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Price Sensitivity and Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions among Generation Z: The Mediating Roles of Environmental Concern, Health Consciousness, and e-WOM

*Price Sensitivity and
Food Consumption
Intention*

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable food consumption is increasingly important for reducing environmental pressure and supporting healthier consumption patterns, yet the role of price sensitivity in shaping such intentions remains theoretically ambiguous. This study examines whether environmental concern, health consciousness, and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) mediate the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention among Generation Z consumers. The study surveyed 200 Generation Z respondents who had viewed promotional or review content on Instagram and had consumed sustainable food at Nanamia Pizzeria or Warung Bumi Langit at least once during the previous six months. Purposive sampling was used, and the data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The direct effect of price sensitivity on sustainable food consumption intention was positive but did not reach statistical significance at the conventional 5% level ($\beta = 0.1289$, $p = 0.0593$). In contrast, the specific indirect effects through environmental concern ($\beta = 0.1390$, $p = 0.0009$), health consciousness ($\beta = 0.0956$, $p = 0.0097$), and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.1049$, $p = 0.0036$) were significant. The findings indicate a pattern consistent with indirect-only mediation: price-related evaluations appear to translate into sustainable food consumption intention primarily when accompanied by environmental, health-related, or socially transmitted value. The study contributes to sustainable consumption research by clarifying how price sensitivity may operate through multiple value-justification mechanisms in a Generation Z green-restaurant context.

Keywords: *Price Sensitivity; Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions; Environmental Concern; Health Consciousness; Electronic Word of Mouth*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption behavior has increasingly become a global trend, serving as a key strategy to reduce environmental degradation. The adverse effects of environmental issues such as global warming and climate change have heightened public concern over the long-term sustainability of consumption practices for both present and future generations. Adopting sustainable consumption patterns—by selecting, purchasing, and consuming environmentally friendly products—represents a conscious effort to conserve natural resources and promote their efficient use. Such practices are vital to counteract unsustainable industrial activities that contribute to ecological harm (Yue et al., 2020).

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Promoting sustainable consumption is a central objective within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 12, which emphasizes responsible production and consumption. According to the Institute for Economics & Peace (2020), ecological threats are projected to affect 141 countries, resulting in growing environmental insecurity (Lavuri, 2022). Additionally, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) predicts that by 2040, humanity's ecological footprint will reach 170% of Earth's biocapacity, up from 120% in 2006 (Yue et al., 2020). This surge is largely driven by rapid population growth and excessive consumption, reinforcing the urgency of implementing sustainable practices under the SDGs framework to safeguard the environment.

Sustainable food consumption intention refers to an individual's willingness to choose food products whose production and consumption impose relatively lower environmental impacts while supporting resource conservation and long-term well-being (Kumar & Mohan, 2021). Behavioral intention is an important antecedent of actual behavior in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, however, TPB is used as an underpinning perspective rather than tested as a complete model because the core TPB constructs—attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control—are not directly operationalized. Instead, the study focuses on price sensitivity and three contextual psychological and social mechanisms—environmental concern, health consciousness, and e-WOM—that may shape sustainable food consumption intention. Recent evidence also shows that Generation Z sustainable-food intentions are influenced by a combination of evaluative, knowledge-based, and health-related considerations (Jakubowska et al., 2024).

Price sensitivity reflects the extent to which consumers attend to monetary sacrifice, compare alternatives, and adjust their evaluations in response to price differences. It should therefore be distinguished from willingness to pay a premium. A consumer may be highly attentive to price while still accepting a higher price when environmental, health, or quality benefits provide sufficient additional value. This distinction is particularly important for sustainable food, which may involve a perceived green premium. For price-sensitive consumers, sustainable choices may require stronger non-price justification. Environmental benefits can provide ecological value, health consciousness can provide personal value, and e-WOM can reduce uncertainty by supplying socially generated information about product quality and value. Accordingly, this study does not assume that price sensitivity inherently creates environmental concern or health consciousness; rather, it proposes that price-related evaluations may be translated into sustainable consumption intentions through these psychological and social mechanisms (Durmaz & Akdoğan, 2023; Gültekin & Veuphuteh, 2023; Srivastava & Gupta, 2023).

