

# Understanding the Impact of Business Transparency on Consumer Trust and Buying Intention.

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## Abstract

Information transparency is becoming more important as a key factor influencing consumer trust and buying intentions in a Business-to-Consumer (B2C) setting. Although prior studies suggest that transparency has a positive effect on consumer trust and buying intentions, there are still gaps remaining regarding the proportion of the individual and joint effects of these elements of transparency. This research investigates how different elements of transparency (product, price, inventory and process transparency) influence consumers' trust and buying intention. To address the gaps, this research employs a quantitative, deductive approach. The data for this research was collected by using an online survey, resulting in 226 valid responses. Regression analysis is conducted to investigate the relationship between the information transparency elements and their effect on consumer trust and buying intention. Key findings show that transparency of product, price, inventory, and process information positively influences consumer trust and correlates with buying intention. Additionally, trust mediates the direct effect of transparency on buying intention, indicating that higher transparency causes higher consumer trust and so the consumers' buying intentions. This research contributes to literature on information transparency strategy by providing new insights into the individual and combined effects of transparency elements. Practical implications for businesses include developing effective transparency strategies to improve the relationship with the consumer to improve competitive advantage. The findings show the importance of transparency, presenting multiple elements of information transparency to improve the positive impact on consumer trust and indirectly on buying intention. Lastly, this research contributes to the understanding of information transparency in B2C settings, offering valuable implications for both academic literature and business practices, and helping organizations to optimize their transparency strategies to enhance consumer trust and buying intention.

**Keywords:** Transparency, Consumer Trust, Buying Intention, Consumer Behaviour

## 1. Introduction

Operating in a transparent way is becoming progressively important to businesses. The European Commission (EC) aims for more transparency to ensure a fair market, and so proposed an initiative to improve market transparency ([European Commission, 2019](#)). Moreover, increasing transparency significantly increases consumer trust ([Mohammad, 2020](#)), consumer's purchase intention ([Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011](#); [Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2007](#)) and willingness to pay ([Kang & Hustvedt, 2013](#)), while perceived transparency also leads to an increased perceived value ([Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2007](#)) and intention to buy ([Zhou et al., 2018](#)).

Information transparency can be described as a strategy of deliberately disclosing information, emphasising availability and accessibility of the information. In doing so, the following components can be seen as components of information transparency: product transparency, price transparency ([Bhutto et al., 2019](#); [Hanna et al., 2019](#); [Rothenberger, 2015](#); [Sepehrian et al., 2022](#); [Tanford et al., 2010](#)), cost transparency ([Simintiras et al., 2015](#)), inventory transparency and process transparency ([Buell et al.](#); [Dholakia, 2023](#))

Transparency is integral to building consumer trust, as it enhances their willingness to rely on the organization and positively influences their purchase intentions and willingness to pay ([Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2007](#); [Kang & Hustvedt, 2013](#); [Merlo et al., 2017](#)).

Despite the rise of interest in research on the impact of information- and business transparency (see Appendix 1), there is still ground for further research ([Granados et al., 2010](#); [Liu et al., 2015](#); [Schnackenberg et al., 2020](#)). Most of the time, the components of information transparency have been investigated separately from each other. However, the various elements of the information transparency framework are not isolated, since one information element can influence another information element ([Granados et al., 2010](#); [Granados, 2013](#)).

Food production chains are characterised by anonymity and complexity, with an increased distance between consumer and producer. Even though consumers are interested in food product information, evaluation and awareness information become more difficult ([Nitzko, 2019](#)). The increased distance between consumer and producer makes the food industry interesting, since the relationship between transparency and perceived value is stronger in markets that are less transparent ([Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2007](#); [Juhl et al., 2002](#)). The European Commission (EC) wants more transparency in the food supply chain to ensure a fair market, while consumers want to become more informed about the products they are buying and the company they are buying from ([European Commission, 2019](#)). In addition,

the market of nutritional and sports supplement is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 6.3% from 2023 to 2030 ([Precedence Research, 2023](#)). Rising health awareness contributes significantly to this growth of the market. The gap in the literature leaves organizations without a comprehensive understanding of which elements are essential for building trust and influencing consumer choices. It inhibits the development of transparency strategies and hinders organizations from optimizing business strategies.

The purpose of the thesis is to investigate the elements of information transparency and to provide valuable insights into the topic of business transparency, helping organizations in optimizing the relationship between the organization and their customers. This study investigates the aforementioned Information Elements of the research framework for B2C Transparency Strategy ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). In this light, this research aims to examine the individual and joint elements of existing theory on information transparency and understand their interrelationships. By investigating the effects of each information element, it becomes easier for businesses to focus on the crucial aspects of business transparency, enabling them to efficiently implement improvements. Against this background, the core research question in this study is:

**To what extent do the specific informational elements of Transparency Strategy individually and collectively influence consumer trust and consumers' buying intention in B2C context?**

Since this is not an exploratory study, but rather a hypothesis-driven study, a quantitative, deductive research method has been chosen ([Babbie, 2016](#)). The hypotheses could be tested from the literature to create a framework. The necessary data is collected by means of a survey, using survey questions from previous, related literature. In this way it was possible to guarantee to a certain extent that the survey collects the right information. After data collection, the data is analysed in SPSS.

The study showed several significant findings on the effect of transparency on consumer trust and buying intentions. The four transparency elements (product, price, inventory, and process) explained approximately 65.8% of the variance in buying intention. Product transparency was the strongest predictor, followed by price and inventory transparency, while process transparency was not significant. The transparency elements explained for about 57.9% of the variance in consumer trust. Price transparency was the strongest predictor, followed by process transparency and inventory transparency. Product transparency did not significantly predict trust. Transparency, compiled by the four elements of transparency, positively influences both genders' buying intentions and trust, where the effect is stronger for

female consumers compared to male consumers. In addition, individuals with high physical activity showed a stronger relationship with transparency and buying intention and trust than those with medium activity. These findings point out the importance of transparency elements in influencing customer behaviour and suggest organizations adapt their transparency strategies to increase trust and buying intentions, particularly among women and persons with high physical activity.

This study makes numerous contributions to the field of transparency in B2C settings. First of all, the study addresses the growing significance of transparency in businesses ([Cambier & Poncin, 2020](#)). Besides that, the research will contribute to literature by adding new insights to the existing literature about business-related transparency such as [Granados et al. \(2010\)](#). By exploring the impact of informational elements on perceived transparency, this paper offers insight on how organizations can use transparency to improve consumer perceived transparency. Secondly, this study bridges existing gaps in the literature by offering valuable insights that enrich our understanding of transparency strategies ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). By examining the individual and joint effects of various informational elements, it provides valuable insights to entrepreneurs and organizations who are looking to improve their transparency strategies and resource allocation. Additionally, this research offers actionable advice to organisations to change their current strategies. The findings not only contribute new insights into individual transparency elements but also help the development of a comprehensive framework and the understanding of the topic of Transparency Strategy in general ([Granados et al., 2010](#); [Granados, 2013](#)). Also, this research will contribute to the literature by investigating the joint effects of the different types of transparency, as mentioned in [Liu et al. \(2015\)](#). The status quo in the existing literature shows a lack of coherent knowledge about the individual and joint effects of the various elements of transparency, such as product transparency, price transparency, process transparency and inventory transparency. In conclusion, the knowledge gained from this research has the potential to inform both academic literature as well as real-world business applications, thereby enhancing our collective understanding of information transparency and its implications for consumer trust and perceived value ([Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2007](#)).

