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Alternative Food Purchase Intention with Moderating Role of Health Consciousness: Perspective from Non-Working Housewives

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the factors influencing the intention of non-working housewives in Malaysia to purchase alternative food products, focusing on the moderating role of health consciousness. It examined key drivers of buying behaviour, including attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Data was collected from 218 respondents through a structured questionnaire administered to non-working housewives in Malaysia using a purposive sampling method to ensure the inclusion of the target demographic. SPSS 30.0 was used for descriptive analysis of respondents' demographics, while SmartPLS 4.0 conducted PLS-SEM and bootstrap analyses to evaluate the proposed model and test its significance. The study found that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control—significantly influenced purchase intention. However, health consciousness did not strengthen the relationship between these factors and the intention to purchase alternative food products. This research contributed to understanding consumer behaviour in the alternative food market within emerging regions. It provided practical implications for policymakers, marketers, and producers to address non-working housewives' health-consciousness preference in influencing their purchasing decisions, thus bridging gaps in consumer insights for this demographic.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Interest in alternative food products is rising, offering solutions to global food challenges by emphasizing sustainability, ethics, and local connections. The organic food industry, for instance, is forecasted to achieve a valuation of $564.22 billion by 2030, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 12.1% through the current decade (Grand View Research, 2023). Parallel growth is seen in plant-based markets, experiencing swift expansion fuelled by rising preferences for eco-friendly and nutrition-focused alternatives. In Southeast Asian contexts like Malaysia, sectoral momentum mirrors global trends, with the organic market anticipated to develop at a 7.4% compound annual growth rate from 2022 to 2027 (MMR, 2023). National efforts, including Malaysia's National Agrofood Policy (2021-2030), are implementing programs to boost domestic organic agriculture and consumer uptake (National Agrofood Policy, 2024).

From conventional mass-production models, alternative food systems prioritize ecological stewardship and supply chain openness, encompassing organically grown items, CSA farm shares, handcrafted specialties, and goods from independent or family-run producers (Mariutti et al., 2021). Shifting consumer priorities now prioritize product integrity and moral aspects in dietary selections, accelerating adoption rates (Liu et al., 2024). Yet, limited studies offer information on the determinants shaping the adoption behaviour of population segments. Homemakers, and those not employed outside the home, wield significant influence on the family's nutritional choices and can initiate an interest in sustainable dietary alternatives. Their decision processes remain relevant for developing targeted initiatives to foster sustainable diets.

Housewives who do not contribute to the workforce, often the primary decision-makers for family diets, represent an overlooked segment of the alternative food market. Historically, their role has been undervalued, with societal stereotypes depicting them as disengaged from economically productive activities (Edet et al., 2019). This view ignores their critical role in managing households and making purchasing decisions. Non-working housewives face unique challenges, such as doubts about nutritional adequacy, economic limitations, accessibility barriers, and family preferences for conventional foods (Faruky et al., 2022). These challenges are often compounded by limited exposure to diverse food options and cultural norms favouring low-cost, familiar foods (Palmer et al., 2020).

Research highlights internal factors such as attitudes, which reflect individual beliefs and evaluations about a product, and subjective norms, which represent societal and familial expectations. These elements shape purchasing intentions, perceived behavioural control, or confidence in one's ability to make a purchase (Lee et al., 2019). These factors interact with health consciousness, affordability, and cultural influences to determine the likelihood of adopting alternative food products among non-working housewives. While health consciousness can boost demand, financial constraints and traditional dietary patterns often serve as significant barriers (Pandey, 2023; Lu et al., 2023).

This study explored the factors influencing non-working housewives across Malaysia intending to purchase alternative foods. It examined attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and the moderating role of health consciousness to uncover the motivations and obstacles faced by this group. The findings aimed to deepen the understanding of how non-working housewives influence dietary practices as key household decision-makers. In addition, the study offered practical insights for businesses and policymakers to create strategies that made alternative foods more accessible and appealing. Addressing non-working housewives' unique needs and concerns was vital for promoting sustainable and healthier food consumption as the alternative food movement grows (Ólafsson, 2024).

2.0 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The TPB explained, as highlighted by Ajzen (1991), who in 1985 first presented the theory with his publication entitled From Intentions to Actions: A Theory of Planned Behaviour (Brookes, 2023), how there was a cognitive approach interlinking with human behaviour. This psychological theory pointed out three principal constituents that impacted the intention about certain behaviour: attitude towards the conduct, subjective norms, and perceived behaviour control. Intention towards doing something influenced as such might translate into respective acts, serving as the direct precursor of behaviour.

Ajzen developed the TPB as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), co-proposed with Martin Fishbein in 1980. According to TRA, behavioural intention resulted from attitude and subjective norms (Kan & Fabrigar, 2017). However, TRA applied to only those behaviours that were under full volitional control. To overcome this limitation, Ajzen extended TPB by incorporating perceived behavioural control in 1991 (Rahman et al., 2021). Since then, TPB has been applied within advertising, health, and sustainability domains to explain the relationship between beliefs with attitude, intention, and behaviour.

