

# Main Factors that Explain Organic Food Purchase Intention: A Systematic Review

PRINCIPALES FACTORES QUE EXPLICAN LA INTENCIÓN DE COMPRA DE ALIMENTOS ORGÁNICOS: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA

**RESUMEN:** esta investigación tuvo como objetivo comprender los factores tras la intención de compra de productos orgánicos mencionados en la literatura y proporcionar pautas conceptuales y teóricas para futuras investigaciones sobre el tema. Para ello, se realizó una revisión sistemática de artículos de investigación originales incluidos en las bases de datos Scopus y Web of Science durante el período 2011-2021, que arrojó una muestra de 162 artículos. Los resultados muestran que la actitud, los valores y la confianza del consumidor son los principales factores asociados a la intención de compra de alimentos orgánicos. Además, se identificó que la teoría del comportamiento planificado es el marco teórico más empleado para el análisis de la intención de compra de este tipo de alimentos. Los cambios generados por la pandemia de covid-19 se manifiestan en los valores de los consumidores y sus implicaciones para la venta de alimentos orgánicos. En consecuencia, se sugiere considerar los valores de los consumidores como variables que entrelazan los enfoques racional y motivacional en el análisis de los patrones de consumo. Además, se recomienda estudiar la intención de compra que subyace a la estimulación de las actitudes y la confianza de los consumidores con base en sus valores. Finalmente, se propone incorporar el análisis del efecto mediador de las actitudes y la confianza en la relación entre los valores y la intención de compra.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** actitud, confianza, valores del consumidor, covid-19, teoría del comportamiento planificado.

PRINCIPAIS FATORES QUE EXPLICAM A INTENÇÃO DE COMPRA DE ALIMENTOS ORGÁNICOS: UMA REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA

**RESUMO:** este estudo buscou compreender os fatores por trás da intenção de compra de produtos orgânicos mencionados na literatura existente e fornece diretrizes conceituais e teóricas para futuras pesquisas sobre o tema. Foi realizada uma revisão sistemática dos trabalhos de pesquisa originais incluídos nas bases de dados da Scopus e Web of Science no período de 2011 a 2021, resultando em uma amostra de 162 artigos. Os resultados mostram que a atitude, os valores e a confiança do consumidor foram os principais fatores na intenção de comprar alimentos orgânicos. Além disso, verificou-se que a teoria do comportamento planejado foi o enquadramento teórico mais utilizado na análise da compra de alimentos orgânicos. As mudanças trazidas pela pandemia da covid-19 se manifestam nos valores dos consumidores e suas implicações na venda desse tipo de alimentos. Propomos considerar os valores dos consumidores como variáveis que entrelaçam as abordagens racional e motivacional à análise do consumo. Propõe-se também compreender a intenção de compra subjacente ao estímulo às atitudes e à confiança dos consumidores devido aos seus valores. Por fim, sugere-se considerar a análise do efeito mediador das atitudes e da confiança na relação entre valores e intenção de compra.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** atitude, confiança, valores do consumidor, covid-19, teoria do comportamento planejado.

LES PRINCIPAUX FACTEURS QUI EXPLIQUENT L'INTENTION D'ACHAT D'ALIMENTS BIOLOGIQUES : UNE REVUE SYSTÉMATIQUE

**RÉSUMÉ :** Cette étude visait à comprendre les facteurs à l'origine de l'intention d'achat de produits biologiques mentionnés dans la littérature existante et à fournir des lignes directrices conceptuelles et théoriques pour les recherches futures sur le sujet. On a effectué une révision systématique des articles de recherche originaux inclus dans les bases de données Scopus et Web of Science au cours de la période 2011-2021, ce qui a donné lieu à un échantillon de 162 articles. Les résultats montrent que l'attitude, les valeurs et la confiance du consommateur étaient les principaux facteurs de l'intention d'acheter des aliments biologiques. De plus, on a constaté que la théorie du comportement planifié était le cadre théorique le plus utilisé dans l'analyse de l'achat d'aliments biologiques. Les changements apportés par la pandémie de covid-19 se manifestent dans les valeurs des consommateurs et leurs implications pour la vente de ce type d'aliments. Nous proposons de considérer les valeurs des consommateurs comme des variables qui entremêlent les approches rationnelles et motivationnelles de l'analyse de la consommation. On propose également de comprendre l'intention d'achat qui sous-tend la stimulation des attitudes et la confiance des consommateurs en raison de leurs valeurs. Enfin, on suggère de considérer l'analyse de l'effet médiateur des attitudes et de la confiance dans la relation entre les valeurs et l'intention d'achat.

**MOTS-CLÉ :** attitude, confiance, valeurs des consommateurs, covid-19, théorie du comportement planifié.

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**ABSTRACT:** This study sought to understand the factors behind the intention towards buying organic products mentioned in the existing literature and provide conceptual and theoretical guidelines for future research on the subject. A systematic revision of original research papers included in Scopus and Web of Science databases during the period 2011-2021 was conducted, resulting in a sample of 162 articles. The results show that the attitude, values, and confidence of the consumer were the main factors in the intention to buy organic foods. Moreover, it was found that the theory of planned behavior was the most used theoretical framework in the analysis of organic foods purchasing. The changes brought by the covid-19 pandemic are manifested in consumers' values and their implications to the sale of this type of foods. We propose to consider consumers' values as variables that intertwine the rational and motivational approaches to consumption analysis. It is also proposed to understand the purchase intention underlying the stimulation of attitudes and the confidence of consumers due to their values. Finally, it is suggested to consider the analysis of the mediating effect of attitudes and trust in the relationship between values and purchase intention.

