Perceived Value and Trust in Shaping Green Food Purchase Intention: A Review and Integrative Framework

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Abstract

The market for certified green food has expanded rapidly, yet the growth of certified supply does not by itself explain how consumers form intentions to purchase such food. Because the environmental and quality attributes of green food cannot be verified at the point of purchase, two consumer judgements are especially consequential: the value consumers perceive in certified food, and the trust they place in the claims that communicate its benefits. This review synthesizes research on these two judgements and how they shape green food purchase intention. Literature was identified through database searches and citation tracing, and studies were classified by certification type to preserve differences between China-certified Green Food, organic food and eco-labelled contexts. The review finds that perceived value and trust are each well-supported antecedents of green food purchase intention, that both frequently influence purchase intention directly and indirectly through purchase attitude, and that the two are seldom examined together, leaving the field extensive but fragmented. On this basis, the review proposes an integrative framework in which personal orientations shape green perceived value and trust in green claims, which in turn shape purchase attitude and purchase intention, with gender identified as a potential boundary condition requiring further empirical examination,and with the stimulus-organism-response framework, value-attitude-behavior theory and signaling theory accounting for different components of the sequence. The review concludes by identifying conceptual, theoretical, contextual and mechanistic gaps and setting out directions for future research.

Keywords: *Green food; Perceived value; Green trust; Purchase intention; Consumer behavior*

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1. Introduction

Sustainable production and consumption have become central concerns of global development, and food systems occupy a prominent place within them. Food-system activities account for roughly a third of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and are closely tied to land use, water use and biodiversity loss (Crippa et al., 2021). As awareness of these impacts has grown, so has demand for food perceived as environmentally sound, safe and responsibly produced, and certification schemes and eco-labels have proliferated as means of conveying such qualities to consumers. Among these, China's Green Food certification is one of the most institutionalized, and the market for certified green food has expanded substantially. Yet the growth of certified supply does not by itself establish that consumers value certified food or trust the claims it carries, and understanding how consumers form intentions to purchase such food remains an open question.

A defining feature of green food is that its environmental and quality attributes cannot be verified at the point of purchase. These are credence attributes, which consumers cannot confirm even after consumption, so that purchase decisions depend on how consumers evaluate certified food and the information presented about it. Two evaluations are especially consequential in this setting: the value consumers perceive in certified food, weighed against its monetary and non-monetary costs, and the trust consumers place in the certification, labels and claims through which its benefits are communicated (Chen, 2010; Chen & Chang, 2012). Value and trust are related but distinguishable judgements, and both have been linked to green attitudes and purchase intention.

Despite the importance of both judgements, the research literature has largely examined them separately. One body of work focuses on perceived value and its role in shaping attitude and intention, while another focuses on trust and credibility under information asymmetry, and the two are seldom integrated within a single explanatory structure. Reviews of the field describe the resulting literature as extensive but fragmented, with relevant factors selected and positioned inconsistently across studies (Cheng et al., 2024; Castro Campos & Qi, 2024). The theoretical basis of the field is similarly dispersed: several frameworks (most commonly the theory of planned behavior, but also the stimulus-organism-response framework, the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy and signaling theory) are typically applied in isolation rather than in combination. This fragmentation makes it difficult to see how value and trust jointly shape green food purchase intention.

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This review addresses that difficulty in three ways. First, it reviews the evidence on the value route and the trust route to green food purchase intention, clarifying what is established and what remains inconsistent within each. Second, it proposes an integrative framework that organizes this evidence into a single sequence, in which personal orientations shape green perceived value and trust in green claims, which in turn shape purchase attitude and purchase intention, with gender considered as a potential boundary condition. Third, it identifies the conceptual, theoretical, contextual and mechanistic gaps that follow from the review and sets out directions for future research. The remainder of the review is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the method; Section 3 defines the key constructs; Section 4 reviews the relevant theoretical frameworks; Sections 5 and 6 review the value and trust routes respectively; Section 7 develops the integrative framework; and Sections 8 and 9 present the research agenda and conclusion.

2. Method

This review adopts a structured narrative approach to synthesizing the literature on perceived value and trust in green food purchase intention. A narrative synthesis was chosen because the aim is to integrate conceptually diverse studies into a coherent framework rather than to produce a statistical aggregation of effect sizes, for which the reviewed studies are too heterogeneous in constructs, contexts and measures.

Literature was identified through searches of Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar, conducted up to July 2026, and supplemented by citation tracing of relevant reviews and empirical studies. Search terms combined three groups of keywords: terms for the product context (green food, organic food, eco-label, certified food), terms for the focal evaluations (perceived value, green perceived value, trust, green trust, credibility), and terms for the outcome (purchase intention, purchase attitude, willingness to pay). The search focused on peer-reviewed empirical studies and reviews published from 2010 onward, while foundational theoretical and measurement sources were included regardless of publication date because they define the constructs and frameworks used throughout the review. Studies were retained if they examined consumer-level determinants of green or organic food purchase intention, attitude or willingness to pay. Records that were clearly irrelevant, duplicated, or that addressed green products outside the domain without consumer-level evaluation were not retained.

