Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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Doctoral School of

Management and Business

Head of the Doctoral School: Prof. Dr. András Nábrádi

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention of Organic Food in The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: The Mediating Role of Sustainable Consumption Behavior.

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The aim of this dissertation is to obtain a doctoral (PhD) degree in the scientific field of "Management and Business Administration."

Written by: Awaz Shukri Ismael

Supervisor Prof. Dr. Balogh, Péter

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Date of defending the dissertation: 2026

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned (name: **Awaz Shukri Ismael**, date of birth: 08/09/1987) declare under penalty of perjury and certify with my signature that the dissertation I submitted to obtain a doctoral (PhD) degree is entirely my own work.

Furthermore, I declare the following:

-I examined the Code of the Doctoral School of Management and Business, and I acknowledge the points laid down in the code as mandatory.

-I handled the technical literature sources used in my dissertation fairly and I conformed to the provisions and stipulations related to the dissertation.

-I indicated the source of other authors' unpublished thoughts and data in the references section completely and correctly in consideration of the prevailing copyright protection rules.

-No dissertation which is fully or partly identical to the present dissertation was submitted to any other university or doctoral school to obtain a Ph.D. degree.

Debrecen, 22/02/2026

Awaz Shukri Ismael

Name

signature

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In the last two decades, consumer knowledge regarding health, food safety, and environmental sustainability has significantly increased. This increased awareness has prompted a substantial change in worldwide eating practices. A significant outcome of this trend is the increasing demand for organic food items, perceived as healthier options, cultivated by environmentally sustainable and ethically responsible methods. As conventional food production methods face escalating criticism for their detrimental environmental effects and possible health hazards, organic food has emerged not only as an alternative but also as a symbol of sustainable consumption principles. The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL, 2023) reports that global organic food sales surpassed USD 130 billion in 2022, indicating a strong consumer inclination toward environmentally sustainable and health-oriented options.

Simultaneously, the digital age has significantly altered how consumers obtain information and make purchasing choices. Social media platforms have become powerful mediums for communication, marketing, and behavioral influence. The advent of social media marketing (SMM) has transformed conventional marketing frameworks by facilitating instantaneous and interactive connections between brands and their intended audiences. This advancement is crucial for the promotion of organic food items, as successful marketing in this domain requires establishing consumer confidence and providing educational content regarding sustainability, health, and ethical food production. In Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan Region, the organic food sector is still in its infancy. Despite increasing public interest in health and wellness, the actual use of organic products remains comparatively restricted. This decline can be ascribed to multiple issues, including inadequate public knowledge, elevated costs of organic products, underdeveloped supply chains, and the lack of robust regulatory frameworks. The Kurdistan Region is concurrently witnessing a swift rise in internet connectivity and social media engagement, especially among younger populations. Such growth renders the region significant

for examining the impact of digital marketing, namely social media marketing, on consumer attitudes and behaviors towards organic food.

This study intends to examine the influence of social media marketing on customers' purchase intentions for organic food, particularly emphasizing the mediating effect of sustainable consumption behavior. Sustainable consumption is the judicious utilization of commodities and services that satisfy fundamental human needs and improve quality of life while reducing environmental harm and conserving natural resources. Understanding how social media enables or hinders the adoption of sustainable purchasing behaviors is essential for fostering environmentally responsible markets, particularly in developing and transitional economies like the Kurdistan Region.

In much of the existing literature, the determinants of sustainable consumption and purchase intention have been investigated largely in developed economies, where institutional quality, consumer awareness, and certification mechanisms are more established. However, these structural and socio-cultural conditions cannot be assumed to apply uniformly across emerging markets. Recent studies emphasize that institutional voids, weaker regulatory enforcement, trust deficits, and higher price sensitivity shape consumer behavior differently in transitional economies, making direct generalization from developed-market findings problematic (Kutaula et al., 2024). Furthermore, consumers in emerging markets tend to rely more heavily on informal information channels and social influence when forming perceptions of organic and sustainable products, demonstrating behavioral mechanisms that diverge from those observed in mature markets (Samaniego-Arias et al., 2025). These contextual disparities emphasize the need for empirically grounded research in local realities such as the Kurdistan Region, where institutional trust structures and informational dynamics differ substantially from those in developed economies, necessitating direct examination of the interaction between social media marketing and sustainable consumption behavior within an emerging market environment.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite an increasing volume of study on social media marketing (SMM) and consumer behavior, limited studies have investigated the convergence of these elements with sustainable consumption in emerging nations. A significant portion of the current literature focuses on nations with advanced economies, where organic markets are well established, and digital infrastructure is

sophisticated. As a result, there is a big lack of research looking at how social media marketing affects people's buying decisions for organic products in diverse and changing economic areas like the Kurdistan Region. Particularly, insufficient focus has been directed toward the capacity of social media marketing to facilitate not just immediate purchasing decisions but also enduring behavioral transformations through increased awareness of sustainable consumption. We have yet to adequately examine the intricate functions of influencer marketing, consumer trust, and interaction patterns across various social media platforms in shaping organic food preferences. This study seeks to deliver a thorough analysis of multiple aspects of social media marketing, specifically entertainment, customization, interaction, trendiness, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and their correlation with sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention for organic food products.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

1.3.1 Research Aims and Objectives

Social media marketing has emerged as a vital element in shaping customer behavior, particularly within the organic food sector. Comprehending the influence of social media marketing and consumer involvement on purchasing decisions is crucial for enterprises and governments. This study aims:

1- To assess the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intentions.

2- To evaluate the relationship between social media marketing and sustainable consumption behavior.

3- To measure the relationship between sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention.

4- To evaluate the mediating effect of sustainable consumption behavior between social media marketing and purchase intention.

1.3.2 Research Questions

To investigate the impact of social media marketing on purchase intention, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1- Does social media marketing have a relationship with purchase intentions?

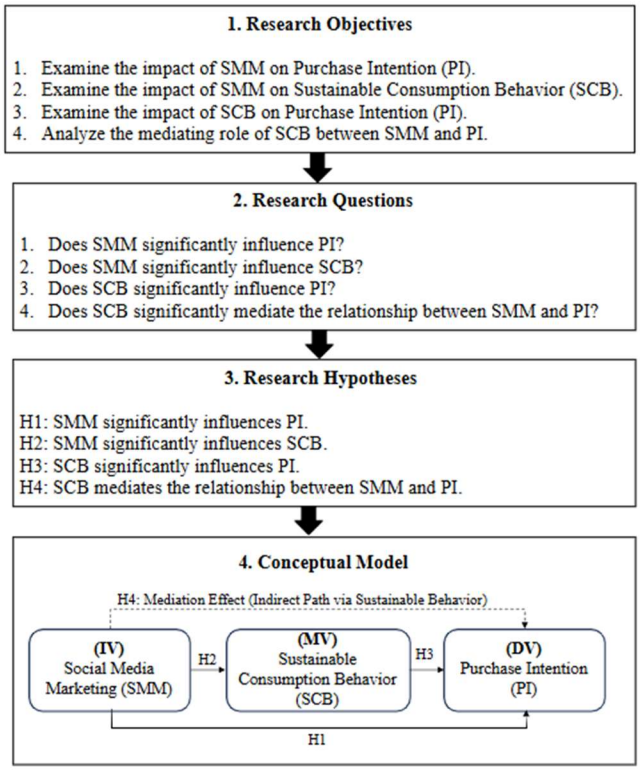
2- Does social media marketing have a relationship with sustainable consumption behavior?

3- Does sustainable consumption behavior have a relationship with purchase intentions?

4-Does sustainable consumption behavior mediate the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention?

Figure 1

Visual Research Roadmap Justification



Note. Created by the author.

1.4 Significance of the Study

1.4.1 Theoretical Importance

This research provides significant theoretical advancements in marketing and consumer behavior disciplines. The main goal is to clearly define and understand the key factors being studied social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intention while looking at how these factors are related to each other. Secondly, the study enhances marketing management

literature by investigating the impact of social media marketing on consumers' purchasing intentions about organic food, a domain that is still inadequately investigated in emerging economies. Significantly, it fills a void in current literature by examining sustainable consumption behavior as a mediating variable, a facet frequently neglected in previous studies. The study uses these theoretical models in the unique social and cultural setting of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which helps to broaden existing theories in an area that hasn't received much academic attention.

1.4.2 Practical Importance

This study provides practical insights for entrepreneurs, legislators, and marketers in the organic food sector, in addition to its scholarly significance. By highlighting the essential components of social media marketing that affect consumer involvement and decision-making, the research can assist organizations in formulating more efficient and targeted digital marketing strategies. Moreover, it emphasizes the significance of sustainable consumption practices as a possible competitive edge, allowing organizations to align their brand messaging with the ethical and environmental principles of a growing demographic of eco-aware consumers. The report offers evidence-based ideas to enhance marketing campaigns and elevate buy intentions, thereby aiding firms in adjusting to a swiftly changing digital economy.

1.5 Research Context: Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq exhibits a unique socio-political and economic environment, marked by the simultaneous presence of rapid digital advancement and deeply rooted traditional purchasing habits. The region operates within the broader Middle East and North Africa (MENA) context, characterized by ongoing institutional reform and increasing international integration. Abdullah and Soltani (2025) highlight that the post-2003 period represented a critical transformation phase for Iraq, particularly within the Kurdistan Region, enabling greater openness to international collaboration, modernization, and global engagement. This reintegration has not only influenced higher education but has also contributed to broader socio-economic restructuring and digital development. Such structural transformations indirectly affect consumer markets by accelerating exposure to global consumption patterns, digital communication platforms, and evolving lifestyle norms. Despite the substantial growth in internet connectivity and smartphone usage, the organic food sector remains underdeveloped and fragmented. Persistent barriers including cultural norms, price sensitivity, limited regulatory enforcement, and insufficient public

awareness continue to constrain sustainable consumption practices. Nevertheless, high engagement among younger populations on platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube suggests significant potential for social media marketing to influence consumption behavior. This study situates its investigation within this evolving socio-economic and digital landscape of the Kurdistan Region.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows:

- **Chapter One** introduces the study by outlining its background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, and significance.
- **Chapter Two** presents a comprehensive review of the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to social media marketing, sustainable consumption, and purchase intention.
- **Chapter Three** details the research methodology, including research design, sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures.
- **Chapter Four** presents the findings from qualitative and quantitative analysis, and it presents the discussion of the results.
- **Chapter Five** presents the implications, limitations of research, and outlines recommendations for future research.
- **Chapter Six** concludes the study, summarizing key findings and contributions.

This comprehensive structure ensures that the study addresses both theoretical and practical dimensions, contributing meaningfully to marketing research and sustainable development discussions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an extensive examination of the literature regarding the influence of social media marketing on the purchase intention of organic food, highlighting the mediating effect of sustainable consumption behavior. The literature review synthesizes theoretical frameworks and empirical research to provide a basis for comprehending consumer decision-making processes. This study examines essential themes including social media marketing tactics, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchasing intention, with a specific emphasis on consumer behavior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. This literature review refers to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) format to guarantee a systematic and transparent methodology for locating, screening, and selecting pertinent studies. A literature study is crucial for establishing a theoretical foundation that underpins this research. Consumer behavior is influenced by several psychological, social, and cultural elements, rendering it a multifaceted field of study. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a framework that elucidates the impact of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control on purchase intention. Moreover, prior studies emphasize that social media marketing has revolutionized consumer engagement by shaping perceptions and behavioral decisions. This chapter employs the PRISMA approach to comprehensively review and synthesize previous studies, revealing essential insights, theoretical deficiencies, and primary factors influencing consumer decisions related to organic food consumption. The increasing significance of social media marketing in influencing customer behavior has prompted researchers to examine its impact on purchase intentions, especially within sustainable product marketplaces. Social media platforms offer entertainment, trend-oriented material, interactive participation, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), all of which affect customer views and behaviors. Sustainable consumption behavior serves as a vital mediator, as customers who emphasize environmental welfare and ethical consumption are more susceptible to social media material advocating organic food. This chapter examines the interaction of these variables and their impact on consumer decision-making processes, providing insights into the changing dynamics of marketing techniques influenced by social media. This review utilizes the

PRISMA framework to provide a systematic and impartial examination of the current literature, emphasizing key findings and research trends.

2.2 Research Process and Method

This article adopts a qualitative research synthesis by (Page et al., 2020). The researcher uses a three-step procedure to gather the research that is most related to our research goals (see *Figure 2*).

2.2.1. Identification

Theoretically, the researcher investigated using the main variables to find out if previous systematic reviews about the topic were previously conducted. (social media, social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, purchase intention and organic food). According to (Page et al., 2020), Authors can expedite their familiarization with literature through using this method. Furthermore, it helps researchers to understand the reasons why obtaining a review of literature, for example identifying the significance of updating the topic, creating a new theory, or highlighting methodological problems in previous research investigations. The stage of the data collection process was carried out from the online library of the University of Debrecen from different databases. Through this stage, started with the process of searching using Scopus, Google scholar, ProQuest, Emerald, and PubMed databases. These databases provide multiple search options that enable users to apply filters and locate the most pertinent items. In the Scopus database the search has been done by using advance search, the query TITLE-ABS-KEY (sustainab* AND consumption AND behavior OR social media AND influencer marketing AND Purchase Intention), has been used to address the study question. The following filters have been used, Business, Environmental Science, Economic, agriculture and Food Science have been selected as a Fields of Study. scholarly journals as source type, articles, review articles and peer review articles, conference papers as document type, publication date from 2018-2024, in English. In Google Scholar, we select the following filters: research articles, review articles and peer review articles, conference papers, publication date from 2018-2024, and in English. As the research includes the integration of variables together, it carried out the search on Google scholar as follows. For example, all words have been used “sustainable, consumption behavior, social media, influencer marketing, purchase intention, organic food”, also the exact phrases have been used such as “sustainable consumption behavior, social media awareness and influencer marketing in

purchase intention of organic food". In ProQuest the advanced search and select the following filters have been utilized: In titles and abstracts, peer reviewed, publication date from 2018-2023, scholarly journals as source type, articles, review articles as document type, and in English. In Emerald as well we use advanced search and select and the following filters have been utilized: last five years, journal articles, in titles and abstracts. Both ProQuest and Emerald have Boolean search operators; therefore, the search in these databases has been done as follows. For example, the search "sustainable consumption" OR "consumption behavior" AND "purchase intention" AND "social media marketing" OR "influencer marketing". Moreover, in Semantic Scholar, the search on articles have been done to find the relationship of variables with each other, for example "social media marketing and purchase intention" as a first relation, second, " social media marketing and sustainable consumption behavior" , second, " sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention", third, "social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention", fourth, " social media awareness and purchase intention" sixth, "sustainable consumption behavior, social media awareness and purchase intention" and the last one was " influencer marketing, social media awareness and purchase intention". In addition, Business, Environmental Science, Economic, agriculture and Food Science, education, Health, and psychology, have been selected as a Fields of Study. And the date range lasted five years, and the articles that have as a Pdf have been chosen.

2.2.2. Screening

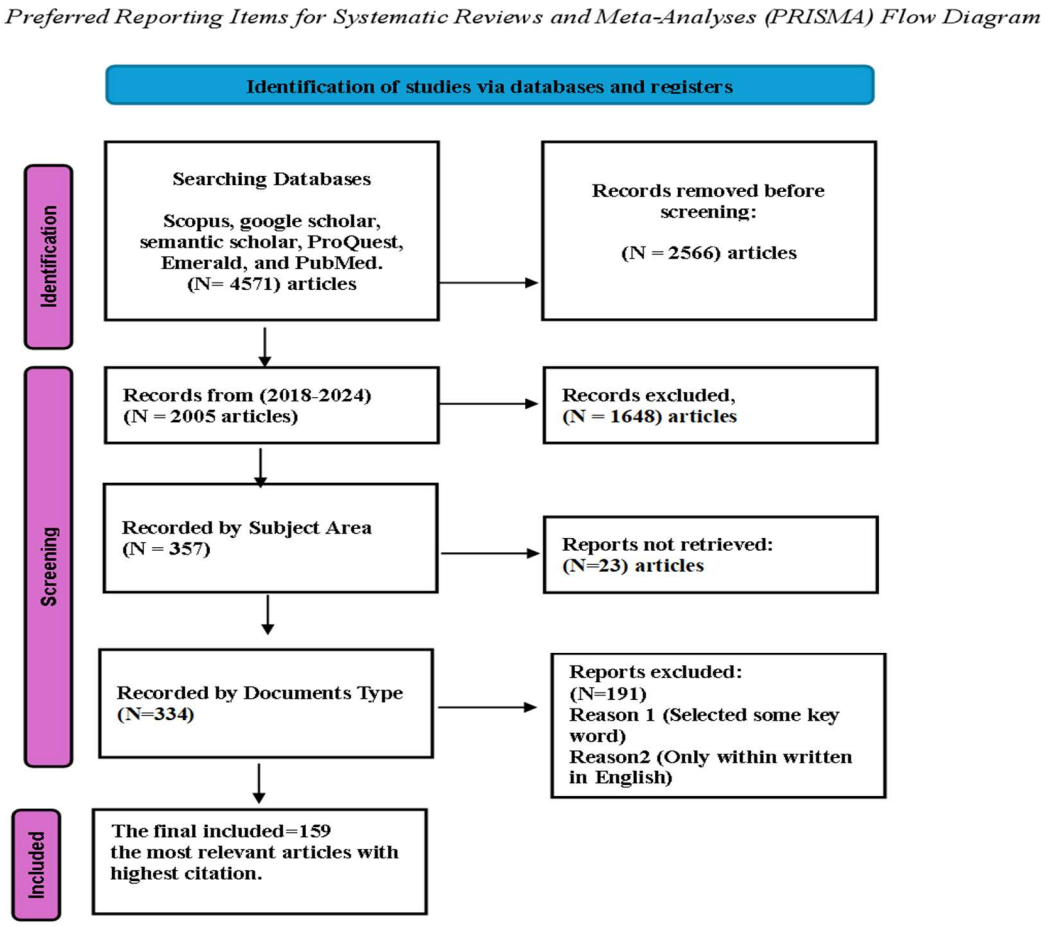
The initial important stage in addressing the research topic and establishing the present investigation within the enormous amount of research in the subject required selecting information from a comprehensive investigation of previous research on sustainable consumer behavior, influencer marketing, social media, and purchase intention of organic food. Whenever a significant number of articles have been identified, they are uploaded to the RefWorks software for the purpose of removing any duplicate copies of the same articles. The application decreased the number of papers and simplified a record of the articles that have been included or excluded. After that, critically review and assess the title pages and abstracts for each article. Many articles concentrated on the topics of sustainable consumption behavior and influencer marketing and social media awareness in relation to purchase intention, particularly in the context of organic food. This process additionally decreased the number of items that might become eligible articles.

2.2.3. Included

Finally, in the third stage of the PRISMA method, which is (Included), every page of each article carefully has been reviewed, focusing special attention on their explanation of ideas, methods, and results. The articles that demonstrate substantial differences among the factors of significance and the factors that intend to examine, in addition to the articles which mainly emphasis. Furthermore, to the fundamental search phrases, we additionally examine the collection of references included in the research papers to find related papers that might not have been easily identified. In this stage, we included an article by Ajzen (1991) that is considered one of the most important articles about the Theory of Planned Behavior. subsequently we collect all the relevant information and classify them into the following topics: purchase intention, sustainable consumption behavior and social media awareness, influencer marketing, organic food in Kurdistan Region and in Hungary. We have included a total of 159 articles collected from different databases that have been mentioned in the first stage which are (Scopus, google scholar, semantic scholar, ProQuest, Emerald, and PubMed databases).

Figure 2

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Flow Diagram



Note. Adapted from Page et al. (2020).

2.3 Theoretical Background

Researchers have suggested multiple models to comprehend the determinants affecting customers' purchase choices. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that an individual's views, social influences (subjective norms), and perceived behavioral control significantly influence their purchasing intentions (Qi & Ploeger, 2021).

2.3.1 Development of the Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is an extension of the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), formulated by Ajzen and Fishbein in the late 20th century (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TRA elucidated the impact of attitudes and social norms on behavior,

while TPB was established to rectify its shortcomings, especially in contexts where individuals had differing degrees of control over their actions. In the Theory of Planned Behavior, an individual's intention to perform a behavior is determined by three fundamental components: Attitudes - The degree to which an individual perceives a conduct positively or negatively Subjective Norms - The social pressure or influence exerted by others concerning behavior. Perceived Behavioral Control - An individual's conviction in their capacity to execute the behavior. These three criteria together influence an individual's likelihood of executing a planned activity (Ajzen, 1991).

2.3.2 Implementation of the Theory of Planned Behavior in Consumer Behavior

The TPB paradigm has been widely employed in consumer behavior research, demonstrating efficacy in forecasting purchasing decisions. The impact of the Theory of Planned Behavior on Indonesian consumers' propensity to purchase herbal items during the COVID-19 epidemic was investigated (Nuryanto & Indriyani, 2020). Their research, employing structural equation modeling (SEM), validated that a consumer's attitude, social influences, and perceived control over their decision greatly affected their desire to purchase herbal items. A separate investigation conducted by Samoggia and Rezzaghi (2021) examined caffeine intake among athletes utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior framework. Their investigation, encompassing online questionnaires and multivariate regression, revealed that social influences (subjective norms) and the practical advantages of caffeine (utilitarian variables) were significant determinants of purchasing behavior among athletes seeking to improve their performance.

2.3.3 Extensions of the Theory of Planned Behavior

Researchers have progressively extended the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by incorporating additional constructs to enhance its predictive accuracy across diverse consumer contexts. For instance, Hossain et al. (2022) integrated moral values and environmental consciousness into the TPB framework to investigate sustainable energy appliance purchases in developing countries. Their study, which included more than 1,100 participants, demonstrated that incorporating ethical considerations significantly strengthened the model’s ability to predict environmentally responsible behavior. Similarly, Lindblom and Lindblom (2018) expanded TPB by introducing price consciousness as an additional determinant, examining the role of cost awareness in collaborative consumption contexts such as Airbnb and Uber. Their findings highlighted that

financial considerations can meaningfully interact with attitudes and subjective norms in shaping purchase-related decisions. In the domain of green consumerism, Manongko and Tamboto (2019) applied TPB to analyze eco-friendly purchasing behavior in Indonesia. Their results confirmed that the core TPB constructs significantly influenced environmentally conscious consumption choices. Likewise, Helmyati et al. (2019) employed TPB to examine halal food purchasing behavior among Indonesian Muslim students, identifying subjective norms and perceived behavioral control as key predictors of intention. These extensions collectively demonstrate the flexibility of TPB and its adaptability to context-specific determinants, reinforcing its suitability as a foundational framework for analyzing sustainable consumption behavior in emerging markets.

2.3.4 Theory of Planned Behavior in Sustainable Consumption and Purchase Intentions

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been extensively employed to examine sustainable consumer behavior and ethical purchase choices. Palau-Saumell et al. (2021) enhanced the Theory of Planned Behavior by integrating risk perceptions associated with COVID-19. Their extensive survey in Spain indicated that pandemic-related worries affected customer perceptions on the purchase of locally produced food. Alcohol Consumption - Ruano et al. (2019) employed the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine alcohol consumption patterns, illustrating the model's significant adaptability to many social and psychological circumstances. Ayar and Gürbüz (2021) investigated sustainable shopping behaviors in Turkey. Their findings indicated that whereas attitudes and perceived control were significant predictors of eco-friendly purchase, subjective norms (social pressure) exerted no influence, underscoring the difficulties of sustainable consumption. Yang et al. (2018) expanded the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine consumer behavior during China's Double 11 shopping event. Their research demonstrated how external variables, like advertising efforts and discounts, substantially influence purchasing decisions. Ali et al. (2019) integrated the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with the Technology Readiness Index (TRI) 2.0 to examine intentions for eco-friendly purchases. Research indicated that personal characteristics such as inventiveness and optimism affected customers' propensity to embrace sustainable shopping behaviors. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a prevalent framework for comprehending consumer decision-making. Its capacity to elucidate buying intentions across diverse contexts spanning sustainability, food selections, and extensive shopping exemplifies its versatility and sustained significance in scholarly study.

2.3.5 Extended TPB Framework in Digital and Sustainable Consumption Contexts

Building on the explanatory strengths of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the present dissertation adopts an extended TPB framework to better capture consumer behavior within digitally mediated environments. Specifically, social media marketing is introduced as an external antecedent influencing both sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention, while sustainable consumption behavior functions as a mediating construct linking digital marketing stimuli to intention formation. This extension enables the model to preserve the core cognitive determinants of TPB while systematically incorporating digitally mediated external influences, thereby enhancing its contextual relevance and explanatory adequacy within emerging market environments.

2.4 Research Variables

The following *Table 1* represents all the variables and dimensions of this research.

Table 1

Variable Classification, Dimensions, Definitions, and Sources

Variable classification	Variable Category	Dimensions	Definition	Author(s) (Year)
Independent Variable	Social media Marketing	Entertainment	Captures users' perceptions of enjoyment and interest derived from social media content.	Cheung et al. (2019)
		Customization	Refers to the degree to which social media content and services are tailored to users' individual preferences.	Ebrahim (2020)
		Interaction and Engagement	Refer to reciprocal communication and active user participation between users and brands on social media.	Ebrahim (2020) and Cheung et al. (2019)
		Trendiness	Denotes the provision of current and fashionable brand information on social media.	Ebrahim (2020)

		Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	Refers to informal online opinions and recommendations shared by consumers about brands or products.	Ebrahim (2020)
Mediating Variable	Sustainable Consumption Behavior	Quality of Life Well-being	The contribution of consumption choices to overall life satisfaction and happiness.	Fei et al. (2022)
		Care for the Environment	Reflects consumers' commitment to environmental protection.	Hosta and Zabkar (2021)
		Care for the Future Generation	Care for future generations reflects long-term responsibility in consumption decisions.	Tomșa et al. (2021)
Dependent Variable	Theory Of Planned Behavior	Attitudes	Refers to a consumer's overall positive or negative evaluation of a product or brand.	Budiman (2021)
		Subjective Norms	Refer to perceived social pressure from significant others to perform or avoid behavior.	Jia et al. (2023)
		Perceived Monetary Barriers	Refer to consumers' perceptions of the financial costs and affordability of a purchase.	(Fitri & Wulandari, 2020; Utami & Oktavia, 2024)

Note. This table outlines the key constructs of the research framework, their dimensions, operational definitions, and the original sources from which they were adapted.

2.4.1 Social Media Marketing (Independent Variable)

2.4.1.1 Definition and Importance of Social Media Marketing

The emergence of the internet and social media has irrevocably transformed traditional marketing. Social media has transformed the methods and instruments for engaging with clients. It has emerged as a critical determinant of consumer behavior. Companies have consistently competed for consumer attention, and the emergence of social media has created a new arena for this competition. The intense rivalry has compelled both corporations and marketers to investigate novel methods for engaging their customers, resulting in the emergence of social media marketing. Social media has become an essential component of our lives, significantly influencing various

areas of our behaviors related to purchases, opinions, and evaluations. The simplicity and affordability of internet marketing, in contrast to traditional methods, have allowed firms of various types to engage their target consumers more effectively. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram have transformed the landscape of online marketing.

Social media has emerged as a significant instrument in today's world, influencing how individuals engage with corporations, make purchase choices, and interpret their identities. Studies indicate that social media significantly enhances brand recognition, fosters consumer trust, and impacts purchasing behavior. Social media marketing activities can be defined "as effective marketing communication methods that capture engaged consumers' per-captions and understanding of activities on social media marketing by five dimensions namely, entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization and word-of-mouth" (Ebrahim, 2020:5). Daud and Othman (2019) discovered that social media platforms have significantly facilitated the promotion of social enterprises in Malaysia, enhancing consumer confidence in their purchase decisions. Young and Oza (2021) investigated the influence of social media interactions on brand awareness and purchasing decisions, demonstrating that digital involvement significantly impacts consumer behavior. In addition to marketing, social media significantly impacts self-esteem, particularly among younger individuals. Research has investigated the impact of photo-centric platforms on adolescents and children, elucidating their influence on self-perception and conduct. Stojanovic et al. (2018) investigated the impact of social media on travel businesses, highlighting its effect on consumer perceptions and marketing efficacy. Social media advertising has been shown to be transformative. Bilgin (2018) emphasized the impact of internet advertisements on brand reputation and consumer decision-making. In the organic food sector, social media has been shown to influence sustainability-related purchasing behaviors. Rounsefell et al. (2019) found that exposure to social media can affect individuals' body perceptions, alter their dietary habits, and drive them toward specific food selections. Moreover, research indicates that social media marketing influences consumer loyalty and perceptions of eco-friendly products. James et al. (2019) discovered that individuals frequently correlate organic food with elevated status because of social media, hence enhancing the probability of purchase. Wongprawmas et al. (2021) noted that social media influences food culture and fosters sustainable practices, including the reduction of food waste. Numerous researchers, like Simeone and Scarpato (2020), have investigated the

impact of social media material on promoting sustainable consumption, hence affecting consumer knowledge and environmental consciousness. Additional research has examined the influence of elements such as webpage design (e.g., aesthetic appeal, navigation, and information quality) on impulsive online purchasing behavior (Tariq et al., 2019). Zheng and Cao (2022) discovered that excessive information on social media can induce customer anxiety, thereby affecting perceptions of organic food.

2.4.1.2. Social Media Marketing Advantages

Social media marketing can provide numerous advantages to enterprises. At first, it raises brand awareness and visibility by letting companies engage with a larger audience and increase brand exposure. This is mostly done through paid advertising, content creation and distribution, and influencer marketing (Anjel et al., 2022; Bilgin, 2018; Porto et al., 2022). Second, social media marketing (SMM) helps businesses get customers more involved and loyal by letting them communicate with them in a more personalized and interactive way. This builds stronger relationships and increases customer loyalty (Mandagi & Aseng, 2021; Ebrahim, 2020; Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2022). Social media offers critical insights into consumer preferences and behaviors, enabling firms to comprehend their target audience more effectively and make informed decisions on future marketing initiatives. SMM is also known to have a big impact on brand variables such as brand gestalt (Siddik et al., 2022; Mandagi, 2023), brand awareness (Waworuntu et al., 2022; Anjel et al., 2022), and brand loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2021; Mandagi & Aseng, 2021). Through the promotion of consumer interaction, collaboration, and communication, SMM facilitates brand growth. It also encompasses client remarks regarding the company's diverse social media marketing strategies (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). Marketing managers have a conundrum about social media marketing. It can serve as a powerful catalyst for consumer response, positively influencing consumer intent, behavior, and purchasing decisions (Chen & Lin, 2019).

2.4.1.3. Dimensions of Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing transcends just content uploading; it involves audience engagement, maintaining relevance, and crafting experiences that appeal to consumers. Five aspects are essential for a good social media marketing strategy:

2.4.1.3.1 Entertainment (E)

Social media platforms depend on engaging and enjoyable content such as videos, memes, challenges, and interactive posts to capture attention in an information saturated environment. Entertainment helps brands stand out, creates emotional connections, and increases the likelihood that users will interact with and share content, thereby extending reach organically and strengthening brand consumer relationships. Empirical studies show that entertaining social media content can significantly enhance engagement, brand awareness and favorable consumer responses, ultimately supporting brand loyalty and purchase intentions (Cheung et al., 2020; Aji et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022). In this thesis, entertainment is therefore conceptualized as the extent to which social media content is enjoyable, interesting, and fun for consumers.

2.4.1.3.2 Customization (C)

Customization refers to the tailoring of social media content, messages, and recommendations to match users' needs, interests, and behaviors. Personalized interactions enhance perceived relevance, strengthen brand–consumer relationships, and improve user experience. Prior research shows that customized marketing strategies positively influence brand perception, satisfaction, and loyalty, as consumers feel that the brand understands their preferences (Adiningtyas & Hasanah, 2023). Similarly, personalized communication can increase trust and purchase intention, particularly when users perceive content as specifically directed toward them (Laksamana, 2020). Examples such as targeted recommendations, interactive polls, and data-driven messaging demonstrate how customization improves engagement and conversion. Overall, customization enables brands to foster stronger relationships, support repeat purchase behavior, and encourage long-term loyalty by delivering content that aligns closely with individual consumer expectations.

2.4.1.3.3 Engagement and Interaction (EI)

Engagement and interaction represent the two-way communication made possible by social media, where brands and consumers exchange messages, feedback and opinions in real time. Unlike traditional one-directional marketing, interactive platforms enable brands to respond to comments, answer questions and address concerns, helping to build trust and stronger relational ties. Research shows that higher levels of interaction enhance customer satisfaction and brand engagement, as reciprocal dialogue fosters a sense of community and connection with the brand (Cheung et al., 2020). Engagement may take the form of live sessions, polls, replies to comments or user-

generated content, all of which strengthen brand loyalty and encourage positive behavioral responses. When consumers feel listened to and acknowledged, they are more likely to advocate for the brand and maintain enduring relationships.

2.4.1.3.4 Trendiness (T)

Trendiness reflects the ability of brands to align their social media content with current topics, cultural moments, and emerging digital trends. In fast-moving online environments, brands that incorporate timely hashtags, viral themes, or contemporary discussions are perceived as more relevant and appealing to consumers. Prior studies show that the effective use of trending themes increases engagement, strengthens brand recall, and encourages content sharing (Cheung et al., 2020; Sundström et al., 2020). Trend-driven content helps brands differentiate themselves in saturated digital spaces and enhances visibility, especially when combined with culturally resonant messaging or influencer collaboration. However, alignment with brand identity remains essential, as participation in unsuitable trends may appear inauthentic. When used appropriately, trendiness enhances interaction, improves consumer perception, and contributes to a stronger and more dynamic brand presence.

2.4.1.3.5 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a major determinant of consumer purchasing decisions because, unlike traditional advertising, it is driven by real customer experiences and is therefore perceived as more credible and authentic. It involves the ongoing exchange of opinions and information among past, current, and potential consumers about products, services, brands, or companies on online platforms (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Consumers tend to listen more to advice from people who have actual experience with a product than to company generated advertisements (Zahid & Ruswanti, 2024). Positive eWOM can significantly enhance brand reputation, credibility, and purchase intention (Oza, 2023), as well as increase brand visibility, engagement, and loyalty over time (Masa'deh et al., 2021). At the same time, negative reviews can quickly damage a brand's image, so firms must actively manage their online reputation by responding to feedback, addressing complaints, and encouraging satisfied customers to share their experiences through testimonials, influencer collaborations, and other forms of user generated content (Abidin, 2020).

The core elements of social media marketing entertainment, customization, engagement and interaction, trendiness, and eWOM operate together to foster engagement, build trust, and support long-term brand relationships. Social media marketing can be understood as the strategic use of digital platforms to engage consumers, increase brand visibility, and influence purchase behavior (Bilgin, 2018; Cheung et al., 2020). Entertainment refers to creating enjoyable and memorable content, such as videos, memes, and interactive posts, that capture attention and enhance brand recall (Cheung et al., 2020; Aji et al., 2020). Engagement and interaction represent two-way communication between brands and consumers through comments, live sessions, and user-generated content, which deepens commitment and loyalty (Cheung et al., 2020; Shofiya & Fachira, 2021). Trendiness reflects the alignment of content with current topics, popular culture, and evolving consumer preferences, helping brands remain relevant in a rapidly changing environment (Cheung et al., 2020; Syukri & Sunrawali, 2022). Within this framework, eWOM plays a central role in transmitting consumer experiences and evaluations that strongly shape others' perceptions and purchasing decisions (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Abidin, 2020).

2.4.1.4. Analytical Synthesis of Social Media Marketing Dimensions

While prior research has frequently examined social media marketing dimensions such as entertainment, interaction, customization, trendiness, and electronic word-of-mouth as discrete predictors of engagement, there is limited consensus regarding the primary mechanism through which these dimensions influence consumer behavior. Some scholars conceptualize SMM as primarily an experiential value-creation process, emphasizing hedonic enjoyment and emotional resonance as drivers of brand attachment. Others frame SMM as an informational persuasion mechanism, arguing that credibility, informational clarity, and risk reduction are more central to behavioral outcomes. In sustainability contexts, additional theoretical tension emerges. Sustainable consumption has been explained through rational attitudinal models (e.g., TPB), moral-value frameworks (e.g., value–belief–norm theory), and social validation perspectives emphasizing normative influence and identity signaling. Within emerging markets characterized by limited institutional trust and evolving certification systems, informational credibility and peer validation may exert stronger influence than entertainment alone. This suggests that interaction and electronic word-of-mouth may function as trust-building mechanisms that compensate for institutional uncertainty. The present study adopts a relational behavioral interpretation, proposing

that SMM dimensions operate synergistically rather than independently. Entertainment captures attention, customization increases perceived relevance, engagement builds relational trust, trendiness enhances contextual relevance, and eWOM reinforces social validation. Together, these mechanisms influence intention through both attitudinal evaluation and value internalization processes. This integrated interpretation provides a theoretically coherent foundation for examining how SMM shapes sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention within a transitional market context.

2.4.2 Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Mediating Variable)

2.4.2.1 Concept of Sustainable Consumption Behavior

The concept of consumer behavior encompasses the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption-related items. It is a multifaceted field that integrates insights from psychology, sociology, and economics to understand the motivations and influences behind consumer choices. The emergence of consumer behavior as a distinct area of study can be traced back to the need for businesses to understand their customers better in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Factors such as globalization, technological advancements, and the rise of digital marketing have significantly influenced consumer behavior, necessitating a deeper exploration of the underlying dynamics (Lejiw, 2023; Tomșa et al., 2021).

2.4.2.2 Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is a complex interplay of various internal and external factors that influence how individuals make purchasing decisions. Understanding these factors is crucial for marketers and businesses aiming to effectively reach and engage their target audiences. This discussion categorizes the factors into internal and external influences.

2.4.2.2.1 Internal Factors

1. Needs and Motives: The fundamental drivers of consumer behavior are needs and motives, which dictate the purchasing decisions individuals make. Needs are considered the beginning of the purchasing process which is a lack of something of value and benefit to the consumer, or it is something that the individual seeks to satisfy completely or partially, such as physiological needs. The significance of acknowledging the needs of customers as a fundamental phase in the purchase process, positioning this acknowledgment as a prerequisite for further decision-making,

information retrieval, and assessment (Qiu et al., 2023). To further clarify needs, according to (Montag et al., 2020), Maslow presented a hierarchy of needs. It is a psychological framework that categorizes human motivations into five levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. This hierarchy significantly influences consumer purchase intentions. At the base, physiological needs drive consumers to purchase essential products, such as food and water. Safety needs to lead consumers to favor brands that promise reliability and security. Social needs are fulfilled through products that enhance social acceptance, often influenced by social media and peer recommendations. Esteem needs motivate consumers to buy luxury items that enhance their self-image, while self-actualization drives the purchase of products that align with personal values, such as organic or sustainable goods .According to (Rutkowska,2023) the psychological underpinnings of consumer behavior are shaped by both economic and non-economic determinants, emphasizing the importance of understanding individual needs in the context of market behavior (Rutkowska, 2023).

2. Perception: Perception plays a critical role in how consumers interpret information and experiences related to products and services. Liu noted that consumers' perceptions of product quality significantly influence their satisfaction and purchase intentions, suggesting that marketers must carefully manage how products are presented to align with consumer expectations (Prahiawan et al., 2022). Furthermore, the influence of social capital on ethical consumption behaviors indicates that consumers' perceptions of social norms can also shape their purchasing decisions (Fei et al., 2022).

3. Personality: Personality traits can significantly affect consumer behavior, as they influence preferences and decision-making processes. Research by Nurchaini et al. identified that individual characteristics, including personality, play a crucial role in determining consumer preferences and behaviors in various market contexts (Nurchaini et al., 2023). This is further supported by the findings of Mureșan et al., who noted that personal values and traits impact consumers' choices, especially during times of economic uncertainty (Mureșan et al., 2022).

4. Learning: Learning influences consumer behavior by shaping how individuals acquire knowledge about products and brands over time. This process can be affected by previous experiences, which in turn influences future purchasing decisions. For instance, the study by

Suryadi et al. emphasized that consumers' past experiences during economic crises significantly alter their future buying behaviors, demonstrating the importance of learning in consumer decision-making (Suryadi et al., 2022).

2.4.2.2.2 External Factors

1. Social Factors: Social influences, including family, friends, and reference groups, significantly impact consumer behavior. The research by Hasibuan et al. examined how social interactions and community norms shape consumer preferences and behaviors, particularly in settings like coffee shops where socialization is a key component of the experience (Hasibuan et al., 2022). Additionally, the role of social media in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors cannot be overlooked, as it has become a powerful tool for influencing purchasing decisions (Loxton et al., 2020).

2. Cultural Factors: Cultural background profoundly affects consumer behavior, as it shapes values, beliefs, and consumption patterns. Liu's analysis of cultural factors revealed that individualism and uncertainty avoidance significantly influence consumer attitudes toward advertising and product choices (Liu, 2024). This cultural lens is essential for marketers aiming to tailor their strategies to resonate with diverse consumer bases.

3. Marketing Mix Factors: Product, price, distribution, and promotion, as core elements of the marketing mix, function as significant external influences on consumer behavior. Zhang and Jin emphasized that understanding consumers' psychological perceptions of products can help businesses optimize their marketing strategies to enhance purchase intentions (Zhang & Jin, 2022). Moreover, the pricing strategies employed by businesses can significantly affect consumer perceptions of value and influence their purchasing decisions (Liu, 2024).

