






## Article

# Unveiling Millennials' Perceptions of Organic Products: A Grounded Theory Analysis in Ecuador and Peru

Oscar Ortiz-Regalado <sup>1,\*</sup>, Mary Llamo-Burga <sup>1</sup>, Nelson Carrión-Bósquez <sup>2,\*</sup>, Harum Chávez-Gutiérrez <sup>3</sup>, Wilson Guerra-Regalado <sup>4</sup>, Iván Veas-González <sup>2,\*</sup>, Wilfredo Ruiz-García <sup>1</sup> and Cristian Vidal-Silva <sup>5</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Escuela Profesional de Ingeniería en Agronegocios, Universidad Nacional de Cajamarca, Cajamarca 06001, Peru; mllamob@unc.edu.pe (M.L.-B.); wruizg@unc.edu.pe (W.R.-G.)
- <sup>2</sup> Departamento de Administración, Facultad de Economía y Administración, Universidad Católica del Norte, Antofagasta 1270709, Chile
- <sup>3</sup> Departamento de Economía, Administración y Mercadología, ITESO, Universidad Jesuita de Guadalajara, San Pedro Tlaquepaque 45604, Mexico; harumchavez@iteso.mx
- <sup>4</sup> CENTRUM Católica Graduate Business School, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima 15023, Peru; wguerrar@pucp.edu.pe
- <sup>5</sup> Facultad de Ingeniería y Negocios, Universidad de Las Américas, Manuel Montt 948, Providencia, Santiago 7500975, Chile; cristian.vidal.silva@edu.udla.cl
- \* Correspondence: oortizr@unc.edu.pe (O.O.-R.); nelson.carrión@ucn.cl (N.C.-B.); iveas@ucn.cl (I.V.-G.)

**Abstract:** In today's society, the consumption of organic products presents both significant benefits and potential barriers, as evidenced by the intrinsic and extrinsic factors shaping consumer behavior among university-aged millennials. This study explores the motivators influencing consumer behavior toward organic product purchases and identifies barriers that may inhibit university-aged millennials from engaging in such consumption practices. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with thirty-eight university students in Ecuador and Peru. The analysis employed Grounded Theory methods. The findings of this research indicate that intrinsic factors, including environmental awareness, eco-consciousness, habitual tendencies, health considerations, and personal values, in conjunction with extrinsic factors, such as familial and social influences and concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, are significant drivers of the adoption of organic goods. Conversely, challenges related to product availability, cost implications, and prevalent skepticism occasionally hinder the acquisition of these products. An innovative aspect of this study lies in its pioneering use of Grounded Theory in Ecuador and Peru. It sheds light on millennials' perceptions of organic products and elucidates the factors influencing their purchasing decisions in the organic market.

**Keywords:** green purchasing behavior; organic products; intrinsic factors; extrinsic factors; barriers; millennials



**Citation:** Ortiz-Regalado, O.; Llamo-Burga, M.; Carrión-Bósquez, N.; Chávez-Gutiérrez, H.; Guerra-Regalado, W.; Veas-González, I.; Ruiz-García, W.; Vidal-Silva, C. Unveiling Millennials' Perceptions of Organic Products: A Grounded Theory Analysis in Ecuador and Peru. *Sustainability* **2024**, *16*, 5230. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16125230>

Academic Editor: Lester Johnson

Received: 21 May 2024  
Revised: 28 May 2024  
Accepted: 18 June 2024  
Published: 20 June 2024



**Copyright:** © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Unconscious consumption at a global level, coupled with the irresponsible disposal of waste by certain consumer segments, has precipitated critical issues, such as global warming, prolific waste production, and environmental contamination [1–3]. These behaviors have contributed to a rapid acceleration in the rate of environmental decline in recent years [4–6].

The 1960s marked a significant era in environmental activism, with various social groups advocating for the protection of nature, elevating the term “environmental pollution” into the public consciousness [7]. This was a time when awareness and concern for the planet's wellbeing began to take root in the global dialogue. In the following decade, the outcry against environmental degradation intensified [8]. Citizens became increasingly vocal about the urgent need for change, prompting international response [9].

In response to the growing unrest, the United Nations (UN) convened a pivotal conference in Stockholm in June 1972, which would come to be a watershed moment in environmental governance [10,11]. This historic assembly, driven by a newfound collective will to safeguard the environment, resulted in the establishment of June 5 as World Environment Day, a symbolic gesture to galvanize global awareness and action. More substantively, the assembly led to the adoption of 196 measures targeting the reduction of environmental damage [7]. These measures, aimed at curtailing the pollution of waterways, restoring soil health, and improving air quality, were outlined for implementation by national governments [12]. This initiative represented one of the first coordinated global efforts to confront the perils of environmental neglect and set a precedent for future environmental policy and action.

Within the framework of its contemporary agenda for sustainable development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has embedded the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which issue a global call for collective action to secure peace, prosperity, poverty elimination, and environmental stewardship [4,13,14]. A pivotal aim within these goals addresses the necessity for responsible production and consumption, urging a fundamental transformation in the ways we produce and consume goods to diminish the environmental footprint [8,15]. A primary mechanism for fostering this sustainable consumption is the increased acquisition of environmentally benign products, widely termed 'organic products' [3]. Characteristically, organic products are cultivated without relying on pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, or ionizing radiation, offering a more sustainable alternative for both the planet and its inhabitants [7,12,16,17].

In examining the consumption of organic products, it is critical to consider two categories typically exerting significant sway over consumer choices: intrinsic and extrinsic factors [18]. Intrinsic factors encompass the innate attributes of organic products, such as quality, taste, nutritional content, and health advantages. These intrinsic qualities enable consumers to evaluate the food's purity, the absence of pesticides, and its environmental impact [19]. Conversely, extrinsic factors are the external elements that shape consumer perception and drive the adoption of certain behaviors. These factors may include price, availability, marketing efforts, social trends, and the broader context within which consumption occurs [20–22].

Within the realm of organic consumption, individuals harboring positive sentiments towards organic food are inclined to view the purchase of organic products as both significant and judicious [7,10,23–29]. Research has consistently demonstrated that such favorable attitudes can motivate consumers to form intentions to buy organic products. However, these intentions do not invariably translate into actual purchases [12,25]. This discrepancy uncovers a research gap, indicating uncertainty about the factors that either facilitate or impede the purchase of organic products among individuals who profess an environmental identity [3,7,30].

In the scholarly examination of ecological consumption, extensive literature reviews have established the preeminence of several theoretical frameworks, notably the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and the Theory of Consumption Values [12,25,31–34]. These frameworks are instrumental in providing theoretical underpinnings for research in this field. However, a recurring theme in academic discourse is the observed disconnect between consumers' stated intentions and their actual behavior—a significant knowledge gap that persists despite the comprehensive nature of these theories [7,35,36].