Because the empirical literature is distributed across several certification contexts, green food is treated in this review as an umbrella term, and included studies are classified by certification type (China-certified Green Food, organic food, and eco-labelled food) so that differences in standards and institutional meaning are preserved. Where evidence is drawn from organic or general eco-label settings rather than from China-certified Green Food, this is noted, and such evidence is treated as contextually adjacent rather than directly equivalent. The studies remained were then organized by their focal construct and theoretical

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framework, and synthesized into the value route, the trust route, and the integrative framework presented in the following sections. Figure 1 summarizes the identification and selection process.

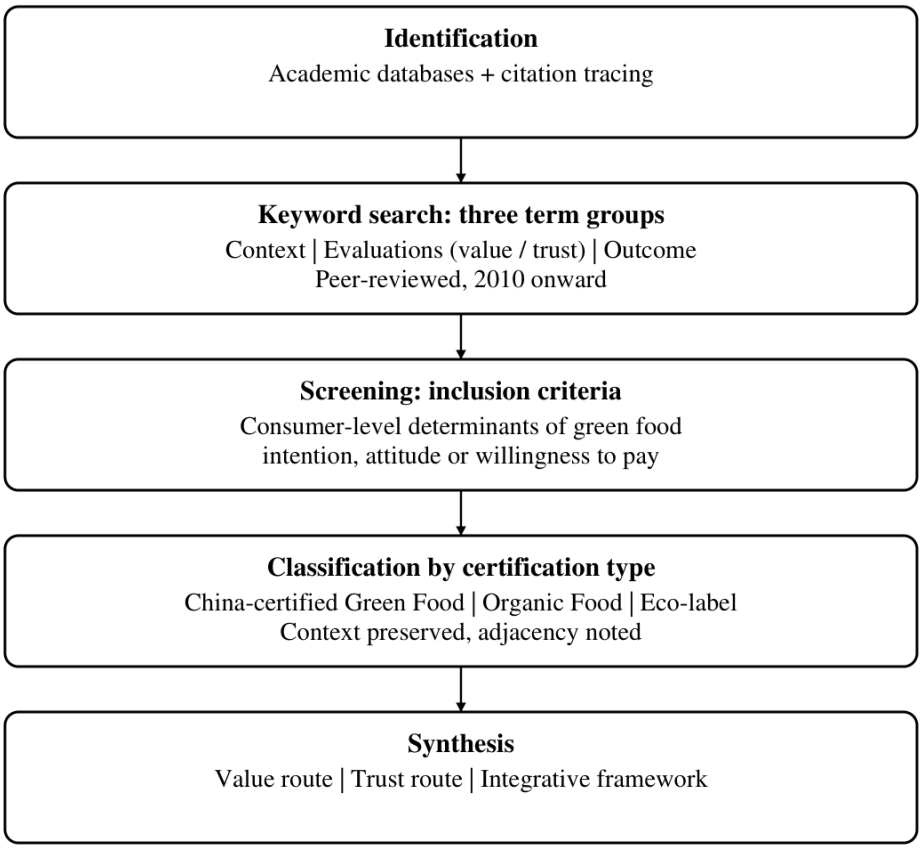


Figure 1. Literature Identification and Selection Process

3. Conceptual Foundations

This section defines the key constructs used in this review and clarifies how they are understood across the literature. Because studies vary in how they label and operate these constructs, establishing a common conceptual basis is a precondition for integrating the value and trust routes in later sections.

3.1 Green Food and Certified Food

In this review, green food is used as an umbrella term for food who's environmental and quality attributes are conveyed to consumers through certification or eco-labelling, rather than as a reference to a single national scheme. Under this usage, the reviewed studies span several certification contexts, including China-certified Green Food, organic food, and food carrying eco-labels of various kinds. This breadth is necessary because empirical literature is distributed across these categories, but the

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distinctions among them are retained throughout the review, since they differ in standards and institutional meaning.

The distinction matters because consumers do not necessarily treat different certifications as equivalent. In China, the Green Food certification is a government-administered scheme positioned between conventional and organic standards, granting authorized producers the right to display the Green Food logo (Yu et al., 2014). Evidence indicates that consumers assign different values to Green Food and organic certification even for the same product, suggesting that the certifications function as distinct indicators of worth rather than interchangeable labels (Wang et al., 2018). A further complication is that many of the attributes at stake are credence attributes: environmental and safety qualities that consumers cannot verify before or after purchase, which makes certification and the trust it commands central to the evaluation process. Where reviewed studies draw on organic or eco-label contexts, this is noted, so that evidence from adjacent settings is not treated as if it were drawn directly from the Green Food context.