This present study uses the Theory of Planned Behaviour to understand the buying intentions of non-working housewives towards alternative foods. According to TPB, behavioural intention is influenced by personal attitude, subjective norms, and perceived control. Based on this, the current study probes housewives' attitudes toward alternative food, the social environment, and the consumer's perceived control over purchasing. This method therefore gives a systematized connotation of their purchasing intentions and behaviour.

2.2 Intention to Purchase Alternative Food

Ali et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between purchase intention in social commerce and trust, perceived risk, and social influence. The study showed that these factors significantly affected consumers' decisions on social media platforms. Li, Guo, Xu, and Yu (2022) explored the factors that influenced the intention of customers to buy innovative products. Their findings indicated that perceived risk negatively influenced trust and purchase intention while risk propensity positively affected behavioural choices. The research revealed that customers probably purchased an innovative product if they perceived its positive value. It also underlined online reviews and opinion dynamics, such that the diversity of the reviewing groups—e.g., evaluation officers, PLUS users, and ordinary users—affected the evolution of purchase intention. This showed that online reviews were one of the main drivers of purchase intention.

Ho Nguyen et al. (2022) identified factors influencing online purchase intention for advertised products using the Theory of Planned Behaviour and Uses & Gratifications Theory to explain and predict consumer behaviour. Tilahun et.la., (2023) studied determinants of purchase intention on digital business platforms, finding that Perceived Ease of Use was the strongest influencer, followed by Subjective Norms and Perceived Usefulness. Their findings indicated that the factors explained 67.6% of the variance in purchase intention.

These studies have underlined that various factors influence purchase intention, including perceived ease of use, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, risk propensity, online reviews, attitude, and social influence. This knowledge will help enterprises understand correct anticipation and influence consumers' choices.

2.3 Alternative Food

Before discovering alternative foods, humans depended on traditional ones like grains, vegetables, meats, and fruits for survival. Alternative foods have been found because of continuous innovation and a quest for new food. Zahaf and Ferjani (2016) supported the idea that research into alternative foods referred

to meat and plant-based diets and a wide variety of new products, such as plant-based proteins, insect-based foods, and lab-grown meats.

The first definition of alternative food is the development of new products that respond to environmental and technological standards and attract consumer attention through innovation. This definition, therefore, identifies innovative food design as a driving force in changing consumers' perceptions and attitudes and allowing continuous interest in alternative foods. Other more familiar categories studied include organic and locally sourced foods. Smutná et al. (2024) investigated consumers' motivations, preferences, and behaviours regarding the said options, which were driven by concerns about sustainability, health, and environmental effects of conventional food systems.

Yang et al. (2022) further indicated that, with increased consumer acceptance and demand for plant-based meat substitutes, for example, the alternative food market was developing. However, it was a challenge to foster a culture of acceptance within certain groups, such as that of non-working housewives.

2.4 Attitude

Ferreira and Pereira (2023) defined attitude as a consumer's feelings toward organic food and green products, which were often viewed as sustainable, healthy, and ethical. These feelings significantly influenced consumers' purchase intentions. Studies suggested that individuals with positive attitudes toward organic food were more likely to express intentions to buy such products. This aligned with the theory that a positive attitude strengthened the likelihood of purchase.

Specific factors, such as level of enthusiasm, safety concerns, taste, and cost broke down consumers' attitudes to alternative food products. Enthusiasm represents a person's readiness to try new food innovations and is usually associated with an increased intention to buy (Ferreira & Pereira, 2023). On the other hand, the health risk or inconsistency in product quality reduced consumer confidence, resulting in reduced purchases (Chang et al., 2024). The taste remained a primary driver, and research demonstrated that appealing sensory properties build long-term consumer loyalty (Tacardon et al., 2023). Price sensitivity often influenced the choice of alternatives, which was also noted as a significant factor for affordability (Szymkowiak et al., 2022). The positive perceptions of organic or sustainable foods tended to correlate with purchasing intention (Ferreira & Pereira, 2023; Chang et al., 2024). Indeed, research pointed out that expressed preferences did not always lead to actual purchasing behavior due to real-life barriers such as limited budgets or sub-optimal product availability (Hidalgo-Baz et al., 2017; Schäufele & Janssen, 2021).

Tacardon, Kester, and Gumasing (2023) described attitude as individual feelings towards an object, behaviour, or idea that determine how an individual approaches the object, behaviour, or idea. In the food industry, attitudes are the consumers' overall evaluation of buying and eating the food, as well as the health benefits, price, and sustainability. In the analysis, attitude positivity is strongly consistent with an intent to purchase domestic and organic foods, highlighting the importance of attitude in consumer behaviours.

