sustainability

MDPI

Article

Factors Influencing Chinese Consumers' Attitudes and Behaviors in the Organic Food Market—In the Context of Sustainable Consumption

Karolina Łopacińska

Department of International Business, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Komandorska 118/120, 53-345 Wrocław, Poland; karolina.lopacinska@ue.wroc.pl

Abstract

The objective of this article is to identify and analyze the factors shaping the behavior of Chinese consumers in the organic product market, with a particular focus on young members of Generations Y and Z. These factors are examined in the context of organic consumption and sustainable development, taking into account global and local trends in the organic food market as well as the role of consumers in stimulating clean production and a circular economy. The article applies a research approach that combines a review of the literature with an analysis of quantitative data. In 2022, an online survey was conducted among 1012 Chinese users of the most popular social media platforms, primarily WeChat and Sina Weibo. The respondents were young consumers from Generations Y and Z. The sample was drawn from the IMAS International online panel. The study identified the characteristics attributed to organic food, the frequency and structure of purchases (product categories and share of organic products in the shopping basket), key motives and choice criteria, barriers to purchase, sources of information on organic products, and the role of promotional tools in shaping attitudes and behaviors. The results show that pro-environmental consumption fosters sustainable development and cleaner production, with younger generations emerging as the driving force behind sustainable consumption. The analysis revealed both stimulating and limiting factors influencing the development of sustainable consumption, and highlighted the critical role of digital channels in shaping consumer attitudes and decisions. The study also discusses implications for market stakeholders (producers, distributors, educational institutions, and policymakers) in leveraging the potential of young Chinese consumers as a catalyst for cleaner production and the circular economy.

Keywords: responsible consumption; clean production; circular economy; sustainable development; organic food; China

Academic Editors: Kyungeun Sung, Abhishek Tiwary and Richie Moalosi

Received: 3 September 2025
Revised: 10 October 2025
Accepted: 14 October 2025
Published: 16 October 2025

Citation: Łopacińska, K. Factors Influencing Chinese Consumers' Attitudes and Behaviors in the Organic Food Market—In the Context of Sustainable Consumption. *Sustainability* **2025**, *17*, 9172. https://doi.org/10.3390/su17209172

1. Introduction

In the pursuit of sustainable development, responsible actions by all participants in the customer value chain are crucial—not only on the production and distribution side, but also on the consumer side. This requires the implementation of sustainable consumption principles, which involve shaping attitudes and behaviors that favor environmentally friendly product choices. Sustainable consumption has therefore been included as Goal 12 of the UN 2030 Agenda and is regarded as a lever for poverty reduction, the transition to a low-carbon economy, and the achievement of climate targets. In practice, this includes

responsible purchasing (green purchasing)—the acquisition and use of goods while minimizing negative environmental impacts—as well as proper waste management. Such consumer choices have a dual effect: on the one hand, they reduce the direct environmental footprint (for example, by limiting demand for high-emission goods), and on the other, they strengthen producers who adopt cleaner and more sustainable practices throughout the supply chain, motivating them to maintain a low carbon footprint and close material cycles [1]. Ultimately, broad consumer engagement in environmentally friendly purchasing and dietary practices is a necessary condition for sustainable development ambitions to translate into lasting change. In this context, there is growing interest in organic food, i.e., agricultural products produced without synthetic pesticides, artificial fertilizers, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and other environmental burdens. A shift in consumer demand toward organic food promotes cleaner food production (for example, by reducing the use of chemicals in agriculture) and can also support the circular economy in the food sector (for example, by driving demand for composting organic waste or recycling biodegradable packaging). Globally, the organic food market is expanding rapidly and is projected to reach approximately USD 272 billion by 2027. This trend is particularly pronounced in North America and Western Europe, where higher incomes and greater environmental awareness encourage consumers to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products [2]. China has also emerged as a global leader—in 2023, its sales of organic food exceeded CNY 100 billion (approximately USD 14 billion), placing the country third worldwide in terms of market size. Importantly, this growth is supported by government policy, as the Chinese authorities view the organic sector as an integral part of their sustainable development agenda. For instance, in 2024 the Ministry of Ecology and Environment introduced new regulations concerning the creation and management of national databases for organic food production. These measures are designed to standardize sectoral development, increase the supply of certified products, and promote the "green transition" of agriculture, thereby generating economic, environmental, and social benefits at the local level [3].

Despite the dynamic growth of the Chinese organic food market, per capita consumption still lags behind Western countries. In 2019, average annual spending on organic food in China was around CNY 57 per person, compared with a global average of about CNY 108 and more than CNY 2600 in leading European countries such as Denmark and Switzerland. This gap can be attributed in part to limited purchasing power as well as structural and cultural barriers in the Chinese market. A history of food scandals (e.g., melamine in milk [4], "gutter oil" [5], clenbuterol [6,7]) has undermined public confidence in food quality. Although organic products are widely perceived as safer and healthier alternatives, many consumers remain cautious, and organic food is sometimes regarded as a "credence good" requiring strong authenticity guarantees [8]. Price also represents a significant obstacle—organic food can cost four to five times more than conventional products, discouraging less affluent consumers. Thus, while many Chinese express a desire to eat healthily and organically, they are often unwilling to pay the premium or lack sufficient knowledge of the benefits of organic products [9]. As a result, the share of organic food in China's overall food market remains modest—only a few percent [10]—and identifying the factors that motivate or inhibit consumers is crucial for the further development of sustainable consumption [11].

The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze the factors shaping the behavior of Chinese consumers in the organic food market, with particular focus on Generations Y (millennials) and Z, who are regarded as the most environmentally conscious and digitally savvy consumer groups. The analysis is framed within the context of organic consumption and sustainable development. This approach makes it possible to demonstrate how the choices of Chinese organic food consumers can support cleaner food production and circu-

lar food systems, as well as what actions are needed to stimulate responsible consumption on a larger scale.

The study draws on both a review of the literature and an online survey conducted by the author in 2022 among representatives of Generations Y and Z in China. It addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Chinese Generation Y and Z consumers understand the concept of "organic food" in comparison with conventional food?
2. How often do Chinese Generation Y and Z respondents buy organic food?
3. What categories of organic food products do Generation Y and Z in China buy?
4. Which attributes of organic food influence the purchasing decisions of Generation Y and Z in China?
5. What is the share of organic food in the overall food purchases of Chinese Generation Y and Z consumers?
6. What motives drive Chinese Generation Y and Z consumers to buy organic food?
7. What barriers limit or discourage the purchase of organic food in China?
8. What sources of information about organic products are most important in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of Chinese Generation Y and Z consumers?
9. What promotional tools for organic food are considered most effective by Chinese Generation Y and Z consumers in shaping their attitudes and behaviors towards this type of food?

The article takes a holistic approach, analyzing empirical research results in the context of contemporary challenges arising from global trends in sustainable development and organic consumption.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Literature Review

The greening of consumption is an increasingly powerful global trend. Research shows that growing awareness of climate challenges, environmental degradation, and health risks is driving people to seek "green" alternatives in their everyday purchasing decisions [12]. Consumers are paying increasing attention to where their food comes from and how it is produced. Products labeled as organic, ecological, or fair trade enjoy greater trust because they promise a lower negative impact on both the planet and human health. As Leonidou et al. [13] note, health- and environment-related factors are among the strongest motivators for purchasing organic food in Western markets [13]. Similar conclusions are drawn by Rana and Paul [14], who distinguish between egoistic motives (health, quality) and altruistic motives (concern for the environment, animal welfare) as key drivers of organic consumption [14]. Among these, however, health-related arguments typically dominate actual purchasing behavior. More than a decade ago, Hughner et al. [15] already observed that health and environmental considerations ranked highest among the reasons for buying organic food, with many studies showing that health concerns outweigh ecological motives in shaping real purchasing decisions [15]. In other words, the average consumer is more likely to choose organic food because it is perceived as safer and healthier, and only then do they consider its positive impact on environmental protection.

In many developed countries, organic products have already gained a notable presence. In Western Europe, organic food now commands a growing share of retail sales, and consumption is rising despite higher prices compared to conventional food [16]. This success has been driven by long-term systemic measures, including certification programs (e.g., the EU's Euro-leaf logo), subsidies for organic farming, educational campaigns, and well-developed distribution channels such as supermarkets and farmers' markets [17]. Western consumers place a high level of trust in certifications and are willing to pay a

so-called price premium for the guarantee of quality and the absence of "chemicals" in food [18]. In Denmark and Austria, the market share of organic products in the food sector reaches double digits, with annual sales measured in billions of euros [19,20]. Importantly, in recent years, the "eco" trend has extended beyond food itself—natural cosmetics, organic textiles, and even ecotourism are gaining in popularity. For younger generations, being "eco" has become part of a lifestyle identity that combines care for personal health with concern for the planet [21,22].

In Asia, interest in organic food is growing, although both the starting point and the dynamics of this trend development differ significantly from those in Europe. In Japan and South Korea, the organic segment remains niche compared to European markets—in Japan, it is downright minimal [23]. One of the most frequently cited barriers is the higher price of organic products, as confirmed by studies and surveys in Korea [24]. In Japan, strong trust in national food safety standards (the JAS system) means that the added value of the "organic" label is often less convincing for some consumers [25].

China, on the other hand, after years of neglect, has been catching up in the last decade. The country has one of the largest areas of organic farmland in the world (around 4 million hectares—4th place globally) and has been developing its own national certification system (GB/T19630-2019) [26], supported by active government policy (MEE, SAMR; the 14th Five-Year Plan). These measures strengthen both the supply and demand for organic food [3]. Numerous food safety incidents have become a key demand factor in China, raising public awareness of the value of product quality and cleanliness. Chinese consumers attach great importance to food safety—studies show that they consider organic food to be free of pesticides, heavy metals, and other hazards, and therefore safer for their health [27].

