



FACTORS INFLUENCING GREEN FOOD PURCHASING BEHAVIOR OF CONSUMERS IN HARBIN CITY, CHINA

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Abstract.

With the rapid development of China's economy in recent years, people's living standards have improved, and the consumption concept of food has shifted from food and clothing to green and health. However, some problems including air pollution, water pollution and soil pollution caused by the development of industrialization seriously affect the development of green food. At present, many green food production and operation companies still lack theoretical and practical guidance on how to produce and sell green food more in line with consumer needs. Based on this, this research will start from consumer behavior theory, sustainable development theory and consumer demand theory, viewing exploring the factors affecting consumers to buy green food as the main research purpose. By sorting out relevant literature and starting from personal factors, product factors and environmental factors, a questionnaire survey is formed, thus organizing research assumptions and building a research framework. According to the results of the survey, it is found by means of data analysis that the main factors influencing green food purchasing behavior of consumers are price factors and purchase experience, and recommendations and suggestions are provided for problems.

Keywords: *Consumers, Green Food, Purchasing behavior, Influencing factors*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the rapid development of industrialization, human wealth has increased rapidly, and residents' requirements for material living standards have been increasing, especially the growing focus on food safety. Unavoidably, safe and reliable food has become the common pursuit of all mankind. Since the 1990s, some civil organizations and governments in European and American countries have launched a series of green purchase activities, and have received responses from many consumers. 'According to statistics, 52% of Germans and 62% of Dutchmen give priority to environmental protection when shopping in the supermarkets, 66% of Britons are willing to spend more money on green products, 85% of Swedes are willing to pay more for environmental cleaning, 80% of Canadians want to pay 10% more for environmentally beneficial products, and 77% of Japanese only choose and buy products with environmental protection marks'[1].

In China, residents are gradually shifting from solving the problem of food and clothing to a well-off

society. In the past ten years or so, people have experienced various food safety issues such as "fake milk powder", "fake eggs", and "excessive pesticide residues in vegetables". Chinese people's confidence in the current food on the market has been greatly dropped. In this case, green food that pays more attention to safety, nutrition and health are becoming increasingly popular. 'According to the statistics collected by the China Green Food Development Center, Domestic annual sales of green food in 2019 were 465.66 billion and exports were \$ 4.131 billion, up 2.1% and 28.7% respectively from the previous year' [2]. all of which show that the number of buyers of green food is increasing, the products varieties are multiplied, and the future market will become bigger.

The industry of green food started relatively late in China, so its development is constrained by a series of problems. For example, laws, regulations and other policies and relevant market supervision measures are not perfect enough, resulting in loopholes in market access and management; food enterprises also have problems such as shoddy filling and indiscriminate use of product logo, which cause residents suspicion towards

the development of green food in recent years. Therefore, it is quite necessary to clearly understand the influencing factors of green food purchasing behavior among Harbin consumers, find the main influencing factors and depend on their influencing degree, developing green food marketing for Harbin green food production enterprises, formulating and improving the policies on the development of green food enterprises by government and taking some corresponding measures by industry associations to promote the further development of the green food industry.

China began to promote the construction of green food project in 1990, and in 1997 began to conduct digital statistics on green food consumption. After more than 20 years of development, it has made great progress, which is reflected not only in the quantity and category of certified products, but also in constructing green food standard system, green food certification system and green food supervision and management system.

Firstly, seen from the absolute quantity, the number of green food enterprises in China has increased significantly with the substantial growth of people's demand. 'In 2004, the number of certified green food was 6,496, with the total certified material objects of 46 million tons. As of 2019, the total number of certified green food enterprises in China has reached 6,949, the total number of certified green food is 36,345, and the annual sales is 465.6 billion yuan'[3]. Thus, it can be seen that China's green consumption develops in an amazing speed.

Secondly, with the absolute number growing, the product categories of green food are also increasingly rich. 'As statistics from the website of China Green Food Development Center show, the number of products given the right to use green food trademarks has grown from 1,018 in 1998 to 36,345 in 2019, mainly including vegetables, rice, fresh fruits, wheatmeal, refined tea, liquid milk, etc'[4].