Academic investigations into green consumption have predominantly utilized quantitative methodologies, employing surveys with closed-ended questions to elicit data, a practice that may constrain participants from fully articulating their genuine motivations, obstacles, and perceptions regarding the purchase of green food products [18,19,36]. Furthermore, reviews of the literature draw attention to the dearth of research on green product consumption in regions like Ecuador and Peru. The studies from these countries have

similarly leaned on quantitative methods, predominantly relying on self-administered questionnaires for gathering data [7,12,17,37–41]. This trend is corroborated by various review articles that note the reliance on self-reported measures within the field of green consumption research [25,32].

While a broad spectrum of quantitative research on green consumption has gained recognition within the scientific community, there is a growing awareness among scholars of the discrepancy between consumers' stated beliefs and their actual practices [7,12,36]. This has brought to light potential inconsistencies between the professed and the practiced behaviors of consumers [3]. Consequently, in recent years, there has been a call from some researchers for the academic community to focus on the actual behaviors of green product consumers to better understand this divergence [3,33,36,42,43].

The surge in research focusing on the consumption of eco-friendly and certified products has highlighted a discernible discrepancy between consumers' professed intentions to purchase such goods and their actual buying behaviors [2,7,12,17,25,44]. This disparity has rendered the green consumer a burgeoning and significant subject of interest within the field of marketing [7,33,36,45].

In the realm of environmental research, there is a recognized consensus regarding the imperative to investigate the factors that truly influence purchasing behavior, with the goal of resolving the prevalent inconsistencies observed in the consumption of green products [3,25,36,42,43,46–48]. This points to the necessity of an in-depth comprehension of consumer behaviors towards green products, the rationale behind their purchasing decisions, and the determinants that lead to the actual consumption of organic products [36,49].

Within Latin American contexts, the consumption of organic products has gained relevance. The growing demand for these products has sparked interest not only among producers but also within the academic community, which has found it necessary to conduct studies to identify the factors influencing consumers' decisions to purchase such products. In this regard, quantitative studies conducted in Ecuador and Peru have identified several factors that influence purchase intentions [7,12,17,35,37,38]. However, the academic literature has determined that it is necessary to identify the true drivers of behavior to bridge the knowledge gaps arising from studies that use self-reported questionnaires [35,36].

To bridge the existing knowledge gap, this study aims to elucidate how millennials perceive organic products and the determinants that affect their actual consumption behaviors. Several authors have determined that millennials are the population cohort most identified with environmental protection, which makes it necessary to continue analyzing their behaviors, as this population cohort significantly contributes to the global economy [4,12,13] and represents an influential element in the development of environmentally conscious populations, paving the way for a promising market for ecological products [15,17,37,46]. Additionally, Carrión et al. [7] determined that it is worth studying millennials' consumption preferences in greater depth. Furthermore, these authors also stated that the selection of this group of individuals within a study is based on two key factors, as follows: (a) millennials are rich sources of information about ecological products because they have a greater concern for environmental issues, and (b) millennials are perceived as opinion leaders and considered change agents in many communities.

Consequently, the research objectives delineated are as follows: (a) to ascertain millennials' conceptualizations of organic products, (b) to identify intrinsic factors that drive the purchase of organic products, (c) to uncover extrinsic factors that encourage the acquisition of organic products, and (d) to determine the barriers that impede the purchase of organic products.

Acknowledging the insights from Sharma et al. [33], who recognized the necessity for comprehensive research to grasp the behaviors of organic product consumers, and Nguyen and Dung [36], who recommended the use of in-depth interviews to pinpoint the factors influencing organic product consumers, this study has implemented Grounded Theory as its data collection method to delve into consumer behaviors. Grounded Theory is distinguished from other methodologies for its critical role in qualitative research, fa-

cilitating a systematic and in-depth examination of the internal and external perceptions, experiences, and motivations of consumers, and enabling the extraction of behavioral patterns through coding [18].

On the other hand, the quantitative academic literature has identified that health, habits, environmental awareness, environmental knowledge, attitude, and environmental values are intrinsic motivating factors that have influenced decisions to consume organic products. However, the influence of these factors, as well as external factors and barriers that impede consumption, has not been proven through interviews that explore the true drivers of purchasing in depth. Consequently, the research questions this study seeks to address are as follows. (a) How do millennials conceptualize organic products? (b) What are the intrinsic factors that impact purchasing behavior related to organic products? (c) What extrinsic factors motivate the acquisition of organic products? (d) What obstacles impede the purchase of organic products?

The contributions of this paper are manifold. Firstly, in contrast to the predominantly quantitative nature of prior research, this study employs a qualitative methodology to achieve a nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Secondly, it utilizes Grounded Theory to elucidate the factors behind purchasing behaviors. Thirdly, it identifies several practical implications that stem from the findings. Lastly, this research addresses the escalating environmental concerns that have intensified in recent years.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and utilized in-depth interviews supported by semi-structured questionnaires. Hernández et al. [50] note that qualitative research is characterized by its pursuit of a profound understanding of research phenomena, taking into account the perspectives of participants within their natural environments or contexts. They explain that semi-structured interviews are informed by a guide of topics or questions, allowing the interviewer the flexibility to introduce additional inquiries for the purpose of clarifying concepts or gathering further details (p. 403).

This research encompassed sixteen organic product consumers from Ecuador and sixteen from Peru, all of whom were millennials engaged in undergraduate or graduate studies. This particular demographic was selected based on the notion, suggested by Amalia et al. [46], that young university students tend to be more aware of and responsive to environmental issues. Additionally, Ndofirepy and Matema [51] posited that university students' purchasing preferences merit scholarly attention (p. 3). Consequently, participant selection was guided by two principal reasons, as follows: (a) students are a valuable repository of insights regarding organic products owing to their heightened environmental consciousness, and (b) they are often regarded as opinion leaders and pivotal drivers of change within their communities.

The researchers communicated by email with 134 university students, previously identified as frequent consumers of organic products through a previous study carried out in Ecuador and Peru. Of those contacted, 38 gave their consent to participate in the current research (19 Ecuadorians and 19 Peruvians). These participants were then invited to a virtual meeting on Zoom, where they participated in interviews that lasted approximately 30 to 40 min each. To guide the discussions, a semi-structured questionnaire with four main questions was used, delving into (a) the conceptualization and perception of green products, (b) the identification of intrinsic factors that motivate purchases, (c) the identification of extrinsic factors that encourage purchases, and (d) the identification of barriers that deter the acquisition of green products.

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed using the Speech Notes program, which facilitates a fluid transition from voice dictation to keyboard typing. The resulting transcripts were analyzed using the Grounded Theory methodology, which entails the development of hypotheses and theories through data collection and analysis by applying inductive reasoning. This research approach enabled the formulation of key adaptable questions to enhance the understanding of each participant's perspective. Goulding [52]

notes that Grounded Theory is advantageous as it allows researchers to (a) generate theories, (b) explain behaviors, (c) refine theories, (d) apply findings in practical settings, (e) gain insights into behaviors, (f) provide a framework for behavioral studies, and (g) identify critical categories for verification in future research.

