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Choosing Organic Food: Planned Behavior Factors, Health Consciousness, eWOM, and Selective Gender Moderation

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ABSTRACT

Organic food purchase intention is shaped by attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, health consciousness, and electronic word of mouth, making it important to test these key determinants together and assess whether the relationships vary by gender.

Objectives: *This study examines the effects of planned behavior factors (attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control), health consciousness, and electronic word of mouth on organic food purchase intention and tests gender as a moderating variable.*

Methodology: *A quantitative survey was conducted using non-probability purposive sampling, involving 243 respondents. The data were analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and gender differences were examined using Multi Group Analysis (MGA).*

Finding: *The results show that attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, health consciousness, and eWOM positively and significantly influenced purchase intention. Multi Group Analysis confirmed selective gender moderation on the effects of perceived behavioral control and health consciousness, while gender differences were not significant for attitude, subjective norm, and eWOM.*

Conclusion: *Organic food purchase intention is driven by behavioral, health, and online information factors, with gender differences appearing only in perceived behavioral control and health consciousness pathways.*

Keywords: *Purchase Intention on Organic Food; Theory of Planned Behavior; Health Consciousness; Electronic Word of Mouth; Gender as Moderation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Organic food is increasingly linked to sustainable consumption goals because SDG 12 emphasizes responsible consumption and production, while organic production reduces dependence on synthetic chemical inputs and supports ecological sustainability (FAO, 2022). However, organic market development does not automatically become mainstream because common barriers include limited product availability, higher prices, and low public understanding of organic benefits (Luthfiana & Bidayati, 2024).

Globally, the organic market has expanded into a major ecosystem, with 2021 retail sales nearing €125 billion and high per capita spending in countries such as Switzerland and Denmark, yet its overall market share remains relatively small, indicating continued barriers

to mainstream adoption (FiBL & IFOAM, 2023). In Indonesia, the government has signaled a push toward organic consumption by setting an organic food share target of up to 20 percent in the 2020–2024 strategic plan, and market dashboards rank Indonesia among the world's larger organic markets, including growth potential in organic packaged food (Kementerian Pertanian, 2021). However, household consumption remains inconsistent: SPOI (2023) reported that about 23 percent of respondents did not consume organic products, 62.6 percent were non regular consumers, and only 12.92 percent were regular consumers; the main barriers were higher perceived prices, followed by limited product variety and access constraints (David & Alkausar, 2023).

This pattern reflects an intention behavior gap where awareness and interest increase, yet consistent purchasing does not, making purchase intention a critical focus before repeated buying forms (Luthfiana & Bidayati, 2024; SPOI 2023). To explain intention, the Theory of Planned Behavior emphasizes three core determinants: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude is important because it captures respondents beliefs that buying organic food is beneficial for health and the environment, and prior evidence shows that a more positive attitude strengthens organic purchase intention (Dorce et al., 2021; Teixeira et al., 2022). Subjective norm matters because organic purchasing is often socially influenced, where family, friends, and reference groups shape acceptance and legitimize the decision, and several studies report a positive contribution of subjective norm to organic purchase intention (Drusyita & Kurniawati, 2022; Gundala et al., 2022). Perceived behavioral control is also critical because it reflects whether respondents feel able to overcome practical constraints such as price, product availability, time, and financial resources, and prior studies consistently show that stronger perceived control increases organic purchase intention, particularly when access and affordability barriers are salient (Bazhan et al., 2024; Prakash et al., 2023).

At the same time, organic purchase intention is increasingly shaped by health orientation and digital information flows. Health consciousness can strengthen intention because organic food is perceived as safer and supportive of long-term wellbeing (Bazhan et al., 2024). Electronic word of mouth is also influential because it provides consumer generated information that helps evaluate quality, safety, and authenticity, and it can build digital trust that supports sustainable purchase intention (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Rütelionė & Bhutto, 2024).

A research gap remains because studies integrating planned behavior factors with health consciousness and electronic word of mouth in the Indonesian context are still limited, while evidence on gender as a moderating variable remains inconsistent across prior studies (Gundala et al., 2022; Luthfiana & Bidayati, 2024). Therefore, this study examines the effects of attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, health consciousness, and electronic word of mouth on organic food purchase intention, and tests whether gender selectively moderates these relationships.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that intention is the most immediate predictor of behavior and is formed by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. In the organic food context, attitude reflects respondents evaluation of buying organic

food, subjective norm reflects perceived social pressure from important others, and perceived behavioral control reflects respondent's perceived capability to perform the purchase under constraints (Ajzen, 1991). This framework remains widely used to explain organic food purchase intention across settings and provides a clear basis for constructing the core predictors in this study (Teixeira et al., 2022).

