



**ASSESSING PURCHASE FACTORS, PURCHASE INTENTION AND WORD-
OF-MOUTH ON ORGANIC FOODS PURCHASE DECISION IN BEIJING,
CHINA**

By

LI SHIMIAO

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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January 2022

Chair : Nor Siah Binti Jaharuddin, PhD
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Under the influences of food safety issue and people's elevated living standard in China, more and more people are pursuing a healthier diet style. Given such a consumption trend, the organic foods market of developed cities of China had grown rapidly in the last five years. Although, a great number of consumers were enthusiastic about acquiring organic foods, majority of them barely acquired certain knowledge and information related to organic foods. Additionally, it was found that health and hedonic dimensions in food quality were intensively studied with consumers' purchase intention towards organic foods, whereas convenience and process dimensions have not been fully explored in this situation. Furthermore, food therapy culture as a profound Chinese local culture is worthwhile of being further studied with consumers' organic food purchase intention within China. More importantly, there was the significant effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) on consumer purchase intention, nevertheless, a little know about its moderating effect on critical gap between purchase intention and purchase decision. As such, this study aimed to examine the key purchase factors, the mediating effect of purchase intention, and the moderating effect of word-of-mouth (WOM). The data were acquired through the purposive sampling method by distributing self-administrative questionnaires among Chinese organic foods consumers in Beijing, China. 405 out of 426 questionnaires were valid to proceed for statistical analysis. All proposed hypotheses were examined via AMOS and SPSS PROCESS regression analysis. The main findings supported significant effects of dimensions in purchase attitude, food quality, perceived behavioral control (PBC), and food therapy culture on purchase intention as well as mediating effect of purchase intention. It is noteworthy that WOM critically addressed the purchase intention and purchase decision gap in studying organic food purchase behavior, which indicated that WOM enables to motivate consumer purchase intention to transit to final purchase decision.

Besides, a novel insight is conveyed to marketers on how to deepen the relationship between consumer purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods by incorporating the vital moderating effect of WOM. Finally, this study made contribution on combining use of theory of reasoned action (TRA), modified theory of planned behavior (TPB), and alphabet theory to redeem the lack of theoretical support occurred in previous studies. While, sample bias, time constraint, single research method are also recognized as the main limitations of the study.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MENILAI FAKTOR PEMBELIAN, NIAT PEMBELIAN DAN PERKONGSIAN
MULUT KE MULUT TENTANG KEPUTUSAN PEMBELIAN MAKANAN
ORGANIK DI BEIJING, CHINA**

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Kesedaran terhadap isu keselamatan makanan dan peningkatan taraf hidup rakyat di China menyebabkan ramai individu mengikuti gaya diet yang lebih sihat. Berdasarkan trend penggunaan, pasaran makanan organik di bandar-bandar maju di China semakin berkembang pesat dalam lima tahun terakhir. Walaupun, sebilangan besar pengguna bersemangat untuk memperoleh makanan organik, sebahagian besar daripada mereka hampir tidak mempunyai pengetahuan dan maklumat tertentu berkaitan dengan makanan organik. Selain itu, didapati bahawa dimensi kesihatan dan hedonik dalam kualiti makanan telah dikaji secara intensif dengan niat pembelian pengguna terhadap makanan organik, manakala dimensi kemudahan dan proses belum diterokai sepenuhnya dalam situasi ini. Tambahan pula, budaya terapi makanan sebagai budaya tempatan Cina yang diketahui adalah sangat bernilai untuk dikaji lebih lanjut, terutama ke atas niat pembelian makanan organik oleh pengguna di China. Lebih penting lagi, terdapat kesan ketara dari mulut ke mulut (WOM) terhadap niat membeli pengguna, namun, hanya sedikit maklumat diketahui tentang kesan moderasi ke atas jurang kritikal antara niat membeli dan keputusan pembelian. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor pembelian yang utama, kesan mediasi niat membeli, dan kesan moderasi WOM. Data diperoleh melalui kaedah persampelan-bertujuan dengan mengagihkan soal selidik pentadbiran sendiri di kalangan pengguna makanan organik di Beijing, China. Sejumlah 405 daripada 426 soal selidik yang sah telah digunakan dan diuji untuk tujuan analisis statistik menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur (SEM) AMOS dan SPSS. Berdasarkan cadangan hipotesis, hasil utama kajian menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dalam dimensi faktor pembelian; i. sikap membeli, ii. kualiti makanan, iii. Tanggapan terhadap kawalan tingkah laku (PBC), iv. budaya terapi makanan ke atas niat membeli serta, v. kesan mediasi niat membeli. Kepentingan WOM secara kritisnya dapat menangani jurang antara niat pembelian dan

keputusan pembelian dalam mengkaji tingkah laku pembelian makanan organik, dimana ini menunjukkan bahawa WOM dapat memotivasikan niat membeli pengguna kepada keputusan pembelian akhir. Selain itu, perspektif baru dapat disarankan kepada pemasar tentang cara membina hubungan antara niat membeli dan keputusan pembelian oleh pengguna terhadap makanan organik dengan memasukkan kesan penting moderasi WOM. Akhir sekali, kajian ini memberi sumbangan kepada penggabungan penggunaan teori tindakan beralasan (TRA), teori kelakuan terancang (TPB) yang diubah suai, dan teori abjad untuk menangani kekurangan sokongan teori yang berlaku dalam kajian lepas. Manakala, bias sampel, had masa, kaedah penyelidikan tunggal juga merupakan antara kekangan utama kajian.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
ALP	Alphabet Theory
PA	Purchase Attitude
RI	Revealed Information
KN	Knowledge
SN	Subjective Norms
PBC	Perceived Behavioral Control
PR	Food Price
FQ	Food Quality
HED	Hedonic
HEA	Health
CON	Convenience
PRO	Process
FTC	Food Therapy Culture
PI	Purchase Intention
PD	Purchase Decision
WOM	Word-of-Mouth
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
Std.	Standardized
CR	Construct Reliability

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
χ^2	Chi-square
CMIN	Minimum Value of the Discrepancy Function, C
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
NFI	Normed Fit Index
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error Approximation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This chapter introduces the research purpose and background information related to the organic foods market in China. The problem statement highlights some critical problems related to organic foods development, research questions and research objectives. Besides, the significance of studies is also discussed.