Concern for one's own health and that of one's family is therefore the strongest incentive for purchasing organic products in China, as confirmed by, among others, the results of a study by Hu et al. [9]. They showed that health consciousness among Chinese consumers aged 18–35 significantly increases their intention to purchase organic food. Other important factors include perceived product value and environmental considerations—consumers who recognized higher quality and ecological benefits were more likely to purchase organic food. Moreover, a generally positive attitude toward organic food was directly linked to a willingness to pay a higher price for such products [9]. This suggests that education placing strong emphasis on the unique health and environmental benefits of organic products can boost both demand and acceptance of higher prices. The literature also highlights the specific cultural and systemic conditions of the Chinese market. On the one hand, Chinese consumers display relatively high trust in certifications and labels—the national organic certification system (the green "China Organic" logo) plays an important role in building product credibility. On the other hand, memories of past food scandals foster caution, as consumers remain concerned about fraud and false labeling. Credibility and transparency are therefore crucial—companies that communicate their practices honestly (for example, by providing information about farms and laboratory test results) gain a competitive advantage [28]. Nevertheless, information asymmetry remains a challenge in China. Many consumers do not fully understand what lies behind the "organic" label, and organic products remain what economists call a credence good—whose quality is judged primarily through information and certification [29]. As a result, a gap between attitudes and behaviors is clearly visible—while declared attitudes toward organic food are often positive, actual purchasing behavior tends to be more cautious [30]. Price constitutes a major barrier, preventing many consumers from moving from intention to purchase. According to Chinese consumer market research [11,31], despite declared willingness to buy, high prices continue to hamper the growth of organic food sales. Unsurprisingly, consumption of organic products is more common in higher-income households, while

the expanding middle class is gradually becoming more willing to pay for "eco" options. For many young adults, however, budget constraints and competing spending priorities (such as housing or children's education) remain significant barriers, sustaining the gap between intentions and actual purchases [11]. Involving consumers in pro-environmental practices is one of the pillars of the concept of responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) [32]. The literature emphasizes that consumer choices are a form of "voting with your wallet" in favor of specific practices within the supply chain. Purchasing organic and low-emission products encourages companies to invest in cleaner production technologies, reduce resource use, and minimize waste [33]. For example, demand for organically grown fruits and vegetables indirectly helps reduce nitrous oxide emissions (a powerful greenhouse gas produced by nitrogen fertilizers) and prevents nitrate pollution of watercourses [34]. In turn, consumers demanding biodegradable packaging or bottle-return systems are prompting manufacturers to design solutions aligned with the principles of the circular economy, such as reusable packaging and compostable materials [35]. The circular economy in the food sector involves, among other things, returning nutrients to the soil (through composting organic waste), reducing food waste, and recycling packaging—all of which help lower environmental pressures and greenhouse gas emissions [34].

The consumption of organic food can be seen as part of a broader trend of responsible consumption and sustainable dietary patterns. Research by Despoudi et al. [36] showed that consumers are increasingly attentive to the environmental impact of the food they eat—for instance, they are willing to pay more for products in eco-friendly packaging or to reduce food waste at home. In China, the concept of the circular economy is permeating public policy and social awareness, particularly after the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, when issues of food safety and supply chain stability gained new significance [36]. A practical example of circularity in action is the development of kitchen waste collection systems in large Chinese cities for compost and biogas, which closes the organic matter cycle between cities and rural areas.

It is worth emphasizing that although consumers often declare support for ecological initiatives, they do not always immediately adopt new habits. The literature describes this phenomenon as the "green gap," referring to the discrepancy between pro-environmental attitudes and actual purchasing behavior [1]. For example, Chinese consumers may express concern about packaging waste but do not necessarily choose products with reusable packaging, especially if such options are less convenient or more expensive. Despoudi et al. [36] even found that among Chinese food buyers, environmental motivation and awareness of sustainable development do not automatically translate into the adoption of circular practices, such as returning packaging or using refill options. A key condition here is adequate knowledge and understanding of the circular economy concept. In other words, consumer education plays a crucial role—well-informed individuals who understand the benefits of closing material loops and clean production are more likely to modify their behavior in environmentally friendly ways [36].

In conclusion, the literature to date indicates that the behavior of Chinese consumers in the organic product market is shaped by a combination of health, environmental, and social motivations, along with economic and informational barriers. Younger generations (Y and Z) appear particularly predisposed to act as leaders of sustainable consumption—they are environmentally aware, open to experimenting with new products, and constantly connected to information networks. However, in order to fully harness their potential for the purposes of sustainable development, it is necessary to understand the specific factors influencing their decisions and to design measures—marketing, educational, and regulatory—that will help them make responsible consumer choices. The next part of the article presents the methodological framework of the empirical study, which focuses on

this very group—Chinese consumers of Generations Y and Z—examining their declared behaviors, preferences, and barriers in the context of organic food purchases.

2.2. Methodology Used

In order to identify the factors influencing consumer choices regarding organic products, an online survey (CAWI) was conducted in 2022 in cooperation with the research agency IMAS International. The study covered 1012 Chinese users of major social media platforms (WeChat and Sina Weibo) belonging to Generations Y (25–40 years old) and Z (16–24 years old). Millennials accounted for 68% of respondents, while Generation Z accounted for 32%.

The sample was purposively selected using a stratified quota sampling method from the IMAS panel. For the agency has an extensive consumer database and experience in Chinese market research. The sample structure was balanced according to gender, age, education level, professional and economic status, household size, and number of children under 18. Women accounted for 47.5% and men for 52.5%. Higher education was declared by 82.5% of respondents, and full-time employment by 71.2%. Nearly 60% assessed their economic situation as above average (23% described it as "very good," 36% as "good").

Respondents came from households of various sizes and at different stages of the life cycle: 46.9% from three-person households and 28.7% from four-person households. A majority (54.9%) had one dependent child, while 26.5% had no children. This sampling structure made it possible to obtain comparable data between key demographic subgroups. In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the demographic profile of the respondents—young, urban, and educated—reflects the core of the target market for organic products in China fairly well.

The research questionnaire was developed based on an analysis of literature concerning organic food consumption in China and worldwide, taking into account previously used survey tools. The layout of the questions reflects the adopted research concept, in which the main research questions of the article include, among others, the understanding of the concept of "organic food" by consumers of generations Y and Z, the frequency of purchase and categories of selected products, as well as the motives and barriers accompanying purchasing decisions. Questions on the attributes of organic products, sources of information about these products, and the effectiveness of promotional tools were also included in order to identify those that can be used to shape consumer attitudes and behaviors in the organic product market. The inclusion of these questions made it possible not only to compare the results obtained with previous studies, but also to deepen the analysis in areas that have been less well recognized so far. A detailed questionnaire is included in the Supplementary Materials, which allows for verification of the completeness and consistency of the research tool used with the concept of the article.

Moreover, it is worth noting that although the study was consumer-oriented, efforts were made to incorporate a sustainable development perspective. When interpreting the results, they were linked to potential environmental impacts—e.g., a high propensity to buy eco-friendly products may translate into a reduction in pesticide use (through the mechanism of supply and demand), while barriers such as distrust or lack of knowledge highlight areas requiring intervention to fully harness consumers' pro-environmental potential. Although the survey itself did not allow for direct measurement of environmental indicators, when planning it, an effort was made to select questions that would enable linking consumer attitudes and behaviors with conclusions about the prospects for the development of cleaner production (e.g., packaging preferences, willingness to compost organic waste). Originally, the study was conducted for the purposes of a project financed

by the Polish National Science Center as part of the Miniature 5 competition, entitled "The role of social media in shaping Chinese consumers' attitudes towards organic food."

3. Results

The survey helped identify the factors that shape Chinese consumers' behavior in the organic product market, especially among young people from Generations Y and Z. The analysis was structured around the research questions introduced earlier.

3.1. Perceptions of Organic Products

The starting point of the analysis was the question: "How do respondents define or understand organic food, i.e., what characteristics do they attribute to eco-certified products?" (Table 1). The majority of respondents (59.7%) agreed with the statement that "organic food is produced in compliance with strictly defined principles of organic farming." This indicates that most respondents are aware of the existence of regulations and standards that distinguish organic farming from a conventional one and, although they may not know the details, they trust in their rigor. Slightly fewer individuals (55.5%) stated that "the use of pesticides (even natural ones) is limited in the production of organic food." This is an accurate observation, in fact, only a few plant protection products of natural origin are permitted in organic farming, and the pest management approach focuses on prevention and biological methods. Thus, there is a clear awareness that the absence of "chemicals" is a key distinction—one that corresponds closely with health-related motivations.

Table 1. In your opinion, what characteristics define an organic food product?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
it has an organic certificate	50.2%	48.9%	52.9%	49.5%	50.8%
no artificial fertilizers are used in its production	36.6%	39.2%	31%	34.9%	38%
the production process follows strictly defined organic farming rules	59.7%	61%	57%	60.5%	58.9%
no genetically modified ingredients are used in its production	48.2%	50.9%	42.4%	47.2%	49.2%
it has labels indicating the origin of the raw materials used in its production	47.6%	47.8%	47.4%	47.6%	47.6%
the use of pesticides (even natural ones) and additives is limited in its production	55.5%	57.5%	51.4%	54.3%	56.7%
I have no opinion	2.7%	2%	4%	2.3%	3%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

Holding an ecological certificate as a distinguishing feature was pointed out by 50.2% of respondents (as many considered that a product must have a certificate and an appropriate logo to be considered organic). This is an important signal, as it shows that half of consumers pay attention to certificates and trust in their significance. The second half may be guided more by a general image, brand, or a place of sale (e.g., they may trust that everything in specialty eco stores is eco-friendly by definition).

The absence of GMOs as a feature of organic food was indicated by 48.2% of respondents—and rightly so, as organic farming standards prohibit the use of genetically modified organisms. This means that almost half of those surveyed associate "eco" with GMO-free.

Slightly fewer respondents (47.6%) indicated that organic products should display information about the origin of raw materials used in their production. Meanwhile, 36.6%

associated organic food with the absence of artificial fertilizers, and only 2.7% of respondents had no opinion on the matter.

Overall, the responses suggested that young Chinese consumers perceive "organic food" as food produced according to strict rules, without chemicals, that is certified and GMO-free. This perception largely corresponds with the formal definition of organic farming. It can therefore be said that education on the basic principles of organic agriculture has been relatively effective—at least among those sufficiently interested in the topic to purchase such products.

3.2. Product Attributes Determining the Choice of Organic Food

The results clearly demonstrate the dominance of quality and information-related attributes in shaping organic food choices. The most frequently indicated criteria—product quality (74.6%), composition (54.9%), and certification confirming organic status (38.7%)—suggest that consumers seek evidence of credibility and ways to reduce the uncertainty associated with so-called credence goods. Certification appears to serve as a "signal of quality" that complements sensory evaluation and producers' declarations. By contrast, product origin (37.8%) and brand (26.1%) play a supporting role—they may strengthen perceived quality but less often determine the purchase itself. This pattern indicates that in the Chinese market, brand equity does not substitute transparent product information, but rather works in tandem with it (Table 2).

Table 2. What factors influence your choice of organic food?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
product composition	54.9%	54.2%	56.5%	52.2%	57.3%
product quality	74.6%	72.1%	80.6%	72.8%	76.3%
product brand	26.1%	28.2%	21.2%	21.9%	30%
certificate confirming the organic nature of the product	38.7%	40.8%	33.6%	41.8%	35.8%
origin of the product	37.8%	38.6%	36%	36.3%	39.2%
eco-friendly packaging	7.6%	6.8%	9.5%	8.4%	6.8%
price	8.2%	6%	13.4%	10.8%	5.8%
place of purchase	6.1%	6%	6.4%	6.9%	5.4%
promotion of this food	11.1%	12.2%	8.5%	12.2%	10.1%
opinions of friends and family	10.6%	11.1%	9.5%	10.4%	10.9%
expert opinions	5.1%	5.6%	3.9%	7.1%	3.2%
product recommendations on favorite social media sites	4.2%	5%	2.5%	3.8%	4.6%
trends	0.3%	0.5%	0%	0.4%	0.2%
other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Own compilation based on a research study.