3.2 Perceived Value

Perceived value is generally defined as a consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on what is received relative to what is given (Zeithaml, 1988). In green consumption, this general definition is extended to green perceived value, which captures a consumer's net assessment of a product's worth based on environmental desires, sustainability expectations and green needs (Chen & Chang, 2012). Green perceived value is widely treated as multidimensional: alongside functional and economic value, studies incorporate environmental, emotional and social dimensions of worth (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Zhao & Chen, 2021). The way value is communicated can itself shape these perceptions, as advertising value propositions have been shown to influence consumers' emotional and environmental value perceptions and, in turn, purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2024). This multidimensionality is important for the present review, because the value route depends on which dimensions of value consumers weigh when evaluating certified food. Across studies, green perceived value is consistently reported as a positive antecedent of green attitude and purchase intention (Roh et al., 2022; Zhuang et al., 2021).

3.3 Trust in Green Claims

Trust in green claims refers to a consumer's willingness to rely on a product's environmental information based on beliefs about its credibility, benevolence and capability (Chen, 2010). Because the environmental and quality attributes of green food are credence attributes that cannot be verified before or after purchase, trust performs a distinct evaluative function from value: it concerns whether the information communicating a product's benefits can be believed, rather than

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whether those benefits are worth their cost. The literature locates trust at several referents, including eco-labels, certification schemes, certifying institutions and brands, and these referents are not always clearly distinguished across studies (Chen, 2010; Wang, Tao, et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2024). Trust is also closely tied to greenwashing: exaggerated or misleading claims erode trust and, in turn, weaken purchase intention (Chen & Chang, 2013; Kovač et al., 2025). Like value, trust in green claims is reported as a positive antecedent of green attitude and purchase intention (de Sio et al., 2022; Zhuang et al., 2021).

3.4 Purchase Attitude and Purchase Intention

Attitude refers to a consumer's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of performing a behavior, and purchase intention refers to the consumer's disposition to buy a product in the future (Ajzen, 1991). Within the theory of planned behavior and related models, attitude is a central determinant of intention, and intention is treated as the most proximal antecedent of behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the green food literature, attitude frequently occupies a mediating position, transmitting the effects of value- and trust-related evaluations to intention (Roh et al., 2022; Parashar et al., 2023). This review adopts purchase intention, rather than actual behavior, as the focal outcome, consistent with the large body of green consumption research in which intention is the primary dependent construct. Table 1 summarizes the dimensions of perceived value and the referents of trust identified across the reviewed studies, and Table 2 lists the constructs together with their commonly used measurement sources.

Table 1. Perceived Value Dimensions and Trust Referents

Perceived value dimension	Representative sources	Trust referent	Representative sources
Functional value	Sweeney & Soutar (2001); Zhao & Chen (2021)	Eco-label	de Sio et al. (2022); Yang et al. (2024)
Economic value	Zeithaml (1988)	Certification scheme	Wang et al. (2018); Wang, Tao, et al. (2020)
Environmental value	Chen & Chang (2012); Zhao & Chen (2021)	Certifying institution	Moruzzo et al. (2020); Mosier (2023)
Emotional value	Sweeney & Soutar (2001); Zhao & Chen (2021)	Brand	Chen (2010); Li & Chen (2025)
Social value	Zhao & Chen (2021)	Green claim / advertising	de Sio et al. (2022); Chen & Chang (2013)

Table 2. Core Constructs and Measurement Sources

Construct	Representative source	Typical focus
Green perceived value	Chen & Chang (2012)	Net worth from environmental and sustainability benefits

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Construct	Representative source	Typical focus
Trust in green claims	Chen (2010)	Credibility, benevolence and capability of green information
Purchase attitude	Ajzen (1991)	Favorable or unfavorable evaluation of buying
Purchase intention	Ajzen (1991)	Disposition to purchase in the future
Environmental values	Zheng et al. (2023)	Environmental value orientation
Health consciousness	Parashar et al. (2023)	Attention to health in food choice
Perceived environmental knowledge	Cui et al. (2024)	Self-assessed environmental knowledge

4. Theoretical Frameworks in Green Food Research

Research on green and organic food purchase intention has drawn on several theoretical frameworks, each of which explains part of the process by which consumers move from underlying dispositions to behavioral intention. This section reviews the most influential of these frameworks and clarifies which of them are best suited to representing value and trust as parallel evaluations.

4.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior is the most frequently applied framework in this field. It proposes that behavioral intention is determined by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, with attitude typically emerging as a strong predictor of intention (Ajzen, 1991). In green food research, the theory is rarely used in its original form; instead, studies extend it by adding cognition-based antecedents such as health consciousness, environmental concern, knowledge and trust, which are modelled as shaping attitude and, through it, intention (Parashar et al., 2023; Qi & Ploeger, 2021b; Cui et al., 2024; Li & Shan, 2025a). Its enduring contribution is the position of attitude as the most proximal determinant of intention. At the same time, the framework is oriented toward explaining which beliefs determine intention rather than toward representing a process through which antecedent conditions shape internal evaluations, and in its standard form it does not readily accommodate two distinct internal evaluations, such as value and trust, operating in parallel. It is therefore well suited to some research questions but less suited to the integrative purpose of the present review.