This research article is structured as follows. First, the core literature on information transparency and transparency strategy will be discussed. Next, the problem statement for this study will be discussed. Then present the research methodology for this article, discussing the research design, research setting and data collection approach. In the next section, the results of the study are presented in the findings section. Next, insights and contributions to the literature are discussed in the Discussion section. Finally, limitations of

the study are mentioned, followed by possible directions for future research. This study employs a structured framework to facilitate effective presentation and comprehension. The layout serves as a roadmap, guiding readers through the critical components of the research. Designed with clarity and focus on mind, it offers a methodical approach to the research process.

## 2. Theory

The next section discusses the main existing theory surrounding the topic of this research paper.

### 2.1. Transparency

Over the past few decades, there has been extensive research on how disclosure of information – or information transparency - can make positive contributions to an organization ([Granados et al., 2010](#); [Granados, 2013](#); [Miao, 2007](#); [Zhou et al., 2018](#)). Operating transparent and sharing information in an open way can increase customer satisfaction, customer value, purchase intentions and willingness to pay ([Liu et al., 2015](#); [Merlo et al., 2017](#); [Mohammad, 2020](#)). Transparency reduces the perceived risk of making incorrect decision during the buying process ([Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2015](#); [Chopdar & Paul, 2024](#); [Nitzko, 2019](#)), and so perceived transparency has significant effect on consumer's intention to buy ([Chopdar & Paul, 2024](#); [Zhou et al., 2018](#); [Zhu, 2002](#)) and price fairness perceptions ([Zhu, 2002](#)). Consumers would prefer a more transparent brand over another brand when the two brands have same features ([Kim et al., 2020](#)).

Information transparency can be defined as: *“the degree to which valuable information is deliberately or strategically disclosed or made available through an uncovering process to the relevant receiver to achieve a specific purpose”* ([Dholakia, 2023, p. 8](#); [Granados, 2013](#); [Roth et al., 2008](#)). It refers to stakeholders' subjective perception of the level of availability and accessibility of information, which influences their trust and confidence in the organization, thereby reducing asymmetries of knowledge and fostering trust among stakeholders ([Feng, 2015](#); [Foscht et al., 2018](#); [Granados et al., 2010](#); [Yang & Battocchio, 2020](#); [Zhou et al., 2018](#); [Zhu, 2002](#)). When information is presented in a transparent way, it carries more persuasive power ([Miao, 2007](#)). Important characteristics of information transparency are the availability, the accessibility and the visibility of information to market participants. ([Feng, 2015](#); [Granados et al., 2010, p. 209](#); [Yang & Battocchio, 2020](#); [Zhu, 2002, p. 93](#)). So, transparency can also be described as the organisation's effort to provide clear and relevant information about their business and product to consumers ([Brandão et](#)

[al., 2018](#)). Important to state is that transparency is not just about providing information, because *“facing overwhelming amounts of information, customers spend considerable time and energy assessing and filtering accurate information and ultimately may become more confused.”* ([Foscht et al., 2018](#)). Not only the organisation’s perspective of their transparency is important, but also the extent to which consumers perceive the organisation as transparent ([Taiminen et al., 2015](#)). Organizations can apply transparency in their business strategy to create customer value, called Information Transparency Strategy (IFS). IFS can be defined as *“the strategy to selectively disclose information outside the boundaries of the firm, to buyers, suppliers, competitors, and other third parties like government and local communities”* ([Granados, 2013, p. 638](#)). However, companies view calls for transparency as *“a challenge to be managed rather than an opportunity to be traded upon sometimes”* ([Merlo et al., 2017](#)). Consequently, organizations face a dilemma. While transparency may boost sales, it also exposes them to competitors, potentially reducing their competitive advantage ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). The IFS framework by [Granados \(2013\)](#) consists of multiple informational elements: transparency about product features, product quality, price, cost, inventory and processes. The various elements are not isolated, since one information element can influence another information element ([Granados et al., 2010](#); [Granados, 2013](#)). The research also states that *“a more transparent market will result from greater transparency in one or more categories of these information elements”* ([Granados et al., 2010, p. 211](#)) and will cause a reduction in information asymmetry.

## 2.1. Buying Intention

Buying intention can be described as the probability that a consumer will buy a product based on their attitudes, preferences and perceptions ([Wang et al., 2022](#)). Key factors of buying intentions are the consumer’s evaluation of the product, their perceived need for a product and their attitude towards the organisation. Buying intention (or Purchase Intention) can be described as an individual’s thought and learning process formed by consumers’ perception ([Candra et al., 2022](#)). Other important factors of Buying Intention are product quality and brand reputation. Buying intention has been found to be a good predictor of consumer behaviour and can be seen as the degree to which consumers are willing to make a purchase at the certain company ([de Cannière et al., 2010](#)). According to previous research, cognitive trust and emotional trust are seen as predictors of buying intention. Cognitive trust can be described as the consumers’ perception that retailers have attributes that they can rely upon ([Zhang et al., 2014](#)). Increasing the level of buying intention can lead to higher sales. However, when consumer have a bad experience with the organisation or perceive a risk during the buying phase, the buying intentions can be reduced ([Li et al.,](#)

[2022](#)). Buying intention is important in highly competitive markets since it helps businesses to understand consumers preference and tailor their marketing strategies. Also, in the context of e-commerce, reviews and ratings can influence the intention to buy and overall purchase behaviour ([Zhang et al., 2014](#)).