According to Chang, Hsia, and Chen (2024), attitude involves how an individual evaluates or feels about a particular behaviour or object, shaped by their beliefs. This assessment, whether positive or negative, influences decision-making. In food products, favourable attitudes toward health benefits or sustainability play a key role in shaping purchase intentions, as seen with organic or 3D-printed foods. The strong connection between attitude and purchase intention is well-documented, demonstrating the impact of positive attitudes on consumer behaviour.

Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Attitude is positively and significantly related to the intention to purchase alternative food.

2.5 Subjective Norms

Tacardon et al. As Van de Ven et al. (2023) described: "Subjective norms are the perceived influence of important other people and groups on a person's behaviour." These norms represent social expectations that influence the decisions we make, especially when it comes to food. In this regard, social influence is significant for purchases of street food. Individuals also consider the views and expectations of the people in the surrounding environment, and this is toward shaping intentions. A search of pertinent literature shows a strong positive relationship between subjective norms and purchase intentions, indicating that social pressure significantly affects food-buying decisions, including selecting traditional options like street food.

Other subjective norm-observed factors perceived as challenging include exposure to family, peers, and the media. In collectivist cultures, family preference strongly impacts purchasing decisions (Chang et al., 2024). The peer effect is powerful: when consumers see others doing it, such as their friends adopting sustainable diets, they tend to do so (Tacardon et al., 2023). In addition, media exposure also influences purchase patterns through promotions, social media, and health campaigns (Ho Nguyen et al., 2022). Hence, subjective norms are positively associated with purchase intentions; social influence is important in consumer behavior (Tacardon et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2024). Often, subjective norms do not correlate positively with purchase behavior, as subjective norms strongly influence actual purchase behavior. Subjective norms may not lead to purchase behaviour under certain conditions, such as uncertainty about the product and personal attitude towards the product (Nam et al., 2019; Curvelo et al., 2019).

Chang et al. (2024) added that subjective norms referred to the social pressures one went through in making a choice, and such pressure arose from family, peers, or other important groups. These have always been the factors that emerged as important predictors of consumer behavior in food categories in numerous studies. The specific case of 3D-printed food showed subjective norms as one of the leading factors influencing purchase intention, proving that others determined one's attitude toward a novel food product. Chang et al. (2024) emphasized that subjective norms significantly influenced purchase intention toward 3D-printed food. Their study found that consumers often relied on social cues, including recommendations from peers and family when making decisions about novel food products. This highlighted the strong role of social pressure in shaping attitudes toward alternative food options.

In turn, all these studies above reflected the same trend that attitude and subjective norms are related and have a high power of impact on purchase intention, particularly on food choice because choices are made due to the acceptance by society or any other relevant societal factor. Understanding what affects purchasing behaviour, either in traditional forms of foods, such as street food, or innovative ones like 3D-printed food, is enriched in this respect through subjective norms. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Subjective norms are positively and significantly related to the intention to purchase alternative food.

2.6 Perceived Behavioural Control

In the review by Szymkowiak et al. (2022), PBC was defined as "the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior which was assessed based on past experiences and obstacles that might be encountered". Concerning food, this is positively related to intentions with people more likely to intend to do something with food when they perceive the task as easy. However, this is not always the case since some studies have reported no significant association. The paper has identified PBC as a determinant of the intention to pay attention to nutrition claims, which implies that perceptions of ease or difficulty in focusing on nutritional information may influence these intentions.

Perceived behavioral control can be measured using accessibility, affordability, and self-efficacy. Accessibility refers to how easily consumers can find alternative food products, with limited availability reducing purchase intention (Witek & Kuźniar, 2023). Affordability remains a barrier, as price-sensitive

consumers may opt for conventional food despite recognizing health benefits (Szymkowiak et al., 2022). Finally, self-efficacy—confidence in preparing and integrating alternative foods—has been shown to increase adoption rates (Tacardon et al., 2023).

Witek and Kuźniar (2023) referred to the PBC of green products, which was connected with cost, information about the product, convenience, and ease of use. If consumers believe that buying green food products is burdensome or do not see any substantial benefits in using such products, then they will not buy them. This could explain the results obtained in this and other studies of various significant effect sizes: some evidence showed the influence of PBC on the intention to purchase green products, while another set the less relevant relation. Indeed, across the articles reviewed, the statistical significance of PBC effects on green food purchase intention has been statistically significant and has a weak impact. The latter means that PBC is not the major determinant here.

Studies have found that higher perceived behavioral control is associated with stronger purchase intentions (Szymkowiak et al., 2022; Witek & Kuźniar, 2023). Nevertheless, some research suggested that perceived behavioural control might not always translate into actual purchase behaviour, particularly when there were economic barriers or a lack of familiarity with the products (Lehmann & Sheffi, 2020; Amanda & Marsasi, 2024).