Hypothesis Development

In the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a behavior, which is formed through behavioral beliefs (Ajzen, 1991). In the organic food context, attitude reflects consumers' favorable evaluation that buying organic food is beneficial for health and the environment, and prior studies report that attitude contributes significantly to organic food purchase intention (Dorce et al., 2021; Gundala et al., 2022; Teixeira et al., 2022).

H1: Attitude has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward organic food.

Subjective norm refers to perceived social pressure from important others to perform or not perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In organic food purchasing, subjective norm operates as a social mechanism that links group values and reference influence to consumers' intention, and empirical studies support its positive role in shaping organic food purchase intention (Drusyita & Kurniawati, 2022; Gundala et al., 2022; Teixeira et al., 2022).

H2: Subjective norm has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward organic food.

Perceived behavioral control reflects the extent to which individuals feel capable of performing a behavior based on perceived resources, skills, and opportunities (Ajzen, 1991). For organic food, perceived control becomes critical because barriers such as price and availability can weaken intention, while higher perceived control strengthens purchase intention (Bazhan et al., 2024; Dorce et al., 2021; Prakash et al., 2023).

H3: Perceived behavioral control has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward organic food.

Health consciousness represents an individual's readiness to care for health and wellbeing, reflected in preventive and healthy lifestyle orientations (Kamboj et al., 2023). In organic food consumption, health consciousness strengthens intention because organic food is perceived as safer and more nutritious, and prior research highlights health consciousness as a strong predictor of organic purchase intention (Bazhan et al., 2024).

H4: Health consciousness has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward organic food

Electronic word of mouth is consumer generated digital communication shared through social media, e commerce platforms, and online forums, and it is often perceived as more credible than conventional promotion. In organic food purchasing, eWOM helps consumers evaluate quality, safety, and authenticity before buying, which can build digital trust and strengthen purchase intention (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Rūtelionė & Bhutto, 2024).

H5: eWOM has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward organic food

Gender may shape how positive evaluations are translated into intention because value orientation toward health and sustainability can differ across male and female respondents (Gundala et al., 2022). Therefore, the strength of the attitude effect may vary by gender.

H6: Gender moderates the effect of attitude on purchase intention toward organic food.

Social influence may operate differently across gender, which can change the strength of subjective norm in forming intention (Gundala et al., 2022; Rütelionė & Bhutto, 2024).

H7: Gender moderates the effect of subjective norm on purchase intention toward organic food.

Because perceived control is closely related to practical constraints, its impact on intention may vary across gender groups (Gundala et al., 2022).

H8: Gender moderates the effect of perceived behavioral control on purchase intention toward organic food.

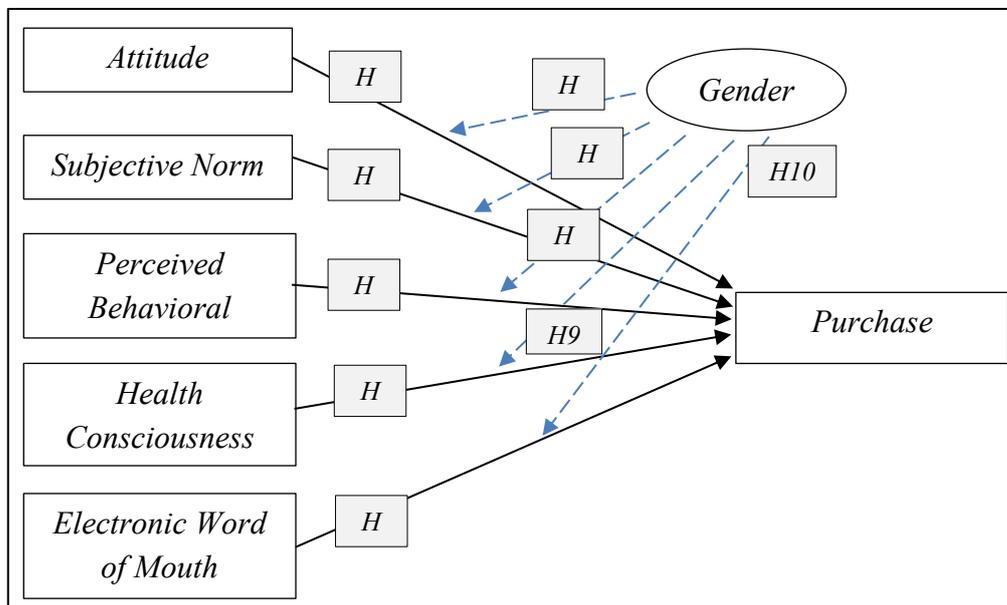
Health consciousness may translate into intention differently across gender, so the health consciousness effect may vary between groups (Rütelionė & Bhutto, 2024).