Thirdly, a relatively perfect standard and system on green food is being gradually formed. Learning from western developed countries, China has established a set of up-to-125-item institutionalized and scientific green food standard system, which is related to whole process of control and integrates into the principle of sustainable development. 'At present, 42 local green food management agencies have been set up; meanwhile, there are 46 quality testing agencies for green food products with designated commissions and 72 environmental monitoring agencies in producing areas'[5].

And finally, China has basically established a green food certification and supervision system. In accordance with the relevant green food standards, China will conduct irregular inspection, audit, evaluation and feedback for green food production and sales enterprises,

and strictly control the license and use of green food signs.

However, there are still problems in green food consumption. Firstly, the industrial foundation is still relatively weak. The standard system covering the whole process of green food production, supply and marketing needs to be further improved, the circulation mode needs to be further innovated, and the market circulation system needs to be further improved. Second, the industrial structure needs to be further optimized. From the perspective of the main body of the application, small and medium-sized enterprises and specialized farmer cooperatives occupy a high proportion, the proportion of leading enterprises is relatively low, and it is difficult to form the demonstration and leading role of the industry. From the perspective of product category structure, the proportion of planting industry is still large, the proportion of livestock and poultry, aquatic products are still low, the homogenization of primary products is still relatively serious. Third, the industrial supervision pressure is still very big. Non-standard market reputation risks caused by irregularities, irregularities and market counterfeiting still exist. How to improve the ability and level of green food supervision according to law, establish a good market order, maintain the credibility of the brand, is still an unremitting topic. Many illegal food production enterprises in China had only one product certified as green food, but they printed the "green food" logo on the outer packaging of all categories of products without authorization. In addition, the overdue use of signs, annual inspection and other phenomena flooded the green food consumption market. The emergence of such a large number of fake and shoddy food in the consumer market will cause consumers' lack of trust in green products and affect the development of green food consumption.

Based on the survey data of Harbin consumers on green food, Harbin consumers study green food purchase, aiming to explore green food purchase tendency, provide user data for enterprises to produce and sell green food, develop strategies to promote the short-term, long-term and institutional guarantee for the development of green food industry, strengthen the supervision of green food industry and promote the healthy development of green food industry.

The research in this paper may have the following innovations:

1. Research methods

Most of the domestic academic researches on green food are qualitative ones, but few are quantitative ones. And previous research mostly taken a single consumer within the region as the research object. This study uses two qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the development of green food from the perspective of consumer demand orientation, and can better provide

relevant data support for enterprise development and policy development;

2. Innovation in the research perspective

Previous research mostly taken a single consumer within the region as the research object. This paper is to study different groups of consumers in Harbin as the research object, with the method of questionnaire research, analyzing of different gender, age, marital status, family composition, level of education, income level groups of objects. It is for the first time to study consumer purchase behavior in Harbin area with first hand data of green food consumer purchase behavior, which will be a supplement to the quantitative research of the relevant research, having a unique perspective and depth from the perspective of the scale of research and practical operation.

2. THEORETICAL MODEL AND RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

The theory of consumer behavior is the process of clarifying the various actions taken in the acquisition, use, and disposal of consumer goods or services, including all processes that affect decisions before these actions. The influence mechanism of consumers' willingness to buy green food is more complex, Consumer approach

motivation, awareness of green food, Consumers ' attitude, subjective norms and perceptual behavior control of buying green food have a direct impact on the willingness to buy; ' Yuan Wei believes that the purchase of green agricultural products by urban residents is mainly affected by the marital status of the residents, whether to live with the elderly or children, the cognition of green agricultural products, the trust of green agricultural products and the purchase motivation' [6]; ' Xu Zhaojun believes that: the level of consumer professional knowledge also has an important impact on its green food purchase behavior' [7]; ' Yang Haobing believes that: the marital situation of consumers will affect consumers ' green food purchase behavior' [8]; ' Wu Mengdi believes that: consumers ' lifestyle, purchase experience, health awareness, income level, price, and the convenience of the shopping environment have a significant impact on the reference groups, Among these significant factors, Price factors, consumers 'health awareness and income level are the main influencing factors of consumers' green food purchase behavior'[9].

