ABSTRACT
Consumers nowadays are aware that organic food helps to maintain a healthy life. In Europe and North America regions, the demand of organic food has increased tremendously. There are great potentials for organic food growth in other regions as well, such as developing economies. In Malaysia, organic food is considered new, specifically in the youth market. Thus, not many studies have been performed to investigate the organic food consumption among the young generations. This study was conducted to examine the influence of various factors on intention to consume organic food among millennial generation. The respondents were 235 conveniently selected undergraduate students from a local university. Data were collected by using a self-administered questionnaire. The findings revealed that three factors, i.e.: perceived quality, environmental concern and trust recorded a significant and positive influence on intention to consume organic food. Meanwhile, perceived cost and health consciousness were deemed as not significant in predicting organic food consumption intention. Lastly, some recommendations have also been put forth.

Keywords: Consumption, Intention, Millennial generation, Organic food, Influencing Factor.

I. INTRODUCTION
There is an increased attention of organic food among the consumers because people are seeking high quality of life (Pallegrini & Farinello, 2009). Due to the decreasing level of confidence for conventionally produced food, people are looking for a high quality and healthy life through consuming organic food (Chen, 2009; Shaharudin et al., 2010b). As mentioned by Knudson (2007), organic food is healthier and safer than conventionally produced food for our daily consumption because it is free from any harmful chemicals and inorganic pesticides and fertilizers during the farming and processing phases.

In the past several years, demand for organic food has soared significantly (Li et al., 2007; Onyango, 2007; Magistris & Gracia, 2008; Bellows, 2008). As Klöckner and Ohms (2009) mentioned, organic food market in European countries has grown rapidly and it is still growing. However, to most of the Malaysian consumers, organic food is still at the introductory stage and considered as something new to them (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2010). Thus, nothing much is known about the development of organic food industry in Malaysia.

As an effort to develop the organic food market, it is vital to investigate the underlying factors that influence the tendency of consumer to purchase organic food products (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2010; Shaharudin et al., 2010b). Over the years, many organic food consumption related studies have been conducted in Europe region (e.g.: Honkanen et al., 2006; Lodorfos & Dennis, 2008 Tsakiridou et al., 2008; Özçelik & Uçar, 2008; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008) and North American region (e.g.: Aguirre. 2007; Li et al., 2007; Bellows et al., 2008). As consumer’s preferences towards organic food varies across countries (Kim et al., 2008), some studies are needed at the local level. However, studies in Malaysia are still limited. Although a handful of local scholars have attempted to study the organic food consumption in Malaysia (e.g.: Shaharudin et al., 2010a; Shaharudin et al., 2010b); yet, they failed to cluster the consumers into proper segments. Realizing the above mentioned gaps, this study was carried out to identify the influence of various factors on the intention to consume organic food among millennial generation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW
Organic foods emphasizes on crop rotation, making the most of natural fertilizers and ensuring that the life of
the soil is maintained (Magistris & Gracia, 2008 & Williamson, 2007). To meet the organic standard, foods must be produced without chemical pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, or sewage sludge. Crops, milk and meat products that were produced from animal cannot be engineered biologically (Knudson, 2007).

Malaysia is one of the South-East Asian markets for organic food products. There are about 600 hectares of organic farmland in Malaysia which grow organic vegetables and fruits. The farmlands are mostly situated in Negeri Sembilan and Johor. In 2002, the Malaysian Department of Agriculture has outlined the national standard and the government certification program for organic food farming and production. A year later, the scheme has been revised and was called Malaysian Organic Scheme (MOS). The organic food production which follows the standard is able to display the Organic Malaysia Logo.

