

# Predicting Generation Z Behavioral Intention Towards Organic Food Consumptions

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## ABSTRACT

A healthy lifestyle has significantly increased the awareness of consuming organic food. In the midst of many unhealthy fast food choices, Generation Z (Gen Z) is expected to have favorable intention behavior toward organic food consumption. Past studies have not yet voiced this appropriately. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this study aims to measure Gen Z's behavioral intention towards organic food consumption in Indonesia. An online questionnaire was spread to the target respondents and 250 valid responses were received for the analysis. This study used partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypothesis. The observation discovers that all TPB variables significantly depict positive influences on behavioral intention. The results imply that Indonesian Gen Z consumers have a positive intention towards organic food consumption. Thus, the findings of this study have improved our understanding of TPB in the organic food context. Organic food businesses may use the tested TPB variables in their daily business activities to cater to Gen Z customers.

**Keywords:** organic food products, Gen Z, theory of planned behavior, PLS-SEM.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Consuming organic foods for healthy lifestyles is becoming a global trend that leads to the growth of organic food products sales. The global sales of organic foods have reached \$50.1 billion, increased by 4.6% with a growth rate of 2% annually in 2020 [1]. It is predicted to grow by 16.44% from 2020 to 2025 [2]. The reason for this growth is that consumers are searching for organic labels as they perceive the products as clean and healthy [3]. It is coupled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in which consumers have increasing awareness to maintain good health, reduce health risks, and minimize environmental impacts [4]. Compared to conventional foods, organic foods are healthier as it is produced without chemicals substances [5]. Despite the environmental factors, social factors also impact consumers to consume organic foods [6]. A global study by Nielsen [7] indicates that Gen Z's are willing to pay premium prices for foods with healthy attributes compared to other generations.

The Indonesian organic food markets reached \$13.9 million, representing only 0.02% of global demand with a per capita expenditure of \$0.05 in 2019 [8]. This figure is very low compared to the growth of global organic food. The Indonesian Gen Z is expected to boost the demand since this generation occupies the largest

percentage of the country's total population [9]. Further, this generation knows more about sustainable living than earlier generations [10] and prioritizes health when making food choices [11]. It was assumed that Gen Z would become the largest share of the consumer market by 2020 [12]. Thus, Indonesian Gen Z has the ability to contribute significantly to the country's economic development [10, 14]. This expectation makes a compelling reason for a deeper study involving Gen Z on organic food consumption. While there are frequent scholarly consumer researches regarding the organic foods purchasing behavior of other generations [13-15], Gen Z is quite unknown [16]. This paucity needs to be addressed to bridge the gap.

Ajzen [17] explains that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) can shape someone's behavioral intention. In the TPB, behavioral intention is the most proximal factor of human social behavior. TPB is widely used to predict behavior in a variety of situations, including the purchase of organic food [18]. Despite its popularity, this theory has not been used specifically to investigate Gen Z's organic food behavior in recent years. For example, a study by [19] uses the TPB to examine Finnish consumers whose ages ranging from 18 to 80. Another study by [18] uses it to measure the Romanian consumers' (whose age ranging from 24 to

74) purchase behavior on organic foods. Other studies on organic food more focus on generational comparison [20, 21] and profiling socioeconomic and demographic organic food consumers [22]. In addition, [22] reports that there are inconsistencies in how people perceive organic food. This current study, therefore, addresses this knowledge gap.

Considering seminal earlier research, this study strives to scrutinize the behavioral intention of Gen Z on consuming organic food using the TPB. The contributions of this study are twofold. First, it advances our theoretical understanding of the TPB on organic food consumption. Second, organic food businesses may use the findings of this study to serve Gen Z customers and sustain their operations.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### ***2.1. Organic Food***

The term organic has a positive connotation for food [31]. Organic food can be referred to as foods produced by farmers using renewable resources, protecting the ecology, and increasing sustainability [32]. Compared to conventional foods, organic food is more superior in terms of nutritional value because it is processed without chemicals or pesticides and is free of GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), whether it is fresh, semi-finished, or processed [5, 33]. Consuming organic food is believed to be safe and improve health since it is considered to have higher quality than conventional one [31]. Previous research reports that consumer self-identity is an important antecedent of consumer behavioral intentions towards organic food [34, 35].