The lack of significant generational differences in prioritizing "quality" is also important. The high share of responses among Generation Y (72.1%) and even higher share among Generation Z (80.6%) suggest a convergence of expectations regarding the main selection criterion. In practice, this means that communication strategies targeting both generations should begin with proof of quality, i.e., clear ingredient lists, credible labels, and transparency of processes and production practices.

From a managerial perspective, these results support an approach based on "evidence-based branding"—emphasizing certifications and the criteria behind labels, supplemented with clear explanations of the composition and access to verification paths (e.g., QR codes with batch information). Origin and brand remain important carriers of narrative (storytelling about place, farm, or standards), but they should not overshadow the core information. For new market entrants, this creates a real opportunity to compete through quality and transparency, even with lower brand equity.

3.3. Frequency of Organic Food Purchases and the Most Popular Categories of the Purchased Products

The frequency of organic food purchases is important for the purpose of analyzing and evaluating consumer behavior. What draws attention here is the high percentage of people who declared having contact with organic food. As many as 93.8% stated that they had purchased an organic food product at least once, while only 6.2% reported never buying organic food. This suggests that awareness of this market segment is nearly universal within the surveyed group (Table 3).

Table 3. Do you buy organic food?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
Yes	93.8%	96.7%	87.6%	94%	93.6%
No	6.2%	3.3%	12.4%	6%	6.4%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

The gathered data indicates that organic products have become a regular part of the diet for a significant share of young Chinese consumers. More than half of respondents (55%) reported buying organic food at least once a week, with an additional 22% purchasing it daily or almost daily. Nearly 19% (18.7%) buy organic products less frequently—several times a month—while only a small fraction (4.4%) reported buying them just a few times a year or less. These results mean that in total, more than three-quarters of respondents (77%) consume organic products at least once a week. This represents a very high level of engagement and indicates that, for the majority of young consumers, organic food is no longer a novelty or a luxury reserved for special occasions, but rather a part of everyday eating habits.

Only minor differences between genders were observed, e.g., the percentage of people buying organic products every day was approximately 23% among women and approximately 21% among men, which is not a statistically significant difference. Similarly, there were no substantial discrepancies between age groups. Both younger respondents (Generation Z, aged 16–24) and older respondents (Generation Y, aged 25–40) largely reported regular (weekly) purchases of organic food (Table 4). Thus, in the surveyed sample, the high level of acceptance of organic food is evident among both women and men and across the entire group of young adults.

Table 4. How often do you buy organic food?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
everyday	21.9%	24.8%	15.2%	22.8%	21.1%
at least once a week	55%	57.4%	49.5%	54.6%	55.3%
1–3 times a month	18.7%	15%	27.2%	17.5%	19.7%
several times a year	4.4%	2.9%	8.1%	5.1%	3.8%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

These declarations are also reflected in the share of organic food within overall food purchases. When asked about their preferred shopping model, 13.5% of respondents stated, "I buy only organic food." Another 64.3% answered, "I try to buy primarily organic food. I choose conventional only if organic is unavailable." Around 22% took the opposite position, saying, "I mainly buy conventional food, and purchase organic products only occasionally for variety." These results indicate that more than three-quarters of young consumers (about 78%) prefer organic food as the dominant part of their diet—an unexpectedly high proportion that points to a strong pro-environmental trend. It is worth noting that the statement "I only buy organic" was more often selected by women than men (14.4% vs. 12.7%), which may suggest that women are slightly more consistent in sticking to an organic diet. Women also admitted slightly more often than men that they still mainly buy conventional food (22.3% vs. 21.9%), although these differences are within the margin of error (Table 5).

Respondents were also asked which types of organic products they purchase most frequently. The results are consistent both with author's expectations and with market data from China (Table 6). Organic vegetables and fruit are by far the most frequently purchased products, with 73.9% of respondents indicating them. Vegetables and fruit are the basis of the diet and, at the same time, are products where consumers are most sensitive to freshness and concerned about pesticide residues, which explains the popularity of their organic versions. Dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese) came in second place, with 65.8% of respondents declaring that they buy their organic versions. This finding is particularly interesting, as dairy consumption in China has traditionally been lower than in Western countries. However, the growing influence of Western diets and concerns over milk quality (following the 2008 melamine scandal [4]) have made organic milk a desirable product especially for families with children.

Table 5. What is your preferred model for purchasing food?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
I only buy organic food	13.5%	15.6%	8.5%	14.4%	12.7%
I mainly buy organic food, but when certain organic products are not available, I replace them with conventional products	64.4%	65.3%	62.2%	63.3%	65.4%
I mainly buy conventional food and add organic products for variety	22.1%	19.1%	29.3%	22.3%	21.9%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

Subsequent positions were occupied by: fruit and vegetable preserves (juices, purees, jams—62.1%), organic eggs (52.8%) and organic meat and hams (48.4%). Cereal and bakery products (such as rice, flour, and bread from certified crops) also ranked quite high (40.3%). Comparatively fewer people indicated specialty products such as organic fish and seafood (32.9%), tea and herbs (15.9%), and honey and liqueurs (14%). Overall, the findings suggest that consumers focus their organic spending on basic food categories consumed daily (vegetables, fruits, dairy, grains, and eggs). Niche or more expensive products, perceived more as curiosities, are less popular (e.g., organic tea—the Chinese mainly drink traditional tea and do not attach much importance to its certification, hence the low score for this category).

Table 6. What organic food products do you buy?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
Vegetables and fruit	73.9%	54.2%	66.4%	77%	70%
Chicken eggs	52.8%	72.1%	42.8%	57.1%	48.5%
Milk and dairy products	65.8%	28.2%	62.9%	67%	61.6%
Baked goods and confectionery	40.3%	40.8%	48.1%	36.9%	37.4%
Meat and cold cuts	48.4%	38.6%	44.9%	49.8%	46.1%
Fish and fish products	32.9%	6.8%	25.8%	35.9%	30.2%
Teas and herbs	15.9%	6%	8.5%	19.1%	14.5%
Honey and liqueurs	14%	6%	8.1%	16.5%	12.5%
Vegetable and fruit preserves (juices, jams, etc.)	62.1%	12.2%	54.4%	65.3%	59.6%
Other	0.5%	11.1%	1.1%	0.3%	0.6%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

These results are consistent with data from other markets, e.g., in Europe, vegetables, fruit, dairy products and eggs are also the largest segments of the organic food market. [9]. This pattern reflects the fact that consumers are most willing to pay extra for products strongly associated with health and that are part of their daily diet—where the benefits of switching to organic are perceived as more tangible. By contrast, products such as tea or spices are used in small amounts, which makes fewer consumers inclined to invest in their more expensive organic versions. Nevertheless, as the market matures, the range of purchased organic products can be expected to expand, for instance, with the growing popularity of organic baby food, certified organic sweets, and organic alcoholic beverages.

3.4. Motivations for Purchasing Organic Food

When asked about the main reasons for choosing organic food (Table 7), respondents most frequently pointed to health concerns. "Caring for one's own health" emerged as the most common motivation, cited by 71.5% of respondents. Slightly fewer, (62.9%) selected "caring for the health of family members". This indicates a strong belief that organic food is healthier and safer, with consumers wishing to protect not only themselves but also their loved ones (children, partners) from potentially harmful substances in conventional food. This health-driven argument aligns with the qualitative findings of Ma et al. [37]. For in interviews, many young parents emphasized that they buy more expensive organic vegetables for their children, even if they occasionally forgo them for themselves [37].

The second group of frequently mentioned motives were sensory and quality-related attributes. "Better taste of organic products" was selected by 36% of respondents. Many consumers believe that vegetables and meat from organic farming and husbandry have a more intense, "natural" flavor, which enhances the pleasure of eating. For them, this superior taste serves as a signal of higher quality, and often of greater nutritional value as well—although the latter is debated in the literature, the perception remains strong and shapes both perceived value and purchasing choices.

Environmental considerations ranked third. "Concern for the natural environment" was a motivating factor for 30.9% of respondents. This means that nearly one in three young consumers consciously choose organic food to support sustainable agriculture and reduce their negative impact on the planet. This is a significant share, confirming that altruistic values play an important role—though, as in many studies, they take second place to the egoistic (health-related) motives.

Table 7. What are your main motives for buying organic food products?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
concern for the environment	30.9%	33.6%	24.4%	31.9%	30%
concern for my own health	71.5%	69.2%	77%	70.6%	72.4%
concern for the health of my loved ones	62.9%	62.8%	63.3%	58.8%	66.6%
caring for my well-being	18.1%	17.6%	19.4%	19.2%	17.1%
caring for my appearance	9.1%	10.1%	6.7%	9.3%	8.9%
better taste of organic products	36%	35.3%	37.8%	37.2%	35%
striving to achieve the lifestyle promoted on social media	23%	24.8%	18.7%	24.8%	21.3%
the trend of buying organic products	16.1%	18.8%	9.9%	17.5%	14.9%
other	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%

Source: Own compilation based on a research study.

Social influences and lifestyle were also among the motivations. "Aspiration to live a lifestyle promoted on social media" was indicated by 23% of respondents, while "the trend of buying organic products" was indicated by 16.1%. The results suggest that for some respondents, eco-consumption possesses not only a pragmatic dimension, but also an image-related one. The answer "striving to achieve the lifestyle promoted in social media" can be interpreted as a need to fit into a certain "code" of modernity, especially in metropolitan areas, where demonstrating concern for the environment is now considered a sign of cultural status and symbolic capital. On the other hand, the indication of a "trend towards buying eco-friendly products" can be interpreted in two ways. Positively, as a declaration of following the dominant pro-eco trend, or negatively, as a signal that some of the respondents treat eco-friendliness rather superficially, reducing it to a temporary fad. Without qualitative data, it is difficult to determine which of these interpretations prevails, but the fact that almost one in five respondents admit that a "trendy" image influences their purchasing decisions highlights the importance of social context and peer pressure in shaping consumer attitudes toward organic products.

Only 9% of respondents admitted that they choose organic products mainly for esthetic reasons, believing that "clean" food improves complexion, body shape, and overall appearance. It is worth noting that in Chinese culture, radiant complexion ("liáng cǎi") and a slender figure have traditionally been associated with good health and high social status, while slogans such as "nèi tiáo wài yang" ("nourishment inside and out") are popular on social media. Despite this symbolic role of appearance, the *esthetic* motivation for buying organic food proved relatively rare, suggesting that for most Chinese consumers of Generations Y and Z, appearance is viewed as a by-product of a healthier lifestyle rather than a primary goal of organic purchases.

In conclusion, for young Chinese consumers of organic food, the most important factors are its perceived health and quality benefits, followed by environmental considerations and the influence of trends. Therefore, what emerges here is a clear egoistic–altruistic dualism, in which motives related to safety and health are at the forefront, while environmental awareness provides an important, though not dominant, backdrop for purchasing decisions.