1.1 Overview of the Study

In recent years, the organic foods market has witnessed a remarkable and noteworthy development across the world, especially in the developed countries, which has made a dramatic economic contribution to the global organic foods market (Bai, Wang, and Gong, 2019; Hansen, Sørensen, and Eriksen, 2018; Vehapi and Dolićanin, 2016). Relevant information showed that the United States and Germany are two leading developed countries with a 5% share in the organic foods market (Sahota, 2018). Besides, the awareness of consuming organic foods has been increasingly spreading to developing countries (e.g., China, India, Thailand and the Philippines) (FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International, 2019). Therefore, the consumption phenomenon has clearly indicated that the concept of organic foods has been gradually accepted by more and more consumers across the world (Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, and Greenland, 2021; Oroian et al., 2017; Tandon et al., 2020).

Though the reasons that drive consumers to purchase organic foods are various, organic foods purchase behavior can be discussed from exogenous and endogenous aspects. For exogenous aspects, the behavior of organic foods purchase is mainly driven by numerous food crises worldwide (e.g., bovine spongiform encephalopathy, aphthous fever and the Belgian dioxin scandal) (Pham, Nguyen, Phan, and Nguyen, 2019; Wee et al., 2014). For endogenous aspects, consumers tend to purchase organic foods by considering healthcare issues, special needs, better taste, animal welfare, environmental protection, etc. (Hasselbach and Roosen, 2015; Le-Anh and Nguyen-To, 2020; Paul and Rana, 2012; Rao, Mogili, and Nagaraj, 2020).

In the field of food purchase, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) is a frequently-adopted theoretical achievement to understand the relationship between purchase factors and purchase intention (Alam and Sayuti, 2011). Apart from using primal variables in the TPB as an imperative theoretical support in exploring the purchase intention and purchase decision of consumers, more researchers employed novel factors according to the theoretical structure of TPB, or the so-called modified TPB, to extend this theory from multiple perspectives in terms of purchasing green/local/environmental/ecological-friendly/organic foods (Li et al., 2020; Sreen, Purbey, and Sadarangani, 2018; Shin and Hancer, 2016; Yazdanpanah and Forouzani, 2015). This shows that factors in the TPB were further studied with border and novel

views, which was also reflected in other fields (e.g., psychology (Leung and Jiang, 2018), such as human resources (Biswas, Boyle, Mitchell, and Casimir, 2017) and management (Hall, Turner, and Kilpatrick, 2019).

Apart from using modified TPB to explore the purchase intention of consumers, more scholars were starting to identify the effects of revealed information and knowledge on the shaping of purchase attitude among consumers, in accordance with alphabet theory (Zepeda and Deal, 2009). On the whole, the alphabet theory can elucidate the correlation among variables (e.g., attitude, information seeking, and knowledge). Previous studies have also suggested that the revealed information and knowledge about organic foods have effective impact on the purchase attitude of consumers with respect to specific products and then stimulate their purchase intention (Kim and Bonn, 2015; McClure and Seock, 2020; Teng and Wang, 2015; Xie et al. 2015). Last but not the least, in original TPB, perceived behavioral control (PBC) plays a critical moderating role in the relationship between behavioral intention and actual behavior. Therefore, TPB has its limitation in explaining the direct relationship between behavioral intention and actual behavior. Accordingly, certain researchers also introduced the theory of reasoned action (TRA) to support the direct relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision in various contexts of study as TRA was proposed without the effect of PBC (Hussain, Rahman, Zaheer, and Salee, 2016; Nguyen, 2019; Law, Tan, and Falahat, 2021). Therefore, with the support of relevant theories, the primary purpose of research is to deeply and extensively explore the influence of proposed purchase factors on purchase intention, the mediating effect of purchase intention on the relationship between proposed purchasing factors and purchase decision, and to further investigate the moderating effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) on the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision.

More specifically, it can be seen that many studies linked attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (PBC) as three critical variables to purchase intention during the study of consumers' purchase behavior in terms of organic foods (Boobalan, Nachimuthu, and Sivakumaran, 2021; Maichum, Parichatnon, and Peng, 2016; Scalco, Noventa, Sartori, and Ceschi, 2017; Zhou, Thøgersen, Ruan, and Huang, 2013). Meanwhile, in marketing studies, an increasing number of researchers have embarked on exploring the relationship between subjective norms, PBC and attitude under a variety of research backgrounds. Each of those researches leveraged modified TPB (Lin, Lu, and Wu, 2012; Paul, Modi, and Patel, 2016; Ünal, Deveci, and Yıldız, 2019). Through the application of modified TPB, those scholars found out subjective norms had influence on the attitude of consumers, which remarkably surpasses that on their purchase intention, for instance, consumers' acceptance of airline B2C, electric car purchase intention, and regional/street food purchasing behavior (Schmalfuß, Mühl, and Krems, 2017). Moreover, in the study of organic foods purchase behavior, numerous scholars found that subjective norms played a superior role in shaping purchase intention towards organic foods through consumers' attitude (Kim, Ham, Yang, and Choi, 2013; Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005). As such, instead of adopting the original TPB, this research is able to more effectively evaluate consumers' intention when it comes to purchasing organic foods via modified TPB along with the elements in it, which is through the highest explanatory power of attitude (Kim, Njite, and Hancer, 2013).

Aside from the discussion about the critical influence of subjective norms on the attitude towards organic foods purchase, there are a wide range of studies on the significance of revealed information and knowledge in influencing consumers' food purchasing attitude, by which, the attitude towards food purchase can be further studied (Hwang and Nam, 2021; Pandey, Kakkar, Farhan, and Khan, 2019; Silayoi and Speece, 2004; Yunus, Rashid, Ariffin, and Rashid, 2014). Therefore, this research is purposed to further explore the predictive power of purchase attitude on purchase intention towards organic foods by introducing the perspectives of revealed information and knowledge from the alphabet theory.