2.1 Theoretical Model

Based on the previous results, the research model, as shown in Figure 1 and the research hypothesis:

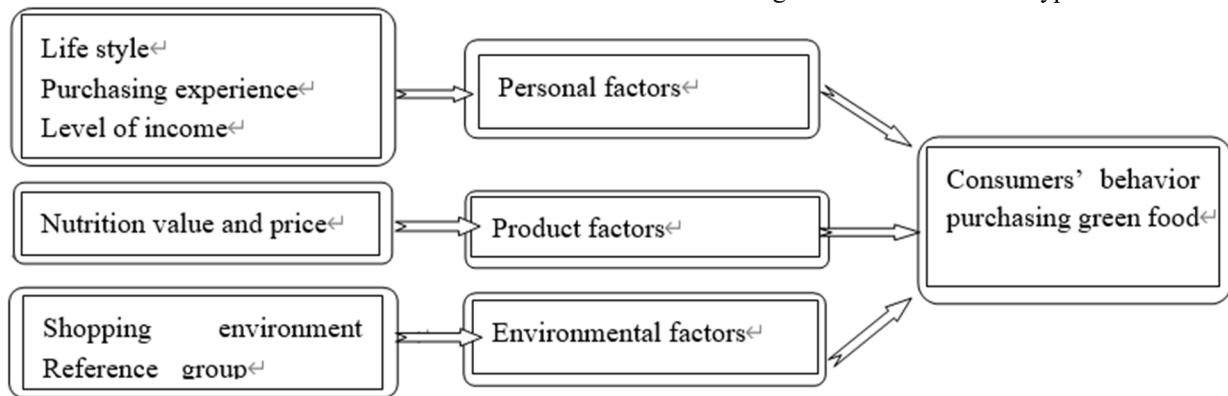


Figure 1 Theoretical model of factors influencing consumers' behavior purchasing green food

2.2 Research Assumptions

First, lifestyle refers to the attitude towards time and money, where consumers choose ways for the sake of life. It reflects all the characteristics of consumers ' mutual influence with the environment, which will have a certain impact on consumer demand, attitude and purchase activities, on the contrary, demand, attitude and purchase activities will also strengthen or adjust the lifestyle of consumers. Therefore, this study presents the following hypothesis:

H1: Lifestyle has a positive influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

H2: Purchase experience has a positive influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

H3: Income level has a positive influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

H4: Nutrition has a positive influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

H5: Price has a negative influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

H6: Shopping environment has a positive influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

H7: Reference group has a positive influence on green food purchasing behavior of consumers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research report is formed mainly by means of empirical research in quantitative analysis, which specifically includes literature research, questionnaire survey and quantitative analysis.

(1) Literature research

Extensive study of consumer behavior theory, sustainable development theory, consumer demand theory, etc., to lay the theoretical foundation of this research. Check a large number of existing literatures to understand the current situation of green food consumption in Harbin.

(2) Questionnaire survey

According to the research hypothesis of this paper, Harbin consumers were questionnaires from personal reasons, product factors and environmental factors to obtain first-hand data and provide data support for this paper.

The questionnaire is a comprehensive questionnaire composed of three parts. The first part is questions for screening. The second part consists of demographic information investigation questions. The third part is survey scales of factors influencing green food purchasing behavior of consumers. In this part, it is necessary to understand in detail the factors influencing

green food purchasing behavior of consumers, including personal factors, product factors, and environmental factors. 9 questions are developed in a personal factor scale based on four indicators, which are lifestyle, purchase experience, health consciousness, and income level; 7 questions are developed in a product factor scale based on two indicators, which are nutrition and price; and 9 questions are developed in an environment factor scale based on two indicators, which are shopping environment, and reference group. The scales are Likert scales, measuring by options of "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with 1 to 5 points, respectively.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis

On the basis of the questionnaire survey, the basic data conducted descriptive statistical analysis and reduced the research items using the factor analysis. On this basis, the two-logistics regression model was constructed, included the research variables into the regression model, and analyzed the impact of each research variables on the green food purchase behavior of consumers.