3.5. Barriers and Constraints to Organic Consumption

Although most respondents regularly buy organic products, also in this group there are barriers and discouraging factors that limit the possibility of fully adopting an organic

diet. Identifying these barriers is therefore essential to understanding what is hindering the further development of responsible consumption (Table 8).

The most frequently indicated obstacle is the high price of organic products. As many as 75% of respondents considered "price to be a major constraint," and as many as nine out of ten saw it as at least a moderate barrier. In practice, this means that even rising middle-class incomes do not compensate for at least two- to threefold price difference between organic and conventional products. Interestingly, this disparity is felt most acutely by millennials (96.7%), who, despite statistically higher earnings, carry the burden of mortgage loans, childcare expenses, and other commitments typical of mature family life. The youngest respondents, while having lower incomes, tend to buy organic food more occasionally, treating it as an "aspirational" addition to the shopping basket. As a result, they reported price as a barrier slightly less often (90.4%). Regardless of generation, however, price remains the greatest obstacle to a full transition toward an organic diet—both in light of this study and analyses conducted in other markets [9].

The second key barrier turned out to be a lack of trust in the "eco" category itself. Nearly 71% of respondents, admitted that uncertainty about whether products labeled as organic actually meet the relevant standards prevents them from buying organic food, while almost as many (70%) respondents poor knowledge of the certification system as an additional obstacle. In other words, consumers are concerned about false labels and unfair practices among producers, and this skepticism is fueled by memories of the aforementioned food scandals as well as the general caution that characterizes the Chinese market. As a result, improving supply chain transparency, strengthening certificate oversight, and clearly communicating their significance appear to be essential to rebuilding credibility in the sector. As long as manufacturers do not offer easy access to information, e.g., through scannable QR codes linked to verified databases, excessive caution among consumers may slow down the growth of the entire segment.

Table 8. What are the main reasons for limiting or giving up organic food purchases in China?

	Level of Importance						
	Low		**Moderate**			**High**	
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
some products are not available	3.7%	3.5%	9.6%	19.5%	25.8%	22.3%	15.7%
low awareness of certificates	3.1%	2.8%	8.2%	16%	25%	24.4%	20.6%
high price of organic products	2%	3.4%	6.7%	12.9%	25%	25.7%	24.3%
insufficient information about the offer	2.9%	2.4%	9.4%	15.5%	29.2%	23.6%	17.1%
underdeveloped distribution network	3.3%	4.5%	9.5%	20.1%	25.7%	22.2%	14.7%
customers preferring conventionally produced products	2.7%	3.8%	8.6%	18.3%	27.7%	21.9%	17.1%
insufficient consumer education on ecology	2.8%	4.2%	8.2%	18.4%	25.5%	25.8%	15.2%
low environmental awareness among consumers	3.2%	4.3%	8.3%	18.2%	24.8%	23.8%	17.4%
low trust in organic products	3.2%	3.4%	7.1%	15.6%	25.3%	25.3%	20.2%
low effectiveness of marketing messages	3.4%	5.4%	9.8%	20.8%	26.4%	20.8%	13.3%
lack of adequate support from the state	3.1%	3.9%	8.8%	20.7%	26.8%	21.3%	15.5%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

Another barrier concerns the limited availability of organic products. For over 60% of respondents complained that their stores still lack a wide selection of organic options.

Indeed, the Chinese market is developing most dynamically in first-tier metropolitan areas, where the majority of organic food consumers are concentrated [38]. Outside these areas—particularly in third- and fourth-tier cities—specialized outlets are much less common, and the assortment is often limited to basic categories such as vegetables (especially leafy greens), legumes, and rice, while organic meat is rarely widely available [39,40]. This was confirmed by 62.6% of respondents. Online commerce partly compensates for these shortages, but when it comes to fresh food, many consumers still prefer in-store shopping. This indicates the need to expand cold-chain logistics and establish cooperation between organic brands and large supermarket chains, which could contribute to the introduction of more comprehensive product lines in local stores.

Behavioral and cognitive factors also pose obstacles. Nearly 67% of respondents declared attachment to familiar, "safe" conventional brands. In the context of the Chinese market—where reputation is built over years and any reputational crisis can spread rapidly through social media—consumers prefer to stick with trusted brands rather than risk trying a new, more expensive organic one. For the organic segment, this entails the need for consistent credibility-building campaigns and participation in popular loyalty programs (e.g., WeChat mini-apps), which effectively accustom Chinese consumers to regular purchases.

Additionally, as many as 66% of respondents admitted that their knowledge of ecology and the health benefits of organic food is insufficient, while 15.9% stated outright that environmental issues do not particularly interest them. This lack of awareness means that the slogan lǜsè shēnghuó ("green life") still sounds abstract to many.

Finally, nearly one-fifth of respondents claimed they did not perceive clear health or taste benefits from consuming organic food. And since there is no "immediate effect", the motivation to pay a higher price weakens. Interestingly, the concerns relate more to the lack of measurable results than to taste itself, which only 7.9% of respondents rated negatively. This is a signal to producers that greater emphasis should be placed on communicating hard data—such as lower pesticide levels, higher nutrient content, or clinical study results—ideally presented in attractive digital formats and readily shared by dietitian-influencers.

In conclusion, high prices, limited trust, and insufficient availability form the triad of key barriers slowing down the popularization of organic products in China. At a secondary level, these are reinforced by consumer habits, educational gaps, and the lack of clearly perceived health benefits. Therefore, if policymakers and manufacturers wish to accelerate the "green transformation" of the shopping basket, they should pursue integrated measures: reducing costs through economies of scale and pack-size promotions, increasing supply chain transparency through digital solutions (blockchain, QR codes), expanding distribution networks beyond major metropolitan areas and designing educational campaigns that translate the abstract idea of sustainable development into tangible everyday benefits. Such a four-pillar model—competitive pricing, credibility, availability and education—appears to be the key to unlocking the full potential of lǜsè xiāofèi ("green consumption") among Chinese millennials and Generation Z.

3.6. The Role of Information Sources in Shaping Consumer Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Organic Products

An important factor influencing young consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward organic products is the source from which they obtain knowledge about this category of food. The author's study results clearly show that digital channels—especially social media—dominate in this regard (Table 9). The most important source of information for Generations Y and Z turned out to be friends and family communicating via social media platforms, indicated by a total of 33.3% of respondents. This means that one in three young consumers learns about new organic products or promotions through posts shared

in WeChat Moments, recommendations in discussion groups, updates on Weibo or short videos on Douyin.

Table 9. Where do you obtain information about organic products from?

	Total	Gen Y	Gen Z	Women (Total)	Men (Total)
from family and friends who pass on information in direct conversations	20.7%	21.8%	18%	21.9%	19.5%
from family and friends who share information via social media	33.3%	35.6%	27.9%	37.2%	29.8%
from television	16.4%	14.7%	20.5%	15.3%	17.5%
from the radio	3.6%	3%	4.9%	2.9%	4.2%
from daily newspapers	2.7%	2.1%	4.2%	1.8%	3.6%
from magazines devoted to ecology	6.5%	6.2%	7.4%	5.3%	7.6%
from posters, billboards, leaflets	7.6%	8.3%	6%	7.3%	7.8%
from fairs/markets	14.8%	14%	16.6%	13.7%	15.7%
from the websites of specific manufacturers of ecological products	18.8%	20.1%	15.5%	21.5%	16.3%
from the websites of specific sellers of ecological products	20.3%	21.6%	17.3%	21%	19.7%
from social media run by manufacturers of ecological products	27.8%	29.7%	23.3%	30.1%	25.8%
from social media run by sellers of organic products	27.5%	29.3%	23.3%	27.7%	27.4%
from social media run by influencers or celebrities	24.9%	24.2%	26.5%	23.9%	25.8%
from forums and discussion groups	14.9%	15.9%	12.4%	13.9%	15.7%
from internet portals	23.4%	24.2%	21.6%	19.9%	26.6%
from other sources	0.1%	0%	0.4%	0%	0.2%
I do not look for such information	2.3%	1.2%	4.9%	2.7%	2%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

Traditional word-of-mouth through face-to-face conversations also remains relevant (20% of responses), but it often serves merely as an extension or commentary on content already encountered online. This overlapping flow of information—moving from digital spaces to offline interactions and back—highlights the powerful role social media play in shaping consumer awareness in China.

Next in importance are social media as independent communication channels for brands and retailers. Profiles of organic product manufacturers are followed by 27.8% of respondents, retailers' accounts by 27.5%, and influencers and celebrities by 24.9%. In turn, industry- or consumer-oriented websites were indicated by 23.4% of respondents. Notably, social media is an important source of shopping inspiration for around 39% of Generation Y consumers [41], while among Generation Z this figure reaches as high as 97% [42]. This difference may reflect the deeper integration of social platforms into the daily lives of younger adults, who spend more time online and interact with brands more frequently.

Nevertheless, both generational groups, eagerly use recommendations published on social media, though they differ in the extent to which they are influenced by particular sources. Generation Z shows a distinctly higher susceptibility to influencer opinions—according to a Morning Consult survey [43], as many as 68% of this group reported

trusting influencers more than traditional celebrities [43]. Millennials also value online recommendations, but they rely more heavily on reviews from friends and user-generated content [44], a pattern that can be linked to the fact that they grew up in an era when traditional marketing and reference groups carried greater weight than they do today.

Another source of information are the websites of organic product retailers and producers, indicated by 20.3% and 18.8% of respondents, respectively. Traditional media, by contrast, play only a marginal role: television was mentioned by 16% of respondents, the press by 2.7%, and radio by 3.6%. Health-oriented fairs, markets, and events were named by 14.8% of respondents, while a similar share (14.9%) pointed to forums and discussion groups.

Ultimately, however, the Internet and social media dominate the information landscape of Chinese youth. The effect of unconscious influence also comes into play here—since consumers may underestimate the impact of advertisements and promotional content, even though these messages in fact shape their decisions. In practice, this means that in order to effectively reach their audience, brands and organizations promoting sustainable consumption must remain active online and maintain a presence on the platforms where young consumers spend most of their time—otherwise, they risk being excluded from the very information flows that influence purchasing choices.

3.7. Effectiveness of Marketing and Communication Activities

The study also examined the perceived effectiveness of various tools used to promote organic food. Respondents were asked to indicate which formats should be intensified, maintained at their current level, or scaled back. The collected responses form a clear gradation that reveal the preferences of young Chinese consumers (Table 10).

At the top of the ranking were interactive activities that reduce the perceived risk of purchase. Nearly 70% of respondents considered tastings and free samples the most convincing form of brand engagement—since being able to try an organic fruit or snack bar in a supermarket alleviates concerns about taste and quality while simultaneously building a direct experience with the product. A similar effect is achieved through the creation of dedicated "eco" zones in stores (68% of responses). For clear shelf markings, easy-to-read labels, and green color schemes help consumers to quickly identify the products they are interested in.