H9: Gender moderates the effect of health consciousness on purchase intention toward organic food.

Consumers may differ by gender in how they evaluate online recommendations and build trust, affecting the influence of eWOM on intention (Chatterjee et al., 2024).

H10: Gender moderates the effect of electronic word of mouth on purchase intention toward organic food.

Figure 1. Hypothesis Framework



METHOD

Research Design and Sample

This study used a quantitative survey to examine the determinants of purchase intention toward organic food and the moderating role of gender. Respondents were selected using non-probability purposive sampling, targeting adults aged 18 years or above in Jabodetabek who

had previously purchased organic food and planned to buy organic food. From 340 responses, 243 valid responses were retained after screening and cleaning.

Construct Measurement

All constructs were assessed using established measurement scales tailored to the organic food context. Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The measures were drawn from prior studies, including Ajzen (1991), Zayed et al. (2022), Gundala et al. (2022), Prakash et al. (2024), and Bazhan et al. (2024).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4.1.1.6. The analysis was carried out in three stages: the measurement model (outer model), the structural model (inner model), and the moderation effect through the MICOM procedure to establish measurement invariance before performing Multi Group Analysis (MGA) to examine gender-based moderation (Hair et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize the respondent’s profiles and provide an overview of the sample characteristics used in this study. The descriptive data analysis is performed using Microsoft Excel 2019 and presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristic

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	122	50
	Female	121	50
Educational	High School	52	21
	Diploma	17	7
	Bachelor’s Degree	153	63
	Master’s Degree	20	8
	Doctoral Degree	1	0
Monthly income	< Rp. 2.000.000	32	13
	Rp. 2.000.001 – Rp. 4.000.000	35	14
	Rp. 4.000.001 – Rp. 6.000.000	57	23
	Rp. 6.000.001 – Rp. 10.000.000	66	27
	Rp. 10.000.001 – Rp. 15.000.000	28	12
	> Rp. 15.000.001	25	10
Monthly food expenditure	< Rp. 200.000	9	4
	Rp. 200.001 – Rp. 400.000	26	11
	Rp. 400.001 – Rp. 600.000	40	16
	Rp. 600.001 – Rp. 1.000.000	46	19
	Rp. 1.000.001 – Rp. 1.500.000	48	20
	> Rp. 1.500.001	74	30

Table 1 shows a balanced gender split (122 men; 121 women) and a respondent profile dominated by bachelor’s degree holders (63 percent). Most respondents fall within middle income brackets, led by Rp. 6,000,001 to Rp. 10,000,000 (27 percent), and report relatively high monthly food spending, with 30 percent spending above Rp. 1,500,001. Overall, the

sample reflects respondents with adequate purchasing capacity, which is relevant for examining intention to buy premium priced organic food.

Assessment of measurement model (outer model)

The measurement model assessment was conducted separately for each gender group to ensure that the indicators and constructs met the required quality criteria before comparing structural relationships across groups. For both groups, the same cutoff values were applied: indicator loadings were expected to be adequate (>0.708), internal consistency was evaluated using composite reliability (>0.70), convergent validity was assessed through average variance extracted (>0.50), and discriminant validity was confirmed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), based on commonly accepted thresholds in PLS SEM.