**KEYWORDS:** Attitude, confidence, consumer values, covid-19, theory of planned behavior.

## Introduction

Organic agriculture, as opposed to conventional agriculture, can provide greater benefits to the consumers, the environment, and to their very producers (Leyva-Hernández *et al.*, 2021; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). Despite the benefits brought by this agricultural approach, the transition towards such model is complicated due to the integration of different areas such as public policy and marketing (Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). However, this sector has seen a considerable growth, which establishes an attractive research field for scholars and experts (Çabuk *et al.*, 2014). In this sense, the analysis of the factors that influence the purchasing of organic foods is necessary to establish market strategies that could promote this type of agriculture.

Organic food consumption has mainly been studied under the Theory of planned behavior (TPB), which argues that the attitudes, subjective norms, and the perceived control of behaviors explain the intention and, at the same time, the purchasing behavior (Ajzen, 1991). For example, a research study proves that the proposed predictors in said theory explain the purchase intention of organic foods in the Czech Republic (Zagata, 2012). Also, the attitude, subjective norms, and the perceived behavior control influence the purchase intention of organic foods in certain countries, such as South Korea and Australia (Lee *et al.*, 2015; Sultan *et al.*, 2020). Despite the cultural differences among countries, TPB-related variables positively influence the purchase intention of organic foods.

However, there are theories and models other than TPB that have been suggested as an extension of this approach, and that have emerged as the basis of studies on the organic food consumption. For example, the model of goal-directed behavior includes the desire as a mediator of the predictors of TPB and the purchase intention (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). The desire can be seen as a strong wish in this type of consumption, which is not based on a rational process (Leyva-Hernández *et al.*, 2021) and involves the achievement of goals that may be different from a common purchase behavior (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001).

In addition, the behavioral reasoning theory considers the predictors of the intention of the theory of planned behaviour as global motives, and suggests that they are explained by reasons for and against the development of a given behavior (Westaby, 2005). Under the behavioral reasoning theory, values and beliefs affect consumption evaluation and attitude, thus generating an influence over a purchase intention (Westaby, 2005).

This indicates that not only can TPB explain the consumption of organic foods, but also that models and theories that include other variables have been developed in order to broaden the understanding of consumption patterns. For example, the stimulus-organism-response theory stipulates that consumers' external stimuli affect their internal state, and therefore consumers respond with a purchase intention (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). As such, in this study, we conduct a systematic literature review in order to explain the main factors behind the purchase intention for organic foods, based on the insights from existing research studies and the main theories that explain the purchase intention phenomenon. We also seek to provide conceptual and theoretical guidelines for future studies on the subject.

Previous literature review works have had different focuses, such as developing a conceptual framework (Dangi *et al.*, 2020), a theoretical framework (Rana & Paul, 2017), or a meta-analysis (Massey *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, this research seeks to provide different conceptual and theoretical orientations for future studies and not only focusing on proposing a single theoretical or conceptual framework. In addition, our study points out the main factors explaining the intention towards organic food purchasing determined by the COVID-19 pandemic, since, as a result of the confinement, restrictions on purchases increased due to social distancing and organic certifications became important for consumers (Brugarolas *et al.*, 2020; Sheth, 2020).

The structure of this paper is as follows. The next section presents the methodology applied. Then, the findings of the research work are introduced to later address the theoretical and conceptual guidelines proposed for future research studies. Finally, the conclusions and implications of this study are mentioned.

## Methodology

In order to carry out the systematic literature review, a series of steps that include planning, managing, and reporting/disseminating the results were followed (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). As such, a search for original research articles, published from 2011 to 2021, addressing the topic of the purchase intention towards organic products was conducted. The online search was performed in Web of Science and Scopus databases at the end of April 2021. The key terms used in the search were "organic food purchase intention," both in English and Spanish. Only original articles were considered, thus excluding book chapters, reports, theses, unpublished manuscripts, and revision articles. Articles analyzed by structural equation were also considered. Through the search in Scopus, a total of 212 records



were obtained, while the search in the Web of Science led to 476 records, as shown in table 1. The resulting publications were retrieved from Scopus and the Web of Science using to the following commands:

Scopus

TITLE-ABS-KEY ( organic AND food AND purchase AND intention) AND PUBYEAR > 2010 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) )

Web of Science

ALL FIELDS: (Organic food purchase intention)  
 Refined by: TYPES OF DOCUMENTS: (ARTICLE )  
 Time period: 2011-2021. Indices: SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, ESCI.

**Table 1.**  
*Results of the search in the databases used.*

Database	Keywords	Results
Scopus	Organic food purchase intention	212
Web of Science	Organic food purchase intention	476

Source: authors.