According to Tacardon et al. (2023), PBC was "an individual's perception of control over a behaviour, such as buying street foods, including considerations such as accessibility, convenience, and perceived barriers." In the context of the articles, PBC reflected the belief that purchasing street food was easy or difficult, depending on availability, cost, and convenience. The findings showed that the PBC was directly related to the intention to buy street food, in a sense that the more perceived control people had in the process, the higher their intention to buy was. Given the importance of PBC in shaping purchase intentions across different contexts, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Perceived behavioural control is positively and significantly related to the intention to purchase alternative food.

2.7 Health Consciousness (moderator)

Health consciousness is a significant moderator in the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and purchase intentions. Health consciousness can be represented by variables such as health awareness, health motivation, and health concerns. Health consciousness is generally understood as an individual's awareness or attentiveness to their well-being, primarily focusing on the nutritional value and safety of the ingredients they consume. High levels of health consciousness would help consumers perceive organic products as healthier than the conventionally produced variety, according to the study conducted by Eberle et al., (2022). This perception greatly improved their intention to purchase organic food, as health-conscious consumers usually try to avoid the chemicals and additives generally associated with non-organic products. Health motivation refers to the inclination to opt for more nutritious food options, whereas health concerns relate to uncertainties about the potential health risks associated with consuming conventional food items. Studies indicated that individuals who prioritized health were more inclined to buy organic and alternative food products because of their perceived advantages for well-being (Iqbal et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the moderating effect of health consciousness could vary based on cultural and contextual factors, and some studies have found that health consciousness did not always lead to increased purchase intentions, especially when other factors such as taste preferences or cost were more influential (Iqbal et al., 2021; Tharun, 2024).

Previous literature also viewed health consciousness acted very effectively as a major predicting agent in purchasing alternative or healthy food commodities including organic food purchases. They further estimated that consumers accustomed to high-end health awareness used this to grow their positive attitudinal stances towards consuming organic food which elevated the ability and likelihood of making purchases, enhancing consumption. Health-conscious consumers often developed positive perceptions of

organic products, influenced by their motivation to make healthier food choices, and reinforced their purchasing intentions.

Su et al. (2022) further indicated that subjective norms, such as favourable societal trends or opinions among peers for healthy eating, tended to influence purchase intention in health-conscious consumers more than others. Such health-conscious consumers were more responsive to social cues promoting healthy eating practices, further strengthening the relationship between subjective norms and purchase behavior.

Health consciousness also moderates the relationship between perceived behavioural control and purchase intention. According to Meireles (2018), consumers who perceived that they had control over their food choices and were highly health conscious were more likely to intend to purchase organic foods. This is conceptually supported because health-conscious consumers view their choices of food items as a tool to control health outcomes, which in turn enhances their perception of control and thereby their purchase intentions. Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Health consciousness positively moderates the relationship between attitude and purchase intention for alternative food.

H5: Health consciousness positively moderates the relationship between subjective norms and purchase intention for alternative food.

H6: Health consciousness positively moderates the relationship between perceived behavioural control and purchase intention for alternative food.

In summary, the literature review above proposed a conceptual framework (refer to Figure 1) based on the TPB model, with health consciousness as a moderator variable.

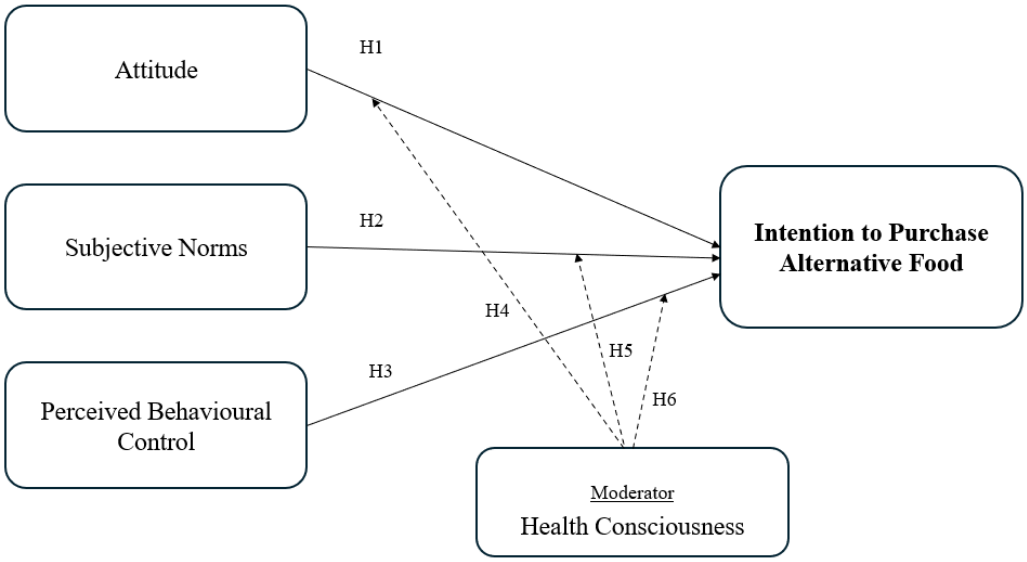

Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In this study, the targeted respondents were Malaysian. The respondents of this study were from West Malaysia (i.e., Northern region, Central region, and Southern region), and East Malaysia (i.e., Sarawak and Sabah), specifically targeting those 18 years old and above with the status of non-working housewives. During the data collection, a filtering question was included to ensure only non-working housewives fill in

