping various behaviors, including consumer choices (Aji, Berakon & Riza, 2020).

Studies (Wan, Shen & Choi, 2017; Hasan & Suciarto, 2020; Roh, Seok & Kim, 2022) have consistently demonstrated a significant influence of subjective norms on purchase intention and

behavior across diverse product categories. Individuals are more likely to intend to purchase and actually purchase products that they believe are approved of by their social circle. This social influence stems from the desire to conform to group norms and avoid social disapproval (Hasan & Suciarto, 2020). The strength of subjective norms' impact on behavior varies depending on the individual's susceptibility to social influence, the perceived importance of the referent group, and the perceived social desirability of the behavior (La Barbera & Ajzen, 2020).

In the context of this study, subjective norms have been identified as a crucial factor influencing purchase intention. Consumers who perceive that their significant others approve of organic food consumption are more likely to intend to purchase and consume organic products. This finding highlights the potential of social norms marketing interventions to promote organic food consumption by leveraging the influence of peer groups and social networks. However, the effectiveness of such interventions may be moderated by individual differences in health consciousness, environmental concern, and trust in organic food.

The literature review encompassing studies by Al-Swidi et al. (2014), Kusumaningsih, Irianto & Antriandarti (2019), Hasan & Suciarto (2020), Nagaraj (2021), and Aprilia et al. (2024) reveals a recurring pattern: subjective norm significantly influences purchase intention. Building on these findings, the research hypothesis will further investigate this relationship.

H2: Subjective norm have an impact on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review conducted by Al-Swidi et al. (2014), Kusumaningsih, Irianto & Antriandarti (2019), Hasan & Suciarto (2020), Nagaraj (2021), and Aprilia et al. (2024), a research framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, has been developed.

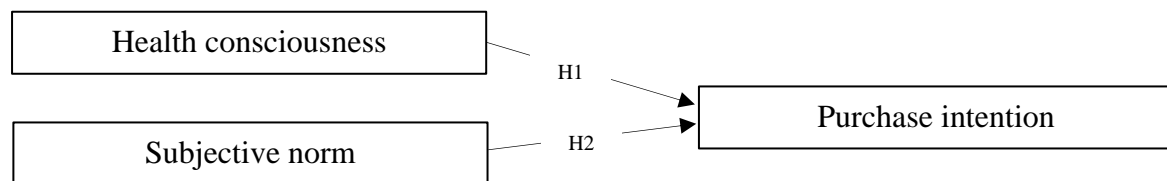


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Methodology

Research Design

This research will employ a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. This methodology is well-suited to examine the relationships between variables at a specific point in time, aligning with the research objectives of exploring the impact of health consciousness and subjective norms on purchase intention.

Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study consists of Generation X consumers residing in Chiang Mai province who have either purchased or expressed interest in purchasing organic vegetables. A convenience sampling technique will be employed to recruit a minimum of 400 participants. This sample size is considered sufficient to ensure adequate statistical power and the generalizability of the findings to the target population.

Data Collection

Data will be collected via an online survey distributed through various social media platforms and online forums frequented by the target demographic. The survey questionnaire will be designed and rigorously pretested with a sample group of participants to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity. The online survey, conducted from September 2023 to March 2024, was determined to be the most suitable method for data collection within the parameters of this study.

Research Instrument

The research instrument will be a structured questionnaire encompassing three primary constructs: health consciousness, subjective norm, and purchase intention. Health consciousness will be assessed using a six-item scale adapted from established measures, while subjective norm will be

measured with a five-item scale capturing perceived social pressure to purchase organic vegetables. Purchase intention will be evaluated using a six-item scale gauging the likelihood of future organic vegetable purchases.

Participants will respond to items on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire's internal consistency will be rigorously evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure data reliability and accuracy. Preliminary analysis has demonstrated high internal consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.875 to 0.897, well above the conventional threshold of 0.7 (Kamkankaew et al., 2023a). This result affirms the instrument's suitability for the present study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics will be utilized to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and the distribution of the variables under investigation. Correlation analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between health consciousness, subjective norm, and purchase intention. Finally, multiple regression analysis will be conducted to assess the impact of health consciousness and subjective norm on purchase intention, controlling for relevant demographic variables.

Results

The research objective is to examine the influence of health consciousness and subjective norms on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers. This investigation will employ quantitative methods to gather data on health consciousness, subjective norms, and purchase intention related to organic vegetables within the Generation X demographic. Correlation analysis will be conducted to assess the relationships between these variables, and hypothesis testing will be used to determine the significance of these relationships. The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of the factors driving organic vegetable consumption among Generation X and inform targeted marketing strategies for this consumer segment.