Close behind product experience comes the price incentive. Discounts, coupons, and promotions (67.8% of responses) are highly valued, reflecting the cost barrier identified earlier—for every percentage point of price reduction directly increases willingness to purchase. It is no coincidence that e-commerce festivals such as Double 11 or 618 have become important occasions for large-scale campaigns promoting organic food in China.

Another key pillar of effective communication is education and trust building. More than 62% of respondents reacted positively to short videos, infographics, and farm reports that explain how organic farming differs from conventional methods, what certifications mean, and how "bio" production affects the environment. There is also a demand for greater consumer involvement in product development—67.7% of respondents expressed interest in suggesting ideas for new flavors or packaging formats, which aligns well with the growing co-creation model in China, supported by WeChat mini-apps.

Digitalization remains critical. As many as 67.4% of respondents called for expanding online sales, and most expect a stronger social media presence from producers. Influencers are seen as particularly important—62.8% believe that brand collaborations with influencers (key opinion leaders, bloggers or Douyin creators) should be intensified. Brand awareness can also be reinforced through sponsored articles (55.2%), television advertising (55%), and traditional media such as in-store leaflets, billboards, and newspapers—although

each of these formats received slightly fewer indications (50–53%). Radio ranked lowest (49.3%), reflecting the clear shift in young audiences away from broadcast channels toward digital platforms.

Table 10. In your opinion, should the scope of individual activities related to the organic food offer be increased, decreased, or remain at the current level?

	The Scope of Application Should Be Increased	The Scope of Application Should Remain Unchanged	The Scope of Application Should Be Reduced
television advertising	54.9%	32%	13%
radio advertising	49.3%	37.2%	13.5%
press advertising	50.8%	36%	13.2%
billboard advertising	53%	34.5%	12.5%
placement of eco-friendly products in TV series and films	50.3%	32.9%	16.8%
sponsored articles	55.2%	33%	11.8%
information on manufacturers' and retailers' websites	65.4%	26%	8.6%
online advertising campaigns	60.3%	29.1%	10.7%
information posted on social media by manufacturers and retailers of organic products	65.1%	26.5%	8.4%
cooperation of manufacturers and sellers of organic products with influencers, bloggers, YouTubers, etc.	62.8%	26.3%	10.9%
dedicated stands/shelves with organic products placed in attractive locations in stores	68.4%	23.3%	8.3%
placing information in newsletters published by stores	53.4%	34.5%	12.2%
tastings	69.3%	22.1%	8.6%
price discounts	67.8%	24.6%	7.6%
online sales	67.4%	23.2%	9.4%
educating customers in cooperation with the media	62.2%	29%	8.9%
engaging and involving consumers in the process of creating organic food offer by inviting them to submit ideas for new solutions	67.7%	23.6%	8.7%

Source: own compilation based on a research study.

In conclusion, young Chinese consumers respond most positively to experiential marketing (samples, tastings), clear in-store displays, financial incentives, and credible digital storytelling. Traditional ATL formats serve a complementary role—helping to broaden reach, but rarely determining the final purchase decision compared to interactive tools. For market practitioners, this means combining competitive pricing strategies with on-site product experiences, data-driven education (e.g., QR codes linking to quality test results) and collaborations with creators who can translate sustainable consumption ideas into attractive, lifestyle-oriented narratives.

4. Discussion

While the results of the author's study confirmed many of the conclusions formulated in earlier scientific works, they also shed new light on the specific nature of the Chinese organic food market in the context of sustainable development. The most important observed phenomena were contrasted with insights from literature and their implications were analyzed.

The high acceptance of organic food among young consumers comes in the forefront. The study revealed that as many as 94% of Generation Y and Z respondents had some experience with buying organic food, and 77% do so regularly (at least once a week). This level of adoption is exceptionally high, especially when compared with nationwide statistics, where organic food still accounts for only a small share of total retail food sales [3]. It should be noted, however, that the sample in this study was specific, focusing on young, urban consumers who represent the vanguard of change. According to the literature, it is Generations Y and Z that are "growing together with the organic market"—they are more open to new dietary trends and identify more strongly with health- and eco-oriented values. Monitoring their attitudes and behaviors is therefore crucial to anticipating future patterns of organic food consumption.

Industry reports (e.g., Organic Trade Association Survey 2024) and Euromonitor analyses indicate that millennials are driving the growth of organic food sales globally, since they are transferring their health-conscious mindsets to their home eating habits as they enter the age of starting families [45,46]. The author's study show a similar mechanism in China, as a significant share of respondents were young parents who regularly purchase organic food with their children's health in mind. This supports the hypothesis that the pro-environmental attitudes of the younger generation translate into concrete consumer behaviors rather than remaining mere declarations.

Interestingly, the theoretical models—such as Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [47] and the Knowledge–Attitude–Practice (KAP) framework [48]—emphasize that a positive attitude alone is insufficient, what matters is its transformation into intention and action. The author's findings indicate that such translation is indeed taking place—positive perceptions (e.g., the belief in the benefits of organic food) go hand in hand with actual purchasing behavior. Research on the Chinese market (e.g., Hu et al. [9]) has shown that consumers with a general pro-environmental orientation are significantly more likely to buy organic food. These individuals also experience moral satisfaction from being responsible consumers—the so-called green psychological benefits—which further increases their willingness to pay a premium for organic products. The results of this study confirm that among China's Generations Y and Z, this intention is, to a large extent, put into practice [9].

Another key aspect concerns the motivations behind choosing organic food—health first, environment second. The author's study revealed a clear hierarchy of motives—concern for health (one's own and that of one's family) dominates, followed by quality and taste considerations, and only then the desire to protect the environment. This finding is consistent with the broader pattern described in the literature—particularly in the Agricultural and Food Economics review [11] and in the study by Gundala and Singh [49], which highlight rising health awareness as a major driver of organic food consumption [11,49]. Similarly, meta-analyses by Rana and Paul [50] and Massey et al. [51], as well as the study by Rufo et al. [52], confirm that people most often choose organic products to avoid pesticides and improve their health—a trend documented in research both in China and globally [9,50–52]. The results of the author's study indicate that Chinese consumers follow the same pattern—for as many as 72% of respondents stated that health concerns were their primary motive. This factor is particularly important for parents of young children and for younger adults concerned with fitness and appearance. And in China, a large share of organic food buyers are young mothers purchasing healthier food for their families.

Thus, egoistic health motivations clearly outweigh altruistic environmental concerns (named as the main motive by 31% of respondents). On one hand, this might be seen as a limitation—if organic consumption is driven primarily by self-interest (health), fewer people may be willing to make consumption sacrifices purely for environmental reasons. On the other hand, health motivation is a powerful ally of sustainable development—for

by taking care of people's health, we simultaneously reduce pressure on the ecosystem (by promoting chemical-free farming), while also achieving social and environmental goals. In this sense, egoistic and altruistic goals in organic food consumption are largely complementary, even if consumers themselves do not always perceive them as such.

This fact should be leveraged in the discussion on cleaner production—campaigns promoting organic food should continue to highlight health benefits first and foremost, while subtly integrating messages about environmental gains, thereby gradually building ecological awareness. The author's findings suggest that nearly one-third of young consumers already consciously connect their food choices with environmental concerns—a considerable share that is likely to grow as public debate on the climate crisis intensifies.

It is also worth noting the importance of sensory qualities. For more than one-third of respondents (36%) value the superior taste of organic food. While this is a subjective factor, it is nevertheless significant—it shows that consumers are guided not only by rational considerations but also by hedonic experiences. Żakowska-Biemans [53] and Kushwah et al. [54] argue that the perceived sensory quality of organic products—particularly taste and freshness—increases consumers' willingness to repurchase, even when ideological motives fade into the background [53,54]. In the author's study, this factor ranked third among all motivations, highlighting its importance. For producers, this is a crucial signal—organic products must be not only ethical but also tasty and appealing to customers. Promoting flavor qualities (for example, through tastings, as discussed earlier) may therefore help retain consumers in the organic segment over the long term.

Despite high levels of acceptance and positive motivations, the development of responsible consumption faces major barriers. The author's study found that the greatest obstacle to the growth of organic consumption in China is the high price of organic products. Research by Liu et al. [8] confirms that in China, price sensitivity significantly weakens the positive impact of attitudes on organic purchase decisions—for many consumers admit that although they would prefer to buy organic vegetables, the price deters them [8]. This barrier is critical and universal, observed across many countries. For example, Moser [55] found that although consumer attitudes were favorable, inflated prices limited the actual market share of "green" products [55].

In China, the price problem is especially acute, as the gap between organic and conventional food is enormous—often four- or even fivefold (as noted by Hu et al. [9] and confirmed by the respondents in the author's study). Moreover, the younger generation, while large in size, does not yet have the purchasing power of their Western counterparts (China's GDP per capita and average wages remain several times lower than in Western Europe). As a result, responsible consumption faces a challenge of inclusivity—how to make organic food more affordable for a wider group of consumers? Possible solutions include expanding production scale (to reduce unit costs), state subsidies or market-based mechanisms to narrow the price gap, introducing lower-cost product lines (e.g., private-label supermarket brands with organic certification), and educating consumers about the value behind higher prices (e.g., higher nutritional value, better animal welfare, or reduced environmental harm). Without addressing the price issue, many consumers, despite good intentions, may continue to purchase organic products only occasionally.

The second fundamental barrier is insufficient trust in the credibility of certifications and organic products themselves. For more than 70% of respondents expressed concerns about the authenticity of organic products available on the market. This phenomenon is not unique to China—studies in Central Europe have shown that some consumers remain skeptical of "organic" labels, fearing greenwashing. A lack of knowledge about the criteria of organic farming poses an additional barrier—many consumers do not clearly understand how organic products differ from conventional ones, or whether they are truly worth the

higher price. Yuan et al. [56] found that providing consumers with reliable information—when trust in sources and labels is high—increases acceptance of organic food in China [56]. Given the history of high-profile food scandals on the Chinese market, such skepticism is all the more understandable.

The results of the author's study suggest that despite government efforts (e.g., a national certification system and inspections), further action is still needed to strengthen trust in the organic food system. Without this, even price reductions may have limited effect, as consumers will not perceive real value in the product. Therefore, the key areas for action include increasing transparency (e.g., enabling traceability of product origins—some producers already place QR codes on packaging that link to information about the farm), strict enforcement of penalties for fraud and mislabeling (several cases of counterfeit certificates have been exposed in recent years, where authorities should demonstrate "zero tolerance"), and consumer education explaining what exactly an organic certificate means and how oversight mechanisms function. An interesting trust-building initiative is also offered by some Chinese organic farms that invite consumers to visit—seeing the cultivation and production process firsthand helps people develop greater confidence in the authenticity of the declared "organic" nature of the product.

It is also worth emphasizing that social media and digital marketing play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and decisions of young consumers today. The author's findings show that effective communication with this group is inseparable from online channels. In a previous article [57], the author highlighted that social media are an essential tool for promoting sustainable consumption in China. More than half of the respondents obtain information on organic food from their online friends, and about one-third from influencers or thematic groups on social media platforms [57]. The conclusion is simple—organic brands must maintain an active digital presence, otherwise they risk losing touch with young customers.

