

The Influence of Consumption Values on Consumers' Intentions to Purchase Organic Foods - An Extended TPB Theory

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Abstract. It remains highly relevant to investigate strategies for encouraging the adoption of organic food among Chinese consumers. This study introduces the functional, social and emotional value of traditional consumption values as independent variables, aiming to explore the differential impacts of these three values on purchase intention and their action mechanisms. The research instrument was administered to collect data, resulting in 400 usable responses. And the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was adopted for empirical analysis. The research findings are that functional, social and emotional value all beneficially affect willingness to buy organic food, but their influence diverge. The total effect of emotional value on willingness to buy organic food is more notable, while the direct effect of social value is stronger. Secondly, the mediating mechanisms of attitude and subjective norms (SN) are different, but all three values can influence willingness to buy organic food through these two mediating variables. In particular, the mediating effect of SN on functional value is greater, while the mediating effect of attitude on emotional value and social value is more prominent.

Keywords: consumption values, organic food consumption, TPB

1. Introduction

Food safety incidents, the demand for environmental protection, and health issues have prompted various countries to pay attention to organic food and carry out research in this field [1]. Although China ranks highly globally in organic farming acreage, as an emerging market for organic food, its per capita consumption of organic food is much lower than that of European countries [2,3]. Against the backdrop of the global economy, promoting the sound development of this emerging market is of far-reaching significance [4]. Therefore, the fundamental goal of this investigation is to delineate the influence of consumption values on the organic food purchasing decisions of Chinese consumers.

In recent years, research of the underlying factors shaping organic food consumption has mainly focused on the intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics of organic food [3,5]. Among intrinsic characteristics, Wojciechowska-Solis conducted a questionnaire survey on consumers in Poland and the United Kingdom during the pandemic period and found that health concern was the primary driver behind respondents' organic food purchases [4,6]. In terms of extrinsic characteristics, Czudec

surveyed organic food consumers in Poland and concluded that altruism derived from environmental concern enhances willingness to buy organic food [5,7]. Furthermore, many investigations have introduced consumption values to explore the driving factors and barriers of organic food purchase [2,3]. However, consumer values can be divided into multiple dimensions. Moreover, there are differences in cultural backgrounds and consumption habits among different countries. Most of the research results come from Western countries, while the research on Chinese consumers' organic food purchase intention still needs to be further deepened. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore the motivation of Chinese consumers' organic food purchase from the perspective of traditional consumer values. This study conducted a questionnaire survey on consumers in three representative regions of China (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong), analyzed the sample data by applying the TPB model, and explored the differential impact mechanisms of three subdivided dimensions of values (functional, social and emotional value) on willingness to buy organic food.

This study may make three contributions. First, by dividing classic consumption values into three dimensions (functional, social, and emotional) to study Chinese consumers' organic food purchase intention, it enriches the research results on organic food in China. Second, it expands the research field regarding the differential impacts of these three different dimensions on organic food purchase intention. Third, it explores the mediating role of attitude and subjective norms (SN) in willingness to buy organic food. By constructing the TPB model, this investigation analyzes how the three dimensions of values exert indirect impacts on purchase intention through attitude and SN.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

TPB is a classic theory for studying people's behavioral intention [6] [14]. The theory points out that attitude, SN and perceived behavioral control (PBC) all affect people's behaviors and intentions.

Many investigations have applied the TPB model to the research on willingness to buy organic food [7-9] [15] [16] [17] [18]. Lu confirmed that PBC can significantly affect willingness to buy organic food and Li demonstrated that attitude facilitates willingness to buy organic food [7-8] [15] [16]. Xiao verified that SN contribute to willingness to buy organic food [9] [19]. Accordingly, the investigation develops these hypotheses:

H1: Attitude affects willingness to buy organic food.

H2: PBC affects willingness to buy organic food.

H3: SN affect willingness to buy organic food.

2.2. Consumer Value Theory

The Consumer Value Theory describes and explains consumer behavior through five types of consumption values [10] [20]. Sheth systematically proposed five factors, namely functional, social, emotional, conditional and epistemic value. This study selects three value factors (functional, social and emotional value) for research.