4. Economic Factors: Economic conditions, such as inflation, unemployment rates, and overall economic stability, play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. The findings of Vladimirovna et al. indicated that economic factors, including consumer confidence and financial stability, are key triggers of purchasing behavior, especially in the context of the digital economy (Polevych et al., 2021). Furthermore, the impact of economic instability during the COVID-19 pandemic has been shown to alter consumer spending patterns, as highlighted by Mureșan et al. (Mureșan et al., 2022).

5. Technological Factors: The rapid advancement of technology has transformed consumer behavior by providing new avenues for shopping and information access. Liu's research on big data techniques illustrates how technology can be leveraged to understand and influence consumer behavior by analyzing vast amounts of data to identify trends and preferences (Liu, 2024). Additionally, the role of digital platforms in shaping consumer experiences and expectations has become increasingly significant in recent years (Polevych et al., 2021).

2.4.2.3. The Concept of Sustainable Consumption Behavior

Sustainable consumption is a holistic approach to consumption that seeks to minimize environmental impact while promoting social equity and economic viability. It encompasses the responsible use of resources, ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept is increasingly relevant in today's context, where consumer choices significantly affect environmental sustainability. The rise of sustainable consumption is attributed to growing awareness of environmental issues, climate change, and the depletion of natural resources, prompting consumers to seek products that align with their values and contribute to a more sustainable future (Wyrwa (2023); Piligrimienė et al., 2020). Sustainable behavior refers to actions taken by individuals or groups that contribute to environmental sustainability. This behavior is often influenced by a combination of personal values, social norms, and external factors such as government policies and marketing strategies. Sustainable behavior can manifest in various forms, including reducing waste, conserving energy, and choosing eco-friendly products. Research indicates that consumers who are aware of the environmental impact of their choices are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors, highlighting the importance of education and awareness in promoting sustainable consumption (Rosa & Jorgensen, 2021; Kenny et al., 2023).

The Behavior of the Sustainable Consumer Towards Purchasing Sustainable Products

The behavior of sustainable consumers can be understood through a four-stage process: awareness, interest, information gathering, and practical application.

1. Awareness: The first stage involves recognizing the importance of sustainability and the impact of consumer choices on the environment. This awareness is often sparked by educational

campaigns, media coverage, or personal experiences that highlight environmental issues (Lim et al., 2022).

2. Interest: Following awareness, consumers develop an interest in sustainable products. This interest can be influenced by social media, peer recommendations, and marketing efforts that emphasize the benefits of sustainable consumption (Yener, 2023).

3. Information Gathering: In this stage, consumers actively seek information about sustainable products, including their environmental impact, production processes, and certifications. This information-gathering phase is crucial as it helps consumers make informed decisions and reinforces their commitment to sustainability (Schumacher et al., 2022).

4. Practical Application: The final stage involves the actual purchase and use of sustainable products. Consumers translate their interest and knowledge into action by choosing to buy eco-friendly products, thereby contributing to sustainable consumption practices (Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018).

Justifications for Sustainable Consumption The justifications for sustainable consumption are multifaceted. Firstly, there is a moral imperative to protect the environment for future generations. Consumers increasingly recognize that their choices can have significant implications for the planet, leading to a sense of responsibility to adopt sustainable practices (Han, 2021). Secondly, sustainable consumption can lead to economic benefits, such as cost savings from energy-efficient products and the potential for innovation in sustainable technologies (Hasbullah et al., 2022). Lastly, social factors, including peer influence and community values, play a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes towards sustainability, as individuals often seek to align their behaviors with those of their social circles (Yang, 2023).

Sustainable consumption has emerged as a response to the challenges posed by overconsumption and environmental degradation. The concept gained traction in the late 20th century, particularly following the publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987, which emphasized the need for sustainable development (Banytė, 2023). Since then, various international agreements and initiatives have aimed to promote sustainable consumption practices, reflecting a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of economic, social, and environmental systems (Hur & Cassidy, 2019).

The primary objectives of sustainable consumption include reducing resource use, minimizing waste, and promoting social equity. By adopting sustainable consumption practices, consumers can contribute to the conservation of natural resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support fair labor practices in the production of goods (Fardet et al., 2021). Additionally, sustainable consumption aims to foster a circular economy, where products are designed for longevity, reuse, and recycling, thereby reducing the overall environmental footprint (Areola et al., 2022).

2.4.2.4. Challenges to Sustainable Consumption

Despite growing awareness and interest in sustainable consumption, several challenges persist. One significant barrier is the perceived higher cost of sustainable products, which can deter consumers from making eco-friendly choices (Šálková, 2023). Additionally, the lack of availability and accessibility of sustainable options can limit consumer participation in sustainable consumption practices (Tjokrosoeharto & Paramita, 2021). Furthermore, ingrained habits and social norms can pose challenges, as consumers may be reluctant to change their purchasing behaviors despite their awareness of sustainability issues. Overcoming these challenges requires concerted efforts from policymakers, businesses, and consumers to create an environment that supports sustainable choices. According to Dimitrova et al. (2022) “sustainable consumption is an umbrella term that brings together a number of key issues, such as meeting needs, enhancing the quality of life, improving resource efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, minimizing waste, taking a life cycle perspective and taking into account the equity dimension”. Sustainable consumption behavior is frequently associated with expressions including "pro-environmental consumption behavior," "green consumption behavior," and "ethical consumption behavior, etc.” (Dimitrova, et al., 2022). The literature on sustainable consumption behavior encapsulates a diverse array of factors influencing consumer choices and behaviors, reflecting a multidimensional understanding of this phenomenon. In their study Setiawan et al. (2020) they combined the Theory of Planned Behavior with norm activation to explore the importance of frameworks in understanding behavior within an environmental context. Additionally, Fu and Xu (2022) examined the effect of message strategies on reducing harmful to the environment consumption behaviors in services which involve expressing materials, providing potential methods for promoting sustainable consumption. In their paper. The research aimed to develop a

reliable and valid scale to measure sustainable consumption behavior (SCB) from the consumer perspective. According to a study conducted by Quoquab et al. (2019), the study involved qualitative interviews to generate items for the scale. The initial scale was tested using exploration factor analysis (EFA) on data from 1,002 respondents, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to confirm the scale's dimensionality using Smart PLS. The SCB was identified as a three-dimensional construct with 24 items, including quality of life, care for environmental well-being, and care for future generations. The scale demonstrated reliability and validity.

These studies collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional nature of sustainable consumption behavior, incorporating psychological, social, and technological factors. By integrating theoretical frameworks, exploring consumer perceptions, and identifying intervention strategies, the literature provides valuable insights into the promotion of sustainable consumption behavior.

Balan (2020) explored the knowledge on how retailers engage customers in environmentally friendly purchasing. (Hwang and Yeo, 2022) extended the understanding of sustainable consumption through investigating the way values-in-behavior and social involvement influence the relationship between individuals' perceived desire and their real involvement in sustainable consumption. Moreover, (Matharu et al.,2020) examined the factors that can impact consumption behavior. The study delves into the idea of incorporating health and sustainability (LOHAS) into consumers preferences for engaging in consumption within the sharing economy. (Leaniz and Castro-González, 2023) highlighted the important role of studying environmentally friendly purchasing behaviors within individual consumer behavior, emphasizing the necessity for continual study in this field of study. (Rodríguez-Rad and Hidalgo, 2018) explore the significance of moral identity in mediating the relationships between the original consumer ethics scale (OCES) and spiritual as a distinct factor as well as perceptions of engaging in responsible conduct and recycling behaviors amongst customers. However, in contrast to these investigations (Hasbullah ,2021) carried out an analysis on research pertaining to green and sustainable consumption. His study shed light on insights within the field, but it did not make substantial contributions towards enhancing our overall understanding of sustainable consumer behavior.

The burgeoning interest in sustainable consumption behavior underscores a focused exploration of consumer attitudes and behaviors (Elbers and Janssen, 2023). Although previous studies have predominantly relied on survey data for analyzing consumer behavior, there is a discernible need for more research grounded in actual purchase data (Mat et al., 2022). Moreover, Kristia et al. (2023) conducted a study focused on aspects such as food, food waste management, environmental impact, food safety, and consumer behavior surrounding organic items. Additionally, there is a causal relationship between existential dangers to our biosphere and our unsustainable consumption practices. Since 2015, studies on sustainable consumption have grown in number, indicating that the interest in the field has increased. There are four major theories in the field of sustainable consumption research, which utilize three interconnected levels of analysis: micro, and macro. This research indicates that to achieve a higher quality of life for buyers, it is essential to redefine consumption sustainability through an attention on consumer consumption trends (Haider et al., 2022). Thus, according to (Dimitrova, et al, 2022) there are three dimensions of sustainable consumption which are (Quality of life well-being, Care for the environmental well-being and Care for the future generation). The collective review of literature implies that achieving sustainable consumption necessitates reforming consumer mindsets, instilling mindful consumption practices, and establishing infrastructure conducive to mindful consumption. Economic theory and consumer behavior are identified as crucial lenses for comprehending and promoting sustainable consumption. This comprehensive overview establishes a foundation for further research, emphasizing the need for continued exploration and the development of practical strategies to foster sustainable consumption behavior.

2.4.2.5 Dimensions of Sustainable Consumption Behavior

2.4.2.5.1 Quality of Life and Well-being (QL)

Quality of life well-being places an emphasis on consumer behaviors that improve both individual and community well-being. Considerations such as a person's physical wellness, mental well-being, and social ties are included in this category. Consumers are becoming more aware of the nutritional value of the foods they choose to eat, which has led to a preference for organic and locally sourced products that promote health and well-being (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2019). Sustainable consumption behaviors in this dimension focus on products and practices that contribute to a better quality of life. Some examples of these behaviors include nutritious eating,

community engagement, fostering social relationships, and improving the overall quality of life by supporting local businesses and engaging in community initiatives. It is a great way to get involved in the community. According to Kim (2018), this engagement demonstrates a dedication to the social and economic well-being of the community.

2.4.2.5.2 Care for Environmental Well-being (CE)

The primary objective of the Care for Environmental Well-Being initiative is the implementation of measures that preserve and maintain the natural environment. Significant environmental challenges resulting from extensive human intervention, including pollution, global warming, land degradation, and biodiversity loss, directly affect the sustainability and quality of the environment and ecosystem (Dimitrova, et al., 2022).Consumers that place a high priority on this aspect participate in patterns of behavior that reduce their impact on the environment, such as the reduction of waste, which can be accomplished through sustainable consumption behaviors such as recycling, composting, and selecting products that have minimal packaging (Iqbal et al., 2021). This demonstrates a dedication to preserving resources and minimizing the impact on the environment. Moreover, conservation efforts are a significant number of consumers taking an active role in environmental conservation initiatives, such as campaigns to plant trees and efforts to protect wildlife. According to Japutra et al. (2021), this participation exemplifies a proactive approach to environmental management.

2.4.2.5.3 Care for Future Generations (CFG)

The concept of "Care for Future Generations" places an emphasis on the individual responsibility of current consumers to guarantee that resources will be accessible to future generations. According to (Dimitrova, et al., 2022), “sustainable consumption goes beyond the environmental concern by ensuring and managing the existing resources that are not only able to meet the current demand, but also without jeopardizing the needs of future generation”. According to Katt and Meixner's research from 2020, consumers who are concerned about the future should give priority to products and practices that encourage the use of sustainable resources. Examples of such practices include sustainable agriculture and renewable energy. Such behavior demonstrates an awareness of the connectivity between the usage of resources at the present time and the availability of resources in the future. In addition, a significant number of consumers participate in educational initiatives aimed at enhancing their knowledge about sustainability issues and

advocating policies that promote environmental protection. Such activity includes taking part in community workshops and providing financial support to organizations that seek to protect the environment (Dimitrova et al., 2022). Moreover, legacy considerations, According to Kushwah et al. (2019), consumers are motivated by the desire to leave a positive legacy for future generations. This desire influences their decisions about environmentally friendly products and sustainable technologies. According to Kim (2018), the expansion of the organic food market is intricately linked to the development of the green/sustainable market, as organic food is cultivated through the protection of soil and water to improve environmental quality, for subsequent generations .The components of sustainable consumption behavior, such as consideration for future generations, environmental well-being, and quality of life, provide a comprehensive framework for understanding consumer motives and behaviors. Marketers and politicians can build strategies that resonate with the values of customers and promote sustainable consumption patterns if they acknowledge the interplay that exists between these factors. Sustainable consumer behavior prioritizes decisions that promote overall well-being and protect the environment. It promotes consumer behaviors that combine individual satisfaction with responsibility for the environment, fostering identities that reflect sustainable principles (Randall, 2019). An essential element of this behavior is commitment to the environment, advocating activities that diminish waste and mitigate harm. Moreover, it signifies a dedication to future generations, guaranteeing the preservation of resources and ecosystems for those who follow. Randall (2019) emphasizes the ethical obligation individuals possess to establish equitable and sustainable conditions for future societies.

2.4.3 Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable)

2.4.3.1 Understanding Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to how likely a consumer is to buy a product, influenced by both rational and emotional factors. It plays a crucial role in marketing, as it helps predict actual buying behavior, allowing businesses to shape their strategies accordingly. By understanding purchase intention, companies can uncover what motivates consumers and what obstacles may prevent them from making a purchase, ultimately improving sales and expanding their market reach particularly for organic products (Avcı, 2023; Pang et al., 2021). Additionally, Shien et al. (2023) defines purchase intention as a key measure of the connection between consumer interest and

actual purchasing decisions. Psychological factors heavily influence this intention, reflecting the likelihood that a consumer will follow through with a specific purchase (Zong et al., 2023).

The significance of purchase intention becomes even more apparent in the context of sustainable products, such as organic food. Research suggests that consumers who express a strong intention to buy organic products are often driven by health concerns, environmental consciousness, and ethical beliefs (Qi et al., 2020; Budhathoki & Pandey, 2021). Studies indicate that those who prioritize sustainability tend to have a more positive purchase intention toward organic products, as they associate these items with both personal well-being and environmental benefits (Avcı, 2023; Prakash et al., 2023).

Recognizing the key factors behind purchase intention allows businesses to refine their marketing approaches, ensuring they align with consumer values and preferences. This, in turn, fosters more sustainable consumption habits and strengthens the appeal of organic products (Yu & Lee, 2019).

The process of developing purchase intention generally involves three key steps: gaining knowledge, forming an emotional connection, and developing a behavioral intent. Knowledge acquisition refers to how aware consumers are of the benefits of organic food, which can be strengthened through educational efforts and the spread of reliable information (Pang et al., 2021; Aprilia, 2024). Research indicates that the more consumers learn about organic products, the more likely they are to consider purchasing them (Wang et al., 2019). For example, individuals who understand the nutritional advantages of organic food often show a stronger desire to buy these products (Wang et al., 2019). Beyond knowledge, emotional factors such as personal values and beliefs about health and sustainability also play a significant role in influencing purchase intention. Many consumers base their buying choices on feelings and the emotional connections they form with a product. A study found that emotional value, including the visual appeal of organic food, has a direct impact on a consumer's willingness to buy (Yu & Lee, 2019). Additionally, people who strongly identify with sustainable living are more likely to purchase organic products because their personal values align with their shopping habits (Aditya et al., 2022). Additionally, consumers who feel a strong emotional connection to environmental issues are more likely to intend to purchase organic products (Prakash et al., 2023; Qasim et al., 2019).

Finally, behavioral intention is influenced by perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes towards the product, as outlined in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Qi & Ploeger, 2021; Chen, 2023).

2.4.3.2 Factors Affecting Purchase Intentions

Several key factors influence purchase intention, including health awareness, environmental concerns, social influences, and perceived value. Health consciousness is a major driver of organic food purchases, as more consumers prioritize healthier eating habits (Katt & Meixner, 2020; Murti & Ekawati, 2022). Similarly, environmental awareness significantly impacts buying decisions. Individuals who are more conscious of environmental issues tend to be more inclined to choose organic products (Qi et al., 2020; Budhathoki & Pandey, 2021). In addition to personal motivations, social influences also shape purchase intention. Recommendations from friends, family, and online communities, especially through social media, can strengthen consumer interest by fostering a sense of shared values and collective responsibility toward sustainable consumption (Lopez-Sintas, 2024). The literature on purchase intention is characterized by (Zong et al., 2023), explore the connection between traditional cultural representations and social identity and assess how these two elements impact the emotional value that customers attribute to products ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions. This analysis draws from existing research on practices and incorporates insights from the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Similarly, Kader et al. (2022) introduced a hierarchical model that identifies distinct consumer motivations and traits influencing purchase intention in the context of green delivery. Their model incorporating the environmental theory of planned behavior serves as a comprehensive framework for predicting and understanding purchase intention. Lăzăroiu et al. (2020) concentrated a study seeks to investigate the procedure by which customers make decisions about purchases, the most important variables that affect their attitudes and intentions toward commerce on social media, the effect of the perceived risk on their decision of purchasing goods online and the connection between trust among consumers buying behavior, and digital stores websites. Andronie et al. (2021) conducted an analysis examining the role of micromanagement decision-making and cognitive algorithms in the acceptance of mobile shopping applications. Their study specifically focused on how trust and perceived risk influence user behavior. The study delved into the factors influencing customer intentions and their willingness to embrace mobile app stores and platforms. Furthermore, the characteristics of shopping platforms significantly influence consumer behavior (Liu et al., 2019). They specifically emphasized knowledge sharing as a key driver for consumers using shopping applications. Rozenkowska (2023) conducted a systematic analysis and categorization of consumer behavior

studies grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The findings indicated a strong focus on consumers' decision-making processes and their willingness to purchase food products. Similarly, Nie et al. (2021) carried out a review examining the ethical dimensions of purchasing decisions. The findings indicated that factors such as promoting health, environmental consciousness, and ethical considerations had a significant impact on real purchasing choices when compared to mere intentions to make a purchase.

There has been an interest in studying why customers choose to buy organic food in recent years. Researchers have conducted studies to understand the factors that influence customer beliefs and behaviors towards organic food. One study examined the variables that affect the decision to purchase food and found that attitudes, personal preferences, and identity expression play a role (Bai et al., 2019). In addition, (Bai et al., 2019) also discovered that subjective norms have an influence on purchase intention through purchasing attitude. In addition, a study on variables affecting consumer trust in organic foods emphasizes the importance of trust, practical attitudes, and emotional attitudes for influencing purchasing decisions along with demographic information (Lee et al., 2019). This illustrates the complex character of consumer belief and its effect on intentions for buying organic food. A study has been conducted by (Lian & Yoong, 2019), it examines the young consumers' motivations to buy organic food in a developing country. The findings found that health consciousness, food safety, and environmental involvement have a significant impact on the intentions of buying organic food. Purchase intentions are positively connected to the actual purchase of organic food. The relationship between environmental awareness and purchase intention on organic food with the roles of price sensitivity and perceived food quality have been examined by (Wang et al., 2020), and he found out that the consciousness of environmental has a positive effect on organic food buying intention. Moreover, food quality has a mediating impact on the relationship between environmental awareness and organic food purchase intention. In the existing literature of research, there have been disparities between consumers' attitudes and their actual intentions when it comes to purchasing food. This has prompted a call for exploration into the factors that influence consumers buying behavior in relation to organic food (Ali and Hao, 2021). A study has been conducted by (Latip et al., 2021) about "The Moderating Effect of Food Safety Knowledge on Organic Food Purchase Intention in a New Normal", The research discovered that people's attitude, sense of independence and social

influence play a role, in their motivation to purchase food in a pandemic lifestyle. However, this doesn't necessarily indicate trustworthiness. Furthermore, having an awareness of food safety plays a role in how individual perspectives and intentions influence the decision to buy organic food.

2.4.3.3 Determinants of Purchase Intention (TPB Components)

In line with the Theory of Planned Behavior, purchase intention in the present study is modeled as a function of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

2.4.3.3.1 Attitudes (A)

Consumer attitudes significantly influence purchasing decisions and reflect individuals' overall positive or negative evaluations of a product. Consumers are more likely to form purchase intentions when they hold favorable perceptions regarding product quality, brand image, and value. Empirical research confirms that attitudes are a critical determinant of purchasing behavior (Anwar & Andrean, 2021). Furthermore, perceptions of price fairness and value for money contribute to the development of favorable attitudes. Trust in brands also reinforces positive evaluations and strengthens purchase intention (Malelak et al., 2021).

2.4.3.3.2 Subjective Norms (SN)

Social and cultural factors significantly impact consumer behavior, frequently determining purchasing decisions in accordance with societal expectations. Social pressure from peers and broader social influence significantly shape purchasing decisions, as empirical studies identify subjective norms as important predictors of consumer behavior (Maduku & Phadziri, 2021; Jia et al., 2023). Research indicates that in cultures that prioritize domestic products, people are more inclined to purchase locally manufactured goods due to societal expectations (Jia et al., 2023). Furthermore, social norms can be classified into two categories: descriptive norms, which represent observed behaviors of others, and injunctive norms, which pertain to perceptions of social acceptability. Both categories can profoundly impact purchasing decisions, as individuals frequently modify their behavior according to perceived social approval or disapproval (Han, 2018).

2.4.3.3.3 Perceived Behavioral Control (Operationalized as Perceived Monetary Barriers) (PMB)

In the present study, perceived behavioral control (PBC) is operationalized through perceived monetary barriers, reflecting consumers' perceptions of financial constraints associated with organic food purchases. This operationalization is consistent with prior research in emerging market contexts where affordability considerations represent salient control beliefs influencing organic food consumption (Nguyen et al., 2021). Within the TPB framework, control beliefs regarding financial capability determine the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as able to perform the intended purchase behavior. Empirical evidence suggests that perceptions of price fairness and affordability shape consumers' perceived ability to complete a purchase, particularly in price-sensitive markets (Wijayaningsih & Andrian, 2024; Utami et al., 2024). When consumers perceive sufficient financial resources and manageable cost levels, perceived behavioral control increases, thereby strengthening purchase intention.

However, these determinants should be interpreted cautiously across cultural and institutional contexts, as sustainability motivations and social influence mechanisms differ significantly between developed and emerging markets. While much of the existing TPB-based literature has been grounded in Western settings characterized by higher institutional trust and stronger regulatory frameworks, evidence from emerging and transitional economies suggests that collectivist orientations, community-based norms, and institutional constraints shape behavioral mechanisms differently (Nguyen et al., 2022). In such contexts, social approval, informal communication channels, and price sensitivity may exert stronger effects than those typically observed in developed markets. Furthermore, comparative research from Southeast Asia and North Africa indicates that environmental and ethical attitudes do not uniformly translate into purchase intention, revealing inconsistencies in previously established relationships (Ida et al., 2023). These findings challenge the assumption of universal behavioral patterns and underscore the importance of context-specific empirical examination, such as the present study in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

2.5 Organic Food in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Iraq is a country located in Southwest Asia, encompassing an area of approximately 437,065 square kilometers. The borders of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria are situated to the west of Iraq.

Iraq is bordered to the north by Turkey, to the east by Iran, and to the south by Kuwait, located on the southwestern shore of the Persian Gulf. The current state of the Middle East. Borders were delineated according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain and France following World War I. The nation is partitioned into 18 governorates. In the northern region, three governorates, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Dohuk constitute an autonomous area known as the Kurdistan region. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is a semi-autonomous region in northern Iraq characterized by a distinct political and socioeconomic framework. It is formally acknowledged as a federal entity in Iraq, conferring upon it a measure of self-governance along with its own legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The region is inhabited by around 5.7 million individuals, primarily Kurds, with various ethnic and religious groups, including Christians and Yazidis. The predominant religion among the population is Islam (Hassan & Ahmad, 2021). These tensions came to a head in the 2017 independence referendum, which underscored both the region's internal political struggles and its longstanding aspirations for greater autonomy (O'Driscoll & Başer, 2019). Kurdistan's endeavors to reconcile cultural preservation with economic modernity illustrates its developing identity amidst persistent regional concerns. The KRI stresses maintaining security and stability while enhancing its legal and administrative structures. This region continues to be a crucial focus for examining governance, cultural dynamics, and community resilience in a historically significant yet politically intricate context (Hassan & Ahmad, 2021; Ahmad & Cheng, 2018).

The consumption of organic food is influenced by factors such as health consciousness, environmental concern, and cultural values. Ahn and Shamim (2023) examined the determinants of consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. They investigated multiple factors including concerns about the environment, knowledge about organic food, food neophilia, food neophobia, awareness of health issues, cultural norms, satisfaction regarding organic food, and perceived difficulties. The study revealed a significant relationship between concern for the environment and customers' willingness to purchase food that is organic. Additionally, Japutra et al. (2022) emphasized the effect of national culture on the consuming of food that is organic, indicating that cultural components have an important impact on consumers' perceptions and behaviors toward organic food. In addition, the importance of environmentally friendly and healthy nutrition that contains organic food has been highlighted about environmental and health issues. To gain an

understanding of how consumers perceive and utilize products and brands, research conducted by (Beacom et al., 2022) aimed to explore their experiences and expand our knowledge of the different aspects related to modern organic consumption. The investigation highlighted the importance of considering individual, social, and ethical factors when it comes to consuming plant-based products. It underscores the need to consider norms and values in shaping food choices, particularly when it comes to consuming food. In conclusion, the acceptance of organic food is determined by a complex combination of variables including awareness of a person's health, considerations regarding the environment, cultural effects, and individual motivations. It's essential to grasp these aspects to encourage advantageous choices especially within different cultural contexts, like Kurdish cultures.

Kurdish culture has a heritage when it comes to food. It encompasses traditions, health consciousness and a sense of self awareness. The Toronto Kurdish Cultural Centre plays a role in catering to the needs of the dispersed population. It symbolizes their endeavors for democracy and their integration into the community's cultural fabric (Genc, 2019). A study was conducted to cross-culturally compare the wild food plants traditionally gathered by Kurdish Muslims and those gathered by the ancient Kurdish Kakai (Yarsan) religious group and to understand the human ecology possibly better behind these practices (Pieroni et al., 2019). Moreover, (Ghalib et al. ,2019) published an investigation on factors associated with breast cancer within Iraqi Kurdish women. The research emphasized the impact of lifestyle, especially diets, on healthcare. It is necessary to understand the perspective of customers on buying food that is organic, as it demonstrates how attitudes are shifting towards foods that are organic and their cultural impact (Elbers and Janssen, 2023). Moreover, a comprehensive account of the chemical structures and bioactivities of most representative specialized metabolites isolated from these plants. This study indicate that Teucrium plants used in the folk medicine of Iraqi Kurdistan are natural sources of specialized metabolites that are potentially beneficial to human health within the Kurdish culture (Abdullah et al., 2022). These studies collectively emphasize the intricate relationship between Kurdish culture and organic food, encompassing traditional practices, health implications, consumer perspectives, and the scientific validation of traditional remedies. The synthesis of these diverse sources provides a comprehensive understanding of the cultural, ecological, and health-related dimensions of Kurdish culture in the context of organic food.

2.6 Relationship Between Variables

2.6.1. Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention

To assess the impact of social media marketing on customers' willingness to purchase food in the Kurdistan Region, it is important to examine existing research on this subject. Numerous studies have explored the connection between media and decision-making providing insights into this phenomenon (Bai et al., 2019). These investigations have demonstrated the importance of concepts like norms and identity expression in understanding the factors that influence food purchasing. The current study emphasizes the significance of trustworthiness in the commercial sectors, particularly when considering how social media expertise influences customer buying preferences. In a study, Dermawan et al. (2022) explored how social media marketing and brand awareness can affect purchase decisions by examining purchase intention. The findings of their research support the idea that having brand awareness can enhance customers' inclination to make a purchase, thus emphasizing the role of social media, in shaping consumer behavior. Additionally, Ramadhani and Prasasti (2023) emphasized the effects of marketing, through media, on consumers purchasing intentions. They found that being aware of social media content has the potential to affect consumer decisions when making purchases. Furthermore, Shien et al. (2023) found that there is a connection between social media marketing and the intention to purchase among young customers. In addition, it highlights the significance of engaging with consumers, which indirectly influences their buying behavior. Social media platforms also play a role in shaping the purchasing decisions of individuals. Furthermore, Sağtaş (2022) conducted a study that explores that utilizing social media marketing can positively impact purchasing intention and brand equity. The study concludes that companies can enhance the perceived significance of their brand by implementing carefully crafted and clearly communicated social media marketing strategies. This approach offers benefits, such as fostering brand loyalty, reducing advertising costs, reaching an audience more effectively, and influencing perceptions of the brand to drive consumer behavior. Another study highlighted "the effects of brand equity on the consumer's propensity to engage with brand-related content on social media" (Schivinski et al., 2021). When it comes to advertising techniques utilizing media platforms, like LinkedIn can be an incredibly effective way to enhance brand visibility and encourage customers to consider purchasing products, this approach has been found to amplify the influence of media, on consumer's intention to make a purchase (Putri, 2021). Furthermore, Bhutto et al. (2023) highlighted that social media plays a role in influencing

consumer purchasing decisions. It has the potential to enhance brand awareness and customer satisfaction. Additionally, it suggests that when consumers are satisfied, they are more inclined to purchase organic food. Additionally, Emini and Zeqiri (2021) conducted research, and the primary goal of the study was to explore the connection between media marketing and consumer inclination to make purchases in Kosovo, which is often referred to as a transitioning economy. Research has shown that social media marketing can indirectly influence the desire to make a purchase. Additionally, it has been found that brand engagement plays a role in connecting social media marketing with the intention of buying. A study has been conducted by (Wong & Tzeng, 2021), "Mediating Role of Organic Labeling Awareness and Food Safety Attitudes in the Correlation Between Green Product Awareness and Purchase Intentions". The findings of this study suggest that people's choices to purchase food were greatly influenced by their understanding of labeling and their concerns about food safety, particularly because they also considered the environmental impact of products. In summary, the literature analysis offers significant insights into how social media marketing can potentially affect consumers' inclinations to purchase organic food. These studies underscore the significance of trustworthiness, brand awareness, and marketing efforts in molding customer behavior. They emphasize the necessity of further investigating the impact of social media marketing on purchase intentions.

H1: Social media marketing positively influences purchase intentions for organic food among consumers in the Kurdistan region.

2.6.2 Social Media Marketing and Sustainable Consumption Behavior

The existing literature provides a detailed and complex depiction of the relationship between sustainable consumption behavior and social media marketing. It confirms that sustainable consumption behavior has a positive impact on social media marketing among consumers in the Kurdistan region. A study conducted by (Wang & Yu (2021), the results of regression analysis demonstrates that there exists an important connection among the results in the purchaser indication, the sustainable products provided in the services provision indication, Positive effect on customers' sustainable consumption trends. Therefore, the development of environmentally conscious consuming uses between customers benefits the performance of sales. In their study (Wang and Yu, 2021) explore the factors that contribute to these behaviors. Although their research doesn't specifically focus on social media marketing, it does provide insights into the

nature of sustainable consumption, which can ultimately influence our understanding of social media marketing.

Effendi et al. (2020) provided insight into elements of our investigation through examining the use of social media while assessing the sustainable consumption behavior of young consumers. Effendi et al. (2020) clearly establishes a direct connection between social media marketing and customer behavior. Moreover, Piligrimienė et al. (2020) explores the concept of consumer engagement within the context of consumption and seeks to uncover the factors that influence customer engagement in sustainable consumption. The study conducted by Banytė et al. (2020), companies that provide methods to promote consumer behavior among households gain a competitive edge in the market. The research seeks to shed light on the connection between engagement in sustainability and the practice of consumption. Studying how customers are satisfied with their consumption habits both at work and at home allows companies to devise strategies to improve their environmental performance. As stated by Bryła (2022), social media platforms have made advancements in engaging consumers in brand building and promoting consumption. The research aims to explore how social media promotion impacts consumer participation in consumption practices. A thorough analysis of this study reveals a diverse relationship between consumption behavior and social media marketing. These studies highlight the effectiveness of media in promoting consumption but also acknowledge that its impact varies depending on specific factors (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020). The influence of social media on sustainability varies depending on the specific circumstances and context. This extensive literature review provides a strong basis for the methodical investigation of the correlation between sustainable purchasing behavior and social media marketing in the Kurdistan region.

H2: social media marketing positively impact Sustainable consumption behavior among consumers for organic food in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

2.6.3 Sustainable Consumption Behavior and Purchase Intention

The area of academic study on sustainable consumer behavior has attracted significant concern, especially in connection with purchasing organic food. According to (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020), the growing demand for healthy foods which have limited adverse effects on both health and the environment highlights the complicated connection between conceptual and emotional attitudes, individual beliefs, and trust among consumers. These components affect the decision of purchasing

goods which encourage a sustainable environment. (Testa et al., 2018) contributed more information on the beneficial effect of subjective norms on actual purchasing decisions, emphasizing minor aspects that impact consumer decision-making purchase of organic food. In their study (Wang et al., 2020) explore the link, between awareness and the desire to purchase organic food. Their findings provide evidence that this relationship is influenced by factors such as food quality and sensitivity to price which enhances our understanding of the elements that influence consumer decision making. Findings from around the world indicate that concerns for safety, chemical food, and animal welfare are crucial aspects of sustainability. However, there are some challenges associated with buying food such as prices, limited availability, and lack of awareness. Nevertheless, many buyers are motivated to choose options based on their values including health benefits, natural ingredients, higher quality standards, and better taste. When considering factors, like income level and education level also play roles in influencing consumers' decisions when it comes to purchasing organic products. The study conducted by (Nguyen et al. ,2021) regarding people's willingness to buy meat, in Vietnam and the research undertaken by (Jung et al., 2021) on the variations in factors influencing consumer choices towards textile products across different countries highlight the complex nature of sustainable consumption behavior. These investigations provide insights into the factors that influence consumer decision making, enhancing our understanding of the interconnected elements that drive intentions to purchase friendly products, particularly organic food. (Nasir, 2023) examines the effect of values related to consumption, such as social, economic, functional values, and emotional, on the intention of purchasing organic food from a cross-cultural perspective. Moreover, in their study, (Roseira et al., 2022) shed light on how cultural factors, including societies, with tendencies can influence consumers attitudes, subjective norms, perception of prices and overall concern, for the environmental impact of organic food. This research underscores the importance of considering variations in culture when examining consumer behavior. (Ali, 2021) Perceptions among consumers in the Kurdistan region regarding food are significantly shaped by factors such as quality, health concerns, and taste. Furthermore, this study emphasizes how local influences have an impact on these attitudes. Recent literature emphasizes the strong link between sustainable consumption behavior and the purchase of organic food. Ismael and Balogh (2023) highlighted that factors such as health consciousness, environmental awareness, and product quality

significantly influence consumers' decisions to buy organic food. Their findings also noted that trust and food safety are key drivers, while price and limited knowledge act as barriers to purchase.

Overall, the combined results from much research conducted in different locations confirm that sustainable consumption behavior favors consumers' intentions to purchase organic food in the Kurdistan region. This thorough analysis provides a detailed and nuanced comprehension of the complex dynamics that form the basis of consumer decision-making processes in sustainable and organic consumption.

H3: Sustainable consumption behavior positively influences the purchase intentions of consumers for organic food in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

2.6.4 Mediating Role of Sustainable Consumption Behavior

This comprehensive literature review focuses on examining the complex correlation between sustainable consumption behavior, social media marketing, and purchase intentions for organic food in the Kurdistan region. Qin & Song (2022) conducted a study to explore the factors, approaches, and decision-making processes that influence the consumption habits of consumers, utilizing the TPB ABC integration theory. It's important to note that different types of consumption may be influenced by varying factors. Attitude plays a role in shaping purchasing and transportation behaviors whereas unfavorable circumstances tend to have a greater impact on recycling and resource saving behaviors (Qin & Song (2022). In an analysis conducted by White et al. (2019) they explored the impact of marketing on promoting sustainable consumption. Their study delved into research in the fields of marketing and studies examining various effective strategies to encourage consumer behaviors that contribute to environmental sustainability. Matharu et al. (2020) adjusted to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by considering lifestyle factors and emphasizing the impact of norms and consumer attitudes. Yuan and Xiao (2021) conducted research where they utilized the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Perceived Risk Theory (PRT) to predict consumption behavior. The focus of their study was assessing the impact of mobile payment methods. Patmawati & Miswanto (2022) examined the impact of social media influences, highlighting the function of brand awareness as a mediator. Banytė et al. (2020) further supported the idea that sustainable consumption involves both pro-environmental and pro-social consumption habits. Moreover Hosta & Žabkar (2020) have highlighted the significance of values, concerns, and ethical principles, in shaping consumer behavior towards sustainability both

socially, this enhances our understanding of how consumers engage with sustainability initiatives by providing insights. Hernández et al. (2020) explored the concept of eco-manufacturing and highlighted its crucial role in promoting environmentally conscious consumption. These studies offer both evidence and theoretical frameworks for understanding the factors that influence consumption habits as well, as the impact of social media marketing, on individuals' choices to buy organic food. A research study was conducted by Testa et al. (2018) to explore the factors influencing the consumption of food. The study examined how attitudes, subjective norms, perceived control, intention to purchase, knowledge, about food and health awareness affect the actual buying behavior of organic food. The findings indicate that the decision-making process for purchasing food is positively influenced by the intention to buy and is negatively affected by norms. In addition, health awareness and perceived control have an impact on individuals' attitudes towards buying organic products. Furthermore, consumer knowledge about materials plays a role in shaping purchase intentions. Rumaningsih et al. (2022) demonstrate that factors such as the environment, how consumers perceive the value of the product and their direct engagement with it have a positive influence on their intention to purchase organic foods. This study reveals that consumers' concern for the environment is a determinant of their intention to make a purchase. In studies conducted by Putri (2021) and Faisal & Ekawanto (2022), they examined how social media influences consumer buying intentions. Additionally, research by Patmawati & Miswanto (2022) and Dindasari & Sukawati (2022) on the importance of brand awareness, in the relationship between media marketing and purchase intention, has been emphasized. According to a study conducted by Li & Jaharuddin,(2020) the desire to purchase plays a role in connecting the factors that influence our decision-making process when it comes to buying food. This discovery enhances our understanding of the factors that impact our intentions to purchase organic food products. This literature review consolidates a substantial amount of research to elucidate the intricate relationship between sustainable consumption behavior, social media marketing, and purchasing intentions about organic food. The findings provide useful insights into the complex elements that influence consumer behavior and purchasing intentions in the context of sustainable and organic food consumption. These insights have ramifications for the Kurdistan region.

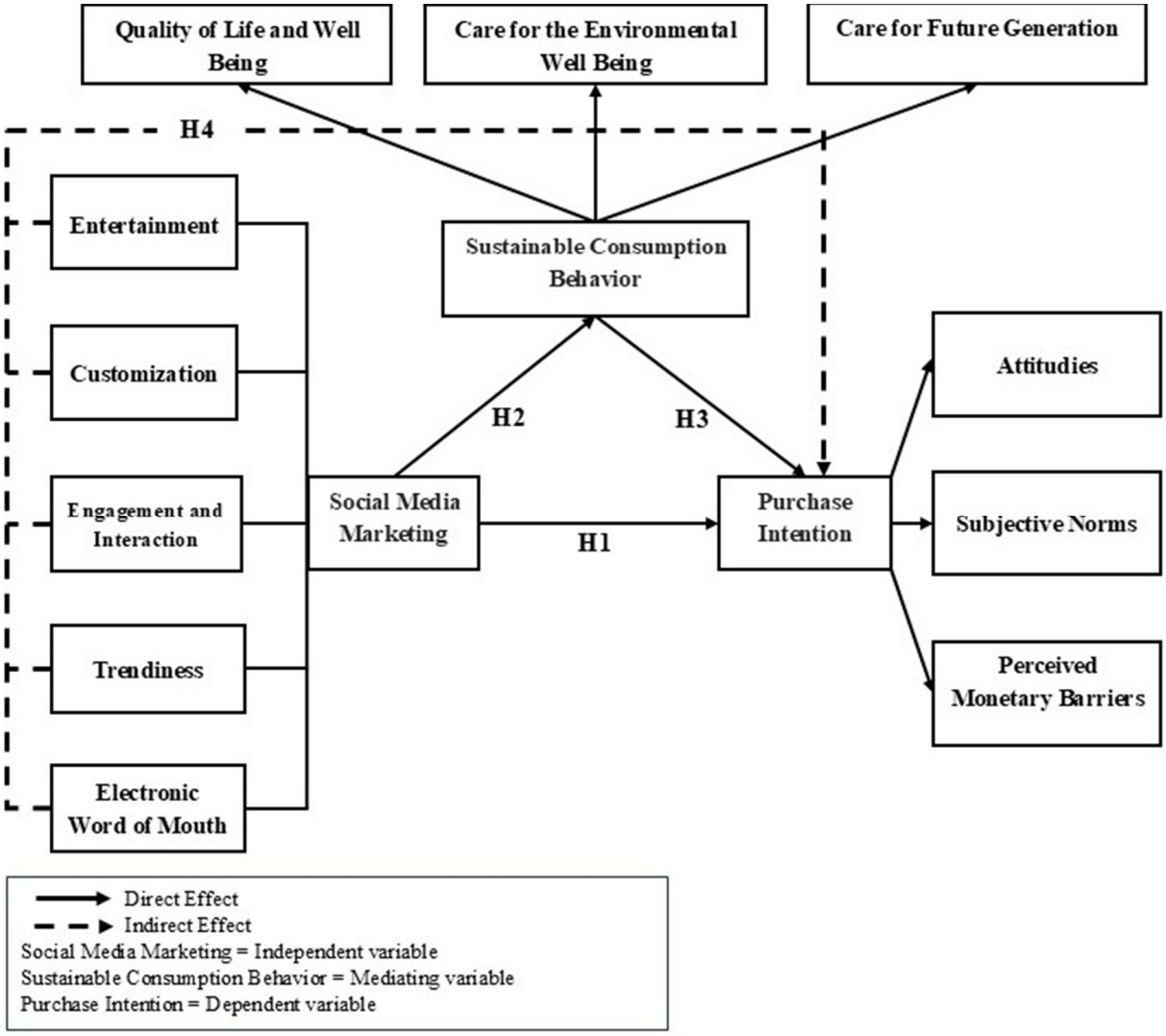
H4: There is an indirect relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention through Sustainable consumption behavior for organic food in the Kurdistan region.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the reviewed literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates social media marketing dimensions and sustainable consumption behavior to explain purchase intention toward organic food. The mediating role of sustainable consumption behavior (SCB) is theoretically grounded in prior empirical findings. Ismael and Balogh (2023) demonstrated that ethical, health, and environmental concerns significantly shape organic food purchasing decisions, positioning SCB as a critical behavioral mechanism within consumer intention models. Accordingly, SCB is conceptualized as a mediator linking social media marketing dimensions to purchase intention (see *Figure 3*).

Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3

Conceptual Framework Based on Literature Review



Note. Conceptual framework developed by the author based on the literature review.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

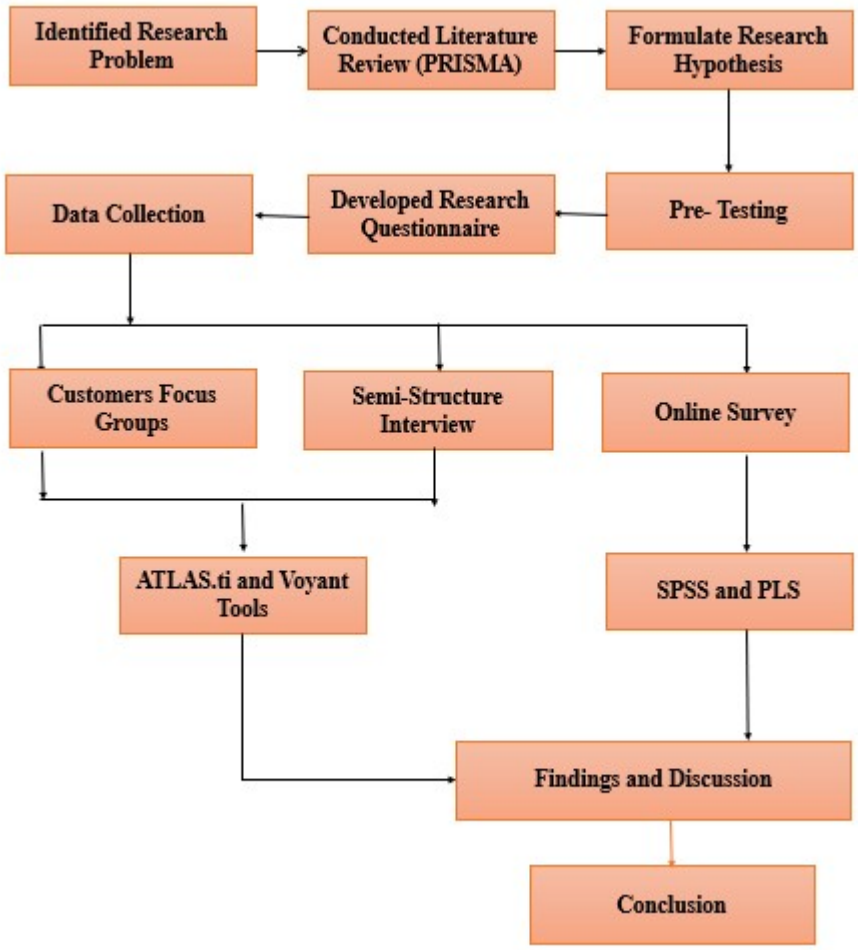
The scientific study is crucial as a repository of knowledge and a significant element in addressing social issues across various domains. Methods and procedures of study are essential elements that any scientific researcher must understand, as each scientific investigation requires a methodological framework followed by the researcher or student. This chapter defines the approach utilized for this investigation. The aim is to obtain conceptually and logically valid findings, avoiding unnecessary methods in research that provide no beneficial implications on scientific or social levels. The outline of this chapter began with the research approach, data collection and analytical technics that have been used to investigate the impact of social media marketing on purchase intentions for organic food with sustainable consumption behavior as a mediating variable. Mixed methods have been used in this research to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Online surveys have been used as a quantitative method for collecting data and SPSS have been adapted as an analytical tool for testing the research hypothesis related to social media marketing, purchase intention, and sustainable consumption behavior. Moreover, customer focus groups and semi-structured interviews with influencers on social media and producers of organic food products have been used as a qualitative method to have deeper insights among customers and have more investigation of using social media and purchasing organic food. Accordingly, this paper will discuss the research design, research approach, survey design, sampling size, data collection process, data analysis, focus group, participants selection, focus group structure, data collection ana data analysis, interviews, data collection and recording, data analysis, ethical consideration, limitation of the study and finally conclusion.

3.2 Research Design

The following research design describes a structural visual representation of the study, starting with the research problem to the conclusion. It provides the key steps consisting of formulating research aims, selection of the mixed method approach, data collection, and analysis. This structure ensures that the study systematically covers the research problem and questions while including

both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The function of this design is to guide the reader to easily understand the progress of this study (see *Figure 4*).

Figure 4
Research Design of the Study



Note. Developed by the author to illustrate the research methodology applied.

3.3 Methodological Approach

According to (Knott et al, 2022), there are three main types of the theory-developed approach, which are deductive, inductive, and abductive approaches. The deductive method involves formulating analytical frameworks, theoretical approaches, and frequently applying hypotheses to the dataset prior to data examination. The inductive approach serves as the analytical framework, while data analysis informs the theoretical approach. Iterative techniques, such as the abductive

approach, are a way of working that combines deductive and inductive parts in a planned way by switching between data and well-known theoretical frameworks. This method is widely considered a more practical and preferable third alternative to the conventional linear choice between inductive and deductive reasoning. This research used an abductive approach because it combines deductive and inductive approaches.

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods used, the combination of qualitative and quantitative concepts, methodologies, and findings is seen crucial in mixed methods of research, regardless of formal classification (Maxwell, 2015). The integration of methodologies in mixed methods research improves the capacity to obtain insights and facilitates the triangulation of findings (Dowell et al., 2023). In the field of marketing and business studies, a mixed-methods approach has been utilized in many research fields, such as international franchising, startup business innovation, and online marketing efficiency analysis (Bakri, 2024). This methodology allows researchers to examine subjects at both group and individual levels, offering a more comprehensive perspective on the research issues (McCrudden & McTigue, 2018). Moreover, the use of mixed methods in study design is increasingly common in management domains as it helps offset the shortcomings inherent in mono-method approaches (Mamabolo & Myres, 2019). A mixed-method study is being applied here, which combines qualitative and quantitative techniques to obtain an exhaustive understanding of purchasing intentions for organic foods based on social media marketing. The quantitative component is an online survey of consumers, and qualitative is based on customer focus group conversations, semi-structured interviews of social media influencers, and semi-structured interviews of organic food producers. This is a process of data triangulation, which delivers more evidence in numbers together with detailed contexts.

The combined use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, commonly known as mixed-methods research, has garnered significance in recent years. This methodology enables researchers to utilize the advantages of both paradigms, yielding a more thorough comprehension of intricate situations (Thompson & Ivankova, 2022; Aramide et al., 2023). Qualitative data can guide the creation of quantitative instruments, whereas quantitative findings can corroborate qualitative insights, so enriching the narrative of the research issue (Rehman et al., 2023). This collaboration strengthens the validity of research outcomes and promotes evidence-based practice across multiple disciplines (Thompson & Ivankova, 2022; Aramide et al., 2023).

The quantitative questionnaire was developed following the qualitative phase, consistent with a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. Themes emerging from interviews and focus groups including product authenticity concerns, certification skepticism, price sensitivity, trust in influencers, and social approval dynamics directly informed the refinement of measurement items and contextual wording. Specifically, items measuring purchase intention were adapted to reflect the conditional and affordability-based decision patterns identified in the qualitative findings. The perceived monetary barrier construct was refined to capture expenditure prioritization patterns reported by participants. Statements relating to trust and social influence were aligned with the relational dynamics and credibility concerns emphasized during interviews with influencers and producers. This iterative refinement process enhanced content validity and ensured that the measurement instrument reflected locally grounded meanings rather than relying exclusively on standardized scale wording from prior studies. In the Discussion chapter, qualitative findings are systematically integrated with the SEM results to explain how and why the hypothesized relationships operate. In line with mixed-methods integration principles (Fetters & Freshwater, 2021), themes such as trust in influencers, certification uncertainty, misinformation, and price/access constraints provide explanatory depth to the statistically significant structural paths observed in the model. In particular, qualitative evidence clarifies the behavioral mechanisms underlying the mediating role of sustainable consumption behavior and its interaction with perceived monetary barriers, thereby reinforcing methodological coherence between the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study.

3.3.1 Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research focusses on comprehending phenomena by examining meanings, experiences, and perspectives. It utilizes techniques including interviews, focus groups, and content analysis to collect comprehensive, contextual data that elucidate participants' beliefs and behaviors (Bhangu et al., 2023; Cho et al., 2022; Ritchie et al., 2022). This methodology is frequently inductive, enabling researchers to formulate ideas derived from the obtained data instead of evaluating established assumptions (Abood & Alalwany, 2021). Qualitative research is especially significant in disciplines like social sciences, psychology, and healthcare, where comprehending intricate human experiences is essential (Bhangu et al., 2023; Cho et al., 2022).

3.3.1.1 Data Collection Methods

Focus Groups

Focus group discussions provide an environment conducive to groupthink, which may facilitate collective knowledge but face challenges if the study seeks to gather diverse and specific perspectives (Okoko et al, 2023). Moreover, a focus group is defined as a strategy for collecting data through group interactions concerning a topic specified by the researcher (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). It is usually used for collection, collective comprehension, and perspectives of individuals regarding the specified subject. In this study, two groups have been selected: one is customers who eat and purchase organic food, and the other is non-organic food, and each group consists of 6 participants. These two groups have been interviewed to share their values, motivations, and attitudes that have been impacted by social media marketing. Conversely, the aim was to identify the obstacles and difficulties associated with purchasing organic food.

Interviews

This study used interviews as a crucial method for data collection. According to (Bryman, 2021), interviews are the most productive research approach. There are three types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. (Saunders et al., 2020). This study included semi-structured interviews, which are acknowledged as an excellent method for exploring participants' own thoughts, perspectives, and attitudes regarding a specific instance. The aim is to achieve a more profound understanding. Another rationale, as Mohebbi (2022) concurs, is that the enquiries in semi-structured interviews are adaptable, allowing the researcher to pose questions without regard to their sequence. Consequently, the researcher can manage the questions and arrange them based on the participant's comprehension level. Consequently, the researcher may not need to limit a specific inquiry. Furthermore, the researcher may offer participants prompts should they have challenges in answering the interview questions (Mohebbi, 2022).

3.3.1.2 Data Analysis (Voyant and ATLAS.ti)

This study employed two analytical tools: Voyant Tools and ATLAS.ti. Voyant Tools is a web-based text analysis platform widely used in digital humanities research, enabling interactive textual exploration through features such as Cirrus (word cloud generation), Reader, Trends, Summary,

and Context (Jap et al., 2023). The software facilitates the identification of patterns, word frequencies, and relational structures within textual data, thereby supporting systematic interpretative analysis (Macapagal et al., 2023). The study further applied thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns within the qualitative data. Thematic analysis involves systematic coding procedures to generate themes and conceptual categories (Knott et al., 2022). ATLAS.ti was used to organize, code, and manage qualitative data efficiently (Fauzi et al., 2023). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Prior to participation, all interviewees received a consent form outlining the purpose of the study and ethical considerations, and written consent was obtained. Due to geographical distance between the researcher (Hungary) and participants (Kurdistan Region of Iraq), interviews were conducted via Zoom to facilitate remote data collection. All interviews were recorded with participants' permission. The recorded interviews were transcribed using Temi.com, an automated transcription service. The transcripts were subsequently reviewed and manually corrected to ensure accuracy prior to analysis. Given that social media marketing constitutes the independent variable of the study, purposive sampling was applied. Six social media influencers and eleven organic food producers operating in different sectors within the Kurdistan Region were selected to provide relevant insights into social media marketing practices and organic food promotion.

3.3.2 Quantitative Methodology

Quantitative research emphasizes the quantification of phenomena and the analysis of numerical data to discern patterns, correlations, and causal consequences. It generally utilizes statistical techniques to evaluate hypotheses and substantiate ideas, frequently employing surveys, experiments, and observational studies (Saha, 2022). This deductive methodology enables researchers to extrapolate findings from a sample to a broader population, rendering it an effective instrument for establishing correlations and causal links (Abood & Alalwany, 2021). Quantitative methods are extensively used in fields such as medicine, economics, and education, where quantifiable results are crucial for decision-making and policy development (Song, 2023).

3.3.2.1 Survey Design

This research used an online survey created by the google forms then distributed to customers online by sending the link to them. The survey consists of a 44-item questionnaire with 5 questions of demographic variables (see Appendix B and *Table 2*) that is designed to assess customers'

perceptions of organic food purchase intentions. The questionnaire had close-ended questions, selected for their ability to speed up and simplify completion while providing reliable answers (Taherdoost, 2020). The 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree) was employed due to its simplicity and clarity (Joshi et al, 2020).

A prevalent method in the design and development of survey involves modifying item indicators from variables utilized by previous researchers and modifying them to fit the specific setting of the current study (Farida et al., 2022). This adaptation procedure ensures that the survey instrument is relevant and consistent with the study objectives. Furthermore, using questionnaires for data collection is a generally recognized strategy across multiple disciplines, since they provide a systematic approach to gather quantitative data (Ahmad et al., 2023). Before the distribution start the survey have been sent to a translation company called (Bakh) to translate it from English to Arabic to be clearer and more understandable among respondents because English language is a foreign language.

3.3.2.2 Sampling Strategy

In this research, the sampling type conducted is purposive sampling, according to (Knott et al. (2022), is a type of non-probability sampling, which means a sampling strategy that prioritizes the selection of individuals who provide important data or insights relevant to the research problem. This type of sample is used because only customers who purchase and eat organic food have been selected to fill in the survey, to ensure the data are meaningful and reliable. The sample size was calculated in this research using an online calculator that is specifically geared to proportions (Analytics Calculators, 2024). The calculator ensured that the sample was statistically adequate to accommodate qualitative depth consistent with exploratory study design. By using this analytical calculation, the minimum number of sample size is 119.

Table 2

Research Instruments

Variables	Item code	Items	Literature source(s)
	E1	Social media marketing makes it easier to obtain information about organic products.	(Cheung et al., 2020)

Social Media Marketing/SMM **Entertainment (E)**	**E2**	Social media content about organic products is entertaining and interesting.	
	E3	It is enjoyable to spend time on social media related to organic products.	
	E4	Gathering information about organic products through social media is fun.	
Customization (C)	**C1**	Social media allows access to customized information about organic products.	(Cheung et al., 2020)
	C2	Social media provides services tailored to my needs when searching for organic products.	
	C3	Social media platforms for organic products are accessible anytime, anywhere.	
	C4	Social media simplifies purchase decisions for organic products based on my needs.	
Engagement and Interaction **(EI)**	**EI1**	I engage in activities related to obtaining organic food products through social media platforms.	(Bilgin, 2018)
	EI2	Social media enhances my positive attitude toward purchasing organic products.	
	EI3	Social media allows me to engage in discussions and share opinions about buying organic products.	
	EI4	I share my experiences about purchasing organic products with others via social media.	
Trendiness (T)	**T1**	Social media content reflects the latest trends in organic products.	(Cheung et al., 2020) and (Huyen et al., 2024)
	T2	Using social media for organic products enhances a modern and innovative experience.	
	T3	Social media provides up-to-date information about organic products consistently.	
	T4	Social media helps me discover new organic products as they emerge.	
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWM)	**EWM1**	I share my opinions about organic products seen in social media ads with friends.	
	EWM2	I recommend others to try organic products promoted by social media influencers.	

	EWM3	I rely on recommendations from others via social media before deciding to purchase organic products.	(Cheung et al., 2020) and (Huyen et al., 2024)
	EWM4	I share my personal experiences with organic products on social media to guide others.	
Sustainable Consumption Behavior/ SCB **Quality of life well-being (QL)**	**QL1**	I try to make my purchases more organic.	**(Quoquab et al., 2019)**
	QL2	I am careful in my use of organic foods.	
	QL3	I always plan before purchasing any organic or non-organic product.	
	QL4	I practice saving and recycling organic products at home.	
Care for the environmental well-being (CE)	**CE1**	I care about the natural environment because I contribute to raising awareness about environmental issues and reducing waste.	**(Dimitrova et al., 2022)**
	CE2	I use environmentally friendly products.	
	CE3	I pay extra money to purchase organic food or environmentally friendly products.	
	CE4	I am concerned about the depletion of natural resources.	
Care for the future generation (CFG)	**CFG1**	I care for the needs' fulfilment of the next generation.	**(Dimitrova et al., 2022)**
	CFG2	I often think about the quality of life for future generations.	
	CFG3	I strive to reduce excessive consumption to preserve environmental resources for future generations.	
	CFG4	I believe my current consumption decisions significantly impact the future of upcoming generations.	
Purchase Intentions/ PI **Attitudes (A)**	**AT1**	Purchasing organic foods instead of conventional ones is beneficial for health.	**(Curvelo et al., 2019)**
	AT2	Choosing organic foods over conventional ones is a rational decision.	**(Nguyen et al., 2021)**
	AT3	Buying organic foods instead of conventional ones satisfies me more.	

	AT4	Purchasing organic foods reflects my commitment to sustainable choices and healthy practices.	
Subjective Norms (SN)	**SN1**	I value people's opinions regarding the purchase of organic products.	**(Nguyen et al., 2021)**
	SN2	I respect the opinions of groups that advise me to buy organic products.	
	SN3	I buy organic products to avoid criticism from others.	
	SN4	People close to me encourage me to buy organic products.	
Perceived Monetary Barriers (PMB)	**PMB1**	The prices of organic food are relatively higher compared to conventional food.	**(Nguyen et al., 2021)**
	PMB2	I prefer to buy organic products for my health, despite their higher cost.	
	PMB3	I feel there is a lack of availability of organic products.	
	PMB4	I find it challenging to locate organic products while shopping.	

Note. This table presents the measurement items and corresponding sources for each variable used in the study. Items were adapted from prior studies, including Cheung et al. (2020), Bilgin (2018), Quoquab et al. (2019), Dimitrova et al. (2022), Curvelo et al. (2019), Nguyen et al. (2021), and Huyen et al. (2024).

3.3.2.3 Pre-Testing and Data Collection Process

Pre-testing surveys constitute a critical step in ensuring clarity, validity, and comprehensibility of survey instruments. This process involves administering the questionnaire to a smaller group prior to full-scale distribution to identify ambiguities, structural weaknesses, and measurement issues (Carter et al., 2020). Through systematic refinement of survey items, pre-testing enhances both reliability and construct validity while improving respondent engagement and reducing potential misunderstandings. Prior to data collection, the questionnaire underwent expert review by academics with relevant disciplinary expertise. Several professors provided structured feedback and recommendations concerning item clarity, construct alignment, and overall survey design. The list of jury members who participated in the expert evaluation process is presented in Appendix A. Based on their feedback, redundant and ambiguous items were removed or revised. The initial instrument consisted of 66 items; after multiple rounds of refinement, the final version included 44 items in addition to five demographic questions. For data collection, the finalized questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms. The survey link was distributed with the assistance of faculty members from Duhok Polytechnic University, University of Duhok, University of Zakho,

Salahaddin University, and University of Sulaymaniyah. Data collection took place over a two-month period, from December 2023 to January 2024, resulting in 565 valid responses from participants in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. According to the sample size calculation presented in Table 1, the obtained sample is sufficient to meet the study's analytical requirements and address the research questions.

3.3.2.4 Data Analysis (SPSS Version 22)

After collecting data from 565 customers, we converted the data from a Google Form into an Excel sheet. Version 22 of the SPSS software was utilized to evaluate the internal consistency of the instrument. The first is descriptive statistical analysis for demographic variables and questions.

3.3.2.4.1 Descriptive Analysis

In this step, descriptive analysis is utilized for demographic variables and questions. Frequency Distribution, Percentages, Mean, and Standard Deviation of the Variable Social Media Marketing (Entertainment, Customization, Engagement and Interaction, Trendiness and Electronic Word of Mouth). Sustainable consumption behavior (quality of life well-being, care for environmental well-being and care for the future generations). Purchase intention (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived monetary barriers). Descriptive analysis is a crucial statistical technique in SPSS that summarizes and describes the main features of a dataset. It helps researchers identify patterns, trends, and anomalies within the data, which inform further analysis and hypothesis generation (Santoso et al., 2024). Descriptive statistics are essential for conducting basic data analysis aligned with research objectives and for effective communication of research findings. They are also crucial in validating the data collection process by examining the distribution and central tendencies of the data. This validation process ensures that the findings are robust and trustworthy, making them essential for applied research fields.

3.3.2.4.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability and validity are essential elements of quantitative research methodology. They ensure the measurements obtained by instruments truly reflect the constructions they want to assess.

Reliability Analysis

According to (Duyan et al, 2022), reliability represents the consistency of an assessment tool in obtaining similar outcomes when administered to the same participants in an equal environment. Reliability fundamentally signifies consistent or reliable outcomes. Reliability constitutes an aspect of validity of assessment. We performed a reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the constructs used in this study. Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical tool used to evaluate the internal consistency of a measurement scale. According to (Duyan et al. 2022), a value above 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability, while one above 0.80 indicates high reliability. For instance, Erden & Emirzeolu, 2020) reported strong internal consistency, with coefficients of 0.899 and 0.921 for different sub-dimensions. This measure confirms the reliability of the overall analysis. This statistical measure evaluates how well a set of related items works together as a group. As shown in Table 5, all constructions in this study meet or exceed this threshold, confirming their reliability.

Validity Analysis

According to (Duyan, et al, 2022), research validity is the degree to which a study accurately addresses the research question or the accuracy of the study's findings. In the context of outcome measures like surveys or exams, validity represents the precision of the measurement. In this context, validity relates to the extent to which the evaluation tool accurately assesses the fundamental outcome of interest. Validity is not an inherent characteristic of the instrument but rather pertains to the specific aim or interpretation of the assessment tool within contexts.

Two important tests were used to see if the dataset was suitable for factor analysis. These were the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. While values above 0.7 are considered acceptable and values above 0.8 are excellent, the KMO test checks to see if the sample size is right for factor analysis (KURT et al., 2023) and values above 0.60 are considered acceptable. We also used Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to see if there were any significant correlations between the variables, which is a requirement for factor analysis. A significant p-value (<0.05) indicates that factor analysis is appropriate.

3.3.2.4.3 Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Factor loadings and eigenvalues illustrate the relationship between variables and their fundamental factors. Values above 0.40 are usually thought to be significant (Małachowska & Jeżewska-Zychowicz, 2021). This research uses factor loadings and eigenvalues to determine the correlation between demographic factors and each variable. The eigenvalues show how much of the variance can be explained for each component. Values higher than 1 usually mean that the factor is important (Natesan et al., 2019).

T-Tests & ANOVA

The t-test is a method of statistics utilized to evaluate the significance of the difference between the means of two groups. In this study, we conducted an independent samples t-test, a statistical test that compares the means of two distinct groups to identify differences. It calculates a t-statistic, which quantifies the magnitude of the difference in respect to the variability in the data. Weissgerber et al. (2018) use the degrees of freedom to figure out if the difference is statistically significant and how important this t-statistic is.

ANOVA is a statistical technique used to compare the averages of three or more groups to determine if at least one group's meaning is significantly different from the others. By analysing both within-group and between-group variations, ANOVA helps assess how different factors influence the group's means. One type of ANOVA is one-way ANOVA, examining the effect of a single independent variable on a dependent variable across multiple groups. The second kind, called two-way ANOVA, looks at how two different variables affect a dependent variable. It can also show how the variables affect each other. The last type is MANOVA (Multivariate ANOVA), which extends to ANOVA when there are two or more dependent variables. It assesses whether the independent variables affect the dependent variables collectively (Harms, 2019). This research employs one-way ANOVA to examine the impact of a single independent variable on a dependent variable across different groups. Moreover, there are three key concepts of ANOVA. F-statistics measure the ratio of variance between groups to the variance within groups. A higher F-value suggests a greater chance that at least one group differs significantly. Post-Hoc Tests, if ANOVA results show significance, additional tests like Tukey's HSD or Bonferroni correction help pinpoint which groups differ. Another concept involves assumptions, where ANOVA assumes that the data follows a normal distribution and that variances are equal across groups. If these assumptions are

not met, the results may be less reliable (Akbay et al, 2019). All three concepts were applied in this research.

3.3.2.4.4 Assumptions Testing

In this research, the Kruskal-Wallis Test, Levene's Test, ANOVA F-values, and cluster-manning comparisons utilized these statistical methods are essential in research because they help ensure accurate data analysis, allowing researchers to draw meaningful and reliable conclusions The Kruskal-Wallis Test is a non-parametric alternative to one-way ANOVA, used to compare three or more independent groups to determine if their medians differ significantly. This test is especially useful when the data does not meet the normality assumption required for parametric tests like ANOVA (Santiago et al, 2023).

Levene's Test is used to check whether the variances across different groups are equal, which is a key assumption for both ANOVA and t-tests. It helps determine if variance differences could affect the reliability of statistical comparisons. If Levene's test results in a significant (p-value < 0.05) it means that the assumption of equal variances across groups has been violated, indicating that the groups have different levels of variability (Karakas-Stupar et al, 2022).

Cluster analysis groups for subjects based on similarities across different characteristics. Comparing the meanings of these clusters can provide valuable insights into group differences and trends (Liang et al, 2023).

Together, the Kruskal-Wallis Test, Levene's Test, ANOVA F-values, and cluster-manning comparisons serve as essential statistical tools for analyzing group differences. Each plays a specific role in the analysis process, and when used together, they offer a more complete understanding of how different demographic or experimental groups compare. Applying these methods correctly, as shown in recent studies, strengthens the reliability and validity of research findings.

3.3.2.5 Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

A comprehensive evaluation of the measurement model was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to ascertain the validity and reliability of the constructs utilized in this study. This assessment included multiple critical elements. Initially, the reliability of indicators was assessed by analyzing the standardized factor loadings of individual questions, with values

exceeding 0.70 considered acceptable indicators of their corresponding latent variables (Salimi et al., 2023). Secondly, internal consistency reliability was evaluated using both Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with values above 0.70 indicating acceptable consistency among items assessing the same concept (Farid et al., 2024). Third, convergent validity was assessed by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE); a value beyond 0.50 signified that a concept explained more than fifty percent of the variance seen in its indicators (Jaber & Nashwan, 2022). Finally, discriminant validity was assessed to confirm the empirical uniqueness of each construct. The Fornell-Larcker criterion was employed for assessment, necessitating that the square root of each construct's AVE exceeds its correlations with other constructs, and this was validated by the examination of cross-loadings and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Farid et al., 2024; Jaber & Nashwan, 2022). The validation approaches together affirmed the statistical integrity and conceptual coherence of the measurement model.

PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for prediction-oriented research and the analysis of complex structural relationships involving mediating constructs. The present study aims to explain and predict purchase intention within an emerging market context rather than to test a strictly established covariance structure. According to recent methodological literature, PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate when the research objective emphasizes variance explanation, theory extension, and model prediction (Hair et al., 2022). Additionally, PLS-SEM performs robustly under conditions of non-normal data distribution and is well suited for models incorporating multiple latent constructs and indirect effects. In contrast, CB-SEM is primarily designed for theory confirmation and global model fit assessment under more restrictive assumptions. Given the exploratory extension of TPB and the mediation structure tested in this study, PLS-SEM provides a methodologically appropriate analytical approach.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations when conducting a study are crucial concerns. Ethics is essential when a study requires data collection from individuals, groups, or organizations (Facca, et al, 2020). Consequently, ethical considerations must be integrated throughout the data. The process of formulating and examining the study is crucial. To circumvent ethical issues, as (Okorie et al. ,2024) declare, participants must be informed and aware of the research material prior to their involvement. Consequently, every participant in the questionnaire and interview received the

participation information sheet and consent form prior to their involvement (see Appendices A-1 and A-4). These forms address the substance, title, and objective of the research. We also obtained consent from the participants to record the interviews. The transcript and recordings were stored in a secured file on the researcher's computer to avoid ethical issues.

Moreover, participation was freely done, allowing individuals to leave at any moment if they felt uncomfortable, an obligation clearly stated in the consent form provided to them. The researcher must ensure the anonymity of participants' information to prevent any potential harm to them. This study ensured data confidentiality and participant identities by not revealing names or personal details.

Chapter Four

Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, drawing on evidence obtained from both qualitative and quantitative research phases. The primary objective is to analyze the data in alignment with the research aims, with particular emphasis on the influence of social media

marketing on purchase intention for organic food and the mediating role of sustainable consumption behavior in this relationship. The chapter is organized into three main sections. The first section presents the qualitative findings derived from two consumer focus groups (organic and non-organic consumers) and semi-structured interviews with social media influencers and organic food producers. The second section reports the quantitative results from a structured online survey of 565 respondents, analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS (PLS-SEM). The third section integrates the qualitative and quantitative findings to provide a triangulated interpretation of the results.

Section 1: Qualitative Analysis

4.1 Overview of the Qualitative Approach (with analysis procedure integrated)

This part of the study adopted a qualitative methodology to investigate individuals' perceptions and experiences regarding organic food and its marketing through social media platforms. Data were obtained through two focus group discussions (six organic consumers and six non-organic consumers) and semi-structured interviews with six social media influencers and eleven organic food producers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Flexible guiding questions were used to encourage open discussion and generate rich, contextual insights into consumer behavior, marketing practices, and challenges in promoting organic food. The full list of interviews and focus group questions is provided in Appendix C, D, E, and F.

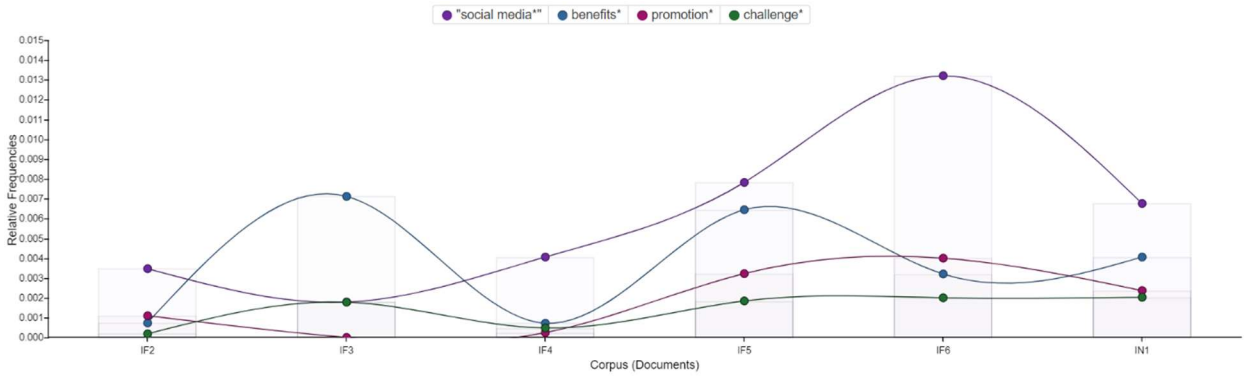
The qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a structured thematic analysis procedure supported by ATLAS.ti. The analysis followed a systematic multi-phase approach. First, data familiarization was conducted through repeated reading of transcripts to preserve contextual meaning and identify preliminary patterns. Second, initial coding was performed using a hybrid strategy combining: (a) deductive codes derived from the conceptual framework (social media marketing, influencer credibility, sustainable consumption behavior, purchase intention), and (b) inductive codes emerging directly from participant narratives (e.g., certification evidence, misinformation, price sensitivity, authenticity, awareness gaps). Third, codes were compared, merged, and organized into subthemes using constant comparison techniques across the four participant groups (influencers, producers, organic consumers, and non-organic consumers). This cross-case comparison enhanced interpretive depth and minimized group-specific bias. Fourth,

subthemes were refined into higher-order themes through iterative analytical review to ensure internal coherence and conceptual distinctiveness. Themes were defined, named, and aligned explicitly with the study's research questions and hypotheses.

4.1.1 Thematic Analysis: Influencers on Social Media

This section reports findings from six semi-structured interviews with social media influencers (F1–F6) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Data were transcribed and coded in ATLAS.ti using a hybrid approach (deductive codes aligned with the conceptual model and inductive codes emerging from participants' accounts). Voyant outputs (*Figure 5*, *Figure 6*, and *Figure 7*) are included as supplementary visual evidence to increase transparency and to show the prominence of recurring concepts across the corpus; however, the primary interpretation is based on thematic coding and cross-case comparison. Figure 8 presents the audit trail (data → codes → subthemes → themes). Across the six interviews, five themes explain how influencer practices shape consumer purchase intention and sustainable consumption behavior in a social-media environment. Overall, influencers positioned themselves as trust intermediaries: they attempt to reduce uncertainty around "organic" authenticity, shape attitudes by highlighting health and sustainability benefits, and influence intention through both normative pressure (followers' social trust) and perceived behavioral control (price/availability barriers).

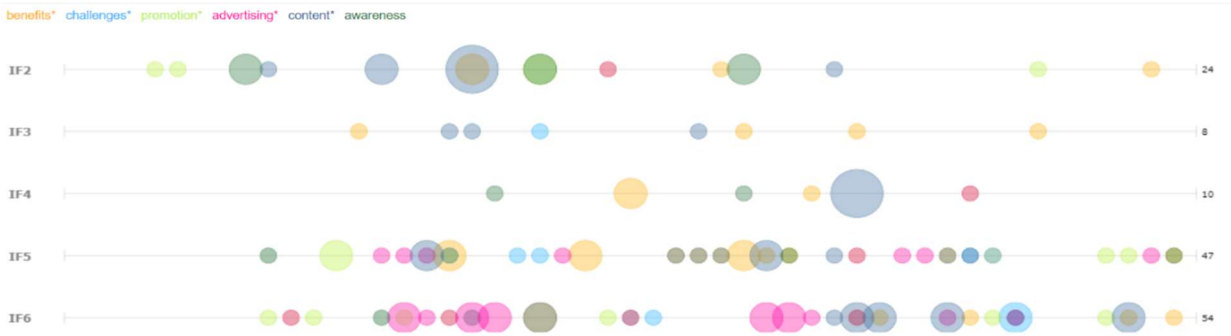
Figure 5
Voyant Visualization from Influencer Interviews



Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

A line chart is a visual representation that shows data points connected by straight lines. It is employed to illustrate patterns over a period or to analyze variations in data at regular intervals (Crouser et al., 2015). This figure plots the relative frequencies of four keyword categories (social media, benefits, promotion, challenges) across the six influencer interview transcripts (F1–F6). Overall, "social media" and "benefits" are the most salient categories across the corpus, while "promotion" and "challenges" appear at lower but consistent levels. The pattern indicates that influencers predominantly discussed platform-mediated influence and perceived benefits, with secondary attention to promotional tactics and barriers. These corpus-level emphases align with the thematic analysis, particularly Theme 1 (SMM and purchase intention), Theme 4 (barriers), and Theme 5 (content mechanisms).

Figure 6
Bubble Chart from Influencer Interviews



Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

A bubble chart is a data visualization technique that portrays data points as bubbles, with the size of each bubble indicating a particular value. Throughout the framework of Voyant Tools, bubble charts serve as visual representations of keywords or concepts, showcasing their frequency or significance throughout a text corpus. Researchers can expediently discern prominent terms or concepts by representing data in a bubble chart, where size and position serve as indicators (Singh & Singla, 2020). This bubble map displays high-frequency terms across influencer transcripts, where bubble size reflects relative prominence within each interview segment. Terms such as "benefits," "promotion/advertising," "content," "awareness," and "challenges" recur across interviews, indicating shared topic coverage with some variation in emphasis between participants. The co-presence of credibility-related terms (e.g., awareness/content) alongside barrier-related

terms (e.g., challenges) reinforces the coded themes on trust-building, consumer education, and constraints to adoption.

Figure 7
World clouds from Influencers Interview

Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

According to (Nogra, 2020) A word cloud is a visual representation tool that presents words in a text, with the size of each word dictated by its frequency. Words that appear more frequently are presented in a greater size in the word cloud. So, the word cloud represents a visual representation of the main ideas associated with organic food and influencer marketing, highlighting multiple significant themes. The analysis significantly highlights the key theme of organic food by phrases such as "organic," "food," and "products." The significance of Influencer Marketing is emphasized by terms such as "influencer," "social media," "media," "promotion," and "advertising," indicating the significant role that influencers have in marketing organic products. Concentration on knowing consumer attitudes and preferences is evident with phrases such as "health," "benefits," "people," "consumer," and "audience," highlighting the significance of consumer perception. Furthermore, the desirable qualities of organic products are highlighted through the emphasis on Product Attributes such as "quality," "good," "sustainable," and "taste."

Table 3
Demographic Information on Influencers on Social Media

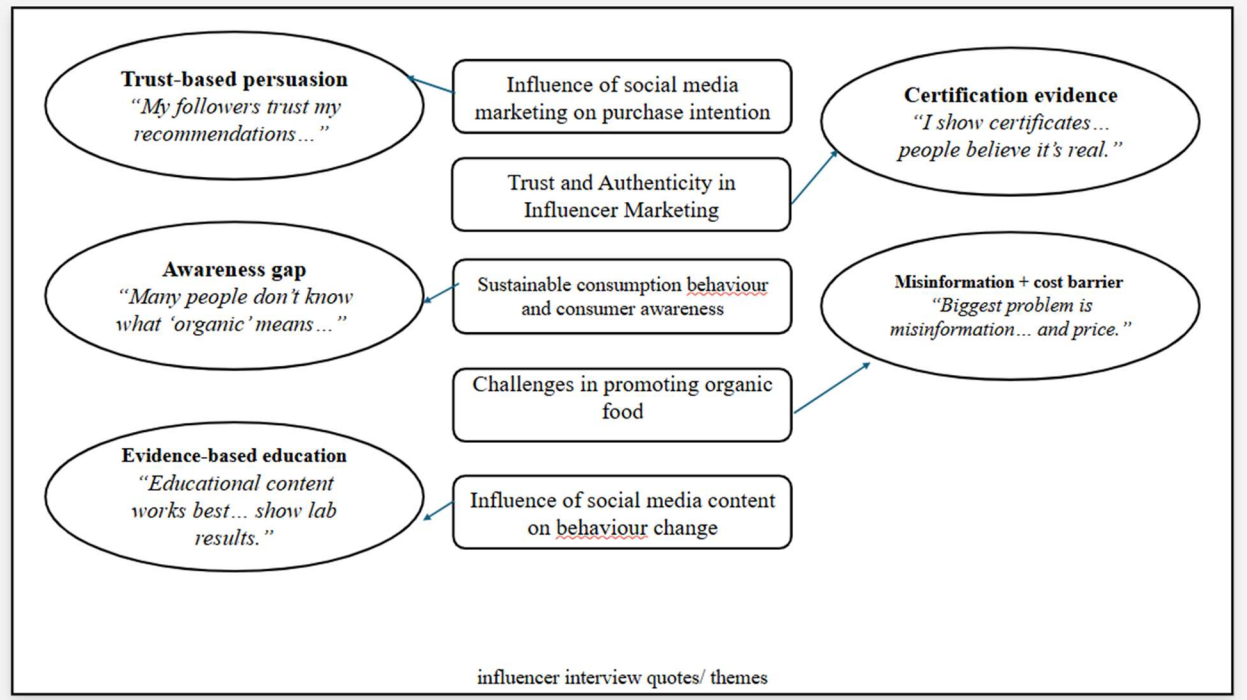
Influencer's Demographic Information			
Influencers	**Gender**	**Most Use Platforms**	**Sector**
Influencer A	Female	Instagram and snapchat	Doctor
Influencer B	Female	Instagram and snapchat	Nutritionist
Influencer C	Female	Instagram and snapchat	Entrepreneur
Influencer D	Male	Instagram, snapchat and YouTube	Businessman
Influencer E	Male	Instagram	pharmacist
Influencer F	Male	Instagram, snapchat and YouTube	Businessman

Note. Data collected by the author through interviews (2024).

To enhance transparency in the qualitative analysis, *Figure 8* presents the audit trail illustrating the progression from raw interview excerpts to codes, subthemes, and final themes derived from influencer interviews.

Figure 8

Audit trail (Data → Codes → Subthemes → Themes) for influencer interviews



Note. Developed by the author based on interview transcripts generated via Temi.com and analyzed through thematic coding in ATLAS.ti (2024).

As shown in Figure 8, the coding structure demonstrates how trust-based persuasion, certification evidence, awareness gaps, and educational strategies were systematically clustered into higher-order themes aligned with the research objectives.