Figure 1 describes the steps for the selection of articles. In the first step, a comparison between the articles included in both databases was carried out in order to exclude duplicate records, resulting in an initial sample of 534 articles. During the second step, the articles that could not be accessed were excluded since there was not permission to review them. Consequently, 18 articles were removed in this step and 6 more discarded due to the language criterion, as they were not written in English or Spanish. Additionally, 5 review articles were also excluded during step 2. Therefore, 505 articles remained by the end of this stage of the process. In the third step, the articles that had no relation to the consumption of organic foods were omitted, discarding 152 of them, thus keeping 353 articles. In the final step, only articles that applied the analysis of structural equations for data processing were considered, as through this statistical technique the relationships of measured theoretical concepts can be studied through other variables (Benitez *et al.*, 2020), which allows quantifying abstract concepts and confirming the relationships proposed in the theories related with analysis of the motivators of the organic food consumption, in this case,

TPB, Stimulus-organism-response, Theory of Consumption Value, and Theory of Reasoned action, among others. With this, the variables that influence the purchase intention for organic foods can be understood. At this stage, 191 articles were discarded, therefore leaving 162 articles in the sample.

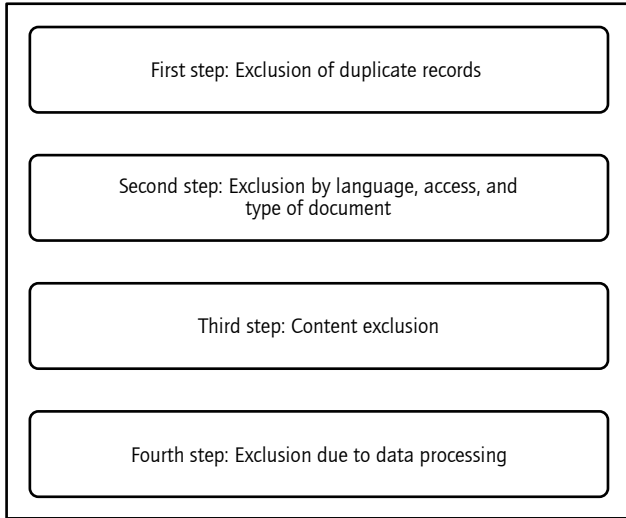


Figure 1. Selection of articles. Source: authors.

### Findings

Most of the publications examined considered primary data. Figure 2 shows that in 76.7% of the publications data analysis was performed through the analysis of structural equations based on covariance (CB-SEM), while the

remaining articles (23.3%) did so through the analysis of structural equations using partial least squares (PLS-SEM), which frames that modelling based on covariances is still being used more than that based on variances. Results allow identifying that 2.4% of the papers studied do not mention the country or countries where the research work took place, 63.2% of the articles were carried out in emerging economies, and 34.4% in developed economies.

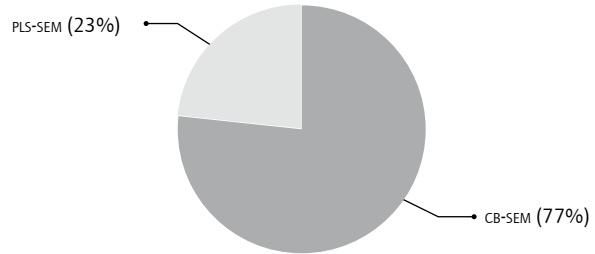


Figure 2. Model of structural equations used for the analysis of the motivations in the purchase of organic foods. Source: authors.

Figure 3 lists the journals where selected papers were published, including the number of publications in each one. Among the ten journals with the highest number of publications, British Food Journal is first, with 20 publications, followed by Food Quality and Preference (13), Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (12), Sustainability (12), Journal of Food Products Marketing (9), Journal of Cleaner Production (7), Appetite (6), Foods (5), Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics (3), and Cogent Business & Management (3).



Figure 3. Journals publishing the selected papers on the motivations towards the purchasing of organic foods. Source: authors.

The revision of the selected publications regarding the main motivating factors in the consumption of organic foods and theories that explain them are presented below.

**Attitude**

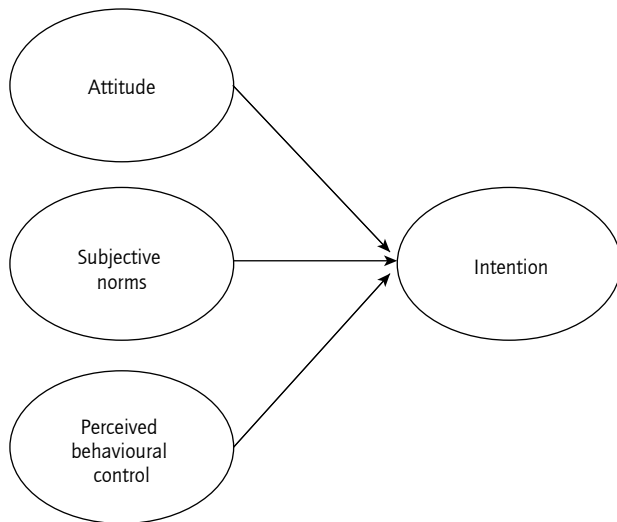
Attitude is understood as the favourable evaluation of a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The attitude is a predictive factor of the intention to buy organic foods that is present in 44.9% of the analyzed studies (table 2). The relation between attitude and purchase intention is considered equally under TPB (Ajzen, 1991), as in other theories. For example, many studies reveal that attitude is the variable within the theory

of planned behavior (figure 4) that largely explains the purchase intention for organic foods (Al-Swidi *et al.*, 2014; Bai *et al.*, 2019; Dorce *et al.*, 2021; Sultan *et al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2019; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). Other studies explain the purchasing of organic products through the principles of the behavioral reasoning theory, and find out that attitude has an influence on the purchase intention for these products (Ryan & Casidy, 2018; Tandon *et al.*, 2020). Said theory takes the view that attitudes are a global motive for intention, but that there are also reasons for and against such behavior, on which beliefs and values exert some influence (Westaby, 2005).