the questionnaire. The study employed a quantitative research method by distributing a questionnaire to the targeted respondents (Hu & Chang, 2017). Past studies also used a similar process in quantitative research using PLS-SEM (Kabir & Islam 2022; Marmaya et. al., 2019). The questionnaire was distributed to the household with the help of 3 research assistants. A filtering question was included during the data collection to ensure only non-working housewives filled in the questionnaire. The respondents were secured confidentiality, and the collected data was sorely used for research purposes.

To determine the minimum sample size, this study utilized G*Power (v3.1.9.7) software (Faul et al., 2009). In computing the sample size, a significance level of 0.05 was established to ensure minimal error in the results. In addition, a medium effect size of 0.15 was chosen to avoid a larger sample population. The power was set at 0.95, with a total of 6 predictors. Following these parameters, the software recommended a minimum sample size of 146 for evaluating the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1).

A structured questionnaire was created and segmented into two distinct sections. The initial section pertained to the demographic characteristics of the participants, including age, region, and education level. The second section delved into gauging the respondents' perspectives regarding their intention to purchase alternative food. 19 items were adapted from past studies for data collection (see Table 1 for reference).

Table 1. Constructs and measurement items

Construct(s)	Items	Sources
Attitude	4	Ferreira & Pereira, 2023; Chang et al., 2024
Subjective Norm	4	Tacardon et al., 2023; Chang et al., 2024
Perceived Behavioural Control	4	Szymkowiak et al., 2022; Witek & Kuźniar, 2023
Health Consciousness	4	Ferreira & Pereira, 2023
Intention to Purchase Alternative Food	3	Tacardon et al., 2023; Prakash et al., 2023

This study utilized SPSS version 30.0 and SmartPLS version 4.0 to analyze the collected data. A closed-ended questionnaire was used for data gathering, and descriptive statistics were applied to explore participant demographics. Reliability and factor analyses were conducted to assess the measurement tools. The Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method was employed to examine the relationships among the variables.

4.0 FINDINGS

In this research, initially, 245 questionnaires were collected from respondents in Malaysia. Before proceeding with the measurement and structural analyses, a preliminary survey was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.0. This step focused on addressing issues such as missing data, outliers, and instances of straight-lining. Subsequently, 27 data sets were excluded from the dataset due to identified straight-lining and outlier issues. The final sample size used for analysis comprised 218 respondents. The profile of the respondents is briefly presented in Table 2.

4.1 Assessment of the Measurement Model

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to assess the measurement scale's reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As Bagozzi et al. (1991) proposed, the loading value below 0.5 should be excluded for further analysis to improve internal consistency. As presented in Table 3, all loading values in this study exceeded 0.5, indicating that none required removal. Composite reliability (CR) values are typically recommended to be at least 0.7 for validity (Chin, 2010), and average variance extracted (AVE) values should ideally exceed 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All CR and AVE values met the required thresholds, confirming convergent validity. Moreover, discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion, with a recommended threshold of <0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). In this study, all HTMT values (see Table 3) were below 0.90, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Table 2. Profiles of the respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Respondents (N=218) Percentage
Age		
18 to 20 years old	11	5.00
21 to 30 years old	29	13.30
31 to 40 years old	72	33.00
41 to 50 years old	74	33.90
51 to 60 years old	21	9.60
61 years old and above	11	5.00
Region		
Sabah	35	16.06
Sarawak	69	31.65
Northern Region – West Malaysia	39	17.89
Central Region – West Malaysia	35	16.05
Southern Region – West Malaysia	40	18.35
Education Level		
Primary School / Secondary School	60	27.50
Certificate / Diploma / Degree	102	46.80
Postgraduates (Master/PhD)	56	25.70

Table 3. Convergent validity and discriminant validity (HTMT) of the measurement model

Constructs	Items	Convergent Validity			Discriminant Validity of Construct (HTMT)				
		Loading	AVE	CR	ATT	HEALHC	PURINTEN	PBC	SN
Attitude (ATT)	ATT_1	0.849	0.728	0.915					
	ATT_2	0.848							
	ATT_3	0.876							
	ATT_4	0.840							
Health Consciousness (HEALTHC)	HEALTHC_1	0.738	0.607	0.860	0.230				
	HEALTHC _2	0.762							
	HEALTHC _3	0.786							
	HEALTHC_4	0.828							
Intention to Purchase Alternative Food (PURINTEN)	PURINTEN_1	0.805	0.694	0.872	0.494	0.557			
	PURINTEN _2	0.852							
	PURINTEN _3	0.841							
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)	PBC_1	0.774	0.586	0.850	0.386	0.231	0.556		
	PBC_2	0.796							
	PBC_3	0.751							
	PBC_4	0.739							
Subjective Norms (SN)	SN_1	0.780	0.652	0.882	0.384	0.574	0.729	0.469	
	SN_2	0.851							
	SN_3	0.812							
	SN_4	0.785							

Note: AVE=Average Variance Extracted; CR=Composite Reliability; HTMT < 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001).