4.2 Stimulus-Organism-Response Framework

The stimulus-organism-response framework holds that inputs encountered by the consumer are processed through internal organismic states, which then produce behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the green food context, the inputs consumers encounter include certification, labelling, environmental claims and product information, while internal evaluations such as perceived value and trust operate as organismic states and

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purchase intention is the response (Li & Shan, 2025b; Roh et al., 2022). Consumers do not, however, process these inputs uniformly: relatively stable personal orientations, such as environmental values, health consciousness and perceived environmental knowledge, shape how the available information is interpreted and evaluated. Rather than assigning each construct to a fixed position in the original triad, the present review therefore uses the framework in the broader sense in which it is commonly applied in consumer research, namely as an overall process architecture running from antecedent conditions, through internal evaluative states, to a behavioral response. Its value for the present review lies in its capacity to accommodate more than one internal evaluation simultaneously, so that value and trust can be organised as parallel evaluative states rather than competing explanations.

4.3 Value-Attitude-Behavior Theory

The value-attitude-behavior framework proposes a hierarchy in which general values influence attitudes, which in turn guide behavior (Homer & Kahle, 1988). In green consumption research, this hierarchy has been used to explain how environmental values and value perceptions shape green attitudes and, subsequently, purchase intention or behavior (Cheung & To, 2019; Zheng et al., 2023). Within the present review, it provides a specific account of the value route, clarifying why value-related orientations should influence intention indirectly, through attitude, rather than directly. A conceptual distinction should be noted here: green perceived value is a product-level evaluative judgement rather than a personal value orientation of the kind originally specified in the hierarchy. The framework is therefore applied as an adapted explanatory logic for the value route, rather than as a claim that personal values and perceived value are equivalent constructs.

4.4 Signaling Theory

Signaling theory addresses situations of information asymmetry, in which one party cannot directly observe the qualities of what another party offers and must rely on observable signals to infer those qualities (Spence, 1973). Because the environmental and quality attributes of green food are credence attributes, certification, eco-labels and environmental claims function as signals through which producers convey unobservable qualities to consumers (Hu et al., 2024; Li & Shan, 2025b; Poulis et al., 2026). Within the present review, it provides a specific account of the trust route, explaining why the credibility of such signals, and consumers' trust in them, becomes decisive when quality cannot be verified before purchase.

Considered together, these frameworks address different parts of the same process. The theory of planned behavior has been the most widely used and establishes attitude as the proximal antecedent of intention, but it is oriented toward identifying the determinants of intention rather than toward integrating parallel internal evaluations. For this reason, the framework developed in this review adopts the stimulus-organism-response perspective as its overall architecture, within which the value-attitude-behavior hierarchy and signaling theory account respectively for the value and trust routes, while the contribution of the

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theory of planned behavior is retained through the mediating position of attitude. These perspectives are seldom combined in existing research to represent value and trust as parallel evaluations within a single sequence, an observation that motivates the integrative framework developed in Section 7.

5. Perceived Value and Green Food Purchase Intention

The first of the two routes examined in this review concerns perceived value, that is, how consumers assess the worth of green food and how that assessment shapes attitude and purchase intention. Research on this route addresses three connected questions: whether value influences intention, what shapes value in the first place, and how value reaches intention. The following discussion is organised around these three questions.

There is broad agreement that perceived value is a positive antecedent of green food purchase intention. Studies consistently report that consumers who assign greater value to certified food express stronger intentions to purchase it and greater willingness to pay a premium. Early evidence from China found that consumers were willing to pay 47% more for Green Food vegetables and 40% more for Green Food meat than for conventional alternatives (Yu et al., 2014), and more recent work confirms that value perceptions continue to shape premium willingness, with environmental values, health consciousness and value perceptions influencing attitude and intention toward organic food (Hu et al., 2024). In a modified theory of planned behavior study of continuous organic food purchase in post-pandemic China, the perceived value of organic food emerged as one of the strongest determinants of intention, alongside attitude and perceived behavioral control (Qi et al., 2023). Meta-analytic evidence reinforces this pattern, identifying green perceived value as a significant correlate of green purchase intention across studies (Zhuang et al., 2021). What varies across this literature is less whether value matters than how strongly and through which dimensions it operates.

A second body of work examines what shapes perceived value, and here personal orientations are central. Environmental values, health consciousness and perceived environmental knowledge are repeatedly reported as antecedents of the value consumers attach to certified food. Environmental consciousness has been found to raise organic food purchase intention, with perceived food quality mediating the relationship (Wang, Pham, et al., 2020), and environmental values have been shown to operate as a mediating orientation linking broader consumer characteristics to purchase intention within a value, attitude and behavior structure (Zheng et al., 2023). Environmental values and environmental self-identity have likewise been reported to drive green food consumption intentions among Chinese consumers (Du & Jiang, 2025). Perceived environmental knowledge has also been linked to intention, in that environmental knowledge significantly influences green purchase

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intention and behavior, with moral obligation partially mediating the relationship (Cui et al., 2024). The role of knowledge is not uniformly positive, however. One study found that higher environmental knowledge weakened the link between environmental attitude and green purchase intention, possibly reflecting greater skepticism toward environmental claims and a degree of green fatigue (Su & Li, 2024). These findings indicate that value is not formed by the certified product alone but by the orientations through which consumers interpret it, so that the same certification may be valued differently by different consumers.