The Consumer Value Theory has been applied in investigations to explore the factors affecting organic food purchase behavior [2] [11-12] [3] [22]. Biswas and Roy confirmed that social value is instrumental in willingness to buy organic food [11] [22]. Qasim pointed out that emotional value and functional value are conducive in willingness to buy organic food [12] [8]. Accordingly, the investigation develops these hypotheses:

H4: Functional value affects willingness to buy organic food.

H5: Social value affects willingness to buy organic food.

H6: Emotional value affects willingness to buy organic food.

2.3. Mediating effects of attitude and subjective norms

Organic food meets people's demand for healthy food. The functional value promotes people to form a positive attitude towards organic food [13]. At the social level, the advocacy of organic food purchase and sustainable development implicitly endows the behavior of purchasing organic food with symbolic meanings such as "environmental protection". The social value formed under the impetus of such meanings changes people's views on willingness to buy organic food. The certification label of organic food implies that the food is pollution-free, and the pleasure brought by this implication makes people form a positive attitude [13]. Accordingly, the investigation develops these hypotheses:

H7a: Functional value affects willingness to buy organic food.

H7b: Social value affects willingness to buy organic food.

H7c: Emotional value affects willingness to buy organic food.

When consumers purchase organic food, verifying its functional values (such as health, nutrition, and no additives) will deepen their subjective judgment on organic food purchase. When social value generally advocates organic food purchase, people may incorporate this social concept into their own subjective judgment, thereby affecting SN. When family members and friends express approval for the behavior of purchasing organic food, consumers are often driven by the sense of accomplishment obtained from meeting others' expectations; this emotional value affects consumers' subjective norms regarding organic food purchase [14]. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H8a: Functional value affects SN.

H8b: Social value affects SN.

H8c: Emotional value affects SN.

2.4. Research framework

The classic TPB is adopted as the basic framework of the model, and then the Consumer Value Theory is integrated into it, with functional, social and emotional value selected as core constructs. By exploring the differential impacts of these three motivational factors on willingness to buy organic food, and the mediating roles of attitude and SN, the explanatory power of the model is enhanced.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Data collection and samples

Based on the TPB model, this investigation explores the specific impact of Chinese consumers' consumption values on organic food purchase intention through rigorous analysis of sample data. Therefore, a questionnaire survey was adopted to collect a relatively large amount of the collected dataset.

The investigation was completed in August 2025, and the questionnaires were distributed online to three regions (Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong). All respondents were adult consumers aged 18 and above, with a basic understanding of organic food.

Table 1 demonstrates the detailed demographic characteristics of the samples. First of all, the gender ratio is balanced: males account for 47.8% and females account for 52.3%. 54.3% of the respondents are aged between 26 and 40. 62.5% of the respondents have an education level above senior high school. 63.3% of the respondents are enterprise employees or self-employed/freelancers.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

| Characteristic | Demographic | Frequency | Percentage(%) |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|---------------|
| Gender | Male | 191 | 47.8 |
| | Female | 209 | 52.3 |
| Age(years) | 18-25 | 32 | 8.0 |
| | 26-30 | 117 | 29.3 |
| | 31-40 | 100 | 25.0 |
| | 41-50 | 83 | 20.8 |
| | 51-60 | 49 | 12.3 |
| | 61 and above | 19 | 4.8 |
| | Junior high and below | 58 | 14.5 |
| Educational | Senior high | 92 | 23.0 |
| | Associate degree | 134 | 33.5 |
| | Bachelor degree | 76 | 19.0 |
| | Master's degree and above | 40 | 10.0 |
| Occupation | Staff of government agencies or public institutions | 88 | 22.0 |
| | Enterprise employee | 117 | 29.3 |
| | Self-employed or freelancer | 136 | 34.0 |
| | Others | 59 | 14.8 |
| City | Beijing | 128 | 32.0 |
| | Shanghai | 152 | 38.0 |
| | Guangdong | 120 | 30.0 |
| Income(monthly) | Less than¥5000(\$705) | 48 | 12.0 |
| | ¥5000(\$705)-¥10000(\$1410) | 151 | 37.8 |
| | ¥10000(\$1410)-¥20000(\$2820) | 126 | 31.5 |
| | More than ¥20000(\$2820) | 75 | 18.8 |
| Population(household) | Single | 67 | 16.8 |
| | Couple without children | 167 | 41.8 |
| | Couple with children | 136 | 34.0 |
| | Others | 30 | 7.5 |
| Total | | 400 | 100 |

3.2. Measures

The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part includes questions about respondents' demographic characteristics, and the second part is used to analyze the relationships between variables at all levels in the constructed model.