However, mere presence on social media is not enough. Communication must be authentic, tailored, and dialogical, since Generation Z is quick to pick up on insincerity or corporate jargon. They expect brands to have clear values, engaging storytelling (e.g., the story of a farmer, the cultivation and certification process), and transparent production practices (short videos, farm reports). It is important, however, for the communication to be precisely targeted, credible, and tailored to the needs of the audience.

This dynamic is shaping Chinese consumer culture, which is evolving alongside the rise in the number of so-called "shehuiren"—people deeply embedded in social media, guided by the opinions of their online circles. Among young, educated urban residents, subcultural norms promoting a health-oriented lifestyle (e.g., drinking organic tea, following plant-based diets, engaging in physical activity), are becoming increasingly prevalent, which fosters mutual encouragement to choose organic products. Positive role models also play an important role—celebrities and influencers who demonstrate buying organic products serve as a strong consumption trigger, especially for Generation Z. For this reason, collaborations with influencers—ideally those who are genuine authorities in health and sustainability—are perceived positively. According to Sprout Social [58], nearly half of consumers make purchases influenced by content creators', demonstrating the moderate yet significant effectiveness of this channel [58]. However, not all creators are equally persuasive, in practice, micro-influencers—creators with smaller but more engaged audiences—often generate better results than "big-name" celebrities, who tend to inspire less trust and project a weaker sense of authenticity.

On the other hand, researchers point out that traditional Chinese cuisine and dietary habits—such as the preference for fresh food purchased at local markets or the belief in the

superiority of traditional Chinese medicine over "Western" dietary trends—may hinder the adoption of novelties like superfoods or imported organic products.

Social media also play an important educational role in this regard. For young Chinese consumers are quick to pick up on online discussions about environmental and food safety issues [36]. Publicizing of any issue (such as a report on pesticide pollution in rivers in a given region) can influence consumer attitudes and choices across the country within a few days. This illustrates the power and reach of social networks. For advocates of sustainable consumption, this presents an opportunity, for social campaigns (e.g., promoting circular economy principles, food waste reduction or regenerative agriculture) can reach young audiences rapidly and on a large scale, shaping their awareness. The author's findings indicate that young people are open to such education—62% evaluated educational initiatives positively—provided that the content is presented in an engaging way rather than as a "boring lecture." Short videos, infographics, and online challenges are formats that can effectively engage Generation Z in the topic of sustainable consumption.

From the perspective of cleaner production and circular economy, it is also useful to compare China's experience with that of other markets and consider transferring best practices. For in many EU countries—particularly Denmark and Austria—the market share of organic products is among the highest in Europe, reaching double-digit levels. In these countries, high consumer demand for organic food goes hand in hand with well-developed circular economy infrastructure: widespread deposit-refund systems for beverage packaging (reusable bottles, PET, cans) [59], the selective collection of organic waste, and its processing into compost and biogas [60]. Regulations and certification standards require that some of the compost or digestate be returned to farmland, including organic farms, although the scale of such cooperation depends on the region and the certifying bodies [61]. Local jar-return systems are also occasionally tested, though they are not yet a common solution. As a result, alongside consumers' health and environmental motivations, the availability of circular infrastructure and the broad distribution of organic products play an important role in market development [19].

Chinese consumers are only beginning to be integrated into such practices, which explains the author's observation that their environmental motivations have not yet translated into behaviors such as "zero waste" [36]. It therefore seems reasonable to draw on international experience—consumer education that emphasizes the full product life cycle could stimulate demand not only for the organic product itself, but also for sustainable packaging and packaging-return solutions. Interestingly, research by Nifatova [62] found no clear distinction between health and environmental motives in consumer perceptions—the "organic" nature of the packaging was perceived as part of the "organic" nature of the product.

In China, very few consumers currently think this way (only about 23% expect eco-friendly packaging [62]), but this is likely to become the next stage in market maturation—when consumers begin to demand that producers take full responsibility for products across their entire life cycle. The results of the author's study in the area of perceived attributes of organic products suggest that half of respondents already pay attention to the production process and certification, and the next step may be increasing pressure on producers to assume responsibility after sale as well (e.g., collection of packaging after use, recycling).

As for generational differences, the survey data show that Generations Y and Z are quite similar in their levels of pro-environmental consumption, although Gen Z is more sensitive to the price barrier (due to their lower purchasing power, high prices discourage them more). The literature often emphasizes that Gen Z is more prosocial and pro-environmental than millennials, but this study did not reveal such a stark difference—presumably because,

in matters of food, both groups are driven by very similar motivations (with health being a universal value across generations). However, in terms of communication behaviors (e.g., sharing opinions online, participating in eco-events), Gen Z may indeed be more community-oriented—an area worth exploring further in future qualitative research.

The results also carry important practical implications for cleaner production and the circular economy. Firstly, high demand among young consumers for organic vegetables, fruits, and dairy means that expanding sustainable farming practices in these areas will bring substantial environmental benefits. If a large share of vegetables and fruits were grown organically, runoff of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers into water bodies would decrease, soil fertility would improve (thanks to compost replacing chemical fertilizers), and greenhouse gas emissions from fertilizer production would fall. Young consumers clearly want to buy these products—the challenge now for producers and distributors is to make them widely available while maintaining affordable prices.

Availability remains a major problem—in smaller cities and rural areas, certified organic food options are often limited, and consumers may not have access to eco-friendly substitutes for basic food products. Although China's e-commerce market makes it possible to order food from anywhere, logistics for fresh products (cold storage, rapid delivery) remain a challenge, affecting real purchasing decisions (e.g., not everyone is willing to buy organic fruit online, fearing quality loss during transport).

Secondly, the fact that consumers expect organic products to have specific attributes (e.g., credible certification, non-GMO, environmentally friendly production methods) and place their trust in these attributes creates pressure to maintain the integrity of certification systems. From the perspective of cleaner production, this is a positive phenomenon—the more effective the certification system (e.g., the more farms are effectively controlled and certified also in terms of emissions or waste management), the greater the assurance that organic consumption translates into real environmental benefits.

Thirdly, in the area of packaging and waste, the author's findings suggest that these are not yet the main concerns of young consumers, but this is likely to change in the future. Organic food producers should anticipate rising expectations and invest in circular solutions—such as compostable packaging or box return systems for vegetable deliveries—in order to gain a competitive advantage and strengthen their image as fully responsible brands. Research by Nifatova et al. [62] shows that altruistically motivated consumers expect producers to take full responsibility for a product throughout its entire life cycle. This segment of consumers perceives the "organic" nature of food in a holistic way and expects an organic product to be "green" in all aspects of its life cycle, including packaging. For these consumers, green packaging signals genuine ecological responsibility rather than opportunistic marketing.

In China, there is also growing public debate about the growing mass of packaging waste from online commerce. Therefore, eco-friendly brands could stand out here by introducing reusable packaging systems for e-commerce deliveries—an innovation already offered by some start-ups.

Fourthly, policy and regulation should take into account the consumer behaviors and barriers identified in the study. Since price is the main obstacle, government support—such as reduced VAT on organic food or subsidies for farmers transitioning to organic methods—could significantly accelerate the achievement of sustainable consumption goals (e.g., SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production). Equally important are public information campaigns, run by government agencies and NGOs, that highlight the environmental benefits of organic food consumption and explain certification standards, which should help build trust. Moreover, given the power of social media, authorities could collaborate with eco-influencers (China already has popular vloggers promoting "zero waste" lifestyles)

to spread sustainable habits among young people. New initiatives could also be integrated with ongoing ones—for example, pilot programs for waste sorting and composting in Chinese cities could be linked with a broader narrative about circular food systems, in which consumers actively participate (by sorting food waste, buying local organic products, returning packaging for reuse).

Before drawing final conclusions, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations. First of all, although the sample was large (N > 1000), it is not fully representative of all Chinese consumers as a whole. The author deliberately focused on young social media users, excluding, for example, older generations or rural populations, whose environmental awareness and shopping patterns differ. Therefore, generalizations should mainly be limited to the urban Generations Y and Z segment. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to certain biases, such as the tendency to provide socially desirable answers (though anonymity was carefully ensured, this cannot be fully eliminated). Some respondents may, for instance, have overstated the frequency of their organic purchases due to aspirational motives. Without complementary observational data, such as actual purchase panels, this is difficult to verify. Moreover, the study was cross-sectional in nature, whereas the market is evolving dynamically. Data were collected in 2022 (with supplementary market information up to 2025), but future changes are inevitable (e.g., new brands, scandals, or shifting trends). Since consumer habits evolve gradually, the findings should be seen as a starting point—requiring continuous monitoring and verification in the coming years.

Finally, the study did not directly measure the impact of consumer behavior on specific environmental indicators. The author's statements about implications for cleaner production are based on literature and logical reasoning (e.g., assuming that more organic purchases = greater demand for organic farming, which is more environmentally friendly). However, further research is needed to link consumer behavior data with hard environmental metrics, such as the carbon footprint of shopping baskets. This represents a methodological challenge but is worth pursuing in order to quantify the extent to which growth in "green" consumption actually reduces emissions or pollution.

With these considerations in mind, we can proceed to formulating our final conclusions and recommendations.

5. Conclusions

Based on the analysis of factors shaping Chinese consumers' behavior in the organic food market—considered within the framework of responsible consumption, cleaner production, and the circular economy—several key conclusions can be drawn.

First, younger generations, particularly those belonging to Generations Y and Z, are the driving force of sustainable consumption. Chinese consumers from Generations Y and Z demonstrate high acceptance of organic food and have largely integrated it into their daily diets. For instance, the author's study has shown that one in four millennials consumes organic products daily, while more than half do so at least once a week. The primary driver behind these choices is concern for personal and family health, though pro-environmental motivations are also visible. This suggests that young consumers in China are willing to support cleaner production practices through their purchasing decisions—provided the products meet their quality and health expectations. Generations Y and Z therefore represent a crucial segment for promoting responsible consumption, as their attitudes and habits will shape the market in the coming decades.

Second, the study highlights the key factors influencing the development of responsible consumption. Positive determinants dominate purchasing decisions. Health awareness, perceived quality benefits (such as better taste and higher product quality), and pro-

environmental values are the main motivators of organic food choices. These results are consistent with integrative models of consumer behavior, such as Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Knowledge–Attitude–Practice (KAP) model, which suggest that favorable attitudes toward a product—beliefs about its benefits—translate into purchase intentions and ultimately into actual consumption [1]. Trust in certification and information credibility also plays a crucial role—for about half of respondents, an organic certificate serves as a guarantee of quality, while a lack of trust in the manufacturer's declarations effectively prevents them from making a purchase. The power of social norms is evident in the influence of social media—in the author's study, more than half of respondents admitted that recommendations from friends on social platforms encouraged them to try organic food, confirming the importance of social environments in shaping attitudes (in line with the theory of normative influence). At the same time, economic factors—particularly price—remain the most significant barrier. The high cost of organic products severely limits accessibility for a broader group of consumers, creating a so-called "green gap"–despite positive attitudes of many consumers, they decide to refrain from purchasing for financial reasons [9].