A third strand concerns how value reaches intention, and the recurring finding is that its influence is substantially indirect, transmitted through attitude. Studies modelling green perceived value alongside attitude report that value shapes attitude, which in turn shapes intention (Roh et al., 2022), consistent with the value, attitude and behavior hierarchy. This attitude-mediated pattern recurs in adjacent food contexts. In a study of sustainable healthy dietary patterns among Chinese consumers, perceived value influenced adoption intention only indirectly, through attitude (Chen et al., 2024). Certification categories are, moreover, valued differently rather than interchangeably. In a discrete choice experiment involving 844 consumers from Jiangsu and Anhui, estimated willingness to pay differed across Green Food, Organic Food and Safe Food certification attributes, and differed again between the more and less developed provinces (Wang et al., 2018). Divergence also appears in how the value pathway is specified, since studies differ in whether value is treated as a single overall evaluation or as a set of distinct dimensions, and in whether attitude is modelled as a full or partial mediator. This inconsistency means that, although the value route is well established in outline, its internal structure, including which dimensions of value matter most and how completely attitude mediates their effect, remains unsettled. It is partly this unsettledness that motivates integrating the value route with the trust route rather than examining it alone.

6. Trust and Green Food Purchase Intention

The second route concerns trust, that is, how consumers judge the credibility of the information through which green food is presented, and how that judgement shapes attitude and purchase intention. This route is structured around the same three questions as the value route, namely whether trust influences intention, what shapes trust, and how trust reaches intention, which allows the two routes to be compared and, in the following section, integrated.

There is consistent evidence that trust is a positive antecedent of green food purchase intention. Because the environmental and quality attributes of green food cannot be verified before purchase, consumers rely on the credibility of certification, labels and claims when deciding whether to buy, and greater trust is associated with

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stronger intention. Trust in green claims has been found to mediate the effects of environmental knowledge and advertising skepticism on the intention to buy green food, such that knowledge and credible information translate into intention only when trust is present (de Sio et al., 2022). Studies applying a signaling perspective similarly report that green trust, activated by advertising or other cues, contributes to organic food purchase intention (Li & Shan, 2025b), and meta-analytic evidence confirms green trust as a significant correlate of green purchase intention across studies (Zhuang et al., 2021). Trust also serves as a psychological mechanism that reduces credence uncertainty, with authenticity-based cues shown to strengthen green trust and, in turn, green food purchase intention in Chinese agricultural livestreaming settings. Beyond acting as a direct antecedent, trust has also been found to moderate the relationship between food safety concerns and organic purchasing behavior, shaping whether perceived value and risk translate into purchase (Cao et al., 2023).

A second body of work examines what shapes trust and identifies both consumer-side and information-side determinants. On the consumer side, information acquisition ability, certification knowledge and confidence in regulatory institutions have been shown to influence trust in food eco-labels (Yang et al., 2024), and label trust has been identified as a key determinant of whether consumers use eco-labels at all (Gorton et al., 2021). Institutional trust has likewise been found to shape preferences across different food eco-labels (Mosier, 2023). On the information side, the referent of trust varies, since consumers may place trust in eco-labels, in certification schemes, in certifying institutions or in brands, and studies indicate that trust differs across certifying bodies rather than attaching uniformly to certification as such (Wang, Tao, et al., 2020). Evidence from urban Chinese consumers further suggests that familiarity with certification does not by itself remove skepticism, indicating that trust is not a straightforward function of exposure (Moruzzo et al., 2020). Corporate environmental conduct has also been linked to trust, with ESG-related practices shown to strengthen brand trust and, through it, green food purchase intention (Li & Chen, 2025).

A third strand concerns how trust reaches intention, and here too the influence is substantially indirect, operating through attitude. Studies incorporating trust alongside attitude report that trust shapes attitude, which in turn shapes intention, placing trust in a position parallel to that of value within the attitude-mediated sequence (Roh et al., 2022). Trust is also closely bound up with greenwashing, since perceptions of exaggerated or misleading claims weaken trust and, in turn, purchase intention, so that the trust route is vulnerable in ways the value route is not (Chen & Chang, 2013). Perceived greenwashing has been shown to reduce green brand trust and purchase intention, while non-deceptive and authentic practices help to build it (Rahman et al., 2026; Poulis et al., 2026), and consumer skepticism toward eco-labels has been linked to weak regulatory frameworks and inconsistent labelling

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(Kovač et al., 2025). As with the value route, divergence appears in how the pathway is specified, in which referent of trust is measured and in how completely attitude is treated as the mediating stage. The trust route is therefore, like the value route, well established in outline but inconsistently structured in detail, and the two routes are seldom modelled together despite their parallel form. Table 3 summarizes representative empirical studies of the value and trust routes reviewed in this and the preceding section.