## 2.2. Trust

Trust is related to an organisations performance, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage and other favourable economic outcomes ([Kim et al., 2003](#)). Consumers' decision to make online purchases are partly based on the perceived trust ([Kim et al., 2003](#)). The importance of trust has increased in recent decades, due to the high level of uncertainty and risks present when making online purchases ([Pavlou, 2003](#)). Also, consumer trust has been shown to positively influences consumer purchases of organic foods across various categories. Trust is the consumer's belief in that an organization does what it promises and acts with the consumer's best interest in mind ([Kang & Hustvedt, 2013](#)). The concept of trust includes reliability in and willingness and intention to interact with an organization. [Morgan and Hunt \(1994\)](#) provide the following definition of Trust: *"the belief in the reliability and integrity of an exchange partner."* In addition, Trust is an important predictor of positive marketing and branding outcomes, such as loyalty and retention ([Kang & Hustvedt, 2014](#)). In addition, [Schurr and Ozanne \(1985\)](#) define Trust as follows: *"One's confidence in one's opponent in terms of the opponent's ability and willingness to establish and maintain a faithful business relationship and the reliability of the opponent's promises or appointments"*. An increased level of consumer trust can lead to increased customer loyalty and re-purchases by a consumer (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In addition, Trust plays an important role in reducing the sense of risk and uncertainty that a consumer experiences during an online purchase (Jarvenpaa et al., 2000). On the other hand, Trust can also work the other way, when organizations cannot meet consumer expectations, which can lead to negative word-of-mouth ([Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002](#)) (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Consumer trust is especially important in sectors and markets where there is a high degree of information asymmetry. It helps narrow the gap between what consumers already know and what they need to know to make a good choice. In the situation of an online B2C, Trust in can influence the consumer's purchase decision ([Anisimova & Vrontis, 2024](#))

## 2.3. Information asymmetry

In B2C settings, sellers have the freedom to disclose or conceal information to their own advantage ([Mei, 2014](#)). Over the years, this has caused information asymmetry. Information asymmetry arises when one party involved in a transaction has more information than the

other party ([Lee et al., 2005](#)). However, lately, it has become much easier for consumers to look up information about companies, products and even customer experiences from other customers ([Granados, 2013](#)). The increase in knowledge by consumers has contributed to reducing this information asymmetry ([Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004](#)). Therefore, consumers are now more knowledgeable about products and more aware of market-based prices ([Hanna et al., 2019](#); [Nadkarni & Prüggl, 2021](#)). Transparency reduces information asymmetry ([Granados, 2013](#)). As consumers become increasingly knowledgeable about products, organizations may choose to actively share information on purpose.

## 2.4. Information elements

[Granados et al. \(2010\)](#) identifies five categories of information elements that organisations can apply strategically. Perceived transparency can be increased, by communicating more transparently about the information elements ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). These categories are about: product transparency, price transparency, cost transparency, inventory transparency and process transparency. In the following paragraph, each category will be discussed.

### 2.4.1. Product transparency

Product transparency can be described as the comparability of the quality or characteristics of goods and services ([Møllgaard & Overgaard, 1999](#)). Key elements of product transparency appear to be the ability to look through something and reveal information that is not normally shared. ([Hultman & Axelsson, 2007](#)). Product transparency represents the degree to which customers see the information provided by business as accessible and objective ([Sansome et al., 2024](#)). Increasing the availability of consumers' information about product characteristics also makes the market more competitive ([Clemons et al., 2002](#); [Schultz, 2004](#)), resulting to decreasing prices ([Schultz, 2004](#)). However, sometimes the necessary information is deliberately not shared by online sellers in order to keep prices artificially higher ([Zhou et al., 2018](#)). Product transparency decreases consumers' sensitivity to prices ([Granados et al., 2010](#); [Lynch & Ariely, 2000](#)). For homogeneous products, product transparency doesn't play a significant role in affecting purchasing decisions; but, when consumers are more aware of the features of differentiated products, demand for product transparency will increase ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). Nonetheless, researchers discovered evidence that consumers are more sceptical when crucial information about a product attributes is missing ([Granados et al., 2010](#)) and consumers even rate these products lower when information about certain product attributes were missing ([Johnson & Levin, 1985](#)). In light of this knowledge, it brings us to the following hypotheses:



- H1a: Product transparency positively influences consumers' Buying Intention in the B2C context**
- H2a: Product transparency positively influences consumers' trust in the B2C context.**

#### 2.4.2. Price transparency

In the literature, terms such as Cost Transparency and Price Transparency are frequently used interchangeably. While different authors offers similar definitions, [Granados et al. \(2010\)](#) distinguishes between the two concepts. However, in much of the literature, the definitions are used as synonyms. For this study, the decision was made to combine both concepts under the term Price Transparency.

##### **Cost transparency**

Cost transparency was originally introduced as *"The sharing of costing information between customer and supplier, including data which would traditionally be kept secret by each party, for use in negotiations."* ([Lamming et al., 2001](#)). Cost transparency includes information related to costs and purchase prices, which would otherwise be maintained secretly by both parties ([Lamming et al., 2001](#)) More specifically, in practice, cost transparency offers a breakdown of various items, including costs of materials, labour, duties, and transport ([Peschel & Aschemann-Witzel, 2020](#); [Septianto et al., 2021](#); [Simintiras et al., 2015](#)). For manufacturing companies, cost transparency will mean that consumers will be better able to infer a product's manufacturing costs ([Kuah & Weerakkody, 2015](#)), resulting in an increase in trust and consumer satisfaction ([Carter & Curry, 2010](#)). Cost transparency is an innovative alternative strategy in which cost breakdown information is displayed so that the brands can justify their selling price and enhance their perceived value ([Lowe, 2015](#)) The type of cost information that will be most useful to consumers for deciding price fairness is the direct unit cost or the indirect unit cost, including the manufacturing overheads. ([Simintiras et al., 2015](#)). However, cost transparency becomes less effective as product prices increases ([Mohan et al., 2020](#)). [Jung et al. \(2020\)](#) showed that disclosing true costs of products along with retail price increases the perceived gain of buying, compared to when only the retail price was shown.

##### **Price transparency**

Price transparency can be defined as *"the degree to which market information about prices and characteristics or attributes of goods or services is available to participants"* ([Raban & Marmur, 2023](#); [Soh et al., 2006](#)). Important aspects of price transparency are related to the

selling price in general, price details per item ([Rothenberger, 2015, p. 3](#)) or information on the profits of each participant of the value chain ([Nitzko, 2019](#)). Uncertainty can be caused by incomplete information about product prices. Detailed price information can help consumers to understand the price of the product ([Zhou et al., 2018](#)). Price transparency allows for comparisons of products and services available in the market ([Simintiras et al., 2015](#)). Price transparency positively affect the overall brand equity and consumers' purchase intentions. However, the information has to be perceived as fair, sufficient and useful to have an effect on consumer price judgments. ([Kim et al., 2020](#); [Miao, 2007](#)). A company needs to share information in a clear and comprehensive way, to enhance price transparency ([Kim et al., 2020](#)). If so, consumer are willing to pay a significant amount for price transparency ([Seim et al., 2017](#)). Price transparency is shown to positively affect brand loyalty, higher sales and word of mouth sharing intentions ([Kim et al., 2020](#)). Transparent pricing can lead to a conflict of interest between consumers, suppliers and sellers. Selling parties can benefit from acting transparent, while intermediaries and suppliers may not want to share their pricing information. Electronic marketplaces (EMPs) must make strategic choices to position themselves in this conflict of interest ([Soh et al., 2006](#)). Considering these insights, the subsequent hypotheses are formulated:

**H1b: Price transparency positively influences consumers' Buying Intention in the B2C context.**

**H2b: Price transparency positively influences consumers' trust in the B2C context.**

#### 2.4.3. Inventory transparency

Inventory transparency is about providing information around the organization's inventory levels, availability and supply chain ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). It can provide clarity to the customer about the number of products being sold. In addition, it can provide clarity about whether a product may sell out within a short period of time. Organisations can improve their customer service quality by intentionally share real-time inventory status on their websites ([Dewan et al., 2007](#)), so "*consumers do not spend time browsing and selecting products that has been sold out.*" ([Zhou et al., 2018](#)). Being transparent about inventory, firms can enhance trust and improve relationships with consumers and suppliers ([Granados et al., 2010](#)). However, this degree of transparency is not only useful for consumers when they have to make a purchasing decision, but also for competitors and suppliers ([Dewan et al., 2007](#)). In this way, inventory transparency can unintentionally provide competitors and suppliers with information. When stocks at company X are low, company Y can increase its selling price in order to grab a higher margin in case of out-of-stock at company X. New innovations such as

Blockchain technologies, Internet-of-things and more recently Artificial Intelligence (AI) are also contributing to an increase in transparency in the supply chain and around inventories ([Khan et al., 2022](#)). Considering these insights, the subsequent hypotheses are formulated:

- H1c: Inventory transparency positively influences consumers' Buying Intention in the B2C context.**
- H2c: Inventory transparency positively influences consumers' trust in the B2C context.**

#### 2.4.4. Process transparency

Process Transparency is mentioned in various ways in the literature. It includes such things as business process and supply chain transparency. The terms Process Transparency, Supply Chain Transparency and Operational Transparency are often used interchangeably and, in many cases, amount to the same thing. In this section of the theoretical framework, the term Process Transparency will be retained to encompass transparency of processes, operations and supply chain related topics. Process transparency can be described as the visibility of an organization's practices and values, organizational efforts and relationships. ([Busser & Shulga, 2019](#); [Liu et al., 2022](#)). It can be characterized by the effectiveness with which information asymmetries and perceived risks are reduced by disclosing about a companies processes ([Liu et al., 2022](#)). Companies are becoming more expected to act in a sustainable and transparent manner throughout the supply chain ([Schäfer, 2023](#)). Process transparency can alleviate consumer mistrust and strengthen the relationship between the brand and the customer ([Dholakia, 2023](#)). According to [Raban and Marmur \(2023\)](#) can process transparency increase the consumer's perception of value and resultant feelings of reciprocity. The information needs to be perceived as fair to have a positive effect on the consumers' purchase intentions ([Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016](#); [Kim et al., 2020](#); [Liu et al., 2015](#)). Furthermore, consumers feel much better when a company shares information about its business practices in an open way. They even want to pay a higher price for these product, even if the quality of the product is poorer ([Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011](#)). Moreover, the growing need for sustainable practices caused an information demand from consumers to companies. Consumers want more information about the organization's ability to operate sustainably. Organizations can take leverage on this by disclosing information, such as about the supply chain or the manufacturing process of products ([Kim et al., 2020](#)). An organization's commitment to transparency influences its perceived value on consumers ([Buell & Norton, 2011](#)). Additionally, [Buell et al. \(2017\)](#) indicated that consumers value the organisations services higher when they were able to witness sections of the organizational processes. The distance between consumers and food production or processing is

increasing. Markets are characterized by anonymity. It results into a decrease in consumer knowledge about food products, a loss of trust and a need for more transparency (Nitzko, 2019). According to Nitzko (2019), important transparency requirements are the composition of (food) products and the processing and production methods used. Information on the composition of food products represents another important aspect. In the case of highly processed products it is hardly possible for consumers to understand the ingredients at all anymore (Nitzko, 2019). New developments in the food technology enable more complex production processes, resulting in a reduction of consumer knowledge of food production processes. The evaluation of the products becomes more difficult (Nitzko, 2019). Considering these insights, the subsequent hypotheses are formulated:

**H1d: Process transparency positively influences consumers' Buying Intention in the B2C context**

**H2d Process transparency positively influences consumers' trust in the B2C context.**

## 2.5. Theoretical framework

For this research, there are two research frameworks composed. The frameworks were composed as follows:

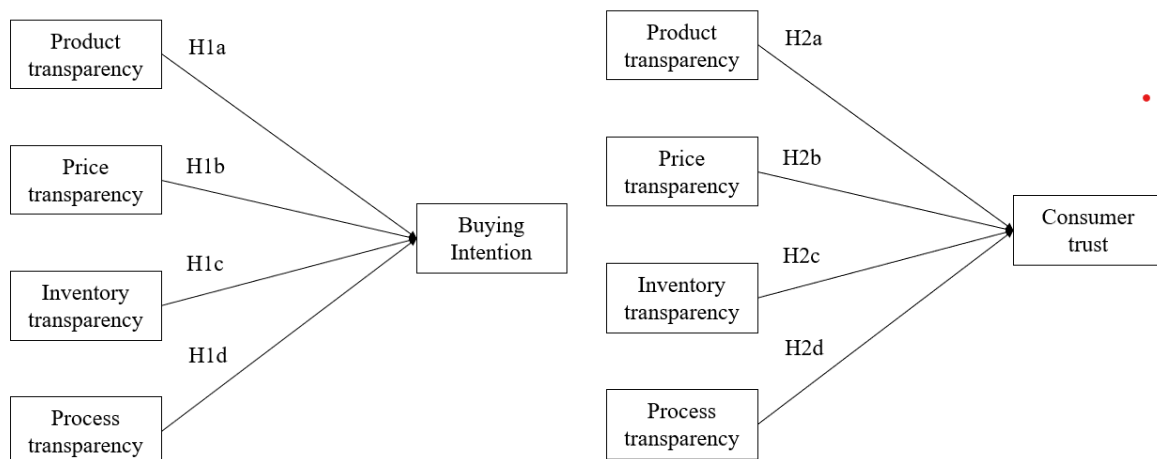


Figure 1 Research frameworks

### 3. Method

This chapter will discuss the research methodology that helps answer the previously formulated research question and its hypotheses.