Generation Z represents an important segment for sustainable food research because younger consumers are highly exposed to digital information and increasingly encounter environmental and health claims in food markets. Green restaurants can respond to these expectations by integrating environmentally responsible operations with credible communication about product sourcing, packaging, health attributes, and waste reduction. Social media is particularly relevant because reviews and peer-generated information can become part of consumers' value assessment before purchase (Bushara et al., 2023; Kumar & Pandey, 2023).

The empirical context of this study is Nanamia Pizzeria and Warung Bumi Langit, two Indonesian restaurants associated with sustainable food practices. Prior research by Deswita et al. (2024) examined e-WOM, price sensitivity, environmental concern, and sustainable food consumption intention in the same green-restaurant context. The present study extends that stream of research by incorporating health consciousness and by examining environmental concern, health consciousness, and e-WOM simultaneously as parallel mediating mechanisms. This extension is important because price-related evaluation may not directly determine sustainable food intention; instead, consumers may require environmental, personal-health, or socially validated reasons to justify sustainable choices.

Three research gaps motivate this study. First, prior findings concerning price-related considerations and green purchase intentions remain mixed, indicating an empirical gap regarding whether price sensitivity directly promotes or constrains sustainable consumption. Second, a mechanism gap remains because less attention has been paid to how price sensitivity is translated into sustainable food consumption intention through multiple psychological and social pathways. Third, evidence on parallel mediation involving environmental concern, health consciousness, and e-WOM remains limited in Generation Z green-restaurant settings in emerging markets. Therefore, this study addresses two research questions: (1) Does price sensitivity directly influence sustainable food consumption intention? and (2) Do environmental concern, health consciousness, and e-WOM mediate this relationship? By answering these questions, the study contributes a value-justification perspective in which sustainable consumption intention emerges when non-price benefits help consumers evaluate whether the monetary sacrifice is worthwhile.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Price Sensitivity and Sustainable Food Consumption Intention

Price sensitivity describes consumers' responsiveness to price information and their tendency to compare monetary sacrifice across alternatives. In conventional consumption settings, greater price sensitivity may weaken purchase intention when consumers perceive the offered benefits as insufficient to justify the price. Sustainable food creates a more complex evaluation because consumers may simultaneously consider price, quality, environmental impact, and health benefits. Consequently, the direct relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention may be weak or contingent on additional value perceptions. Previous studies show that price sensitivity can play different roles across green-consumption contexts, suggesting that its direct effect should be empirically tested rather than assumed (Lavuri, 2022; Srivastava & Gupta, 2023). Accordingly, the first hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Price sensitivity has a significant effect on sustainable food consumption intention.

Environmental Concern as a Mediator

Environmental concern reflects consumers' awareness of environmental problems and the importance they attach to reducing ecological harm. For consumers who remain attentive to price, environmental value can provide a non-monetary justification for choosing sustainable food. When sustainable products are perceived as contributing to environmental protection, the ecological benefit may reduce the psychological weight of monetary sacrifice and strengthen consumption intention. Thus, environmental concern is not assumed to be created automatically by price sensitivity; rather, it represents a value-based mechanism through which price-related evaluation can become associated with sustainable choice (Yue et al., 2020; Durmaz & Akdoğan, 2023).

H2: Environmental concern mediates the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention.

Health Consciousness as a Mediator

Health consciousness refers to the degree to which individuals attend to health information and consider health consequences in everyday decisions. Sustainable food may be evaluated not only through its monetary cost but also through the personal benefits consumers expect to receive. For price-sensitive consumers, perceived health benefits can provide additional value that helps justify a relatively higher price. Health consciousness can therefore function as a psychological mechanism linking price-related

evaluation with sustainable food consumption intention (Gültekin & Veuphuteh, 2023; Chu et al., 2022).