Table 3. Empirical Studies of Value and Trust Routes

Author (Year)	Country	Food type	Theory	Main finding
Yu et al. (2014)	China	Green Food	Not specified	47% / 40% price premium
Wang et al. (2018)	China	Certified pork	Not specified	Certifications valued differently
Zheng et al. (2023)	China	Organic	VAB	Environmental value mediates intention
Roh et al. (2022)	Korea	Organic	S-O-R	Value and trust shape attitude
Hu et al. (2024)	China	Organic	Signaling	Value drives premium willingness
Qi et al. (2023)	China	Organic	Modified TPB	Perceived value a key determinant
Lian et al. (2025)	China	Green Food	Grounded theory	Value and trust as intervening mechanisms
de Sio et al. (2022)	Italy	Green food	Not specified	Trust mediates knowledge and intention
Wang, Tao, et al. (2020)	China	Certified pork	TPB	Trust differs by certifying body
Yang et al. (2024)	China	Eco-label	Not specified	Institutions shape label trust
Li & Chen (2025)	China	Green food	Signaling	ESG builds trust, then intention
Pan et al. (2026)	China	Green food	S-O-R	Authenticity cues build trust
Gundala et al. (2022)	USA	Organic	TRA	Gender moderates attitude and intention

Note: VAB = value, attitude and behavior; S-O-R = stimulus, organism and response; TPB = theory of planned behavior; TRA = theory of reasoned action. “Not specified” indicates that no single named framework was adopted.

7. Toward an Integrative Framework

The preceding review shows that research on green food purchase intention has developed along two largely separate lines. One line treats perceived value as the central evaluation, examining how consumers weigh the benefits of certified food against its monetary and non-monetary costs, and how this valuation translates into attitude and intention (Yu et al., 2014; Hu et al., 2024; Roh et al., 2022). The other line treats trust as the central evaluation, examining how consumers judge the credibility of certification, eco-labels and environmental claims under conditions of

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information asymmetry (Chen, 2010; de Sio et al., 2022; Wang, Tao, et al., 2020). Each line has accumulated substantial empirical support, yet the two are seldom brought together within a single explanatory structure. Reviews of the field have described the resulting literature as extensive but fragmented, with relevant factors selected and positioned inconsistently across studies (Cheng et al., 2024; Castro Campos & Qi, 2024). This fragmentation is the point of departure for the framework proposed here.

A small number of studies indicate that the two routes can be connected rather than treated as alternatives. Research applying the stimulus, organism and response perspective has modelled green advertising and related cues as inputs that activate both green perceived value and green trust, which then jointly shape organic food purchase intention (Li & Shan, 2025b). Other work has combined value perceptions, perceived knowledge, attitude and trust within one model and found that these evaluations operate together rather than in isolation (Roh et al., 2022). A qualitative study of Chinese green food consumers similarly identified green trust, perceived value and lifestyle congruence as parallel mediators through which contextual cues shape purchase intention (Lian et al., 2025). An integrated model of green food purchase intention in China has further shown that combining constructs drawn from an amended theory of planned behavior and a modified stimulus, organism and response model offers greater explanatory power than either model applied alone (Qi & Ploeger, 2021a). Meta-analytic evidence also reports that green perceived value, attitude and green trust are all significant correlates of green purchase intention (Zhuang et al., 2021). Taken together, these findings suggest that value and trust are related but distinguishable judgements that can be integrated within a common sequence, and that attitude is a plausible point at which the two routes converge before intention is formed.

On the basis of this evidence, an integrative framework can be derived, as shown in Figure 2. In this framework, consumers approach green food with a set of personal orientations, namely environmental values, health consciousness and perceived environmental knowledge. The reviewed literature identifies these as recurrent orientations associated with value-, trust- and attitude-related evaluations (Wang, Pham, et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2023; Cui et al., 2024; Du & Jiang, 2025), although the specific pathways from each orientation to each evaluation have not been examined with equal consistency across studies. These orientations feed into two parallel internal evaluations: green perceived value, the consumer's overall assessment of the worth of certified food, and trust in green claims, the consumer's judgement of whether the associated environmental information is credible. Both evaluations are then expressed through green food purchase attitude, which functions as the proximal route to green food purchase intention. The framework thus organizes the dispersed findings of the literature into a single value and trust sequence running from personal

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orientations, through two internal evaluations and a shared attitudinal stage, to intention.

The framework also accommodates the possibility that these relationships are not uniform across consumers. Several studies report that consumer characteristics condition how evaluations translate into attitude and intention, with gender among the characteristics most frequently discussed in green and sustainable consumption (Gundala et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022). Findings are not uniform, however: some studies report gender differences in specific paths, while others find no such difference (Haj-Salem, 2024), which is itself a reason to treat gender as a boundary condition to be tested rather than assumed. Gender is therefore represented in the framework as a potential boundary condition on the evaluation to attitude and attitude to intention relationships, rather than as an additional antecedent. Positioning it in this way keeps the core sequence intact while allowing the strength of specific relationships to differ across groups. The framework does not assume that such differences necessarily exist; it identifies them as a question requiring further empirical examination.

