

## I know who I am in green food consumption

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### Abstract

The study investigates the factors influencing young Chinese consumers' intention to consume green food. This study combined the theory of planned behavior and the normative activation model theory to determine whether green self-identity (GSI), awareness of environmental consequences (AEC), and subjective norms (SN) are related to green food consumption intention (GFI) through the mediating effects of green attitude (GA) and personal norms (PN). The study was conducted in the world's largest developing country, China. Quantitative methods were used in this study. Data were collected using a customized and validated survey instrument from 318 young consumers aged 14 to 35 in China. The data analysis revealed that GSI, SN, and AEC were significant predictors of PN and GA. This suggests that young consumers' GFI was directly influenced by PN and GA, while the relationship between PN, GA, and GFI was moderated by trust. The findings will significantly assist government officials, green marketers, and practitioners in recognising the role of GFI and trust in the evolution of young Chinese consumers' attitudes towards green food and their intention to consume green food, thus contributing to developing promotional policies and marketing strategies.

**Keywords:** Young consumers, Green self-identify, Green food consumption intention, Trust, Consumer Behaviour, Health

## Introduction

The increase in global human population and intensifying climate change have placed sustainable development at the forefront of international policymakers due to ecological and social concerns. Today, people are more concerned about environmental issues and realise that unsustainable consumption patterns cause serious environmental problems, such as climate change, global warming, and catastrophic pollution (Chong et al., 2022; Lai and Cheng, 2016). The green food industry in China is considered “one of the most successful eco-labelling programs in the world” (Giovannucci, 2005, p. 12). It is reported that green food is safe for human consumption; it is nutritious, healthy, high quality, and does not harm the environment (Giovannucci, 2005). Moreover, green food production is less environmentally harmful than traditional food production (Sulaiman and Janai, 2017). Therefore, green food is also considered an “eco-friendly,” “environmentally friendly,” or “sustainable” product (Han et al., 2009). Previous research has shown that people who care more about the environment are more likely to buy green products (Sarumat and Peattie, 2010; Hi, 2014). This trend is known as green consumption (Anderson and Cunningham, 1972).

In the last decade, China’s green food industry has grown immensely, with 30,932 green food-labelled products, 106,523 tonnes of green food production, and total domestic sales of US\$68.1 billion in 2018, an increase of 76.6%, 18.4%, and 75.7%, respectively, compared to 2008 (Green Food Development Centre, 2009, Green Food Development Centre, 2019). At the same time, an increasing number of Chinese households are choosing safe, green food due to a growing interest in health, quality of life, environmental protection, and food safety (Ayyub et al., 2018; Qi and Ploeger, 2021). Understanding Chinese consumers’ attitudes and intentions toward green food consumption is essential for green food manufacturing companies and local government policymakers (Meng and Zhu, 2021). It is also reported that younger consumers are emerging as an influential consumer segment within the consumer group (Pasco, 2023). This study emphasises youths’ perspectives; their opinions and attitudes have been largely ignored since the beginning of the environmental movement (Wray-Lake et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2024). Despite the growing popularity and acceptance of green food in the world market, the amount consumed could be much higher (Nuyue, 2019; Zhang and Cham, 2024).

In China, despite the demonstrated concern for the environment, green consumption has yet to take off, and there is a research gap in understanding the willingness of young Chinese consumers to purchase green food in particular. According to past studies (e.g., Zhang and Cham, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024), most research on consumer behaviour toward environmentally friendly products comes from Western contexts, with limited investigations from other parts of the globe. However, there is a lack of research on green purchasing behaviour in China and emerging Asian economies, such as India (Yadav and Pathak, 2016; Zhang et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). Particularly in China, studies focusing specifically on young consumers’ consumption of green products still require further investigation (Yang et al., 2020). From the beginning of the environmental movement, the opinions and attitudes of youth have been largely ignored (Wray-Lake et al., 2010), and it needs to be clarified how various factors influence the willingness of young Chinese consumers to purchase green food. In addition, most previous studies have considered all green product purchasing behaviours as one category and have not systematically examined green food purchase intentions from a

single perspective, such as the food attributes of the product (Zhang and Dong, 2020).

Given the above evidence, this study aims to fill the research gap by investigating how factors such as GSI, SN, and AEC influence the GFI of young Chinese consumers, focusing on the role of GA, PN, and trust in this context.

## Literature Review

### Theory of Planned Behaviour

In the environmental field, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model remains one of the well-known theories for identifying and explaining pro-environmentally responsible behaviour (Ahmed et al., 2021; Si et al., 2020; Sia and Jose, 2019). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was created by Ajzen (1991), who argued that behavioural intention is a direct determinant of behaviour, influenced by attitudes and subjective norms about behaviour and perceived behavioural control (Cham et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2024; Chin et al., 2024). Weber et al. (2015) found that behavioural attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control can influence German consumers' intentions to purchase sustainable (green) food, thus influencing their pro-environmental behaviours in buying food.