H3: Health consciousness mediates the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention.

e-WOM as a Mediator

Electronic word of mouth provides consumer-generated information that can reduce uncertainty and support value assessment before purchase. In the present measurement context, e-WOM primarily captures consumers' reading of, reliance on, and confidence derived from online restaurant reviews rather than only the creation of online messages. Such information is especially relevant for price-sensitive consumers because reviews can help them assess whether sustainable food provides adequate quality, environmental benefits, and health value for the price paid. Therefore, e-WOM can serve as a social-information mechanism through which price-related evaluations are translated into sustainable food consumption intention (Kumar & Pandey, 2023; Shimiao et al., 2021).

H4: e-WOM mediates the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative survey design to examine the relationships among price sensitivity, environmental concern, health consciousness, e-WOM, and sustainable food consumption intention. The research population consisted of 21,618 followers of the Instagram accounts of Nanamia Pizzeria and Warung Bumi Langit. The study focuses on this green-restaurant context because the respondents were familiar with sustainable food offerings and related promotional or review content from the two restaurants.

A total of 200 Generation Z respondents were selected using purposive sampling. Eligible respondents had (1) viewed at least one promotional post or food review on the Instagram page of either restaurant and (2) consumed a sustainable food product from either restaurant at least once during the previous six months. Because the study used purposive sampling and focused on two restaurants, the findings should be generalized cautiously beyond consumers represented in this research context.

Primary data were collected using offline and online questionnaires. The offline survey was distributed directly, while the online survey was administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire collected demographic information, including gender, age, and monthly food expenditure, together with measures of the five study constructs. Measurement items were adapted from prior studies as reported in Table 1.

The model consists of price sensitivity as the exogenous variable, sustainable food consumption intention as the endogenous outcome, and environmental concern, health consciousness, and e-WOM as parallel mediators. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. Measurement-model assessment considered indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Outer loadings around 0.708 or higher are generally preferred; indicators with loadings between 0.40 and 0.70 may be retained when composite reliability and AVE remain satisfactory and content validity would otherwise be weakened (Hair et al., 2022). Composite Reliability values above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50 were used as benchmarks. Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT criterion. The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, significance tests, and R² values. Mediation was assessed from the significance pattern of the direct and specific indirect effects.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Research Variables

Research Variables	Definition of Research Variables	Research Constructs
Sustainable Food	Sustainable food consumption intentions are the desire to consume	1. I plan to purchase sustainable food in the near future.

Research Variables	Definition of Research Variables	Research Constructs
Consumption Intentions	food products to fulfill basic needs and have an impact on improving the quality of life while paying attention to environmental sustainability to ensure the needs of future generations (Kumar & Mohan, 2021).	2. I plan to purchase sustainable food as a health insurance policy. 3. I am willing to pay a premium for sustainable food. 4. I plan to purchase sustainable food as an effort to reduce environmental damage. 5. I plan to purchase sustainable food as an effort to avoid disease. 6. I want to purchase sustainable food as a responsible consumer.
Price Sensitivity	Price sensitivity is consumer awareness of how consumers feel when buying a particular product at the cost paid (Gültekin & Veuphuteh, 2023).	1. I pay attention to price when I'm going to buy a product. 2. I consider price as a factor in assessing product quality. 3. I always try to buy the product at the lowest price. 4. I often compare prices of similar products to find the lowest price. 5. I am willing to spend time in many stores to find cheaper food prices. 6. I am willing to spend time in many stores to find cheaper food prices. 7. I often research food prices before making a purchasing decision.
Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)	e-WOM refers to consumer-generated information, opinions, and reviews communicated through digital platforms that can influence other consumers' evaluations and purchase decisions (Shimiao, Nor & Włodzimierz, 2021).	1. I usually read reviews about other customers' dining experiences on the Instagram feed of the green restaurant I'm planning to visit. 2. I usually read reviews about other customers' dining experiences on the Instagram feed of the green restaurant when choosing what to buy. 3. I usually interact with other customers on the Instagram feed of the green restaurant to help me decide what to buy. 4. I usually get information about sustainable food from reviews from other customers on the Instagram feed of the green restaurant. 5. I feel anxious about my decisions without reading reviews about customers' experiences on the Instagram feed of the green restaurant. 6. I am confident in my decision to purchase sustainable food from the reviews I read on the Instagram feed of the green restaurant.
Environmental Concern	Environmental concern is an effort made to grow and increase awareness to preserve the environment	1. I am willing to pay more for sustainable food that has a positive impact on the environment.