4.1.1.2 Results and Discussions

This research explores the role of social media marketing influencing consumers' organic food purchase intentions. In this research, as it has been mentioned earlier, the qualitative method utilized and the semi-structured interview done with six influencers on social media answered the research questions, aims, and hypotheses. In the interview discussion, five key points have been highlighted, which are the findings that underscore the importance of trust, authenticity, and the requirement for demonstrated organic certifications. They also highlight the significant impact social media influencers have on consumer behavior. Sustainable consumer behavior (SCB) continues to face significant challenges due to the prevalence of misinformation, low awareness, and high costs. In addition, the content that is distributed on social media platforms plays an

essential part in the process of behavior change, with educational content proving to be the most successful technique.

Theme 1: Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention

Codes: Social Media Impact, Influencer Endorsement, Consumer Trust, Content Marketing

Social media greatly impacts customer choices regarding organic food. Influencers become credible information sources, encouraging followers to seek out everything via personal recommendations and collaborations. Influencer D emphasized that trust is an important factor in consumer decision-making, since followers tend to accept recommendations without proof *"When I promote an organic product, my followers trust my recommendations and many of them end up buying it. They believe in what I say, even if they cannot verify if the product is truly organic.",* corroborating research indicating that endorsements from credible influencers can markedly affect purchasing behavior (Chen, 2024; Nadia et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be observed in collaborations between users and organic brands, which enhances exposure and authenticity by simply integrating these items into influencers' daily routines. Furthermore, studies underscore the usefulness of social media marketing in augmenting brand awareness and influencing customer perceptions (Ramdan et al., 2023; Gabriela et al., 2023). Additionally, Influencer A's collaboration with organic manufacturers highlights the way influencers use organic items into their everyday routines, which increases their credibility *"Once I try out an organic product and I am satisfied with it, I promote it on my platforms…. I am currently partnered with a company for pediatric organic supplies which I already use for my own child."*. Moreover, Influencer C and Influencer F emphasized the significance of advertising in augmenting awareness of products and influencing brand perception, especially in Kurdistan. *"Social media influencers has a big role in consumer purchase decision for organic food, because nowadays people recognize brand and products more on social media, so when they see the advertising it affect them, because without advertising nothing is going well." (Influencer C), "Social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchase decisions for organic food in Kurdistan. Through trust-building, education, trendsetting, engagement, collaborations, and overcoming barriers, influencers can significantly influence and drive the demand for organic food among their followers." (Influencer F).* Through the creation of engaging narratives, influencers motivate their followers to consider organic food choices that correspond with a health-oriented lifestyle. The integration of trust, individual

recognition, and advertising in social media marketing signifies an important improvement in consumer involvement (Khoirunnisa & Astini, 2021; Puspaningrum, 2020). Research on consumer decision-making indicates a diverse relationship between subjective appeal and reason in the digital realm (Rajh, 2022). Shan et al. investigates how highlighting the advantages of organic food might mold customer attitudes and affect purchasing choices, underscoring the significant impact of social media on consumer behavior (Shan et al., 2020). This indicates that marketers had to concentrate not just on information but also on its delivery to effectively impact consumer decisions concerning organic products. In summary, influencer marketing is crucial in the organic food sector, propelled by trust, innovative marketing tactics, and personal branding. This changing environment underscores the necessity of comprehending and using social media dynamics to synchronize marketing strategies with consumer inclinations for organic goods.

Theme 2: Trust and Authenticity in Influencer Marketing

Codes: *Trustworthiness, Authenticity, Certification, Reputation*

Authenticity and trust are fundamental for influencers when advertising organic products. Influencer D underscored the importance of organic certification, rejecting the promotion of products lacking appropriate validation to preserve credibility *"I never promote a product unless I am sure it's organic. If a company doesn't have proper certification, I reject their offer because my reputation is more important than money…. People need to see evidence. When I show certificates or videos of how the product is made, they are more likely to believe it's real."*. Trust is crucial for establishing consumer loyalty in marketing environments (Hasibuan et al., 2023; Junaedi et al., 2020). Consequently, establishing authenticity with organic certification is essential for sustaining credibility in influencer marketing. Influencer C emphasized that trust constitutes the fundamental element of influencer marketing, guaranteeing solely ethical promotions *"My strategy and my principle are trust, because trust is the most important thing for the audience to follow their influencers, so I never want to do the advertising for something harmful to human and environment, so until now my principle is that if something does not have a good impact I do not show."*. Trust functions as a mediating variable between consumer happiness and loyalty, especially with organic products, where perceived quality and ethical norms are essential for success (Curvelo et al., 2019; Braimah et al., 2022). Research indicates that consumers' perceptions of a brand's credibility may greatly impact their desire to buy organic products, demonstrating that

increased trust levels enhance customer attitudes towards the company's offerings (Cachero-Martínez, 2020; Melović et al., 2020). These findings align with current consumer trends, particularly within Generation Z, which emphasizes ethical consumption and transparency in their purchasing habits (Fahira & Djamaludin, 2023; Amallia et al., 2021).Influencer A recognized the difficulty associated with consumer dissatisfaction, given that organic benefits require time to materialize *"Sometimes it's difficult for us, as influencers and doctors, because few people will not see the full benefits of organic food or products in a specific period of time, they all want to see the results in a very short time which is impossible, thus they may withdraw from using the products."*. Moreover, Influencer F underscored the importance of governmental rules in securing product authenticity, advocating for enhanced regulation by health authorities *"Organic food should be reliable from the governments it is organic I mean it should have a certificate or something to show that it is organic this is first, and also the ingredients show that is it organic or not organic, on the package because the governments has monitoring on everything especially, Ministry of health , because they con not do the packaging without the permission of the government and also without the permission of the ministry of health and they certify that it is organic."*. The intricacy of organic items demands liability from the sector and awareness from consumers, therefore requiring enhanced regulatory supervision to guarantee authenticity (Okpala & Korzeniowska, 2021; Trivedi & Yadav, 2018). Research regularly demonstrates that trustworthy information and regulatory assurances substantially enhance customer trust, which is crucial for shaping purchasing intentions in the organic market. This link demonstrates that whereas influencers contribute to forming views, the regulatory framework also significantly impacts customer trust and happiness, resulting in a complex environment for organic product marketing (Hoi & Yin, 2023; Munte et al., 2022). In conclusion, our data establishes an integrated narrative in which authenticity, trust, and regulatory obligations underpin effective influencer marketing campaigns within the organic industry. Insights from various influencers and research studies emphasize that marketing professionals and politicians must effectively manage this environment to build sustainable consumer relationships and improve organic product acquisition.

Theme 3: Sustainable Consumption Behavior and Consumer Awareness

Codes: *Consumer Education, Health Awareness, Labeling, Misinformation*

Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) and consumer awareness are closely connected, as emphasized by numerous influencers on social media who highlight the necessity for enhanced education, promotion, and governmental assistance. Influencer D asserts that several customers regard organic food as a conventional marketing strategy rather than an acceptable health-oriented option, recommending that more transparent government labeling could address this discrepancy *"Many people don't even know what 'organic' really means. They think it's just a marketing trick. There should be a proper government label to prove which products are truly organic……I always tell my followers that organic food is not just about taste it's about health. Your long-term well-being is more important than saving a few moneys on food"*. In the same way, Influencer B observes that individuals frequently consume both organic and non-organic items without recognizing the distinction, consequently highlighting the pervasive lack of consciousness *"it's bit difficult and very, very expensive. And yet people here don't recognize organic and non-organic food at all. But, for some reason, some people eat organic foods without knowing it. And some people eat non-organic food, and they don't, they are not aware of it. So, here we don't have that amount, that much of, uh, background about the organic and unorganic food. But as all, uh, overall, I think we don't use it and what very much I think."*

Conversely, Influencer A emphasizes that parental knowledge is rising, especially about their children's health, yet underscores the necessity of scientifically confirmed studies to substantiate the long-term advantages of organic consumption *"Yes, they are more aware of organic products now especially for their children as they are in their growing phase, less chemicals substrates are advised to use for example nonorganic shampoos or appetizers…. The strongest method is to give them science-proven studies that organic products have long-term effects."*. Influencer F emphasizes the significance of recognizing health benefits, as numerous recent diseases, like diabetes and hyperlipidemia, arise from unhealthy food choices, hence providing it essential to present organic consumption as a preventive strategy *"The specific method is talking about the health benefits, because nowadays many people die because of some diseases that they cause from unhealthy food, for example, diabetes and Hyperlipidemia because they eat unhealthy food and they do not exercise they do not care about their health, that why the most important point that we talk about when we promote organic food is mentioning health benefits."*

Moreover, Influencer E and Influencer F champion enhanced social media marketing and governmental action, as numerous individuals still neglect their health or comprehend the ramifications of their purchase decisions *"People till now, actually didn't get into point that their health is, is, is so important…. We need awareness in promotion and promotion also in social media. And we need support from the government."*. These results indicate that although knowledge is increasing, considerable gaps persist, requiring a synthesis of specific labeling, health education, social media campaigns, and legislative assistance to promote more sustainable consumer behavior *"I foster a sense of community around organic food on my platforms by emphasizing the health benefits and environmental impact. I share informative content on how organic food can improve personal health, reduce exposure to pesticides, and provide higher nutritional value. Additionally, I highlight how choosing organic supports sustainable farming practices, reduces pollution, and promotes biodiversity. This dual focus encourages followers to join a community committed to healthier lifestyles and a healthier planet." (Influencer F)*. Wong and Tzeng's research confirm the claim that increased understanding of organic labeling might influence the connection between green product awareness and purchasing intention, suggesting that clarity in official labeling may enhance customer attitudes towards organic products (Wong & Tzeng, 2021). Zhao and Husnain emphasize the significance of traceability in the organic food supply chain, indicating that customer awareness regarding product sourcing directly impacts food safety and overall consumer health (Zhou & Husnain, 2022). This highlights the essential function of education in shifting consumer perspectives from considering organic food as simple marketing tactics to acknowledging its genuine health advantages. The systematic study by Savi indicates that health consciousness, environmental concerns, and perceived value greatly influence customers' organic food purchases, suggesting that increased consumer education can improve purchasing behavior (Savi, 2024). Yıldırım asserts that influencers can effectively promote sustainable consumption patterns through their compelling online presence, hence directing their followers toward more responsible consumption decisions (Yıldırım, 2021).

Conversely, despite an increasing consumer awareness, significant deficiencies persist, as highlighted by Cavite et al. and Hauth et al. Their research indicates that, despite increased awareness of the health benefits of organic food, trust in the legitimacy of organic claims frequently diminishes due to inconsistent labeling and disinformation (Cavite et al., 2021; Hauth

et al., 2023). This signifies an urgent necessity for fundamental alterations in the marketing and regulation of organic products. The impact of health-oriented influencers aligns with findings by Su et al., indicating that elevated health and social awareness among consumers correlates with a greater propensity to buy organic foods (Su et al., 2022). This underscores the need for focused social media initiatives alongside robust regulatory frameworks to enhance educational efforts on the long-term advantages of organic eating. In essence, influencers serve as instructors rather than simply salesmen. Their success depends on trustworthiness and access to scientific validation (Wong & Tzeng, 2021). Influencer D's apprehension regarding customer misinterpretation exemplifies the "trust deficit" in organic labeling articulated by Cavite et al. (2021). This indicates the necessity for enhanced governmental certification and digital literacy initiatives to bolster influencer endeavors. Zhao & Husnain (2022) assert that traceability in the supply chain bolsters consumer trust, a responsibility now anticipated of influencers.

In conclusion, despite the increasing knowledge of organic foods, substantial difficulties such as misinformation and trust deficits continue to impede sustainable consumer behavior. Therefore, a holistic strategy that includes transparent labeling, effective health education, influencer involvement, and supportive governmental regulations is crucial for cultivating a more informed customer base capable of making.

Theme 4: Challenges in Promoting Organic Food

Codes: *Misinformation, High Cost, Consumer Skepticism, Limited Awareness*

The biggest challenges in advocating for organic food are misinformation and high expenses. The barriers related to promoting organic food, specifically misinformation and increasing costs, are significant concerns in current literature. Misinformation can dramatically undermine customer trust in organic products. Research by Yu et al. indicates that deceptive claims made by specific brands generate ambiguity among customers, hence intensifying their suspicion towards all organic products (Yu et al., 2022). This corresponds with the findings of Pennycook et al., who assert that increased emphasis on accuracy may reduce the dissemination of disinformation, therefore cultivating a better-informed consumer base (Pennycook et al., 2021). Misinformation evidently influences perceptions and individual purchase decisions, as highlighted by Clapp and Moseley, who examine its adverse effects on public health and product trust (Clapp & Moseley, 2020). Influencer D noted that misleading assertions from certain brands generate uncertainty

among consumers, fostering skepticism towards all organic products *"The biggest problem is misinformation. Some companies claim their products are organic, but they're not. This confuses consumers and makes them doubt all organic products……Another challenge is price. Organic food is more expensive, and people in our region are not always willing to pay extra, even if it's healthier."*

Influencer A and Influencer E acknowledged that cost represents an important hurdle, as organic food is regarded as costly and unattainable *"The only obstacle is the price point and availability of organic foods, as very few places can provide them since we are not a country that organic products are very accessible…..However, because it's costly, most of them cannot afford to buy organic products despite the good benefits, but it's my duty to explain it scientifically."* Influencer C underscored the need for education in addressing these problems, contending that effective communication regarding the benefits of organic food could decrease customer skepticism *"the challenges to promote sustainable food choice on social media for example misinformation and disinformation, the spread of inaccurate information about sustainable food choices can confuse consumers and undermine efforts to promote sustainable practices…..I have not faced any challenges but when we promote something organic, we have to mention that the quality is more important than the price, so we have to convince our audience by giving the whole details about the products how it is important to our health to our environment they will understand it."*. This is supported by Ecker et al., who explains how cognitive biases can influence consumer views and the efficacy of corrected information (Ecker et al., 2022). This indicates that organized educational initiatives could reduce mistrust regarding organic products, hence enhancing customer impression.

Moreover, the necessity for precise messaging to clarify common misconceptions corresponds with the findings of Fong et al., who examine the impact of corrective communication on consumer purchasing behavior in relation to product misinformation (Fong et al., 2023). Influencer F, B and E also identified economic restrictions as a limiting factor, since numerous consumers are unable to afford organic food despite its advantages *"In my view, I do not see lots of challenges, but the most important one is sustainable food options are often perceived as more expensive, which can be a barrier in a region where economic conditions might not support such choices for all residents.". "Lack of awareness and the price are the biggest challenges" (Influencer E).* A

fundamental issue noted is the perception of organic food as expensive and unavailable. Influencers A and E's recognition of financial constraints is confirmed by Marx et al., who demonstrate the economic obstacles that impede consumer access to health-enhancing items, including organic foods, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Marx et al., 2023). Moreover, the viewpoint about economic constraints is corroborated by research by Ecker et al., which demonstrates that disinformation, along with economic variables, complicates the environment for customers seeking to acquire organic products (Ecker et al., 2022). Awareness is essential for eliminating misinformation and misconceptions regarding the costs associated with organic food. This aligns with the conclusions of Pennycook et al. (2021), who emphasize the significance of accuracy priming in mitigating the dissemination of disinformation. Ecker et al. (2022) contend that misinformation needs rectification via organized content initiatives, a responsibility currently assumed by influencers. Nonetheless, in the absence of comprehensive regulatory and institutional backing (Yu et al., 2022), their initiatives may achieve restricted impact.

Theme 5: Influence of Social Media Content on Behavior Change

Codes: *Educational Content, Health Messaging, Fear Appeals, Recipe Sharing, Slow Behavior Shift, Audience Engagement*

Educational evidence is the most successful technique for promoting the adoption of organic food. Influencer D claimed that presenting research findings and comparison assessments with typical products facilitates an improvement in consumer behavior *"Educational content works best. When I explain the benefits of organic food, show lab results, or compare it with regular products, people start to listen……I have seen behavior change over time, but it's slow. It might take decades for people to fully adopt organic food as a lifestyle."* Influencer A and Influencer C emphasized the significance of comprehensive content regarding health advantages *"The only way I can communicate with my audience regarding the composition of is to talk about the ingredients and their benefits…. The best content regarding my specialty is health content of course."*

However Influencer F stated that fear-based marketing focusing on the adverse effects of harmful food can be an effective tactic *"The best content that I use is to eat when I do promotion and for sure I mention health benefits and compare it to conventional products which are not healthy because it has chemical ingredients and sugar, so I mention staff like that I say advantages of*

eating organic food." Influencer B stated that recipe sharing, and product education enhance consumer engagement and awareness *"We post the recipes and the details of the products, what is it for, what is used, who can eat, who can't eat, and when they do have to eat and, sometimes we share res videos and recipes on how to make something like our example, for example, the bread."* The educational value of social media content is supported by various studies. For instance, Goodyear et al. conducted a systematic review revealing that social media interventions can positively impact dietary behaviors and physical activity among young people and adults (Goodyear et al., 2021). Similarly, Sah and Karki found that social media advertisements significantly impact consumer purchasing behavior, identifying social media as having a more substantial influence than other forms of media (Sah & Karki, 2020).

These findings suggest that informative content shared on social media, especially regarding health, can effectively motivate consumers to make healthier choices. Influencers play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and behaviors through social media. Various influencers have emphasized different strategies for promoting healthy eating. For instance, the impact of educational content that compares organic products with traditional ones is critical, as highlighted in a systematic review by Shiyab et al., which suggested social media interventions can lead to improved dietary behaviors (Shiyab et al., 2023). Additionally, the focus of specific influencers on comprehensive health content resonates with previous reviews indicating the positive effects of social media on encouraging healthier lifestyle choices (Goodyear et al., 2021). Influencer F's advocacy for fear-based marketing strategies, which highlights the negative consequences of unhealthy food, may capture attention effectively, but this tactic should be approached cautiously, as its long-term effectiveness can vary by audience type and is supported by broader discussions in health communication literature (Lin et al., 2020).

Moreover, strategies involving recipe sharing and educational content can enhance consumer engagement and awareness. This aligns with research by Hegazy et al., which indicates that social media can affect social behaviors, potentially leading to changes in lifestyle patterns when users engage with health-related content (Hegazy et al., 2021). The interactive nature of social media fosters a community-centric approach to health promotion, allowing users to share experiences and tips, thereby improving overall effectiveness (Elaheebocus et al., 2018). The interplay between content provision and user interaction is crucial, as users increasingly rely on their networks for

support in behavior change efforts, corroborating findings from studies exploring peer influence in health interventions (Pan et al., 2020). Influencers leverage educational content, health-based messaging, and emotional appeals to drive consumer engagement and long-term dietary shifts. Evidence-based posts especially those comparing organic and conventional products appear to be the most persuasive, aligning with findings by Goodyear et al. (2021) and Shiyab et al. (2023), which highlight the impact of social media interventions on health behaviors. While health-focused and fear-based appeals (Lin et al., 2020) can prompt immediate attention, their sustainability is less certain and may depend on the audience's values. Recipe-sharing enhances accessibility and trust, fostering behavioral reinforcement through practical content. Yet, as noted by several influencers, behavior changes are often gradual. This slow shift supports the need for consistent, community-driven engagement as emphasized by Elaheebocus et al. (2018) and Pan et al. (2020), where social media functions not only as a broadcast tool but also as a peer-support ecosystem.

4.1.2 Thematic Analysis: Organic Food Producers

This investigation examines the viewpoints of organic food producers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, emphasizing their utilization of social media, the influence of influencers, consumer behavior, and institutional obstacles. The information derives from conversations with 11 producers and is corroborated by theme tools like Voyant.

Figure 9

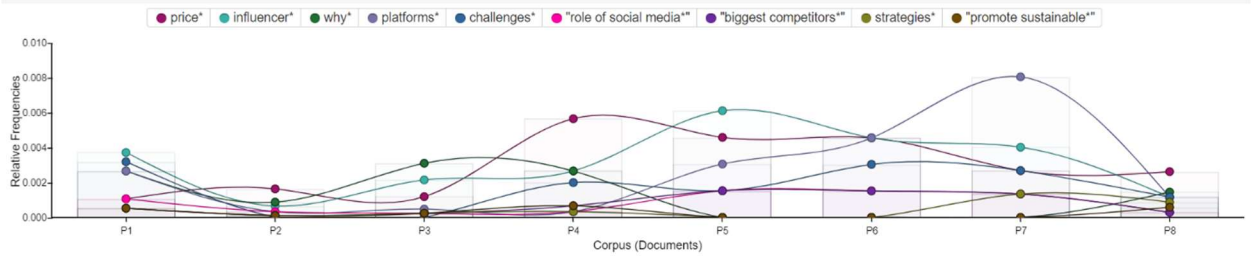
Word Cloud Analysis from Organic Food Producers

Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

Word clouds have been created using Voyant Tools in study to examine text data from many sources, including title files, with the purpose of identifying significant themes or topics (Daher et al., 2021). The word cloud clearly captures essential themes in the organic food production

business. The central themes revolve around the focus on products, which includes terms like "product," "quality," and "organic." It also encompasses market and consumer orientation, represented by words such as "customers" and "buy." Additionally, marketing and branding strategies are highlighted, with a particular emphasis on "social media" and "brand." Furthermore, business and economic considerations, such as "price" and "company," are considered. Lastly, there is a connection to health and sustainability through terms like "health" and "sustainable." The significant importance of "organic," "food," and "product" is highlighted by their prevalence in the sector.

Figure 10
The Line Chart from Organic Food Producers



Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

Line charts have been implemented in research examining vision screening, specifically to evaluate enhancements in visual acuity using logMR charts and pinhole testing (Marmamula et al., 2014). Visual tools are essential for summarizing and presenting data in a way that is easy to understand. They help researchers derive valuable insights from their findings.

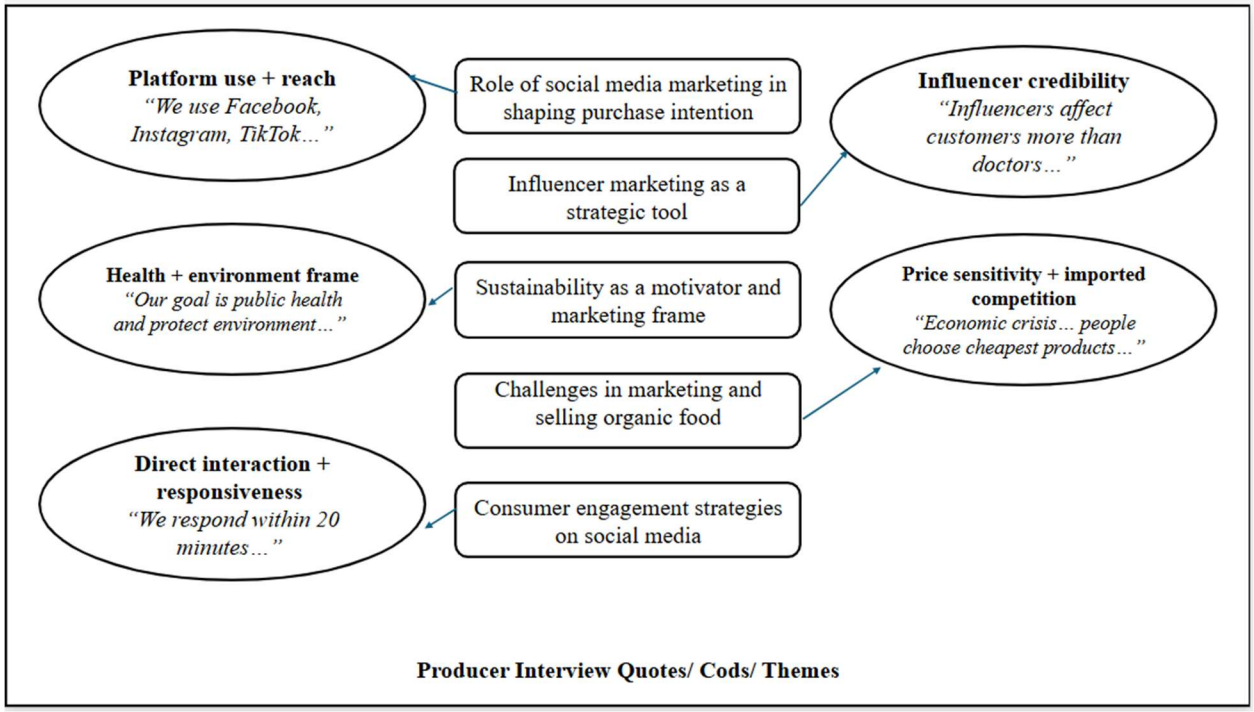
The line chart *Figure 10* exhibits the relative frequency of eight document portions which are the (8) eight interviews that have been done online with eight producers of organic food in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which are labeled P1 to P8. The y-axis measures the relative frequency, ranging from zero to 0.010, with intervals of 0.002. The following ten terms are represented: price, influencers, rationale, platforms, obstacles, social media role, primary competitors, strategies, and sustainable promotion. The term frequencies differ among segments, suggesting changes in emphasis. While the "price" remains generally stable, the importance of the "role of social media" increases. The terms "challenges" and "strategies" vary, indicating lively arguments.

Table 4
Demographic Information of Producers

Producer's Demographic Information			
Producers	**Gender**	**Experience (years)**	**Sector**
Producer A	Female	3 years	Organic Food+ Sweats
Producer B	Male	3 years	Organic Juices
Producer C	Male	7 years	Organic Olives Oil
Producer D	Male	2 years	Organic Tomato Paste
Producer E	Male	45 years	Organic Meat
Producer F	Male	8 Years	Organic Ice Cream
Producer G	Male	8 years	Organic Rice
Producer H	Male	30 years	Organic Sesame Past
Producer I	Male	37 years	Organic Spice
Producer J	Male	5 years	Organic Oil
Producer K	Male	1 year	organic pomegranate molasses and organic apple vinegar

Note. Data collected by the author through interviews (2024).

Figure 11
Producers — From Data to Themes



Note. Developed by the author based on interview transcripts generated via Temi.com and analyzed through thematic coding in ATLAS.ti (2024).

4.1.2.1 Overview of key findings

Five key findings emerged from data analysis, reflecting the professional identity formation of producers' background about the social media impact on organic food purchasing through sustainable consumption behavior. The five key findings see *Figure 11* are: the social media marketing impact on purchase intention, the role of influencer marketing, sustainable consumption behavior as a bridge between marketing and purchasing, challenges in promoting and selling organic food, and the importance of consumer engagement. Each of those elements are crucial to the marketing strategies of organic food producers and adds to the industry's overall expansion.

Theme 1: Role of Social Media Marketing in Shaping Purchase Intention

Codes: *Platform Use, Brand Awareness, Consumer Engagement, Reach, Influencer Impact*

Producers maintain that social media marketing significantly influences customer purchase decisions. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat perform as essential tools for engaging target consumers. Due to the broad adoption of these platforms, producers

acknowledge them as key methods for marketing foods that are organic. Producer E believes that social media facilitates brands' engagement with an array of consumers, revealing that it is essential for businesses to leverage all accessible platforms to maximize their impact *"We use social media to target our audience as you know because of the rapid growth of technology people nowadays use social media a lot, and we use the whole platforms of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok and Snapchat so on. Because it is very important for every company if they want to get a whole audience and customers, they should use the whole platforms on social media. "Producer* F emphasizes that social media acts as a way for customers to identify organic food businesses, with Instagram and influencer recommendations playing a notably crucial role in enhancing awareness *"Social media plays a huge role in helping people learn about organic products. Many customers first discover our organic ice cream through Instagram posts and influencer recommendations. Without social media, reaching new consumers would be much harder."* Producer A emphasizes that social media is essential not only for the organic food sector but for nearly all businesses, illustrating its extensive impact *"Well, I think it's, it has a very significant role. very significant role. And, not only organic food, but everything also now they need very good marketing and social media marketing for the product, for the food. So, I think it is very significant… Everything now is online and social media," emphasizing the undeniable shift towards digital platforms as a primary driver of consumer awareness and purchase decisions."*

Moreover, social media facilitates the rapid expansion of a business's audience. Producer D reports that their company obtained 3,000 new consumers in a week with social media marketing. Numerous producers emphasize the efficacy of influencer marketing *"100% social media has a big role in organic food industry because it attracts more people…, based on my experience by using social media we attract more than 3000 audience in a week because social media affect people a lot more than the traditional way."* Similarly, producer *G, H, and J*,. Producer C, for instance, notes the availability of professional personnel to oversee promotions *"we have prepared a budget for doing promotion for our products especially on social media because now a days people use social media a lot and they use it for everything, and we brought a professional stuff for doing promotion for our products in social media because influencers can effect on customers more than anyone else even more than doctors, because it is reality that we have today."*, while Producers K and B emphasize the efficacy of influencers, particularly when famous individuals

promote organic food *"It has a big role nowadays, because people use social media a lot, if one of the influencers promote something maybe more than 500 or 1000 people see the post and maybe they will go and buy the product because they love the person who did the advertising of that product, so that is why social media marketing has a big role in organic food industry." (Producer K), "social media has a big role in influencing consumer awareness, especially doctors they have a good role in influencing in social media to make people aware of eating organic food and talk how it is beneficial for their health ……because in social media may 2 million people see and listen to you , doctors should advise their patient to eat organic food before they get sick because it will survive them from many diseases, that is why I say social media has a big role in awareness of people."(Producer B)*.

The influence of social media marketing on consumer purchasing decisions, particularly in the organic food sector, is emphasized by various producers and supported by recent academic research. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat are recognized as essential for reaching and engaging target consumers, with notable claims by producers regarding their effectiveness. Research indicates that platforms like Instagram significantly enhance brand awareness and engagement among users. For instance, a study found that positive emotion-inducing strategies on social media are associated with increased interactions, which can lead to greater brand loyalty and make social media a vital marketing tool for businesses (Klassen et al., 2018).

Furthermore, direct engagement such as likes, shares, and comments can significantly influence purchasing behaviors, as evidenced by a study that found many participants were more inclined to make a purchase after viewing engaging social media campaigns (Oza, 2023). This phenomenon is particularly evident in the organic food industry, where producers report substantial consumer interactions driven by social media campaigns. Influencer marketing also occupies a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. The prominence of influencers, especially on platforms like Instagram, plays a critical part in consumer awareness and purchasing intentions. Research has shown that collaborations with influencers can boost the visibility of brands and products within the organic food sector, effectively shaping consumer preferences (Ghosh & Islam, 2023, Chopra et al., 2020). Furthermore, it aligns with trends indicating that influencers significantly impact brand recognition and consumer trust, which are especially critical for niche

markets like organic food (Boerman, 2020). Moreover, social media's capacity to rapidly expand a brand's audience is underscored by reports of companies gaining thousands of new customers in a short timeframe due to effective social media marketing strategies (Liyanasooriya et al., 2023). This aligns with findings from recent studies highlighting how engaging social media campaigns can lead to significant increases in sales and consumer interest (Oza, 2023). Additionally, the ability to effectively target specific demographics further supports the notion that social media platforms serve as vital instruments for marketing in contemporary business strategies (Rahardja, 2022). In conclusion, empirical evidence corroborates the claims made by producers regarding the strategic importance of social media marketing in influencing customer purchasing decisions, especially in the organic food sector. It facilitates unique engagement opportunities, enhances brand visibility through influencer partnerships, and allows businesses to quickly grow their consumer base. *"When we promote something, we must talk in a write way and tell the truth to attract more customers and give them something befit for themselves." (Producer I)*

Theme 2: Influencer Marketing as a Strategic Tool

Codes: *Influencer Credibility, Targeted Collaboration, Consumer Trust, Brand Authenticity*

Research suggests that collaborations involving reputable influencers can enhance the perceived authenticity of organic food products, leading to increased consumer trust and willingness to pay higher prices for perceived quality and safety (Marozzo et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024). This careful selection process is foundational, as consumers are increasingly discerning about whom they trust, especially in a marketplace inundated with advertising messages. The persuasive power of influencers has been documented, indicating that endorsements from these individuals often resonate more effectively with consumers than traditional advertising methods (Kapitan et al., 2021; Mardani et al., 2024). Producer E emphasizes the importance of collaborating with influencers that have an excellent reputation in the health and wellness sector *"We use influencers to promote our products. We choose influencers carefully, ensuring they have a good background and align with our brand values. For example, we worked with one of the influencers because he is a healthy, well-known, and positive public figure*". Various studies indicate that consumers are more likely to engage with brands that project authenticity through their influencer partnerships (Mardani et al., 2024).

Furthermore, influencers who communicate transparent messages may evoke a stronger emotional response, creating a more resonant connection with potential buyers (Zniva et al., 2023). Producer F similarly asserts that influencers' endorsements usually have greater persuasive power than conventional advertising *"We've seen that when influencers share their experience with our organic ice cream, people trust their opinions more than traditional ads. Their reviews make a big difference in convincing customers to try our products."*. Producer A has declared that influencers must have direct links with the industries they promote *"But of course it will be much better if they're related to the, what they are doing"*. Other producers, D, G, H, and J, have stated that they frequently work along with influencers, choosing them based on the relevance of the content that they make *"Every month we contract with influencers in social media. We choose influencers based on their content when they make a promotion"*, they prioritize content relevance when selecting influencers for collaboration, ensuring that the influencer's niche aligns closely with the product being marketed (Ambili, 2023). This relevance helps maintain the authenticity of the message conveyed to consumers, resonating with their preferences and fostering trust towards both the influencer and the brand. Producer C believes that influencers have a higher impact on the behavior of consumers than doctors do, further underlining the persuasive abilities of influencers *"Influencers can affect customers more than anyone else, even more than doctors, because it is reality that we have today."* This observation aligns with findings that suggest consumers increasingly view influencers as credible sources of information, sometimes even surpassing traditional authorities like doctors in perceived trustworthiness (Jun & Yi, 2020).

The versatility of these partnerships is demonstrated by the fact that certain producers, such as B and K, expand their influencer marketing strategies by forming partnerships with comic influencers and chefs. The fact that Producer I also acts as an influencer for their brand is a wonderful example of how effective self-promotion can be *" We use influencers, for example we have used comedian influencers, and we choose the chef to make promotion for our product." (Producer K), " if someone is comedy and people like them and have a good reputation I give him to promote my brand, because comedy influencers all ages follow them in social media, someone who has a value and good reputation in society…..I can use doctors to do advertising for my brand, and we have sponsored a program is about collecting doctors and ask them some question sin the program we are sponsoring this program so doctors are very good to promote organic brands."*

(Producer B). This approach showcases the versatility of the marketing strategy and broadens the appeal of organic food to various consumer segments, potentially drawing in audiences that traditional marketing methods might overlook (Liu et al., 2024; Mardani et al., 2024). Additionally, Producer I's role as both a producer and influencer illustrate the potential of self-promotion within effective marketing strategies, further emphasizing the importance of a personal touch in brand storytelling and consumer engagement. In conclusion, the landscape of influencer marketing for organic food producers is intricately tied to concepts of authenticity, trustworthiness, and relevance. The strategic selection of influencers who align with business values, alongside transparent communication, holds paramount importance in enhancing brand credibility and influencing consumer purchasing behaviors.

Theme 3: Sustainability as a Motivator and Marketing Frame

Codes: *Health, Environmental Ethics, Local Production, Clean Ingredients, Social Responsibility*

Sustainability significantly influences buyer decisions regarding organic food, as a growing number of consumers develop awareness surrounding the health benefits and environmental impacts of organic products. Recent studies highlight a notable shift in consumer preferences, with buyers increasingly inclined towards organic options to avoid harmful chemicals and synthetic ingredients. This trend is substantiated by Bai et al., who emphasize that the use of chemicals in agriculture contributes to both environmental degradation and health risks such as cancer and endocrine disruption (Bai et al., 2019). This perspective is complemented by research from Tan et al., which illustrates that increasing concerns regarding environmental sustainability drive the demand for organic food products, emphasizing the alignment of organic offerings with consumer values concerning health and ecological welfare (Tan et al., 2022). Producer E underscores their business's focus on public health and environmental conservation, observing a consistent increase in both awareness and sales "*Our goal is to take care of public health and protect the environment. We want to provide healthy meat for society, people are becoming more aware and buying more organic food. It's a slow process, but each year, sales increase compared to the previous year."* Producer F approves of expressing that people are continuously opting for organic products to avoid chemicals and synthetic ingredients *"Health is one of the biggest reasons people buy organic ice cream. They want to avoid chemicals and eat clean ingredients. If they understand that organic choices support sustainability, they may be more willing to pay extra for it."*

In Kurdistan and Iraq, health problems associated with insufficient dietary selections show the necessity of advocating for organic food, *"We started these projects as organic because our society suffering from many health problems because of the products that we imported from Iran and Turkey….Making campaign in collaboration with some NGO's and tell the society we are producing products which are environmentally friendly, we do not harm our environment because we do not use chemical sources." (Producer D) (G, H, and J)*. Producer C emphasizes the growing incidence of diet-related disorders, prompting farmers to concentrate on organic food production as Diebel et al. discuss the critical role regulatory frameworks play in enhancing sustainable agricultural practices (Diebel et al., 2024). Policy initiatives such as reducing plastic consumption and improving recycling efforts are crucial, as they can facilitate a more sustainability-oriented market landscape. Collaboration among stakeholders is another fundamental aspect of sustainability initiatives in the organic food sector. Producer K argues for increased governmental assistance, emphasizing policies such as minimizing plastic bag consumption and enhancing recycling initiatives, *"Sustainability is very important, nowadays people take care of the environment, especially people who are conscious about environment, as a producer we cannot do anything alone, but we can collaborate to promote sustainable food consumption in cooperation with the governments, for example governments make some roles and regulations for example on buying bags should be payable not free this is one option. for example, still there are some people they do not care about the environment, and they make it dirty, the government should punish them, to become an example to others to take care of the environment. take care of recycling, I know that there are some factories of recycling cartoons this is a good way to promote sustainability but I will say again we need government support, but some factories have been closed because of the lack of support from the government they pay more for electricity and tax for their factory more than their profit this is a big challenge so we need the support from the government."*

Collaboration is an essential part of sustainability initiatives. Producer B indicates that they collaborate closely with local fig farmers to bolster the local economy and promote organic agriculture *" we can collaborate to promote sustainable food, for example I have collaborated with 3 farmers of figs, one of them is my father I told him the will buy the amounts and tons of your pigs they will be mine and I will use them for my organic juice, so in that case we can care about*

economic and local products and improve them and motivate our farmers to grow their productions….. also the government has a big role in promoting sustainability, the government should reduce the tax on farmers and support them for producing local and organic food, they should take more attention about exporting product not importing them to Kurdistan Region, because we really need to promote sustainability to take care of our environment for the next generation because it is not only our own environment , economic and society as well,". This sentiment echoes findings from Boscari et al., which emphasize that buyer-supplier collaborations can enhance sustainability within food supply networks (Boscari et al., 2024). Producer I reiterate this strategy, underscoring their dedication to providing entirely natural products while informing consumers about the advantages of organic food. Producer I note their organization's dedication to providing entirely natural products while educating consumers on the benefits of organic food. This aligns with research by Vega-Zamora et al., which indicates that consumer awareness and education about organic products positively influence purchasing intentions, thereby promoting sustained growth in the organic sector (Vega-Zamora et al., 2019).

In conclusion, the interplay between sustainability, consumer awareness, and collaborative practices within the organic food sector underscores the significant influence that sustainability has on buyer decisions. As producers and policymakers work together to highlight the health and environmental benefits of organic foods, they cater to a consumer base that is increasingly mindful of their dietary choices. Producer A asserted that she wants to eat something healthy and give something healthy to her kids, and because Kurdistan is lacking in organic availability, she wants to produce organic products, *"Well, I want to eat something clean when I, I need without additive or sugar, add, add, add the sugars or added oil, or artificial colors or flavors. So, I want to, for our kids to have something, organic and healthy, because we don't have it, we didn't have it here. So, yes. That's why."* Producer C says that recently many people suffer from many diseases because they eat unhealthy food *"It is a very good question, because in recent years we have seen that our society is full of diseases from kids to the elderly people especially cancer many people in Kurdistan and Iraq get cancer because they do not eat healthy food, and we do not know the sources for the products that we imported from other countries so we said we have to do something to protect our society from these disease that is why we want to serve and give something healthy*

to our society, and the other thing is to support our local products, so because of these two reasons we produce organic food products."