**Table 2.**  
*Studies that support the relationship between attitude and purchase intention for organic foods.*

Theory or model	Authors
Theory of planned behavior	Ahmed <i>et al.</i> (2021); Al-Swidi <i>et al.</i> (2014); Asif <i>et al.</i> (2018); Bai <i>et al.</i> (2019); Boobalan <i>et al.</i> (2021); Boobalan and Nachimuthu (2020); Caliskan <i>et al.</i> (2020); Canova <i>et al.</i> (2020); Carfora <i>et al.</i> (2019); Demirtas (2019); Dorce <i>et al.</i> (2021); Ham <i>et al.</i> (2018); Hoang <i>et al.</i> (2020); Kashif <i>et al.</i> (2020); Lee (2016); Lee <i>et al.</i> (2015); Li and Jaharuddin (2021); Nguyen <i>et al.</i> (2021); Nguyen <i>et al.</i> (2019); Pacho (2020); Pandey <i>et al.</i> (2019); Rahman and Noor (2016); Sadiq <i>et al.</i> (2021); Saleki <i>et al.</i> (2019); Sultan <i>et al.</i> (2020); Tuan and Vinh (2016); Ünal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Urban <i>et al.</i> (2012); Vassallo <i>et al.</i> (2016); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2020); Wang <i>et al.</i> (2019); Yadav and Pathak (2016); Yazdanpanah and Forouzani (2015); Zagata (2012)
Alphabet theory	Li and Jaharuddin (2020)
Behavioral reasoning theory	Ryan and Casidy (2018); Tandon <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Hybrid choice model	Yangui <i>et al.</i> (2016)
Institutional theory, advertising effectiveness, theory of planned behavior	Lacoeuilhe <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Model of goal directed behavior	Leyva-Hernández <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Reasoned action approach	Aitken <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Schwartz's personal values	Mainardes <i>et al.</i> (2017)
Self-perception theory	Koklic <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Self-construal theory	Kareklas <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Stimulus-organism-response	Lee and Yun (2015)
Storytelling	Nie <i>et al.</i> (2017)
Theory of consumption values	Rahnama (2017)
Consumer decision model and theory of planned behavior	Teng and Wang (2015)
Theory of planned behavior, transaction cost theory, signalling theory	Liang (2016)
Theory of reasoned action	Effendi (2020); Mohanty (2020); Müller and Gaus (2015); Nosi <i>et al.</i> (2020); Shahriari <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Triple bottom line	Hsu <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Values theory	Ruiz-de-Maya <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Not mentioned	Cachero-Martínez (2020); Chu (2018); Erdoğan Yazar and Burucuoğlu (2019); Farias <i>et al.</i> (2019); Hauser <i>et al.</i> (2010); Iweala <i>et al.</i> (2019); Lu <i>et al.</i> (2019); Nagaraj (2021); Ogorevc <i>et al.</i> (2020); Palmero and Montemayor (2020); Pham <i>et al.</i> (2019); Pino <i>et al.</i> (2012); Sarabia-Andreu <i>et al.</i> (2019); Wijesinghe and Aththanayaka (2021); Yadav (2016)

Source: authors.



**Figure 4.** Theory of planned behavior. Source: Ajzen (1991).

Among other variables related with the consumption of organic foods, attitude is also a predictive variable. For example, Ashraf (2020) mentions that attitude positively influences a limited rational plan to purchase organic foods, as indicated by the theory of limited rational planned behavior, where a volitional process is involved – one that is controlled by the consumer (Ashraf, 2017).

### Values of the consumer

In the analyzed studies, the values of consumers are mainly considered in the theory of consumption values (Sheth *et al.*, 1991), in the value-attitude-behavior model, and in the green perceived value model (Woo & Kim, 2019). The theory of consumption values considers the functional, conditional, social, epistemic, and emotional value in the consumption choice (Sheth *et al.*, 1991). Meanwhile, the green perceived value model indicates that functional, conditional, social, and emotional values influence the attitude of green purchasing (Woo & Kim, 2019). In the same way, the value-attitude-behavior model in the context of food explains that values form attitudes (Homer & Kahle, 1988). Hence, values are understood as motivating forces underlying certain behavior (Schwartz, 1992).

In the green value model and the value-attitude-behavior model, values function as an organized system, explaining the motivational bases of attitudes (Olson & Zanna, 1993; Schwartz, 2012; Vinson *et al.*, 1977). The values of the consumer influence the attitudes towards purchasing and are differentiated from attitudes. On the one hand, attitudes are the degree to which a person has a favourable evaluation of the behavior (Ajzen, 1991), in this case, the purchase behavior. On the other, values express motivational worries and depend on the utility of the product (Schwartz

& Bilsky, 1987; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), which also directly influence the behavior regarding organic purchases, as indicated by the theory of consumption values. Table 3 lists the studies on consumer values for organic products.