4.1 Assessment of the Structural Model

In analyzing structure, the coefficient of determination (R^2) for the endogenous latent variables of the current study for intention to purchase alternative food was 0.506. These R^2 values were interpreted as 50.6 percent of the constructs. Chin et al. (1998) classify R^2 values as substantial at 0.67, moderate at 0.33, and weak at 0.19. In this study, the R^2 value fell within the moderate range, with support for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

The results of hypothesis testing are reported in Table 4 and Figure 2. Bootstrapping with 5000 resamples was conducted to calculate standard errors, t-statistics, and p-values for the hypotheses tested. For one-tailed hypothesis testing, the significance criteria included t-values greater than 1.645 or 2.33, and p-values less than 0.01 or 0.05 (Hair et al., 2021). Based on the statistical results of p-values, t-values, and beta coefficients (Table 4), hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were supported. Nonetheless, all the three proposed moderation hypotheses (i.e., H4, H5, and H6) were found not supported, indicating that health consciousness did not moderate the relationship between the three dimensions of TPB (i.e., attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control), on intention to purchase alternative food among Malaysian's non-working housewife.

Furthermore, the effect size (f^2) was examined to understand the strength of relationships between constructs. Effect sizes of 0.35, 0.15, and 0.02 are typically considered large, medium, and small, respectively (Cohen, 1988). The effect sizes (f^2) are reported in Table 4. Moreover, to assess the presence of multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was also reported in Table 4. According to Shrestha (2020), a VIF above 10 indicated severe multicollinearity, a VIF between 5 and 10 signalled moderate multicollinearity, and a VIF below 5 suggested little to no multicollinearity in the model. Hence, it is deemed that the model is free from multicollinearity issues.