Numerous studies have shown that Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z are more sensitive to environmental issues (Gan et al., 2008; Mahesh and Ganapathi, 2012), and due to their flexible attitudes, knowledge, ideas, and green awareness, they are a powerful engine for the development of an environmentally friendly population and a promising market for green products (Ahmed et al., 2021). In consumer research, previous studies have attempted to extend the TPB model by adding new variables, such as social influences, perceived environmental knowledge, consumer collectivism, and cultural values, with the aim of better understanding behaviour in specific research settings (Joshi and Rahman, 2016).

### Normative Activation Model Theory

Normative Activation Model Theory (NAM) was first proposed by Schwartz in 1977 to assess altruistic or prosocial behaviours and intentions. The model includes three core constructs: awareness of consequences (AC), attribution of responsibility (AR), and personal norms (PN) (Wittenberg et al., 2018). The theory suggests that an individual's willingness to engage in pro-environmental behaviours is influenced by consequence awareness, responsibility attribution, and personal norms (Wang et al., 2020). Awareness of consequences (AC) denotes whether or not a person is aware of the negative impact on other things valued by others when they exhibit a non-pro-social behaviour (Chen, 2016); attribution of responsibility (AR) includes a person's feeling that they are responsible for the negative consequences that may result from not adopting a particular pro-social behaviour (Steg and De Groot, 2010). The structure of personal norms is defined as an individual's intrinsic expectations about how they should behave according to their intrinsic values (Schwartz, 1973).

From the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) perspective, personal norms differ from subjective norms. We argue that subjective norms come before personal norms. This

is because subjective norms validate whether or not a particular behaviour is socially correct, guiding a person in determining their beliefs about whether or not it is appropriate for them (Bamberg et al., 2007). People use these subjective norms as information to determine whether an action is morally right or wrong (Bamberg and Moser, 2007; Bamberg et al., 2007). It was reported that NAM remains one of the highly used theories for identifying environmentally responsible behaviour (Wang et al., 2018b).

## **Hypotheses Development**

### ***Effect of the Green Self-Identity on Green Attitudes and Personal Norms***

The relevance of green self-identity for environmentally friendly purchases has been discussed in previous studies (Zabkar and Hosta, 2013; Khare, 2014, 2015). It was also emphasised that a significant predictor of a consumer's green buying behaviour is their self-identification with environmentally friendly traits (Becerra et al., 2023). Thus, green self-identification is the primary prerequisite for pro-environmental behavioural intentions (Whitmarsh and O'Neill, 2010). This leads to a spillover effect between pro-environmental self-identification, resource conservation, and organic consumer-related intentions. Adopting a catalyst behaviour, such as recycling, may encourage people to adopt other pro-environmental behaviours (Zhang et al., 2024). Based on the above evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H1a** Green self-identity is positively related to the personal norms of young consumers on green food consumption.
- H1b** Green self-identity is positively related to the green attitudes of young consumers on green food consumption.

### ***Effect of the Subjective Norm on Green Attitudes and Personal Norms***

Subjective norms are expected to have a considerable association with green purchase intentions, which has been acknowledged in past research (Lacap et al., 2021; Li et al., 2020). Past studies (e.g., Lim et al., 2022; Loh et al., 2023; Rezaei et al., 2019) also suggested that when an individual is affected by subjective norms, he will adopt the same behaviour as the general public under social pressure, or herd mentality. Repeatedly implementing this behaviour over time will gradually transform it into personal norms. Previous research also concluded that subjective norms positively influence consumers' behavioural intentions to indulge in certain foods (Shen and Chen, 2020).

In addition, past studies have demonstrated the strong influence of subjective norms on the consumption of green products (Moser, 2015; Li et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). It was also suggested that the subjective norm's efficacy in explaining consumer food choices requires more in-depth examinations (Qi and Ploeger, 2019; Qi and Ploeger, 2021). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

- H2a** Subjective norms are positively related to young consumers' personal norms on green food consumption.

**H2b** Subjective norms are positively related to the green attitudes of young consumers on green food consumption.

### ***Effect of the Awareness of Environmental Consequences on Green Attitudes and Personal Norms***

De Groot and Steg (2009) define consequences as "a person's awareness of the negative effects on others or other things when he or she does not act pro-socially." In this case, awareness is described as the individual's association with green foods as being healthier, better quality, and environmentally friendly (Aminrad et al., 2013) and a significant indication of an intention to purchase green foods (Pasco, 2023).

Numerous interdisciplinary studies have established the importance of understanding the consequences and practising environmentally responsible behaviour (Han, 2020; Han et al., 2019). Research by Makanyeza et al. (2021) and Sweldens et al. (2014) outlined the magnitude of awareness in forming attitudes. However, extensive literature focuses on consumers' understanding of environmental consequences rather than its impact on young consumers' green attitudes and personal norms, particularly in China (Zhang et al., 2024). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed based on the above discussion:

**H3a** Awareness of environmental consequences positively relates to young consumers' norms toward green food consumption.