Rahnama (2017), Kushwah *et al.* (2019b), Qasim *et al.* (2019), Zaidi *et al.* (2019), Amin and Tarun (2020), and Lin *et al.* (2020) refer to the theory of consumer values in their studies on the purchase of organic foods in India, Pakistan, Iran, China, and Bangladesh from a perspective of ethical purchasing. These authors related purchases with multiple values that are not only centered on the consumer, but also on the environment, society, and functionality, among others. Akbar *et al.* (2019) and Kashif *et al.* (2021) refer to the consumer values postulated in the green perceived value model but considering predictors for the purchase intention of organic foods in the Pakistan context, given that organic consumption is highly related to green purchases, as these favor the protection of the environment.

The study of the influence of emotional, conditional, and epistemic values on the purchase intention and consumers' choice for organic foods in countries with emerging economies stands out in the papers examined (Kushwah *et al.*, 2019a; Qasim *et al.*, 2019). The emotional value is associated with the stimulation of emotions or feelings provoked by the purchase, while the conditional value depends on the circumstances and situations, and epistemic value stimulates interest and novelty (Sheth *et al.*, 1991). In the purchase of organic foods, the stimulation of consumer feelings, the circumstances, and situations surrounding the purchase and novelty of the product are factors that determine the purchase intention.

The role of consumer values in the analysis of organic consumption has also been studied from other perspectives. Kareklas *et al.* (2014) consider selfish and altruistic values as factors involved in the purchase of foods from the self-construal theory, finding that thriftiness and a pro-environmental lifestyle influence the purchase intention. Ryan and Casidy (2018) consider the role of values as predictors of the attitude in the analysis of the consumption of organic foods under behavioral reasoning theory (Westaby, 2005). Under this theory, values such as health awareness can also be considered predictors of the reasons for and against the behavior of purchasing organic foods (Ryan & Casidy, 2018; Tandon *et al.*, 2020).

Under the theory of planned behavior, environmental conscience, appearance conscience, health conscience, and food harmlessness have been studied (Fleseriu *et al.*, 2020; Li & Jaharuddin, 2021; Ünal *et al.*, 2019; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). For example, Yadav and Pathak (2016), Fleseriu *et al.* (2020), and Nguyen *et al.* (2021) proved that

**Table 3.**  
*Studies on consumer values for organic products.*

Theory or model	Values	Authors
Theory of consumption value	Epistemic, conditional, and emotional	Kushwah <i>et al.</i> (2019a); Qasim <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Theory of consumption value	Functional, conditional, epistemic and health	Rahnama (2017)
Theory of consumption value	Functional and emotional	Lin <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Theory of consumption value	Emotional	Amin and Tarun (2020)
Theory of consumption value	Functional and social	Zaidi <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Value-attitude-behavior model	Biospheric	Shin <i>et al.</i> (2017)
Green perceived value model	Functional, conditional, social, and emotional	Akbar <i>et al.</i> (2019); Kashif <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Self-construal theory	Frugality and healthy lifestyle	Kareklas <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Behavioral reasoning theory	Health conscience, consumer values	Ryan and Casidy (2018); Tandon <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Stimulus-organism-response	Ecological welfare	Lee and Yun (2015)
Stimulus-organism-response	Health conscience and food harmlessness	Talwar <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Dual factor theory, innovation resistance theory, and stimulus-organism-response	Ecological welfare and health conscience	Tandon <i>et al.</i> (2021)
Not mentioned	Environmental conscience	Farias <i>et al.</i> (2019); Mahrinasari (2019)
Not mentioned	Environmental/ecological and health conscience	Chu (2018); De Toni <i>et al.</i> (2018); Katt and Meixner (2020); Konuk (2018a); Molinillo <i>et al.</i> (2020); Nathan <i>et al.</i> (2021); Nguyen and Truong (2021); Prakash <i>et al.</i> (2018)
Theory of planned behavior	Environmental conscience and health conscience	Li and Jaharuddin (2021); Ünal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Yadav and Pathak (2016)
Theory of planned behavior	Environmental conscience	Ahmed <i>et al.</i> (2021); Nguyen <i>et al.</i> (2021); Saleki <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Self-perception theory	Environmental conscience	Koklic <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Environmental value-attitude-system model	Environmental conscience	Pandey and Khare (2015)
Triple bottom line	Environmental conscience and food harmlessness	Hsu <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Not mentioned	Food harmlessness	Hsu <i>et al.</i> (2016); Hwang (2016); Nguyen <i>et al.</i> (2019); Pino <i>et al.</i> (2012)
Theory of planned behavior	Environmental conscience, health conscience and food harmlessness	Fleseriu <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Theory of planned behavior	Food harmlessness	Le-Anh and Nguyen-To (2020)

Source: authors.

environmental conscience explains attitude, whilst Ahmed *et al.* (2021) and Li and Jaharuddin (2021) showed that conscience for appearance explains purchase intention. Fleseriu *et al.* (2020), Nguyen *et al.* (2019), and Yadav and Pathak (2016) showed that health conscience exercises a positive effect on attitude, and Muhammad Asif *et al.* (2018), Fleseriu *et al.* (2020), Kashif *et al.* (2020), Li and Jaharuddin (2021), Wang *et al.* (2019), and Yadav and Pathak (2016) demonstrated that it exercises a positive effect on purchase intention.