Table 2. Measurement Model Result

Construct/Items	Factor loading	CR	AVE
	Complete/Male/Female	Complete/Male/Female	Complete/Male/Female
Purchase Intention (PI) (Zayed et al., 2022)			
PI1	0.818/0.821/0.815	0.900/0.900/0.904	0.693/0.692/0.701
PI2	0.852/0.865/0.838		
PI3	0.856/0.867/0.846		
PI4	0.801/0.771/0.850		
Attitude (ATT) (Gundala et al., 2022)			
ATT1	0.860/0.838/0.876	0.829/0.845/0.812	0.708/0.732/0.684
ATT2	0.823/0.873/0.774		
Subjective Norm (SN) (Gundala et al., 2022)			
SN1	0.833/0.823/0.840	0.846/0.846/0.842	0.647/0.648/0.641
SN2	0.786/0.857/0.706		
SN3	0.793/0.730/0.848		
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) (Prakash et al., 2023)			
PBC2	0.825/0.863/0.783	0.815/0.814/0.814	0.687/0.686/0.686
PBC3	0.833/0.792/0.872		
Health Consciousness (HC) (Bazhan et al., 2024)			
HC1	0.875/0.897/0.821	0.874/0.874/0.868	0.776/0.777/0.767
HC3	0.887/0.865/0.927		
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) (Zayed et al., 2022)			
eWOM1	0.772/0.767/0.777	0.881/0.882/0.880	0.554/0.559/0.552
eWOM2	0.847/0.818/0.871		
eWOM3	0.744/0.788/0.701		
eWOM4	0.759/0.772/0.740		
eWOM5	0.618/0.573/0.671		
eWOM6	0.708/0.741/0.679		

Source: PLS-SEM Data

Table 2 indicates that the measurement model achieved satisfactory convergent validity and internal consistency across the complete sample and both gender groups. Most indicators show strong outer loadings that meet the recommended threshold for reflective constructs, while composite reliability values are consistently high and AVE values exceed the minimum criterion, suggesting that each construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators (Hair et al., 2022). Although a few indicators fall below the ideal loading cutoff (eWOM5), they remain acceptable because the corresponding constructs still meet the AVE and composite reliability requirements, which supports retaining these items for subsequent analysis (Hair et al., 2022). Overall, the results confirm that the indicators reliably represent their latent constructs and that the measurement quality is adequate for continuing to structural model evaluation and group comparisons.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Result used HTMT

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. ATT						
2. HC	0.569/0.605/0.532					
3. PBC	0.809/0.850/0.764	0.729/0.866/0.583				
4. PI	0.651/0.541/0.770	0.602/0.774/0.416	0.690/0.674/0.706			
5. SN	0.634/0.490/0.795	0.397/0.548/0.254	0.547/0.616/0.476	0.555/0.560/0.554		
6. eWOM	0.627/0.617/0.642	0.462/0.706/0.238	0.693/0.871/0.507	0.544/0.610/0.476	0.641/0.641/0.641	

Source: PLS-SEM Data

Table 3 presents HTMT values for the full sample, male group, and female group (reported as complete/male/female). All HTMT ratios are below the recommended cutoff (<0.90), indicating adequate discriminant validity across the three datasets and confirming that ATT, HC, PBC, PI, SN, and eWOM represent distinct constructs (Hair et al., 2022). This result supports using the measurement model for subsequent structural analysis and gender group comparisons.

Assessment of structural model (inner model)

The structural (inner) model was evaluated to assess how well the predictors explain and predict purchase intention. This assessment focuses on the model's explanatory power (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and the effect size (f^2) of each relationship.

Table 4. Predictive Model Result

Relationship	R^2	Q^2	f^2	Effect size
	(Complete/Male/Female)	(Complete/Male/Female)	(Complete/Male/Female)	(Complete/Male/Female)
ATT → PI	0.422/0.469/0.430	0.373/0.359/0.339	0.032/0.010/0.072	Small/No effect/Small
SN → PI			0.033/0.041/0.024	Small/Small/Small
PBC → PI			0.023/0.001/0.074	Small/No effect/Small
HC → PI			0.064/0.160/0.019	Small/Medium/No effect
eWOM → PI			0.039/0.038/0.026	Small/Small/Small

Source: PLS-SEM Data

The predictive performance of the model for the full sample and for male and female groups. The model explains a moderate proportion of variance in purchase intention, with R^2 values of 0.422 for the complete sample, 0.469 for males, and 0.430 for females, indicating that the predictors jointly provide meaningful explanatory power across groups. The Q^2 values (0.373 complete, 0.359 male, 0.339 female) further confirm that the model has predictive relevance for purchase intention in all datasets. In terms of effect sizes, most relationships show small effects, suggesting that purchase intention is influenced by multiple factors rather than being dominated by a single predictor; however, health consciousness shows a comparatively stronger contribution in the male group (medium effect), while its effect is weaker for the female group. Overall, these results support the adequacy of the structural model to proceed with hypothesis testing and gender group comparisons.