Descriptive statistics of the variables

The descriptive analysis in Table 1 revealed that Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province demonstrated a high level of health consciousness ($M = 4.197$, $SD = 0.873$), suggesting a heightened awareness and concern for health-related issues. Additionally, subjective norms were found to be influential ($M = 4.078$, $SD = 0.892$), indicating a perceived social pressure to purchase organic vegetables. This consumer group also exhibited a high intention to purchase organic vegetables ($M = 4.138$, $SD = 0.831$), further confirming the significance of both health consciousness and subjective norms. The skewness and kurtosis values for all variables remained within acceptable ranges, suggesting a relatively normal distribution of the data. These descriptive findings provide a foundation for further examination of the complex interplay between health consciousness, subjective norms, and purchase intention within this specific demographic context.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variables	Mean	S.D.	skewness	kurtosis	Meaning of Mean
Health consciousness (HCN)	4.197	0.873	0.937	0.171	high level
Subjective norm (SUN)	4.078	0.892	0.640	0.456	high level
Purchase intention (Y_PIT)	4.138	0.831	0.590	0.360	high level

Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis in Table 2 revealed a significant positive association between health consciousness (HCN), subjective norm (SUN), and purchase intention (Y_PIT) of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. Both health consciousness ($r = 0.761$, $p < 0.01$) and subjective norm ($r = 0.729$, $p < 0.01$) were strongly correlated with purchase intention. This suggests that individuals with heightened health awareness and those who perceive social pressure to consume organic vegetables are more likely to exhibit a higher intention to purchase them. Additionally, a strong correlation was observed between health consciousness and subjective norm (r

= 0.791, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals who prioritize health are also more likely to be influenced by social norms regarding organic vegetable consumption.

Table 2 The result of Correlation analysis

	Y_PIT	HCN	SUN
Y_PIT	1.000		
HCN	0.761**	1.000	
SUN	0.729**	0.791**	1.000

Note: ** means a statistical significance level of 0.01

Multicollinearity testing in Table 3 was conducted using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values. The results indicated the absence of multicollinearity, as VIF values for both HCN and SUN were below the threshold of 10, and tolerance values were above 0.1. This confirms that both health consciousness and subjective norm can be included as independent predictors in regression analysis to examine their individual effects on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province.

Table 3 The result of multicollinearity testing

Variables	VIF values	Tolerance values	Meaning
Health consciousness (HCN)	0.758	1.329	Not Multicollinearity
Subjective norm (SUN)	0.748	1.318	Not Multicollinearity

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the regression analysis in Table 4 reveal that both health consciousness (HCN) and subjective norm (SUN) are significant predictors of purchase intention (Y_PIT) of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. The standardized beta coefficients (β) of 0.264 and 0.399 for HCN and SUN, respectively, suggest that subjective norm has a slightly stronger influence on purchase intention compared to health consciousness.

The model explains 33.3% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.333$), indicating that while health consciousness and subjective norm are important factors, other variables not included in this study also contribute to the decision to purchase organic vegetables. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.922 suggests that there is no significant autocorrelation in the data, supporting the validity of the regression model. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of both personal health concerns and social influences in driving the demand for organic vegetables within this consumer group.

Table 4 The result of entering method regression analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable: Y_PIT				
	b	SE	β	t	p-value
constant(a)	1.562	0.192		8.137	0.000*
HCN	0.252	0.046	0.264	5.511	0.000*
SUN	0.372	0.045	0.399	8.328	0.000*
$R = 0.577$, $R^2 = 0.333$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.330$, $R^2_{\text{change}} = 0.333$					
$F = 95.574$, Sig $F = < .001$, Durbin-Watson = 1.922					

Note: * means a statistical significance level of 0.05

These findings in Table 4 provide valuable insights for developing targeted marketing strategies that leverage both the personal health benefits associated with organic produce and the social reinforcement of making healthy choices to effectively promote organic vegetable consumption within this specific demographic. The results of the Table 4 reveal a significant impact of both health consciousness and subjective norm on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province.

The established regression equation is as follows:

$$Y_{\text{PIT}} = 1.562 + 0.252(\text{HCN}) + 0.372(\text{SUN})$$

The constant (1.562) indicates a baseline level of purchase intention towards organic vegetables, even in the absence of health consciousness or subjective norm influences. The coefficient for health consciousness (HCN) is 0.252, suggesting that for every unit increase in health consciousness, there is a 0.252 unit increase in the purchase intention of organic vegetables. This positive and significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) confirms the hypothesis that health consciousness is a crucial factor influencing the intention to purchase organic vegetables. Similarly, the coefficient for subjective norm (SUN) is 0.372, indicating that for every unit increase in the perception of social pressure to purchase organic vegetables, there is a 0.372 unit increase in the actual purchase intention. This positive and significant relationship ($p < 0.05$) validates the hypothesis that subjective norm plays a significant role in shaping the decision to buy organic vegetables.