Fleseriu *et al.* (2020), Hsu *et al.* (2016), Hwang (2016), Le-Anh and Nguyen-To (2020), Hoang Viet Nguyen *et al.* (2019), and Pino *et al.* (2012) found that conscience of food harmlessness positively influences attitude. Additionally, the environmental factor has also been analysed under the value-attitude-behavior model, where Shin *et al.* (2017) identified that the biospheric value, related to the harmonisation of the individual with nature, the protection of the environment, the preservation of nature, and

the balance with nature, influences pro-environmental attitudes in the United States.

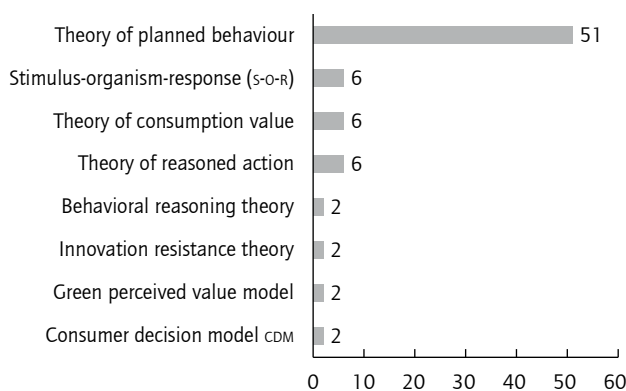
### Confidence

Confidence is another relevant predictor of the purchase intention for organic foods (Konuk, 2018b; Mohammed, 2020; Teng & Wang, 2015; Yu *et al.*, 2021). Confidence can be understood as the expectations of compliance from the provider, brands, and the product purchased that involve a dependence on others based on their integrity and trustworthiness (Konuk, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Wang & Tsai, 2014).

Wang and Tsai (2014), Khare and Pandey (2017), and Pandey *et al.* (2020) have studied the positive influence of confidence towards retailers on the purchase intention for organic foods. In turn, Ladwein and Sánchez Romero (2021) examined the positive effect of confidence in retailers and producers on the purchase intention for these products. Müller and Gaus (2015) and Cachero-Martínez (2020) analyzed the relationship between confidence in an organic food brand and its purchase intention. Additionally, confidence exercises an effect not only on purchase intention, but also on the purchasing behavior for organic foods (David *et al.*, 2020; Wheeler *et al.*, 2019).

### Main theories

A summary of the main theories employed for the analysis of the motivations behind the purchasing of organic foods is shown in figure 5, where TPB is observed as the main theoretical approach, as it is mentioned as the most recurrent theory. TPB is the prevailing approach in 51 of the research works in the sample, followed by the Stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory, the theory of consumption value, and the theory of reasoned action, each with six works.



**Figure 5.** Theories that sustain the analysis of motivations underlying the purchasing of organic foods. Source: authors.

### COVID-19

Given the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, some articles indicate the influence of the health emergency on the purchase behavior for organic foods. For example, environmental awareness and support for local businesses have gained relevance in the perception of consumers. As the pandemic led to an increase in waste and economic affectations, buying organic foods could offset these negative effects (Cachero-Martínez, 2020). The pandemic has also imposed new requirements that directly affect purchase intention, such as social distancing, which is not respected in various places where these foods are sold, despite being necessary to avoid contagions (Prince & Wahid, 2020). During this pandemic, variables such as food security and knowledge on said matter have become relevant, directly affecting attitude, trust, social pressure, and autonomy (Latip *et al.*, 2020).

TPB is maintained during the analysis of the purchase of organic food during the COVID-19 pandemic, but variables such as food safety and knowledge have been added as predictors of the exogenous variables of said theory, and the variable perceived green trust as an endogenous variable of the predictors of TPB (Latip *et al.*, 2020). Also, studies carried out during the pandemic, such as that of Prince and Wahid (2020), used extensions of the theory of reasoned action as a theoretical framework, since they integrated the variable of social distance as a variable that intervenes between the predictors of price, availability, and the benefits analyzed in studies before the pandemic (Acar Bolat *et al.*, 2020; Hauser *et al.*, 2010; Lee & Yun, 2015; Prakash *et al.*, 2018; Prentice *et al.*, 2019; Yangzom & Singh, 2019) regarding organic food purchase intention. The pandemic also created interest in studying other variables, such as satisfaction and confidence, as predictive variables of the purchase intention and, at the same time, as intervening variables in the relationship between attitude and purchase intention (Cachero-Martínez, 2020). This frames the importance of confidence, knowledge, and social distancing in the analysis of the purchase intention (table 4).

### Theoretical and conceptual guidelines

Within the studies published in the last ten years (2011-2021), TPB has been maintained as the most widely used approach to explain the purchase intention for organic foods. In addition, under this theoretical framework, the relationships between the most relevant factors identified in this study –attitudes, values, and confidence– have been tested. For example, research has shown that



**Table 4.**  
*Studies published during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Theory	Endogenous variables	Intervening variables	Exogenous variables	Authors
Extension of the theory of planned behavior	Food safety knowledge	Attitude, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms	Perceived green trust, purchase intention	Latip <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Extension of the theory of reasoned action	Price, availability, benefits	Social distance	Purchase intention	Prince and Wahid (2020)
Extension of the theory of reasoned action	Attitude	Satisfaction, confidence	Purchase intention	Cachero-Martínez (2020)

Source: authors.

values are predictors of both attitude and purchase intention (Fleseriu *et al.*, 2020; Yadav & Pathak, 2016), and that values, attitudes, and confidence could explain purchase intention (Kashif *et al.*, 2020; Mohammed, 2020; Pandey *et al.*, 2019).