### ***2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior***

TPB is developed from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). In TRA, a person's behavior can be predicted through intentions due to his conscious actions, with two related variables, namely attitude and subjective norms [17]. Meanwhile, the TPB assumes that intention represents the effort to try and conduct certain behaviors, hence it considers another variable called perceived behavioral control. In TPB, various human behaviors in any contexts could be predicted by attitudes, subjective norms according to social approval, and perceived behavioral control to perform human behavior [23]. Previous researchers have widely used this theory to predict consumer behavioral intentions.

#### ***2.2.1. Attitude***

Someone's evaluation, favor or unfavorable, towards certain behavior is known as attitude [23, 36]. It can be influenced by moods and emotions, which will affect human behavior. Someone's assessment of something

beneficial or unfavorable for him can be said as the primary determinant of attitude [3]. In other words, the stronger a person's desire to engage in a certain behavior, the more favorable his attitude towards that behavior [23, 37]. In addition, attitude can be created from the results of one's experience and the environment according to their beliefs.

Previous research in organic foods observes the importance of natural content, health consciousness, food safety focus, and subjective knowledge in influencing one's attitudes and behaviors of consuming organic food [6]. A study by [20] obtains the same results, which show that five consumer generations have a positive attitude to buy organic food. Next, the economic crisis factor has no impact on the purchase behavior of organic food. In contrast, [5] explains that different attitudes in consuming organic food do not always affect consumer behavioral intentions by considering several factors. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that

H1: Attitude positively influences behavioral intention towards organic food.

#### ***2.2.2. Perceived Behavioral Control***

The level of perceived behavioral control describes to what extent certain behavior is that easy to perform while reflecting on both past and anticipated barriers [23]. Perceived behavioral control of behavior is thought to reflect a person's actual control over the behavior. It serves a notable part in TPB [38].

Perceived behavioral control is influenced by beliefs [39] as [40] reports that perceived behavioral control is better directed at behavioral intentions than attitudes. Many previous studies have found its significant effect on behavioral intentions of organic food [41]. However, in the study of [32], the effect of perceived behavioral control is not significant. This can be due to differences in consumer characteristics. The hypothesis formulated is:

H2: Perceived behavioral control positively influences behavioral intention towards organic food.

#### ***2.2.3. Subjective Norms***

Perceived social pressure has a role in someone's decision to perform a behavior or not as explained in subjective norms [23]. Subjective norms of behavior refer to the internal desire to act as others think; bringing feelings of self-worth or pride if working successfully and leading to shame or self-blame if it is unsuccessful [39]. Subjective norms have been studied in the context of food behavior worldwide but still little in the Asian perspective [42]. Many previous studies have found a significant influence of subjective norms on the behavioral intentions of organic foods [4, 5, 43]. However, [44] reports its weak or insignificant results in

influencing behavioral intentions. Conflicting results could be caused by differences in population characteristics of the study, so it needs to be investigated further, especially from the Asian perspective. Therefore, hypothesis three can be proposed.

H3: Subjective norms positively influence behavioral intention towards organic food.

2.2.4. Behavioural Intention

Intention represents a self-referential condition of satisfaction [45, 40]. Strong intentions will produce certain behaviors within different contexts. Intentions and perceptions of control must be assessed in relation to the particular behavior of interest, and the specified context must be the same as that in which the behavior is to occur [49, 23]. Behavioral intentions, which can be said as buying intentions, are basically determined by three influencing factors, ranging from the individual's attitude to conduct the behavior, the level of perceived social pressure based on subjective behavior or norms, and perceived behavioral control [44]. Further, [42] claims that behavioral intention means the individual's intention to perform a helpful behavior.

The stronger intention on organic food can generate consumer word-of-mouth recommendations as well as repurchase despite a higher price [47]. Consumer behavior intentions will be influenced by the motivation to express the identity of organic food [46]. Similarly, [48] reports that the expression of organic food identity plays a role in consumer behavioral intentions.

2.3. The Proposed Research Model

Based on previous studies, a research model is proposed. The model aims to assess organic food products towards behavioral intention (see figure 1). This model is adapted from several previous studies by Hansen et al [46], Bai et al [48], and Fleserieu [18].