In addition, by applying a modified TPB, PBC was extensively discussed with organic foods purchase intention, which emphasizes the role of consumers' control ability over their behaviors in purchase intention (Dangi, Gupta, and Narula, 2020; Liang, 2014; Yadav and Pathak, 2016). Moreover, to fully explore the influence of purchase factors on purchase intention and achieve a new extension of the TPB in studying the organic foods purchase behavior of consumers, food quality and food prices are also adopted as the essential purchase factors in line with the TPB. According to past studies, food quality was highly regarded as a fundamental component regarding food choice as it is closely related to human health, especially in a situation where food safety issues frequently happened (Banović, Grunert, Barreira, and Fontes, 2009; Jaafar, Lalp, and Naba, 2012; Tariq et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). In this study, the quality of organic foods is evaluated in the four dimensions proposed by Grunert, Larsen, Madsen, and Baadsgaard (1995), i.e., hedonic, health, convenience and processes, to better recognize the most important dimension perceived by consumers towards organic foods purchase intention.

Besides, previous studies suggested that price, one of the critical purchase factors, was commonly considered as the key hindrance in terms of upscaling the demand of organic foods purchase (Aschemann - Witzel and Zielke, 2017; Bolat, Kaygisiz, and Bulut, 2020; Rahnama, 2017; Saleki, Quoquab, and Mohammad, 2019). However, Hughner et al. (2007) claimed that price was a multifaceted and even paradoxical issue when its influence on purchase intention is studied in line with other purchase factors. By concerning the complexity attribute of price, hence, in this research, the predictive power of food price on purchase intention towards organic foods is further studied with other proposed purchase factors by giving more specific and clear reference standards to it.

In this research, to delve into the intention of consumers when it comes to purchasing organic foods in China, thereby extending the TPB in the context of China, this research critically introduces the concept of food therapy culture, which is ingrained in traditional Chinese culture. Food therapy denotes a traditional health maintenance strategy every day which includes the adoption of natural and healthy diet. It compares such a way of life with the lifestyle in which contemporary medicines play a role in dealing with the demands for health care every day. Research suggested that for the consumers in China, food therapy is potently related to the purchase of traditional herbal medicine (Cai, 2009; Jiao, 2015; Liu, Cai, and Zhu, 2015). Since the traditional herbal medicine carries features highly consistent with the characteristics of organic

foods (more natural, more healthy, as well as with no adverse effects of chemically-synthesized constituents) (Wei, 2016), it is predicted that consumers who buy traditional herbal pharmaceuticals may be prone to the purchase of organic foods. Given this dearth of research, this research is aimed to offer enlightenment as to the influence of food therapy culture on the intention of consumers to buy organic foods in China.

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In addition, based on the TPB, extensive studies explored a variety of variables affecting consumers' intention to purchase organic/green/regional/environment-friendly products (Xu, Hua, Wang, and Xu, 2020). In the study of marketing, e.g., purchase intention has been broadly considered to be a mediating factor for the relationship between a wide range of purchasing elements (environment-related concern, perceived knowledge, society standards, and perceived validity) and purchasing behavior (decision) regarding environment-friendly commodities/food (Saleki, Quoquab, and Mohammad, 2020; Zarei, Asgarnezhad Nuri, and Noroozi, 2019). As purchase intention has the vital mediating effect on the relationship between purchase factors and purchase behavior (decision) when the TPB is applied, this research is aimed to thoroughly investigate the mediating effect of purchase intention on the relationship between proposed purchase factors (purchase attitude, PBC, prices, food quality, and food therapy culture) and organic foods purchase decision.

As mentioned above, the elements of consumers' purchase intention have been broadly studied in a wide range of backgrounds. Nevertheless, the existing literature neglected the gap which exists in the relationship between intention and behavior (decision). Although some studies can be found for explaining the direct relationship between purchase intention and purchase behaviors by applying TRA (Hussain, Rahman, Zaheer, and Salee, 2016; Nguyen, 2019; Law et al., 2021), Futerra (2005) stated that consumers' purchasing behavior (decision) is not often directly predicted by purchase intention, which means purchase intention may not be converted directly into purchasing behavior (decision). Therefore, this paper is aimed to deal with the intention-decision gap in terms of organic foods purchase by applying a moderating effect to it with TRA as one of the theoretical supports. According to the existing researches, word-of-mouth (WOM) is thought to bear more dependability and trustworthiness in contrast to the information provided by marketers (Li, Liu, and Suomi, 2013). As a result, consumers are inclined to use this kind of information as a vital referential source when it comes to their eventual purchase decision-making (Handi, Hendratono, Purwanto, and Ihalaui, 2018; Park, Lee, and Han, 2007; Wibowo et al., 2020). Considering the importance of the direct influence of WOM on purchase behavior, this study takes WOM as a moderating factor to determine if it could facilitate the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision in respect of organic foods.

To conclude, the primary goal of the present study is to fully explore the purchase factors which influence purchase intention, the mediating effect of purchase intention on the relationship between purchase factors and purchase decision, and to further investigate the moderating effect of WOM on the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision within the study context of China. More importantly, the modified TPB, the alphabet theory, and TRA are introduced to support the proposed study purpose theoretically. The effect of purchase attitude on purchase intention is measured through different perspectives, i.e., revealed information,

knowledge, and subjective norms. Food prices, food quality and food therapy culture are included to achieve a new extension of the original TPB. Purchase intention is fully explored as a mediator in the relationship between purchase factors and purchase decision, while WOM is studied as a moderator to deal with the intention-decision gap existing in the TPB.

1.2 Background of the Study

In this section, the definition of organic foods in China is precisely described according to official regulations. In addition to this, the major differences between other types of “safe foods” and organic foods are fully compared on the basis of relevant attributes. Moreover, the overall development of organic foods and organic food marketplace in China is elaborated on with the support of data.