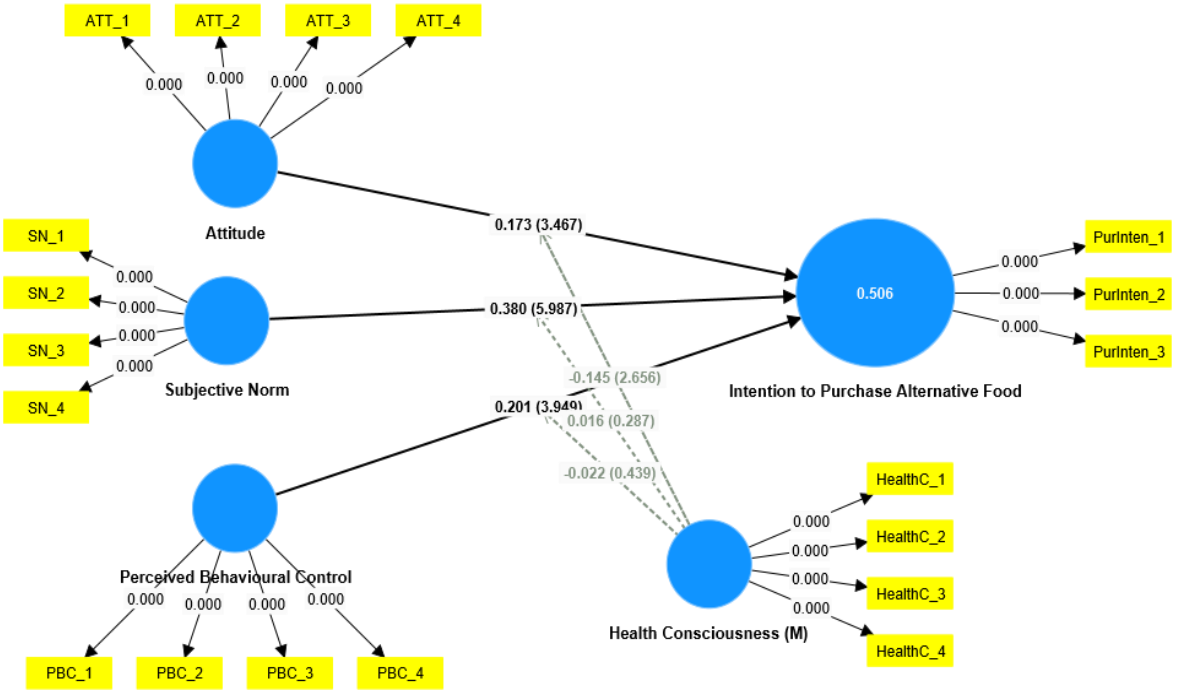

Fig. 2. Research model with path coefficient and t-values

Table 4. Path coefficient and hypothesis testing

H	Relationship	Standard Beta	p-value	t-value	Decision	VIF	f^2
H1	Attitude → Intention to purchase alternative food	0.173	0.000	3.467	**S**	1.205	0.050
H2	Subjective norm → Intention to purchase alternative food	0.380	0.000	5.987	**S**	1.568	0.187
H3	Perceived behavioural control → Intention to purchase alternative food	0.201	0.000	3.949	**S**	1.233	0.066
H4	Health consciousness * Attitude → Intention to purchase alternative food	-0.145	0.004	2.656	NS	1.494	0.044
H5	Health consciousness * Subjective norm → Intention to purchase alternative food	0.016	0.387	0.287	NS	1.364	0.000
H6	Health consciousness * Perceived behavioural control → Intention to purchase alternative food	-0.022	0.330	0.439	NS	1.453	0.001

Note: $p < 0.01$** = $t > 2.33$; $p < 0.05$ = $t > 1.645$* (H = hypothesis; S=supported; NS=not supported)

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

The result of the current study indicated that three out of six proposed hypotheses are found to be supported. First, attitude is positively and significantly related to non-working housewives' intention to purchase alternative food products (H1). The findings of this study were consistent with past studies such as the one from Teng and Wang (2015) and Yadav and Pathak (2016) which found that a positive attitude tends to lead to purchase intention of sustainable or organic food. The results specified that non-working housewives would be more likely to buy if they perceived alternative food products as beneficial, safe, or compatible with their values, leading to intention to purchase.

Next, the statistical results for hypothesis 2 are also supported. The Subjective norm is positive and significantly related to the intention to purchase alternative food products among non-working housewives. This finding aligned with Ham et al. (2015) who found that subjective norms significantly influenced consumers' intention to buy green food products. In this study, the intention of non-working housewives to purchase alternative food products could be influenced by family members or friends.

Besides, the statistical results also supported the hypothesis that perceived behavioural control was significantly related to non-working housewives' intention to purchase alternative food products (H3). This was in line with past studies by Yazdanpanah and Forouzani, (2015) and Paul et al. (2015), who had demonstrated that perceived behavioural control was positively related to buying intention of organic food. The findings could be justified that convenience played a key role in purchase decisions for many non-working housewives. If they felt buying alternative foods was easy—whether through quick cooking or preparation, or easy access to stores—this enhanced their perceived behavioural control and indirectly led to the intention to purchase alternative food products.

Interestingly, the findings of this study recommended that health consciousness did not moderate the relationship between the three proposed independent variables and non-working housewives' intention to purchase alternative food products, hence, H4, H5, and H6 were rejected. Health consciousness does not consistently moderate attitudes towards the intention to buy alternative food products due to several interrelated factors. While health consciousness is often perceived as a significant influencer, its impact can be overshadowed by other variables such as social networking, cultural context, and product characteristics. As propounded by Ahn and Shamim (2023), this could be due to different cultural contexts. For instance, their study found that cultural differences crucially shaped consumer behaviour. For illustration, the impact

of health consciousness on purchasing intentions varied significantly between consumers in different countries, such as the USA and India. In this study, the studied respondents were Malaysian non-working housewives, therefore due to cultural differences, this study found that health consciousness did not play a role in strengthening the relationship between the three proposed predictors of intention to purchase alternative food products.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This research is expected to contribute to both theoretical advancement and practice. It contributes to the theoretical advancement of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by integrating novel predictors—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control—while introducing health consciousness as a moderating variable into the model. Most previous studies did not consider the role of health consciousness as a moderator, whereas this research specifically investigated its impact on the relationships among TPB constructs and purchase intentions. It therefore addressed a literature gap and extended TPB into the context of sustainable food consumption. Though the results indicated that health consciousness did not act as a moderating factor among TPB variables in their effects on purchase intention, this result offered valuable insights into the dynamics of consumer behaviour. Though traditionally viewed as a significant influencer, health consciousness might have its effects diluted or mediated by other contextual variables, such as social networks, cultural norms, and product-specific characteristics. These findings highlighted the complexity of the consumer decision-making process and emphasized the need for nuanced approaches when applying TPB in diverse contexts.

Furthermore, this research will fill an important gap in the literature on purchase intention, as it focuses on a demographic group that has rarely been explored: non-working housewives. Most of the previous studies, while focusing on gender as a broad category, barely explored the specific characteristics of subgroups within this category. This led to the fact that a more thorough contribution is put to understanding consumer behaviour, especially regarding purchase intention, due to its targeting of non-working housewives as respondents. In perspective, the study enriched the literature on consumer behavior research and offered a more inclusive perspective on the subject.