Not only trust, attitudes, and environmental awareness are variables that influence the intention to purchase organic foods, as when considering a broader perspective of analysis—such as green purchasing—these variables also stand out as individual characteristics of the consumer that affect their purchase intention. In turn, in green purchasing, TPB is also useful, since attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control towards a behavior are widely studied variables, whose influence on purchase intention has been tested (Zhuang *et al.*, 2021).

Our findings show that a large part of the selected publications state that attitude is a predictor of the purchase intention, and that the evaluation of the benefits of organic foods results in the purchase intention of these foods. This voluntary process is not only implicit in the purchasing of organic products, but other studies have shown it also applies for fast food (Pérez-Villarreal *et al.*, 2019) and foods with another type of certification, such as Halal (Ali *et al.*, 2017).

Depending on the type of food, other variables could also be present. For example, when it comes to fast food, the emotional factor influences the purchase intention (Pérez-Villarreal *et al.*, 2019); when consumers are happy, satisfied and excited, they will be more willing to consume this type of food, even when it does not improve their health or benefit the environment, as in the case of organic foods. In the case of Halal-certified food, religious beliefs influence consumers' purchase intention (Awan *et al.*, 2015), which does not occur for organic foods, as this certification is related to health and environmental aspects, but it is not religious. As shown in the results, the analysis of the purchase intention involves variables such as environmental awareness, health awareness, and food

harmlessness related with the health and the protection of the environment (Fleseriu *et al.*, 2020).

When the intention to purchase organic foods is analyzed, the constructs considered in TPB are also applied from other theoretical perspectives. For example, from the perspective of the Stimulus-organism-response, attitudes predict behavior (Lee & Yun, 2015; Liang & Lim, 2020), as it also occurs from the view of the alphabet theory (Li & Jaharuddin, 2020) and the behavioral reasoning theory (Ryan & Casidy, 2018; Tandon *et al.*, 2020). Theoretical constructs have also been involved in the development and application of theories that stem from the theory of planned behavior, such as the theory of bounded rational planned behavior (Ashraf, 2017, 2020).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, concepts such as social distance emerged, which can be seen as a construct that implies food security, health, well-being, and protection. Therefore, it is recommended to include this variable in future analysis, as it integrates indicators that are directly related to the purchasing of organic foods.

Other models and theories have also emerged, such as the behavioral reasoning theory, the theory of reasoned action, and the model of goal-directed behavior (Effendi, 2020; Leyva-Hernández *et al.*, 2021; Müller & Gaus, 2015; Ryan & Casidy, 2018; Tandon *et al.*, 2020). These theories provide a better understanding of organic products purchase intention from two perspectives: motivational and rational.

It is proposed that the intention to purchase organic foods be analyzed from both perspectives, rational and motivational, which could make use of the union of the behavioral reasoning theory, the theory of reasoned action, and the model of goal-directed behavior. With this union, values and confidence can be considered as the reasons for the consumption behavior, and variables such as price and availability can be the reasons against the consumption behavior, which additionally affect consumers' attitude. As

observed by studies conducted during the pandemic, price, availability and confidence are relevant variables in the analysis of the purchase intention, which supports findings by previous research studies, where values, confidence and price modify attitudes (Kareklas *et al.*, 2014; Lee & Yun, 2015; Lee *et al.*, 2015; Shahriari *et al.*, 2019; Ünal *et al.*, 2019; Yadav, 2016). In turn, attitude can explain purchase intention with the desire variable as a mediator of this relationship. As previous research studies have shown, the desire mediates the relationship between attitude and the purchase intention (Leyva-Hernández *et al.*, 2021). In this way, the rational and motivational perspective are united in a theoretical extension.

The application of theories different from TPB in the analysis of organic consumption, such as Stimulus-organism-response theory and consumption value theory, also have a relevant place in the examined papers. The studies analyzed under these theories have considered the internal state (organism) as attitudes, confidence, and values (Lee & Goudeau, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2020; Liang & Lim, 2020; Yu *et al.*, 2021). It was found that attitudes towards organic food and labels, considered as the internal state, were the ones that influenced the purchase intention (Liang & Lim, 2020). Besides, utilitarian and hedonic attitudes were considered as the organism receiving external stimuli (Lee & Goudeau, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2020).

As a result of the pandemic changes in decision-making processes emerged, demonstrating that knowledge of food safety modifies some attitudes (Prince & Wahid, 2020). Therefore, we propose that the Stimulus-organism-response theory becomes a theoretical framework where food safety knowledge is taken as the external stimulus that modifies attitudes and the internal state, resulting in an organic food purchase intention.

Research works prior to the health contingency highlight that the stimuli for the purchase of organic products are related to consumers' health and safety, the taste and nutritional aspects of products, and concerns regarding the environment and the welfare of animals (Puelles-Gallo *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, during the pandemic, the stimuli related to environmental awareness and food safety prevailed (Cachero-Martínez, 2020; Latip *et al.*, 2020). Consumers have become more aware of their health and the environment given the conditions imposed by COVID-19, and it is perceived that consumers have become more aware of their peers and that the social factor is a relevant variable in organic food purchasing studies. Other values such as social, health and environmental concerns can also be included as external stimuli of attitude, since these values have been proven to modify attitudes (Chu, 2018; Fleseriu *et al.*, 2020).

