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Chinese Students' Trust in the Safety of Food Purchased through Online Channels

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Abstract

With the rapid development of E-commerce, online food shopping has become popular in the past decade in China. Considering the high level of concern that the Chinese have about food safety, there are questions around trust in the safety of food purchased online. The aim of this study is to analyse the factors influencing trust in food safety when Chinese university students purchase food via the internet.

In order to examine the trust of Chinese university students in the safety of food purchased online, a survey was conducted on students from four Chinese universities in 2013. Data analysis was conducted on 1403 valid questionnaires. A Structural Equation Model, Principal Components Analysis and LISREL software were used as statistical tools for analysis.

Trust in food safety is a dynamic process and is based on food risk information transfer. The main outcome of this study was the development of a multi-factor conceptual model of Chinese university students' trust in the safety of food purchased online. This model consists of two separate determinants: food safety and the online shopping environment. Chinese university students were influenced more by the online shopping environment than by concerns with food safety. Trust in food safety is mainly influenced by two dimensions: Food Control (the general and constant element of trust) and Risk information (the changeable element of trust). Trust in the online shopping environment is influenced by two dimensions: Aesthetics and Functionality. Fourteen factors were found contributing to the trust in online food safety; traceability, media and delivery risk need more attention by industry. Since university students will become important online food shopping buyers when they graduate, New Zealand food

industries that export to China should consider these factors that influence sales via the internet.

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Abbreviations

ANOVA-Analysis of Variance

AVE-average variance extracted

B2B-Business to business

BSE-Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

CA-Cronbach's Alpha

CFA-Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFI-Comparative fit index

E. coli-Escherichia coli

EFA-Exploratory factor analysis

FAO- Food and Agriculture Organization

GM-Genetically modified

HPAI-highly pathogenic avian influenza

KMO-Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

PCA-Principal Components Analysis

RMSEA-Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

SEM-Structural Equation Model

TRA-Theory of Reasoned Action

vCJD-Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

WTP-Willingness to pay

α -Cronbach's Alpha

χ^2 -Chi-squared difference test