This study offered practical values for companies promoting alternative food products in Malaysia. The analyses revealed increased consumer openness to including such products in their consumption habits. The perceived value of alternative food offered companies a greater ability to affect the consumers' behaviour and decision-making process. It is perceived as health and environmental benefits that prove critical to shaping attitudes and, consequently, consumers' purchase intentions. Businesses could capitalize on these insights by emphasizing these attributes in product positioning and marketing efforts.

The study stressed how attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influenced the intention to buy among non-working housewives. This would be a source for entrepreneurs interested in food products and explain what drove interest and purchase decisions. Food businesses can implement targeted programs that combine promotional activities with stakeholder collaboration to support adopting alternative food products among non-working housewives. One effective approach is to organize community-based nutrition awareness campaigns. These can include "Healthy Home Cooking Workshops" in collaboration with local nutritionists and culinary experts to educate housewives on the benefits and preparation of alternative foods (FundsforNGOs, n.d.). Additionally, free sampling events at supermarkets, local markets, and community centers can allow consumers to taste alternative food products. Partnering with local influencers and health professionals to share testimonials and nutritional benefits on social media platforms can further enhance awareness and interest (FundsforNGOs, n.d.).

Loyalty and incentive programs can also play a significant role. Developing a "Healthy Choices Rewards Program" where customers earn points for purchasing alternative food products, redeemable for discounts or free items, can encourage repeat purchases (Brianne, 2025). Exclusive membership deals for housewives, offering bundled discounts on organic and alternative food products, can make these options

more attractive. Subscription-based meal kits featuring alternative foods with simple recipes tailored to family needs can provide convenience and promote healthier eating habits (Shah, 2024).

Retail and market expansion initiatives are crucial for increasing the visibility and accessibility of alternative food products. Partnering with supermarkets and convenience stores to create dedicated "Alternative Food Aisles" can make these products more prominent (Tadman, 2025). Collaborating with farmers' markets and small-scale producers can help increase the availability of alternative food products, ensuring that consumers have more options (Good Food Institute, 2025).

Current food businesses can leverage these findings to fine-tune their products and attitudes toward customers. The scale items developed in this study would be useful for assessing promotional activities, thus enabling business owners to measure progress and adjust their strategies. Producers and marketers can use the findings from this study to develop targeted campaigns consistent with consumer preferences to enhance their competitiveness in the marketplace.

As with any research, this study had several limitations. Firstly, this study relied primarily on samples from non-working housewives in Malaysia. The different cultural aspects of Malaysian non-working housewives with other destinations in various countries might restrict the generalizability of the outcomes. Future research could consider adopting this model and collecting data in different countries with different cultural backgrounds. Secondly, a cross-sectional study was applied to determine the causality effect of the study. Future studies might consider adopting a longitudinal approach for data collection. Thirdly, another limitation was the use of health consciousness as the moderator in this study, further research could consider adopting other potential moderators (e.g., consumer demographic factors or product attributes) to be included to testify to the purchase intention of alternative food products.

7.0 CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Conceptualization, Jessica Xi-Yi Lee (JXYL) and Chin Chee Hua (CCH); methodology, CCH and Voon Mung Ling (VML); software, CCH; validation, VML; formal analysis, CCH; investigation, JXYL; data curation, CCH; writing - original draft preparation, JXYL, VML, and CCH; writing - review and editing, VML and CCH; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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9.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors agreed that this research was conducted without self-benefits or commercial or financial conflicts and declared the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

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Appendix: Constructs and Measurement Items

Variables	Sources
Attitude (ATT)	
1. I think buying alternative food is a good idea. 2. I find comfort in alternative food. 3. I think alternative food is healthy. 4. I believe that the ingredients in alternative food are natural.	(Ferreira & Pereira, 2023); (Tacardon et al., 2023); (Chang et al., 2024)
Subjective Norms (SN)	
1. Eating alternative food regularly is common in my area. 2. My family members purchase alternative food. 3. Opinions from individuals or peers would influence my desire to buy alternative food. 4. The opinions of professionals, such as nutritionists, would affect my willingness to buy alternative food.	(Tacardon et al., 2023); (Chang et al., 2024)
Perceived Behavioural Controlled (PBC)	
1. I believe I can easily find a nutrition claim on a package. 2. I have the income to purchase alternative food 3. I can buy alternative food even if it has a higher price. 4. My current habits do not prevent me from purchasing alternative food.	(Szymkowiak et al., 2022); (Tacardon et al., 2023); (Witek & Kuźniar, 2023)
Health Consciousness (HC)	
1. I chose alternative food carefully to improve my health. 2. I often think about health-related issues. 3. I a lot about my health. 4. I'm generally aware of my health.	(Ferreira & Pereira, 2023)
Purchase Intention (PI)	
1. I plan to eat alternative food regularly. 2. I am quite willing to eat alternative food. 3. I intend to purchase alternative food soon.	(Tacardon et al., 2023); (Prakash et al., 2023)

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