#### 3.1. Research design

For business, it is interesting to understand what topics of transparency and their aggregates are important to a certain industry. As previous literature has investigated the relationship between transparency and trust, it is relevant for this study to investigate the proportions of the effect. For this, quantitative research will have to help exploring the effect of the informational elements on consumer's perceived transparency. To collect data, an online survey was conducted, as this research method is suitable for testing consumers' perceived transparency. Hypotheses were developed to assess these relationships through a survey. These hypotheses may or may not be supported by the results of the questionnaire. To analyse the data, regression analysis will be used ([Baglin, 2014](#)). This type of analysis allows the construct to be measured in a structured way and viewed as one concept. A sample size as large as possible is sought to make the results as reliable as possible. This could ensure that the results were as reliable as possible. 100 participants is the minimum number of respondents needed for sufficient data, although multiple sources recommend having at least 200 participants ([Costello & Osborne, 2005](#); [Lingard & Rowlinson, 2006](#)). The data is collected using a survey distributed through Qualtrics. The introduction of the survey can be found in Appendix 2. The data was analysed using SPSS to assess the theory and validate hypotheses. SPSS is software used for statistical analysis and data visualization. It is commonly employed in scientific research. We examine the individual and aggregate effects of informational elements on perceived customer transparency to get a better picture of the phenomenon. The specific tests that should be used to examine the relationships among the various elements still need to be specified. In addition, PROCESS method by ([Hayes, 2013](#)) will be used to examine a possible mediating effect between the constructs in the study. An Alpha level of .05 will be applied across all statistical tests during this study. A hypothesis will be rejected at the alpha level of .05 or higher. An alpha level of .05 indicates there is a 5% chance of incorrectly rejecting a hypothesis ([Aisbett, 2023](#)). This level of significance will be used during all analysis this study, such as regression analysis or ANOVA. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) is a statistical method used to compare the mean of different groups to check if there are significant differences between those groups ([Stähle & Wold, 1989](#)).

### 3.2. Instrument development

To measure the things we want to measure, measurement instrument validated in previous studies were used. This study uses measurement instruments from studies by [Chopdar and Paul \(2024\)](#); [Hustvedt and Kang \(2013\)](#); [Lin et al. \(2017\)](#); [Shafieizadeh and Tao \(2020\)](#).

These measurement instruments form the basis for each construct for the different forms of transparency. These scales are measured using a 7-point Likert scale. An overview of the instruments can be found in Appendix 3.

### 3.3. Research setting

This research focuses on the fitness or avid sports person. Nutrition can be complex, where it is sometimes complicated to understand a product or where raw materials are sourced from. According to [McKinsey & Company \(2019\)](#), 42% of the Millennials and 37% of Gen Z want to know what raw materials goes into products and how they are made before they purchase the product. Also, Gen Z tend to prioritize health when making food choices and are more willing to pay a premium for foods they perceive to be healthier ([Su et al., 2019](#)). However, the lack of information and a mistrust of (organic) claims are barriers to purchase food products ([Aitken et al., 2020](#)). People are more concerned about health-related issues, well-being and the environment. For example, an increasing number of individuals are adopting a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle due to reasons related to health, the environment, or animal rights ([Hopwood et al., 2020](#)). Additionally, merely 1% of Dutch citizens believe that prioritizing a healthy diet is unimportant, whereas more than 36% aspire to eat healthier. In addition, sports nutrition is a product category that is gaining ground in Dutch supermarkets. Sports nutrition is becoming increasingly accessible to the avid athlete, as well as the 'casual athlete' who works out a few times a week ([Moorman, 2024](#)). In addition, there are higher average margins on products within this product category ([Moorman, 2024](#)). Australian research also shows that sales of healthy high-protein ready-to-eat meals almost doubled between 2014 and 2019 ([Wooldridge et al., 2021](#)). This makes this industry interesting to investigate.

### 3.4. Participants and reliability and validity

The online survey that was distributed for the purpose of this research was completed by 292 participants (before cleaning and validating data). The non-probability sampling method 'convenience sampling' was used, as it was considered as most realistic and feasible for this study, even though this approach may reduce the generalizability of the research ([Stratton,](#)

[2021](#)). The target audience primarily consists of young adults. Study participants were randomly divided into two groups. One group was presented with examples with a “lower” level of transparency. In contrast, the other group was shown more transparent examples. Prior to the survey, participants were informed about the research’s purpose and explicitly gave consent for the processing of the data they provided. To properly distinguish between respondents, a control question is added to the survey. This control question tests whether the respondent have used at least one type sport supplement in last year ([Murofushi et al., 2024](#)). In addition, the six-point scale of [Webster et al. \(2011\)](#) will be used to measure the physical activity (PA) of the participants.

In the final section of the survey, questions will be asked regarding the demographic characteristics of the respondent. These demographic characteristics may be of interest to the study in order to distinguish between different segments of participants. For example, there may be differences between age groups, level of exercises or level of education. By including these questions in the questionnaire, it is possible to detect potential differences. For this purpose, the measurement items proposed by [Hughes et al. \(2022\)](#), [Hustvedt and Kang \(2013\)](#) and [DePriest \(2021\)](#) will be utilized. In the demographic segment of the survey, respondents will be asked about the following characteristics: age, gender, educational level, level of physical activity and annual household income.

### 3.5. Overview survey

The survey starts with a brief introduction to the research topic and the purpose of the survey. Additionally, explicit consent will be requested for processing respondents’ data. Also mentioned are the expected time it takes to complete the survey, that participation is completely voluntary, and that the respondent could quit at any time. The survey will start with a few straightforward questions to ease respondents into the process. Subsequently, participants are then divided into two groups, with each group being shown one variant of the survey. One version will only show examples of a basic product page and one version will show product pages where more transparency has been added. There, the four components of the transparency strategy are discussed systematically. A conscious decision was made to assess each element of the framework in a separate product page so that product pages would not become overcrowded (and thus cluttered). A special design was made for each element of the framework, highlighting that one element of information transparency. The designs of the product pages were designed in the program Adobe XD. The user interfaces were designed based on examples of product pages from Dutch supplement companies to simulate a situation as realistic as possible. The product descriptions and other textual

context were written by AI tool Copilot. The product images used on the product pages were developed by generative AI tool Image Creator from Microsoft Bing. In this way, unique product images were generated. The designs can be found in Appendix 4. The different constructs will be measured using the Likert scale—a commonly used method for survey administration. Respondents will have seven answer options, ordered from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’. Toward the end of the survey, respondents are asked about their sense of trust in and reliability of the brand. Then there will be a brief inquiry about respondents’ demographic characteristics, including gender, age, and educational level. The survey has been conducted in Dutch as the research author is Dutch, and a significant portion of the respondents would be Dutch speaking. Qualtrics is used to administer the questionnaire. Qualtrics is a well-known survey tool. The tool is made available by the University of Twente, which allowed the researcher to use Qualtrics free of charge. In order to measure the core constructs of this research, measures validated in previous studies were used. Perceived transparency scale items from [Hustvedt and Kang \(2013\)](#) and [Shafieizadeh and Tao \(2020\)](#) were used to measure perceived transparency (e.g. *“I believe this brand offers access to information about [information element Y].”* and *“This brand provides clear information about [information element Y].”*). In order to measure brand trust (e.g., *“I think this brand is reliable”*) items were adopted from [Shafieizadeh and Tao \(2020\)](#) and consumers’ trust using [Shafieizadeh and Tao \(2020\)](#) and [Hustvedt and Kang \(2013\)](#). An overview of the survey can be found in Appendix 2.