Three theoretical perspectives support different components of this framework, and their combination is what allows the two routes to be integrated rather than merely juxtaposed. The stimulus, organism and response perspective provides the overall architecture, understood here as a process running from antecedent conditions, through internal evaluative states, to a behavioral response. This maps onto the movement from personal orientations, through value and trust evaluations and attitude, to intention (Li & Shan, 2025b; Roh et al., 2022). The value, attitude and behavior perspective underpins the value route, in which more general evaluative orientations shape attitudes that then guide behavioral tendencies (Zheng et al., 2023; Cheung & To, 2019). Signaling theory underpins the trust route, explaining why certification and eco-labels matter as credibility signals when product qualities cannot be verified before purchase (Spence, 1973; Hu et al., 2024). These perspectives are complementary rather than interchangeable, since each account for a part of the sequence that the others do not, and together they provide a coherent basis for treating value and trust as parallel evaluations within one framework. The framework is offered here as a conceptual synthesis of existing evidence, and as a structure that future empirical research can test and refine.

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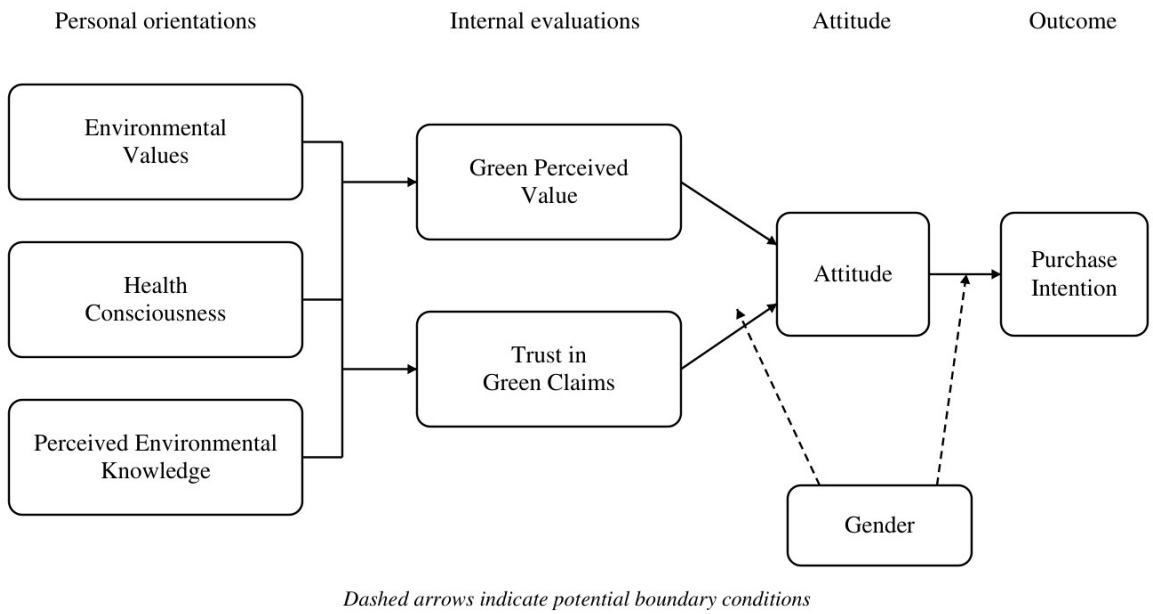


Figure 2. Integrative Framework of Green Food Purchase Intention

Note: The framework is derived from the reviewed literature; gender is a potential boundary condition.

8. Discussion and Future Research Agenda

8.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This review contributes to literature in three ways. Theoretically, it brings the value route and the trust route into a single explanatory structure rather than treating them as competing accounts, and it clarifies the division of labor among the frameworks used in this field: a process architecture organizes the overall sequence, while value- and trust-specific perspectives explain each route. Conceptually, it distinguishes green perceived value from trust in green claims as related but separable evaluations and identifies purchase attitude as the stage at which the two routes converge. Contextually, it draws attention to the institutional differences among certification schemes and cautions against treating evidence from organic or general eco-label settings as directly transferable to China-certified Green Food.

For certification bodies and regulators, the review suggests that the effectiveness of a certification depends not only on the rigor of its standards but also on whether consumers can interpret and believe the information those standards generate. Improving the transparency of certification criteria, the traceability of certified products, and the accessibility of verifiable supporting information may therefore matter as much as tightening the standards themselves.

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For producers and marketers, the review indicates that communicating value and building credibility are distinct tasks that cannot substitute for one another. Emphasizing environmental, health and quality benefits may raise perceived value, but if the claims conveying those benefits are regarded as exaggerated or unverifiable, the resulting skepticism can weaken rather than strengthen purchase intention. Communication strategies that pair benefit-related messages with verifiable evidence are therefore likely to be more effective than either element alone. The review also suggests that consumers differ in how they process certification information, so that a single communication approach may not serve all segments equally well.