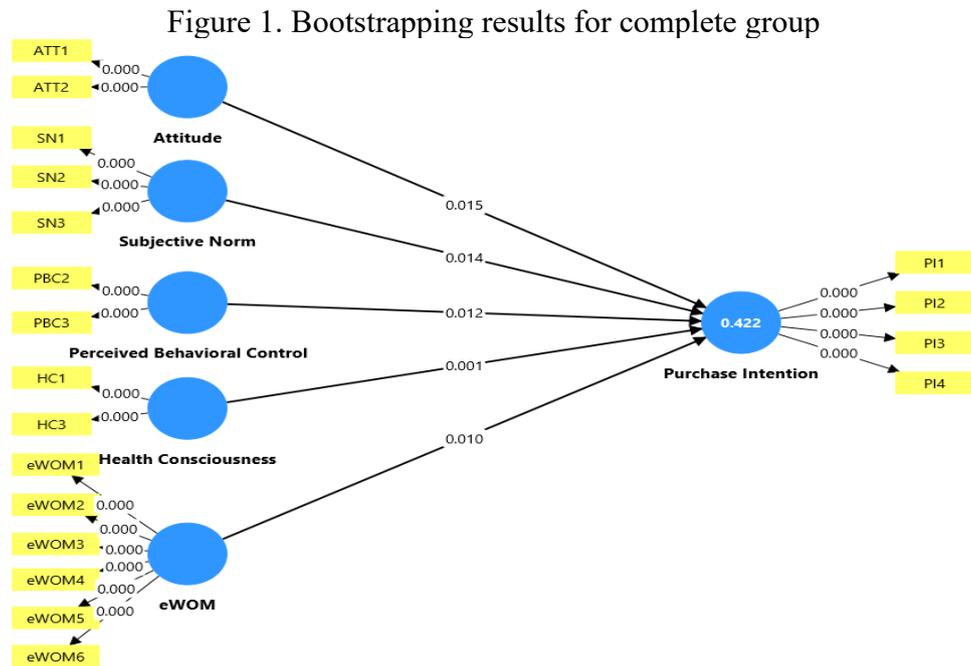


Table 5. Hypothesis testing for direct relationships

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	T statistics	p-values	Supported
H1	ATT \rightarrow PI	0.166	2.173	0.015	Yes
H2	SN \rightarrow PI	0.166	2.205	0.014	Yes
H3	PBC \rightarrow PI	0.145	2.264	0.012	Yes
H4	HC \rightarrow PI	0.223	3.280	0.001	Yes
H5	eWOM \rightarrow PI	0.193	2.324	0.010	Yes

Source: PLS-SEM Data

The results show that all direct hypotheses (H1–H5) are supported because each predictor has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention toward organic food ($p < 0.05$). Attitude ($\beta = 0.166$; $p = 0.015$) and subjective norm ($\beta = 0.166$; $p = 0.014$) have similar positive effects, indicating that both personal evaluation and social influence strengthen intention. Perceived behavioral control also contributes significantly ($\beta = 0.145$; $p = 0.012$), suggesting that feeling able to buy organic food increases purchase intention. Health consciousness has the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.223$; $p = 0.001$), showing that health motivation is a key driver. Electronic word of mouth is also significant ($\beta = 0.193$; $p = 0.010$), confirming that online information and recommendations support organic food purchase intention.

Multi-Group Analysis

Before testing moderation, measurement invariance was assessed using the MICOM procedure to ensure that the male and female groups could be compared meaningfully. The results on Table 7 and 8 show that compositional invariance was established for all constructs, and the mean and variance differences were not statistically significant, indicating full measurement invariance (the constructs are measured equivalently across male and female groups); therefore, the multi group comparison was appropriate to proceed. These MICOM step two and step three outputs are reported in the appendix due to space limitations, but they provide the required basis for MGA (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 6. Moderated hypotheses results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient Difference (β) ((Male)-(Female))	PLS MGA	Parametric Test	Welchsat- terthwait Test	Supported
H6	ATT \rightarrow PI	-0.173	0.119	0.119	0.119	No
H7	SN \rightarrow PI	0.030	0.427	0.417	0.417	No
H8	PBC \rightarrow PI	-0.212	0.047	0.048	0.049	Yes
H9	HC \rightarrow PI	0.261	0.030	0.027	0.027	Yes
H10	eWOM \rightarrow PI	0.051	0.386	0.387	0.387	No