1.2.1 Organic Foods in China

The organic foods sector in China is under the joint supervision of MOA and China Organic foods Certification Center (OFCC). Meanwhile, due to the increase in food safety issue and health consciousness, there are a wide variety of safe foods (i.e., green food, no-harmful agriculture products, and good agricultural practices products) that are certified and promoted by the Chinese government. Table 1.1 summarizes the labels and descriptions of organic foods as well as the other safe foods in China. While among these various safe foods certified by the Chinese government, organic foods followed most strict planting standards, as the certificate gets extended only by passing high-standard censorship annually. Thus, it is noted that organic foods indicate the highest level of food quality in China.

Table 1.1: Major Safe Food and Organic foods Labels in China





Label	Label Title	Description	Differences
	Non-harmful agriculture products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe agricultural products that use safe inputs, and are produced to the prescribed technical specifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow environmental protection standards only.
	Green food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chemical and pesticide are allowed to be applied with limitations Farming sites and manufacturers are checked every 3 years GMO tolerance Avoid pollution of foreign substances in the process of agricultural production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chemical and pesticide are allowed within limited amount. Inspection period is longer.
	Good agricultural Practices (GAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid agricultural process improper operation of the product hazards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize the avoidance of hazards and pollution of foreign substances.

Table 1.1: Continued

Label	Label Title	Description	Differences
	Organic foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No harmful chemicals or synthesized fertilizer have been used for ≥ 2 years for annual crops and 3 years for perennial plants. Farming sites and manufacturers are checked every year to update the certifications. Operations and land use must have certificates without GMO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the most strict planting standards Certificate is needed for both farms and plants Inspection is conducted annually

(Source: cnca.gov.cn, 2019)

Considering the progress made in the organic food purchase behavior across the world in 2017, China is considered as the 1st leading country in terms of organic agricultural area (3 million hectares). According to the report released by FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International (2018), the overall area intended for organic agricultural practice in Asian countries took up nearly 4.9 million hectares in 2016, and the top nations in terms of area included China (2.3 million hectares) and India (nearly 1.5 million hectares). Also, it is worth noting that China has a massive potential market in the consumption of organic foods around the world. The largest marketplace is the US (38.9 billion euros), followed by Germany (9.7 billion euros), France (6.7 billion euros) and China (5.9 billion euros) (FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International, 2018). In addition, in a 3-million-hectare organic agricultural area, FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International (2019) stated that China acted as the top country when it came to organic grain (96.3 million hectares) and temperate fruit yield (22,400 hectares).

1.2.2 Organic Food Marketplace in China

There is a remarkable organic food marketplace in China, which ranks as the 4th largest market in the world by value (Daxueconsulting, 2020). Figure 1.1 indicates the development of China's organic foods industry by time scales (from 1980 to 2020).



Figure 1.1: The Development of Organic foods Industry in China
(Source: Daxueconsulting, 2020)

According to the statistic report conducted by Ma (2021), the sales of organic foods in China had stably increased from USD 47 billion in 2015 to USD 76.1 billion in 2020. Also, it is found out that the purchase rate for different organic food varieties increased with time scale in China's market (e.g., grain, beans, vegetables, fruits, tea, and livestock, Table 1.2). Since 2012, the top three organic food products purchased by Chinese consumers are fresh milk (26%), cooking oil (26%), pork (33%), beef (35%), and chicken (37%) (Organic Relationship Trade (OTA), 2015). After 2015 until now, Chinese consumers have shown strong preferences for the purchase of organic vegetables (63.3%), fruits (59.3%), dairy products (19.9%), and baby foods (16.6%) (OABC, 2020). Based on the fast-growing domestic capability of organic foods consumption in the market, it is projected that China has a quite big potential to hit more than USD 13 billion organic food market shares by the end of the year 2024 (Globe Newswire, 2019).

Among the dazzling organic foods categories in China's market, it is noticed that the total value of organic packaged food and drink in 2017 was almost USD 2.84 billion, and organic standard milk took the most market share, accounting for more than 71% generally (FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International, 2019). Additionally, according to HKTDC Research (Hong Kong Trade Development Council) (2017), the "organic products" purchase rate was 69%, and 37% of them increased their purchasing frequency towards organic foods in 2017. Furthermore, 81% of mainland middle-class consumers expected their income to increase in the upcoming 2-3 years, 51% of middle-class people would be willing to spend more than before in the pursuit of healthier and higher quality life, and many of them have developed the habit of purchasing organic vegetables on a regular basis (HKTDC Research, 2017). In terms of Chinese organic foods consumer segmentation, International Trade Center (2011) also indicated that the top three organic foods consumer groups include white collar

families (10%), the families with minors (10%), and those families with healthy problems (10%). Indeed, organic foods as a percentage of nation's entire food market only stood at around 1.5% (Xiao, 2018), indicating that there are great untapped opportunities in China's organic foods market.

Table 1.2: Categories of Organic foods in China's Market

Category	Food type
Grain	Rice, various legumes and pulses, peanuts, wheat, buckwheat, corn, etc.
Beans	Mung bean, kidney bean, etc.
Vegetables	Zingiber, bamboo sprouts (primarily harvested in the wild), mushrooms (harvested by incubation or collected in the wild), etc
Fruits	Apples, pears, strawberries, blueberries, peaches, jujube, grapes, etc.
Medical herbs	Ginseng, a variety of traditional medical herbs (harvested by incubation or collected in the wild), etc.
Livestock	Meat, eggs, etc.
Aquaculture produce	Fish, shrimp, crab, etc.
Processed food	Frozen vegetables, desiccated fruits, milk powder, etc.

(Source: Daxueconsulting, 2020)

Based on the relevant information as mentioned above, it can be seen that China has a considerable potential of development in domestic organic foods consumption. As such, the phenomenon of consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods is worthy of in-depth exploration for supporting the sustainable development of the organic foods market in China. The present study intends to design a conceptual model with the support of relevant theories to identify the key purchase factors of consumers' purchase intention towards organic foods, along with the moderating effect of WOM on the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision. Besides, this research can be referred to by marketers, practitioners as well as policymakers in the organic foods industry for guiding the further development and expansion of the organic foods market through a thorough understanding of organic foods consumers.