3.1 Definition and Measurement of Variables

According to the research needs of this study, the variables are defined according to the actual objectives, as shown in the following table 1:

TABLE 1 DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

Variable name	Definition
X1: Lifestyle	Consumers' attitude on time and money
X2: Purchase experience	Consumers' previous experience of purchasing green food
X3: Income level	Consumers' disposable income
X4: Nutrition	Consumers' understanding of all the nutrients in green food
X5: Price	Consumers' acceptance of green food price
X6: Shopping environment	Degree of convenience for consumers to buy green food
X7: Reference group	Group influencing the purchase of consumers
Y: Green food purchasing behavior	Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers

Note: This table is compiled by the author of this study.

In this study, Enjoining platform (an online survey platform in China providing functions equivalent to SurveyMonkey) is used as the questionnaire carrier, and the questionnaire prepared is organized on the platform and distributed to the survey subjects to fill in. The questionnaire filling channel on the platform is closed after 30 days from the release of questionnaire, and data is collected for statistics.

3.2 Sources and Descriptions of Indicators

A total of 7 indicators is defined in this study, wherein the sources and descriptions of these indicators are as in the following table (Table 2):

TABLE 2 7 SUMMARY OF DEFINED INDICATOR SOURCES

Variable	Value	Source
Gender	1=Male, 2=Female	/

	1=Under 18 years old	
	2=18-30 years old	
Age	3=31-45 years old	
	4=46-60 years old	
Marital status	1=Married, 2=Unmarried	
Children status	1=Yes, 2=None	
	1=Elementary school or lower	
	2=Technical secondary school or junior high school	
Education level	3=Senior vocational school or high school	
	4=Junior college or college	
	5=Postgraduate or higher	
	1=Lower than 2,000 yuan	
	2=2,000-4,000 yuan	
Monthly income	3=4,000-6,000 yuan	
	4=6,000-8,000 yuan	
	5=8,000-10,000 yuan	
	6=More than 10,000 yuan	
X1: Lifestyle	P1-P3	YU Qiannan (2012)
X2:Purchase experience	P4-P6	Jue Chen (2012)
X3: Income level	P7-P9	TENG Guoling (2014)
X4: Nutrition	C1-C3	Magnusson (2001)
X5: Price	C4-C7	D-Souza (2006)
X6:Shopping environment	E2-E6	McCarthy (2002)
X7: Reference group	E7-E1	LAO Kefu (2013)
Y: Green food purchasing behavior	X	/

Note: This table is compiled by the author of this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sample Descriptive Analysis

A total of 319 questionnaires are returned in this questionnaire survey. After filtering the questionnaires with missing data and the questionnaires filled in by those who are not survey subjects, a total of 286 valid questionnaires are obtained, achieving an effective rate of 898.655%. All data Analysis below are based on the 286 valid questionnaires.

4.2 Binomial Logistic Regression Equation

According to the research needs of this topic, it is

TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF BINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS (N=286)

Variable	B	S.E	Wals	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
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necessary to explore the relationships between lifestyle, nutritional value, price, purchase experience, shopping environment, reference group and whether consumers have ever purchased green food. There are two situations concerning whether consumers have ever purchased green food: "Yes" or "No", so the binomial logistic regression analysis should be used here. Next, the six items, i.e., lifestyle, nutritional value, price, purchase experience, shopping environment, and reference group, are used as independent variables, and the binomial logistic regression analysis is performed using Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers as the dependent variable (the first item of the demographic indicators in this questionnaire is used as a reference item for comparative analysis).