Initially, data coding was conducted manually. The information gathered from the interviews was systematically categorized and coded using the following approach: (a) interview segments, which involved the transcription of responses from each interview and highlighting information crucial for subsequent coding; (b) open coding, a stage where interview excerpts were marked with a word or brief phrase that facilitated the creation of initial categories of meaning and the elimination of redundancies across interviews; and (c) axial coding, where codes derived from open coding were further refined to establish core categories (central codes) and to initiate a preliminary structuring of categories, thereby integrating the findings with the research questions formulated for the study.

Following the initial manual coding, the interview responses were recoded using Atlas.ti 9.0 software. For the determination of a priori categories, the codes generated during the manual coding phase served as the foundation. Utilizing the established codes and the code management functions of Atlas.ti 9.0, the coding process was reiterated. This step was crucial for identifying quotations that had not been coded previously and subsequently progressing towards the creation of semantic families or networks.

### 3. Results

To encompass all subpopulations of millennials, Table 1 demonstrates that the study adopted the criteria established by previous research, which defines millennials as a cohort starting in 1979 and ending in 2000, subdivided into three sub-cohorts [7,12,17].

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics.

Population Cohort	Participants		Born
	Ecuador	Peru	
Older millennials	7	7	35 a 44 años (1979–1988)
Mid millennials	6	7	29 a 34 años (1989–1994)
Younger millennials	6	5	23 a 28 años (1995–2000)
Total	19	19	

The findings of the research were organized around four central research questions, as follows: (a) RQ1: What are the conceptualizations that millennials hold regarding organic products? (b) RQ2: Which intrinsic factors inspire millennials to purchase organic products? (c) RQ3: What extrinsic factors influence millennials' decisions to purchase organic products? (d) RQ4: What are the barriers millennials face that inhibit the purchase of organic products? Each of these areas yielded distinct insights, which are elaborated upon in the sections that follow, presenting a comprehensive understanding of millennials' perspectives and behaviors related to the consumption of organic products.

#### 3.1. Understanding Conceptualizations of Organic Products (RQ1)

To address Research Question 1 (RQ1), participants were prompted to articulate their personal definitions of organic products. Their responses commonly highlighted themes associated with health, naturalness, and ecological production. To distill these perceptions further, the respondents were asked to express two or three words that spontaneously came to mind upon hearing the term "organic product". Table 2 encapsulates the words provided by the participants, along with a corresponding categorization devised by the researchers, offering a snapshot of the associative meanings that millennials attach to organic products.

**Table 2.** Analyzing the conceptualizations of organic products (RQ1) through coding.

Simple Words	Number of Mentions		Generated Codes
	Ecuador	Peru	
Natural	14	12	
Chemical-free	12	14	
Healthy	16	12	1. Natural
Nutritious	2	9	2. Health
Energy	8	3	
Life	1	0	
Defenses	5	9	

As indicated in Table 2, the coding of the conceptualizations of organic products primarily captured references to “natural” (free from chemicals) and “health” (healthy, nutritious, vitality, energy, and immunity). These insights are congruent with findings from other scholars who have concluded that organic foods are perceived as products cultivated without the use of pesticides and fertilizers and are neither synthetic nor genetically modified [17,23,42,43,48,53].

Furthermore, these results align with researchers who assert that most consumers regard organic food as eco-friendly, safe, healthier, more nutritious, and tastier compared to conventional alternatives [3,32]. A similar consensus was observed among Ecuadorian and Peruvian respondents in terms of associating organic products with being natural, devoid of chemicals, and conducive to good health. Notably, a higher proportion of Ecuadorian participants associate organic products with providing energy, whereas Peruvian consumers tend to emphasize the products’ capacity to bolster the body’s defenses.

### 3.2. Identifying Intrinsic Motivators for Purchasing Organic Products (RQ2)

To address this research question, participants were first briefed on the nature of intrinsic factors before being queried about the types of factors that sway them when choosing an organic product. Their responses largely echoed the health-oriented definitions they provided for the first research question. However, additional factors cited included habits, environmental awareness, knowledge about environmental issues, concern for the environment, attitudes, and personal values. Table 3 presents the words and phrases participants associated with intrinsic factors, along with the categorization formulated by the authors of the study.

**Table 3.** Analyzing the coding of intrinsic motivators for organic product purchases (RQ2).

Simple Words	Number of Mentions		Generated Codes
	Ecuador	Perú	
Health, healthcare, health	13	11	1. Health
Habits	13	13	2. Habits
Awareness	14	15	3. Environmental awareness
Knowledge	13	14	4. Environmental knowledge
Attitudes	12	11	5. Attitude
Values	9	8	6. Environmental values

#### 3.2.1. Health

Health is the state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity [18]. One of the predominant themes in the codification of intrinsic factors was health-related concerns. Twenty-four participants provided answers associating organic products with health benefits, such as improved wellness and healthcare. It is widely acknowledged that the consumption of conventional products poses significant risks to public health [17,43,53], thus elevating organic products as a choice for responsible consumption in harmony with environmental stewardship.

Research conducted by Andrade and Ayaviri [38] in Ecuador revealed that 86% of consumers identifying with organic product consumption cited health benefits as their main reason. These researchers posited that “the growth in demand for organic products will be contingent upon increased recognition of their health benefits and contribution to environmental preservation” (p. 219).

### 3.2.2. Habits

A habit is commonly understood as a behavior that is executed automatically in response to a context cue developed through repeated association between the cue and the behavior [7]. This concept emerged prominently in the responses of the twenty-six millennial participants who reported a predisposition towards consuming environmentally friendly products. Given the focus on college-aged millennials, the findings suggest that this demographic shows a strong preference for organic products, a trend that is well-documented in scholarly research [17,46,54,55].

Millennials, who constitute the largest consumer generation and are identified as individuals born between 1979 and 2000 [12,46,53,55], are noted for their consumption habits that favor products with environmental credentials [56]. Habits operate along an impulsive pathway, eliciting responses swiftly and effectively, often bypassing deliberate thought processes [57]. Such habitual behaviors are characterized by automatic and repetitive actions enacted without conscious planning or effort, and once internalized by an individual, they provoke routine responses to familiar contexts [27,32].

The link between consumers and organic products has reinforced sustainable development initiatives. Maintaining high levels of environmental awareness among consumers is crucial for enhancing their dietary habits [6,57]. However, Wang et al. [55] have observed that consumers’ daily behaviors tend to be more influenced by established habits and experiences than by rational deliberation (p. 9). This view is somewhat contested by Carrión and Arias [7], who assert that millennials’ consumption habits remain aligned with traditional, non-organic products. Moreover, Klöckner [58] has synthesized the existing literature on organic consumption into a comprehensive psychological model of environmental behavior, proposing that habits be incorporated to bolster the model’s predictive power. Other scholars also advocate for recognizing habits as a crucial factor in explaining sustainable lifestyles [6,29,59,60].

### 3.2.3. Environmental Awareness

Environmental awareness is the understanding of and concern about the impact that human actions have on the environment, as well as the commitment to adopting sustainable practices to protect and preserve natural resources and ecological balance [5,35]. This factor emerged as the most frequently cited factor in the interviews. Certain terms, such as environmental awareness, knowledge, and concern, were mentioned a combined total of twenty-nine times by Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials. This suggests a significant trend among millennials, who have a proclivity towards organic consumption, echoing sentiments found within the scholarly literature. These findings align with research indicating that current generations perceive environmental concerns associated with organic products as personal responsibilities [10,19,61,62].