1.3 Problem Statement

Based on plenty of researches conducted by previous scholars, it is noteworthy that the TPB has been widely applied to explore consumer purchase intention, decision-making as well as consumer motives towards consuming organic or green food (products) within different contexts around the world (e.g., Finland, Italy, the UK (Yadav and Pathak 2016), Thailand (Maichum et al., 2016), Taiwan (Chen, 2007), India (Chekima, Igau, Wafa, and Chekima, 2017), and Pakistan (Al-Swidi et al., 2013)). However, the prior studies related to organic foods purchase behavior suggested that a modified TPB can better explain the purchase intention of consumers in terms of organic or green food by building up inter-correlations among TPB variables (Kim, Njite, and Hancer, 2013; Li and Li, 2019; Liu, Liu, and Mo, 2020; Zhu, 2018). Hence, this indicates that a modified TPB can strengthen the predictive power of variables in the original TPB, which gives more directions in motivating the purchase intention and decision-making of consumers towards organic or green foods.

Due to the importance of attitude and significance of the modified TPB, instead of adopting those variables in the original TPB, consumers' motivations to purchase organic foods can be further explored more effectively via an modified TPB along with the elements in it, through the strongest explanatory power of attitude (Asif, Xuhui, Nasiri, and Ayyub, 2018; Cahyasita, 2021; Irianto, 2015; Nagaraj, 2021). Furthermore, according to the findings obtained from some meta-analysis, it is found out that subjective norms have showed their poorest predictive power to intention among the variables in the original TPB (Krueger Jr, Reilly, and Carsrud, 2000; Sheppard, Hartwick, and Warshaw, 1988). In respect of this issue, researchers have started to explore the explanatory power of subjective norms to consumers' purchase attitude in various research backgrounds (India, Finland, and America). However, in the context of China, there is still a lack of study that further considers measuring the purchase attitude of consumers towards organic foods by incorporating subjective norms as one of the elements.

In addition to discussing the critical role of the modified TPB, it is also noticed that the alphabet theory was first adopted to explore the crucial roles of information and knowledge in shaping consumers' attitude on local/organic foods (Kim and Bonn, 2015; McClure and Seock, 2020; Pandey et al., 2019; Pang, Tan, and Lau, 2021). In China, the concern over domestic food safety problem such as the extensive use of banned cooking oil, the illegal use of pesticides and veterinary medicine, the contamination of melamine milk powder, and the injection of meat with water becomes a main driver for them to purchase organic foods (Yoon, 2015; Prentice, Chen, and Wang, 2019; Smyth, 2018; Wright, 2015).

Despite Chinese consumers are enthusiastic about the purchase of organic foods, past studies revealed that they usually misunderstood its differences to green foods and assume both are similar (Bekele, Zhou, Kidane, and Haimanot, 2017; OABC, 2020; Xie et al., 2015). Consequently, the lack of deep understanding towards organic foods may be another potential issue for the demand and sustainable development of the

organic foods market in China. Therefore, it is suggested to further measure the purchase attitude of consumers towards organic foods by jointly incorporating the variables of revealed information, knowledge, as well as subjective norms by combining the application of the modified TPB and the alphabet theory. This is currently identified as a crucial gap about the study of the organic foods purchase intention.

Due to a lower availability of organic foods in the food market, organic foods are used to sold with 40% - 50% premium price compared to conventional food (Bryła, 2016; Katt and Meixner, 2020; Tran, Freytag-Leyer, Ploeger, and Krikser, 2019). Price as one of the influencing variables is commonly considered the key hindrance in terms of motivating and upscaling the demand of organic foods purchase (Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke, 2017; Wang, Pham, and Dang, 2020; Zhen and Mansori, 2012). More importantly, it is noteworthy that majority of studies just simply link the variable of price to consumer purchase intention without giving any clear definition and reference standard to it (Costell et al., 2010; Chiciudean et al., 2019; Ling, Dominic, and Shanmugam, 2018; Tariq et al., 2019). Since variable price has its paradoxical and multifaceted attributes in studying particular purchase behavior, it is quite difficult for consumers to evaluate if organic food price is acceptable or unacceptable without any reference standard, which largely affects the accuracy of study result in relation to the influence of organic food price on both purchase intention and purchase behavior. Hence, it is worthwhile to conduct an in-depth study of exploring the effect of food price by giving specific definitions and reference standards on purchase intention and purchase decision of organic foods by incorporating aforesaid variables.

Quality as a vital variable is frequently discussed with consumers' purchase intention towards particular products, especially for the decision-making of food choice (Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008; Wang, 2017; Wang, Tao, and Chu, 2020; Wu, Xiong, Yan, and Wang, 2021). While quality is a broader, more complex and vaguer construct, which still needs to be fully explored, especially when it is related to the purchase intention and decision of consumers (Jover, Montes, and Fuentes, 2004). A notable classification for food quality dimension was developed by Grunert, Larsen, Madsen and Baadsgaard (1995), which is evaluated by four dimensions, i.e., hedonic-associated, healthy issue-associated, convenient degree-associated and processing-associated. However, it is noted that all of these four dimensions of perceived food quality are not completely covered in particular studies (e.g., Apaolaza, Hartmann, Echebarria, and Barrutia, 2017; Findling et al., 2018; Lassen et al., 2016; Teo et al., 2015). In other words, there is a lack of study that explores the relationship between perceived food quality and purchase intention towards organic foods by totally incorporating four dimensions together, as well as that evaluates and compares which dimension is highly correlated to the purchase intention of consumers towards organic foods.