Variable	B	S.E	Wals	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Gender	-0.596	0.488	1.492	1	0.222	0.551
Age	-0.956	1.152	0.688	1	0.407	0.385
Marital status	-1.111	1.446	0.591	1	0.442	0.329
Status of children under 12 years old in families	-0.11	0.521	0.045	1	0.833	0.896
Education level	1.2	2.168	0.306	1	0.58	3.32
Monthly income	-0.711	1.07	0.037	1	0.021	1.365
Lifestyle	-0.805	0.443	0.041	1	0.031	0.995
Nutrition value	-0.803	0.056	0.738	1	0.098	0.558
Price	-0.848	0.361	0.015	1	0.029	0.428
Purchase experience	-0.985	0.429	0.012	1	0.032	2.678
Shopping environment	-0.753	0.551	0.035	1	0.026	0.777
Reference group	-0.608	0.503	0.027	1	0.037	0.545
Constant	3.103	2.696	1.325	1	0.25	22.267
Cox & Snell R2					0.111	
Nagelkerke R2					0.210	

* $P < 0.05$

Dependent variable: Whether consumers have ever purchased green food

Note: This table is compiled by the author of this study.

The results of the data analysis in Table 3 show that the Cox & Snell R2 of this survey is 0.111, which means that these 12 factors, i.e., gender, age, marital status, status of children under 12 years old in families, education level, monthly income, lifestyle, nutritional value, price, purchase experience, shopping environment, and reference group, can explain why the value of the item "whether consumers have ever purchased green food" is 11.1%. In addition, the table also shows that the model fits well. During the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, the P value is 0.201 (greater than 0.05), which proves that the Hosmer-Lemeshow test also show that the real situation is almost the same as that predicted.

As can be seen from Table 3, the P values corresponding to gender, age, marital status, status of children under 12 years old in families, education level, and monthly income are all greater than 0.5, indicating that the seven demographic variables above do not affect the item of whether the corresponding population has ever purchased green food. Meanwhile, the P values of the four variables, i.e., lifestyle, nutritional value, shopping environment, and reference group, are also greater than 0.5, which indicates that the four variables do not affect the item of whether the corresponding population has ever purchased green food.

However, the P value corresponding to the nutrition value is 0.738, which is more than 0.05, indicating that

the nutrition value will not affect the item of whether the sample population has ever purchased green food. The nutrition value corresponding to B is -0.803, which is less than 0, indicating that the higher the nutrition value, the lower the probability of the sample population buying green food. In addition, the value of Exp (B) is 0.558, which means that every time the price increases by one unit, the probability of the sample population buying green food will become 0.428 times the previous one.

As can be drawn from the above table, the p values corresponding to the monthly income, lifestyle, price, purchase experience, purchase environment and reference group are all less than 0.05. Therefore, these six indicators have a significant influence on consumers' buying green food, that is, accepting null hypothesis and refusing alternative hypothesis. As is reflected in Table 3, p value corresponding to nutrition value is greater than 0.05, which shows that the variable has no significant impact on consumers buying green food, accepting the alternative hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

According to the results of the survey and data analysis in this study, in the 7 hypotheses proposed at the beginning of this paper, 6 of them are con-firmed, and the remaining 1 hypothesis is falsified. The details are shown in the following table:

TABLE 4 SUMMARY OF THE HYPOTHESIS VALIDATION RESULTS

Hypotheses	Contents	Verification results
H1	Lifestyle has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Confirmed
H2	Purchase experience has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Confirmed
H3	Monthly income has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Confirmed
H4	Nutrition has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Falsified
H5	Price has a negative influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Confirmed
H6	Shopping environment has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Confirmed
H7	Reference group has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers	Confirmed

Note: This table is compiled by the author of this study.

According to the verification results, among the hypotheses which are falsified, the result shows significant influence supporting hypothesis H1 during the hypothesis verification in this study. In the verification process of H1, the independent variable is "lifestyle" and the dependent variable is "whether consumers have ever purchased green food". In the binomial logistic regression analysis, the P value of "lifestyle" is 0.041; that is to say, significant influence of "lifestyle" on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers is observed. Therefore, the hypothesis "H1: Lifestyle has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers" is established.

Hypothesis H2 is confirmed by the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire in this study. Due to the actual measured results, after the common factor extraction, according to the operating results, the P value of "purchase experience" was 0.012, that is, "purchase experience" affects the behavior of consumers buying green food. Therefore, the hypothesis "H2: Purchase experience has a positive influence on Green Food Purchasing Behavior of Consumers" is established.