**H3b** Awareness of environmental consequences is positively related to young consumers' attitudes toward green food consumption.

### ***Effect of the Personal Norms on Young Consumers' Green Food Consumption Intentions***

Personal norms are defined as an individual's sense of moral obligation to perform a specific action or behaviour (Schwartz, 1973); they also refer to an individual's perception of acting a certain way based on their moral obligation, whether right or wrong (Cham et al., 2023; Low et al., 2021; Maminirina et al., 2022). Mehmetoglu (2010) found that people's sense of moral obligation to protect the environment (personal norms) is positively related to their involvement in green hotels, pro-environmental behaviours, and green restaurant products (Han, 2020). People with personal norms are more likely and willing to purchase green products (Zhang et al., 2024). To test the association between personal norms and young consumers' intentions in the context of green food consumption, the following hypotheses are postulated:

**H4a** The personal norms are positively related to young consumers' intention to consume green food.

**H4b** Personal norms mediate the relationship between green self-identity and green food consumption intention.

**H4c** Personal norms mediate the relationship between subjective norms and green food consumption intention.

**H4d** The influence of personal norms mediates the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green food consumption intention.

***Effect of Green Attitudes on Young Consumers' Intention to Consume Green Food***

Many scholars have explored green consumer attitudes and behaviours (Amin and Tarun, 2020; Johnston et al., 2023). According to Do Paco et al. (2019), attitude is one of the key antecedents of behavioural intentions. Attitudes have been identified as predictors of behaviour (Casaló and Escario, 2018; Cham et al., 2024; Gao et al., 2024). Younger consumers' attitudes toward the environment have also been reported in many markets, including India (Kautish and Sharma, 2019), Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2017), and Ghana (Amoako et al., 2020). Based on the above discussion, it is assumed that the more favourable the attitudes of young consumers toward green products, the higher their willingness to purchase them. Therefore, the following relationship was hypothesised:

**H5a** Green attitude is positively related to green food consumption intention.

**H5b** Green attitude mediates the influence of green self-identity on green food consumption intention.

**H5c** Green attitude mediates the influence of subjective norms on green food consumption intention.

**H5d** Green attitude mediates the influence of awareness of environmental consequences on green food consumption intention.

***Effect of the Trust between Green Attitudes and Personal Norms on Young Consumers' Intention to Consume Green Food***

Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002) describe trust as a reflection of consumers' perceived reliability and ability to deliver the promised product attributes of a service provider. The unavailability and lack of awareness of green food increase consumers' perceptions of risk and trust (Wang and Tsai, 2014). Trust has a significant impact on encouraging consumers' decisions to purchase green foods (Sobhanifard, 2018). Previous studies have found that trust influences consumers' behavioural intentions toward food delivery apps, mobile banking, information technology, and organic foods (Hasan et al., 2023; Troise et al., 2021). However, there has been limited research on the impact of trust between green attitudes and personal norms on green food purchase intentions. Therefore, this study investigates the moderating influence of trust in green attitudes and personal norms on green food purchase intentions within the framework of the research model. As such, the following hypotheses are postulated:

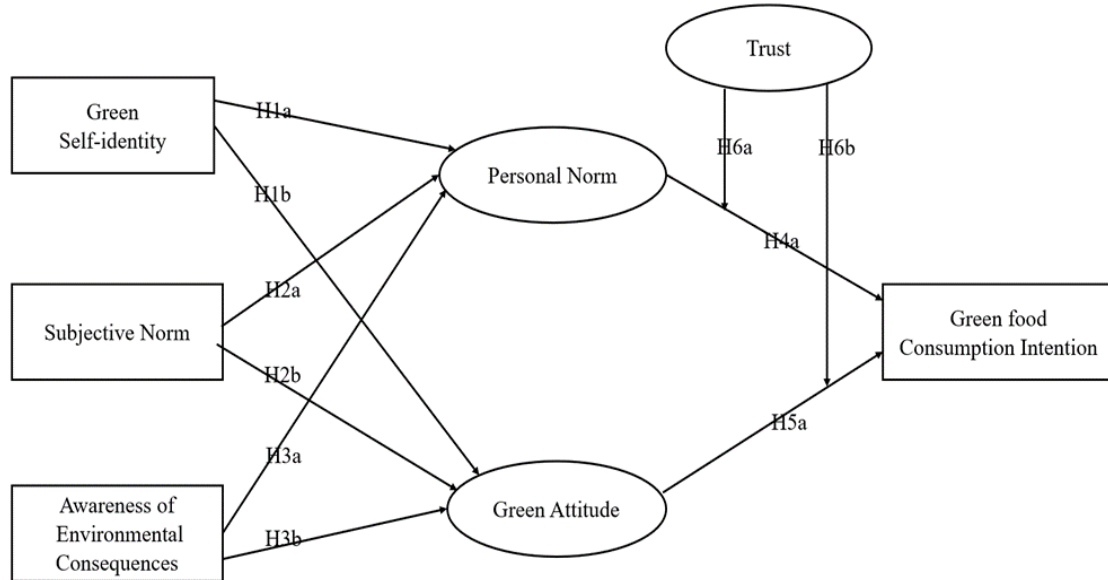
**H6a** Trust moderates the relationship between personal norms and young consumers' green food consumption intention.