### 3.6. Control variable

At the beginning of the survey, right after respondents agree to the terms of the survey, a control question is asked. This control question ensures that only individuals who have used sports supplement or sports nutrition in the past year complete the survey. A total of 10 respondents (before data cleaning) filled in for the ‘No’ option to the question *“Have you used sports nutrition/nutritional supplements in the past year?”* These respondents were automatically redirected to the end of the survey. These individuals were excluded from the survey during data cleaning and processing. Respondents who answered ‘Yes’ to this question were able to complete the survey. Those individuals who indicated that they did not agree to the terms and conditions were also excluded from participating in the survey.

## 4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the research are discussed. The data is further analysed using various analytical techniques. Additionally, the reliability of the items is examined, factor analysis is conducted, and a preliminary conclusion is drawn.



#### 4.1. Overall statistical results

Prior to distributing the survey, it was tested by three students from the University of Twente. They went through the survey several times to identify and correct any errors and ambiguities ([Hunt et al., 1982](#)). Since no issues were found by the test panel, the survey was distributed. In total, 292 individuals completed the survey. After cleaning the data, such as excluding incomplete surveys or unreliable responses, a total of 226 responses remained. Of these, 51.3% were male, 48.2% female, and one individual identified as 'other'. 47.8% of the respondents fell within the 18-24 age category, while 42.9% were in the 25-34 age category. One respondent was younger than 18, while the remaining 9.3% were between the ages of 34 and 54. Notably, none of the respondents were older than 55. Regarding the level of education, the survey was mainly filled out by highly educated or theoretically educated participants. More than 90% of the respondents indicated they had completed a bachelor's degree at a University of Applied Sciences or higher. About 80% of the respondents reported earning between €0 and €49,999 annually, while the remaining 20% earned more than €49,999. When looking at the level of physical activity among the participants, over 85% reported engaging in 'high physical activity' every week (Webster et al., 2011). Lastly, it is notable that nearly half of the respondents are using supplements on a daily basis. For an overview of these statistics, see Table 1.

Variable	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	116	51,3%
Female	109	48,2%
Other	1	0,4%
<b>Age</b>		
Young than 18 years	1	0,4%
18-24 years	108	47,8%
25-34 years	97	42,9%
35-44 years	16	7,1%
45-54 years	4	1,8%
55-64 years	0	0,0%
65+	0	0,0%
<b>Education</b>		
Geen of lager onderwijs	1	0,4%
vmbo / lbo / mavo	1	0,4%
havo / vwo	3	1,3%
mbo	17	7,5%
hbo bachelor	106	46,9%
hbo master	10	4,4%
wo bachelor	17	7,5%
wo master / doctoraal	71	31,4%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than €25.000	82	36,3%
€25.000 - €49.999 per year	93	41,2%
€50.000 - €99.999 per year	44	19,5%
€100.000 - €199.999 per year	2	0,9%
Prefer not to say	5	2,2%
<b>Physical Activity</b>		
Low Physical Activity	3	1,3%
Medium Physical Activity	30	13,3%
High Physical Activity	193	85,4%
<b>Use of supplements</b>		
1 day a week	10	4,4%
2 days a week	14	6,2%
3 days a week	19	8,4%
4 days a week	33	14,6%
5 days a week	29	12,8%
6 days a week	10	4,4%
7 days a week	111	49,1%

Table 1 Frequency of demographic characteristics

## 4.2. Reliability of items

### 4.2.1. Cronbach's Alpha

To assess the internal consistency and reliability of the various items, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the different constructs of the research framework. The results can be found in Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal reliability and consistency of a set of survey questions. According to guidelines, Cronbach's Alpha should be at least 0.6 to be considered acceptably reliable. A value between 0.7 and 0.9 is generally considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2014). A very high Cronbach's Alpha can indicate data problems or redundant items since

literature suggests that a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.95 may cause validity problems ([Taber, 2018](#)). As shown in Table 2 below, the constructs have very high Cronbach's Alpha values. This suggests that certain survey questions might be redundant, as they yield similar data compared to other questions. To address this, we need to further examine the survey questions to exclude any redundant questions from the analysis. Literature indicates that values of .9 may suggest redundancies in the survey questions ([Tavakol & Dennick, 2011](#)). When analysing the Inter-Item Correlation Matrices, many values exceed 0.8. These matrices can be found in Appendix 6. When looking at the 'Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted' values, it is evident that excluding a single variable has relatively little effect on the overall Cronbach's Alpha. Given that the constructs studied are very narrow, the survey questions are very similar, and these questions were derived from previous literature, the researcher has decided to conclude that all survey items are reliable indicators of the constructs being studied.

	Items	Version 1	Version 2
<b>Price Transparency</b>	6	0,937	0,96
<b>Product Transparency</b>	6	0,911	0,96
<b>Inventory Transparency</b>	6	0,936	0,96
<b>Process Transparency</b>	6	0,969	0,971
<b>Trust</b>	5	0,933	0,947
<b>Buying Intention</b>	2	0,901	0,926

*Table 2 Values of Cronbach's Alpha of each construct*

#### 4.2.2. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Additionally, it is necessary to check that the independent variables do not correlate with each other, also known as multicollinearity, before analysing the data. Multicollinearity can cause problems in interpreting regression models, as the input from different variables may be the same. This can be assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). VIF measures how much the collinearity between the independent variables increases the variance of the regression coefficients ([Marcoulides & Raykov, 2019](#)). As a rule of thumb, a maximum VIF value of 10 (or even 4) is recommended ([O'brien, 2007](#)). When examining the Collinearity Statistics, the VIF values are all between 1 and 2. Therefore, according to the VIF test, there is no indication of multicollinearity.

	Version 1	Version 2
<b>Price Transparency</b>	1,562	1,392
<b>Product Transparency</b>	1,553	1,542
<b>Inventory Transparency</b>	1,265	1,168

Process Transparency	1,241	1,446
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Table 3 VIF values for predictor variables

### 4.2.3. Q-Q plot

Lastly, the Q-Q plot is a graphical method used to assess whether a dataset follows a particular distribution ([Thode, 2002](#)). By graphically displaying the residuals, it is possible to visually inspect their distribution. It is a good method for examining the residuals and serves as a valuable addition to previous methods. It visualizes how the sample distribution matches, in this case, the normal distribution. When looking at the Q-Q plots of TR and BI as the dependent variable, we see that the data does not show any irregularities in the distribution of the residuals. Therefore, we can assume that there is no issue of non-normality. The Q-Q plots can be found in Appendix 5.