The literature recognizes that irresponsible consumption has led to a host of environmental issues, including excessive waste production and pollution of water, air, and land, along with global warming. These issues have prompted society to become more conscious and to alter consumption habits [10,13,18]. From a sustainable development perspective, the choice to consume organic products represents a harmonious balance between meeting consumer demands and environmental protection, thereby fostering consumer behaviors that elevate environmental awareness [2,7,36,62].

### 3.2.4. Environmental Knowledge

Environmental knowledge is the understanding and recognition of natural processes, environmental issues, and the interactions between humans and the environment, including the identification of sustainable practices and solutions to address ecological challenges [7,24]. This factor was another intrinsic factor frequently highlighted by the interviewees. Mentioned twenty-seven times by Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials, it indicates that awareness of environmental issues among this cohort encourages consumption behaviors that favor environmental protection. This aligns with research suggesting that environmental knowledge is a key factor that enhances consumer awareness, enabling them to understand the impact of human activities on the environment due to unchecked consumption [27]. Furthermore, conscious consumption is often influenced by the extent of a consumer's knowledge about the environmental consequences of their consumption choices [7,63–65].

### 3.2.5. Attitude

Attitude is a person's mental and emotional disposition towards something or someone, which is reflected in their behavior and actions [7]. This factor was recognized as a significant intrinsic factor influencing the consumption of organic products, highlighted twenty-three times by millennials from Ecuador and Peru. Although "attitude" was less frequently mentioned than other terms, it was determined to affect actual purchasing behavior significantly. This supports the findings of various researchers who have identified attitude as a critical determinant of organic purchasing decisions [7,17,42].

For millennials, attitude not only reflects their environmental concerns but also serves as an impetus for buying eco-friendly products. According to Ajzen [66], attitude comprises two dimensions: behavioral belief, the individual's perception of the outcomes associated with a behavior, and outcome evaluation, the value assigned to these outcomes, be they favorable or unfavorable. Research by Aertsens et al. [24] found a significant positive correlation between consumer attitudes and their consumption of organic foods. Similarly, Von Meyer et al. [67] and Prakash et al. [68] identified a direct, meaningful relationship between attitude and purchasing behavior among German consumers. Kumar et al. [8] suggested that a favorable attitude towards environmental and organic products mediates the effect of environmental knowledge on purchasing decisions. Bon and Byoung-ho [69] also observed in their study across the United States and China that attitudes significantly influence buying behavior related to organic products.

Contemporary studies have further affirmed the link between pro-environmental attitude and increased purchase intentions for organic products, revealing that the stronger the eco-conscious attitude among millennials, the higher their inclination to purchase organic items [7,12,18,36,46].

### 3.2.6. Values

The research results identified environmental values as another factor that stimulates millennials' purchasing behavior. Environmental values are principles and beliefs that guide people's actions and decisions regarding the protection and conservation of the environment, emphasizing the importance of sustainability and respect for natural resources [25]. Expressions related to values were mentioned seventeen times by Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials. This indicates that respect, tolerance, kindness, and solidarity with the environment guide the actions and decisions of this group of consumers, helping to protect the environment and improve society. This finding is supported by several scholars who have determined that values enable consumers to protect the environment through their purchasing behaviors [70]. Environmental values revolve around two main aspects: conscious concern and careful use of resources [43]. Individuals with strong consumer values are more likely to purchase organic products and demonstrate higher environmental consciousness [71,72].

### 3.2.7. Comparison of Intrinsic Factors among Ecuadorian and Peruvian Millennials

The research identified that health, habits, environmental awareness, environmental knowledge, attitudes, and values are intrinsic factors that stimulate millennial consumers in Ecuador and Peru to consume organic products. This indicates that there is no noticeable difference in the factors that stimulate consumers of organic products in these two countries.

### 3.3. Extrinsic Factors Motivating the Purchase of Organic Products (RQ3)

To address this research question, participants were first briefed on extrinsic factors and then asked to identify the factors that influence their choice of organic products. The responses revealed three main factors: family influence, social influence, and COVID-19. Table 4 presents the words mentioned by participants and the categorization developed by the authors.

**Table 4.** Coding of the conceptualizations of extrinsic factors (RQ3).

Simple Words	Number of Mentions		Generated Codes
	Ecuador	Peru	
Familiar influence: Parents, siblings, spouses	17	15	1. Subjective norms 2. COVID-19
Social influence: Friends, colleagues	12	11	
Risk factors: COVID-19	15	9	

#### 3.3.1. Subjective Norms

Based on the participants' responses, it was found that thirty-two Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials consider family influence (parents, siblings, spouses) to be a significant factor in their environmentally conscious purchasing habits. Additionally, twenty-three interviewees indicated that social influence (friends, coworkers, colleagues) also plays a role in their decision to purchase organic products. These findings are supported by authors who suggest that family or social influences can be considered subjective norms [25,46]. Subjective norms, also known as social norms, refer to the influence exerted by an individual's environment and society on the development of specific behaviors [66]. Family members, friends, and colleagues can influence the adoption of organic purchasing behavior [12,17].

Empirical evidence suggests a strong association between social norms and various pro-environmental behaviors, including the purchase of organic products [12]. Additionally, Carrión and Arias [7] argue that the literature on green behavior supports the idea that subjective norms play an important role due to the social pressure exerted toward environmentally friendly behavior. Subjective norms significantly influence organic purchases in terms of normative expectations. People are motivated to buy more organic products because their relatives also do so, and they believe that this behavior protects the environment and contributes to the well-being of others [46].

#### 3.3.2. COVID-19

One significant finding of this study was the impact of COVID-19 on the extrinsic factors influencing organic purchasing behavior. Twenty-four Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials reported that they began or increased their consumption of organic products due to COVID-19. They felt the need to improve their eating habits and boost their immune systems, which led them to consume more organic products.

The literature on the influence of COVID-19 on organic consumption is still limited. While several authors have included COVID-19 as a variable in their research on organic consumption, their findings suggest that consumers began or increased their consumption of organic products as a measure to protect themselves from COVID-19 infection [7,18,30]. According to Su et al. [59], COVID-19 was a human catastrophe that affected people emotionally and prompted them to reassess their consumption habits to boost their immune systems. This epidemic shocked consumers, motivating them to improve their consumption patterns to mitigate the health effects of the virus [73,74].

### 3.3.3. Comparison of the Extrinsic Factors of Ecuadorian and Peruvian Millennials

The interview results revealed that family and social influences have a comparable impact on Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials. This suggests that subjective norms play a role in influencing the purchasing behavior of organic product consumers in these countries, particularly through family influence. Additionally, COVID-19 emerged as an extrinsic factor driving the consumption of organic products to enhance immune defenses, a factor that had a stronger influence on Ecuadorian millennials.