Third, eco-friendly consumption fosters sustainable development and cleaner production. The observed consumer behavior patterns directly contribute to advancing China's sustainable development goals. Strong demand for organic products motivates producers to expand the scale of cleaner production methods—farmers who see a growing market are more willing to adopt organic cultivation, which translates into reduced environmental pollution and decreased consumption of raw materials. By choosing organic food, consumers contribute to reducing the negative externalities of agriculture from artificial fertilizers. The welfare of farm animals is also improving. However, the author's study shows that for this positive impact to be fully realized on a larger scale, the barriers of high prices and limited trust must be overcome. This presents a dual challenge—for policymakers (through subsidies, tax relief, or regulations supporting the organic sector) and for businesses (by lowering costs and increasing transparency). Moreover, given that consumers currently focus mainly on the purchase phase rather than the post-consumption stage of a product's life cycle, there is a clear need to encourage participation in circular practices—for instance, through deposit-return systems or education on waste separation and composting. A truly conscious consumer should not only buy environmentally friendly products but also manage them responsibly after use (e.g., by recycling the packaging). Importantly, the survey already points to a foundation for such behaviors—for one-third of respondents reported being motivated by environmental concerns, offering a starting point for further deepening of their engagement in circular practices.

Fourth, digital channels play a pivotal role. The analysis highlights that communication and education via social media are essential for effectively promoting sustainable consumption among young Chinese consumers. Respondents identified social platforms as their primary source of information and recommendations about organic food—far more influential than traditional channels such as television, press, or broadcast advertising. In practice, this means that marketing and educational campaigns aiming to boost demand for products supporting cleaner production (e.g., organic food or reusable packaging) must be concentrated online, on platforms such as WeChat, Douyin, Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book), or Bilibili. It is also essential, for digital content to be credible and engaging, for authentic stories, industry influencers, and interactive formats deliver far stronger results than standard advertising. Incorporating elements of environmental education into online content (e.g., posts explaining how organic farming reduces emissions or how consumers can compost waste) can effectively raise awareness and drive long-term behavioral change.

Fifth, the study formulates practical recommendations for market stakeholders. To harness the potential of young Chinese consumers as catalysts of cleaner production and the circular economy, a multi-faceted approach is required. Most importantly, education and social campaigns must be intensified—health and environmental benefits of organic food should be highlighted, ideally through social media and with the involvement of opinion-leading influencers, in order to raise consumer knowledge and trust (following the principle that an informed consumer is a loyal consumer). For eco-brands, this means implementing an active and carefully designed digital strategy—engaging influencers, building online communities around the brand, and consistently responding to customer questions and concerns on social platforms [63]. It is worth noting that, social media in China also serves as an educational channel—NGOs, bloggers, and research institutions frequently share knowledge about healthy eating and sustainability through short videos, infographics, and online forums discussions [64,65].

Equally important are pricing policies. Mechanisms that lower the cost of organic products for consumers—such as subsidies, tax incentives, or the development of affordable product lines (e.g., certified organic food under retail chains' own brands)—could help reduce the economic barrier and broaden access to responsible consumption. At the same time, the certification and quality control system must be strengthened. Continued efforts by the Chinese government to standardize and oversee organic production (e.g., further refinement of certification norms) are needed, along with clearer communication of these standards to the public (for instance, campaigns explaining the meaning and reliability of the Chinese organic label). Consumers should also be more closely involved in circular practices—pilot initiatives could encourage the return of food packaging, making them active participants in closing the material cycle.

Producers, in turn, should pay attention to the coherence of their product image. Environmentally friendly packaging enhances brand credibility in the eyes of demanding consumers and helps guard against accusations of greenwashing. Solutions such as compostable packaging or deposit-return systems fit neatly into cleaner production strategies and can also serve as a compelling marketing argument linking responsible consumption to circular practices [62]. Another key recommendation is to invest in experiential marketing—brands should provide opportunities for consumers to directly experience the benefits of organic products (e.g., through tastings, demonstration farms or culinary workshops), since the author's study showed that such firsthand contact strongly reinforces positive beliefs and attachment to products. Finally, segmentation and personalization of marketing messages are crucial. Communications should be tailored to different consumer subgroups: young mothers should be reassured about food safety for children, urban singles should be targeted with lifestyle and convenience benefits (e.g., organic home-delivery boxes), while students should be offered affordable eco-meal kits. Though their needs differ, all these groups share a desire for healthier food, and properly targeted communication can build stronger engagement with sustainable consumption. Research indicates that millennials expect authenticity and interactivity in brand messaging [63,64], while Generation Z tends to distrust traditional advertising but is more influenced by key opinion leaders and peer-generated content [65,66]. For eco-brands, this reinforces the need for active, well-planned digital strategies—engaging credible influencers, fostering online brand communities, and addressing consumer concerns in real time [67]. It is important to remember, that social media also acts as a powerful educational tool in China, with NGOs, bloggers, and academic institutions promoting knowledge about health and sustainability through short videos, infographics, and discussions [68,69].

In conclusion, Chinese consumers aged 16–40 (Generations Y and Z) are showing growing awareness and willingness to engage in responsible consumption of organic

products. This has a direct impact on supporting cleaner production practices and could become an important driver of a circular food economy in China. Unlocking this potential, however, requires addressing the persistent barriers—especially high prices and low trust—while continuing to involve consumers in sustainability initiatives, from supporting local organic producers to responsibly managing waste.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/su17209172/s1, Questionnaire.

Funding: This research was funded by Polish National Science Center under the Miniature 5 Grant Program (Grant # 2021/05/X/HS4/01779).

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Wroclaw University of Economics and Business (protocol code 36/2021; date of approval: 20 September 2021).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this study are available in the RepOD Open Data Repository at the following link: https://repod.icm.edu.pl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.18150/AWFT2G (accessed on 13 October 2025).

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Hong, Y.; Mamun, A.A.; Masukujjaman, M.; Yang, Q. Sustainable consumption practices among Chinese youth. *Humanit. Soc. Sci. Commun.* **2024**, *11*, 1058. [CrossRef]
2. GlobeNewswire. Organic Food Market to be Worth $272.18 Billion by 2027. 2020. Growing at a CAGR of 12.2% from 2020. Available online: https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/12/08/2141147/0/en/Organic-Food-Market-Worth-272-18-billion-by-2027-Growing-at-a-CAGR-of-12-2-From-2020-With-COVID-19-Impact-Meticulous-Research-Analysis.html?utm_source (accessed on 7 August 2025).
3. Xiao, T. Capitalizing on China's Organic Boom: Certification, Trends, Opportunities. China Briefing News. 2024. Available online: https://www.china-briefing.com/news/china-organic-product-certification-trends-sustainability/#:~:text=China%E2%80%99s%20organic%20product%20industry%20is,capitalize%20on%20its%20lucrative%20opportunities (accessed on 7 August 2025).
4. Gossner, C.M.; Schlundt, J.; Embarek, P.B.; Hird, S.; Lo-Fo-Wong, D.; Beltran, J.J.O.; Teoh, K.N.; Tritscher, A. The Melamine Incident: Implications for international food and feed safety. *Environ. Health Perspect.* **2009**, *117*, 1803–1808. [CrossRef]
5. Li, J.; Cui, N.; Liu, J. Gutter oil: An overview of Chinese food safety issues and policies. *Glob. Health Promot.* **2016**, *24*, 75–78. [CrossRef]
6. Li, X.; Zang, M.; Li, D.; Zhang, K.; Zhang, Z.; Wang, S. Meat food fraud risk in Chinese markets 2012–2021. *Npj Sci. Food* **2023**, *7*, 12. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
7. Jia, H. Clenbuterol Scandal Highlights the Need for Better Testing. Chemistry World. 2024. Available online: https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/clenbuterol-scandal-highlights-the-need-for-better-testing/3001022.article?utm (accessed on 7 August 2025).
8. Liu, R.; Gao, Z.; Snell, H.A.; Ma, H. Food safety concerns and consumer preferences for food safety attributes: Evidence from China. *Food Control* **2022**, *112*, 107157. [CrossRef]
9. Hu, T.; Mamun, A.A.; Reza, M.N.H.; Wu, M.; Yang, Q. Examining consumers' willingness to pay premium price for organic food. *Humanit. Soc. Sci. Commun.* **2024**, *11*, 1249. [CrossRef]
10. Qi, X.; Mou, J.; Meng, C.; Ploeger, A. Factors Influencing Consumers' Organic Food Continuous Purchase Intentions during the Post-Pandemic Era: An Empirical Investigation in China. *Foods* **2023**, *12*, 1636. [CrossRef]
11. Campos, B.C.; Qi, X. A literature review on the drivers and barriers of organic food consumption in China. *Agric. Food Econ.* **2024**, *12*, 18. [CrossRef]
12. Becerra, E.P.; Carrete, L.; Arroyo, P. A study of the antecedents and effects of green self-identity on green behavioral intentions of young adults. *J. Bus. Res.* **2023**, *155*, 113380. [CrossRef]
13. Leonidou, L.C.; Eteokleous, P.P.; Christofi, A.M.; Korfiatis, N. Drivers, outcomes, and moderators of consumer intention to buy organic goods: Meta-analysis, implications, and future agenda. *J. Bus. Res.* **2022**, *151*, 339–354. [CrossRef]