In the research context of China, for the purpose of deeply delving into the purchase intention towards organic foods among local Chinese consumer and to extend the explanatory power of the TPB, the concept of food therapy culture is introduced, which has been deeply rooted in Chinese regimen consciousness for a long time (Chu, Yao, and Tan, 2018; Shi, Zhu, Yuan, and Tao, 2018; Zou, 2016). Based on the concept of

food therapy culture, Chinese people believe that Chinese food therapy or traditional Chinese medicine makes great contributions to health maintenance and illness prevention for people, instead of taking modern medicine (Deng et al., 2012; Jiao, 2015; Yao et al., 2012). Also, existing studies suggested that food therapy culture is closely related to Chinese herbal medicine purchase among Chinese consumers (Cai, 2009; Jiao, 2015; Wei, 2016). As Chinese herbal medicine has quite consistent attributes with the definition of organic foods (natural, more healthy, as well as with no adverse effects of chemically synthesized constituents), it is assumed that those consumers who are prone to purchase traditional herb-based pharmaceuticals may have intention as well to purchase organic foods. However, the researches delving into the consumers' intention to buy organic foods in China are scarce from the perspective of regional culture.

In the research of marketing, purchase intention are frequently studied as mediator to explore its mediating effect on the relationship between various purchase elements (social norms, environment issues, and information) and the purchase behavior towards eco-friendly food products (Moons, Barbarossa, and De Pelsmacker, 2018; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2020; Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005; Xu et al., 2020). For instance, Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) demonstrated that consumers' purchase intention mediates the relationships between health consciousness, attitude, subjective norms, and reported purchasing frequencies. However, the purchase intention functioning as a mediating effect by applying modified TPB are still far from exhaustively studied, especially for the study on organic foods purchase behavior among Chinese consumers. Therefore, this study gives a novel perspective on studying the mediating effect of purchase intention by involving critical purchase factors (e.g., purchase attitude, food price, food quality, PBC and food therapy culture) as independence variables and purchase decision as an induced variable.

Over the past few years, it is apparent to see that the TPB is frequently adopted as a predominant theory to study the purchase intention and behaviors of consumers in various study contexts, such as environmental-friendly purchase behavior, green/ecological products purchase, recycling consumption behavior, and ethical consumer behavior, etc. (Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, and Tripathi, 2020; Chaudhary and Bisai, 2018; Moser, 2015; Sun, 2019). Among these relevant studies, however, most of them somehow ignored that a gap exists between purchase intention and purchase behavior (decision). In support, Futerra (2005) also claimed that consumer purchase behavior is not always straightly predicted by purchase intention. As such, Belk (1975) suggested that situational context should be considered for studying intention-behavior (decision) gap, where situation refers to a single point in time and space, which is about a series of momentary characteristics. Accordingly, this study is aimed to address the intention – decision gap for organic foods purchase behavior by incorporating the moderating role of word-of-mouth (WOM) as a critical situational factor with the theoretical support of TRA, which is barely found in previous studies.

To sum up, the motivations of this study are mainly driven by few critical academic gaps. First of all, there is a lack of study that considered further exploring the predictive power of purchase attitude of purchase intention towards organic foods by combining the use of modified TPB and alphabet theory as solid theoretical supports. Secondly, among four dimensions in food quality, a majority of studies only focused on the roles of hedonic and health in purchase intention, while it remains unknown how convenience and process dimensions make influence on purchase intention. Thirdly, since food price is perceived as an important determinant of organic food purchase intention, it is suggested to measure its effect on purchase intention by giving more specific reference standards, i.e., from the perspective of family income. Fourthly, concerned with the in-depth influence of local culture on Chinese consumer purchase intention, food therapy culture is introduced as one of purchase factors by applying modified TPB. Fifthly, purchase intention as mediator has not been thoroughly studied in terms of organic food purchase behavior. In the end, WOM is proposed as moderator in order to fill in the intention – behavior (decision) gap existing in original TPB.

Secondly, it has been reported that there are varieties of organic foods available in China's food market (e.g., vegetables, fruits, vegetable oils, grains, beans, etc.) (Daxueconsulting, 2020). However, it is also found that there is an unbalanced development of organic food industry between organic food supply and demand in China. According to FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International (2019), in terms of organic food categories, almost 3.1% of the total organic tea is grown in Asia, with most of it in China (90,000 hectares). China has the most organic beehives among Asian countries (233,415), and the largest production volume of aquaculture was found in China (526,500 metric tons). While, according to report made by OABC (2020), in China, high-frequent purchased organic food types among different age groups are mainly vegetables (43.6%-80%), fruits (43.5%-76%), dairy products (13.9%-30.5%), and meat (16%-26%), with very few of Chinese consumers considering to purchase organic tea, honey and aquaculture products. Additionally, Organic Trade Association (OTA) (2015) reported that the top five organic foods frequently purchased by Chinese consumers are organic chicken (37%), beef (35%), pork (33%), cooking oil (26%), and fresh milk (26%). However, the latest report from FiBL and IFOAM-Organics International (2019) indicated that European countries (e.g., Austraria, Denmark, Swiden, Swizeland, and Finland) have taken a great proportion of organic meat and dairy products markets. As such, it clearly reveals that the unbalanced development of organic food market between demand and supply exists in China.

Thirdly, although Chinese consumers' awareness of pursuing healthy and organic foods has been increasing within few years, some dishonest and fraudulent cases regarding to organic food certificate happened in China's organic food industry. According to China's organic product criteria GB/T19630.1-2011, organic products refer to the products yielded, manufactured and sold in accordance with the standards for mankind and animal usage (CNCA, 2020). However, due to the difficulties in techniques and cost barrier, some organic food companies had dishonest and cheating behaviors for getting the organic food certificate issued by institutions. In addition, some of them disobeyed organic standard after receiving the certification (Liang and Qiu, 2007; Liao, 2018). Moreover, Xia (2018) reported that since 2016, at least 15 lots of organic food have been detected with safeness problems, 5 cases with faked organic food tags, and 4

cases of certificate institutions and officials have been subjected to punishment by the regulator for violations. Besides, “organic food” label even can be customized based on company’s need on some illegal e-commerce platforms. As such, the occurrences of dishonest and regulation violation cases would definitely damage consumer trust and the willingness towards organic foods, especially for those consumers whom do not fully understand the attributes of organic foods.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions are designed to achieve the research objectives:

1. Is there any relationship between purchase factors (e.g., purchase attitude, PBC, food price, food quality and food therapy culture) and purchase intention towards organic foods?
2. Is there any relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods?
3. Is there any relationship between factors and purchase decision towards organic foods?
4. Does purchase intention have a mediating effect on the relationships between purchase factors and purchase decision towards organic foods?
5. Does word-of-mouth (WOM) play moderating effect on the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods?