The main reason behind producing organic food according to Producer B and I was to give something healthy to their society, *"The main reason behind that was the people's health," (Producer B)*, *"My aim is to service my society and give them a 100% natural product without using any chemical source...always I give advice to our customers please eat healthy and organic food. Do not eat the products that we import from abroad to eat something that has been produced in a natural way without using any chemical sources. "Even people who want or not based on their desire or needs must eat organic food and healthy food... people should know the quality and quantity of food that they are eating..." (Producer I).*

Theme 4: Challenges in Marketing and Selling Organic Food

Codes: *Price Barrier, Consumer Awareness Gap, Imported Competition, Economic Crisis*

Despite growing consumer interest, organic food producers face numerous challenges. A significant challenge is price sensitivity, as organic items are generally more costly than conventional ones. Producer F believes that higher pricing may deter new purchasers, despite their awareness of the advantages of organic products *"The biggest challenge is the price. Organic ingredients cost more, and that makes our ice cream more expensive. Many customers hesitate to spend extra, even if they know the benefits."* Price is identified as a major barrier by Producer A, who notes that many people do not appreciate the benefits of organic products *"But to be honest, here, everything is organic, it's bit difficult and very, very expensive. And yet people here don't recognize organic and non-organic food at all,"*. A further difficulty is competition from imported non-organic goods. Producer C clarifies that food imported from countries such as Turkey, Iran, and Syria are frequently more economical, consequently affecting local organic producers' capacity to compete *"And the worst thing is now we are in a bad economic situation. Which are economic crises that is why people look for cheapest product, even if it has a bad impact on their health but because it is cheap they buy it……Foreign products from other countries and we brought to Kurdistan region I mean imported products are the biggest competitors of the organic food market in Kurdistan, Turkey, Syria and Iran are our competitors in Kurdistan Market, because most of the people the price is the most important thing for them..."*

Economic fluctuations contribute to customer purchasing power, as observed by Producers D, G, H, and J .*"Price sensitivity and lack of consumer awareness are major challenges that hinder purchase intentions for organic food"*. A lack of awareness represents a further barrier *"Transportation and taxes are major challenges. Another issue is that some consumers compare our organic meat with imported non-organic meat from Spain, which is cheaper. Many people are not fully aware of the differences between organic and non-organic meat" (Producer E).*. Producer K asserts that numerous Kurdish consumers are uninformed about the advantages of organic food, therefore constraining market expansion *"Kurdish customers do not have enough awareness this one is more expensive because it is better quality and healthier... customers' needs awareness because one of the challenges is lack of awareness about organic food..."*. Producer B indicates that availability is a challenge, as organic items are not readily available in Kurdistan *" Price sensitivity…. Also limited availability as we know organic products might not be widely available in Kurdistan, making it inconvenient for consumers to find them regularly. Another challenge is lack of awareness, there might be a knowledge gap regarding the benefits of organic food and sustainable practices."*

Producer I presents an alternative viewpoint, highlighting the increasing demand for organic food, particularly for locally sourced products *"No for me, I have seen any challenges in promoting and selling organic products, on the contrary, customers ask for Kurdish, local and organic products more than the conventional food because it is healthier."* Despite the increasing consumer interest in organic food, producers encounter significant challenges that can impede market growth. A notable issue is price sensitivity. Organic foods typically command higher prices than their conventional counterparts, which serve as a deterrent for potential buyers. For instance, Smoluk-Sikorska et al. emphasize that the higher price of organic products is perceived as a barrier, as many consumers do not fully grasp the associated health and environmental benefits, which could justify the premium they are asked to pay (Smoluk-Sikorska et al., 2023). Similarly, Luthfiana et al. have noted that price remains a significant hurdle in consumer purchasing behavior, with their findings indicating that consumers often deem organic products less attractive due to cost concerns (Luthfiana et al., 2024). This sentiment is echoed by multiple producers who highlighted that despite awareness of organic benefits, consumer reluctance to pay higher prices is a prevalent

roadblock. In addition to price sensitivity, competition from imported non-organic goods poses a formidable challenge to local organic producers.

Producers have observed that imported foods from regions such as Turkey and Iran tend to be cheaper, thus impacting the competitive landscape for local organic products. This dynamic is supported by Dangi et al., who point out that pricing disparities between domestic organic goods and imported conventionally produced items create difficulties in maintaining market viability for local organic producers (Dangi et al., 2020). The broader economic landscape also plays a role; fluctuating economic conditions affect consumer purchasing power, with contributors like Xu et al. noting that external economic factors can heavily influence consumer willingness to purchase organic foods (Xu et al., 2018). Consumer awareness is another critical factor influencing organic market growth. As noted, there exists a substantial gap in knowledge among consumers regarding the advantages of organic food, which limits market expansion. This lack of awareness is corroborated by Nguyen et al., who found that inadequate consumer knowledge about the benefits of organic food often results in lower purchasing incidences, even when intention exists (Nguyễn et al., 2019).

Moreover, the availability of organic products significantly affects consumer purchasing behavior. Limited availability of organic items can directly hamper consumer access and encourage reliance on conventional products, a constraint supported by the literature indicating the need for improved distribution networks for organic foods to meet consumer demands (Luthfiana et al., 2024; Dangi et al., 2020). This multifaceted relationship between price, competition, consumer awareness, and availability highlights the complexities that organic food producers face despite a burgeoning interest in healthier and environmentally friendly options. While increasing demand for local organic products is noted, the systemic challenges underscore the necessity for strategic interventions to sustain and enhance the organic market trajectory.

Theme 5: Consumer Engagement Strategies on Social Media

Codes: *Direct Interaction, Contests and Giveaways, Video Content, Timely Response, Experiential Marketing*

Interacting and engaging with consumers is essential for organic food producers to establish trust and loyalty. Multiple people highlight direct engagement with clients on social media as a

fundamental method. Producer E underscores the significance of addressing questions from customers and coordinating contests and freebies *"We highly value customer engagement. We respond to comments and questions because feedback is important to us. We also run contests and giveaways to maintain customer interest and loyalty. And* we have contest and giveaway as well to keep our customers", such as addressing inquiries and organizing contests or freebies, which can significantly enhance consumer relationships and loyalty (Hasdimeyra, 2024). Producer F observes that attractive information, such as videos, in his mind enhances consumer education and increases trust in the company and its reputation *"Engaging with customers on social media is crucial. We respond to their comments, share behind-the-scenes content, and educate them about why organic products matter. This helps build trust and loyalty."*, corroborating findings that suggest visual content is effective in boosting consumer engagement and brand perception (Li, 2023; Kartomo, 2024).

Prompt communication is another crucial element. Producers D, G, H, and J guarantee that their social media teams address client inquiries within 20 minutes, sustaining improved engagement levels *"We prioritize direct and responsive communication with customers through social media… we respond to customers directly to their questions but not in the comment, each page has an admins and reply to people from morning until 11pm they must reply to our followers within 20 minutes."*, a strategy recognized to foster positive consumer engagement and trust (Sharma, 2023; Antczak, 2024). This immediacy not only reflects a commitment to consumer satisfaction but also enhances brand image, as timely responses are often associated with company reliability. Producer C emphasizes the need for educational information, particularly in instructing consumers on how to differentiate between organic and non-organic products *" We post videos about how customers can differentiate organic and nonorganic oil for example, because when we do an advertising, we do not focus on the photos only, so we focus on the benefits of eating this organic product,"*, which is increasingly relevant as consumers seek more information before making purchases (Cheng et al., 2021). Competitions and rewards significantly contribute to consumer engagement. Producer K discusses their methods for inspiring fans to engage in competitions designed for promoting awareness of organic food *"We do a lot of contests or giveaways, for example we post a contest, and we say if someone tells us the benefit of eating organic food, we can give them a gift. And, we have done contests, for example we said to our followers if you send our pages to your friends, we*

will put our name in a contest, and you will get a gift. We participate in job fairs, and we participate in organic products events as well and we give gifts to people", this method aimed at motivating fans to participate in awareness competitions about organic foods, which can serve as a powerful tool for enhancing brand visibility and engagement (Soegoto et al., 2021).

Producer B emphasizes the efficacy of word-of-mouth marketing, whereby satisfied consumers endorse organic products to their colleagues and relatives *"The most important and affective promotion is the word of mouth, when customers came here and then go and talk about our brand to their family and friends."*, this underscores the efficacy of word-of-mouth marketing, where satisfied customers promote organic products within their networks, magnifying outreach and acceptance (Vittayavarakorn & Sornsaruht, 2024; Ali & Naushad, 2023). The interplay between social networks and personal recommendations is crucial; consumers are more likely to trust products that are endorsed by friends and family, making this a strategic component of organic marketing approaches (Hossain et al., 2019; Saeed et al., 2019).

Eventually, Producer I asserts that trustworthiness in marketing is crucial, asserting that transparency fosters enduring trust with consumers *"The best strategy to use is convince them by telling them the truth about the products that you prove it, do not aim to buy your customers something because you did not sale it, so just tell them the truth about the products that you have.",* this finding is supported by studies indicating that transparency in communication positively influences consumers' purchase intentions (Martínez & Castro-González, 2023; Saeed et al., 2019).Building trust is very important to attract new customers and keep exist customers as Producer A attest that *"To truly engage consumers, we must prioritize experiential marketing, build trust through taste and firsthand experience; strategically partner with informed advocates who understand our brand; acknowledge and encourage the growing consumer shift towards healthier choices; and ultimately, recognize the power of sensory appeal, understanding that the path to lasting engagement often begins with satisfying the palate."* Overall, these consumer engagement strategies highlight that a multifaceted approach consisting of responsive communication, engaging content, competitive promotions, and transparency is essential for organic food producers aiming to cultivate enduring relationships with their consumers.

4.1.3 Thematic Analysis: Organic Food Customer Focus Group (Focus Group A)

This group has six participants (A1–A6) see *Table 5* who consistently acquire and consume organic food. Their observations illustrate the motivations, habits, and obstacles pertinent to organic consumption in the Kurdistan Region.

Table 5

Demographic Information on Customer's Focus Group

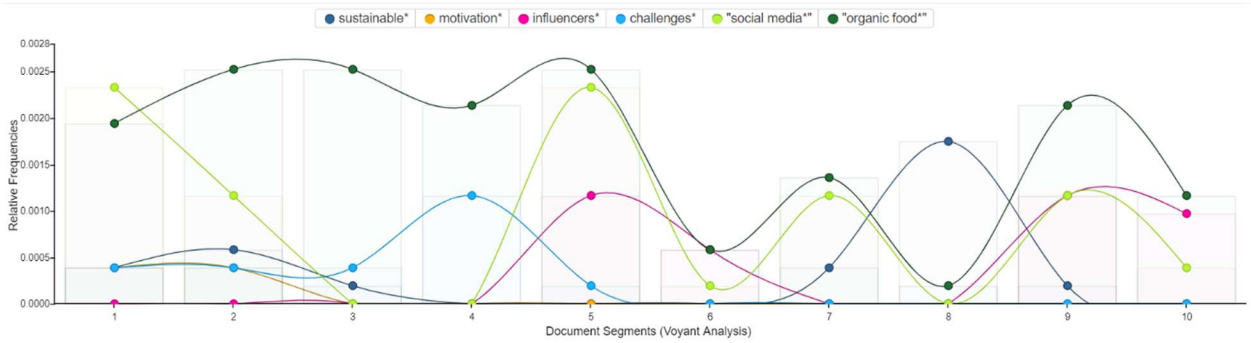
Customer's Focus Group Demographic Information						
Customer	**Gender**	**Age**	**Organic**	**Non-Organic**	**Interview Date**	**Interview Duration**
Customer A1	Male	37	✓		19/07/2024	69 Minutes
Customer A2	Male	39	✓			
Customer A3	Male	30	✓			
Customer A4	Female	37	✓			
Customer A5	Female	27	✓			
Customer A6	Female	49	✓			
Customer B1	Female	33		✓	19/07/2024	73 Minutes
Customer B2	Female	30		✓		
Customer B3	Female	31		✓		
Customer B4	Male	39		✓		
Customer B5	Male	21		✓		
Customer B6	Female	25		✓		

Note. Data collected by the author through focus group interviews (2024).

The above table shows the demographic information of two customer focus groups; each group consists of six customers. The first group buys and eats organic food, while the second does not. The author contacted them individually to get permission to do a focus group discussion, sent them the contest form, and came to an agreement on the date, time, and place. The author conducted an interview with an organic food customer's group on 19 July 2024, lasting 69 minutes. The other group was on the same day, but at a different time, and the duration of the discussion was 73 minutes. For analysis of their discussion, Voyant and ATLAS.ti were utilized, as it has been discussed in the following parts.

Figure 12

Understanding the Focus Group Findings on Organic Food Purchase



Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

Line charts in Voyant Tools can be used to graphically represent document clusters, events, search possibilities, and filtering options. They offer an interactive web application that allows users to explore data visually (Crouser et al., 2015). The line chart *Figure 12* demonstrates the proportions of six categories in ten document parts. The x-axis represents segments numbered from one to 10, while the y-axis measures relative frequency ranging from zero to 0.004 in increments of 0.0002. The figure displays six main categories represented by lines: sustainable, inspiration, influencers, challenges, social media, and organic food. Although the topics of "organic food" and "motivation" are initially highlighted, later sections of the text place greater importance on discussing "challenges" and "social media." The "sustainable" category exhibits a moderate and variable trend across the segments.

Figure 13

Word Cloud Analysis from Organic Food Focus Group

Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

Word clouds are often used for the purpose of condensing information found in texts. They can be created using tools such as Voyant Tools, which examine the occurrence rate of individual words in a text after eliminating stop words (Hirsch & Tian, 2013).

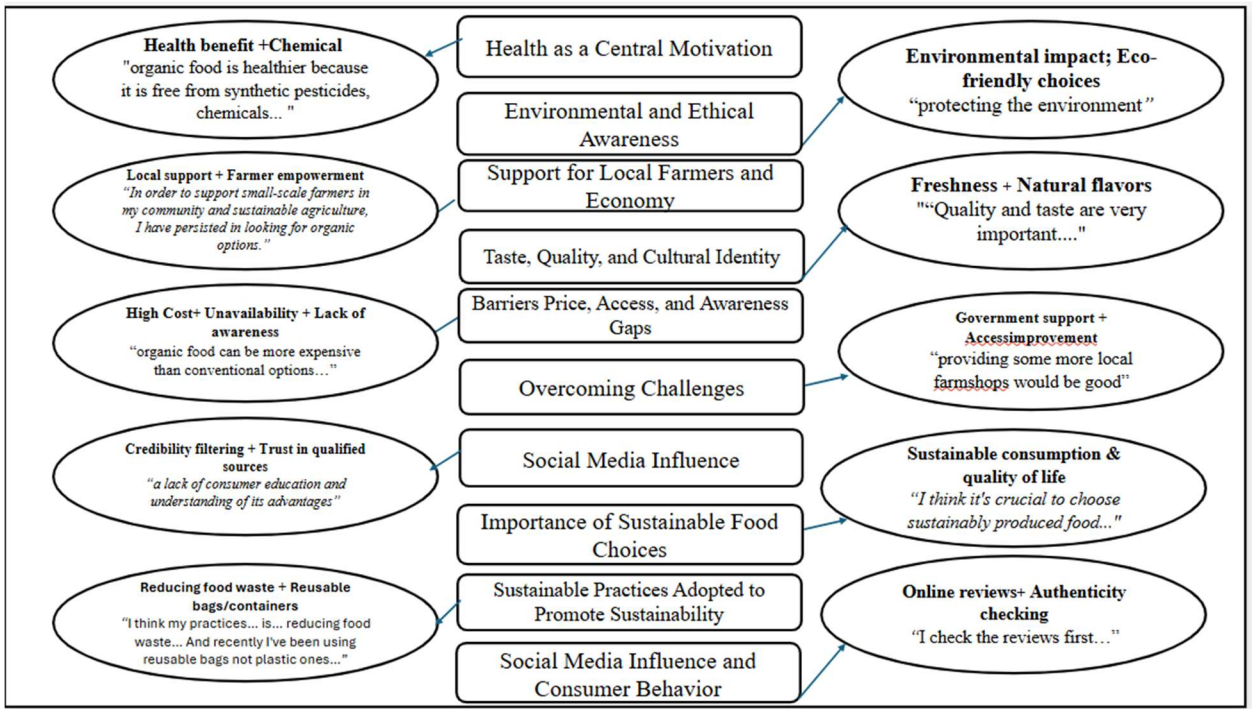
The word cloud see *Figure 13* provides a clear and concise visualization of the main themes related to organic food consumption, as expressed by the members of the focus group. The analysis focuses mostly on product qualities, specifically highlighting phrases such as "products," "quality," and "taste." Consumer behavior is a significant topic, emphasized by terms such as "purchasing" and "recommendations." In addition, the cloud highlights social and environmental issues by using terms like "sustainable" and "farmers." Trust and knowledge are identified as crucial elements, as seen using phrases such as "reviews" and "misleading" that reflect customer suspicion.

4.1.3.1 Motivations for Purchase

The focus group discussion revealed that the motivations for purchasing organic food among the participants are multifaceted, with health benefits, environmental sustainability, support for local farmers, and taste and quality emerging as the primary drivers.

Figure 14

Organic Food Customer Group quotes, cods and themes



Note. Developed by the author based on interview transcripts generated via Temi.com and analyzed through thematic coding in ATLAS.ti (2024).

Theme 1: Health as a Central Motivation

Codes: *Health Benefit, Chemical Avoidance, Preventive Health, Family Wellbeing*

Health benefits were consistently cited as a dominant factor influencing the purchase of organic food. Participants expressed a strong belief in the health advantages of consuming organic products, particularly in avoiding synthetic chemicals, pesticides, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). For instance, (A2) emphasized that one of the primary reasons for choosing organic food is the health benefits associated with avoiding GMOs and synthetic chemicals. This perspective aligns with findings in the literature, which indicate that health concerns are a significant driver of organic food purchase intentions. According to (Nasır and Karakaya ,2014), many consumers prioritize the health of their families, viewing organic food as a safer and more nutritious option.

Similarly, (A5, A6) highlighted the importance of health in their decision-making process. Noor noted, "*I always encourage people to eat organic food in order to live a healthy life and be free from diseases."* (A6) echoed this sentiment, stating, *"I believe organic food is healthier because it is free from synthetic pesticides, chemicals, and GMOs."* These comments are supported by (Yadav et al. ,2019), who assert that health-related benefits are among the foremost reasons consumers choose organic foods.

(A3, A4) also shared that health is their primary concern when purchasing organic food. (A3) mentioned that if health benefits are clear, then taste becomes an important factor. Meanwhile, (A4), motivated by a family history of health issues, stated, *"It's because of the health actually. My family has some health issue history, so I don't want to go through the same thing."* This reinforces the notion that health concerns are a central motivation for consumers, especially those with personal or familial health considerations.

Theme 2: Environmental and Ethical Awareness

Codes: *Sustainability, Environmental Impact, Eco Friendly Choices, Ethical Eating*

Environmental sustainability was another critical factor influencing the purchase of organic food among the participants. Many expressed a commitment to supporting environmentally friendly practices, which are consistent with the broader literature. (Shrestha ,2020) emphasizes that environmental concerns play a significant role in shaping consumer intentions towards organic foods.

(A2), articulated this by noting that, alongside health benefits, environmental considerations are a key reason for purchasing organic food, emphasizing the promotion of sustainable farming methods. (A6) also stressed the importance of environmental sustainability, stating, *"I am concerned about the environment. Organic farming practices are more sustainable, promoting soil health, reducing pollution, and conserving water."* This perspective aligns with the findings of (Wei et al. ,2022), who discuss how ecological motives enhance consumers' commitment to ethical purchasing decisions.

(A5), also connected her organic food choices to environmental protection, mentioning that her motivation includes *"protecting the environment."* These responses reflect a growing awareness

among consumers of the environmental impacts of their food choices, further supporting the notion that ecological consciousness is a significant motivator for purchasing organic products.

Theme 3: Support for Local Farmers and Economy

Codes: *Local Support, Community Development, Farmer Empowerment*

Supporting local farmers emerged as another important motivation for purchasing organic food. Several participants highlighted their desire to contribute to the local economy and support small-scale agricultural practices. Bewar mentioned her dedication to supporting local farmers and small enterprises, a sentiment echoed by (A1), who stated, *"In order to support small-scale farmers in my community and sustainable agriculture, I have persisted in looking for organic options."* This reflects the findings of (Czudec et al. ,2022), who report that a substantial percentage of consumers are motivated by the desire to support local economies through their organic food purchases.

Supporting local farmers is also tied to the broader trend of sustainable consumption practices, which is gaining traction among consumers who are increasingly aware of the socio-economic impacts of their food choices. The focus group's responses suggest that this motivation is not only about supporting local economies but also about fostering a connection to the land and cultural heritage, particularly for participants like (A1), who value traditional Kurdish recipes and the vibrant flavors of local organic produce.

Theme 4: Taste, Quality, and Cultural Identity

Codes: *Taste, Freshness, Cultural Heritage, Natural Flavors*

Taste and quality were pivotal factors in motivating the purchase of organic food, with several participants expressing a strong preference for the superior taste and quality of organic products. This is consistent with the research by (Vehapi and Mitić ,2021), which highlights that taste and freshness are significant factors that enhance the intent to purchase organic food.

(A2,A6) both emphasized the importance of taste and quality, with (A2) stating, *"Quality and taste are very important. In my opinion, eating organic food is still a wise decision even though it may be more expensive because it frequently tastes better and contains more nutrients."(*A6), similarly noted that organic produce *"often has a richer, more natural flavor compared to conventionally*

grown food." These observations align with (Baumann et al. ,2017), who found that parents are often motivated by health and taste concerns when selecting organic products for their families.

However, it is worth noting that while taste is important, some participants, such as (A4), indicated that health concerns take precedence, with (A4) stating, *"I don't care about the taste, to be honest with you."* This suggests that while taste is a significant factor, it may be secondary to health benefits for some consumers.

Theme 5: Barriers: Price and Access

Codes: *High Cost, Availability Issues, Lack of Awareness*

One of the most frequently mentioned barriers to purchasing organic food is its higher cost. Several participants noted that the premium price of organic products can be prohibitive, especially in a region like Kurdistan. (A2), for instance, pointed out that the high costs of organic food make it frequently unaffordable, stating that *"organic farming is expensive,"* which translates into higher retail prices. This sentiment is echoed in the literature, where research indicates that the high price of organic products is a significant deterrent for consumers. (Karthika and Senthilkumar ,2021) assert that the premium pricing associated with organic foods can reduce their accessibility, making it challenging for consumers to justify the additional cost, even when they recognize the health benefits. (A5), also identified cost as a barrier, noting that organic food is *"more expensive than other snacks,"* while (A6), similarly acknowledged that "organic food can be more expensive than conventional options," making it less accessible on a regular basis.

These views align with findings from (Krishnakumare and Niranjan ,2017), who found that price is a critical variable negatively affecting consumer attitudes toward organic food, often outweighing their health-conscious motivations. Availability was highlighted as another major challenge in purchasing organic food. Several participants mentioned difficulties in finding organic products, particularly outside major urban areas. (A1), noted that "some organic products are difficult to locate outside of larger cities," and (A6), shared a similar experience, stating, *"Organic products are not always easy to find in local markets and grocery stores."* This lack of availability restricts consumer choices and can significantly hinder the purchase of organic foods, particularly for those living in more remote areas. Literature supports this, with (Xie et al. ,2015) identifying the lack of availability as a primary barrier to increasing the market share of organic

products. When organic food is not readily accessible, even consumers who are motivated to buy it may be forced to opt for conventional alternatives, thus reducing the overall market penetration of organic products.

(A3), also raised concerns about availability, suggesting that government support could help improve access to organic food by making it more widely available across neighborhoods. This aligns with research indicating that logistical challenges, including supply chain issues and the concentration of organic products in certain markets, limit consumer access to these goods (Xie et al., 2015).

The discussion also revealed that a lack of consumer awareness is a significant barrier to purchasing organic food. (A2), noted that *"a lack of consumer education and understanding of its advantages"* makes organic food harder to locate, as demand may not be strong enough to support wider availability. (A6), similarly pointed out that the lack of awareness and information about the benefits of organic food can limit the variety and supply available locally.

This observation is consistent with findings in the literature, where (Rodríguez-Bermúdez et al. ,2020) argue that better-informed consumers are more likely to purchase organic products. They suggest that educational initiatives could play a crucial role in overcoming barriers to organic food purchases, as consumers who understand the health and environmental benefits of organic foods are more likely to seek them out and be willing to pay a premium. The lack of awareness can lead to skepticism and reluctance to buy organic products, as consumers may not fully appreciate the advantages of organic farming practices or may doubt the validity of organic labeling (Rodríguez-Bermúdez et al., 2020). Therefore, increasing consumer education could be a key strategy in overcoming this barrier.

Theme 6: Overcoming Challenges

Codes: *Supporting Local Farmers,* Government Suppor**t**

The participants also discussed potential strategies for overcoming these challenges, emphasizing the need for increased support for local farmers, enhanced government involvement, and better consumer education.

One strategy to address the challenges of price and availability is to focus on supporting local farmers and markets. (A4), suggested that *"providing some more local farm shops would be good*" and that focusing on local products could help make organic food more accessible and affordable. This approach could reduce costs associated with transportation and importation, making organic food cheaper for local consumers. (A6), also advocated for increasing local organic production through farmer support, which could help address both availability and price barriers. By bolstering local organic farming, consumers would have easier access to organic products, and the overall cost of these products could decrease as supply increases. Government intervention was another key strategy mentioned by the participants. (A3), suggested that government support could improve the availability of organic food by implementing regulations to ensure that organic products are available in every neighborhood. This could help overcome the logistical challenges that currently limit access to organic food, particularly in more remote areas.

Additionally, several participants emphasized the importance of raising awareness about the benefits of organic food. (A3), noted that "more awareness is needed" to educate consumers on why they should choose organic products over conventional ones. (A6), supported this idea, advocating for educational initiatives that inform consumers about the health and environmental benefits of organic food, which could increase demand and, in turn, encourage greater availability and variety.

Theme 7: Social Media Influence

Codes: *Trusting Information, Misleading Information*

The role of social media in shaping consumer knowledge and decisions about organic food was a focal point of the discussion. Participants provided diverse perspectives on how social media influences their purchase behavior, for example (A2), mentioned reliance on specific pages like 'Naturally_by_Maha' for information. This preference aligns with research by (Soon ,2020), which highlights the role of reputable social media pages in enhancing consumer awareness of organic products. According to (Soon ,2020), specialized pages with credible information can serve as trusted sources for consumers.

Moreover, (A5, A1), indicated that they actively use social media to learn about healthy food and organic products. (A5's) reliance on influencers for recipes is supported by (Shrestha ,2023), who

notes that social media influencers can significantly impact consumer behavior by providing engaging content that informs purchase decisions. (A1's), regular visits to social media for updates underscore the platform's role in keeping consumers informed, as highlighted by (Gautam et al. ,2021), who emphasize the importance of ongoing engagement in shaping consumer preferences. In addition, (A3's) more incidental interaction with social media, where organic food recommendations are secondary, reflects a less proactive but still significant role of social media in influencing consumer behavior. (Shrestha ,2023) supports this by noting that social media's influence varies among users based on their engagement levels. (A4's) focus on dieticians and doctors on social media underscores the importance of authoritative sources in building trust. This is consistent with findings from (Hermaren & Achyar ,2018), who argue that professional endorsements can significantly enhance the credibility of health-related information. (A6's) broad use of multiple social media platforms for discovering organic products highlights the extensive reach of social media in shaping consumer awareness. (Hermaren & Achyar ,2018) and (Gautam et al. ,2021) both support the idea that social media is an essential tool for connecting consumers with new products and like-minded communities.

The participants' trust in social media content varied, reflecting different strategies for evaluating credibility, (A2), trusted only specific, qualified influencers like (Mrs. Maha). This cautious approach underscores the need for credibility and aligns with (Gosal et al. ,2022), who emphasize that consumer trust is heavily influenced by the perceived qualifications and reliability of social media sources. (A5, A1), found value in influencer recommendations. (A5's) experience is supported by (Shrestha ,2023), which suggests that influencers can effectively build consumer trust through personal engagement and content that resonates with their audience. (A1's) positive experiences also highlight the role of social proof in reinforcing trust, as supported by (Jackson ,2017). Furthermore, (A3's) reliance on reviews to gauge authenticity reflects a common consumer strategy, supported by (Al-Zaman ,2021), who notes that online reviews play a critical role in validating product recommendations and reducing uncertainty. (A3's) practice of verifying information with viewer comments and external sources aligns with (Ansari et al. ,2022), who highlight the importance of cross-verification to avoid misinformation and ensure accurate consumer decisions. Moreover, (A6's) detailed approach to evaluating content credibility,

including checking testimonials and expert opinions, is supported by (Wu ,2022), who emphasizes the importance of multiple sources and thorough evaluation in countering misleading information.

Misleading information on social media was a significant concern, (A1) mentioned not encountering misleading information but acknowledged its potential presence. (A5) identified exaggerated claims as misleading, aligning with (Al-Zaman ,2021), who discusses the prevalence of misleading information in the context of health and wellness products. (A2) actively verifies information, reflecting a cautious approach supported by (Jackson ,2017), which underscores the importance of critical evaluation to avoid misleading claims. Additionally, (A4) shared an experience of misleading information, a concern echoed by (Gosal et al. ,2022), who discuss the spread of misinformation and its impact on consumer behavior.(A6's) strategy of checking credibility through comments and user feedback highlights an important consumer practice supported by (Ansari et al. ,2022) and (Wu ,2022), who advocate for vigilance and cross-referencing to mitigate the risks associated with misleading content.

Theme 8: Importance of Sustainable Food Choices

Codes: *Sustainable Consumption and Quality of Life, Educational Influence and Awareness,*

The discussion with the six focus group participants revealed a strong consensus on the importance of sustainable food choices. Participants emphasized various aspects of sustainability, including environmental protection, community well-being, and future generations' health. (A4), highlighted the significance of sustainability for environmental protection and future generations, focusing on local products and reducing food waste:

"Very important for the environment and future generations, focuses on local products and reducing food waste." (A5), underscored the health benefits and the importance of sustainability for future generations and environmental care: *"It is very important because of the healthy lifestyle, to take care of the future generation and of course it is very important to take care of our environment."* (A1), emphasized that choosing sustainably produced food is aligned with his values as a Kurd and contributes to both local community and environmental protection: *"I think it's crucial to choose sustainably produced food. Because protecting the environment is one of my core beliefs as a Kurd. Buying organic food is an investment in my neighborhood and the environment."* (A3), spoke to the broader impacts of sustainable choices, including benefits for

workers, the community, and animals*: "It is definitely very important to make sustainable choices for food consumption because I think if we make these choices for sustainability, I think we are helping the workers, we are helping the community themselves and animals."* (A2), articulated the moral and long-term benefits of sustainable decisions, emphasizing environmental protection and health: "It is crucial. Making sustainable decisions protects the environment and future generations. They frequently encourage moral food production methods and lead to healthy lifestyle decisions" (A6), outlined the multifaceted benefits of sustainable food choices, including environmental conservation, community well-being, and future health: "Making sustainable choices when it comes to my food consumption is very important to me. I believe that sustainable food choices help protect the environment by promoting practices that conserve natural resources, reduce pollution, and maintain soil health.

Additionally, supporting sustainable agriculture contributes to the well-being of local communities and ensures that future generations can enjoy healthy and nutritious food. By choosing sustainable options, I feel I am making a positive impact on the planet and encouraging more responsible food production practices."

The participants' responses align with the broader literature on sustainable consumption. Their views reflect a deep commitment to practices that support environmental sustainability, community health, and ethical food production. The participants' emphasis on sustainability to protect the environment and future generations is consistent with (Wyrwa's ,2023) assertion that sustainable consumer behavior enhances quality of life while minimizing ecological impact. (Wyrwa, 2023) highlights that sustainable consumption should address current needs while ensuring long-term ecological and social benefits, reflecting the participants' concerns for both present and future generations. (Hasibuan ,2023) underscores the role of education and consumer awareness in promoting sustainable consumption. The participants' statements about the importance of understanding and making informed choices resonate with (Hasibuan's, 2023) findings that informed consumers are more likely to engage in sustainable practices. This supports the idea that increased awareness and education are critical for fostering sustainable consumption behaviors. (A1's), view that sustainable food choices reflect his cultural values aligns with (Cherrier et al.'s ,2012) concept of sustainable development as a practice grounded in cultural and ethical considerations. This perspective highlights the importance of integrating cultural values

into sustainability practices to enhance their acceptance and impact. The discussion on sustainable practices promoting community well-being and reducing waste is supported by (Matharu et al. ,2020) and (Wu & Yu ,2021), who explore how lifestyle choices and sharing economy dynamics contribute to sustainable consumption. Participants' focus on local and communal aspects of sustainability highlights the relevance of these findings.

Theme 9: Sustainable Practices Adopted to Promote Sustainability

Codes: *Reducing Food Waste, Buying Local and Seasonal Produce.*

The focus group discussion revealed several individual practices that participants adopt to promote sustainability. These practices include reducing food waste, buying local and seasonal produce, opting for plant-based meals, and using reusable bags and containers. Each practice is aligned with broader sustainability goals and contributes to environmental conservation and resource efficiency. (A1), discussed his approach to sustainability, focusing on meal planning, composting, and supporting local farms: *"Through meal planning and composting, I lessen food waste. Purchasing locally grown produce also helps the environment. Another important sustainable practice that I believe in is supporting farms."* (A2), highlighted several strategies, including buying local foods, reducing food waste, and favoring seasonal over processed foods: *"I buy local foods, try to reduce food waste and support sustainable farming methods. I also eat less canned, frozen, and highly processed food and instead favor seasonal foods."* (A5), emphasized her preference for local products to maintain sustainability: *"I like to buy local products which consist of natural and fresh materials to have a sustainable practice."* (A3), described his efforts to reduce food waste and his shift towards using reusable bags*: "I think my practices for promoting sustainability in my diet is of course one of the biggest ones is reducing food waste. I only eat what I am capable of or even I sometimes try to force myself to finish my plate so that I don't waste it. And recently I've been using reusable bags not plastic ones so that I can use it again and again. I don't have to waste it and hurt the environment in general."* (A4), spoke about the importance of raising awareness for waste reduction and the role of local product promotion: "Reducing waste food is one way for promoting sustainability" (A6), outlined a comprehensive set of sustainable practices, including reducing food waste, buying local produce, eating seasonally, adopting plant-based meals, and using reusable materials.

Participants' emphasis on reducing food waste is supported by research indicating that effective food waste management is crucial for environmental conservation. Studies show that household food waste can be significantly reduced through practices such as meal planning and reusing leftovers (Begho & Zhao, 2022; Kilibarda et al., 2019). Education and awareness campaigns are critical in fostering these behaviors and enhancing overall waste reduction efforts (Chen & Chen, 2018; Chinie, 2020). The benefits of purchasing local and seasonal produce include reduced carbon footprints and enhanced food security. Local food systems generally have lower environmental impacts and provide fresher produce to communities (Ahmed et al., 2021). Seasonal eating aligns with natural growing cycles and minimizes the need for artificial preservation, contributing to both taste and nutritional value (Teng et al., 2021). Adopting plant-based diets is an effective strategy for lowering greenhouse gas emissions and resource use associated with food production. Research indicates that plant-based foods have a lower environmental impact compared to animal products (Bajželj et al., 2020; Conrad et al., 2018). This practice supports broader sustainability goals by reducing overall resource consumption and emissions. The use of reusable bags and containers helps reduce plastic waste and supports sustainable consumption practices. Studies show a growing preference for environmentally friendly packaging options, which contribute to minimizing single-use plastic waste (Pandey et al., 2022). Implementing policies that encourage these practices can further enhance sustainability efforts.

Theme 10: Social Media Influence and Consumer Behavior on Organic Food Purchases

Codes: *Social Media Influencers, Online Reviews, Awareness and Trust,*

The discussion with six customers about their use of social media for purchasing organic food reveals several key themes: the role of social media influencers, the impact of online reviews, and the importance of awareness and trust in decision-making processes. Participants in the discussion, such as (A1, A2 and A4), highlighted that social media influencers play a significant role in shaping their choices related to organic food. Influencers are perceived as sources of inspiration and information, which aligns with findings from (Chetioui et al. ,2022), who emphasize that health and wellness influencers are critical in facilitating consumer engagement with organic food markets. These influencers bridge the gap between consumers and organic food brands by providing relatable and persuasive content.

A common theme among the participants, including (A6, and A4), is the reliance on online reviews and influencer recommendations before purchasing new organic food products. This behavior is supported by research indicating that detailed product information and credible reviews enhance consumer willingness to pay for organic products (Jiumpanyarach, 2018). Participants' preference for verified reviews and their skepticism towards potentially biased influencer endorsements reflect a broader consumer trend towards seeking authenticity and reliability in online information (Bai et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2018).

The discussion also underscores the importance of awareness and trust in the purchasing process. Participants like (A3 and A4), expressed concerns about the authenticity of information and emphasized the need for credible sources and personal research. This mirrors findings that suggest consumer trust and transparency are crucial in influencing organic food purchases (Canova et al., 2020; Liang, 2023). The skepticism towards influencer marketing and the preference for thorough research underscore the role of consumer trust in decision-making.

In summary, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior towards organic food. Influencers, online reviews, and the dynamics of social networks significantly impact purchasing decisions. Consumers rely on these sources for inspiration, information, and verification, underscoring the need for brands to build trust and provide transparent, credible information. The integration of social media into marketing strategies must consider the diverse ways in which consumers engage with content and the potential challenges posed by misinformation. Effective marketing in the organic food sector requires a nuanced understanding of these factors and a commitment to authenticity and transparency.

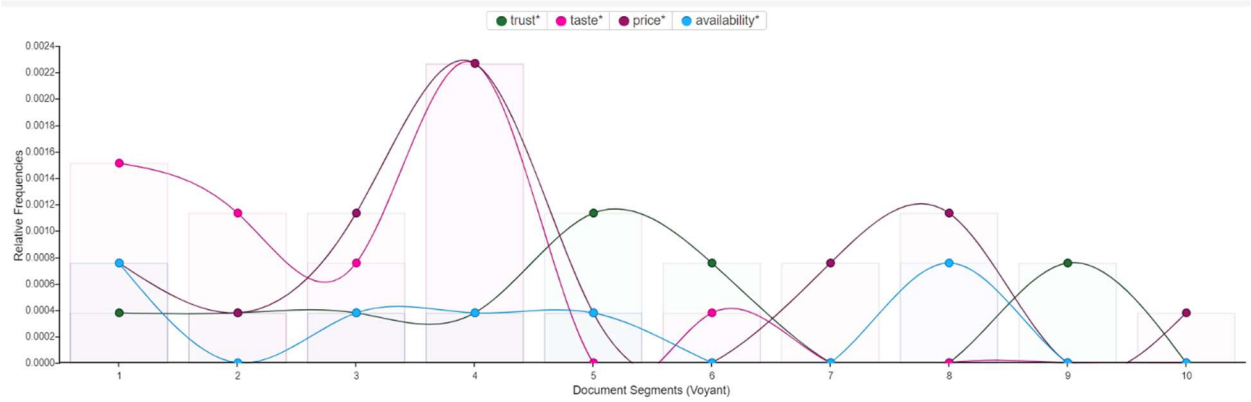
4.1.4 Thematic Analysis: Non-Organic Food Consumers (Focus Group B)

The focus group discussion with 6 customers who are not buying organic food, the discussion have been done online by using Zoom with 6 non organic food customers and the duration of the meeting was 73 minutes, before choosing them they were asked if they buy organic food or not. The convenience sampling as a method for selecting participants in the focus group study on non-organic food consumers has been selected. The decision to use convenience sampling was based on its convenience as well as accuracy in choosing individuals who were easily accessible and willing to volunteer to take part in the research. A prospective attendee by using another’s own networks, and community connections. After the meeting was done, the webpage (Temi.Com) was

used to transcribe the focus group discussion. After that (Voyant) tools have been used to find keywords and codes. Finally, Atlas.ti7 employed to analyze the focus group discussion with non-organic food customers in that tool (thematic analysis) was used in organic food focus group discussion.

Figure 15

Understanding the Focus Group Findings on Non-Organic Food Purchase



Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

Line charts in Voyant Tools can be used to graphically represent document clusters, events, search possibilities, and filtering options. They offer an interactive web application that allows users to explore data visually (Crouser et al., 2015).

The *Figure 15* provides a line chart indicating the relative frequencies of 10 document segments. The x-axis is numbered from 1 to 10, while the y-axis represents relative frequencies ranging from 0 to 0.004, increasing in increments of 0.0002. The graphic displays four separate lines, each representing a distinct category: The level of trust, represented by green, starts at a low frequency in segment 1, reaches its highest point in segment 4, and then gradually decreases until segment 10. The sensation of taste, namely the perception of the color magenta, begins at a moderate frequency during segment 1, reaches its highest point abruptly during segment 3, and subsequently diminishes fast, almost reaching a value of zero by segment 10. The price (blue) initiates at a high frequency in segment 1, gradually diminishes until segment 5, then rises again in segments 6 and 7, before declining to a low level in segment 10. The availability of documents in all sectors is consistently low and steady.

When examining these patterns, we recognize two main elements, Price and Availability, that have a substantial impact on customer behavior, as well as two other elements, Trust and Taste. Price is a significant determinant, as non-organic food is often seen as being more economical than organic alternatives. Availability refers to the convenience and extensive presence of non-organic food goods in different retail establishments. Conversely, Trust is perceived as a less important factor, as customers display doubt regarding the genuineness of organic food labeling and the assertions made by merchants. Additionally, participants have suggested that non-organic food often has a more appealing taste due to the inclusion of additional flavors, colors, and other additions.

Upon combining the results of the focus group and the Voyant analysis, it becomes evident that Price and Availability consistently have the greatest influence on consumer decision-making when it comes to non-organic food. This is supported by their higher and more consistent frequencies. Meanwhile, the levels of Trust and Taste exhibit greater variability, indicating that their impact may depend on the conditions or be less stable. The results emphasize that economic factors, convenience, and perceived product quality play a crucial role in influencing the consumption of non-organic food. Examining the document portions where Trust and Taste have higher frequency could yield a more profound understanding of the settings that enhance these perceptions.