Research Variables	Definition of Research Variables	Research Constructs
	so that it remains protected (López-Fernández, 2020).	2. I try to consume food that is produced using environmentally friendly mechanisms. 3. I consume food made from locally sourced, environmentally friendly ingredients. 4. I encourage those close to me to consume healthy, environmentally friendly food. 5. I am concerned about the global environmental damage situation. 6. I believe that humans should maintain the balance of nature to ensure survival. 7. I buy food in organic or easily recycled packaging to be more environmentally friendly. 8. I minimize my food waste to avoid polluting the environment.
Health Consciousness	Health consciousness is a concern and attention to health to become better (López-Fernández, 2020).	1. I choose food carefully to ensure good health. 2. I consider myself a health-conscious consumer. 3. I frequently think about health-related issues. 4. I frequently reflect on my health. 5. I usually pay attention to my inner feelings related to my health. 6. I consistently get health check-ups. 7. I am alert to changes in my health.

RESULTS

This study analyzed data from 200 Generation Z respondents, consisting of 34% males (68 respondents) and 66% females (132 respondents). In terms of age, 11.5% of respondents were between 16–20 years old, 76% were aged 21–25, and 12.5% were over 25 years old. Regarding monthly food expenditure, 18% spent between IDR 600,000–1,300,000, 56.5% spent IDR 1,300,000–2,000,000, and 25.5% spent over IDR 2,000,000. The measurement model was evaluated following Hair et al. (2022). All constructs achieved AVE values above 0.50, supporting convergent validity. Most indicator loadings exceeded the preferred level of approximately 0.708. PS3 (0.6676) and EC1 (0.6563) were below this preferred benchmark but were retained because the corresponding constructs continued to demonstrate satisfactory Composite Reliability and AVE and because retaining the items preserved content coverage. Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability exceeded 0.70 for all constructs, indicating adequate internal consistency. Discriminant validity was also established because all HTMT values were below 0.90. The structural model explained 15.91% of the variance in environmental concern, 21.02% in health consciousness, 17.74% in e-WOM, and 59.88% in sustainable food consumption intention. Hypotheses were subsequently evaluated using the path coefficients and significance levels shown in Table 5 and Figure 1.

Table 2. Measurement Model Test Results

Latent Variable	Manifest Variable	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Price Sensitivity	PS1	0.7103	0.8561	0.8886	0.5332
	PS2	0.7388			
	PS3	0.6676			
	PS4	0.7117			
	PS5	0.7288			
	PS6	0.7739			
	PS7	0.7741			
Environmental Concern	EC1	0.6563	0.9019	0.9213	0.5951
	EC2	0.8117			
	EC3	0.7854			
	EC4	0.7865			
	EC5	0.8411			
	EC6	0.7620			
	EC7	0.7494			
	EC8	0.7655			
Health Consciousness	HC1	0.7830	0.9019	0.9226	0.6306
	HC2	0.8027			
	HC3	0.7917			
	HC4	0.8550			
	HC5	0.8001			
	HC6	0.7057			
	HC7	0.8128			
e-WOM	e-WOM1	0.7902	0.8693	0.9018	0.6051
	e-WOM2	0.7962			
	e-WOM3	0.7475			
	e-WOM4	0.8075			
	e-WOM5	0.7593			
	e-WOM6	0.7647			
Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions	SFCI1	0.7290	0.8649	0.8985	0.5963
	SFCI2	0.7239			
	SFCI3	0.7486			
	SFCI4	0.8046			
	SFCI5	0.7980			
	SFCI6	0.7765			

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS4 (2025)