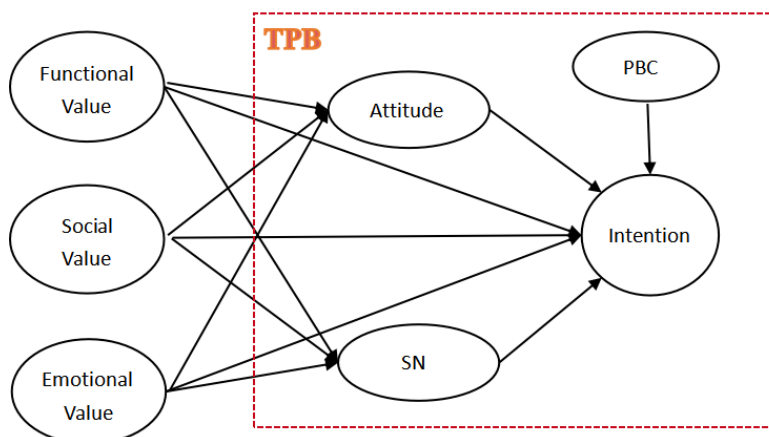


Figure 1. The research framework of consumers' organic food consumption behaviour

The items of each variable in the second part were modified on the basis of previous studies. The items of functional value were adapted from Thio [13] [23]; the items of social value referred to Cho [15] [25]; and the items of emotional value were adapted from Samoggia [16] [26]. The items of attitude, PBC and the willingness to buy organic food were based on the relevant research of Lu [7] [15], while the items of SN referred to Samoggia [16] [26]. In addition, a 5-point Likert scale was used for the options of the questions, where “1” represents “strongly disagree” and “5” represents “strongly agree”, so as to evaluate the items of all constructs.

4. Data analysis methods and results

4.1. Common Method Variance (CMV) and descriptive statistics

Harman's single-factor test was used to test the CMV. The factor analysis results demonstrated that the first factor explained 41.92% of the total variance, which is lower than the threshold of 50%. This result indicates that CMV does not have an impact on this study.

Descriptive statistical analysis of the sample data demonstrated that there is no statistically reliable difference in the perception of Chinese adult consumer groups towards the social value (mean=3.2358, sd=0.81012) and emotional value (mean=3.2892, sd=0.85188) of organic food, while they pay more attention to the functional value (mean=3.6092, sd=0.89975) of organic food. In addition, t-test results showed that the driving effect of attitude (mean=0.212, p=0.004) on willingness to buy organic food is stronger than that of SN (mean=0.177, p=0.001) and PBC (mean=0.171, p<0.001). This indicates that Chinese adult consumers' attitude towards organic food promotes their willingness to buy organic food.

4.2. Measurement model

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to evaluate the reliability and validity of the model structure. As demonstrated in Table 2, all Cronbach's alpha and CR values in this study are higher than the critical value (0.7), which indicates that the scale has good internal consistency. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) and standardized factor loadings were used to evaluate the convergent validity of the items. As shown in Table 2, the AVE values of the 7 variables are all higher than 0.5, and the outer loadings of all items are greater than 0.7. These results confirm that the questionnaire items have sufficient convergent validity.

Finally, the discriminant validity was measured by the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 3, the square roots of the AVE values of the 7 constructs are all greater than the correlations between the constructs themselves and other constructs. At the same time, as shown in Table 4, the HTMT ratios of all combinations are lower than 0.9. These results confirm that all constructs have good discriminant validity.