Figure 16
Word Cloud from Non-Organic Customers Focus Group

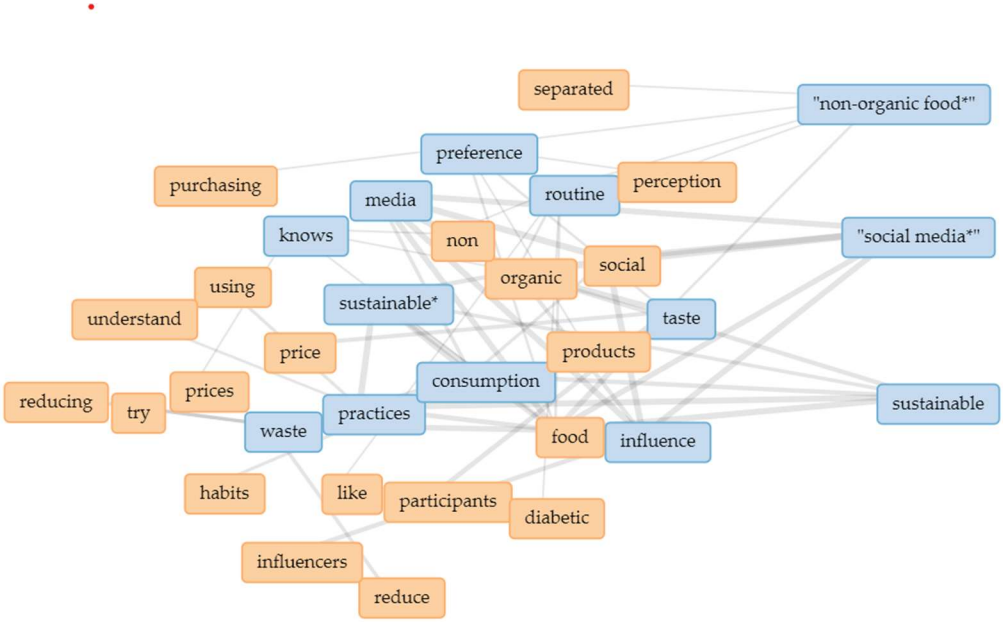
Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

The visual representation provides a rapid understanding of the most frequently occurring terms in the text, emphasizing important themes or subjects depending on their significance in the visualization (McNaught & Lam, 2014).

The word cloud *Figure 16* creates a unique visual representation of the main themes and ideas associated with the consumption of organic food. The significant positioning and higher font size of the term "organic" emphasize its vital importance. Clusters of surrounding words expose several elements of the topic. The terms "consumers," "perception," "decision," "choices," and "buying" point out the focus on consumer behavior and the factors that impact their purchasing decisions. On the other hand, words like "taste," "health," and "benefits" indicate the concerns and motivations that drive consumer interest in organic food. Furthermore, terms such as "sustainable," "environment," "social," and "impact" emphasize the environmental and social aspects related to the consumption of organic food. The inclusion of words like "waste" and "practices" indicates a wider concern for the effects of food systems on the environment. The terms "media," "marketing," "influence," and "social" underscore the substantial impact of marketing and social media on shaping consumer perceptions of organic food. Meanwhile, words such as "labels" and "trust" emphasize the significance of transparent communication and the imperative to establish consumer confidence in organic products. The presence of terms such as "price," "affordable," and "expensive" suggests that the cost of organic food continues to play a crucial role in shaping customer choices. The word cloud successfully represents the various aspects of organic food consumption, encompassing important factors such as consumer behavior, environmental and social impact, marketing influence, and economic considerations.

Figure 17

Top Linked Keywords from Non-Organic Customers Focus Group



Note. Created by the author using Voyant Tools (2024).

Linked Keywords are terms or phrases that have a strong association with a specific group of genes or subjects, determined by analyzing how often they appear together in textual data. This approach to keyword enrichment involves identifying keywords that are strongly associated with a certain group of genes based on their frequent appearance together in sources such as Medline abstracts (Frijters et al., 2008). Researchers can get insights into the relationships between distinct concepts or entities within a dataset by detecting these interconnected keywords.

The "Linked Keywords" feature in Voyant Tool see *Figure 17* visually represents the connections between words in a text corpus by presenting the frequency of specific keywords appearing near each other in the studied documents or text segments. This feature highlights multiple fundamental principles. Initially, it emphasizes elements of consumer behavior and decision-making, use terms like "purchasing," "preference," "perception," "routine," and "habits" to illuminate the processes by which consumers make choices and adhere to established patterns of food consumption. Terms such as "knows," "understand," and "try" implying a continuous endeavor to acquire knowledge and explore other options when it comes to making food choices. The research highlights the theme of product and consumption, specifically focusing on non-organic food consumption. Key terms

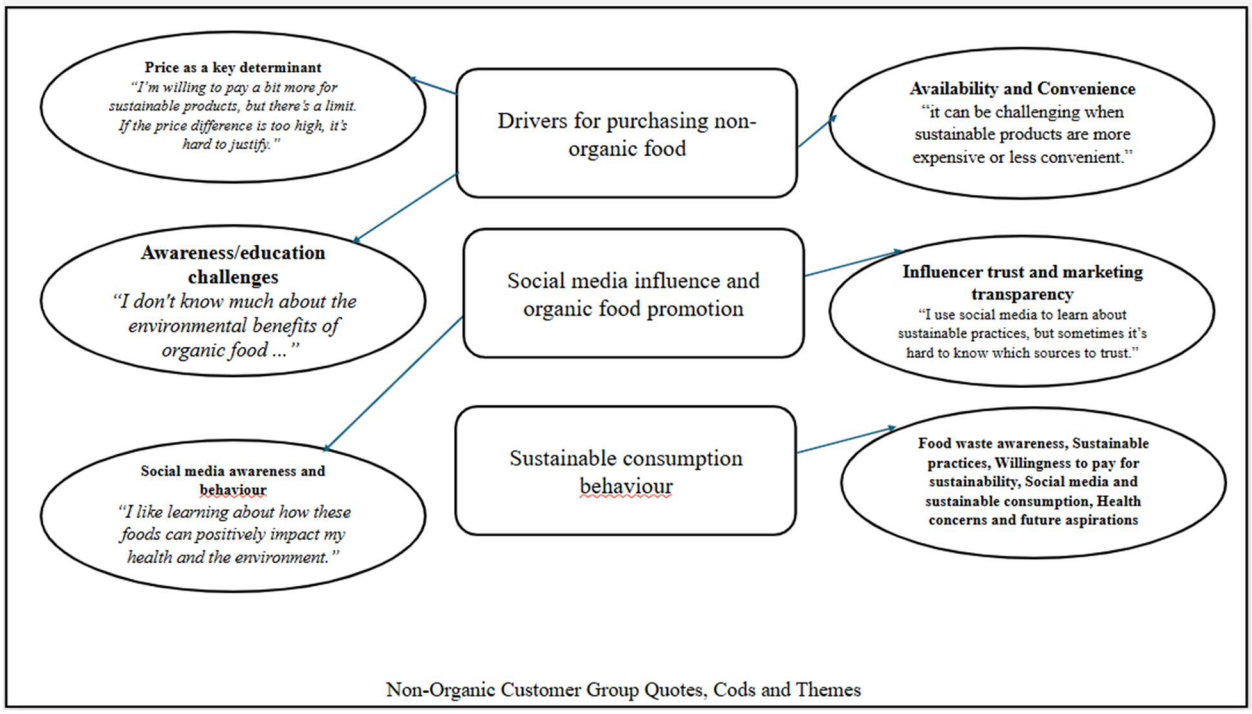
such as "non-organic food," "products," "consumption," "food," and "taste" are used to center the discussion around this fundamental topic. Furthermore, the inclusion of phrases such as "price," "prices," "reducing," "waste," and "sustainable" suggests a focus on economic considerations and environmental sustainability. Ultimately, this characteristic highlights the significance of external factors on customer behavior, as evidenced by the inclusion of terminology such as "media," "social media," "influencers," and "participants." The terms "sustainable" and "practices" imply a wider framework that encompasses environmental and social responsibilities.

4.1.4.1 Results and Discussion

The focus group discussions revealed that the primary drivers for purchasing non-organic food products among participants are largely influenced by factors such as price, availability, taste preferences, and skepticism towards organic food claims. These insights align with broader consumer behavior patterns observed in existing literature, which emphasize the importance of economic considerations, convenience, and consumer trust in shaping food purchasing decisions.

Figure 18

Non-Organic Customer Group Quotes, Cods and Themes



Note. Developed by the author based on interview transcripts generated via Temi.com and analyzed through thematic coding in ATLAS.ti (2024).

Thems1: Drivers for purchasing non-organic food

Code1: *Price as a Key Determinant*

Price emerged as a significant determinant in the decision to purchase non-organic food. Participants consistently cited the higher cost of organic food as a barrier to regular consumption, with some explicitly stating that they would consider purchasing organic products more frequently if they were more affordable. This price sensitivity is reflective of broader economic pressures that influence consumer behavior, particularly in regions or populations where budget constraints are a prevalent concern. The focus group responses resonate with findings by (Melgaard, 2024), who notes that the affordability of non-organic food plays a crucial role in driving consumer choices, particularly among price-sensitive demographics.

Code2: Availability and Convenience

The availability of non-organic food products was also highlighted as a critical factor influencing purchasing decisions. Participants expressed frustration with the limited selection and accessibility of organic food, noting that non-organic options are more readily available in local supermarkets and retail outlets. This ease of access contributes to the higher sales of non-organic products, as consumers tend to prioritize convenience in their shopping routines. The focus on availability supports (Melgaard, 2024) observations that convenience is a key driver of non-organic food purchases, particularly in markets where organic products are less accessible.

Code 3: Taste Preferences and Consumer Perceptions

Taste was another important consideration for participants, with several notes that they did not perceive a significant difference between the taste of organic and non-organic foods. Some participants even expressed a preference for the taste of non-organic options, which they attributed to added flavors and preservatives. This finding aligns with research by (Sörqvist et al. ,2015), which suggests that the perceived taste difference between organic and non-organic foods may be more a result of consumer expectations than actual sensory differences. The subjective nature of taste highlights the complexity of consumer preferences and the role that personal experience plays in food choices.

Code4: Skepticism and Trust Issues

Skepticism towards the authenticity and benefits of organic food was a recurring theme in the discussions. Participants expressed doubts about the validity of organic labels and questioned whether organic products truly offer superior health benefits. This lack of trust in organic certification processes reflects broader concerns about transparency and reliability in the food industry. (Dumortier et al. ,2017) emphasize that trust is a crucial factor in consumer decisions, particularly when it comes to purchasing organic products. The focus group findings suggest that skepticism may be a significant barrier to organic food adoption, reinforcing the need for clearer communication and stronger certification standards to build consumer confidence.

Code5: Challenges Related to Awareness and Education

The discussions also revealed a lack of awareness and understanding of the benefits associated with organic food. Some participants admitted to being uncertain about the real advantages of organic products, citing conflicting information and a general lack of knowledge. This gap in

awareness may contribute to the preference for non-organic foods, as consumers are less likely to choose organic options if they do not fully understand their potential benefits. Research by (Doorn and Verhoef ,2015) highlights the importance of education and marketing in increasing consumer awareness and shifting perceptions towards organic food. The focus group findings suggest that enhancing consumer education could play a crucial role in promoting organic food consumption.

The findings from this focus group study suggest that economic factors, convenience, and taste preferences are primary drivers of non-organic food purchases, while skepticism and lack of awareness about organic products pose significant challenges. To address these issues, it is essential to implement targeted strategies that focus on making organic food more affordable and accessible. Additionally, improving consumer education and building trust through transparent certification processes could help mitigate skepticism and encourage more consumers to consider organic options.

By integrating these insights with existing research, a multifaceted approach is necessary to influence consumer behavior and increase the adoption of organic food products. Future studies should continue to explore the complex interplay between economic, social, and psychological factors in food purchasing decisions to develop more effective interventions that promote sustainable and healthy eating practices.

Theme2: Social Media Influence and Organic Food Promotion

The influence of social media on consumer food choices, particularly regarding organic products, is significant and multifaceted. Social media platforms have become a primary source of information and inspiration for many consumers, with influencers playing a pivotal role in shaping perceptions and purchasing behaviors. Participants in the focus group indicated that they are frequently exposed to organic food promotions on social media, which underscores the growing presence of these products in digital marketing spaces. For instance, some participants acknowledged that they were introduced to organic brands and products through posts by health influencers on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. This exposure often leads to increased curiosity and a willingness to try new organic products, as evidenced by comments from participants (B4 and B5), who discovered organic brands through influencer posts and were

motivated to make purchases based on these recommendations, but as they mentioned earlier due to the price and unavailability, they are not able to buy it.

This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the power of social media in driving consumer awareness and engagement with organic products. Research by (Raj et al, 2023) and (Devi, 2023) supports the notion that social media, through influencers, effectively communicates the health benefits of organic food, thereby enhancing consumer interest and purchase intentions. The frequent mention of influencers like (Maha and Joanna) by the focus group participants further highlights the role these digital personalities play in introducing and promoting organic food products to a broader audience.

Code1: Influencer Trust and Marketing Transparency

While social media influencers significantly impact consumer behavior, the level of trust that consumers place in these influencers varies. Trust emerged as a critical factor in determining whether participants would act on the recommendations made by influencers. For example, some participants expressed skepticism about the authenticity of influencer endorsements, questioning whether these promotions were genuinely based on personal experience or merely sponsored content. Interviewee 2 and 5's comments reflect this skepticism, pointing to the need for greater transparency in social media marketing.

This skepticism is consistent with the findings of (Lee et al., 2019) and (Lăzăroiu et al., 2019), who argue that consumer trust in organic products is heavily influenced by the perceived credibility of the information sources. If influencers are perceived as authentic and genuinely invested in the products they promote, consumers are more likely to follow their recommendations. Conversely, if there is a perception that content is driven purely by sponsorship, it can diminish the effectiveness of these promotions. Participants (B1 and B3), who expressed a desire for more transparency in social media marketing, underscore the importance of clear disclosure about sponsored content to maintain consumer trust. Moreover, the emotional connection that influencers can establish with their audience plays a crucial role in building trust and driving consumer behavior. Influencers who share personal stories, experiences, and the benefits they've reaped from using organic products are more likely to resonate with consumers, leading to higher engagement

and purchase intentions. This is corroborated by (Zheng et al., 2022) and (Lian et al., 2016), who highlight the effectiveness of emotional appeals in marketing organic products.

Code2: Social Media and Consumer Awareness and Behavior

The role of social media in raising awareness about organic food is also evident from the discussions. Participants who follow specific food bloggers, nutritionists, or organic-focused accounts reported gaining valuable information about the benefits of organic products, new recipes, and updates on new products. This kind of ongoing education through social media is vital in bridging the knowledge gap that often exists among consumers regarding the advantages of organic foods. The continuous flow of information provided by trusted sources can help demystify organic products, making them more approachable and desirable to consumers.

This finding is supported by research of (Mahajan, 2019) and (Roy et al., 2022), who emphasize the importance of sustained online engagement and the role of consistent messaging in building a loyal consumer base. Social media's ability to provide a platform for continuous learning and interaction helps to cultivate informed consumers who are more likely to make organic food purchases.

Theme3: Sustainable Consumption Behavior

Sustainable consumption behavior in organic food is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in addressing environmental concerns, minimizing food waste, and promoting sustainable practices. The intersection of these elements highlights the importance of consumer attitudes and behaviors in fostering a more sustainable food system.

Code1: Environmental Concerns

Environmental concerns are paramount in the discourse surrounding organic food consumption. Organic agriculture is often viewed as a viable solution to mitigate the adverse environmental impacts associated with conventional farming practices. It promotes biodiversity, reduces chemical inputs, and enhances soil health, thereby contributing to a more sustainable food system (Müller et al., 2017). However, the feasibility of organic agriculture is contested, necessitating a balanced approach that considers both environmental benefits and economic viability (Müller et

al., 2017). Participants had varying levels of awareness regarding environmental issues related to food production. While (B5) strongly emphasized the importance of sustainable food practices, Interviewee 5 admitted a lack of knowledge: *"I don't know much about the environmental benefits of organic food specifically."* (B2) expressed a strong concern for the environment, saying, *"Not using plastic bags because it affects the environment a lot is one of the practices for sustainable food consumption."* This highlights the diverse levels of understanding and concern among participants, indicating a need for more education in some areas. (B6) highlighted a crucial point regarding environmental awareness: *"I believe that understanding the impact of our choices on the environment is essential, but it's not always easy to prioritize when other concerns, like cost, come into play."* This reflects the challenge many consumers face in balancing environmental concerns with practical considerations.

Code2: Food Waste Awareness

Food waste is a significant issue that exacerbates environmental degradation. It is estimated that approximately one-third of food produced globally is wasted, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and resource depletion (Wilewska-Bien et al., 2018). Research indicates that consumers who are aware of the environmental implications of food waste are more likely to engage in behaviors that reduce waste (Chen & Chen, 2018). For instance, studies have shown that messaging campaigns can effectively encourage individuals to adopt practices that minimize food waste, such as taking smaller portions and returning for seconds (Ahmed et al., 2018). Furthermore, organic food consumers tend to exhibit lower food waste behaviors compared to conventional consumers, suggesting that their purchasing choices are influenced by a commitment to sustainability (Hamzaoğlu & Göktuna, 2022).

Food waste was recognized as a significant issue by most participants. (B4 and B5) both discussed strategies to reduce waste, such as meal planning and creative use of leftovers. (B2) took a practical approach, stating, *"Food is limited for me. I take what I need. Why, why the food will be waste."* This perspective reflects a direct, resource-conscious attitude towards food consumption. (B1) also emphasized the societal responsibility to reduce food waste: *"We should take care more of our society and environments by raising awareness of eating healthy food and reducing food waste."*

(B3's) focus on the growing health crises also ties into the broader implications of sustainable food consumption.

Code3: Sustainable Practices

Sustainable practices in food consumption extend beyond individual behavior to encompass broader systemic changes. The transition towards a circular economy in the food system is essential for addressing food waste and promoting sustainable consumption (Jurgilevich et al., 2016). Additionally, educational initiatives aimed at raising awareness about food waste and its environmental impacts are crucial for fostering a culture of sustainability among consumers (Chen & Chen, 2018).

Participants shared their sustainable food consumption practices. (B2) again highlighted his avoidance of plastic bags as a key practice. (B4 and B5) both mentioned using reusable bags and buying in bulk to reduce packaging waste. (B1's) broader perspective on social responsibility tied sustainable practices back to community well-being and environmental health, echoing the need for widespread adoption of such practices. (B6) discussed the importance of making sustainable choices but also pointed out the barriers: *"I think it's important to support sustainable practices, but it can be challenging when sustainable products are more expensive or less convenient."* This statement underscores the need for making sustainable options more accessible to encourage broader adoption.

Code4: Willingness to Pay for Sustainability

The desire of participants to pay more for sustainable products was mixed. (B4 and B5) both expressed that lower prices and better availability would make them more likely to consider organic food. (B2) pointed out the broader societal benefits of organic food, particularly in relation to health: *"If we change our routine from non-organic food to organic food, this will be much more beneficial for our health."* (B3), concerned about the increasing rates of diseases like cancer, added, *"Cancer is separating. We didn't have so many cases before, but now we have a lot of cases, so we must make changes"* This indicates a recognition of the health benefits of sustainable products, even if economic factors remain a barrier. (B6) also noted that cost is a significant factor: *"I'm willing to pay a bit more for sustainable products, but there's a limit. If the price difference*

is too high, it's hard to justify." This sentiment reflects a common challenge where consumers are interested in sustainability but are often constrained by budget.

Code5: Social media and Sustainable Consumption

Social media's influence on participants' consumption behaviors was evident. (B5) found recipe tutorials and educational posts particularly engaging. (B2) shared a similar sentiment: *"I like learning about how these foods can positively impact my health and the environment."* (B1) added that raising awareness through social media could significantly influence consumer behavior towards more sustainable choices. This demonstrates the powerful role that digital platforms can play in shaping consumer attitudes and practices. (B6) added that she relies on social media for information but also warned of potential misinformation: *"I use social media to learn about sustainable practices, but sometimes it's hard to know which sources to trust."* This highlights both the potential and the challenges of using social media to promote sustainable consumption.

Code6: Health Concerns and Future Aspirations

Health concerns, particularly the rise in diseases like cancer, were a major motivator for participants considering organic foods. (B2) expressed concern about the long-term health implications of non-organic food, emphasizing the need for a dietary shift: *"When we get older, everyone should use organic food because when we reach 40 and above, there are so many diseases like hypertension and diabetes. It's all due to non-organic food."* (B3) echoed these concerns, highlighting the growing prevalence of cancer: *"Cancer is spreading. We didn't have so many cases before, but now we have a lot of cases, so we must make changes"* This underscores the critical role of health considerations in driving sustainable consumption. (B6) also linked health to food choices, stating: *"I believe that eating organic food is better for our health, but it's not always affordable or easy to find."* This emphasizes the ongoing tension between health aspirations and the accessibility of organic products.

The analysis reveals that while participants are generally aware of the importance of sustainable consumption, their levels of commitment and knowledge vary. Economic factors, convenience, and the influence of social media significantly impact their behaviors. The inclusion of health concerns, especially regarding the rise of chronic diseases, further emphasizes the need for accessible and affordable sustainable food options. Increasing awareness through targeted

education and leveraging social media can help promote sustainable practices and organic food consumption more effectively.

Section 2: Quantitative Analysis

4.2.1 Overview of the Quantitative Approach

This study's quantitative component aimed to investigate the relationship between social media marketing, sustainable consumption behaviors, and the desire to purchase organic food. Researcher collected data through a structured online survey through Google Forms, which allowed for efficient data collection and analysis, distributed to residents of three principal cities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah. A total of 565 valid responses were obtained. The survey included Likert Scale questions grounded in known academic principles which can be found in appendix (B). SPSS was utilized for fundamental statistical analysis and reliability assessment, whilst Smart PLS software was employed for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This enabled the researchers to meticulously analyze both direct and indirect impacts among the study's variables, so validating the robustness and precision of the overall model.

Table 6

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	315	55.8
	Female	250	44.2
	Total	565	100
Age	Less than 30 years	172	30.4
	30-40 years	206	36.5
	41-50 years	141	25
	More than 50	46	8.1
	Total	565	100
Education Level	Technical Education or below	51	9
	Bachelor	220	38.9
	Postgraduate	294	52
	Total	565	100

Income	Less than 500$	181	32
	500-999$	171	30.3
	1000-1500$	132	23.4
	More than 1500$	81	14.3
	Total	565	100
Residence	Urban	503	89
	Rural	62	11
	Total	565	100

Note. This table presents the demographic profile of the survey of respondents, including gender, age, education level, income, and place of residence. Data collected by the author (2024).

Table 6 displays the demographic variables of the respondents, revealing that 315 of them were male. The majority (206 respondents) are aged 30–40, showing strong interest in social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intentions for organic food. 172 respondents (less than 30 years old), 141 respondents (41–50 years old), and 46 respondents (50+ years old). The majority of participants, specifically 52%, hold a postgraduate degree, indicating that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to purchase organic food. Another demographic variable is monthly income. The highest number of respondents are those whose income is less than $500, which is 32. There isn't much else than the scores of other participants; those whose monthly income ranged between $500 and $999, and this was followed by those whose income is between $1000 and $1500, which was 132 participants, and the fewer number of participants were those whose income is more than $1500, which was 81 participants. The final demographic variable pertains to residence, with most respondents (503) residing in urban areas, and the remaining participants residing in rural areas.

4.2.2 Results of the Questionnaire Survey

In our questionnaire survey, we examined social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intentions of organic food in Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Marketing Dimensions

Entertainment

Q	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)		Mean	Standard Deviation
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
E1	121	21.4	224	39.6	126	22.3	54	9.6	40	7.1	3.588	1.1353
E2	83	14.7	215	38.1	142	25.1	89	15.8	36	6.4	3.389	1.1095
E3	92	16.3	222	39.3	153	27.1	63	11.2	35	6.2	3.483	1.0827
E4	149	26.4	232	41.1	98	17.3	59	10.4	27	4.8	3.738	1.1039
SUM/ Average		19.7		39.5		22.9		11.75		6.1	**3.549**	**1.1078**
	59.2				**22.9**		**17.9**					
Customization												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
C1	112	19.8	234	41.4	133	23.5	56	9.9	30	5.3	3.598	1.0755
C2	83	14.7	209	37.0	150	26.5	84	14.9	39	6.9	3.376	1.1153
C3	151	26.7	199	35.2	130	23.0	55	9.7	30	5.3	3.682	1.1272
C4	102	18.1	253	44.8	123	21.8	64	11.3	23	4.1	3.613	1.0355
SUM/ Average		**19.8**		**39.6**		**23.7**		**11.5**		**5.4**	3.567	1.0883
	59.4				**23.7**		**16.9**					
Engagement and Interaction												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		

EI1	74	13.1	210	37.2	166	29.4	84	14.9	31	5.5	3.375	1.0606
EI2	93	16.5	196	34.7	164	29.0	79	14.0	33	5.8	3.419	1.0977
EI3	93	16.5	206	36.5	144	25.5	88	15.6	34	6.0	3.418	1.1168
EI4	109	19.3	195	34.5	140	24.8	70	12.4	51	9.0	3.427	1.1926
SUM/ Average		**16.4**		**35.7**		**27.2**		**14.2**		**6.5**	**3.409**	**1.1169**
	52.1				**27.2**		**20.7**					

Trendiness												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
T1	85	15.0	198	35.0	186	32.9	57	10.1	39	6.9	3.412	1.0776
T2	147	26.0	244	43.2	104	18.4	45	8.0	25	4.4	3.784	1.0566
T3	132	23.4	243	43.0	119	21.1	54	9.6	17	3.0	3.742	1.0161
T4	168	29.7	229	40.5	99	17.5	46	8.1	23	4.1	3.837	1.0678
SUM/ Average		**23.5**		**40.4**		**22.5**		**9**		**4.6**	**3.693**	**1.0545**
	63.9				**22.5**		**13.6**					

Electronic Word of Mouth												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
EWM1	92	16.3	188	33.3	134	23.7	100	17.7	51	9.0	3.301	1.1976
EWM2	97	17.2	191	33.8	149	26.4	73	12.9	55	9.7	3.358	1.1908
EWM3	94	16.6	207	36.6	142	25.1	76	13.5	46	8.1	3.402	1.1545

EWM4	92	16.3	178	31.5	157	27.8	84	14.9	54	9.6	3.301	1.1871
SUM/ Average		**16.6**		**33.8**		**25.8**		**14.7**		**9.1**	**3.340**	**1.1825**
	50.4				**25.8**		**23.8**					

Note. This table presents the frequency distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the social media marketing dimensions: Entertainment (E), Customization (C), Engagement and Interaction (EI), Trendiness (T), and Electronic Word of Mouth (EWM). Data were collected by the author (2024).

The results of *Table 7* represent the frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the dimensions of social media marketing from (E1- EWM4), which represent the phrases of (entertainment, customization, engagement and interaction, trendiness, and electronic word of mouth). The rate of those who agreed on the entertainment was (59.2%), while the rate of those who were neutral was (22.9%), and the rate of those who disagreed was (17.9%) with an arithmetic mean (3.567) and a standard deviation of (1.0883), which means that the respondents agreed with this variable. The positive value of this variable was contributed by (E4), which indicates gathering information about organic products through social media is fun, with an arithmetic mean of (3.738) and a standard deviation of (1.1039). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (E2), which indicates that social media content about organic products is entertaining and interesting, with a mean (3.389) and a standard deviation (1.1095). Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

Customization was agreed upon by (59.4%), neutral by (23.7%), and disagreed upon by (16.9%), with an arithmetic mean of (3.549) and a standard deviation of (1.1078), indicating compliance. With an arithmetic mean of (3.682) and a standard deviation of (1.1272), this variable's positive value comes from (C3). This means that social media platforms for organic products can be accessed at any time and from anywhere. As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (C2), which indicates that social media provides services tailored to my needs when searching for organic products, with a mean (3.376) and a standard deviation (1.1153).

The engagement and interaction rate were (52.1%), the neutral rate was (27.2%), and the disagree rate was (20.7%), with an arithmetic mean of (3.409) and a standard deviation of (1.1169), suggesting that respondents agreed with this variable. The positive value of this variable was contributed by (EI4), which indicates I share my experiences about purchasing organic products with others via social media, with an arithmetic mean of (3.427) and a standard deviation of (1.1926). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (EI1), which indicates that I engage in activities related to obtaining organic food products through social media platforms, with a mean of (3.375) and a standard deviation of (1.0606).

The respondents agreed with trendiness at (13.6%), were neutral at (22.5%), and disagreed at (20.7%), with an arithmetic mean of (3.693) and a standard deviation of (1.0545). The positive value of this variable was contributed by (T4), which social media helps me discover new organic products as they emerge., with an arithmetic mean of (3.837) and a standard deviation of (1.0678). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (T1), which indicates that social media content reflects the latest trends in organic products., with a mean (3.412) and a standard deviation (1.0776).

With an arithmetic mean of (3.340) and a standard deviation of (1.1825), the respondents agreed with electronic word of mouth for (50.4%), neutral for (25.8%), and disagreed for (23.8%). The positive value of this variable was contributed by (EWM3), which indicates I rely on recommendations from others via social media before deciding to purchase organic products., with an arithmetic mean of (3.402) and a standard deviation of (1.1545). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (EWM1) and (EWM4), which indicates that I share my opinions about organic products seen in social media ads with friends. And I share my personal experiences with organic products on social media to guide others, with a mean (3.301) and a standard deviation (1.1976- 1.1871).

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Sustainable Consumption Behavior Dimensions

Quality of Life well-being

Q	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)		Mean	Standard Deviation
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
QL1	152	26.9	210	37.2	135	23.9	42	7.4	26	4.6	3.743	1.0750
QL2	110	19.5	228	40.4	145	25.7	58	10.3	24	4.2	3.605	1.0442
QL3	129	22.8	229	40.5	128	22.7	55	9.7	24	4.2	3.680	1.0611
QL4	87	15.4	172	30.4	163	28.8	87	15.4	56	9.9	3.260	1.1856
SUM/ Average		21.2		37.1		25.3		10.7		5.7	**3.572**	**1.0914**
	58.3				**25.3**		**16.4**					
Care for Environmental well-being												
Q	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)		Mean	Standard Deviation
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
CE1	203	35.9	185	32.7	106	18.8	52	9.2	19	3.4	3.887	1.0986
CE2	181	32.0	209	37.0	118	20.9	39	6.9	18	3.2	3.878	1.0388
CE3	146	25.8	204	36.1	127	22.5	57	10.1	31	5.5	3.667	1.1279
CE4	250	44.2	171	30.3	88	15.6	27	4.8	29	5.1	4.037	1.1190
SUM/ Average		**34.5**		**34**		**19.5**		**7.8**		**4.3**	**3.867**	**1.0960**
	68.5				**19.5**		**12.1**					
Care for the future Generation												
Q	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Neutral (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)		Mean	Standard Deviation
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
CFG1	179	31.7	215	38.1	120	21.2	29	5.1	22	3.9	3.885	1.0362
CFG2	207	36.6	198	35.0	95	16.8	38	6.7	27	4.8	3.920	1.1088
CFG3	183	32.4	199	35.2	119	21.1	38	6.7	26	4.6	3.841	1.0929

CFG4	162	28.7	193	34.2	135	23.9	46	8.1	29	5.1	3.731	1.1149
SUM/ Average		**32.4**		**35.6**		**20.8**		**6.7**		**4.6**	**3.844**	**1.0882**
	68				**20.8**		**11.3**					

Note. This table presents the frequency distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the Sustainable Consumption Behavior dimensions: Quality of Life well-being (QL), Care for Environmental well-being (CE), Care for the future Generation (CFG). Data were collected by the author (2024).

From (QL1–CFG4), which stands for "Quality of Life well-being," "Care for Environmental well-being," and "Care for the future generation," *Table 8* shows the frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the dimensions of sustainable consumption behavior. The quality-of-life well-being rate was 58.3%, neutral was 25.3%, and disagreed was 16.4%, with an arithmetic mean (3.572) and a standard deviation of (1.0914). The positive value of this variable was contributed by (QL1), which indicates I try to make my purchases more organic, with an arithmetic mean of (3.743) and a standard deviation of (1.0750). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (QL4), which indicates that I practice saving and recycling organic products at home., with a mean (3.260) and a standard deviation (1.1856). Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

Additionally, 68.5% of respondents agreed on environmental well-being, 19.5% were neutral, and 12.1% disagreed, with an arithmetic mean (3.867) and a standard deviation of (1.0960). The positive value of this variable was contributed by CE4, which indicates I am concerned about the depletion of natural resources with an arithmetic mean of 4.037 and a standard deviation of 1.1190. As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by CE1, which indicates I care about the natural environment because I contribute to raising awareness about environmental issues and reducing waste with a mean of 3.667 and a standard deviation of 1.1279. Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

Additionally, 68% of respondents agreed on future generation care, 20.8% were neutral, and 11.3% disagreed, with an arithmetic mean (3.844) and a standard deviation of (1.0882). The positive value of this variable was contributed by (CFG2), which indicates I often think about the quality of life

for future generations, with an arithmetic mean of (3.920) and a standard deviation of (1.1088). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (CFG4), which indicates I believe my current consumption decisions significantly impact the future of upcoming generations., with a mean (3.731) and a standard deviation (1.1149). Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Purchase Intention Dimensions

Attitudes												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
A1	235	41.6	180	31.9	84	14.9	30	5.3	36	6.4	3.970	1.1627
A2	207	36.6	199	35.2	92	16.3	45	8.0	22	3.9	3.927	1.0932
A3	197	34.9	204	36.1	100	17.7	40	7.1	24	4.2	3.903	1.0880
A4	170	30.1	222	39.3	116	20.5	41	7.3	16	2.8	3.865	1.0174
SUM/ Average		35.8		35.6		17.4		6.9		4.3	**3.916**	**1.0903**
	74.4				**17.4**		**11.2**					
Subjective Norms												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
SN1	140	24.8	181	32.0	156	27.6	53	9.4	35	6.2	3.598	1.1391
SN2	167	29.6	236	41.8	95	16.8	40	7.1	27	4.8	3.842	1.0743
SN3	66	11.7	103	18.2	127	22.5	113	20.0	156	27.6	2.664	1.3580
SN4	96	17.0	179	31.7	171	30.3	66	11.7	53	9.4	3.352	1.1691
		20.8		**30.9**		**24.3**		**12**		**12**	**3.364**	**1.1851**

SUM/ Average	51.7				24.3		24					
Perceived Monetary Barriers												
Q	**Strongly Agree (5)**		**Agree (4)**		**Neutral (3)**		**Disagree (2)**		**Strongly Disagree (1)**		**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**	**F**	**%**		
PMB1	201	35.6	198	35.0	106	18.8	32	5.7	28	5.0	3.906	1.0997
PMB2	179	31.7	213	37.7	119	21.1	35	6.2	19	3.4	3.883	1.0335
PMB3	168	29.7	219	38.8	110	19.5	45	8.0	23	4.1	3.821	1.0710
PMB4	157	27.8	189	33.5	129	22.8	65	11.5	25	4.4	3.687	1.1264
SUM/ Average		**31.2**		**36.3**		**20.6**		**7.9**		**4.2**	**3.824**	**1.0826**
	67.5				**20.6**		**12.1**					

Note. This table presents the frequency distribution, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the Purchase Intentions dimensions: Attitudes (A), Subjective Norms (SN), Perceived Monetary Barriers (PMB). Data were collected by the author (2024).

Table 9 displays the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of the sustainable consumption behavior dimensions from A1 to PMB4. These dimensions are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived financial barriers. Respondents agreed with this variable (74.4%), were neutral (17.4%), and disagreed (11.2%) with an arithmetic mean (3.916) and standard deviation (1.0903). The positive value of this variable was contributed by (A1), which indicates that purchasing organic foods instead of conventional ones is beneficial for health, with an arithmetic mean of (3.970) and a standard deviation of (1.1627). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (A4), which indicates that purchasing organic foods reflects my commitment to sustainable choices and healthy practices, with a mean of (3.865) and a standard deviation of (1.0174). Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

In addition, 51.7% of respondents agreed on subjective norms, 24.3% were neutral, and 24% disagreed, with an arithmetic mean (3.364) and a standard deviation of (1.1851). The positive value

of this variable was contributed by (SN2), which indicates I respect the opinions of groups that advise me to buy organic products, with an arithmetic mean of (3.842) and a standard deviation of (1.0743). As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (SN4), which indicates that people close to me encourage me to buy organic products, with a mean of (3.352) and a standard deviation of (1.1691). Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

(67.5%) of respondents agreed with the idea that money was a barrier, (20.6%) were neutral, and (12.1%) disagreed. The mean score was (3.824), and the standard deviation was (1.0826). With a mean of (3.906) and a standard deviation of (1.0997), this variable has a positive value that comes from (PMB1). This means that the prices of organic foods are higher than the prices of conventional foods. As for the lowest arithmetic mean value, it was achieved by (PMB4), which indicates that I find it challenging to locate organic products while shopping, with a mean of (3.687) and a standard deviation of (1.1264). Examining the values of the respondents' standard deviations makes it clear that their answers are homogeneous.

Table 10

Reliability and Validity Measures for Key Variables: Cronbach's Alpha, KMO, and Bartlett's Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	Bartlett's Test
Entertainment	0.924	0.861	1943.975
Customization	0.936	0.861	1703.202
Engagement and interaction	0.924	0.860	1659.032
Trendiness	0.921	0.815	1061.101
Electronic word of mouth	0.865	0.811	850.644
Quality of life well-being	0.837	0.862	1957.513
Care for the environmental well-being	0.937	0.867	2148.123

Care for the future generation	0.946	0.861	2346.112
Attitudes	0.952	0.855	2152.525
Subjective Norms	0.943	0.811	1459.895
Perceived Monitory Barriers	0.900	0.825	1478.159

Note. This table presents reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) and validity metrics (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin [KMO] and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity) for all major constructs used in the study. Data were calculated by the author (2024).

4.2.3 Factor Analysis and Reliability Testing

Among the constructs, attitudes demonstrated the highest reliability score (0.952), indicating a strong consistency among the items measuring consumer attitudes toward organic food marketing. This was closely followed by *Care for the Future Generation* (0.946), *Subjective Norms* (0.943), and *Customization* (0.936), all of which suggest strong reliability. Conversely, *Quality of Life Well-being* (0.837) and *Electronic Word of Mouth* (0.865) exhibited the lowest reliability scores in the study; however, both remained within the acceptable range see *Table 10*. This indicates that they remain sufficiently resilient for inclusion in subsequent analysis. The results indicate that the utilized survey instrument demonstrates strong reliability across all assessed domains.

4.2.4 Validity Test (KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity)

Validity Assessment (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity) This study revealed that the majority of constructs exhibited robust sampling adequacy, as evidenced by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values exceeding 0.8, indicating the data's appropriateness for component analysis. The most prominent constructs were Environmental Well-being (0.867), Quality of Life Well-being (0.862), Customization (0.861), and Future Generational Care (0.861). These values indicate that the items within these categories are cohesively clustered, rendering them suitable for investigation. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity corroborated these findings. The constructs with the highest values were Care for Future Generations (2346.112), Care for Environmental Well-being (2148.123), and Attitudes (2152.525). The results demonstrate robust correlations among items within each group, validating their inclusion in the component analysis. Certain constructions, such as Electronic Word of Mouth

(850.644) and Trendiness (1061.101), exhibited diminished Bartlett's values. Although statistically valid, they may require further scrutiny, particularly if any problems arise during model testing. In summary, both the reliability and validity assessments indicate that the constructs in this study are robust and prepared for further exploration. Elevated Cronbach's Alpha and KMO values indicate that the instruments used are reliable and valid, whilst Bartlett's test corroborates the applicability of factor analysis. Nonetheless, it is important to continue refining the model in subsequent research, particularly for structures with lower Bartlett's values, to enhance the accuracy and robustness of the analysis.

Table 11

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rotated Factor Loadings for Entertainment, Customization, Engagement and Interaction, Trendiness, and Electronic Word of Mouth.

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation	E	C	EI	T	EWM
Social media marketing makes it easier to obtain information about organic products.	3.602	1.100	0.875				
Social media content about organic products is entertaining and interesting.	3.462	1.067	0.890				
It is enjoyable to spend time on social media related to organic products.	3.549	1.036	0.881				
Gathering information about organic products through social media is fun.	3.678	1.089	0.902				
Social media allows access to customized information about organic products.	3.626	1.009		0.852			
Social media provides services tailored to my needs when searching for organic products.	3.504	1.049		0.876			

Social media platforms for organic products are accessible anytime, anywhere.	3.713	1.056	0.888			
Social media simplifies purchase decisions for organic products based on my needs.	3.642	0.974	0.857			
I engage in activities related to obtaining organic food products through social media platforms.	3.453	0.998		0.863		
Social media enhances my positive attitude toward purchasing organic products.	3.444	1.043		0.874		
Social media allows me to engage in discussions and share opinions about buying organic products.	3.465	1.047		0.873		
I share my experiences about purchasing organic products with others via social media.	3.490	1.108		0.847		
Social media content reflects the latest trends in organic products.	3.437	1.061			0.754	
Using social media for organic products enhances a modern and innovative experience	3.796	1.037			0.811	
Social media provides up-to-date information about organic products consistently.	3.745	1.013			0.816	
Social media helps me discover new organic products as they emerge.	3.837	1.056			0.763	
I share my opinions about organic products seen in social media ads with friends.	3.301	1.197				0.760

I recommend others to try organic products promoted by social media influencers.	3.358	1.190					0.805
I rely on recommendations from others via social media before deciding to purchase organic products.	3.402	1.154					0.712
I share my personal experiences with organic products on social media to guide others.	3.301	1.187					0.723
Eigenvalue			3.149	3.016	2.988	2.474	2.255
Explained variance by factors (%)			78.730	75.405	74.691	61.852	56.379
Cronbach's alpha			0.924	0.936	0.924	0.921	0.865

Note: E= Entertainment, C= Customization, EI= Engagement and Interaction, T= Trendiness, and EWM= Electronic Word of Mouth.