Source: PLS-SEM Data

Table 6 reports the PLS-MGA results for the moderated hypotheses. The findings indicate that gender does not moderate the effects of attitude, subjective norm, and eWOM on purchase intention (H6, H7, and H10 not supported, p values >0.05). In contrast, gender selectively moderates the effects of perceived behavioral control and health consciousness on purchase intention (H8 and H9 supported, p values <0.05). The negative path coefficient difference for PBC ($\beta = -0.212$) suggests that the PBC effect is stronger for female respondents, while the positive difference for health consciousness ($\beta = 0.261$) indicates that the health consciousness effect is stronger for male respondents. Overall, the moderation results confirm that gender differences appear only in the control and health pathways, not in the attitude, norm, or eWOM pathways (Hair et al., 2022).

Discussion

The findings confirm that organic food purchase intention is jointly shaped by planned behavior factors, health consciousness, and online information. First, attitude significantly increases purchase intention, indicating that when respondents hold a more favorable evaluation of organic food, they are more likely to intend to purchase it, which is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior logic and aligned with prior organic food studies (Ajzen, 1991; Teixeira et al., 2022; Zayed et al., 2022). Subjective norm also strengthens purchase intention, suggesting that perceived approval or expectations from important referents such as family and peers can translate into stronger buying intention, supporting TPB arguments and earlier evidence in the organic context (Ajzen, 1991; Gundala et al., 2022; Pang et al., 2021). Perceived behavioral control positively affects purchase intention, meaning that intention rises when respondents feel they have sufficient resources and fewer barriers such as access and affordability, which is in line with empirical work highlighting feasibility and barrier management in organic purchasing (Jiang & Wu, 2022; Prakash et al., 2023; Qi et al., 2023). Health consciousness further reinforces intention, showing that stronger health orientation encourages organic purchase intention, consistent with Indonesian and international evidence positioning health motives as a key driver of organic demand (Drusyita & Kurniawati, 2022; Garg et al., 2025; Septiani et al., 2024). Finally, electronic word of mouth increases purchase intention, indicating that online reviews, recommendations, and peer sharing can build trust and perceived value, thereby encouraging intention to buy organic food (Chatterjee et al., 2024; Zayed et al., 2022).

Multi group analysis then shows that gender moderates only two relationships: perceived behavioral control to purchase intention, and health consciousness to purchase

intention. Specifically, the influence of perceived behavioral control on intention is stronger for female respondents, implying that perceived ability to handle barriers and access issues plays a more decisive role for women in this sample, consistent with the thesis interpretation that social psychological and control related considerations may weigh more strongly for women in platform based consumption contexts (Mouloudj et al., 2025). In contrast, the influence of health consciousness on intention is stronger for male respondents, and the thesis links this pattern to respondent characteristics and resource readiness, implying that health driven motivation translates more strongly into intention when perceived resources align (Drusyita & Kurniawati, 2022; Garg et al., 2025). Meanwhile, gender does not significantly moderate the effects of attitude, subjective norm, and electronic word of mouth, suggesting these drivers operate relatively similarly across male and female respondents, and reinforcing the view that gender moderation in TPB based models can be contextual and pathway specific rather than universal (Ajzen, 1991; Mouloudj et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study clarifies how organic food purchase intention is formed by integrating planned behavior factors with health consciousness and eWOM, while also testing whether these relationships differ by gender. The findings confirm that intention is explained not only by psychological and social determinants but also by health orientation and digital information influences, indicating that efforts to increase organic purchasing should address both individual motivation and information environments. Importantly, gender differences are not universal across all pathways; they emerge selectively in perceived behavioral control and health consciousness, which suggests that interventions should be tailored by strengthening enabling conditions (access and affordability) and health related messaging in a way that is sensitive to gender. Overall, the study contributes by showing that gender moderation in organic food intention is pathway specific rather than general, supporting more targeted strategies for market and policy development. Future research should extend the model by adding contextual factors such as trust, perceived risk, and price sensitivity, and by using broader samples and longitudinal designs to capture intention consistency over time.

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