8.2 Future Research Directions

The preceding review identifies a body of evidence that is substantial but unevenly organized. Four gaps follow from this assessment, each pointing to a direction for future research.

The first is a conceptual gap. Although perceived value and trust are both well supported antecedents of green food purchase intention, they are typically examined in isolation, and the literature rarely models them together as parallel but distinguishable evaluations. This separation limits understanding of how value and trust jointly shape intention, and of whether they operate through a common attitudinal stage. Future research should test integrated models in which value and trust are examined simultaneously, so that their relative and combined contributions can be assessed rather than inferred from separate studies.

The second is a theoretical gap. The field draws on several frameworks, including the theory of planned behavior, the stimulus, organism and response framework, the value, attitude and behavior hierarchy and signaling theory, but applies them largely in isolation, with each accounting for only part of the process. Few studies combine an overarching process framework with complementary explanations of value formation and credibility assessment. Future research would benefit from theoretically integrated designs that use a process framework to organise the overall sequence while drawing on value- and trust-specific theories to explain each route, as the framework proposed in this review illustrates.

The third is a contextual gap. Systematic reviews of Chinese organic food research note that extension variables are introduced inconsistently and that coverage remains uneven across studies (Chen et al., 2025). More specifically, much of the strongest evidence on value and trust is drawn from organic food or general eco-label settings, and comparatively little addresses China-certified Green Food directly. Because certifications differ in their standards and institutional meaning, and because consumers do not treat them as interchangeable, findings from adjacent contexts cannot be assumed to transfer to the Green Food context. Future research should test value and trust models specifically within the China-certified Green Food setting, so

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that conclusions rest on evidence drawn from that context rather than extrapolated from others.

The fourth is a gap concerning mechanisms and boundary conditions. Studies that position attitude as a mediator between evaluations and intention report inconsistent specifications, differing in whether attitude is treated as a full or partial mediator and in which referents of value and trust are measured. At the same time, boundary conditions such as gender are examined infrequently and with mixed results, leaving it unclear whether the relationships in the sequence hold uniformly across consumer groups. Future research should specify the mediating role of attitude more consistently and test relevant boundary conditions explicitly, so that the conditions under which value and trust translate into intention are better understood.

Addressing these gaps would move the field from an accumulation of separate findings toward a more coherent account of how green food purchase intention is formed. The integrative framework proposed in this review is intended as a step in that direction, organizing existing evidence into a single value and trust sequence and identifying the questions that such a sequence makes it possible to examine.

8.3 Limitations of the Review

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The review adopts a structured narrative approach rather than a full systematic review protocol, so the identification and selection of studies, while transparent, does not follow a formal screening and appraisal procedure. The reviewed evidence spans several certification contexts that differ in standards and institutional meaning, and although these differences are noted throughout, heterogeneity across contexts limits the extent to which findings can be generalized. The review draws primarily on peer-reviewed literature published in English, which may under-represent relevant work published in other languages. No statistical comparison of effect sizes was undertaken, so conclusions about the relative strength of the value and trust routes cannot be drawn from this review. Finally, the integrative framework is a conceptual synthesis of existing evidence rather than an empirically tested model, and requires validation in future research.

9. Conclusion

This review set out to clarify how perceived value and trust shape green food purchase intention, and to address the fragmentation that has characterized research on this question. Reviewing the two routes in turn, it found that perceived value and trust in green claims are each well-established antecedents of purchase intention, that both frequently influence intention directly and indirectly through purchase attitude, and that they are nonetheless seldom modelled together, despite their parallel form

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and shared attitudinal stage. The theoretical basis of the field is similarly dispersed, with major frameworks applied in isolation rather than in combination.

In response, the review proposed an integrative framework that organizes the existing evidence into a single value and trust sequence, running from personal orientations, through green perceived value and trust in green claims, to purchase attitude and purchase intention, with gender treated as a potential boundary condition. The framework draws on the stimulus, organism and response framework for its overall architecture, on value, attitude and behavior theory for the value route, and on signaling theory for the trust route, using these perspectives in a complementary rather than interchangeable way. Its contribution is to make explicit a structure that is implicit in the literature but rarely stated, namely that value and trust are related but distinguishable evaluations that can be examined together within one sequence.

The review also identified conceptual, theoretical, contextual and mechanistic gaps that remain to be addressed, most notably the scarcity of evidence drawn directly from the China-certified Green Food context and the infrequent testing of boundary conditions such as gender. Addressing these gaps would move the field from an accumulation of separate findings toward a more coherent account of green food purchase intention. By setting out an integrative framework and a corresponding research agenda, this review is intended to support that development.

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Author Contributions

D.D.L.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Literature Synthesis, Writing (Original Draft), Supervision. B.L.C.: Literature Screening, Analytical Matrix Development, Visualization, Writing (Review and Editing). T.C.L.: Governance Analysis, Framework Refinement, Validation, Project Administration. All authors have read and agreed to the submitted version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Generative AI Statement

Generative AI was used to assist with language drafting, editing, manuscript formatting, and reference checking. The authors take responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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