**H6b** Trust moderates the relationship between green attitudes and young consumers' green food consumption intention.

### Conceptual Framework

Based on a thorough examination of the literature, the proposed conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



## Methodology

### Sample and Procedures

The questionnaire was collected in May 2023 with a total of 318 responses (after the data cleaning process), which aligns with the statistical and theoretical generalisations proposed by Lee and Baskerville (2003). The study followed Hair et al. (2019) and Kline (2015) to determine the sample size, with 10-15 observations recommended for each variable. Table 2 shows variables in this study with a minimum sample size of 230 (23\*10). Individuals born between 1994 and 2005 were the respondents of this study. Using 18-29-year-olds as a sample in the study is appropriate, as this group represents emerging and potential young consumers who should be able to make a difference in purchasing power in the coming decades (Devnath, 2022). The demographics of the respondents are summarised in Table 1, where the descriptive statistics show that 123 (38.68%) were males and 195 (61.32%) were females. Most respondents (77.99%) had a bachelor’s degree and earned between CNY4000 and CNY6000 per month (46.23%).

Table 1: Demographic of respondents

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	123	38.68
	Female	195	61.32
Age	18-21	95	29.87
	22-25	108	33.96
	26-29	115	36.16
Educational level	High school and below	20	6.29

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Occupation	Undergraduate course	248	77.99
	Master	45	14.15
	Learned scholar	5	1.57
	Student	113	35.53
	Company staff	126	39.62
	State official	52	16.35
	Freelancer	25	7.86
Monthly income	Peasant	2	0.63
	Less than 2000 yuan	95	29.87
	2000-4000 yuan	26	8.18
	4000-6000 yuan	147	46.23
Marital status	More than 6000 yuan	50	15.72
	Spinsterhood	208	65.41
	Be married	110	34.59

## Measures

A quantitative survey was used in this study, and the data was collected using electronic means through the *Wenjuanxing* platform, one of the leading online research service providers based in China. The advantage of using this service provider to collect data sets is reduced sampling homogeneity, and a better response rate is obtained (Gong et al., 2022). The scales in the current study were adapted from earlier studies, and it was essential to pretest them to ensure the constructs' expected reliability. The sources of the scales of indicators are shown in Table 2. For all measures, a 5-point Likert scale was used. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with participants' personal information; the second part dealt with familiarity with green food and willingness to buy. The SPSS package was used for data cleaning, while SmartPLS version 4.0 was used to test the hypotheses developed for this study.

**Table 2: Measurement items**

Constructs	Source(s)	Indicators
Green self-identity (GSI)	Carfora et al. (2017)	GSI1: I think of myself as a green food(s) consumer.
		GSI2: I think of myself as a person who is interested in green food(s) consumption.
		GSI3: I think of myself as very concerned with green food(s) issues.
Subjective Norms (SN)	Rahman et al. (2017); Kim (2018)	SN1: Most people who are essential to me agree that I consume green food(s).
		SN2: Most people who are vital to me support my consumption of green food(s).
		SN3: Most people who are essential to me recommend consuming green food(s).
Awareness of Environmental Consequence (AEC)	Kim (2018)	AEC1: Green food(s) consumption can result in the efficient use of resources.
		AEC2: Green food(s) consumption can inspire community consciousness.
		AEC3: Green food(s) consumption can bring about resource-saving effects.



Constructs	Source(s)	Indicators
Personal Norm (PN)	Ahn et al. (2012)	PN1: I feel an obligation to consume green food(s) where possible. PN2: I should do what I can to conserve natural resources. PN3: I must do something to help future generations. PN4: I feel a solid personal obligation to consume green food(s) wisely.
Green Attitude (GA)	Roberts (1996); Tanner and Kast (2003)	GA1: Buying green food(s) is a good idea. GA2: Buying green food(s) is a wise choice. GA3: I like the idea of buying green food(s). GA4: Buying green food(s) is pleasant.
Trust (TR)	Choi and Ji (2015); Zhang et al. (2019)	TR1: Green food(s) is reliable. TR2: Green food(s) is dependable. TR3: Overall, I can trust green food(s).
Green Food Consumption Intention (GFI)	Ajzen (2002); Fishbein and Ajzen (2010)	GFI1: I intend to consume green food(s) over the next few months. GFI2: I plan to consume green food(s) over the next few months. GFI3: I want to consume green food(s) over the next few months.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics for the Items

The descriptive statistics for the measurement items are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Results of descriptive statistics**