Extraction method: maximum likelihood: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

Communalities: Entertainment (0.766-0.813), Customization: (0.727-0.788), (Engagement and Interaction: (0.717-0.764), Trendiness: (0.569-0.666), Electronic Word of Mouth: (0.506-0.648); cutoff point: 0.50; N = 565.

Table 12

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rotated Factor Loadings for Quality-of-life well-being, Care for the environmental well-being, and Care for the future generation

Questions	Mean	Standard Deviation	QL	CE	CFG
I try to make my purchases more organic.	3.708	1.042	0.886		
I am careful in my use of organic foods.	3.600	1.025	0.895		
I always plan before purchasing any organic or non-organic product.	3.655	1.019	0.884		
I practice saving and recycling organic products at home.	3.497	1.054	0.889		
I care about the natural environment because I contribute to raising awareness about environmental issues and reducing waste.	3.899	1.044		0.913	
I use environmentally friendly products.	3.864	1.035		0.911	
I pay extra money to purchase organic food or environmentally friendly products.	3.752	1.030		0.892	
I am concerned about the depletion of natural resources.	3.959	1.036		0.891	
I care for the need's fulfilment of the next generation.	3.871	1.025			0.908
I often think about the quality of life for future generations.	3.919	1.060			0.924
I strive to reduce excessive consumption to preserve environmental resources for future generations.	3.855	1.055			0.922
I believe my current consumption decisions significantly impact the future of upcoming generations.	3.789	1.041			0.895

Eigenvalue	3.158	3.253	3.330
Explained variance by factors (%)	78.954	81.315	83.246
Cronbach's alpha	0.837	0.937	0.946

Note: QL= Quality of life well-being, CE= Care for the environmental well-being, and CFG= Care for the future generation

Extraction method: maximum likelihood: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Communalities (Quality of life well-being): (0.781-0.801), Care for the environmental well-being: (0.794-0.833), Care for the future generation: (0.800-0.855); cutoff point: 0.50; N = 565.

Table 13

Means, Standard Deviations, and Rotated Factor Loadings for Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Monetary Barriers

Questions	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**A**	**SN**	**PMB**
Purchasing organic foods instead of conventional ones is beneficial for health.	4.004	1.096	0.900		
Choosing organic foods over conventional ones is a rational decision.	3.963	1.053	0.926		
Buying organic foods instead of conventional ones satisfies me more.	3.933	1.056	0.916		
Purchasing organic foods reflects my commitment to sustainable choices and healthy practices.	3.897	0.989	0.852		
I value people's opinions regarding the purchase of organic products.	3.611	1.085		0.890	
I respect the opinions of groups that advise me to buy organic products.	3.798	1.071		0.891	
I buy organic products to avoid criticism from others.	3.179	1.141		0.759	
The people close to me encourage me to buy organic products.	3.467	1.074		0.786	

The prices of organic food are relatively higher compared to conventional food.	3.936	1.020			0.799
I prefer to buy organic products for my health, despite their higher cost.	3.897	0.997			0.772
I feel there is a lack of availability of organic products.	3.874	1.003			0.911
I find it challenging to locate organic products while shopping.	3.765	1.029			0.866
Eigenvalue			3.233	2.780	2.814
Explained variance by factors (%)			80.828	69.490	70.343
Cronbach's alpha			0.952	0.943	0.900

Note: A= Attitudes, SN= Subjective norms, and PMB= Perceived monetary barriers

Extraction method: maximum likelihood: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Communalities (Attitudes): (0.596-0.830), Subjective norms: (0.575-0.795), Perceived monetary barriers: (0 .756-0.857); cutoff point: 0.50; N = 565.

Participant views may differ despite lower ratings; the sequence of mean replies does not inherently align with the highest loading factors. Entertainment emerged as a pivotal element in the dimensions of social media marketing, with the assertion *"Gathering information about organic products through social media is fun"* attaining the greatest factor loading (0.902). It distinctly illustrates that engaging and satisfying content serves as a potent incentive for individuals to investigate organic items on social media.

In the Electronic Word of Mouth dimension, the item *"I share my personal knowledge about organic products on social networks to help guide others"* received the lowest factor loading of (0.712). Time is a scarce resource, and the valuable knowledge provided by staff significantly aids individuals in their choices and judgments. This behavioral tendency on social media resembles passive consumption, wherein consumers engage with content rather than produce it. Of all the variables related to Sustainable Consumption Behavior, the Care for Future Generations (CFG) statement *"I often think about the quality of life for future generations"* exhibited the greatest factor loading (0.924). Consumers are more aware of the long-term implications of their purchase decisions on society and their ethical obligation to promote environmental steadily, the QL item *"I always plan before purchasing any organic or non-organic product."* exhibited the lowest

loading (0.884). Despite its continued value, its comparatively low weight suggests that implementing feasible activities, such as recycling, may be more challenging due to infrastructural or behavioral obstacles, even though sustainability may be fervently supported ideologically. Within the framework of Purchase Intention and Consumer Attitudes, the statement *"Choosing organic foods over conventional ones is a rational decision."* exhibited the highest factor loading (0.926), underscoring that consumers perceive organic food purchases as logical and advantageous, particularly concerning potential health benefits and environmental issues. Within Subjective Norms (SN), the lowest factor loading recorded was *"I buy organic products to avoid criticism from others"* (0.759). Although still statistically significant, this indicates that societal pressure does not explain organic food purchases to a comparatively lesser extent. Consumers are mostly driven by internal attitudes and perceived value rather than external norms or fear of condemnation. Collectively, these data suggest that entertainment and informative value, personal motivations related to sustainability, and rational decision-making are significant antecedents influencing consumer behavior towards organic food on social media. Nonetheless, there remains potential for enhancement in active content sharing and sustainable home/office practices. Marketing strategy should prioritize engaging, enjoyable, and informative content that resonates both emotionally and intellectually with consumers. Facilitate Interactive Environments to Enhance Consumer Trust in Your Brand Motivate Your Customers to Share Their Experiences and Endorsements Moreover, complimentary educational initiatives that highlight fundamental and straightforward techniques for cultivating sustainable practices at home help translate intentions into deeds. Employing influencers and fostering community participation enables marketers to enhance the reach and authenticity of their campaigns, providing an additional rationale for promoting responsible consumption.

Table 14

Correlation Between Demographic Variables (Age Groups) and Study Constructs

Variables/ Dimensions	Demographic Variables			
	Age			
	Less than 30 years	30-40 years	41-50 years	Above 50 years
SMME	0.237 a	-0.080 a b	-0.101 b	-0.213 b

SMMC	0.223 a	-0.058 a b	-0.149 b	-0.123 b
SMMEI	0.234 a	-0.046 a b	-0.164 b	-0.166 b
SMMT	0.085	0.061	-0.121	-0.222
SMMEWM	0.185 a	0.016 a b	-0.154 b	-0.299 b
SCBQL	0.034	0.026	-0.015	-0.201
SCBCE	0.044	-0.035	-0.029	0.084
SCBCFG	-0.013	0.001	0.048	-0.104
PIA	-0.001	0.007	-0.011	0.008
PISN	0.036	0.023	-0.045	-0.101
PIPMB	-0.006	0.005	0.005	-0.017

Note: SMME= Social Media Marketing (Entertainment), SMMC= Social Media Marketing (Customization), SMMEI= Social Media Marketing (Engagement and Interaction), SMMEWM= Social Media Marketing (Electronic Word of Mouth), SCBQL= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Quality of Life well- Being), SCBCE= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Environmental well- Being), SCBCFG= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Future Generation), PIA= Purchase Intention (Attitudes), PISN= Purchase Intention (Subjective Norms), and PIPMB= Purchase Intention (Perceived Monetary Barriers).

Table 14 presents the difference between categories of age groups in case of different factors related to social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intentions.

The youngest age group (under 30 years) has the highest consensus (0.237) for entertainment (SMME) being the biggest reason for use of social media, and the eldest age group (over 50 years) has the lowest consensus (-0.213). The migrant generation (30–40 years and 41–50 years) lies in between (-0.080 and -0.101, respectively), and this can be interpreted as lower use of social media marketing due to different usage behavior. Similarly, customization (SMMC) has the highest value for the youngest age group (0.223), with consensus declining for higher age levels (-0.123 for 50 and above). This suggests that young consumers appreciate more individual and personalized content than higher-age consumers. Engagement and interaction (SMMEI) also have a similar pattern, with higher levels of intense agreement (0.234) from youths and lower levels from elderly individuals (-0.166). This suggests youths are more likely to engage with content more interactively, and elderly individuals could be more passive consumers of social networks.

Trendiness (SMMT) also doesn't experience the same substantial trend, with middle values for varying groups, with the oldest group. However, maintaining the least amount of consensus (-0.222) and therefore being least affected by trends. Electronic word of mouth (e-WMM) also reaches its peak for the youngest age group (0.185) and decreases significantly for elderly people (-0.299), underscoring the probability of trusting and reacting more to peer recommendations on social networks for the young. Sustainable consumption behavior drivers (SCBQL, SCBCE, and SCBCFG) don't vary significantly across age groups, and this suggests age isn't a key predictor of sustainable consumption behavior on social media. The purchase intention factors (PIA, PISN, and PIPMB) don't change much across age groups, which suggests that generational differences don't have a big effect on purchase decisions in this data.

Overall, the statistics reveal higher use of social media marketing among the younger generation, particularly when it comes to entertainment, customization, interaction, and electronic word of mouth. The older generation, on the other hand, has a declining usage pattern of these factors, possibly due to different habits and tendencies towards the use of the internet.

Table 15

Correlation Between Demographic Variables (Education Levels) and Study Constructs

Variables/ Dimensions	Demographic Variables		
	Education Level		
	Technical Education or Below	Bachelor	Postgraduate
SMME	0.306 a	0.050 a b	-0.090 b
SMMC	0.306 a	0.069 a b	-0.103 b
SMMEI	0.341 a	0.058 a b	-0.102 b
SMMT	0.199 b	-0.000 b	-0.034 b
SMMEWM	0.305 a	0.113 a b	-0.138 b
SCBQL	0.115	-0.005	-0.016
SCBCE	0.112	-0.041	0.011
SCBCFG	0.137	-0.027	-0.003
PIA	0.165	-0.036	-0.001
PISN	0.209	-0.005	-0.032
PIPMB	0.091	-0.033	0.009

Note: SMME= Social Media Marketing (Entertainment), SMMC= Social Media Marketing (Customization), SMMEI= Social Media Marketing (Engagement and Interaction), SMMEWM= Social Media Marketing (Electronic Word of Mouth), SCBQL= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Quality of Life well- Being), SCBCE= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Environmental well- Being), SCBCFG= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Future Generation), PIA= Purchase Intention (Attitudes), PISN= Purchase Intention (Subjective Norms), and PIPMB= Purchase Intention (Perceived Monetary Barriers).

The connection between education levels and social media marketing see *Table 15*, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intentions follows a pattern similar to what we see in age-based trends. People with a technical education or lower tend to engage the most with social media marketing, particularly in areas like entertainment (0.306), customization (0.306), interaction (0.341), and electronic word of mouth (0.305). This mirrors the behavior of younger age groups, who also show higher engagement with social media marketing.

On the other hand, individuals with postgraduate degrees show negative correlations across these categories, much like older individuals, who are generally less engaged with social media marketing. Interestingly, education level doesn't seem to have a major impact on sustainable consumption behavior just as age differences didn't lead to significant variations, suggesting that neither factor is a strong predictor of sustainable consumption habits.

When it comes to purchase intentions, people with lower education levels show slightly stronger correlations, indicating they are more influenced by social media when making buying decisions. This is different from the age-based analysis, where purchase intentions remained consistent across different age groups.

Overall, the findings suggest that younger individuals and those with lower education levels are more actively engaged with social media marketing, while older and more educated individuals are less influenced by it. This means that businesses should consider both age and education levels when designing social media strategies, as engagement varies across these demographics.

Table 16

T- Test results of Gender-Based Differences in Social Media Marketing, Sustainable Consumption Behavior and Purchase Intentions

Factors	Male		Female		Levene's Test	Significant value	Test Vale	Significant value for T-Test
	M	SD	M	SD				
SMME	-0.047	0.977	0.059	0.844	7.626	0.006	-1.402	0.161
SMMC	-0.089	0.955	0.113	0.855	2.794	0.095	-2.606	0.009
SMMEI	-0.105	0.955	0.133	0.830	8.337	0.004	-3.176	0.002
SMMT	-0.034	0.957	0.043	0.873	2.272	0.132	-0.990	0.323
SMMEWM	-0.120	0.959	0.151	0.839	6.768	0.010	-3.581	0.000
SCBQL	-0.016	0.896	0.020	0.879	0.426	0.514	-0.497	0.620
SCBCE	0.018	0.906	-0.023	0.916	0.078	0.780	0.548	0.584
SCBCFG	-0.002	0.944	0.003	0.925	0.388	0.534	-0.083	0.934
PIA	-0.011	0.964	0.014	0.952	0.003	0.959	-0.325	0.745
PISN	-0.034	0.902	0.043	0.905	0.431	0.512	-1.030	0.303
PIPMB	-0.020	0.871	0.026	0.931	1.964	0.162	-0.614	0.539

*Levene's test was significant ($p<0.05$) therefore t-value represents the Welch-test results

**Different letters show significant differences (a' represent significantly larger value)

Source: Own result.

Note: SMME= Social Media Marketing (Entertainment), SMMC= Social Media Marketing (Customization), SMMEI= Social Media Marketing (Engagement and Interaction), SMMEWM= Social Media Marketing (Electronic Word of Mouth), SCBQL= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Quality of Life well- Being), SCBCE= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Environmental well- Being), SCBCFG= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Future Generation), PIA= Purchase Intention (Attitudes), PISN= Purchase Intention (Subjective Norms), and PIPMB= Purchase Intention (Perceived Monetary Barriers).

The findings in *Table 16* highlight clear gender differences in how people perceive various aspects of social media marketing and sustainable consumption behavior. When it comes to Social Media Marketing (SMM), significant differences appear in three key areas: Customization (SMMC), Engagement & Interaction (SMMEI), and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (SMMEWM). Women tend to place greater value on personalized content, interactive experiences, and peer recommendations compared to men.

For instance, in Social Media Marketing Customization (SMMC), women have a higher average score (0.113) than men (-0.089), with a statistically significant difference ($t = -2.606$, $p = 0.009$). This suggests that women are more receptive to tailored content, such as algorithm-driven recommendations and customized social media experiences. Similarly, in Engagement & Interaction (SMMEI), women score 0.133, whereas men score -0.105, with strong statistical significance ($t = -3.176$, $p = 0.002$). This indicates that women are generally more interactive and engaged on social media. The trend continues in Electronic Word-of-Mouth (SMMEWM), where women score 0.151 compared to men's -0.120, with a highly significant difference ($t = -3.581$, $p < 0.001$). This highlights the fact that online reviews, recommendations, and peer discussions significantly influence women.

On the other hand, when it comes to Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) and Purchase Intention (PI), gender differences are not statistically significant. Both men and women show similar attitudes toward sustainability, including factors like Quality of Life & Well-being (SCBQL), Care for Environmental Well-being (SCBCE), and Care for Future Generations (SCBCFG). Likewise, purchase intention factors Attitude (PIA), Social Norms (PISN), and Perceived Monetary Barriers (PIPMB)do not vary significantly between genders. This suggests that sustainability and purchasing behaviors are relatively consistent across men and women.

In summary, the findings suggest that social media marketing strategies should prioritize customization, engagement, and word-of-mouth marketing when targeting female audiences, as these aspects resonate more strongly with them. Meanwhile, we can apply strategies related to sustainability and purchase intention more broadly, as gender does not significantly shape these behaviors.

Table 17
T- Test for Residence (Urban and Rural) results

Factors	Rural		Urban		Levene's Test	Significant value	Test Vale	Significant value for T-Test
	M	SD	M	SD				
SMME	-0.023	0.919	0.187	0.924	0.107	0.744	-1.699	0.090
SMMC	-0.007	0.908	0.060	0.998	0.959	0.328	0-.541	0.589
SMMEI	-0.035	0.893	0.286	0.990	1.148	0.285	-2.645	0.008
SMMT	-0.038	0.923	0.311	0.854	2.137	0.144	-2.838	0.005
SMMEWM	-0.039	0.904	0.318	0.966	0.698	0.404	-2.914	0.004
SCBQL	-0.020	0.878	0.169	0.954	1.128	0.289	-1.590	0.112
SCBCE	-0.026	0.913	0.214	0.857	0.718	0.397	-1.969	0.049
SCBCFG	-0.027	0.931	0.219	0.942	0.000	0.996	-1.963	0.050
PIA	0.014	0.932	-0.115	1.147	5.058	0.025	0.854	0.396
PISN	-0.034	0.896	0.276	0.923	0.009	0.924	-2.561	0.011
PIPMB	-0.019	0.892	0.155	0.932	0.243	0.622	-1.443	0.149

*Levene's test was significant ($p<0.05$) therefore t-value represents the Welch-test results

**Different letters shows significant differences (a' represent significantly larger value)

Source: Own result.

Note: SMME= Social Media Marketing (Entertainment), SMMC= Social Media Marketing (Customization), SMMEI= Social Media Marketing (Engagement and Interaction), SMMEWM= Social Media Marketing (Electronic Word of Mouth), SCBQL= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Quality of Life well- Being), SCBCE= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Environmental well- Being), SCBCFG= Sustainable Consumption Behavior (Care for the Future Generation), PIA= Purchase Intention (Attitudes), PISN= Purchase Intention (Subjective Norms), and PIPMB= Purchase Intention (Perceived Monetary Barriers).

The data in *Table 17* reveals distinct differences in the perceptions of Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) between individuals from urban and rural locales. Unexpectedly, urban residents exhibit significantly greater involvement in social media marketing across various domains particularly regarding engagement, trend awareness, and online opinion sharing. In the Engagement & Interaction category (SMMEI), urban respondents exhibited a much higher average score (M = 0.287) than rural respondents (M = -0.035), with a statistically significant difference (t = -2.645, p = 0.008). This indicates that individuals in metropolitan environments are more inclined to engage with brands and react to material on social media, perhaps due to their heightened digital connectivity and more frequent use of social platforms. A similar pattern emerges when examining Trendiness (SMMT). Urban users achieved a score of 0.311, whereas rural users obtained a score of -0.038 (t = -2.838, p = 0.005). This suggests that urban inhabitants are more attracted to fashionable or viral information, probably owing to their exposure to rapidly evolving internet landscapes. Urban participants exhibited superior scores in Electronic Word-of-Mouth (SMMEWM), averaging 0.318, in contrast to rural participants' average of -0.039 (t = -2.914, p = 0.004). This indicates that urban dwellers are more susceptible to influences such as internet reviews and peer recommendations elements that might significantly affect their purchasing decisions.

Urban inhabitants exhibited elevated degrees of concern for environmental sustainability and the welfare of future generations regarding Sustainable Consumption Behavior. In the Care for Environmental Well-being (SCBCE), urban residents scored 0.214, whereas rural residents scored -0.026 (t = -1.969, p = 0.049). The ratings for Care for Future Generations (SCBCFG) were 0.219 in urban areas and -0.027 in rural areas (t = -1.963, p = 0.050). The findings indicate that urban residents are generally more environmentally conscious, possibly attributable to variables such as access to environmental education, urban sustainability initiatives, or increased exposure to eco-friendly marketing.

The Quality of Life & Well-being (SCBQL) metric revealed no significant disparity between urban and rural populations (t = -1.590, p = 0.112). This indicates that both groups perceive the personal advantages of sustainable behavior in a comparable manner. The findings regarding Purchase Intention (PI) are somewhat inconclusive. Urban individuals exhibited markedly elevated scores in Subjective Norms (PISN), indicating a greater perception of societal pressure or influence on

purchasing decisions (M = 0.276 vs. -0.034; t = -2.561, p = 0.011). Nonetheless, there were no significant disparities between the groups regarding Attitude (PIA) (t = 0.854, p = 0.396) or Perceived Monetary Barriers (PIPMB) (t = -1.443, p = 0.149). Although social impact differs, individuals in both contexts share comparable perspectives on expenditure and purchase behaviors.

Table 18

ANOVA Analysis of Monthly Income and SMM, SCB & PI Variables

Variables/ Dimensions	Demographic Variables			
	Monthly Incomes			
	Less than $500	$500-999	$1000-1500	More than $1500
SMME	0.123	-0.001	-0.111	-0.089
SMMC	0.198 a	-0.088 a b	-0.116 b	-0.067 a b
SMMEI	0.206 a	-0.054 a b	-0.149	-0.101 b
SMMT	0.083	-0.084	-0.012	0.011
SMMEWM	0.185 a	-0.021 a b	-0.157 b	-0.113 b
SCBQL	0.041	-0.047	-0.064	0.110
SCBCE	-0.028	-0.059	0.037	0.128
SCBCFG	-0.051	-0.017	0.062	0.048
PIA	-0.056	-0.009	0.023	0.108
PISN	0.005	-0.022	0.043	-0.036
PIPMB	-0.016	-0.035	0.0003	0.110

Note: SMME = Social media marketing (entertainment), SMMC= Social media marketing (Customization), SMMEI= Social media marketing (Engagement and interaction), SMMT= Social media marketing (Trendiness), SMMEWM= Social media marketing (Electronic word of mouth), SCBQL= Sustainable consumption behavior (Quality of life well-being), SCBCE= Sustainable consumption behavior (Care for the environmental well-being), SCBCFG= Sustainable consumption behavior (Care for the future generation), PIA= Purchase intention (Attitudes), PISN= Purchase intention (Subjective norms), PIPMB= Purchase intention (Perceived monetary barriers).

Analyzing how monthly income levels relate to social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intentions reveals clear patterns that build on insights from age- and

education-based trends see *Table 18*. People earning less than $500 per month tend to engage the most with social media marketing, especially in areas like entertainment (0.123), customization (0.198), engagement & interaction (0.206), and electronic word of mouth (0.185). This trend aligns with what we see among younger individuals and those with lower education levels, who also show higher levels of social media engagement. On the other hand, individuals earning $1,000 or more per month generally engage less with social media marketing, showing negative correlations across most dimensions. Their behavior mirrors that of older and more highly educated groups, who also tend to be less active on social media.

When it comes to sustainable consumption behavior (measured through SCBQL, SCBCE, and SCBCFG), the results vary by income level. Lower-income groups show weak or even negative correlations, while those earning $1,500 or more per month exhibit slightly positive correlations. This contrasts with the patterns seen in age- and education-based analyses, where sustainable consumption behavior remained steady across groups. This suggests that income may play a slightly stronger role in shaping sustainability-related behaviors.

Looking at purchase intentions, higher-income individuals ($1,500+) tend to have positive correlations with purchasing behavior (PIA: 0.108, PIPMB: 0.110), while lower-income groups show negative or neutral correlations. Contrary to the education-based findings, social media significantly influences the buying decisions of individuals with lower education levels. The data suggests that, although lower-educated individuals engage more with social media, it is higher-income individuals who are more likely to turn that engagement into actual purchases.

In summary, younger, lower-educated, and lower-income individuals are the most active on social media, while older, more educated, and higher-income individuals engage less. However, despite their lower engagement, high-income individuals are more likely to make purchases. These insights highlight the importance of tailoring marketing strategies not just based on engagement but also on conversion potential targeting high-income individuals for direct sales while focusing on younger, lower-income users for brand awareness and engagement.

Table 19

Kruskal-Wallis Test Results for Differences in Age, Education Level and Monthly Income Across Clusters

Variables	Mean Rank			Chi- Square	Significance level
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster3		
Age	259.08 b	302.50 a	287.84 ab	10.130	P =0.006
Education Level	257.67 b	309.58 a	265.83 ab	16.730	P =0.001
Monthly Income	267.09	297.35	268.67	5.039	P=0.080

Note. This table presents Kruskal–Wallis H test results comparing age, education level, and monthly income across three consumer clusters. Superscripts with different letters (a, b, ab) indicate statistically significant differences between clusters based on pairwise comparisons. $p < .05$ is considered statistically significant.

The *Table 19* compares three different groups based on age, education level, and monthly income, using what seems to be the Kruskal-Wallis H test. The findings reveal that there are notable differences in age and education levels between the clusters, while monthly income remains relatively consistent across the groups. The highest mean rank for age for Cluster 2 (302.50), then for Cluster 3 (287.84), and the least for Cluster 1 (259.08) indicates that there are more elderly people in Cluster 2, and there are more young people in Cluster 1. Similarly, the highest mean rank for Education Level for Cluster 2 (309.58) indicates higher levels of education for individuals in this group compared with Cluster 1 (257.67) and Cluster 3 (265.83). The values of Chi-Square (10.130 for Age and 16.730 for Education Level) also indicate significant differences between the clusters. indicating that members of Cluster 2 tend to have higher education levels. Post-hoc tests also found significant differences between Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 and between Cluster 3 and the other two, with the latter not being different from the other two. However, when it comes to monthly income, the difference is not statistically significant (5.039), meaning that income levels across the three clusters are similar. The findings therefore suggest that there are more elderly and more educated individuals in Cluster 2, more young and less educated individuals in Cluster 1, and

there are more balanced individuals in Cluster 3, whereas income does not vary much between the groups.

Table 20

Levene's Test for Homogeneity, ANOVA F-Values, and Cluster's Mean Comparisons for Factors

Factors	Levene Statistic	P Value	F Value	P Value	Mean		
					Cluster 1	Cluster2	Cluster3
SMME_F	14.553	0.000	248.271	0.000	0.589 a	-0.407 b	-1.269 ab
SMMC_F	8.010	0.000	223.054	0.000	0.550 a	-0.350 b	-1.330 ab
SMMEI_F	3.537	0.030	243.149	0.000	0.595 a	-0.431 b	-1.159 ab
SMMT_F	12.411	0.000	250.870	0.000	0.534 a	-0.274 b	-1.514 ab
SMMEWM_F	10.342	0.000	217.157	0.000	0.591 a	-0.445 b	-1.084 ab
SCBQL_F	7.406	0.001	185.642	0.000	0.483 a	-0.252 b	-1.314 ab
SCBCE_F	15.197	0.000	190.091	0.000	0.453 a	-0.186 b	-1.492 ab
SCBCFG_F	17.061	0.000	189.565	0.000	0.450 a	-0.161 b	-1.574 ab
PIA_F	12.790	0.000	170.940	0.000	0.446 a	-0.156 b	-1.566 ab
PISN_F	9.605	0.000	202.627	0.000	0.504 a	-0.279 b	-1.368 ab
PIPMB_F	2.043	0.131	107.342	0.000	0.309 a	-0.050 b	-1.336 ab

Note: SMME = Social media marketing (entertainment), SMMC= Social media marketing (Customization), SMMEI= Social media marketing (Engagement and interaction), SMMT= Social

media marketing (Trendiness), SMMEWM= Social media marketing (Electronic word of mouth), SCBQL= Sustainable consumption behavior (Quality of life well-being), SCBCE= Sustainable consumption behavior (Care for the environmental well-being), SCBCFG= Sustainable consumption behavior (Care for the future generation), PIA= Purchase intention (Attitudes), PISN= Purchase intention (Subjective norms), PIPMB= Purchase intention (Perceived monetary barriers), F= Factor

The Levene's Test in *Table 20* for homogeneity of variances indicates that, except for PIPMB_F ($p = 0.131$), there are significantly varying variances between clusters ($p < 0.05$) and heteroscedasticity. The ANOVA F-values also indicate statistical significance for mean differences for all factors ($p = 0.000$) and corroborate significant variations between clusters. Looking at the averages of the clusters, Cluster 1 consistently has higher values. This means that people in this cluster have a very positive view of how well social media marketing works (SMME_F = 0.589), what it posts (SMMC_F = 0.550), how people interact and engage with it (SMMEI_F = 0.595), and other factors. On the other hand, Cluster 3 has lower values, with significantly negative means for all the factors, including SMME_F (-1.269) and SCBCFG_F (-1.574), implying the least trust and least engagement in social media marketing. The middle group, Cluster 2, has values between the two, with negative mean values, such as SMME_F (-0.407) and SMMEI_F (-0.431), implying a middle group with moderately low trust and hence moderately low engagement. SCBCE_F ($F = 15.197$, $p = 0.000$) and SCBCFG_F ($F = 17.061$, $p = 0.000$) among the individual factors show very significant statistical differences in variances, corroborating different perceptions between the different clusters. Interestingly, PIPMB_F has the least F-value ($F = 2.043$, $p = 0.131$), implying its variance remains relatively stable between the different clusters. All in all, the findings point towards three different audience segments: Cluster 1 is the trusting and engaged group, Cluster 2 is moderately engaged people, and Cluster 3 is the least engaged with the least trust for purchase behavior and social media marketing.

4.2.5 Measurement and Structural Models

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the measurement model and determine the reliability and validity of the components utilized in this research. The analysis evaluated essential indices of convergent validity, such as item loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). Table 15 indicates that most item loadings

reached or beyond the minimum threshold of 0.60, with many exhibiting values far above 0.70. One item (SN3) exhibited moderate underperformance, loading at 0.586, yet was maintained due to its minimal variance and the overall robustness of the construct's dependability metrics. Furthermore, all constructs exhibited AVE values exceeding 0.50 and CR values surpassing 0.70, thereby fulfilling the criteria for convergent validity and internal consistency dependability. Social Media Marketing (SMM) had a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.957 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.545, whereas Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) demonstrated a CR of 0.943 and an AVE of 0.617. Correspondingly, Purchase Intention (PI) had a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.925 and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.541. Cronbach's Alpha scores surpassed the recommended level of 0.70 for all constructions, so affirming the internal consistency of the items. To enhance the verification of the measurement model's validity, discriminant validity was assessed utilizing both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Tables 16 and 17 demonstrate that the square root of each construct's AVE exceeded its correlations with other constructs, and all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, signifying that each construct is empirically different. The results together confirm that the measurement model is trustworthy and valid, establishing a robust basis for further examination of the structural model and hypothesis testing.

The following *Table 21* represents the measurement model of this study to justify its reliability and validity:

Table 21

Measurement Model Results: Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Sub-Construct	Item	Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Marketing	E	E1	0.771	0.957	0.545	0.956
		E2	0.780			
		E3	0.762			
		E4	0.794			
	C	C1	0.773			
		C2	0.777			

		C3	0.756			
		C4	0.771			
	EI	EI1	0.777			
		EI2	0.764			
		EI3	0.754			
		EI4	0.762			
	T	T1	0.698			
		T2	0.713			
		T3	0.727			
		T4	0.723			
	EWM	EWM1	0.673			
		EWM2	0.687			
		EWM3	0.651			
		EWM4	0.616			
Sustainable Consumption Behavior	QL	QL1	0.700	0.943	0.617	0.943
		QL2	0.745			
		QL3	0.720			
		QL4	0.745			
	CE	CE1	0.838			
		CE2	0.813			
		CE3	0.833			
		CE4	0.831			
	CFG	CFG1	0.791			
		CFG2	0.789			
		CFG3	0.811			
		CFG4	0.794			
Purchase Intention	A	AT1	0.777	0.925	0.541	0.922
		AT2	0.792			
		AT3	0.797			
		AT4	0.797			
	SN	SN1	0.729			
		SN2	0.775			

		SN3	0.586			
		SN4	0.707			
	PMB	PMB1	0.682			
		PMB2	0.755			
		PMB3	0.720			
		PMB4	0.681			

Note. SMM= Social Media Marketing, E= Entertainment, C= Customization, EI= Engagement and Interaction, T= Trendiness, EWM= Electronic Word of Mouth, SCB= Sustainable Consumption Behavior, QL= Quality of Life well-being, CE= Care for Environmental well-being, CFG= Care for the future Generation, PI= Purchase Intention, A= Attitudes, SN= Subjective Norms, PMB= Perceived Monetary Barriers.

Table 21 provides the results of the measurement model, encompassing Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's Alpha for all primary constructs. The findings demonstrate that all constructs satisfy the established reliability and validity criteria, with CR values above 0.70 and AVE values over 0.50, hence affirming internal consistency and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021). Moreover, the individual item loadings for all constructs Social Media Marketing (SMM), Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB), and Purchase Intention (PI) exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.6, hence reinforcing the robustness of the measuring model.

The discriminant validity in this research was examined utilizing the HTMT method. Based on the recommendation of Henseler *et al.* (2015), the HTMT criterion in this investigation surpassed the Fornell and Larcker criterion, as shown in Table 22. Furthermore, this study conducted an HTMT analysis in Table 23, which indicates that all HTMT values are below the threshold (0.850) suggested by Henseler *et al.* (2015). Therefore, all the fundamental factors were identified and found appropriate for additional examination. As a result, the measurement model is appropriate for the analysis of the research, supporting the dependability as well as the precision of the hypotheses. The following *Table 22* shows the values of the Discriminant Validity, i.e., Fornell-Larcker Criterion of this research:

Table 22
Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	SMM	SCB	PI
SMM	0.738		
SCB	0.529	0.785	
PI	0.578	0.700	0.736

Note. Diagonal values represent the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. Off-diagonal values indicate the correlations between constructions. Discriminant validity is confirmed when a construct's AVE square root (on the diagonal) is greater than its correlations with other constructs. SMM = Social Media Marketing; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior; PI = Purchase Intention. Results based on the author's own data analysis (2024).

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was employed to evaluate discriminant validity, as illustrated in *Table 22*. The square roots of the AVE values are displayed on the diagonal (in bold), whereas the off-diagonal values indicate the relationships among the constructs: Social Media Marketing (SMM), Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB), and Purchase Intention (PI). Fornell and Larcker (1981) assert that discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of a construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeds its correlations with other constructs. This study reveals that the square root of the AVE for SMM is 0.738, above its associations with SCB (0.529) and PI (0.578). Likewise, the square root of the AVE value for SCB is 0.785, surpassing its correlations with PI (0.700) and SMM (0.529). Finally, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for PI is 0.736, above its correlations with SCB (0.700) and SMM (0.578). The results affirm that each concept exhibits a stronger correlation with its respective indicators than with other constructs, demonstrating adequate discriminant validity within the model.

Moreover, the following *Table 23* represents the values from the Discriminant Validity through Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio:

Table 23
Discriminant Validity Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

	PI	SMM	SCB
PI	-		
SMM	0.613	-	
SCB	0.750	0.557	-

Note. This table presents HTMT ratios for assessing discriminant validity among the latent constructs. Discriminate validity is considered acceptable when HTMT values are below the threshold of 0.85. SMM = Social Media Marketing; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior; PI = Purchase Intention. Results based on the author's own data analysis (2024).

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was utilized to further assess discriminant validity, as advised by Henseler et al. (2015). This approach offers a more comprehensive evaluation of discriminant validity than the conventional Fornell-Larcker criterion, especially in variance-based structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). HTMT values below 0.85 (conservative) or 0.90 (liberal) signify adequate discriminant validity, as per the set limits. *Table 23* shows the results for Discriminant Validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, which helps determine how clearly different each construct is from the others. All the HTMT values are below the commonly accepted cutoff of 0.85, suggesting that the constructs are distinct enough to be considered separate. For instance, the HTMT value between Purchase Intention (PI) and Social Media Marketing (SMM) is 0.613. Between PI and Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB), it's 0.750, and between SMM and SCB, it's 0.557. These figures indicate that while the constructs are somewhat related, they still capture different aspects of the study, confirming that each one reflects a unique concept.

Researcher exploited Smart-PLS version 4 to analyze the conceptual framework as well as investigate the hypothesized connections. The capacity for explanation of the study's model has been measured by R2 values. The study revealed that the R^2 value for Purchase Intention (PI) was 0.551, signifying that the predictor variables Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) jointly account for 55.1% of the variance in PI. This demonstrates

a significant degree of explanatory capability inside the model. The R^2 value for SCB was 0.280, indicating that SMM accounts for 28.0% of the variance in Sustainable Consumption Behavior, which is regarded as a moderate effect (Hair et al., 2021).

The blindfolding approach was used with an omission distance of 7 to evaluate the predictive relevance of the path model. Table 5 illustrates that the Stone-Geisser Q^2 values for the endogenous constructs PI ($Q^2 = 0.293$) and SCB ($Q^2 = 0.169$) exceed zero, signifying adequate cross-validated predictive significance of the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). The results affirm that the model exhibits moderate to strong predictive efficacy for the endogenous variables.

Table 24

Predictive relevance of the path model

Dependent Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2 Values
PI	0.551	0.549	0.293
SCB	0.280	0.279	0.169

Note. This table presents the coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2, and Stone-Geisser's Q^2 values for the endogenous constructs in the structural model. Q^2 values greater than 0 indicate predictive relevance. PI = Purchase Intention; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior. Results based on the author's own data analysis (2024).

Table 24 illustrates the predictive relevance and explanatory capacity of the structural model. The R^2 score for Purchase Intention (PI) is 0.551, signifying that the model accounts for 55.1% of the variance in PI, which is deemed significant. Meanwhile, Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) exhibits a R^2 of 0.280, indicating a moderate degree of explained variance. The Q^2 values derived from build cross-validated redundancy are 0.293 for PI and 0.169 for SCB. Hair et al.

(2021) assert that these values exhibit moderate to high predictive significance, affirming the model's efficacy in forecasting the endogenous constructs.

Further, the research observed that the VIF values in *Table 25* for all structures were below 3.3, showing the lack of multicollinearity concerns (Mahmud *et al.,* 2023). The following Table 19 shows the VIF values for the constructions:

Table 25

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values for Constructs

Variables	SMM	SCB	PI
SMM			1.389
SCB	1.000		
PI		1.389	

Note. This table presents the VIF values used to assess multicollinearity among constructs in the structural model. VIF values below 5.0 indicate no significant multicollinearity. SMM = Social Media Marketing; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior; PI = Purchase Intention. Results based on the author's own data analysis (2024).

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) data were analyzed to evaluate multicollinearity among the constructs in the structural model. Table 6 indicates that the VIF values for Social Media Marketing (SMM), Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB), and Purchase Intention (PI) are significantly below the advised threshold of 5. SMM and PI both exhibited VIF values of 1.389, whilst SCB displayed a value of 1.000. Hair et al. (2021) assert that VIF values under 3.3 signify the absence of significant multicollinearity issues. The results affirm that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model, allowing for the reliable inclusion of constructs in the route analysis without the possibility of redundant explanatory power. The results from the hypotheses testing are shown in *Table 26* below:

Table 26
Hypothesis Testing Results for Direct Effects

Hypotheses	Paths	Original sample (O)	Sample means (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Decisions
H1	SMM PI	0.289	0.288	0.038	7.572	< .001	Supported
H2	SMM SCB	0.529	0.531	0.042	12.612	< .001	Supported
H3	SCB PI	0.548	0.548	0.039	14.188	< .001	Supported

Note. SMM = Social Media Marketing; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior; PI = Purchase Intention. p-values are based on bootstrapping. Results are based on the author's data analysis (2024).

The direct-effect results indicate that social media marketing (SMM) exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on both purchase intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < .001$) and sustainable consumption behavior ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < .001$). Additionally, sustainable consumption behavior significantly predicts purchase intention ($\beta = 0.548$, $p < .001$). These findings confirm that digital marketing engagement not only shapes consumers' purchasing decisions but also strengthens sustainability-oriented behavioral tendencies. The results are consistent with prior research suggesting that sustainability-oriented attitudes are positively associated with organic food purchase intention (e.g., Ismael & Balogh, 2023). Collectively, the findings demonstrate that social media marketing operates as both a promotional and value-shaping mechanism within the extended TPB framework.

Table 27
Hypotheses Testing for Indirect Effects

Hypotheses	Paths	Original sample (O)	Sample means (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Decisions

H4	SMM → SCB → PI (Indirect Effect)	0.290	0.291	0.032	8.990	< .001	Supported

Note. SMM = Social Media Marketing; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior; PI = Purchase Intention. The indirect effect represents mediation via SCB. p-values are based on bootstrapping. Results are based on the author's data analysis (2024).

The findings for Hypothesis 4 (H4) indicate that Social Media Marketing (SMM) exerts a positive and significant indirect effect on Purchase Intention (PI) through Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) see *Table 27*. The standardized indirect coefficient (β = 0.290) demonstrates that SMM influences purchase intention via sustainability-oriented values. The t-value (8.990) and p-value (< .001) confirm the statistical significance of this mediation effect.

Table 28

Summary of Hypotheses Testing and Interpretive Conclusions (PLS-SEM Results)

Hypothesis	Structural Relationship Tested	β (O)	t	p	Decision	Interpretive Conclusion
H1	SMM → PI	0.289	7.572	< .001	Supported	Social media marketing exerts a positive and significant direct effect on purchase intention for organic food.
H2	SMM → SCB	0.529	12.612	< .001	Supported	Social media marketing significantly enhances sustainable consumption behavior.
H3	SCB → PI	0.548	14.188	< .001	Supported	Sustainable consumption behavior significantly increases purchase intention.
H4	SMM → SCB → PI (Indirect Effect)	0.290	8.990	< .001	Supported	Sustainable consumption behavior partially mediates the relationship between social media

						marketing and purchase intention (complementary partial mediation).