Some studies can relate the theory of values with the Stimulus-organism-response theory, the emotional, conditional and epistemic value can be seen as the stimuli of the consumer's feelings, of the circumstances and situations that surround the consumer's purchase and novelty of organic products. Therefore, the values could be the external stimuli that modify the internal state of the consumer.

Other studies indicated that confidence responds to a purchase intention when it is stimulated by attributes related to organic foods, corporate social responsibility, and environmental protection (Liang & Lim, 2020; Yu *et al.*, 2021), while consumer values can take the role of external stimuli and internal state (Liang & Lim, 2020; Talwar *et al.*, 2021). It is therefore proposed to consider confidence as the internal state that is modified by values, the attributes of organic foods, corporate social responsibility, and environmental protection, which consequently results in an intention to purchase organic food.

Small producers of this type of foods have sought to give credibility and confidence to their products through certifications (Araya-Pizarro & Araya Pizarro, 2020). Trust has also been taken into account in the purchase decision during the pandemic (Latip *et al.*, 2020). Within food research, it has been found that food confidence positively influences consumer satisfaction (Espejel-Blanco *et al.*, 2014). Hence, analysis on the influence of trust on both organic food purchasing behavior and consumer satisfaction could be considered. An extension of TPB where trust can be a variable that intervenes in the relationship between the predictors of the theory with purchase intention and satisfaction is proposed, since the pandemic emphasized the importance of trust in the study of organic foods purchasing. Table 5 presents the theoretical guidelines previously stated.

## Conclusions

Attitude is one of the variables that continues to be relevant in the analysis of organic food consumption, as it is considered in most of the theories and models that explain the purchase of these products. Values gain relevance as they are considered predictors of attitude and purchase intention. Such values include emotional, conditional, epistemic, altruistic, and selfish values, as well as health conscience, environmental conscience, and concerns for food harmlessness.

Additionally, some studies reveal that consumers' confidence is relevant in the purchasing decision, specifically confidence in the organic food, brand, retailers, and producers, due to their effects on attitude, intention, and

**Table 5.**  
*Theoretical guidelines.*

Theoretical framework	Proposed relationships
Behavioral reasoning theory, theory of reasoned action, and the model of goal-directed behavior	Reasons for (values, confidence), reasons against (price, availability) → Attitude → Desire (mediator) → Intention
Stimulus-organism-response theory	Stimulus (food safety knowledge) → Organism (attitude) → Response (purchase intention)
Stimulus-organism-response theory	Stimulus (social, health, and environmental concerns) → Organism (attitude) → Response (purchase intention)
Theory of values and Stimulus-organism-response theory	Stimulus (emotional, conditional, epistemic value) → Organism (attitude) → Response (purchase intention)
Stimulus-organism-response theory	Stimulus (values, attributes of organic food, corporate social responsibility, environmental protection) → Organism (confidence) → Response (purchase intention)
Theory of planned behavior	TPB predictors (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control) → Trust (mediator) → Satisfaction (purchase intention)

Source: authors.

the purchasing of organic foods. Confidence also affects customer loyalty, which increases the purchase behavior for these foods. In future research works, we suggest to examine the purchase decision under the study of attitude, consumer values, and confidence, given that existing studies show that these variables are key for purchasing intention and behavior. Consequently, marketing practitioners and public policy makers should contemplate said variables in the design of strategies aimed at promoting the purchase of this type of foods.

Based on our findings, existing studies on the subject have used the motivational and rational perspectives separately. However, it is possible to analyze them together by integrating the model of goal-directed behavior, the theory of reasoned action, and the theory of behavioral reasoning. Future research may consider reasons for and against (such as values, trust, price and availability) as predictors of attitude, and attitude as the predictor of purchase intention, with desire acting as the mediating variable. In this manner, the rational process –driven by reasoning– and the attitude and the motivational process –driven by desire– could be integrated.

The Stimulus-organism-response theory presents a theoretical framework that can be used when considering the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic to organic food purchasing intention, since the effects of the pandemic can be considered as external stimuli that affect the internal state and, consequently, result in a purchase intention. Under this theoretical framework, future research can consider the food safety knowledge, which is a relevant variable during the health contingency, as an external stimulus that modifies the attitude (organism) and generates a purchase intention.

Future research works under this theoretical framework could also consider values as external stimuli; these can be social, environmental or health awareness, or, according to the theory of values, emotional, conditional or epistemic values, which modify attitudes and results in a purchase intention. In turn, studies can use this theory considering trust as the organism and values, corporate social responsibility, environmental protection, and the attributes of organic food as stimuli.

Bearing in mind that TPB continues to explain purchase intention, it is recommended that future research studies consider this approach; although we suggest to apply an extension of this theory that considers trust as a mediating variable between its predictors (attitude, norms subjective, and perceived behavioral control) and the purchase intention. Likewise, satisfaction can be considered as an endogenous variable. Thus, not only could the willingness to buy be predicted, but it will also be possible to assess whether these variables predict consumer satisfaction.

### Disclosures

Authors declare no institutional or personal conflicts of interest.

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