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
GSI1	318	1	5	3.554	1.27904
GSI2	318	1	5	3.226	1.11443
GSI3	318	1	5	3.220	1.11002
SN1	318	1	5	3.563	1.32227
SN2	318	1	5	3.333	1.13542
SN3	318	1	5	3.315	1.07825
AEC1	318	1	5	3.409	1.34194
AEC2	318	1	5	3.299	1.08418
AEC3	318	1	5	3.226	1.10590
PN1	318	1	5	3.566	1.29317
PN2	318	1	5	3.230	1.05711
PN3	318	1	5	3.252	1.08018
PN4	318	1	5	3.267	1.07198
GA1	318	1	5	3.528	1.33533
GA2	318	1	5	3.330	1.15697
GA3	318	1	5	3.396	1.16207
GA4	318	1	5	3.390	1.16960

TR1	318	1	5	3.456	1.42851
TR2	318	1	5	3.305	1.18802
TR3	318	1	5	3.252	1.18065
GFI1	318	1	5	3.522	1.18793
GFI2	318	1	5	3.371	1.11233
GFI3	318	1	5	3.412	1.12196

### Measurement Model Assessment

In the subsequent steps, reliability and validity were assessed. Reliability was confirmed based on factor loadings and composite reliability (He et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2019). According to Table 4, AVE values above 0.50 for all variables and CR values greater than AVE confirmed the convergent validity of the question items. The results of Cronbach's alpha (alpha-reliability coefficient) values were well above the threshold of 0.70, indicating the scale items' internal consistency (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). In this study, factor loadings for all measurements (Table 4) and CR for all structures exceeded the recommended thresholds of factor loadings > 0.50 and CR > 0.70 (Hair et al., 2014b; Quoquab et al., 2017), satisfying the requirements of the measurement model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

**Table 4: Result of measurement model**

Constructs	Loading	$\alpha$	AVE	CR
Green self-identify		0.818	0.732	0.891
GSI1	0.853			
GSI2	0.856			
GSI3	0.858			
Subjective norm		0.854	0.774	0.911
SN1	0.892			
SN2	0.873			
SN3	0.874			
Awareness of environmentally conscious		0.813	0.727	0.889
AEC1	0.871			
AEC2	0.841			
AEC3	0.846			
Personal norm		0.838	0.674	0.892
PN1	0.861			
PN2	0.799			
PN3	0.853			
PN4	0.787			
Green attitude		0.894	0.758	0.926
GA1	0.877			
GA2	0.870			
GA3	0.864			
GA4	0.870			
Trust		0.860	0.779	0.914
TR1	0.872			
TR2	0.869			
TR3	0.907			
Green food consumption intention		0.896	0.828	0.935
GFI1	0.910			
GFI2	0.908			
GFI3	0.912			

Table 5 shows that none of the HTMT values exceeded the cut-off points of HTMT 0.90 and HTMT 0.85. Discriminant validity is calculated using the hetero-feature-single trait (HTMT) ratio, which represents the ratio of intra-structure-to-inter-structure correlation. It has higher accuracy in detecting validity problems in variance-based SEM (Henseler et al., 2015). The highest HTMT value in the entire model was 0.620, which implies that sufficient discriminant validity exists across the model. Therefore, it was appropriate to move forward and evaluate the structural model. Moreover, Fornell and Larcker's criterion (FLC) and the evaluation of the discriminant validity of the data for the variables in this study were also used. For the FLC results, according to Table 6, the correlation coefficients between the variables in this study were lower than the square root value of the AVE for each latent variable, indicating an acceptable discriminability between the variables.

**Table 5: Discriminant Validity- HTMT Assessment**

	AEC	GA	GFI	GSI	PN	SN	TR	TR x PN	TR x GA
AEC									
GA	0.564								
GFI	0.601	0.589							
GSI	0.542	0.575	0.603						
PN	0.538	0.556	0.610	0.602					
SN	0.509	0.481	0.620	0.491	0.575				
TR	0.382	0.275	0.466	0.338	0.406	0.440			
TR x PN	0.146	0.115	0.217	0.089	0.069	0.044	0.099		
TR x GA	0.110	0.093	0.244	0.113	0.122	0.165	0.063	0.360	