Ahmad and Juhdi (2010) mentioned that most of the Malaysian consumers still regard organic food as something new. Thus, understanding of how consumers perceived organic food is important to develop the organic food market. However, studies performed in the local context failed to investigate the consumers’ preferences in accordance to different segments (e.g.: Shaharudin et al., 2010a; Shaharudin et al., 2010b). The young generation should not be neglected in consumer behavior study because they are exposed to different societal values. The young generation who were born in between 1982 to 2000 are known as Millennial (Strauss & Howe, 1992), Echo Boomers or Millennium Generation (Neuborne & Kerwin, 1999). This generation has shown a great difference from its previous generation and has exhibited a shift in purchasing behavior. Thus, this generation has forced the marketers to rethink their marketing strategies in promoting and selling their products.

Intention affects individuals’ behaviors which includes purchasing behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), intention is the indication of how hard people are willing to try, or how much effort people plan to exert in order to perform a behavior. It is believed that the stronger the intention, the more likely the behavior will be performed. Thus, intention is a good predictor for consumer’s decision to purchase a particular product. Specifically, consumers’ intentions to purchase organic products are affected by various factors (Aertsens et al., 2009; East et al., 2008; Lodorfos & Dennis, 2008). The following discussions focus on the factors which affect consumers’ intentions to consume organic food.

Perceived cost is the degree of which an individual are willing to pay for higher prices when they feel confidence with the higher quality of products (Essoussi & Zahaf, 2009; Chakrabarti, 2010). Individuals are willing to pay a significantly higher price for organic foods even they cost much higher than packaged food products (Pellegrini & Farinello, 2009). Other researcher also found that people willing to buy organic foods despite of their higher price (Tsakiridou et al. 2008; Lin, 2009; Essoussi & Zahaf, 2009).

Consumers who perceived organic food to be higher quality, healthier and tastier than the conventional food are motivated to purchase organic food (Hughner et al., 2007; Aguirre, 2007; Tsakiridou et al., 2008). As Naspetti and Zanoli (2009) mentioned, consumers preferred high quality products which are deemed as tasty, healthy, nicely appeared, convenience and carefully processed. Tsakiridou et al. (2009) and Essoussi and Zahaf (2009) also found that majority of food consumers were willing to pay a premium price for the high quality organic food for their diet. In addition, Magistris and Gracia (2008) also identified that consumer who highly believes that organic food products of higher quality than conventional ones will have a higher intention to purchase organic food products.

Health consciousness has been found as a strong motivating factor in organic food consumptions (e.g.: Hughner et al., 2007; Tsakiridou, 2008; Chen, 2009; Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008). Organic food consumers perceived that organic food has more nutritional value, ensure good health and protect themselves from diseases (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2010; Shaharudin et al., 2010a, 2010b). Essoussi and Zahaf (2009) mentioned that Canadian consumers categorized health concerns as a major reason for purchasing organic food. Consumers who highly believed that organic food products are healthier will have a higher intention to purchase the products (Magistris & Gracia, 2008) and showed positive attitude toward organic food (Chen, 2009). There are consumers who base their buying decisions on purchasing the products that do not harm the environment (Paco & Raposo, 2009). The purchase of organic food is associated to consumers’ environmental

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attitudes and concerns (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2010; Essoussi & Zahaf, 2008; Özçelik & Uçar, 2008; Hughner et al., 2007; Magistris & Gracia, 2008). The consumer believed that organics consumption is an important element in environmental protection and they felt good about buying brands that were less damaging to the environment (Tsakiridou et al., 2008; Baker & Ozaki, 2008). Lin (2009) found that consumers who participated in environmental movements were more likely to consume organic products. Chen (2009) asserted that consumer’s concern about environmental degradation was the determinant for positive attitude toward organic food.

Trust towards the retailers and the certification process is another important determinants of organic foods consumption (Essoussi & Zahaf, 2009). Baker and Ozaki (2008) mentioned that consumers generally trust popular brands because the risk is much lower than the less well-known brand. Lin (2009) also asserted that consumers’ loss their trust and refuse to purchase organic products from companies who have been accused of being environmental polluters. Based on the above arguments, the following research framework (Figure 1) and five hypotheses were developed.