### 3.4. Barriers to Purchasing Organic Products (RQ4)

To address this research question, participants were briefed on the concept of purchase barriers and asked to identify any obstacles that occasionally deterred them from purchasing organic products. The responses were categorized into three main barriers: high prices, availability, and skepticism. Table 5 presents the words mentioned by the participants and the categorization developed by the authors.

**Table 5.** Barriers coding for purchasing organic products (RQ4).

Simple Words	Number of Mentions		Generated Codes
	Ecuador	Perú	
Prices	15	14	1. Prices
Costs	3	2	
Monetary values	2	3	
Lack of products	13	10	2. Availability
Shortage of products	2	3	3. Skepticism
Doubt	5	1	
Certifications	11	5	
Product appearance	1	3	
Distrust	0	2	

#### 3.4.1. Prices

The high prices of organic products are considered barriers to purchasing them. Thirty-nine Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials mentioned that price, or its synonyms, such as costs and monetary values, sometimes prevented them from buying organic products. Price is a factor widely recognized by the academic community as a hindrance to purchase behavior [17,25,36]. The increase in prices of organic products is due to the fact that they do not use chemical elements to accelerate their production phase, which results in reduced production and, consequently, higher prices [7]. According to the Agricultural Market Consulting Firm of Ecuador, fruits, vegetables, greens, and meats cost between 15% and 20% more compared to traditional products of the same type.

According to Nguyen et al. [36], despite consumers' environmental concerns, they may not engage in green purchasing behavior due to perceived barriers. Although the literature indicates that millennials are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products [54], other authors suggest that one of the factors preventing green consumption is the price of the products [7,25,44].

#### 3.4.2. Availability

Another barrier reported by participants was the availability of organic products in the market. Twenty-eight Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials mentioned that availability, or its synonyms, such as lack of products or shortage of products, sometimes prevented them from buying organic products. According to the interviewees, they sometimes intend to buy a specific organic product, but the shortage of this product in the markets forces them to purchase traditional products. This supports the findings of Carrión and Arias [12], who determined that availability is one of the factors that hinders the intention to buy organic products and leads millennials to continue consuming traditional products.

Some studies have defined availability as one of the deterrent factors for the selection of organic products, creating a gap in consumer behavior [7,17]. Even when consumers are highly motivated to buy organic products, product availability remains a barrier to their purchase [25]. On the other hand, Witsel and Agaard [75] found that the availability of organic food in a store serves as an incentive for the initial purchase, which also significantly influences repeat purchases of such products. Sillani and Nassivera [76] also highlighted that the availability of organic products and food is an important factor that can explain pro-environmental behavior towards vegetables.

#### 3.4.3. Skepticism

The study revealed that twenty-eight Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials identified skepticism, or its synonyms, such as doubts, certifications, product appearances, and distrust, as barriers that sometimes prevented them from buying organic products. This suggests that millennials are skeptical towards products claiming to be organic, which creates resistance and limits their consumption of such products.

Skepticism is defined as a cognitive response that varies based on the context and content of communication and is sometimes exhibited by consumers [17]. Skeptical consumers may unknowingly forego the opportunity to contribute to environmental preservation by purchasing genuinely organic products [21,36]. Despite having a clear understanding of the benefits of eco-friendly products, organic consumers are sometimes deterred from purchasing them due to skepticism about specific products [7,77].

Environmental labels are frequently used by governments and marketing specialists to promote the identification of organic products (See Appendix B). Eco-labels have thus become a means through which companies communicate the environmental quality of their products to consumers [71]. However, the limited acceptance of the term “environmental truth” among consumers has led to widespread skepticism regarding the promotion of organic products [17,21].

#### 3.4.4. Comparison of the Barriers Hindering the Purchase of Organic Products by Ecuadorian and Peruvian Millennials

The results indicated that price and product availability are factors that occasionally prevent consumers from buying organic products, affecting Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials similarly. Additionally, skepticism was found to influence consumers in restraining their intentions to purchase organic products, thereby hindering the motivation to buy such products due to the distrust they generate. This situation is more prevalent among Ecuadorian millennials.

### 4. Discussion

Considering that studies on the consumption of organic products by college millennials are scarce in developing countries, the results of this study are significant. The data collected support several key findings.

First, the definitions given to organic products focus on them being healthy products developed with natural raw materials and without chemical intervention. These definitions align with previous authors who defined organic products as foods grown naturally without chemicals that are safe and healthy for consumers [12,36].

Second, concerning intrinsic factors, the findings indicate that factors motivating Ecuadorian and Peruvian college millennials to consume organic products include health, habits, environmental awareness, and environmental knowledge. These findings are consistent with other researchers', who found that consumers purchase these products for health reasons [6,38,55,57], habits [6,56], awareness [19,60–62], and knowledge [27,63–65]. Additional research supports the other two intrinsic factors (attitudes and values), indicating that attitude is a significant predictor influencing organic purchasing behavior [7,17,36,42,46] and that consumer values increase the willingness to buy organic products [43,71,72].

Third, regarding extrinsic factors, the findings indicate that subjective norms are factors influencing the consumption behavior of organic products among Ecuadorian and Peruvian millennials. In other words, family and the social environment influence purchasing behavior. These findings are supported by the academic literature, which found family members, friends, and colleagues influence the consumption of organic products [7,9,17,42]. Moreover, an interesting finding is the effect that COVID-19 had on the increased consumption of organic products. Participants stated that they engaged in this purchasing behavior to improve their body's defenses and to have minor effects in case of contracting the virus. This finding aligns with a study by Qi et al. [18], which found that the consumption of organic products by Chinese consumers increased after the emergence of COVID-19. The results also support the assumptions of Carrión and Arias [7], who determined that COVID-19 may have been one of the factors influencing the increase in real consumers of organic products.

Lastly, it was determined that price, availability, and skepticism are occasional barriers to buying organic products for college millennials in Ecuador and Peru. These findings are similar to research conducted in other countries, where consumers see these barriers as impediments to moving from purchase intent to actual purchase [7,12,17,75].

## 5. Conclusions

This qualitative study focused on university millennials in Ecuador and Peru to identify the underlying influences on their preferences for buying organic food. The study found that consumers in these countries share similarities in their behavioral traits, except for the skepticism factor, where Ecuadorian millennials appear to be more skeptical than Peruvians.

From the results, the authors identified intrinsic factors that influence the consumption of green products, including environmental awareness, attitude, habits, and health. Extrinsic factors that stimulate college millennials to consume these products are family, co-workers, and friends. The presence of COVID-19 was also found to influence the consumption of organic products, as consumers sought to improve their immune system and increase their body's defenses.

Despite the intention to support the environment and consume healthier products, the price factor continues to be a barrier to purchasing organic products. The economic situation of consumers forces them to buy products according to their income. Availability is another factor preventing the actual purchase of organic products, as many participants stated that there is a lack of diversity of organic food in grocery stores. Additionally, skepticism about organic products sometimes leads consumers to reject them in favor of conventional ones, highlighting credibility as another factor affecting the purchase of organic products.