**Table 6: Discriminant Validity- Fornell and Larcker's Assessment**

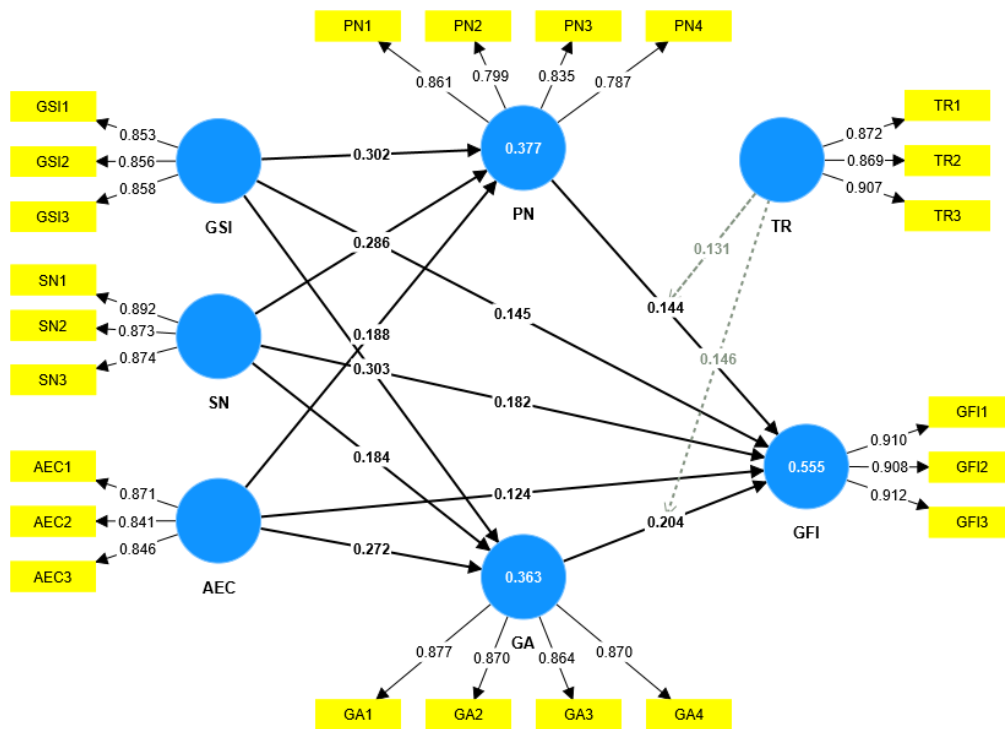
	AEC	GA	GFI	GSI	PN	SN	TR
AEC	0.853						
GA	0.487	0.870					
GFI	0.517	0.530	0.910				
GSI	0.448	0.501	0.525	0.856			
PN	0.445	0.485	0.532	0.505	0.821		
SN	0.427	0.426	0.544	0.414	0.492	0.880	
TR	0.323	0.247	0.417	0.280	0.352	0.378	0.883

### Structural Model Assessment

Figure 2 and Table 7 show the overall effect of endogenous variables on green purchase intentions. The results of the path coefficient test showed that GSI had a significant positive effect on PN ( $\beta=0.302$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and GSI had a significant positive effect on GA ( $\beta=0.303$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), supporting H1a and H1b; SN had a significant positive effect on PN ( $\beta=0.286$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and SN had a significant positive effect on GA ( $\beta=0.184$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), indicating that H2a and H2b pathways are established; AEC had a significant positive effect on PN ( $\beta=0.188$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and AEC had a significant positive effect on GA ( $\beta=0.272$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), supporting H3a and H3b. The results of the path coefficient test showed that each path was tested, which means that all the hypotheses are statistically significant.

This study uses the Smart-PLS algorithm function to determine the coefficient  $R^2$ . The results showed that the  $R^2$  of each predicted variable ranged from 0.363 to 0.555, and the significance p-value was  $0.000 < 0.05$ , indicating that the corresponding independent variable combination of each predicted variable has a high explanatory level for the predicted variable. After testing the multicollinearity of the model, it was found that all the VIF values were less than 5, which means that there is no collinearity problem. Finally, a blindfold procedure was performed to assess the predictive correlation of the model ( $Q^2$ ). The endogenous variables had  $Q^2$  values greater than zero and ranged from 0.248 to 0.440 across all datasets, indicating the model has predictive quality (Hair et al., 2019b).

**Figure 2: Research model with path coefficients and p-values**



**Table 7: Path coefficients and hypotheses testing**

Hypotheses	Relationship	Standard $\beta$	Standard error	t-value	CI	VIF	p-value
H1a	GSI→PN	0.302	0.052	5.776	(0.201, 0.405)	1.353	0.000
H1b	GSI→GA	0.303	0.050	6.018	(0.207, 0.403)	1.353	0.000
	GSI→GFI	0.145	0.047	3.083	(0.052, 0.236)	1.614	0.002
H2a	SN→PN	0.286	0.057	5.031	(0.174, 0.398)	1.324	0.000
H2b	SN→GA	0.184	0.053	3.492	(0.080, 0.288)	1.324	0.000
	SN→GFI	0.182	0.047	3.855	(0.090, 0.274)	1.586	0.000

H3a	AEC→PN	0.188	0.050	3.779	(0.091, 0.287)	1.372	0.000
H3b	AEC→GA	0.272	0.058	4.700	(0.159, 0.387)	1.372	0.000
	AEC→GFI	0.124	0.048	2.565	(0.031, 0.219)	1.574	0.010
H4a	PN→GFI	0.144	0.052	2.761	(0.040, 0.244)	1.768	0.006
H5a	GA→GFI	0.204	0.050	4.058	(0.107, 0.303)	1.780	0.000

Note: PN→R<sup>2</sup>=0.377, Q<sup>2</sup>=0.248; GA→R<sup>2</sup>=0.363, Q<sup>2</sup>=0.266; GFI→R<sup>2</sup>=0.555, Q<sup>2</sup>=0.440

### Mediating Effect

The bootstrapping function was used to analyse Smart PLS, and the mediating roles of GA and PN between the independent and dependent variables were obtained. GA's and PN's direct and indirect effects on GFI were analysed to determine the mediating effect. Therefore, H4b, H4c, and H4d, indicating that PN mediates the effects of GSI, SN, and AEC on GFI, are supported, as well as H5b, H5, H5d, GA mediate the effects of GSI, SN, and AEC on GFI. Thus, the results of the mediating effects of both GA and PN are depicted in Table 8.