1.5 Research Objectives

Exploring variables that influence consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods is necessary for marketers to develop constructive marketing strategy in organic foods industry, as well as for policymakers in charge of organic foods industry regulation. For marketers, they can expand organic market reasonably and develop more attractive marketing strategy with the support of various purchase factors. As for policymakers, relevant research clues can be considered to optimize their certification standards to eliminate confusions and enriching knowledge about organic foods among consumers.

Therefore, to fulfilling the purpose of the research, specific research objectives are proposed as follow:

1. To examine the relationships between purchase factors (e.g., purchase attitude, PBC, food price, food quality and food therapy culture) and purchase intention towards organic foods.
2. To identify the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods.
3. To study the relationships between purchase factors and purchase decision towards organic foods.
4. To investigate the mediating effect of purchase intention on the relationships between purchase factors and purchase decision towards organic foods.
5. To determine the moderating effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) on the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is mainly aimed to fully investigate the variables that influence consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods. Besides, this study intends to explore the mediating effect of purchase intention and to further explore the existing issue related to intention-behavior (decision) gap by incorporating the variable – WOM as the moderation. In this research, all purchase factors are developed based on a combined use of the modified TPB, TRA, and the alphabet theory. This can enable readers to understand the purchase factors influencing consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods through various perspectives. In line with the research purpose, the significance of the study is explained in detail from academic and practical perspectives.

For academic contributions, first of all, purchase attitude as one of critical purchase factors is measured through three vital dimensions, i.e., revealed information, knowledge, and subjective norms, with the support of the TPB and the alphabet theory. In this way, it can further explore the predictive power of purchase attitude to purchase intention from a multidimensional perspective, i.e., which dimension is more likely to influence the purchase attitude of consumers towards purchasing organic foods.

Secondly, due to the multifaceted and paradoxical attributes of food price, in this research, the predictive power of price to purchase intention is examined by giving more specific and clear measuring items. Consequently, the significance of food price is to know within a holistic perspective.

Thirdly, food quality is fully examined through four critical dimensions, i.e., hedonic-related, health-related, convenience-related, and process-related. Therefore, the predictive power of each dimension within perceived food quality is more clearly and completely discussed compared to other similar studies. Fourthly, through integration with the influence of particular Chinese culture on organic foods purchase intention, food therapy culture functioning as a critical driving factor plays its role in motivating organic foods purchase intention from the perspective of local culture, which contributes to achieving a new extension of the TPB in the context of China.

Fifthly, in this research, intention-behavior (decision) gap is further studied by introducing moderator – WOM with the support of TRA, i.e., moderator is required for making contribution to filling the gap between purchase intention and purchase decision in terms of organic foods. Lastly, this research provides a holistic view on studying the purchase intention and purchase decision of consumers towards organic foods within the study background of China by looking at potential purchase factors, the mediating effect of purchase intention, and the moderating effect of WOM, whereas few studies fully explored them.

For practical contributions, firstly, marketers and policymakers get new insight into how to motivate consumers' purchase attitude from multiple perspectives (e.g., considering needs from reference people, sufficient information claim about organic foods, convey of relevant knowledge). Secondly, price and the perceived food quality of organic foods are highly regarded as essential clues for marketers, thereby enabling marketers to fully understand how consumers evaluate the perceived importance of these two critical purchase factors when having purchase intention towards organic foods. Consequently, marketers and policymakers can judge which dimension in perceived food quality is intensively cared about by consumers, so as to continuously raise the quality standards of organic foods based on the evaluation of organic foods made by consumers. Thirdly, concerned with the influence of food therapy culture as a particular Chinese culture on organic foods purchase intention, it provides a new perspective for marketers to accurately capture motives in purchasing organic foods among Chinese consumers in China's organic foods market.

Fourthly, WOM as a moderating role can enhance the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision, whereby consumer actual purchase behavior might be largely motivated through the moderating effect of WOM. Based on this, various communication channels (e.g., social media platform, organic foods community, and post-sales feedback center) can be built up by marketers to encourage them to share the opinions and feelings related to organic foods. To conclude, marketers are capable of making clear and target-oriented marketing strategies that based different levels of effects of purchase factors on purchase intention. As for policymakers, according to the

key purchase factors identified by the study, organic foods inspection institutions should pay more attentions to organic foods information claim, knowledge spreading and labeling authorization. Through a series of improvements made by policymakers, the confusions related to organic foods on consumers' mind are eliminated, while consumers get to have deeper understandings towards organic foods. As such, this can intensively increase the acceptance level of purchasing organic foods among consumers in their daily life.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research focuses on investigating the purchase intention and purchase decision of consumers towards organic foods among Chinese consumers in Beijing, China, and on further exploring the intention-behavior (decision) gap existing in academic area. In line with research questions and research objectives, independent variables, dependent variable, mediator, and moderator are adopted based on the combined use of the modified TPB (Ajzen, 1991), TRA, and the alphabet theory (Zepeda and Deal, 2009) to fully discuss the driving factors related to consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods.

More specifically, purchase attitude, as one of the determinant purchase factors in the TPB, is closely linked to purchase intention and assumed to be influenced by revealed information, knowledge and subjective norms. In the original TPB, PBC is studied as a critical independent variable to exert its effect on purchase intention. Moreover, price and perceived food quality are also examined with original variables in the TPB. In addition, food therapy culture is introduced as another essential driving factor by considering the importance of local culture in influencing consumers' purchase intention in the background of China. At last, for further exploring the intention-behavior (decision) gap in studying consumers' purchase behavior towards organic foods, WOM is introduced as moderator in this research to discuss its moderating effect in terms of helping consumers to make final purchase decision by applying TRA.