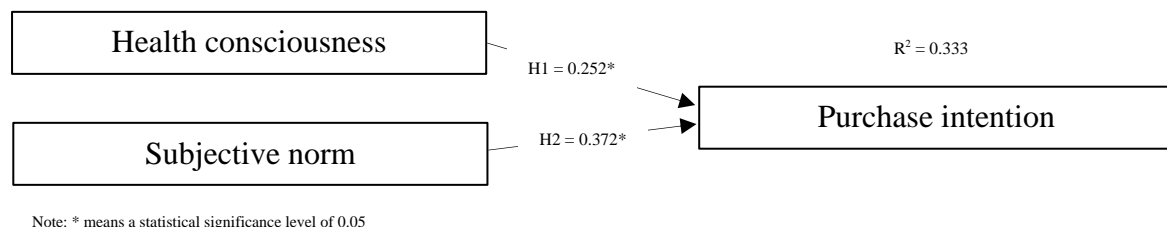


Figure 2 Result of hypothesis Testing

In conclusion, this study's findings emphasize the significant role of both health consciousness and subjective norm in predicting the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. These insights hold substantial implications for marketers and policymakers aiming to promote the consumption of organic vegetables in this demographic.

Discussion

This study's findings align with existing literature, confirming the significant role of health consciousness in influencing consumer behavior. Consistent with previous research (Mai & Hoffmann, 2015; Al-Dmour et al., 2020), heightened health consciousness among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province is associated with a greater propensity to purchase organic vegetables. This preference is underpinned by the perception of organic produce as being healthier, safer, and more environmentally sustainable. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the relationship between health consciousness and organic consumption is nuanced, with additional factors like price, availability, and perceived benefits also shaping consumer choices.

Furthermore, the study underscores the substantial influence of subjective norms on purchase intention. The findings resonate with those of numerous studies (Wan, Shen & Choi, 2017; Hasan & Suciarto, 2020) demonstrating the significant impact of perceived social pressure on consumer decision-making. In this specific context, individuals who perceive their social circle to be supportive of organic food consumption are more likely to express an intention to purchase organic vegetables. This aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that personal attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape intention formation.

Notably, the regression analysis revealed that within this specific demographic, subjective norms exert a slightly stronger influence on purchase intention than health consciousness. This suggests that social reinforcement, potentially through family, friends, or community networks, plays a pivotal role in driving the demand for organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. While health consciousness remains a significant factor, the desire for social conformity and approval from peers emerges as a particularly potent motivator. This nuanced understanding has important implications for marketing strategies aimed at promoting organic produce, emphasizing the need to harness social networks and peer influence to cultivate a positive social image surrounding organic consumption.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study elucidates the significant influence of both health consciousness and subjective norms on the purchase intention of organic vegetables among Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. While both factors contribute significantly, subjective norms, particularly the perceived social pressure and approval from peers, emerge as a slightly more salient predictor of purchase intention within this demographic. These findings underscore the necessity for targeted marketing strategies that not only emphasize the personal health benefits associated with organic produce but also leverage the power of social reinforcement to create a positive image surrounding organic consumption. By tailoring promotional efforts to resonate with both the health-conscious values and the desire for social affirmation within this consumer segment, stakeholders can effectively stimulate the demand for organic vegetables, fostering a healthier populace and a more sustainable agricultural landscape in the region.

Recommendation

Managerial Recommendation

The study's findings underscore the importance of crafting targeted marketing strategies that resonate with Generation X consumers in Chiang Mai province. Campaigns should emphasize the dual benefits of organic vegetables: the enhanced personal health outcomes associated with consuming organic produce and the positive social image reinforced by making health-conscious choices. Utilizing influencer marketing, community engagement initiatives, and testimonials from satisfied consumers can create a sense of social proof and encourage organic adoption. Furthermore, addressing concerns related to price, availability, and perceived benefits through transparent communication and targeted promotions can further stimulate purchase intention.

Academic Recommendation

The study contributes to the growing body of literature examining the determinants of organic food consumption, particularly among Generation X consumers. The results offer insights into the relative importance of health consciousness and subjective norm in this specific demographic, highlighting the significant role of social influence. Future research could build upon these findings by exploring the complex interplay between these factors and other potential determinants of purchase intention, such as price sensitivity, product knowledge, and trust in organic certification. Investigating the effectiveness of various marketing strategies that leverage both health-focused messaging and social influence tactics would also offer valuable guidance to practitioners and policymakers seeking to promote sustainable consumption patterns. Expanding the research scope to other consumer segments and geographic regions could further enhance the generalizability of the findings and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of organic consumption behavior.

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