**Table 8: Results of path coefficients and hypotheses testing**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	p-value	Hypothetical result
GSI→GA→GFI	0.062	0.063	0.019	3.261	0.001	Yes
GSI→PN→GFI	0.044	0.043	0.017	2.603	0.009	Yes
AEC→GA→GFI	0.055	0.056	0.018	3.096	0.002	Yes
AEC→PN→GFI	0.027	0.027	0.013	2.165	0.030	Yes
SN→GA→GFI	0.038	0.038	0.015	2.560	0.010	Yes
SN→PN→GFI	0.041	0.041	0.018	2.349	0.019	Yes

### Moderating Effect

As seen from Table 9, the results of the path coefficient test show that TR x PN has a significant positive effect on GIF ( $\beta=0.131$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), suggesting that the moderating effect of TR in the pathway between PN and GFI is valid. TR x GA had a significant positive effect on GFI ( $\beta=0.146$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), indicating that the moderating effect of TR in the pathway of GA and GFI holds.

**Table 9: Results of Structural Model (Moderating Effect)**

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	p-value	Hypothetical result
TR x PN → GFI	0.131	0.130	0.046	2.828	0.005	Yes
TR x GA → GFI	0.146	0.145	0.047	3.090	0.002	Yes

## Discussion

Green food consumption plays a crucial role in keeping the environment sustainable over time, which helps maintain the planet's health and society. This study aims to determine whether green self-identify (GSI), awareness of environmental consequences (AEC), and subjective norms (SN) are related to green food consumption intention (GFI) through the mediating effects of green attitude (GA) and personal norms (PN). The study combined the TPB and NAM models to obtain a solid conceptual model. As environmental concerns do not always translate into purchasing behaviour (Akehurst et al., 2012), previous studies have found that although GFI, AEC, and SN have previously been associated with green purchase intentions, there is limited evidence that GA and PN are used as mediators between other variables and consumers' purchase intentions and behaviours (Sobuj et al., 2021; Chen, 2020; Šedík et al., 2019; Sultan et al., 2020). Aschemann-Witzel and Niebuhr Aagaard (2014) stated that young consumers toward organic foods hold very positive attitudes, but their actual purchases are still low, especially in emerging countries in Asia like China, where little attention has been paid to the study of environmental issues among young consumers (Adnan et al., 2017). Our study, therefore, fills this gap.

In addition, trust is thought to moderate the relationship between GA, PN, and GFI, but previous studies have not considered all seven dimensions at the same time, and limited studies are testing these variables in the same model; therefore, our study found that placing these dimensions in a theoretical model integrating NAM and TPB theories enhances the understanding of young consumers' willingness to consume green food in the context of developing countries like China. Earlier studies on green consumer intention have focused on the role of unclassified uniform green products, but these dimensions have not been examined for green food as a category (Zhang, 2020). Our study focuses on the specific category of green food, providing a more accurate research perspective on green food consumption. The empirical results show that the model-fitting results of TPB, NAM, and the proposed model are acceptable. The model's statistical measure of goodness of fit exhibits standard self-adaptation, indicating its excellent explanatory quality and the presence of a specific reference value for determining the anthems of GFI.

Specifically, research has shown a significant relationship between GSI and GA and PN (H1a and H1b), which confirms previous findings that consumers' green identity positively influences attitudes and personal norms towards green products (Johe and Bhullar, 2016; Barbarossa et al., 2017). Individuals who exhibit a green self-identity will be able to understand the benefits of purchasing green foods because they have been exposed to environmentally related issues. Moreover, SN was found to

significantly influence PN and GA (H2a and H2b). The “subjective norms” variable positively affects green attitudes, indicating that the choice of other important people will affect consumers’ attitudes towards green food consumption. This is consistent with the study by Panagiotopoulos and Dimitrakopoulos (2018) and Zhang et al. (2023). The current pro-environmental social climate in China can explain this influence.