This research intends to approach the participants in major organic foods specialty stores and supermarkets with organic foods sales areas located in different municipal districts in Beijing, China. Due to the high cost of quality management of organic foods, organic food products used to be sold with premium price compared to conventional foods. Therefore, organic food market is more likely to expand in those developed cities across China, such as Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Chongqing. While among these cities, Beijing hit the top 3 ranking in terms of urban per capita GDP (3.6 trillion Yuan), per capita disposal income of urban households (62,361 Yuan), as well as the planting area of organic foods (0.96%) (NBSC, 2019, 2021). Nevertheless, the border questionnaire distribution area is necessary, while research time and cost restrictions should also be seriously concerned during data collection. Hence, Beijing is selected as the target city for data collection mainly considering its remarkable consumption capability for organic foods, which would largely increase the eligible proportion of questionnaire feedback.

Then, questionnaires will be distributed to the participants after getting permission from them. As the research purpose is mainly proposed based on a particular study background, the target participants have to be local (Chinese) organic foods consumers whom can understand the general concept of food therapy culture. In summary, the expected research purpose is to explore the purchase factors influencing consumers' intention of purchasing organic foods in a holistic view and to fill the academic gap existing in the relationship between purchase intention and purchase decision by incorporating the moderating effect of WOM.

1.8 Definitions of Main Terms

This section gives a brief explanation of the main terms used in this research (e.g., attitude, subjective norms, PBC, perceived food quality, behavioral intention, actual behavior, food therapy culture, and word-of-mouth (WOM)), so as to help readers clearly understand the research content.

i. Attitude

Conceptual: The individuals' attitude, or individual viewpoint on whether certain behavior is correct or incorrect, positive or negative, favorable or unfavorable (Ajzen, 1991).

Operational: Consumers' attitude (favorable or unfavorable) of purchasing organic foods.

ii. Subjective Norms

Conceptual: Perceived social influence that influences opinions and somehow approval from relatives, people around, and any trustworthy individuals (Ajzen, 1991).

Operational: It refers to the opinions of purchasing organic foods from people who are important (e.g., families, friends, co-workers, and professionals).

iii. Perceived Behavioral Control

Conceptual: The perceived ease or challenge when it comes to implement the action (Ajzen, 1991).

Operational: How easy or difficult for consumers to purchase organic foods, in other words, how much resource (e.g., cost, time, and opportunities) can be held by consumers to purchase organic foods.

iv. Food Quality

Conceptual: Individuals' overall quality evaluations that are the result from both expected quality and experienced quality. Perceived food quality can be measured through four dimensions (hedonic, health, convenience, and process) (Gunert, 1995).

Operational: Consumers' overall evaluation towards organic foods by looking at four dimensions (hedonic, health, convenience, and process).

v. Behavioral Intention

Conceptual: People's willingness to implement a particular behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

Operational: It is transformed to term – purchase intention, which refers to the willingness of consumers to purchase organic foods.

vi. Actual Behavior

Conceptual: An overt action or set of behavior that is performed by individuals (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

Operational: It is transformed into term – purchase decision, which refers to consumers' actual behavior of purchasing organic foods.

vii. Food Therapy Culture

Conceptual/Operational: To keep people's health under maintenance and illness prevention through natural foods, instead of taking modern medicine (Shi, Zhu, Yuan, and Tao, 2018).

viii. Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Conceptual: Personal evaluation of brand, products, service or organizational entities without commercial purpose through person-to-person or any social communication platforms (Silverman, 1997).

Operational: Consumers' comments towards organic foods after making purchase through face-to-face and online platforms.

1.9 Organization of Thesis

Chapter 1: The first chapter gives the introduction about the research purpose and the basic background information related to the organic foods market and the consumption situation in the whole world as well as in China. Then, the problem statement highlights some critical problems related organic foods development from academic and industrial perspectives. Consequently, research questions and research objectives are proposed to further systematically explore the problems mentioned in the problem statement.

Chapter 2: The second chapter discusses the relevant theories used in the research and potential correlations among proposed variables based on previous studies. A theoretical gap is also generated based on the systematic review of literature.

Chapter 3: The third chapter organizes a research framework as well as the hypotheses development, and the research framework in chapter three is generated based on previous study results and gap existing in the current academic field. The proposed hypotheses are fully elaborated with the supported from previous studies.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter covers the research design and the methodology (e.g., philosophy of research design, population and sampling design, questionnaire instruments, administration of questionnaire, and data analysis techniques). Based on collected data, the reliability and validity of the data are fully examined for ensuring the data qualification of proceeding to the hypotheses test.

Chapter 5: The fifth chapter mainly includes the descriptive statistics analysis, including the information of socio-demographic profiles (e.g., genders, age distribution, marital status, education levels, monthly income, and occupations). Also, findings and results of the proposed hypotheses are revealed subsequently based on statistic outputs.

Chapter 6: The sixth chapter fully discusses the findings and results generated from statistics outputs with the supports of previous literature. The differences and similarities of study results between this research and past studies are also elaborated. Additionally, the mean scores and standard deviations of dimensions in key variables are presented to identify the importance level of each dimension in key variables. Lastly, the contribution of the study, limitations, conclusion, and the suggestions for future research are given.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter briefly discusses the importance of using the TRA, modified TPB, and the alphabet theory to fill in the theoretical and industry gaps mentioned in this research: incomplete studies related to consumers' purchase intention and purchase decision towards organic foods by using TPB; lacking of revealed information and requisite knowledge about organic foods; very limited research explored intention-behavior (decision) gap in terms of organic foods purchase while it is identified as an important issue; purchase factors influencing purchase intention of organic foods among Chinese consumers are barely studied by previous scholars from the perspective of local culture.

Lastly, in this chapter, the research objectives and the research questions are proposed precisely based on the purpose of this research. The research questions and objectives are closely related to the critical issues highlighted in the problem statement, which could be a reliable foundation for proposing the research framework and developing the relevant hypotheses in the following chapter.

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