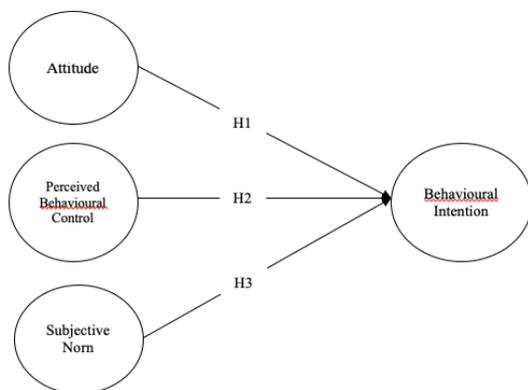


Figure 1 The proposed research model.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study was designed with a descriptive research approach to describe the phenomenon of Gen Z's behavioral intention towards organic food consumption. A purposive sampling method was used to distribute an online questionnaire to intended respondents. The respondents of this research must be young people between 15 and 24 (Gen Z) and have consumed organic foods at least once in the last three months. A total of 250 responses were collected and analyzed further. The questionnaire was created based on previous research. The attitude variable was adapted from [20] and [6]. The perceived behavioral control variable was adjusted from [23]. The subjective norms variable was developed from [18] and [24]. Meanwhile, the behavioral intention variable was modified from [25].

This study carried out a quantitative approach using PLS-SEM to achieve the study's objectives. In PLS-SEM, there are two stages that should perform sequentially. The first stage was to measure the reliability and validity of the construct variables. The reliability was measured using factor loading, Cronbach's alpha, construct reliability, and average variance extracted. Meanwhile, the discriminant validity was detected using Fornell-Larcker criterion. The second stage was to test the structural model. This test was carried out using Goodness of Fit (GoF), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), cross-validated redundancy ( $Q^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ) as recommended [26-29].

4. RESULTS

The result of the respondent characteristics is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' profile

Characteristic	Freq.	%
Born		
-1995 – 1999 (age 21 – 25)	289	64.2
-2000 – 2005 (age 15 – 20)	63	14.0
Gender		
-Female	285	63.5
-Male	71	15.8
Level of Education		
-Senior High School	70	15.6
-Diploma	101	22.4
-Bachelor	164	36.4
-Master	23	5.1
Occupation		

Characteristic	Freq.	%
-Student	214	47.6
-Government Employees	3	0.7
-Private Employees	85	18.9
-Entrepreneur	35	7.8
-House Wife	5	1.1
-Other	25	5.6
Monthly income IDR		
-less than 1.000.000	155	34.4
-1.000.001 – 3.000.000	119	26.4
-3.000.001 – 5.000.000	57	12.7
-more than 5.000.000	31	6.8
Monthly spending for organic foods (IDR)		
-less than 50.000	137	30.4
-50.001 – 100.000	141	31.3
-100.001 – 200.000	52	11.6
-more than 200.000	20	4.4

The result of the outer model evaluation is presented in Table 2. It shows that the factor loadings of all items are above the cut-off value of 0.50 [30]. The Cronbach's alpha of all constructs is also above the cut-off value of 0.60 [30]. The construct validity (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) are above the cut-off value of 0.70 and 0.50 respectively [30]. These results indicate that all indicators and variables are valid and reliable.

**Table 2.** Outer model measurements

Constructs/ Items	Loading factors	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Attitude		0.823	0.876	0.592
-AT1	0.550			
-AT2	0.824			
-AT3	0.752			
-AT4	0.850			
-AT5	0.830			
Perceived B Control		0.747	0.838	0.556
-PBCI1	0.764			
-PBCI2	0.837			
-PBCI4	0.765			

Constructs/ Items	Loading factors	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
-PBCI5	0.629			
Subjective Norm		0.755	0.838	0.517
-SNo1	0.732			
-SNo2	0.863			
-SNo3	0.828			
-SNo4	0.585			
-SNo5	0.526			
Behavioral Intention		0.843	0.905	0.761
-BI1	0.869			
-BI2	0.875			
-BI3	0.873			

**Note:** \*All significant at  $p < 0.05$

The discriminant validity result is displayed in Table 3. It satisfies the requirements as no inter-construct correlation values are higher than the intra-construct values [30].