### Hypothesis testing

To evaluate for relationships between the four elements of transparency, transparency in general and the dependent constructs Trust and Buying Intention, a regression analysis will be performed using SPSS. Each element of transparency will be independently tested against the constructs Trust and Buying Intention. Linear regression was used to test the effects of the transparency elements on Trust (TR) and Buying Intention (BI). The results can be found in Table 4 and Table 5.

First of all, linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the elements of the Transparency framework and Buying Intention (See Table 4 and Figure 2Figure 3). A significant regression was found. The test revealed that the four elements of Transparency explained approximately 65,8% of the variance in Trust,  $R^2 = .658$ ,  $F(4, 221) = 42.222$ ,  $p < .001$ . The predictor variable of the level of product transparency was the strongest predictor of the level of Trust,  $B = .365$ ,  $t(225) = 4.69$ ,  $p < .0001$ . After product transparency, the variable of the level of price transparency was the strongest predictor of the level of Trust,  $B = .139$ ,  $t(225) = 2.066$ ,  $p = 0.04$ . The last significant predictor of the level of Trust is the level of Inventory Transparency,  $B = .135$ ,  $t(225) = 2.119$ ,  $p = 0.035$ . The predictor level of Price Transparency was found as not significant,  $B = .55$ ,  $t(225) = 1.165$ ,  $p = .245$ . This means that the level of Trust increases when at least one of the significant predictor variables (product transparency, inventory transparency and process transparency) increases. This means that H1a, H1b and H1c are supported.

Hypotheses	Regression Weights	B	t	p-value	Results
H1a	Product TP -> BI	0,365	4,69	<0,001	Supported
H1b	Price TP -> BI	0,139	2,066	0,04	Supported
H1c	Inventory TP -> BI	0,135	2,119	0,035	Supported
H1d	Process TP -> BI	0,089	1,321	0,188	Not supported
R	0,658				
F (4, 221)	42,222				

Table 4 Hypotheses results Buying Intention

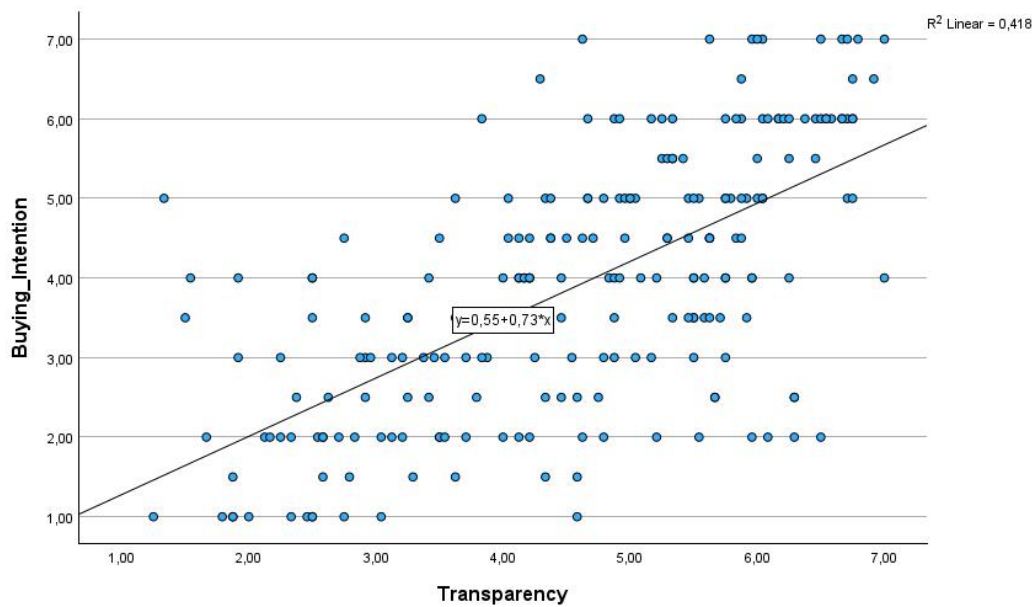


Figure 2 Scatter plot Transparency -> Buying Intention

Secondly, linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the elements of the Transparency framework and Trust (See Table 5 and Figure 3). A significant regression was found. The test revealed that the four elements of Transparency explained approximately 57,9% of the variance in Trust,  $R^2 = .579$ ,  $F(4, 221) = 75,859$ ,  $p < .001$ . The predictor variable of the level of price transparency was the strongest predictor of the level of Trust,  $B = .309$ ,  $t(225) = 5.604$ ,  $p < .001$ . After price transparency, the variable of the level of process transparency was the strongest predictor of the level of Trust,  $B = .164$ ,  $t(225) = 3.45$ ,  $p < .001$ . The last significant predictor of the level of trust is the level of Inventory Transparency,  $B = .149$ ,  $t(225) = 3,324$ ,  $p < .001$ . The predictor level of Price Transparency was found as not significant,  $B = .55$ ,  $t(225) = 1.165$ ,  $p = .245$ . This indicates that the level of Trust increases when at least one of the significant predictor variables (product transparency,

inventory transparency and process transparency) variables increases. This means that H2a, H2c and H2d are supported.

Hypotheses	Regression Weights	B	t	p-value	Results
H2a	Product TP ->TR	0,309	5,604	<0,001	Supported
H2b	Price TP -> TR	0,55	1,165	0,245	Not supported
H2c	Inventory TP -> TR	0,149	3,324	0,001	Supported
H2d	Process TP -> TR	0,164	3,45	<0,001	Supported
R	0,761				
F (4, 221)	75,859				