Table 2. Reliability and validity tests of the constructs

| Construct | VIF | Items | Standard loadings | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE |
|------------------|-------|---|-------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Functional Value | 1.627 | Organic foods provide a variety of ingredients. | 0.836 | 0.753 | 0.859 | 0.670 |
| | 1.513 | Organic foods are very delicious. | 0.824 | | | |
| | 1.442 | Organic foods are worth the money. | 0.794 | | | |
| Social Value | 1.525 | Eating organic foods has changed my lifestyle. | 0.820 | 0.741 | 0.853 | 0.659 |
| | 1.464 | Being perceived by others as eating organic foods helps me stand out among my peers. | 0.819 | | | |
| | 1.439 | When I eat organic foods, my social status is higher. | 0.797 | | | |
| Emotional Value | 1.383 | When I buy organic foods, I feel full of hope. | 0.775 | 0.737 | 0.851 | 0.655 |
| | 1.550 | When I decide to buy organic foods, I feel satisfied. | 0.829 | | | |
| | 1.484 | When I decide to buy organic foods, I feel proud. | 0.823 | | | |
| Attitude | 1.806 | Buying organic foods is a good idea. | 0.855 | 0.815 | 0.890 | 0.730 |
| | 1.766 | Buying organic foods is a wise choice. | 0.856 | | | |
| | 1.820 | I like the idea of buying organic foods. | 0.852 | | | |
| SN | 1.701 | My peers approve of buying organic foods. | 0.834 | 0.804 | 0.885 | 0.719 |
| | 1.669 | I want to fit in with my peers who buy organic foods. | 0.834 | | | |
| | 1.908 | Many like-minded people prefer organic foods. | 0.875 | | | |
| PBC | 1.744 | I am confident that I can buy organic foods if I want to. | 0.793 | 0.853 | 0.901 | 0.694 |
| | 2.093 | Organic foods are always in sufficient supply. | 0.849 | | | |
| | 2.083 | There are organic vegetables on the market. | 0.850 | | | |
| | 1.970 | Organic foods are labeled with accurate information or the organic status of the product. | 0.840 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|--|-------|-------|-----------|-----------|
| Intention | 1.49 3 | I intend to buy organic foods in the near future. | 0.766 | 0.819 | 0.88 1 | 0.64 9 |
| | 1.82 1 | If I had to choose again,I would buy organic foods. | 0.820 | | | |
| | 1.76 8 | I try to buy organic foods because it is my best choice. | 0.813 | | | |
| | 1.83 6 | I consider myself a loyal customer of organic foods. | 0.822 | | | |

Note: VIF is short for Variance Inflation Factor; CR is short for Composite Reliability; AVE is short for Average Variance Extracted. PBC=Perceived behaviour control; SN = Social norms.

Table 3. Fornell-larcker criterion

| | SN | Functional Value | Attitude | Emotional Value | PBC | Social Value | Intention |
|------------------|-------|------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| SN | 0.848 | | | | | | |
| Functional Value | 0.441 | 0.818 | | | | | |
| Attitude | 0.532 | 0.411 | 0.854 | | | | |
| Emotional Value | 0.580 | 0.412 | 0.665 | 0.809 | | | |
| PBC | 0.512 | 0.457 | 0.551 | 0.535 | 0.833 | | |
| Social Value | 0.484 | 0.441 | 0.507 | 0.531 | 0.573 | 0.812 | |
| Intention | 0.621 | 0.491 | 0.661 | 0.657 | 0.633 | 0.638 | 0.806 |

Note: PBC=Perceived behaviour control; SN=Social norms.

Table 4. HTMT and confidence interval

| | SN | Functional Value | Attitude | Emotional Value | PBC | Social Value | Intention |
|------------------|-------|------------------|----------|-----------------|-------|--------------|-----------|
| SN | | | | | | | |
| Functional Value | 0.564 | | | | | | |
| Attitude | 0.657 | 0.526 | | | | | |
| Emotional Value | 0.750 | 0.553 | 0.856 | | | | |
| PBC | 0.619 | 0.569 | 0.659 | 0.671 | | | |
| Social Value | 0.626 | 0.590 | 0.651 | 0.718 | 0.720 | | |
| Intention | 0.764 | 0.624 | 0.808 | 0.845 | 0.755 | 0.818 | |

Note: PBC=Perceived behaviour control; SN=Social norms.

4.3. Path relationship evaluation

As shown in Table 5, functional, social and emotional value all facilitate willingness to buy organic food. which verifies H4, H5, and H6. This suggests that these three values can directly affect purchase intention. In addition, functional, social and emotional value beneficially affects attitude, which supports H7a, H7b, and H7c. Moreover, functional, social and emotional value also beneficially affect SN, which confirms H8a, H8b, and H8c. Finally, attitude , PBC and SN all foster purchase intention, which verifies H1, H2, and H3.