This study provides theoretical, practical, and social implications. Theoretical implications include empirical support for factors influencing the actual purchasing behavior of consumers of organic products. Practical implications suggest that companies in the organic food production industry in Ecuador and Peru should adapt their marketing strategies to offer a diversity of organic products, adjust pricing strategies, and improve communication to reduce consumer skepticism. From a social perspective, the study emphasizes the importance of raising awareness about environmental impact and encouraging environmentally friendly purchasing behavior.

This study is one of the first investigations in Ecuador and Peru to use Grounded Theory to determine influencing factors and barriers to the purchase behavior of organic products among millennials. Despite the significant findings discovered in the study, it is essential to note that one of the limitations of the research was the sample size. Any study conducted with small groups of people affects the ability to generalize the results. Therefore, there are still gaps that need to be considered by other researchers, such as exploring the behaviors of other age groups and using qualitative research methods to

explore consumer values in greater depth. Future research should also propose research models that seek to generalize behaviors through quantitative research.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization: O.O.-R., M.L.-B. and N.C.-B.; Methodology: N.C.-B. and M.L.-B.; Software: N.C.-B., W.R.-G. and I.V.-G.; Validation: O.O.-R., M.L.-B. and W.R.-G.; Formal analysis: N.C.-B., I.V.-G. and H.C.-G.; Investigation: N.C.-B. and W.G.-R.; Resources: O.O.-R., M.L.-B., N.C.-B., I.V.-G., W.G.-R., W.R.-G., H.C.-G. and C.V.-S.; Data curation: N.C.-B., Iván-Veas González and H.C.-G.; Writing—original draft preparation: C.V.-S., O.O.-R. and W.G.-R.; Writing—review and editing: N.C.-B. and H.C.-G.; Visualization: N.C.-B. and I.V.-G.; Supervision: N.C.-B.; Project administration: O.O.-R., M.L.-B. and N.C.-B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Ethics Committee of Professional Association of Economists of the Cajamarca region (protocol code 21-2023 and date of approval 3 December 2023) for studies involving humans.

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

**Data Availability Statement:** Interviews available at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19JCPY32VMFDbANFvUL3BL0XF5Mi9DyMs?usp=sharing>, accessed on 20 May 2024.

**Acknowledgments:** We thank the College of Economists of Cajamarca, Peru, for having endorsed this research through its college's ethics committee.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A

Research questions

- (a) How do you define organic products?
- (b) What are the intrinsic factors that influence your organic purchasing behaviour?
- (c) What are the extrinsic factors that influence your organic purchasing behaviour?
- (d) What are the barriers that prevent you from buying organic products?

## Appendix B

Labeling marks of organic food products

Labeling Mark in Ecuador	Labeling Mark in Perú
 <p><a href="https://www.portalfruticola.com/noticias/2017/08/03/ecuador-lanza-etiqueta-identificar-promover-los-productores-organicos/">https://www.portalfruticola.com/noticias/2017/08/03/ecuador-lanza-etiqueta-identificar-promover-los-productores-organicos/</a>, accessed on 20 May 2024</p>	 <p><a href="https://elperuano.pe/noticia/123840-midagri-anuncia-creacion-del-sello-nacional-de-produccion-organica">https://elperuano.pe/noticia/123840-midagri-anuncia-creacion-del-sello-nacional-de-produccion-organica</a>, accessed on 20 May 2024</p>

## References

- Herman, L.E.; Udayana, I.B.; Farida, N. Young generation and environmental friendly awareness: Does it the impact of green advertising? *Business. Theory Pract.* **2021**, *22*, 159–166. [CrossRef]
- Nekmahmudet, M.; Ramkissoon, H.; Fekete, M. Green purchase and sustainable consumption: A comparative study between European and non-European tourists. *Tour. Manag. Perspect.* **2022**, *43*, 100980.

3. Kim, N.; Lee, K. Environmental Consciousness, Purchase Intention, and Actual Purchase Behavior of Eco-Friendly Products: The Moderating Impact of Situational Context. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2023**, *20*, 5312. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Sun, Y.; Liu, N.; Zhao, M. Factors and mechanisms affecting green consumption in China: A multilevel analysis. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2019**, *209*, 481–493. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Kautish, P.; Paul, J.; Sharma, R. The moderating influence of environmental consciousness and recycling intentions on green purchase behavior. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2019**, *228*, 1425–1436. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. García, E.; Rondon, R. Green Marketing Practices Related to Key Variables of Consumer Purchasing Behavior. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 8499. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Carrión Bósquez, N.G.; Arias-Bolzmann, L.G.; Martínez Quiroz, A.K. The influence of price and availability on university millennials' organic food product purchase intention. *Br. Food J.* **2023**, *125*, 536–550. [[CrossRef](#)]
8. Kumar, B.; Manrai, A.K.; Manrai, L.A. Purchasing behaviour for environmentally sustainable products: A conceptual framework and empirical study. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2017**, *34*, 1–9. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Cavite, H.J.; Mankeb, P.; Kerdsriserm, C.; Joedsak, A.; Direksri, N.; Suwanmaneepong, S. Do behavioral and socio-demographic factors determine consumers' purchase intention towards traceable organic rice? Evidence from Thailand. *Org. Agric.* **2022**, *12*, 243–258. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Jaiswala, D.; Kant, R. Green Purchasing Behaviour: A Conceptual Framework and Empirical Investigation of Indian Consumers. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2018**, *41*, 60–69. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Figueroa-Fadic, C.; Tello-Álvarez, C.; Veas-González, I.; Vidal-Silva, C.L. Razones para co-destruir en plataformas hoteleras usando boca a boca electrónico (e-WOM) negativo. *Inf. Technol.* **2021**, *32*, 37–46. [[CrossRef](#)]
12. Carrión Bósquez, N.G.; Arias-Bolzmann, L.G. Factors influencing green purchasing inconsistency of Ecuadorian millennials. *Br. Food J.* **2022**, *124*, 2461–2480. [[CrossRef](#)]
13. Hou, C.; Sarigöllü, E. Is bigger better? How the scale effect influences green purchase intention: The case of washing machine. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2022**, *65*, 102894. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Larranaga, A.; Valor, C. Consumers' categorization of eco-friendly consumer goods: An integrative review and research agenda. *Sustain. Prod. Consum.* **2022**, *34*, 518–527. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Yela Aránega, A.; Ferraris, A.; Baima, G.; Bresciani, S. Guest editorial: Sustainable growth and development in the food and beverage sector. *Br. Food J.* **2022**, *124*, 2429–2433. [[CrossRef](#)]
16. Nguyen, H.; Le, H. The effect of agricultural product eco-labelling on green purchase intention. *Manag. Sci. Lett.* **2020**, *10*, 2813–2820. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Hoyos-Vallejo, C.A.; Carrión-Bósquez, N.G.; Ortiz-Regalado, O. The influence of skepticism on the university Millennials' organic food product purchase intention. *Br. Food J.* **2023**, *125*, 3800–3816. [[CrossRef](#)]
18. Qi, X.; Yu, H.; Ploeger, A. Exploring Influential Factors Including COVID-19 on Green Food Purchase Intentions and the Intention–Behaviour Gap: A Qualitative Study among Consumers in a Chinese Context. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2020**, *17*, 7106. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
19. Aliman, M.; Astina, I. Improving Environmental Awareness of High School Students' in Malang City through Earthcomm Learning in the Geography Class. *Int. J. Instr.* **2019**, *12*, 79–94. [[CrossRef](#)]
20. Katt, F.; Meixner, O. A systematic review of drivers influencing consumer willingness to pay for organic food. *Trends Food Sci. Technol.* **2020**, *100*, 374–388. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Lavuri, R. Organic green purchasing: Moderation of environmental protection emotion and price sensitivity. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2022**, *368*, 133113. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Duong, C.D.; Nguyen, T.; Nguyen, H. How green intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact, balance and imbalance with each other to trigger green purchase intention and behavior: A polynomial regression with response surface analysis. *Heliyon* **2023**, *9*, 1–16. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
23. Dahm, M.J.; Samonte, A.V.; Shows, A. Organic foods: Do eco-friendly attitudes predict eco-friendly behaviors? *J. Am. Coll. Health* **2009**, *58*, 195–202. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
24. Aertsens, J.; Mondelaers, K.; Verbeke, W.; Buysse, J.; Huylenbroeck, G. The influence of subjective and objective knowledge on attitude, motivations and consumption of organic food. *Br. Food J.* **2011**, *113*, 1353–1378. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Joshi, Y.; Rahman, Z. Factors affecting green purchase behaviour and future research directions. *Int. Strateg. Manag. Rev.* **2015**, *3*, 128–143. [[CrossRef](#)]
26. Rodríguez-Bermúdez, R.; Miranda, M.; Orjales, I.; Ginzo-Villamayor, M.; Al-Soufi, W.; López-Alonso, M. Consumers' perception of and attitudes towards organic food in Galicia (Northern Spain). *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2020**, *44*, 206–219. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. Gravelines, Z.; Banyté, J.; Dovalienė, A.; Gadeikienė, A. The Role of Green Self-Identity and Self-Congruity in Sustainable Food Consumption Behaviour. *Organ. Mark. Emerg. Econ.* **2022**, *13*, 336–356. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. García-Salirrosas, E.; Niño-de-Guzmán, J.; Gómez-Bayona, L.; Escobar-Farfán, M. Environmentally Responsible Purchase Intention in Pacific Alliance Countries: Geographic and Gender Evidence in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Behav. Sci.* **2023**, *13*, 221. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
29. Khan, S.A.R.; Yu, Z.; Farooq, K. Green capabilities, green purchasing, and triple bottom line performance: Leading toward environmental sustainability. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2023**, *32*, 2022–2034. [[CrossRef](#)]