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) ratios

Construct	EC	HC	SFCI	PS	e-WOM
EC	N/A				
HC	0.8239	N/A			
SFCI	0.7984	0.7220	N/A		

Note:
EC = Environmental Concern HC = Health Consciousness
SFCI = Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions PS = Price Sensitivity
e-WOM = Electronic Word of Mouth
* Discriminant validity using HTMT criteria

Measure	Environmental Concern	Health Consciousness	e-WOM	Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions
Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	0.1591	0.2102	0.1774	0.5988

The diagram illustrates a measurement model with five latent variables (blue circles) and their associated observed variables (yellow rectangles). The latent variables are PS, EC, HC, e-WOM, and SFCI. The observed variables are grouped as follows:

- PS (Psychological Stress):** PS1, PS2, PS3, PS4, PS5, PS6, PS7.
- EC (Emotional Control):** EC1, EC2, EC3, EC4, EC5, EC6, EC7, EC8.
- HC (Health Control):** HC1, HC2, HC3, HC4, HC5, HC6, HC7.
- e-WOM (Electronic Word of Mouth):** e-WOM1, e-WOM2, e-WOM3, e-WOM4, e-WOM5, e-WOM6.
- SFCI (Social Facilitating Conditions):** PISM1, PISM2, PISM3, PISM4, PISM5, PISM6.

Arrows indicate the measurement model, showing the relationship between each latent variable and its corresponding observed variables. For example, PS is measured by PS1 through PS7, EC by EC1 through EC8, HC by HC1 through HC7, e-WOM by e-WOM1 through e-WOM6, and SFCI by PISM1 through PISM6.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results through Path Coefficient

Source: Data processed with SmartPLS4 (2025)

The Effect of Price Sensitivity on Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions

The direct effect of price sensitivity on sustainable food consumption intention was positive ($\beta = 0.1289$) but did not reach statistical significance at the conventional 5% level

($p = 0.0593$). Therefore, H1 was not supported. The result should not be interpreted as evidence that price has no relevance; rather, it indicates that price sensitivity by itself was insufficient to explain sustainable food consumption intention in this sample. This pattern is theoretically plausible because sustainable food decisions involve a broader value assessment in which consumers may weigh monetary sacrifice against perceived quality, health, environmental, and ethical benefits. The result is consistent with prior evidence that price-related factors do not always operate as straightforward direct determinants of sustainable food choices (Zayed et al., 2022).

Environmental Concern Mediates The Effect of Price Sensitivity on Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions

Environmental concern significantly mediated the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention ($\beta = 0.1390$, $p = 0.0009$), supporting H2. This finding is best interpreted as a value-based pathway rather than as evidence that price sensitivity inherently causes stronger environmental concern. For consumers who remain attentive to price, environmental considerations may provide an additional justification for choosing sustainable food despite monetary sacrifice. When ecological benefits are viewed as meaningful, the perceived value of sustainable food can extend beyond price alone. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of environmental concern in green and organic consumption decisions (Naveed et al., 2021; Kushwah et al., 2019; Durmaz & Akdoğan, 2023).

Health Consciousness Mediates The Effect of Price Sensitivity on Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions

Health consciousness also significantly mediated the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention ($\beta = 0.0956$, $p = 0.0097$), supporting H3. The finding suggests that health-related value constitutes another mechanism through which price-related evaluation can be associated with sustainable food intention. Consumers who carefully assess price may still consider a sustainable product worthwhile when they perceive meaningful health benefits. Accordingly, health consciousness can reduce the dominance of monetary sacrifice by increasing the perceived personal utility of the sustainable option. This interpretation is consistent with prior evidence that health considerations can shape evaluations of sustainable and organic food (Chu et al., 2022; Gültekin & Veuphuteh, 2023).

E-WOM Mediates the Effect of Price Sensitivity on Sustainable Food Consumption Intentions

e-WOM significantly mediated the relationship between price sensitivity and sustainable food consumption intention ($\beta = 0.1049$, $p = 0.0036$), supporting H4. In this study, the e-WOM indicators primarily represent consumers' use of and reliance on online reviews when evaluating restaurant choices. The result therefore suggests that digital review information can function as an informational mechanism that helps price-sensitive consumers assess whether sustainable food offers sufficient value. Reviews may reduce uncertainty regarding quality, environmental attributes, and health-related benefits, thereby strengthening intention when price alone is not decisive. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that social-media engagement and e-WOM can shape green-consumption evaluations and intentions (Kumar & Pandey, 2023).