![Figure 1](image)

H1: Perceived cost influences intention to consume organic food.
H2: Perceived quality influences intention to consume organic.
H3: Health consciousness influences intention to consume organic food.
H4: Environmental concern influences intention to consume organic food.
H5: Trust influences intention to consume organic food.

III. METHODOLOGY

The population of this study comprised of full-time undergraduate students in a local university. The selection of sample was based on non-probability convenience sampling. A total of 235 respondents participated in this study. A self-administered closed-questionnaire was used. Items in questionnaire were adapted from previous researchers, such as Botonaki et al. (2006), Tsakiridou et al. (2008), Shaharudin et al. (2010a), Ahmad and Juhdi (2010) and Chen (2010). As this paper was a study of perception on how strongly the respondents agree or disagree with certain statements, five-point Likert scale was employed. Table 1 summarizes the internal consistency of the instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No. of Item</th>
<th>Cronbach's α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived cost (PC)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived quality (PQ)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health consciousness (HC)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmenal concern (EC)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust (TR)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to Consume Organic Food (ICOF)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. FINDINGS

Demographic Analysis

In regards to respondents’ profiles. There were more females (F=166; 70.6%) than males (F=69; 29.4%). It is a norm in local universities that the number of female students is higher than the male students. Vast majority of the respondents comprised of Malays (F=232; 98.7%) while only a mere 1.3% (F=3) of other races. It was because the respondents were selected from a local university which specially caters to Malays and Bumiputra candidates.

Pearson Correlations, Multiple Regression and Hypotheses Testing

According to Burns and Burns (2008), correlation is “a measure of the degree of correspondence between variables”; while multiple regression is “a technique for estimating the value on the criterion variable from values on two or more other variables.” Table 2 summarizes the Pearson correlation coefficients (r). Positive and significant correlations existed between all
pairs of variables. All variables recorded an r-value between 0.38 and 0.53. According to Elifson et al. (1998), the strength of relationship between two variables can be determined by the following general guidelines: weak relationship, r = ±0.01 to ±0.30; moderate relationship, r = ±0.31 to ±0.70 and; strong relationship, r = ±0.71 to ±0.99. The results indicated that all pairs of variables have obtained a moderate correlation.

**Table 2. Correlation Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>PQ</th>
<th>HC</th>
<th>EC</th>
<th>TR</th>
<th>ICOF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ</td>
<td>0.490**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>0.498**</td>
<td>0.526**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>0.455**</td>
<td>0.398**</td>
<td>0.416**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>0.391**</td>
<td>0.459**</td>
<td>0.513**</td>
<td>0.489**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICOF</td>
<td>0.376**</td>
<td>0.486**</td>
<td>0.421**</td>
<td>0.455**</td>
<td>0.460**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Table 3 presents the results of multiple regression analysis. The results were found to be significant as indicated by the F-value of 25.138 and p-value of 0.000. In addition, the value of R-squared was 0.354, indicated that 35.4% of the variance in dependent variable, intention to consume organic food (ICOF) was explained by the five independent variables, namely: (i) perceived cost (PC); (ii) perceived quality (PQ); (iii) health consciousness (HC); (iv) environmental concern (EC) and; (v) trust (TR). Adjusted R-square obtained was 0.340.

**Table 3. Regression Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T-value</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>0.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>3.758</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>1.257</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>3.255</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>2.651</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-value</td>
<td>25.138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 235; Dependent variable: Intention to consume organic food (ICOF)

In regards to hypotheses testing, the results showed that three independent variables, namely, perceived quality (PQ), environmental concern (EC) and trust (TR) positively and significantly influenced the dependent variable, intention to consume organic food (ICOF). All of them recorded a p-value < 0.05. As such, hypotheses H2, H4 and H5 were supported. In addition, perceived quality (PQ) (β = 0.254) was the most important factor followed by environmental concern (EC) (β = 0.212) and trust (TR) (β = 0.179). Since no significant influences (p-value > 0.05) were found for the other two independent variables, i.e.: perceived cost (PC) and health consciousness (HC) on intention to consume organic food (ICOF), hypotheses H1 and H3 were not supported.

V. DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis found that only three hypotheses were supported in this study. Specifically, perceived quality, environmental concern and trust recorded a positive and significant influence on intention to consume organic food among millennial generation. This indicated that young consumers are willing to consume organic food if it is a high quality food. As supported by Essoussi and Zahaf (2009) and Tsakiridou et al. (2009), consumers are willing to purchase organic food which is deemed as high quality. Furthermore, consumers who believe that organic food products are having higher quality than conventional ones will have a higher intention to purchase them (Magistris & Gracia, 2008).

This study also found positive and significant influence between environmental concern and intention to consume organic food, which confirmed Hughner et al. (2007), Essaussi and Zahaf (2008) and Özçelik and Uçar (2008). Furthermore, as showed by Özçelik and Uçar (2008), Paco and Raposo (2009) and Baker and Ozaki (2008), individuals having higher environmental concern possess higher intention for organic food consumption, this study has obtained the similar result as well. Thus, it indicated that young consumers would only consume organic food if only it could be proven as harmless and safe.

As Essoussi and Zahaf (2009) mentioned, trust towards the retailers and the certification process is an important determinants of consumers to consume organic food. Consumers generally trust popular brands because the risk is much lower than the less well-known brands. Thus, it indicated that millenial generation consumers would only consume organic food if it was produced by
a well-known brand and undergone organic certification process.

Surprisingly, the results obtained for other independent variables were quite dissimilar to previous studies. In terms for perceived cost, the result was in contrast to previous studies. It could be possibly caused by expensive pricing of organic food in market. In addition, health consciousness was not a significant factor in influencing organic food consumption intention. It was possibly because the millennial generation did not acquire sufficient facts and exposure about health. Moreover, maybe they did not have enough knowledge and awareness to eat well for the sake of their health. As pointed out by Magistras and Gracia (2008), consumers with higher knowledge on organic food have more positive attitudes to believe that organic food are healthier to consume.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted to identify the influence of various factors on the intention to consume organic food among millennial generation. Past literature found that various factors are influencing the intention to consume organic food, for example, perceived cost, perceived quality, health consciousness, environmental concern and trust. Based on the statistical analyses performed, three out of five influencing factors recorded a significant positive relationship on intention to consume organic food. As such, it can be concluded that perceived quality, environmental concern and trust play a significant and positive effect on influencing intention to consume organic food among millennial generation. However, other factors such as perceived cost and health consciousness are deemed as not significant in predicting intention to consume organic food among millennial generation.

Consumers are willing to buy organic food when they have sufficient information (Magistras & Gracia, 2008); thus, manufacturers or producers of organic food should organize exhibitions or increase marketing efforts to consumers frequently. They need to detail out the origin, benefits and advantages of consuming organic food to the consumers to boost up organic food consumption in the market. As for consumers, they need to inspect before and after they consume organic food, to verify whether or not it provides the benefits as claimed. In addition, the consumers have to be wellversed with the organic terms and certification in order to consume organic food. Policy maker plays a part in developing organic food market as well. The government should encourage its people to consume organic food. For examples, promotional programs such as campaigns and social outreach activities can be launch to create awareness and increase consumers’ knowledge on organic food. Furthermore, research and development activities should also be carefully funded to improve the quality of organic food. Close monitoring on the plantation and production of organic food is also required to ensure the safety and quality of organic food.

Lastly, this study only focused on Bumiputras, future research can expand the sample to include other groups of consumers in the country. In addition, future researchers can also include other variables such as mediating or moderating factors. Furthermore, future studies are also recommended to use other types of instruments and include other statistical tests.

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