Table 5. Results of algorithm and bootstrapping tests

| Hypothesis | β | T-value | <i>p</i> - value |
|------------------|---------|---------|------------------|
| SN -> Intention | 0.180 | 3.244 | 0.001 |
| FV -> SN | 0.194 | 4.105 | 0.000 |
| FV -> AT | 0.118 | 3.017 | 0.003 |
| FV -> Intention | 0.078 | 2.173 | 0.030 |
| AT -> Intention | 0.216 | 2.876 | 0.004 |
| EV -> SN | 0.401 | 7.340 | 0.000 |
| EV -> AT | 0.521 | 11.012 | 0.000 |
| EV -> Intention | 0.171 | 2.859 | 0.004 |
| PBC -> Intention | 0.169 | 3.763 | 0.000 |
| SV -> SN | 0.185 | 3.286 | 0.001 |
| SV -> AT | 0.178 | 3.142 | 0.002 |
| SV -> Intention | 0.220 | 3.717 | 0.000 |

Note: SN=Social norms; FV=Functional Value; AT=Attitude; EV=Emotional Value; PBC=Perceived behaviour control; SV=Social Value.

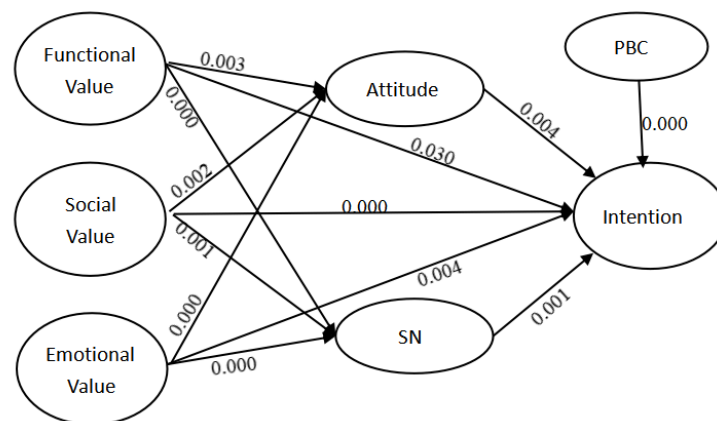


Figure 2. Results of the structural model

4.4. Mediating effects of attitude and SN

The significance of indirect effects was evaluated by the 97.5% confidence interval and T-value. Table 6 shows in detail the specific indirect effects, total indirect effects, direct effects, and total effects of functional, social and emotional value on willingness to buy organic food. Among them, all T-values are greater than 2, and the T-value of the impact of emotional value on attitude exceeds 11. Simultaneously, none of the confidence intervals contain zero at the 97.5% level. These results indicate that attitude and SN are important mediating variables between functional value, social value, emotional value, and the willingness. It can also be seen from Table 6 that the mediating effect

of SN on functional value is greater than that of attitude . However, the mediating effect of attitude on emotional value and social value is higher than that of subjective norms.

Table 6. The results of mediating effect analysis

| Hypotheses and paths | Specific indirect effects | | | Total indirect effects | | | Direct effects | | | Total effects | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------|----------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------------|---------|----------------------|
| | β | T-value | Confidence intervals | β | T-value | Confidence intervals | β | T-value | Confidence intervals | β | T-value | Confidence intervals |
| FV->AT->Intention | 0.025 | 2.048 | [0.005,0.054] | 0.060 | 3.414 | [0.029,0.097] | 0.078 | 2.173 | [0.008,0.150] | 0.139 | 3.706 | [0.066,0.212] |
| FV->SN->Intention | 0.035 | 2.552 | [0.011,0.064] | 0.185 | 4.419 | [0.104,0.263] | | | | | | |
| EV->AT->Intention | 0.112 | 2.828 | [0.033,0.189] | 0.072 | 3.419 | [0.032,0.114] | 0.171 | 2.859 | [0.053,0.288] | 0.355 | 6.161 | [0.239,0.462] |
| EV->SN->Intention | 0.072 | 2.710 | [0.025,0.129] | 0.060 | 3.414 | [0.029,0.097] | | | | | | |
| SV->AT->Intention | 0.038 | 2.393 | [0.009,0.071] | 0.185 | 4.419 | [0.104,0.263] | 0.220 | 3.717 | [0.112,0.344] | 0.292 | 4.899 | [0.181,0.414] |
| SV->SN->Intention | 0.033 | 2.459 | [0.010,0.064] | 0.072 | 3.419 | [0.032,0.114] | | | | | | |

Note: FV=Functional Value; AT=Attitude; SN=Social norms; EV=Emotional Value; SV=Social Value.