Taken together, the insignificant direct effect and the three significant specific indirect effects indicate a pattern consistent with indirect-only mediation. The central theoretical implication is that price sensitivity does not independently translate into sustainable food consumption intention; instead, its role becomes meaningful through environmental, health-related, and social-information mechanisms. This finding supports a value-justification interpretation of sustainable choice: consumers who pay close attention to price may still form strong sustainable food intentions when non-price benefits provide adequate justification for the expenditure. The findings are broadly consistent with the TPB proposition that behavioral intention reflects evaluative and socially informed considerations, but the present study should not be regarded as a direct test of the core

TPB constructs. From a managerial perspective, green restaurants should therefore avoid relying solely on price promotions and should communicate credible environmental and health value while facilitating informative and trustworthy customer reviews.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the direct effect of price sensitivity and the mediating roles of environmental concern, health consciousness, and e-WOM in explaining sustainable food consumption intention among Generation Z consumers represented in two Indonesian green-restaurant contexts. Price sensitivity showed a positive but statistically non-significant direct relationship with sustainable food consumption intention at the 5% level, whereas all three specific indirect effects were significant. The findings therefore indicate a pattern consistent with indirect-only mediation and suggest that price-related evaluations are more likely to translate into sustainable food intention when consumers perceive environmental benefits, health-related value, or credible social information. The model explains 59.88% of the variance in sustainable food consumption intention, indicating meaningful explanatory power within the present context.

Managerially, green restaurants should complement price strategies with clear value communication. Environmental claims should be concrete and credible, health-related benefits should be communicated without exaggeration, and social-media channels should facilitate accessible customer reviews that reduce uncertainty before purchase. The findings should nevertheless be interpreted within several limitations. The study used purposive sampling, focused on consumers associated with only two green restaurants, relied on self-reported cross-sectional data, and measured consumption intention rather than actual purchasing behavior. These features restrict causal inference and generalizability. Future research should employ broader probability-based or multi-site samples, longitudinal or experimental designs, and actual behavioral measures. Additional variables such as income, sustainable-food knowledge, perceived value, and willingness to pay a premium may also clarify when price sensitivity constrains or supports sustainable choices.

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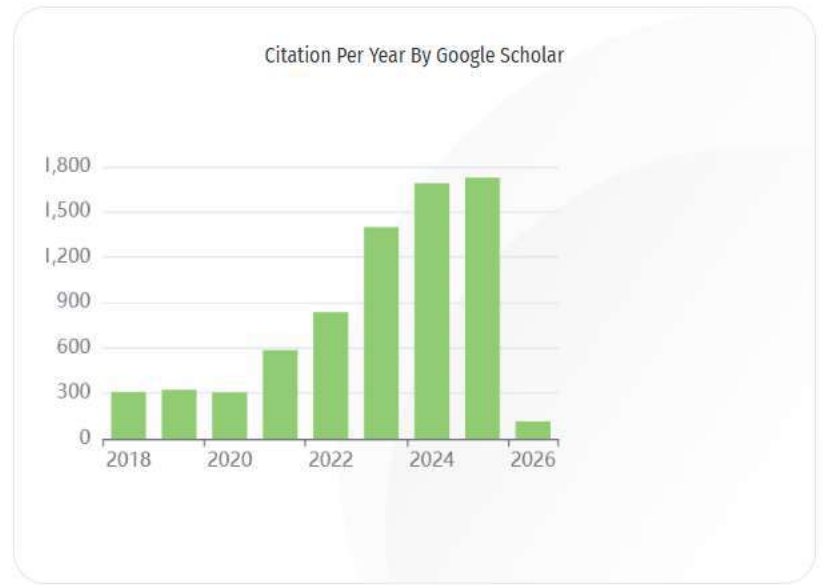


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