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SMM = Social Media Marketing; SCB = Sustainable Consumption Behavior; PI = Purchase Intention. Indirect effect represents mediation via SCB. p-values are based on bootstrapping (5,000 subsamples). Complementary partial mediation indicates that both direct and indirect effects are significant and operate in the same direction.

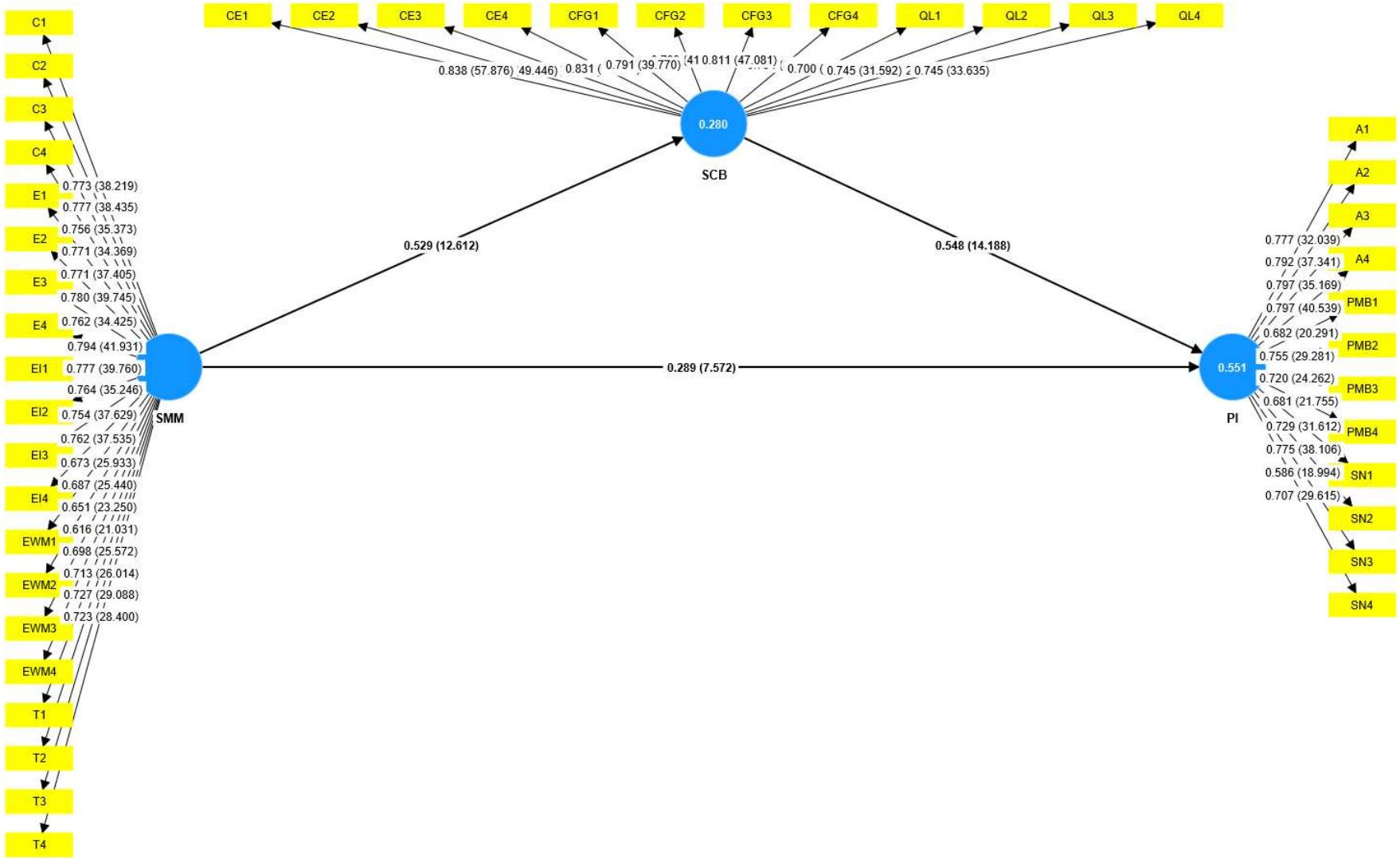
Table 28 summarizes the PLS-SEM hypothesis testing results for both the direct and indirect relationships among the study constructs. As shown, Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention (PI) ($\beta = 0.289$, $t = 7.572$, $p < .001$) and on Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB) ($\beta = 0.529$, $t = 12.612$, $p < .001$). In addition, SCB significantly predicts PI ($\beta = 0.548$, $t = 14.188$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect of SMM on PI through SCB is also significant ($\beta = 0.290$, $t = 8.990$, $p < .001$), confirming complementary partial mediation within the model.

The results indicate that subjective norms and perceived monetary barriers exert a significant influence on purchase intention alongside sustainability-oriented values. Within the extended TPB framework, subjective norms represent perceived social pressure from family, peers, and close social networks, while perceived monetary barriers function as a context-specific operationalization of perceived behavioral control. In the Kurdistan Region, consumption decisions are often embedded within collectivist social structures in which family expectations, peer influence, and community standards shape individual behavior. Organic food purchasing may therefore be influenced not only by personal attitudes toward sustainability but also by social approval and relational dynamics. This helps explain why subjective norms remain a significant predictor of intention even when sustainability-oriented values are present. Similarly, perceived monetary barriers reflect the economic realities of transitional market contexts. Household budgeting priorities, moderate income levels, and the higher price of organic products constrain purchasing capacity. As a result, although sustainability awareness strengthens intention, it does not fully override cost-based decision factors. This explains why sustainable consumption behavior operates as a complementary partial mediator rather than a full mediator in the structural

model. This interpretation aligns with broader evidence from emerging and transitional economies, where value-based motivations for sustainable food consumption coexist with social influence dynamics and structural economic constraints rather than eliminating them (Vermeir et al., 2020).

Figure 19

Structural Model with Path Coefficients and t-values



Note. This figure displays the measurement model showing standardized factor loadings and corresponding t-values for each item in relation to its latent construct. Diagram generated using Smart PLS 4 software based on the author's data analysis (2025).

Figure 19 presents the measurement model derived from PLS-SEM, including standardized factor loadings and *t*-values for each observed variable. All item loadings exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.60 and are statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating good convergent validity. The visual representation confirms that each observed indicator loads strongly on its respective latent construct, supporting the reliability and validity of the measurement model. This model underpins the structural relationships examined in the subsequent path analysis.

This study's findings confirm the hypotheses provided, affirming the strength and direction of the linkages among Social Media Marketing (SMM), Sustainable Consumption Behavior (SCB), and Purchase Intention (PI). Hypothesis 1, which asserted that SMM has a substantial impact on Purchase Intention, was validated with a high level of significance ($\beta = 0.289$; $p < 0.001$). This outcome aligns with prior research that underscores the influential capacity of social media content in shaping consumer purchase habits (Putri & Tiarawati, 2021). Effective marketing methods on social media platforms seem to enhance consumer knowledge, trust, and ultimately, their propensity to purchase especially in areas such as organic food, where trust and values are paramount.

The second hypothesis proposed a substantial and affirmative impact of Social Media Marketing on Sustainable Consumption Behavior. This finding, significant at the 1% level ($\beta = 0.529$; $p < 0.001$), demonstrates that strategic social media communication can promote environmentally responsible customer behavior. These findings are corroborated by prior studies (Aghayev & Israfilzadeh, 2022), that highlight how marketing / promotional content influences purchase decisions and connects to societal or sustainability-objectives. The implication is evident: digital involvement via social media can function as an instructional and motivational instrument to advance sustainability. Hypothesis 3 was validated ($\beta = 0.548$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that Sustainable Consumption Behavior significantly increases Purchase Intention. When consumers exhibit sustainable behavior, their intention to acquire organic or eco-friendly products escalates. This substantiates the idea that environmentally aware consumers not only act more responsibly

but also affect purchase behaviors. The findings correspond with previous studies indicating that personal values regarding sustainability can influence purchasing choices (Emini & Zeqiri, 2021; Setiari & Ekawati, 2022). Furthermore, Hypothesis 4 examined the indirect influence of SMM on PI, which was corroborated by a robust path coefficient ($\beta = 0.290$; $p < 0.001$). This highlights the intermediary function of SCB in enhancing the influence of SMM on PI. Social media marketing influences purchase intention both directly and indirectly by promoting sustainable behaviors that subsequently lead to purposeful purchasing. The supporting metrics, including R^2 values (0.551 for PI and 0.280 for SCB) and Q^2 values (0.293 for PI and 0.169 for SCB), validate the explanatory and predictive efficacy of the structural model. The HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criteria validate the reliability and discriminant validity of the constructs, while low VIF scores mitigate concerns regarding multicollinearity. The study underscores the significance of utilizing social media marketing not only for transactional results but also for fostering durable consumer behaviors. By effectively utilizing digital platforms, organizations can cultivate value-driven relationships with their audience, thereby enhancing social impact and consumer loyalty.

Section 3: Integrated Discussion: Triangulation of Qualitative and Quantitative Results

First, the positive influence of social media marketing on purchase intention is strongly reinforced by qualitative findings across influencers, producers, and consumers. Influencers consistently described their role as trust intermediaries who reduce uncertainty surrounding organic authenticity. Certification transparency, scientific explanation, and ethical positioning were emphasized as essential for maintaining credibility. Producers similarly highlighted the importance of collaborating with reputable influencers whose values align with health and sustainability. Focus group participants confirmed reliance on trusted pages, medical professionals, and credible personalities when evaluating organic products. These converging perspectives explain why SMM significantly affects purchase intention: its impact operates primarily through trust-building and normative influence, consistent with the attitude and subjective norm components of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

Second, lack of awareness emerged as a cross-cutting theme that directly contextualizes the structural relationships identified in the SEM model. Participants repeatedly noted that many

consumers misunderstand the concept of "organic," perceive it as a marketing label, or lack knowledge regarding certification standards and production processes. This awareness gap weakens informed decision-making and increases skepticism. Consequently, social media functions not merely as a promotional channel but as an educational platform. Influencers emphasized that evidence-based posts, certification visibility, health comparisons, and explanatory content produce greater behavioral change than simple advertising. Thus, the significant SMM → PI relationship can be interpreted as awareness-driven attitude formation. Awareness campaigns appear essential in transforming digital exposure into informed purchase intention.

Third, the mediating role of sustainable consumption behavior identified in the quantitative analysis is illuminated by qualitative narratives emphasizing health consciousness, environmental responsibility, and ethical consumption. Both producers and consumers framed organic food consumption as part of a broader lifestyle orientation rather than a single transactional decision. Participants demonstrating higher awareness levels articulated motivations related to long-term well-being, environmental protection, and intergenerational responsibility. These insights provide behavioral grounding for the mediation effect: social media marketing strengthens sustainability-oriented values, which subsequently enhance purchase intention. SCB therefore operates as a value-based bridge linking marketing stimuli to behavioral intention.

Fourth, perceived behavioral control is clarified through recurring structural barriers, particularly high price, limited market availability, restricted distribution channels, and regional economic instability. Many participants reported difficulty locating certified organic products in local markets, indicating that supply constraints reduce the feasibility of consistent purchasing behavior. Even consumers with positive attitudes and sustainability values acknowledged that organic products are not always easily accessible. These availability limitations directly reinforce the PBC construct within the TPB framework, demonstrating that behavioral intention is contingent not only on motivation but also on market infrastructure. Price sensitivity was frequently linked to both limited availability and insufficient awareness of long-term value, further explaining variation in purchase intention despite favorable perceptions.

Finally, misinformation and weak regulatory enforcement were identified as destabilizing factors affecting consumer trust. Influencers expressed concern about misleading organic claims, and consumers reported skepticism toward labeling authenticity. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of influencer marketing is contingent upon broader institutional credibility and supply-chain transparency. Government-supported certification visibility, standardized labeling systems, and structured awareness campaigns are therefore necessary to reinforce trust and strengthen the organic market ecosystem.

Overall, the triangulated results enhance internal validity by demonstrating convergence between statistical relationships and lived experiences. The mixed-methods design moves beyond identifying significant structural paths to explaining how trust-building, awareness formation, sustainability values, and market constraints interact to shape organic food purchase intention. In the Kurdistan Region, social media marketing is effective not solely because of exposure or persuasion, but because it functions as a mechanism for education, credibility reinforcement, and value internalization within a developing and structurally constrained organic market.

Chapter Five

Implications, Limitations and Recommendations

This chapter presents the broader implications of the research, emphasizing its theoretical, practical, methodological, and contextual contributions, while acknowledging its limitations. It also outlines recommendations for policymakers, businesses, and future researchers. The findings provide both academic and applied insights into the relationship between social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intention for organic food within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical discourse on social media marketing (SMM), sustainable consumption behavior (SCB), and consumer purchase intention by extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) within a digital marketing context. Rather than introducing a separate theoretical framework, the dissertation expands TPB by positioning social media marketing as an external antecedent influencing sustainability-oriented values and behavioral intention. The structural model results indicate that social media marketing significantly enhances sustainable consumption behavior ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < .001$), which in turn exerts a strong positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.548$, $p < .001$). In addition, social media marketing directly influences purchase intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < .001$), while the indirect effect through SCB ($\beta = 0.290$, $p < .001$) confirms complementary partial mediation. These findings extend TPB by demonstrating that sustainability-related values operate as a mediating mechanism through which digital marketing stimuli translate into behavioral intention. By embedding sustainability orientation within the TPB structure, the study advances a more context-sensitive explanation of intention formation in digital environments. Furthermore, situating this extended TPB framework within the

Kurdistan Region of Iraq contributes to the geographical diversification of consumer behavior research in emerging markets.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings have substantial implications for marketing practitioners, producers, and policymakers seeking to promote organic food and sustainable consumption in developing markets. From a marketing and business perspective, the structural results demonstrate that social media marketing significantly influences both sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention. This confirms that digital platforms are not merely promotional tools but mechanisms for shaping sustainability-oriented values and behavioral engagement. Businesses should therefore invest in interactive and educational social media strategies that emphasize transparency, certification visibility, and consistent messaging. Influencer collaborations should prioritize credibility and authenticity, as qualitative findings indicate that trust-building is central to converting awareness into actual purchase intention. Furthermore, the identification of two distinct consumer segments of value-driven adopters and price-sensitive sceptics provides a foundation for differentiated marketing strategies. Value-driven consumers respond to narratives emphasizing health, environmental responsibility, and ethical sourcing; thus, storytelling, loyalty initiatives, and community-based engagement can reinforce long-term commitment. In contrast, price-sensitive consumers are more influenced by affordability and accessibility considerations. For this segment, producers should consider value-based pricing strategies, smaller packaging options, promotional bundles, and targeted social media discounts to reduce perceived financial barriers. From a policy perspective, the findings underscore the need for stronger institutional and regulatory support to address structural market constraints identified in the qualitative phase. Limited availability, weak distribution networks, and competition from lower-priced imported products restrict consistent purchasing behavior despite positive consumer attitudes. Policymakers should therefore establish transparent certification and labeling systems to enhance credibility and reduce misinformation. In addition, supply-chain development initiatives, subsidies for local organic producers, and tax incentives could improve affordability and market accessibility. Integrating sustainability education into school curricula and public media campaigns would further strengthen long-term awareness and eco-conscious consumer behavior.

Overall, these practical implications demonstrate that social media marketing can function simultaneously as a commercial instrument and an educational platform. When supported by institutional infrastructure and regulatory transparency, digital engagement strategies can contribute to both economic development and the expansion of sustainable consumption practices in emerging economies such as the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

5.3 Methodological Implications

This study offers methodological contributions through the application of a sequential mixed-methods design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The use of PLS-SEM enabled the simultaneous estimation of direct and mediating relationships among complex behavioral constructs, making it particularly suitable for testing the extended TPB framework and the complementary mediation of sustainable consumption behavior. The quantitative phase (n = 565) provided statistically robust evidence regarding structural relationships, while the qualitative phase comprising focus groups and interviews with influencers and producers offered contextual depth and explanatory insight. This triangulated design strengthened internal validity by aligning statistical associations with lived experiences and market realities. Furthermore, incorporating both consumer and industry perspectives enriched the analytical scope of the research. Thematic analysis conducted using ATLAS.ti facilitated systematic coding, cross-group comparison, and transparent theme development, enhancing methodological rigor and auditability. The structured integration of qualitative insights into both questionnaire design and structural model interpretation provides a replicable methodological framework for future research examining sustainability-related behaviors in emerging or transitional market contexts.

5.4 Original Contributions (Novelty of the Study)

Building on the implications discussed above, this dissertation makes several original scientific contributions at the theoretical, methodological, contextual, and practical levels.

5.4.1 Theoretical contribution.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first empirical study in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to examine how social media marketing (SMM) influences purchase intention (PI) for organic

food through the mediating role of sustainable consumption behavior (SCB) using an extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework. Rather than applying TPB in its conventional form, the study extends the model by positioning social media marketing as an external antecedent and incorporating sustainable consumption behavior as a mediating mechanism. The finding that SCB acts as a complementary partial mediator demonstrates that sustainability-oriented values interact with, rather than replace, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in shaping purchase intention. This theoretical extension contributes to TPB scholarship by embedding digital marketing stimuli and sustainability value formation within intention-based models in an emerging market context.

5.4.2 Methodological Contribution

Methodologically, the dissertation employs a sequential mixed-methods design that combines a large-scale survey (n = 565) analyzed using PLS-SEM with in-depth qualitative data from focus groups and interviews with influencers and producers. Sustainable consumption behavior is operationalized as a three-dimensional construct (Quality of Life and Well-being, Care for Environmental Well-being, and Care for Future Generations), and the measurement model demonstrates strong reliability and validity (CR and Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.90$; AVE > 0.50; HTMT < 0.85; low VIF values). The structured integration of qualitative insights into instrument development and structural interpretation provides a replicable methodological template for examining sustainability-related behaviors in other developing or transitional contexts.

5.4.3 Contextual Contribution

Contextually, the study fills an important geographical and empirical gap by providing systematic evidence on organic food consumption in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, a market that has received very limited academic attention. Beyond identifying behavioral drivers, the findings reveal that organic food intentions are shaped within a structurally underdeveloped market environment characterized by limited product availability, weak distribution networks, strong competition from lower-priced imported goods, and inconsistent certification visibility.

The mixed-methods results identify two recurring consumer profiles: value-driven adopters who purchase despite higher prices, and price-sensitive sceptics who hesitate due to affordability,

authenticity concerns, and restricted access. The evidence demonstrates that positive attitudes and sustainability values do not automatically translate into consistent purchasing behavior when market infrastructure remains constrained. By embedding behavioral intention within these structural realities, the study offers a context-specific yet theoretically transferable explanation of how organic food purchase intentions is formed in transitional and emerging economies.

5.4.4 Practical Contribution

From a practical standpoint, the research reconceptualises social media influencers as "educator-advocates" who help bridge information and trust gaps in environments where formal certification and institutional communication remain weak. The findings indicate that interactive, community-driven SMM (engagement and electronic word-of-mouth) is more effective than one-way advertising for building purchase intentions in such contexts. These insights support the design of targeted digital strategies for producers, marketers, and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption and organic food markets in the Kurdistan Region and similar emerging settings.

5.5 Limitations

While the study provides robust theoretical and empirical insights, several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the geographic focus on three major cities (Duhok, Erbil, and Sulaymaniyah) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq may limit the generalizability of findings to rural areas or other cultural and economic contexts. Regional socioeconomic characteristics and levels of market development may influence consumer perceptions and behavior. Second, the study adopts a cross-sectional design. Although PLS-SEM allows for structural modeling of complex relationships, causal inferences remain limited. The temporal dynamics between social media marketing exposure, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intention cannot be conclusively established. Third, organic food was examined as a general product category rather than disaggregated into specific types (e.g., fruits, vegetables, dairy, or meat). This broader categorization may obscure product-specific variations in consumer preferences and purchasing behavior. However, this approach was justified by the early developmental stage of the organic market in the Kurdistan Region, where product

differentiation and specialization remain limited. Fourth, although the qualitative phase provided rich contextual insights, the sample size was relatively small and may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives across all demographic segments. The inclusion of additional micro-influencers, small-scale producers, and rural consumers could have expanded the scope of qualitative representation. Recognizing these limitations provides direction for future inquiry and strengthens the transparency and credibility of the research design.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the SMM → SCB → PI framework tested in the Kurdistan Region, future research should extend the geographic scope to multi-site studies across Iraq and comparable emerging markets. Establishing measurement invariance and testing cultural moderators would enhance cross-context comparability. To overcome the limitations of cross-sectional inference, longitudinal research designs such as cross-lagged panel models or latent growth modeling should investigate the temporal sequencing and durability of social media marketing effects on sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention. From a theoretical perspective, future studies may integrate complementary frameworks such as UTAUT, the Value–Belief–Norm model, or Environmental Identity theory. Explicitly modeling perceived behavioral control and price barriers as moderators would allow examination of moderated mediation mechanisms suggested by the present findings.

At the practical level, experimental and quasi-experimental designs should compare macro versus micro influencers, educational versus entertainment-based content, and transparency mechanisms such as certification badges, QR traceability systems, or farm-to-fork digital storytelling. Behavioral performance indicators (e.g., click-through rates, add-to-cart behavior, and conversion metrics) would strengthen external validity beyond self-reported intention measures. Policy-oriented research should experimentally evaluate educational campaigns, subsidy programs, and certification reforms using measurable outcomes in SCB, PI, and where feasible, observed purchasing behavior. Finally, future research should incorporate formal segmentation techniques, multigroup SEM analysis, product-specific measurement, and methodological robustness checks (e.g., common method bias and endogeneity testing) to enhance external validity and practical applicability.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This research examined how social media marketing (SMM) shapes consumers' purchase intention (PI) for organic food in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, emphasizing the mediating role of sustainable consumption behavior (SCB). Using a sequential mixed-methods design comprising interviews with influencers and producers, two consumer focus groups, and a large-scale survey (n = 565) analyzed via PLS-SEM, the study integrates qualitative depth with quantitative generalizability. Empirically, SMM demonstrated a positive and significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < .001$) and on sustainable consumption behavior ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < .001$). Sustainable consumption behavior strongly predicted purchase intention ($\beta = 0.548$, $p < .001$) and partially mediated the SMM → PI relationship (indirect $\beta = 0.290$, $p < .001$), confirming complementary partial mediation. The structural model explained a substantial proportion of variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.551$) and a moderate proportion in SCB ($R^2 = 0.280$), while blindfolding procedures indicated predictive relevance (PI $Q^2 = 0.293$; SCB $Q^2 = 0.169$).

Qualitative findings converged with these results, emphasizing the central role of trust and authenticity, the educational function of influencers, and persistent price and availability barriers. Two recurring consumer profiles emerged: value-driven adopters who purchase despite higher prices, and price-sensitive skeptics who hesitate due to affordability and authenticity concerns. This segmentation aligns with the quantitative pattern of strong positive attitudes coexisting with high perceived monetary barriers. The study extends intention-based models by integrating multidimensional SMM (entertainment, customization, engagement and interaction, trendiness, and electronic word-of-mouth) with sustainable consumption behavior as a mediating mechanism within an extended TPB framework. It further validates a three-dimensional SCB construct (Quality of Life and Well-being; Care for Environmental Well-being; Care for Future Generations) in an under-researched transitional economy.

From a practical standpoint, the research reconceptualizes social media influencers as educator-advocates capable of bridging information and trust gaps in environments where certification systems remain underdeveloped. Interactive, community-driven formats (engagement and electronic word-of-mouth) appear more effective than one-way promotional messaging in fostering purchase intention. However, the findings are bounded by a cross-sectional, self-report, non-probability design conducted in three urban areas of the Kurdistan Region and by a focus on purchase intention rather than observed purchasing behavior. These limitations underscore the need for longitudinal designs, field experiments, multigroup analysis, and the incorporation of objective behavioral data.

Overall, social media in the Kurdistan Region functions not merely as a promotional channel but as a behavioral infrastructure that can cultivate sustainability-oriented values and influence organic food consumption when credibility, education, affordability, and access are addressed. This dissertation provides a theoretically grounded and empirically validated model linking social media marketing, sustainable consumption behavior, and purchase intention in an emerging market context. By combining theoretical extension with methodological rigor, it contributes to sustainability-oriented marketing scholarship and offers actionable insights for policymakers, producers, and researchers committed to advancing responsible consumption in developing economies.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
SMM	Social Media Marketing
E	Entertainment
C	Customization
EI	Engagement and Interaction
T	Trendiness
EWM	Electronic Word of Mouth
SCB	Sustainable Consumption Behavior
QL	Quality of life well-being
CE	Care for the environmental well-being
PI	Purchase Intention
A	Attitudes
SN	Subjective Norms
PMB	Perceived Monetary Barriers

Appendix A - List of Jury Members for the Evaluation of the Suitability of the Questionnaires

No	Full Name	Academic Title	Specialty	University
1	Dr. Khairi Ali Auso	Professor	Business Administration	General Directorate of Tourism/ Duhok
2	Dr. Hadi Khalil Ismael	Professor	Business Administration, Organizational Theory and Behaviour, Information System, Human Resource Management.	Duhok Polytechnic University
3	Dr. Darman Sulaiman Sadiq	Professor	Marketing Management	Duhok University
4	Dr. Aree Mohammed Ali	Professor	Business Administration,	Duhok Polytechnic University
5	Dr. Elvin Nadher Aldawod	Asst. Professor	Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management	Duhok University
6	Dr. Fairooz Mustafa Hamdi	Asst. Professor	Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior	Duhok Polytechnic University
7	Ms. Shiler Abdulrahman Ali	Asst. Professor	Organizational Theory and Organizational Behavior	Duhok University
8	Ms. Aveen Salim Nuree	Asst. Professor	Marketing Management	Duhok Polytechnic University
9	Ms. Bayan Mohammed Tahir M. Saleem	Lecturer	Human Resource Management	Duhok Polytechnic University
10	Ms. Bafreen Arif Haji	Lecturer	Organizational Theory and Organizational Behavior	Duhok University

Appendix B - Survey Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

The researcher is conducting a study as a requirement for obtaining a doctoral degree in Marketing Sciences with a thesis entitled ***"The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq".***

This questionnaire aims to gather information on the impact of social media on the purchase intention of organic food, focusing on sustainable consumption behavior as a mediating variable. Through this questionnaire, we aim to understand your opinions on sustainable consumption behavior, how social media influences your purchasing decisions related to organic food, and the factors that encourage you to purchase these products.

Your valuable opinions will help us analyze consumer behavior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Your responses will remain completely confidential and will only be used for this academic study.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Awaz Shukri Ismael

PhD Researcher

University of Debrecen, Hungary

Supervised by

Prof. Dr. Balogh Peter

Professor at The University of Debrecen

Do you purchase organic products or organic food?

If your answer is "Yes," kindly proceed to complete this survey.

Section 1: Demographic variables:

Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

Age:

☐ Less than 30 ☐ 30-40 years ☐ 41-50 years ☐ 50 and above

Education level:

☐ Technical Education or Below ☐ Bachelor ☐ Postgraduate Studies

Monthly Income:

☐ Less than 500$ ☐ 500-999$ ☐ 1000-1500$ ☐ More than 1500$

Residence:

☐ Urban (Inside the city) ☐ Rural (Outside the city)

Section 2: Social Media Marketing: Below is a set of statements. Please place a checkmark (✓) next to the option that best reflects your opinion regarding social media marketing, and it is dimensions, which are **(Entertainment, Customization, Interaction & Engagement, Trendiness, and Electronic Word of Mouth)**.

Variables	**Scales**				
Entertainment	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Social media marketing makes it easier to obtain information about organic products.					

Social media content about organic products is entertaining and interesting.					
It is enjoyable to spend time on social media related to organic products.					
Gathering information about organic products through social media is fun.					
Customization	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Social media allows access to customized information about organic products.					
Social media provides services tailored to my needs when searching for organic products.					
Social media platforms for organic products are accessible anytime, anywhere.					
Social media simplifies purchase decisions for organic products based on my needs.					
Engagement and Interaction	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
I engage in activities related to obtaining organic food products through social media platforms.					
Social media enhances my positive attitude toward purchasing organic products.					
Social media allows me to engage in discussions and share opinions about buying organic products.					

I share my experiences about purchasing organic products with others via social media.					
Trendiness	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Social media content reflects the latest trends in organic products.					
Using social media for organic products enhances a modern and innovative experience					
Social media provides up-to-date information about organic products consistently.					
Social media helps me discover new organic products as they emerge.					
Electronic Word of Mouth	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
I share my opinions about organic products seen in social media ads with friends.					
I recommend others to try organic products promoted by social media influencers.					
I rely on recommendations from others via social media before deciding to purchase organic products.					
I share my personal experiences with organic products on social media to guide others.					

<u>Section 3:</u> Sustainable Consumption Behavior: Below is a set of statements. Please place a checkmark (✓) next to the option that best reflects your opinion regarding sustainable consumption behavior, which are dimensions **(Quality of life well-being, Care for the environmental well-being and Care for the future generation)**.

Variables	**Scales**				
Quality of life well-being (QL)	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
I try to make my purchases more organic.					
I am careful in my use of organic foods.					
I always plan before purchasing any organic or non-organic product.					
I practice saving and recycling organic products at home.					
Care for the environmental well-being	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
I care about the natural environment because I contribute to raising awareness about environmental issues and reducing waste.					
I use environmentally friendly products.					
I pay extra money to purchase organic food or environmentally friendly products.					
I am concerned about the depletion of natural resources.					

Care for the future generation	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
I care for the need's fulfilment of the next generation.					
I often think about the quality of life for future generations.					
I strive to reduce excessive consumption to preserve environmental resources for future generations.					
I believe my current consumption decisions significantly impact the future of upcoming generations.					

Section 4: Purchase Intention (PI): Below is a set of statements. Please place a checkmark (✓) next to the option that best reflects your opinion regarding social media marketing, and it is dimensions which are **(Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Monetary Barriers).**

Variables	**Scales**				
Attitudes	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
Purchasing organic foods instead of conventional ones is beneficial for health.					
Choosing organic foods over conventional ones is a rational decision.					
Buying organic foods instead of conventional ones satisfies me more.					

Purchasing organic foods reflects my commitment to sustainable choices and healthy practices.					
Subjective Norms	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
I value people's opinions regarding the purchase of organic products.					
I respect the opinions of groups that advise me to buy organic products.					
I buy organic products to avoid criticism from others.					
The people close to me encourage me to buy organic products.					
Perceived Monetary Barriers	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
The prices of organic food are relatively higher compared to conventional food.					
I prefer to buy organic products for my health, despite their higher cost.					
I feel there is a lack of availability of organic products.					
I find it challenging to locate organic products while shopping.					

Appendix C - Interview Questions (Influencers on social media)

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

 Organic Food: Food grown or raised without the use of synthetic chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It often prioritizes natural methods and animal welfare.

 Sustainability: Practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It considers environmental, social, and economic factors in food production and consumption.

Introduction:

This interview aims to understand your perspectives on organic food, social media marketing, and sustainable consumption behavior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Your insights will be crucial for my research on purchase intentions for organic food.

Icebreaker:

1. Briefly tell us about yourself.
2. How often do you use social media platforms, and which ones are your favorites?

Influencers

- **Perceptions of Organic Food:**
    - Can you describe your own views and experiences with organic food?
    - What are the biggest misconceptions about organic food that you encounter in your Kurdish audience?
    - How do you differentiate organic food from other sustainable food options (local, fair-trade) in your content?
- **Social Media Marketing for Organic Food:**
    - How do you typically (kaifa tata3amal)approach promoting organic food on your social media platforms?
    - Do you partner with any organic food brands for sponsored content?
    - What kind of content resonates best with your Kurdish audience regarding organic food (e.g., recipes, health benefits, environmental impact)?
    - Have you observed any changes in consumer behavior towards organic food based on your social media interactions in Kurdistan?
    - What are the challenges and opportunities you see in using social media to promote sustainable food choices in Kurdistan?
- **Impact on Consumer Behavior:**
    - In your experience, how do social media influencers influence consumer purchase decisions for organic food in Kurdistan?

- What strategies do you use to encourage your audience to adopt sustainable consumption habits within the context of food choices?

- **Content & Strategy:**

1. **What types of content do you create to promote organic food on your social media channels? (Influence of Social Media Content)**
   - Do you focus on specific aspects of organic food (e.g., health benefits, environmental impact, recipes)?
2. **What are you trying to achieve with your organic food content? (Influence of Social Media Content)**
   - Do you aim to educate your audience, inspire them to try new things, or encourage them to purchase organic products? How and why?
   - How do you measure the success of your organic food content?

- **Engagement & Interaction:**

1- **How do you interact with your audience on social media? (Engagement and Interaction)**
   - Do you respond to comments and questions?
2- **Do you ever face any challenges when promoting organic food on social media? (Influence of Social Media Content)**
   - How do you address concerns about price or availability?
   - Have you faced any skepticism about organic food from your audience? How do you respond to these concerns?

- **Influencer Impact:**

  In your experience, how do influencers impact consumer perceptions of organic food? (Influencer Marketing Impact)

   - Do you think influencers can play a role in driving consumer behavior towards organic options?
   - How can influencers ensure their promotion of organic food is authentic and trustworthy?

Closing:

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience promoting organic food on social media?

Thank you for your valuable participation!

Appendix D - Interview Questions (Producers of Organic Food)

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

 Organic Food: Food grown or raised without the use of synthetic chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It often prioritizes natural methods and animal welfare.

 Sustainability: Practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It considers environmental, social, and economic factors in food production and consumption.

Introduction:

This interview aims to understand your perspectives on organic food, social media marketing, and sustainable consumption behavior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Your insights will be crucial for my research on purchase intentions for organic food.

Icebreaker:

-Briefly tell us about yourself and your production experience with organic food (what kind of products do you have).

Organic Food Producers

- **Organic Food Production and Marketing:**
  - Can you describe your production process for organic food?
  - Why do you produce organic food?
  - How does your marketing strategy target consumers who are interested in sustainable food choices in Kurdistan?
  - Do you use social media marketing to reach your target audience? If so, how?
- **Challenges and Opportunities in the Organic Food Market:**
  - What are the biggest challenges you face in promoting and selling organic food products in Kurdistan? What do you do to overcome those challenges?
  - How do you perceive the role of social media marketing in the organic food industry in Kurdistan?
  - What are the potential future trends in consumer demand for organic food in Kurdistan?
  - How do you address (mo3alajakain) the price sensitivity of consumers towards organic food?
  - What are the biggest competitors in the organic food market in Kurdistan, and how do you differentiate yourself?
  - What strategies do you have in place to adapt to changing consumer preferences for organic food?

- **Consumer Behavior and Social Media:**
    - Have you observed (mola7aza kriya) any changes in consumer behavior towards organic food in Kurdistan in recent years?
    - Do you think social media plays a role in influencing consumer awareness of organic food in Kurdistan?
    - How can producers better collaborate (ta3awon bishakl Afzal) to promote sustainable food consumption in Kurdistan?
- **Social Media Strategy:**

1. **How do you use social media platforms to reach potential customers interested in organic food? (Influence of Social Media Content)**
    - Which social media platforms do you find most effective for your brand?
    - What types of content do you typically post on social media (e.g., product photos, recipes, educational content)?
2. **Do you engage with your followers on social media? How do you encourage interaction and build a community around your brand? (Engagement and Interaction)**
    - Do you respond to comments and questions from your followers?
    - Do you run any contests or giveaways on social media to promote your products?

- **Influencer Marketing:**

  Do you partner with social media influencers to promote your organic food products? If so, what qualities do you look for in an influencer? (Influencer Marketing Impact)

    - How do you typically select influencers to partner with?

Closing:

- Do you have any plans to expand your use of social media marketing in the future?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience using social media to reach consumers interested in organic food?

Thank you for your valuable participation!

Appendix E - Interview Questions (Organic Food Customers)

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

 Organic Food: Food grown or raised without the use of synthetic chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It often prioritizes natural methods and animal welfare.

 Sustainability: Practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It considers environmental, social, and economic factors in food production and consumption.

Introduction:

This interview aims to understand your perspectives on organic food, social media marketing, and sustainable consumption behavior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Your insights will be crucial for my research on purchase intentions for organic food.

Icebreaker:

Briefly tell us about yourself and your experience with organic food (if any).

Organic Consumers

- **Organic Food Consumption Habits:**
  - Can you describe your typical shopping habits for organic food?
  - What are the main reasons you choose to buy organic food products? (Health, Environment, etc.)
  - How important is taste and quality when it comes to organic food for you?
  - What are some of the biggest challenges you face when buying organic food in Kurdistan? (Price, Availability, etc.)
  - How much more are you willing to pay for organic food compared to non-organic options?
- **Social Media Influence:**
  - How often do you use social media to find information about organic food?
  - Can you share an example of how social media influenced your decision to buy a specific organic product? (e.g., influencer recommendation, recipe inspiration)
  - What type of social media content is most likely to convince you to buy organic food? (e.g., health benefits explained by a doctor, visually appealing recipes using organic ingredients)
  - Have you ever faced any misleading information about organic food on social media? How did you identify it?
- **Sustainable Consumption Behavior:**

    - How important is it for you to make sustainable choices when it comes to your food consumption? (Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important), and Why?
    - Besides buying organic, what other practices do you adopt to promote sustainability in your diet? (Reducing food waste, buying local produce, etc.)
- **Learning & Engagement:**
    - How do you typically use social media to discover new products or services?
    - Have you ever discovered a new organic food product through social media? Can you describe the experience?
    - Do you follow any social media accounts focused on organic food brands or influencers? Why or why not?
    - What kind of content from organic food brands or influencers do you find most engaging? (e.g., educational posts about organic farming, recipe tutorials using organic ingredients)
    - When considering buying a new brand of organic food, do you research online reviews or recommendations from influencers? How much do they influence your decision?

Closing:

- **Thank you:** "Thank you again for your valuable participation and insights today. Your contributions will be instrumental in my research."
- **Open-Ended Question:** "Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share about organic food, social media's influence on food choices, or sustainable consumption practices in Kurdistan? Perhaps you have personal experiences or suggestions that haven't been covered yet. Feel free to share anything that comes to mind."

Appendix F - Interview Questions (Non- Organic Food Customers)

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

 Organic Food: Food grown or raised without the use of synthetic chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It often prioritizes natural methods and animal welfare.

 Sustainability: Practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It considers environmental, social, and economic factors in food production and consumption.

Introduction:

This interview aims to understand your perspectives on organic food, social media marketing, and sustainable consumption behavior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Your insights will be crucial for my research on purchase intentions for organic food.

Icebreaker:

Briefly tell us about yourself and your experience with organic food (if any).

Non-Organic Consumers

- **Non-Organic Food Consumption Habits:**
    - Can you describe your typical shopping habits for groceries?
    - What factors do you consider most important when buying food products? (Price, Brand, Taste, etc.)
    - Have you ever considered buying organic food? If not, why not?
    - If price were not a concern, would you be more likely to buy organic food?
- **Social Media Influence:**
    - Do you ever use social media to find information about food products?
    - Can you think of a time when social media influenced your decision to buy a specific food product? (e.g., advertisement, influencer promotion)
- **Sustainable Consumption Behavior:**
    - How important do you consider sustainable food practices to be?
    - Are there any ways you currently try to be more sustainable with your food choices? (e.g., reducing food waste, buying in bulk)
    - What would make you more likely to consider buying organic food in the future? (Lower prices, greater availability, etc.)
- **Learning & Engagement:**
    - How do you typically use social media to discover new products or services?

- Have you ever discovered a new organic food product through social media? Can you describe the experience?
- Do you follow any social media accounts focused on organic food brands or influencers? Why or why not?
- What kind of content from organic food brands or influencers do you find most engaging? (e.g., educational posts about organic farming, recipe tutorials using organic ingredients)
- When considering buying a new brand of organic food, do you research online reviews or recommendations from influencers? How much do they influence your decision?

Closing:

- **Thank you:** "Thank you again for your valuable participation and insights today. Your contributions will be instrumental in my research."
- **Open-Ended Question:** "Before we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to share about organic food, social media's influence on food choices, or sustainable consumption practices in Kurdistan? Perhaps you have personal experiences or suggestions that haven't been covered yet. Feel free to share anything that comes to mind."

Appendix G - Interview Consent Form

Research project title: ***The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.***

Researcher: Awaz Shukri Ismael

Research participants' name: ----------

You are invited to participate in a research study titled (***The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchase Intention of Organic Food: Sustainable Consumption Behavior as a Mediating Variable: A Study of Consumer Opinions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq)*.**

This form explains the study's details and your rights as a participant. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate.

The interview will last approximately one hour and will be conducted by Awaz Shukri Ismael a PhD student in Hungary at the University of Debrecen/ Economics and Business School. The interview will focus on Organic Food Purchase. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. We do not anticipate any risks from your participation in this study. However, you are free to withdraw from the interview or to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. We will keep all the information you provide confidential. We will not use your name in any reports or publications. We will analyze the data from this study in aggregate. This implies that we won't use any information that could personally identify you.

By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided above and agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date:_____

We appreciate your willingness to participate in the interview for the research study.

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I express my deepest gratitude to **Allah** Almighty for granting me the strength, perseverance, and guidance throughout this academic journey. Without His blessings, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible.

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