4.5. Predictive relevance

R^2 is a statistic used to measure the correlation between model predictions and reality. The larger the R^2 value, the greater the influence of the construct. In the model constructed in this paper, the R^2 value of SN is 0.408, and the R^2 value of attitude is 0.485, implying that both constructs exert a similar level of influence. The R^2 value of purchase intention reaches 0.652, which shows that its influence is relatively large.

5. Discussion

Through a questionnaire survey on organic food consumption in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong, the following conclusions are drawn.

First, functional, social and emotional value all enhance willingness to buy organic food. From the perspective of total effect, emotional value is instrumental in willingness to buy organic food. This result is consistent with the research of Qasim [12]. When people purchase organic food, they will generate positive emotions, which in turn promote the improvement of their intention to purchase organic food. However, there is a difference: Qasim holds that social value is not a determinant of willingness to buy organic food [12] [8]. This may be due to the differences in the economic development levels of the research subjects. Pakistan is a country dominated by an agricultural economy, while China has achieved rapid economic development in recent years with improved urbanization. In addition, China has vigorously advocated green food at the social level. Therefore, this investigation concludes that social value bolsters willingness to buy organic food. Functional value also fosters willingness to buy organic food, which is consistent with the research results of Rahnema on organic food behavior [17] [21]. After the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a heightened

focus on the safety and standards of food products. In addition, the average life expectancy of Chinese people has increased, and people pay more attention to health preservation, so they can obtain benefits such as health by purchasing organic food. From the perspective of direct effect, social value has the most notable promoting effect on willingness to buy organic food. This may be because organic food is not an ordinary commodity in China, and it often reflects the social status of consumers. Therefore, the effect of social value on directly eliciting intentional responses in favor of organic food buying is obvious.

Second, the mediating roles of attitude and SN in functional, social and emotional value are also different. The mediating effect of SN on functional value is greater than that of attitude, while the mediating effect of attitude on social value and emotional value is greater than that of SN. Among them, the mediating effect of SN on functional value is significant. This may be because functional value is an extrinsic attribute of products, while SN are also related to external social pressure and support, so the connection between the two is closer than that between attitude (which reflects personal intrinsic preference) and functional value. Similarly, attitude, as the evaluation and judgment of the value of things, has a more direct connection with emotional value and social value.

6. Conclusions and implications

6.1. Conclusions

Initially, functional, social and emotional value all beneficially affect willingness to buy organic food. From an overall perspective, emotional value has the most notable impact on willingness to buy organic food, followed by social and functional value. From the perspective of direct effect, social value displays the greatest magnitude of direct impact, followed by emotional and functional value. Second, although the mediating mechanisms and degrees of attitude and SN are different, all three values can influence organic food purchase intention through these two mediating variables. Among them, the mediating effect of SN on functional value is greater, while the mediating effect of attitude on emotional value and social value is more prominent.

6.2. Implications

This investigation yields valuable insights to inform the strategies of growers, retailers, and government bodies in the organic food sector.

Initially, since emotional value has a more notable effect on willingness to buy organic food in terms of total effect, it is crucial to enhance consumers' emotional identification with organic food. From the perspective of stimulating intrinsic needs, story-based and scenario-based marketing content should be released. On the one hand, the real feelings of some consumers when purchasing organic food can be introduced to arouse the emotional resonance of the public; on the other hand, the connection between organic food and themes with high emotional output (such as family health and environmental protection) should be strengthened.

Second, the direct effect of social value on willingness to buy organic food is notable, so amplifying the social value of organic food is one of the effective ways to improve purchase intention. From the perspective of organic food producers, the contribution of organic food to society and the environment can be highlighted on the packaging. From the perspective of sellers, the sales channels of organic food can be combined with environmental public welfare activities. From the perspective of the government, governments at all levels can formulate relevant subsidy policies for organic food purchase based on actual conditions and comprehensive considerations.

Third, attention should be paid to the mediating role of attitude in the impact of social and emotional value on willingness to buy organic food. First of all, the exposure rate of organic food in the public view should be increased. The focus of promotion should be on emotional needs and environmental protection. In addition, it is necessary to guard against the cognitive barriers that consumers may have towards organic food. More popular science content about organic food should be added to help people understand the scientific nature and practicality of organic food.

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