Hypothesis H3 is also confirmed by the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire in this study. Due to the actual measured results, after the common factor extraction, according to the operating results, the P value of "income level" was 0.037, that is, "income level" significantly affects the behavior of consumers buying green food. Therefore, the hypothesis "H3: Income level has a positive impact on consumers buying green food" is established.

Hypothesis H4 is falsified by the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire in this study. After the common factor extraction, the nutrition variable has been integrated into the nutritional value variable. As seen above, the P value of "nutritional value" is 0.738, that is, significant impact of "nutrition" is not observed on the consumers behavior buying green food. Therefore, the hypothesis "H4: nutrition has a positive impact on consumer purchases of green food" is not established.

Hypothesis H5 is also confirmed by the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire in this study. After the common factor extraction, as seen above, the P value of "price" is 0.015, that is, significant impact of "price" is observed on the consumers behavior buying green food. Therefore, the hypothesis "H5: Price has a negative impact on consumer purchases of green food" is established.

Hypothesis H6 is confirmed by the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire in this study. As described above, in the confirmation process of H6, the independent variable is "shopping environment", due to the variable is "whether the consumer has purchased green food", the P value is 0.035, that is, significant impact of "shopping environment" on the consumer behavior buying green food is not observed. Therefore, the hypothesis "H6: Shopping environment has a positive impact on consumer purchase of green food" is established.

Hypothesis H7 is confirmed by the reliability and validity test of the questionnaire in this study. Similarly, in the confirmation process of H7, the independent

variable is "reference group", due to the variable is "whether the consumer has purchased green food", the P value is 0.027, that is, significant impact of "shopping environment" on the consumer behavior buying green food is not observed. Therefore, the hypothesis "H7: Reference group has a positive impact on consumer purchase of green food" is established.

Based on the results of the studies and hypothesis validation above, a conclusion could be drawn as follows. Lifestyle affects consumers in buying green food, and there are positive effects. Purchase experience also affects consumers purchasing green food; the more purchase experience they have, the more likely they buy green food. Price affects the consumers purchasing green food; the higher the price is, the less likely they buy green food; The shopping environment has a positive impact on consumers buying green food, namely, the better the shopping environment is, the more likely they buy green food. The reference group has a positive impact on consumers' behavior buying green food.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through sorting and collecting relevant literature and field research, the paper proposes a model of factors influencing consumers' behavior on purchasing green food. The influencing factors are mainly divided into three levels, namely personal factors, product factors and environmental factors, including lifestyle, purchase experience, health awareness, income level, nutrition, price, climate environment, shopping environment and reference group research hypothesis. By taking Harbin consumers as the research objects, first-hand materials for quantitative analysis are collected. The paper mainly analyzes the factors affecting purchasing behavior on green food and their influencing degree through empirical research methods. Based on the results of the regression analysis, the conclusions can be drawn as follows:

From the perspective of personal factors, there are significant influence and significant positive correlation between three research variables including lifestyle, purchase experience and income level, and purchasing behavior on green food. Compared with the lifestyle and purchase experience, the income level of consumers has a large influence on the purchasing behavior on green food, which belongs to the main influencing factor.

From the perspective of product factors, the significance level of nutritional variables of green food is 0.738, exceeding the threshold value of 0.05, which indicates no significant correlation between nutritional factors and green food purchase behavior, so the research hypothesis proposed in this paper is rejected. The significance level of the price variable of green food is

-0.803, indicating that the price factors are significantly negatively related to the green food purchase behavior, and are close to the influence degree of health awareness and income level, which also belongs to the main influencing factor of the green food purchase behavior of consumers.

From the perspective of environmental factors, the significance levels of both 0.012 and 0.035 are less than the threshold value of 0.05, indicating that two research variables including shopping environment and the reference group significantly affect the green food purchase behavior. There is a positive correlation between the two research variables and the consumers' behavior purchasing green food.

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