**Table 3.** Fornell-Larcker criterion

Variable	1	2	3	4
Attitude	0.769			
Behavioral Intention	0.657	0.872		
Perceived B Control	0.696	0.609	0.753	
Subjective Norms	0.524	0.579	0.497	0.719

The result of the inner evaluation is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Inner model analysis results

Constructs	AVE	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>
Behavioral Intention	0.905	0.532	0.393
Attitude	0.592		
Perceived B Control	0.838		
Subjective Norms	0.838		
Average score		0.793	
AVE x R <sup>2</sup>		0.422	
GoF = $\sqrt{AVE \times R^2}$		0.650	

The variables effect size ( $f^2$ ) as shown in Table 5 has the values of 0.128, 0.051, and 0.119 which can be categorized into small value [30].

**Table 5.** The effect size

Constructs	Effect size
Behavioral Intention	
Attitude	0.128
Perceived B Control	0.051
Subjective Norms	0.119

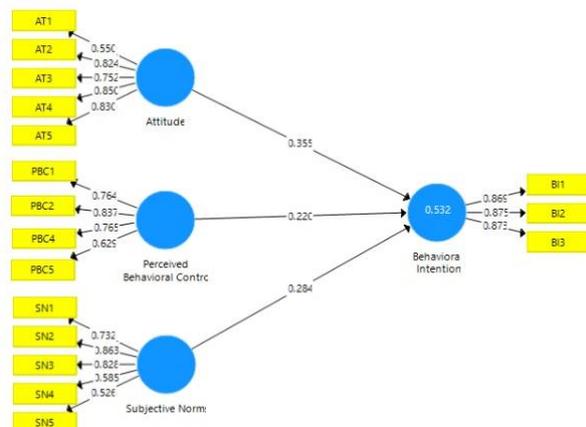
The result of the path analysis is shown in Table 6. It shows that all tested hypotheses are accepted.

**Table 6.** Path analysis results

Hypotheses	$\beta$	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	0.355	4.790	0.000*	Accepted
H2	0.220	2.937	0.003*	Accepted
H3	0.283	5.502	0.000*	Accepted

Significant at  $p < 0.05^*$

The estimated model result is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The results of the estimated model

### 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

There are three notable findings responding to the study's objective have been yielded. First, the attitude of Indonesian Gen Z is positive and significant towards their behavioral intention on organic food consumption. This finding implies that Indonesian Gen Z has favorable behavior towards organic foods. This positive attitude may derive from huge open information in social media which promotes natural content, health consciousness, and food safety. Thus, these factors influence Gen Z's knowledge and in turn, influence their attitude. This finding supports previous studies by [6] and [20]. However, it is different from [5] in which attitude does not significantly influence behavioral intention. These

contradict results open further study on the relationship between Gen Z attitudes towards their behavioral intention. This finding also suggests that organic food producers shall always continually build Gen Z attitudes through various promotional media to get their positive attitude and intention towards organic foods.

Second, Indonesian Gen Z exhibits the positive influence of perceived behavioral control on behavioral intention. This finding implies that it is not difficult for Indonesian Gen Z to perform behavior related to organic foods consumption. This finding supports a previous study conducted by [41] they find that the Chinese customers' intention on organic food was influenced positively by perceived behavioral control. However, it contradicts [32]'s study which discover that perceived behavioral control does not significantly influence behavioral intention. This may happen because of some factors and one of them is due to the consumer characteristics differences. This finding suggests the organic food producers maintain good environments that can be perceived positively by the target customers.

Third, the result of this study shows that Indonesia Gen Z subjective norms positively impact behavioral intention on consuming organic food. It implies that Gen Z has an internal desire to act as others think related to organic foods as they are influenced by social environments. The result of this study supports various earlier studies by [4, 5, 43] who find a significant influence of subjective norms on the behavioral intentions of organic foods. However, it is different from [44] who reports insignificant results on the relationship between subjective norms and behavioral intentions in the organic foods consumption contexts. This finding proposes that producers of organic food require to educate their customers to have a favorable subjective judgment on consuming organic foods.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The current study has successfully examined Gen Z's behavioral intention towards organic food consumption using the TPB. The Indonesian Gen Z has a positive attitude and favorable behavioral intention towards organic food products. The Gen Z attitude significantly influences their behavior intention on organic food consumption. Both perceived behavioral control and subjective norms variables also significantly influence behavioral intention. This study enhances our understanding of the TPB in the organic food context with Gen Z consumers. It provides organic food industries an insight to recognize the Gen Z consumer's demand from the consumers' standpoint and as a foundation for organic food's future development.

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