In addition, AEC significantly affected PN and GA (H3a and H3b). Awareness demonstrated a positive impact on personal norms and green attitudes, aligning with the findings of Tong et al. (2020). This suggests that awareness serves as a key indicator of an individual's intention to purchase environmentally friendly foods. This is also in line with the study by Pasco (2023), which highlighted high levels of awareness among Generation Z consumers due to the belief that green food consumption leads to a healthier, better quality, and safer environment. Moreover, this research explores the moderating role of trust. This study demonstrates that trust acts as a moderator in the relationship between PN, GA, and the GFI (H6a and H6b) of consumers. The moderation of trust is vital because it suggests the need to build and maintain trust in green food consumption (Sobhanifard, 2018). Studies on green-consuming behaviour suggest that green attitudes do not always translate into consumption intentions. Lack of trust in green food because consumers are unsure of its ingredients affects the consumption intention (Dipeolu et al., 2009; Paul and Rana, 2012).

This study has some theoretical and practical implications, but the methodology imposes some limitations, thus paving the way for new directions in future research. Firstly, the scales were adopted from various literature; however, researchers can use qualitative methods to find more potential variables that affect green consumption, and scales can be developed specifically to measure green food consumption intentions. Secondly, the study concentrated on the Chinese market and utilized cross-sectional data. However, there exists a discrepancy between the data and the actual level, which can be attributed to the diversity of China's demographics, where different personalities and social backgrounds may influence consumer behaviour. The study's focus on young consumers could potentially bias the results, as they may have selected responses that are socially desirable (Fischer et al., 2017). Common methodological bias may have occurred because of features such as the exact source of data on young people, the same measurement environment in the Chinese context, green food consumption, and the suggestive nature of the questions. While the present study focused on interpretation rather than sampling generalization, future studies with larger sample sizes could be conducted to compare them and provide additional insights in different contexts.

### **Practical Implications for Asian Business**

This study concludes that consumers with green self-identity, high subjective norms, and awareness of environmental consequences have positive attitudes toward purchasing green food. Consumers consider themselves to be promoters of environmental protection practices. They are aware of the effects their personal consumption habits will have on the environment and feel the pressure of concern from their loved ones or friends. As a result, they have a stronger demand for their green consumption practices. This paper concludes that although the consumption of green food is increasing in China as people gradually realise the health benefits of green food, consumers feel a higher transaction risk when purchasing green food. This is due to the

need for increased awareness about green food, its availability, and the lack of awareness about the environmental impacts of personal behaviour. As a result, green food purchases are limited to individuals who identify themselves as “green consumers.” Consumers with green self-identification have a lower transactional risk than organic food retailers. Moreover, players in the green food industry need to understand consumers' needs and expectations. As a result, green food consumption currently attracts only a limited number of consumers. This may be a reason for the low sales of green food (Hameed et al., 2019).

Given that young consumers are positively valued and exhibit green characteristics, consumers' self-identification can be improved by developing sound advertising and marketing strategies that enable them to be aware of environment-related issues and construct good attitudes towards green products, activating a sense of moral obligation to protect the environment (personal norms), thereby enhancing consumers' intentions to consume green food (Kareklas et al., 2014). For example, advertising and in-store promotions can focus on publicising the benefits of talking about being a “green consumer” and inducing positive attitudes towards green products through fashionable promotions that are more appealing to young people (Chekima et al., 2017). Green foods can emphasise the “green character” of the food by providing information about the ingredients on the packaging, leading consumers to identify themselves as green. To activate personal beliefs and increase visits to green stores, signs that read, “Did the person next to you choose a green product when making a purchase?” can be displayed at the entrance and the billing counter. Specific details about the advantages of green consumption should be linked to the well-being of the family and the environment, thus increasing consumers' awareness of environmentally friendly practices and encouraging them to adopt them, thus contributing to a greater awareness of the environmental consequences. All these efforts will ultimately increase customers' positive perception of green food and, in the long run, increase their favourability for choosing it.

Another dimension is that the relationship between consumers' green attitudes, personal norms, and willingness to consume green food is reinforced as trust increases. Green food and sales service quality are essential to building trust in green food. Therefore, manufacturers should develop credible green products (Yadav and Pathak, 2016), use publicity, social influence, and efficient services to build consumer trust; convince consumers that green food consumption is good for them, good for others, and good for the biosphere; stimulate a high degree of self-ethical awareness; and facilitate the shift from green attitudes to consumption intentions. In practice, the relationship between green food and traditional Chinese farming culture can be a focus of publicity. When considering the similarities between the green food production process and China's past agricultural practices, especially when we consider that our parents used green agriculture and ate green food, consumers' trust in the production of green food will be further enhanced. Consumers will be able to conclude, based on their past experiences, that green food is safe. Their willingness to consume green food is enhanced.

At present, the world is faced with severe environmental challenges, such as climate change, resource depletion, and ecological imbalance. Given that Asia is home to many developing countries, numerous countries have taken action to encourage green consumption and establish a sustainable development environment for the future. In Asia, consumers are more willing to pay for green products, with 84 percent of



consumers surveyed in China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and other places willing to pay slightly more for green products, compared to only 50 percent in Western countries. Carbon neutrality in Asia is a goal and a commitment to global sustainability. Therefore, studying the green consumption behaviour of young consumers in China is crucial for understanding Asia's future green consumption, and it serves as a focal point for realizing the sustainable development of human society.

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