30. Yang, X.; Jiang, J.; Chen, S.C. Achieving sustainability: Determinants of conscious green purchasing behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2023**, *32*, 2229–2244. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Groening, C.; Sarkis, J.; Zhu, Q. Green marketing consumer-level theory review: A compendium of applied theories and further research directions. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2018**, *172*, 1848–1866. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. Hazaea, S.A.; Al-Matari, E.M.; Zedan, K.; Khatib, S.F.; Zhu, J.; Al Amosh, H. Green purchasing: Past, present and future. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 5008. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Sharma, N.; Saha, R.; Sreedharan, V.R.; Paul, J. Relating the role of green self-concepts and identity on green purchasing behaviour: An empirical analysis. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2020**, *29*, 3203–3219. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. González-Viralta, D.; Veas-González, I.; Egaña-Bruna, F.; Vidal-Silva, C.; Delgado-Bello, C.; Pezoa-Fuentes, C. Positive effects of green practices on the consumers' satisfaction, loyalty, word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay. *Heliyon* **2023**, *9*, e20353. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
35. Carrión-Bósquez, N.; Veas-González, I.; Naranjo-Armijo, F.; Llamo-Burga, M.; Ortiz-Regalado, O.; Ruiz-García, W.; Guerra-Regalado, W.; Vidal-Silva, C. Advertising and Eco-Labels as Influencers of Eco-Consumer Attitudes and Awareness—Case Study of Ecuador. *Foods* **2024**, *13*, 228. [[CrossRef](#)]
36. Nguyen, H.; Dung, H. The formation of attitudes and intention towards green purchase: An analysis of internal and external mechanisms. *Cogent Bus. Manag.* **2023**, *10*, 2192844.
37. Álvarez-Risco, A.; Partida-Puente, A.; Barragán-Codina, J.N. Factores críticos determinantes en la intención de compra de consumidores Millennials de alimentos orgánicos: Caso de estudio en centros comerciales del área metropolitana de Lima, Perú. *Vinculatégica Efan* **2017**, *3*, 269–276.
38. Andrade, C.; Ayaviri, D. Demanda y Consumo de Productos Orgánicos en el Cantón Riobamba, Ecuador. *Inf. Tecnol.* **2018**, *29*, 217–226. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. López-Odar, D.; Alvarez-Risco, A.; Vara-Horna, A.; Chafloque-Céspedes, R.; Sekar, M.C. Validity and reliability of the questionnaire that evaluates factors associated with perceived environmental behavior and perceived ecological purchasing behavior in Peruvian consumers. *Soc. Responsib. J.* **2020**, *16*, 403–417. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Bonisoli, L.; Guañuna, R.A. Going green in Ecuador: Unpacking the motivations behind brand loyalty for organic products. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2023**, *418*, 138116. [[CrossRef](#)]
41. Moreno-Miranda, C.; Franco-Crespo, C.; Pachucho, I.; Uño, K.; Gordillo, A.; Ortiz, J. Socioeconomic Characteristics, Purchasing Preferences and Willingness to Consume Organic Food: A Cross-Location Comparison of Nine Cities in Central Ecuador. *Foods* **2022**, *11*, 3979. [[CrossRef](#)]
42. Taufique, K.M.R.; Vaithianathan, S. A fresh look at understanding Green consumer behavior among young urban Indian consumers through the lens of Theory of Planned Behavior. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2018**, *183*, 46–55. [[CrossRef](#)]
43. Woo, E.; Gug, Y. Consumer attitudes and buying behavior for green food products: From the aspect of green perceived value. *Br. Food J.* **2019**, *121*, 320–332. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Ricci, E.; Banterle, A.; Stranieri, S. Trust to Go Green: An Exploration of Consumer Intentions for Eco-friendly Convenience Food. *Ecol. Econ.* **2018**, *148*, 54–65. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Saraireh, S. Green purchasing, environmental concern, and subjective knowledge in Saudi Arabia: The moderating effect of green skepticism. *Uncertain Supply Chain. Manag.* **2023**, *11*, 77–86. [[CrossRef](#)]
46. Amalia, F.A.; Sosianika, A.; Suhartanto, D. Indonesian Millennials' Halal food purchasing: Merely a habit? *Br. Food J.* **2020**, *122*, 1185–1198. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Testa, F.; Sarti, S.; Frey, M. Are green consumers really green? Exploring the factors behind the actual consumption of organic food products. *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2019**, *28*, 327–338. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. Yadav, R.; Pathak, G. Determinants of Consumers' Green Purchase Behavior in a Developing Nation: Applying and Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Ecol. Econ.* **2017**, *134*, 114–122. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Jaeger, A.K.; Weber, A. Can you believe it? The effects of benefit type versus construal level on advertisement credibility and purchase intention for organic food. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2020**, *257*, 120543. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Hernández, R.; Fernández, C.; Baptista, P. *Metodología de la Investigación*, 6th ed.; Mc Graw Hill: Mexico City, Mexico, 2014.
51. Ndofirepy, T.; Matema, S. Exploring Green Purchasing Behaviour among College Students in a Developing Economy. *S. Afr. Bus. Rev.* **2019**, *19*, 1–25. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Goulding, C. Grounded theory methodology and consumer behavior, procedures, practice and pitfalls. *Adv. Consum. Res.* **2000**, *27*, 261–266.
53. Carrión, N.G.; Salinas, B.V. El consumo verde: Un aporte teórico desde la teoría del comportamiento planificado. *Visión Empres.* **2021**, *11*, 97–114. [[CrossRef](#)]
54. Naderi, I.; Van, E. Me first, then the environment: Young Millennials as green consumers. *Young Consum.* **2018**, *19*, 280–295. [[CrossRef](#)]
55. Wang, B.; Li, J.; Sun, A.; Wang, Y.; Wu, D. Residents' Green Purchasing Intentions in a Developing-Country Context: Integrating PLS-SEM and MGA Methods. *Sustainability* **2019**, *12*, 30. [[CrossRef](#)]
56. Bedard, S.; Tormie, C. Millennials' green consumption behaviour: Exploring the role of social media. *Corp. Soc. Responsib. Environ. Manag.* **2018**, *25*, 1388–1396. [[CrossRef](#)]