14. Rana, J.; Paul, J. Consumer behavior and purchase intention for organic food: A review and research agenda. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2017**, *38*, 157–165. [CrossRef]
15. Hughner, R.S.; McDonagh, P.; Prothero, A.; Shultz, C.J.; Stanton, J. Who are organic food consumers? A compilation and review of why people purchase organic food. *J. Consum. Behav.* **2007**, *6*, 94–110. [CrossRef]
16. IFOAM Organics Europe. Organic in Europe—Browse Latest Production and Market Data. 2025. Available online: https://www.organicseurope.bio/about-us/organic-in-europe/?utm_source (accessed on 7 August 2025).
17. European Commission. *Organic Farming in the EU—A Decade of Organic Growth*; DG Agriculture and Rural Development: Brussels, Belgium, 2023.
18. Kaczorowska, J.; Rejman, K.; Halicka, E.; Szczebyło, A.; Górska-Warsewicz, H. Impact of food sustainability labels on the perceived product value and price expectations of urban consumers. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 7240. [CrossRef]
19. Willer, H.; Schlatter, B.; Trávníček, J.; Schaack, D. Europe and European Union: Key Facts and Figures. FiBL & IFOAM—Organics International: The World of Organic Agriculture. Frick and Bonn. 2025. Available online: https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/55041/1/willer-etal-2025-World-of-Organic_Chapter-Europe-Statistics_p175-201.pdf?utm (accessed on 7 August 2025).
20. Organic Market Report. Økologisk Landsforening (Organic Denmark). 2024. Available online: https://organicdenmark.com/media/l1xbzrpe/organic_market_report_2024.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
21. EU Ecolabel Use and Recognition on the Rise, New Commission Data Shows. European Commission. 2023. Available online: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-ecolabel-use-and-recognition-rise-new-commission-data-shows-2023-10-12_en?utm (accessed on 7 August 2025).
22. 2024 Gen Z and Millennial Survey-Living and Working with Purpose in a Transforming World, Deloitte Global. 2024. Available online: https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-zone1/nz/en/docs/collections/2024/2024-gen-z-and-millennial-survey-findings.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
23. The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics & Emerging Trends 2025. In FiBL. FiBL & IFOAM—Organics International. 2025. Available online: https://www.fibl.org/fileadmin/documents/shop/1797-organic-world-2025.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
24. Kim, E.; Kwon, Y.; Kim, S.; Lee, J.; Park, Y.H. Agrifood consumer competency and organic food purchase intentions according to food-related lifestyle: Based on data the 2019 Consumer Behavior Survey for Food. *Nutr. Res. Pract.* **2021**, *16*, 517–526. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
25. Nakagawa, H. Japan-Organic Market Review 2021. 2021. Available online: https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Japan+-+Organic+Market+Review+2021_Osaka+ATO_Japan_06-15-2021.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
26. *GB/T19630-2019*; Organic Products—Requirements for Production, Processing, Labeling and Management System. Chinese Standard: Beijing, China, 2019.
27. Zhou, Y.; Thøgersen, J.; Ruan, Y.; Huang, G. The moderating role of human values in planned behavior: The case of Chinese consumers' intention to buy organic food. *J. Consum. Mark.* **2013**, *30*, 335–344. [CrossRef]
28. Sternfeld, E. Organic Food "Made in China". *EU-China Civ. Soc. Forum* **2009**, *10*, 1–12. Available online: https://orgprints.org/id/eprint/15979/1/15979.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
29. Li, R.; Lee, H.; Lin, Y.; Liu, C.; Tsai, P.F. Consumers' willingness to pay for organic foods in China: Bibliometric review for an Emerging literature. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2019**, *16*, 1713. [CrossRef]
30. Liu, Y.; Wang, P.; Zhang, M.; Chen, X.; Li, K.; Qu, J. Bridging the Intention–Behavior Gap in Organic Food Consumption: Empirical Evidence from China. *Foods* **2024**, *13*, 2239. [CrossRef]
31. Huliyeti, H.; Marchesini, S.; Canavari, M. A concept mapping study on organic food consumers in Shanghai, China. *Appetite* **2017**, *108*, 191–202. [CrossRef]
32. Goal 12: Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, United Nations Sustainable Development. 2025. Available online: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/ (accessed on 7 August 2025).
33. Cities And Circular Economy for Food, Ellen Macarthur Foundation. 2019. Available online: https://content.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/m/6136f12537e70e5b/original/Cities-and-circular-economy-for-food.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
34. Tuomisto, H.; Hodge, I.; Riordan, P.; Macdonald, D. Does organic farming reduce environmental impacts?—A meta-analysis of European research. *J. Environ. Manag.* **2012**, *112*, 309–320. [CrossRef]
35. Picuno, C.; Gerassimidou, S.; You, W.; Martin, O.; Iacovidou, E. The potential of Deposit Refund Systems in closing the plastic beverage bottle loop: A review. *Resour. Conserv. Recycl.* **2025**, *212*, 107962. [CrossRef]
36. Despoudi, S.; Wu, K.; Nedelkou, E.; Zhu, J. Consumers'Attitudes and Behaviors Toward Circular Food Supply Chain Practices and Sustainable Food Purchase Intention: Evidence from China. *Circ. Econ. Sustain.* **2025**. [CrossRef]
37. Ma, R.; Wang, X.; Gong, Y.Y.; Ensaff, H. The home food environment for children in Northern China. *Appetite* **2025**, *214*, 108175. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

38. Cao, D.; Xie, Q.; Yao, X.; Zheng, Y. Organic food consumption in China: Food safety concerns, perceptions, and purchase behavior under the moderating role of trust. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2023**, *7*, 1319309. [CrossRef]
39. Organic Sector in the World, in Agence BIO. 2020. Available online: https://www.agencebio.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/OrganicSector2020_EnglishVersion.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
40. Organic Sector in the World, in Agence BIO. 2024. Available online: https://www.agencebio.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Organic-Worldwide-2024.pdf?utm (accessed on 7 August 2025).
41. Howarth, J. 85+ Stats on Gen Z Spending and Buying Habits. Exploding Topics. 2025. Available online: https://explodingtopics.com/blog/gen-z-spending?utm_source (accessed on 7 August 2025).
42. Avidor, R. Council Post: The Great Gen Z Chase: The Biggest Online Spending Power in History. Forbes. 2025. Available online: https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbestechcouncil/2025/02/28/the-great-gen-z-chase-the-biggest-online-spending-power-in-history/?utm_source (accessed on 7 August 2025).
43. Morning Consult. *Gen Z and the Rise of the Social Media Influencer*; Morning Consult Report; Morning Consult: Washington, DC, USA, 2022.
44. Hajli, M.N. A study of the impact of social media on consumers. *Int. J. Mark. Res.* **2014**, *56*, 387–404. [CrossRef]
45. Cardozo, I. Conscious Consumption: Younger Generations Fueling Growth in the Organic Industry | OTA. Organic Trade Association. 2024. Available online: https://ota.com/news-center/conscious-consumption-younger-generations-fueling-growth-organic-industry (accessed on 7 August 2025).
46. Rude, J. Future of Consumption: Unlocking Gen Z Behaviour. Euromonitor. 2024. Available online: https://www.euromonitor.com/article/future-of-consumption-unlocking-gen-z-behaviour?utm (accessed on 7 August 2025).
47. Ajzen, I. The theory of planned behavior. *Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process.* **1991**, *50*, 179–211. [CrossRef]
48. Andrade, C.; Menon, V.; Ameen, S.; Praharaj, S.K. Designing and conducting knowledge, attitude, and practice surveys in Psychiatry: Practical Guidance. *Indian J. Psychol. Med.* **2020**, *42*, 478–481. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
49. Gundala, R.R.; Singh, A. What motivates consumers to buy organic foods? Results of an empirical study in the United States. *PLoS ONE* **2021**, *16*, e0257288. [CrossRef]
50. Rana, J.; Paul, J. Health motive and the purchase of organic food: A meta-analytic review. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2019**, *44*, 162–171. [CrossRef]
51. Massey, M.; O'Cass, A.; Otahal, P. A meta-analytic study of the factors driving the purchase of organic food. *Appetite* **2018**, *125*, 418–427. [CrossRef]
52. Rufo, E.; Brouwer, R.; Van Beukering, P. The social costs of pesticides: A meta-analysis of the experimental and stated preference literature. *Sci. Rep.* **2024**, *14*, 31905. [CrossRef]
53. Żakowska-Biemans, S. Polish consumer food choices and beliefs about organic food. *Br. Food J.* **2011**, *113*, 122–137. [CrossRef]
54. Kushwah, S.; Dhir, A.; Sagar, M.; Gupta, B. Determinants of organic food consumption. A systematic literature review on motives and barriers. *Appetite* **2019**, *143*, 104402. [CrossRef]
55. Moser, A.K. Thinking green, buying green? Drivers of pro-environmental purchasing behavior. *J. Consum. Mark.* **2015**, *32*, 167–175. [CrossRef]
56. Yuan, R.; Jin, S.; Wu, W. Interactive effects of information and trust on consumer choices of organic food: Evidence from China. *Appetite* **2023**, *192*, 107115. [CrossRef]
57. Łopacińska, K. The role of social media in shaping Chinese consumers' attitudes towards organic food. *Mark. Sci. Res. Organ.* **2024**, *54*, 4. [CrossRef]
58. New Research Reveals Influencers Significantly Drive Purchasing Decisions, Sprout Social. 2024. Available online: https://investors.sproutsocial.com/news/news-details/2024/New-Research-Reveals-Influencers-Significantly-Drive-Purchasing-Decisions/default.aspx?utm (accessed on 7 August 2025).
59. Reloop, Global Deposit Book 2024-Reloop Platform. Reloop Platform. 2025. Available online: https://www.reloopplatform.org/resources/global-deposit-book-2024/ (accessed on 7 August 2025).
60. Guidance for Separate Collection of Municipal Waste, European Commission. 2020. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pdf/waste/studies/15.1.%20EC_DGENV_Separate%20Collection_guidance_DEF.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2025).
61. Official Journal of the European Union L 253 Volume 64, Publication Office of the European Union. 2021. Available online: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2021%3A253%3AFULL (accessed on 7 August 2025).
62. Nifatova, O.; Bliumska-Danko, K.; Charreire-Petit, S.; Danko, Y. Packaging of organic food—The dilemma of consumers' internal and external motives. *Front. Sustain.* **2025**, *6*, 1513954. [CrossRef]
63. Barton, C.; Koslow, L.; Beauchamp, C. How Millennials Are Changing the Face of Marketing Forever, BCG. 2014. Available online: https://www.bcg.com/publications/2014/marketing-center-consumer-customer-insight-how-millennials-changing-marketing-forever (accessed on 7 August 2025).
64. Simonetta, N.P.; Mingione, M. Towards a new understanding of brand authenticity: Seeing through the lens of millennials. *Sinergie Ital. J. Manag.* **2018**, *103*, 35–55. [CrossRef]

65. Southgate, D.; Bubani, G. Trust in Media: The New Publishing Battleground. 2021. Available online: https://www.kantar.com/inspiration/advertising-media/trust-in-media-the-new-publishing-battleground (accessed on 7 August 2025).
66. Shi, Z. Discovering the Impact of Chinese Social Media Influencers on Generation Z Consumer Behaviour. *SHS Web Conf.* **2024**, *185*, 03012. [CrossRef]
67. Arora, A.; Glaser, D.; Kluge, P.; Kim, A.; Kohli, S.; Sak, N. *It's Showtime! How Live Commerce is Transforming the Shopping Experience*; McKinsey: New York, NY, USA, 2021; Available online: https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/mckinsey-digital/our-insights/its-showtime-how-live-commerce-is-transforming-the-shopping-experience (accessed on 7 August 2025).
68. Zhang, X.; Wen, D.; Liang, J.; Lei, J. How the public uses social media wechat to obtain health information in china: A survey study. *BMC Med. Inform. Decis. Mak.* **2017**, *17* (Suppl. S2), 66. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
69. Xie, P.; Zhang, Y.; Chen, R.; Lin, Z.; Lu, N. Social media's impact on environmental awareness: A marginal treatment effect analysis of WeChat usage in China. *BMC Public Health* **2024**, *24*, 3237. [CrossRef] [PubMed]