57. Petrescu, D.; Petrescu, R.; Bruny, P.; Azadi, H. A new wave in Romania: Organic food. Consumers' motivations, perceptions, and habits. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2017**, *41*, 46–75. [[CrossRef](#)]
58. Klöckner, C. A comprehensive model of the psychology of environmental behavior- a meta-analysis. *Glob. Environ. Chang.* **2013**, *23*, 1028–1038. [[CrossRef](#)]
59. Su, W.; Sun, X.; Guo, X.; Zhang, W.; Li, G. An analysis of awe evoked by COVID-19 on green purchasing behavior: A dual-path effect of approach-avoidance motivation. *Front. Psychol.* **2022**, *13*, 952485. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
60. Hansmann, R.; Laurenti, R.; Mehdi, T.; Binder, C.R. Determinants of pro-environmental behavior: A comparison of university students and staff from diverse faculties at a Swiss University. *J. Clean. Prod.* **2020**, *268*, 121864. [[CrossRef](#)]
61. Yuriev, A.; Dahmen, M.; Paillé, P.; Boiral, O.; Guillaumie, L. Pro-environmental behaviors through the lens of the theory of planned behavior: A scoping review. *Resour. Conserv. Recycl.* **2020**, *155*, 104660. [[CrossRef](#)]
62. Carducci, A.; Fiore, M.; Azara, A.; Bonaccorsi, G.; Bortoletto, M.; Caggiano, G.; Calamusa, A.; De Donno, A.; De Giglio, O.; Dettori, M.; et al. Pro-environmental behaviors: Determinants and obstacles among Italian university students. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2021**, *18*, 3306. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
63. Sun, Y.; Luo, B.; Wang, S.; Fang, W. What you see is meaningful: Does green advertising change the intentions of consumers to purchase eco-labeled products? *Bus. Strategy Environ.* **2021**, *30*, 694–704. [[CrossRef](#)]
64. Hameed, I.; Waris, I. Eco labels and eco conscious consumer behavior: The mediating effect of green trust and environmental concern. Hameed, Irfan and Waris, Idrees (2018): Eco Labels and Eco Conscious Consumer Behavior: The Mediating Effect of Green Trust and Environmental Concern. *J. Manag. Sci.* **2018**, *5*, 86–105.
65. Panopoulos, A.; Poulis, A.; Theodoridis, P.; Kalampakas, A. Influencing Green Purchase Intention through Eco Labels and User-Generated Content. *Sustainability* **2022**, *15*, 764. [[CrossRef](#)]
66. Ajzen, I. The theory of planned behavior. *Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process.* **1991**, *50*, 179–211. [[CrossRef](#)]
67. Von Meyer, M.; Olea, E.; Padilla, C.; Spiller, A. Mature and emerging organic markets: Modelling consumer attitude and behaviour with partial least square approach. *J. Food Prod. Mark.* **2015**, *21*, 626–653. [[CrossRef](#)]
68. Prakash, G.; Singh, P.K.; Ahmad, A.; Kumar, G. Trust, convenience and environmental concern in consumer purchase intention for organic food. *Span. J. Mark.-ESIC* **2023**, *27*, 367–388. [[CrossRef](#)]
69. Bong, S.; Bioyoungho, J. Predictors of purchase intention toward green apparel products. *J. Fash. Mark. Manag. Int. J.* **2017**, *21*, 70–87. [[CrossRef](#)]
70. Roh, T.; Seok, J.; Kim, Y. Unveiling ways to reach organic purchase: Green perceived value, perceived knowledge, attitude, subjective norm, and trust. *J. Retail. Consum. Serv.* **2022**, *67*, 102988. [[CrossRef](#)]
71. Murali, K.; Lim, M.K.; Petrucci, N.C. The effects of ecolabels and environmental regulation on green product development. *Manuf. Serv. Oper. Manag.* **2019**, *21*, 519–535. [[CrossRef](#)]
72. Swetarupa, C.; Naman, S.; Pradip, S.; Bidyut, J. Impact of Green Consumption Value, and Context-Specific Reasons on Green Purchase Intentions: A Behavioral Reasoning Theory Perspective. *J. Glob. Mark.* **2022**, *35*, 285–305.
73. Buessing, A.; Rodrigues Recchia, D.; Dienberg, T.; Surzykiewicz, J.; Baumann, K. Awe/gratitude as an experiential aspect of spirituality and its association to perceived positive changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Front. Psychiatry* **2021**, *12*, 385. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
74. Ma, Y.; Guo, X.; Su, W.; Feng, Y.; Han, F. Dual-path effect of mortality salience induced by COVID-19 on food safety behavior in China. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* **2022**, *19*, 6100. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
75. Witsel, J.; Aagaard, E. Elaborating on the attitude behaviour gap regarding organic products: Young Danish consumers and in-store food choice. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* **2014**, *38*, 550–558.
76. Sillani, S.; Nassivera, F. Consumer behavior in choice of minimally processed vegetables and implications for marketing strategies. *Trends Food Sci. Technol.* **2015**, *46*, 339–345. [[CrossRef](#)]
77. Kashif, U.; Hong, C.; Naseem, S. Assessment of millennial organic food consumption and moderating role of food neophobia in Pakistan. *Curr. Psychol.* **2021**, *42*, 1504–1515. [[CrossRef](#)]

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.