Table 5 Hypotheses results Trust

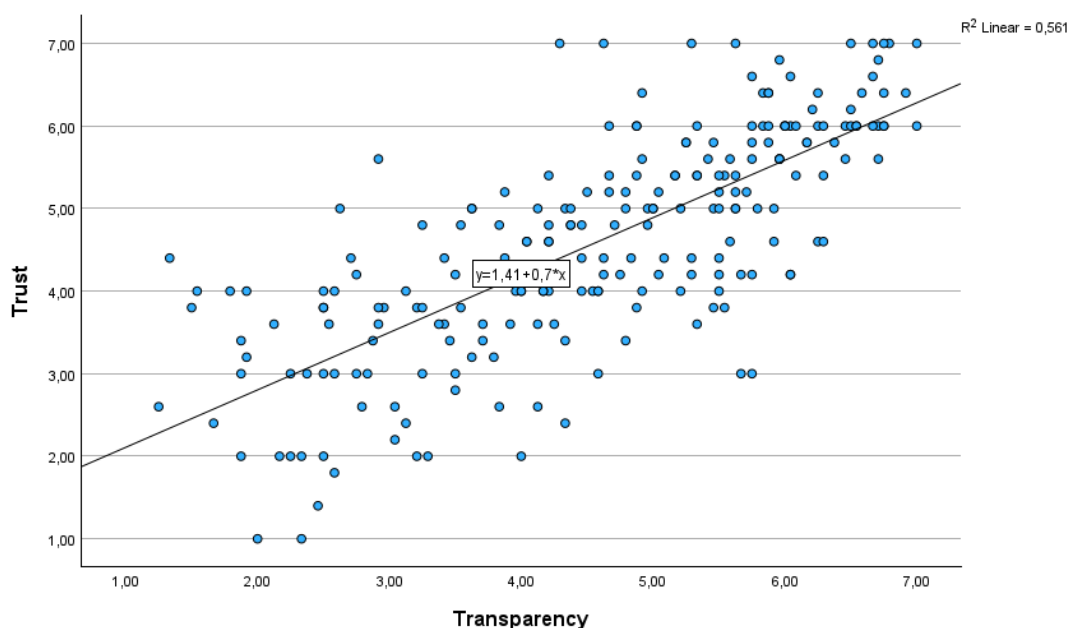


Figure 3 Scatter plot Transparency -> Trust

In addition, it is interesting to look at the concept of Transparency (composed of the average of the values of the four forms of transparency). After compiling the Transparency variable, it is interesting to see what the relationship between Transparency and Trust or Buying Intention looks like. From the tables below (table 6 and table 7) we can draw important conclusions about the relationship between Transparency and Buying Intention, separated by gender. The positive relationship between Transparency and Buying Intention is statistically significant for both men,  $B = .653$ ,  $t = 7.326$ ,  $p < .001$ , and women,  $B = .815$ ,  $t = 10.941$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both regression models can be seen as statistically significant. For men,  $F(1,114) = 53.670$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and for women,  $F(1,107) = 119.699$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

What is your gender?	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
			B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Male	1	(Constant)	.866	.439		1.973	.051
		Transparency	.653	.089	.566	7.326	<0.001
Female	1	(Constant)	.232	.348		.665	.507
		Transparency	.815	.075	.727	10.941	<0.001

Table 6 Transparency and Buying separated per gender

What is your gender			Sum of		Mean		Sig.
			Squares	df	Square	F	
Male	1	Regression	95,705	1	95,705	53,670	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	203,285	114	1,783		
		Total	298,989	115			
Female	1	Regression	153,520	1	153,520	119,699	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	137,233	107	1,283		
		Total	290,752	108			

a. Dependent Variable: Buying Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transparency

Table 7 Analysis of Variance of Transparency -> Buying Intention

Also, for Trust, Transparency was a significant predictor for both men,  $B = .619$ ,  $t = 10.257$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and women,  $B = 0.755$ ,  $t = 13.604$ ,  $p < .001$ . Both regression models can be seen as statistically significant. For men.  $F(1,114) = 105.216$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , and for women,  $F(1,107) = 185.064$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (See Table 8 and Table 9). In both models, Transparency showed a stronger effect on woman compared to men, according to the higher unstandardized B-coefficients. This data shows that transparency positively influences both buying intention and trust for both genders, but the effect is bigger for women.

What is your gender?	Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
			B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Male	1	(Constant)	1.892	.297		6.366	<0.001
		Transparency	.619	.060	.693	10.257	<0.001
Female	1	(Constant)	1.025	.259		3.953	<0.001
		Transparency	.755	.056	.796	13.604	<0.001

Table 8 Transparency and Trust separated by gender

What is your gender			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Male</b>	1	Regression	85,955	1	85,955	105,216	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	93,131	114	0,817		
		Total	179,086	115			
<b>Female</b>	1	Regression	131,783	1	131,783	185,064	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	76,195	107	0,712		
		Total	207,978	108			

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transparency

Table 9 Analysis of Variance of Transparency -> Trust

Additionally, it is interesting to look at the level of Physical Activity of the participants. According to the theory, we can divide people into three levels of Physical Activity: low, medium and high. This can be done on the basis of [Murofushi et al. \(2024\)](#). The survey shows that only three respondents belong to the first category. The results for this group are unreliable due to the extremely small sample size. The groups with 'medium' physical activity and 'high' physical activity can be compared. For both groups there is a significant positive relationship between Transparency and Buying Intention. However, the effect of Transparency on Buying Intention is stronger for the group with 'higher' physical activity than for the group with 'medium' physical activity. The Low Physical Activity group showed no significant relationship. For the PA\_medium group a significant positive relationship  $B = .513$ ,  $t(28) = 3.607$ ,  $p < .001$ , whereas for PA\_high,  $B = .773$ ,  $t(191) = 12.352$ ,  $p < .001$ . The results can be found in Table 10 and Table 11.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	PA_groups	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig
<b>Low</b>	1 (Constant)	7,767	7,120		1,091	0,472
	Transparency	-1,298	1,793	-0,586	-0,724	0,601
<b>Medium</b>	1 (Constant)	1,680	0,664		2,530	0,017
	Transparency	0,513	0,142	0,563	3,607	0,001
<b>High</b>	1 (Constant)	0,341	0,303		1,126	0,262
	Transparency	0,773	0,063	0,666	12,352	< .000

a. Dependent Variable: Buying\_Intention

Table 10 Transparency and Buying Intention per level of Physical Activity



PA_groups			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>1,00</b>	<b>1</b>	Regression	1,604	1	1,604	0,524	,601 <sup>a</sup>
		Residual	3,063	1	3,063		
		Total	4,667	2			
<b>2,00</b>	<b>1</b>	Regression	17,661	1	17,661	13,009	,001 <sup>a</sup>
		Residual	38,014	28	1,358		
		Total	55,675	29			
<b>3,00</b>	<b>1</b>	Regression	233,805	1	233,805	152,568	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	292,700	191	1,532		
		Total	526,505	192			

a. Dependent Variable: Buying\_Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transparency

*Table 11 Analysis of Variance for Transparency and Buying Intention per level of Physical Activity*

For both groups there is a significant positive relationship between transparency and Trust. However, the effect of Transparency on Trust is stronger for the group with 'higher' physical activity than for the group with 'medium' physical activity. The Low Physical Activity group showed no significant relationship. For the PA\_medium group a significant positive relationship  $B = .640$ ,  $t(28) = 5.953$ ,  $p < .0001$ , whereas for PA-high,  $B = .704$ ,  $t(191) = 15.699$ ,  $p < .001$ . The results can be found in Table 12 and Table 13.

PA_groups			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
			B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
<b>Low</b>	<b>1</b>	(Constant)	5,698	2,186		2,606	0,233
		Transparency	-0,534	0,551	-0,696	-0,969	0,510
<b>Medium</b>	<b>1</b>	(Constant)	1,582	0,502		3,152	0,004
		Transparency	0,640	0,108	0,747	5,953	< .001
<b>High</b>	<b>1</b>	(Constant)	1,393	0,217		6,419	< .001
		Transparency	0,704	0,045	0,751	15,699	< .001

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

*Table 12 Transparency and Trust per level of Physical Activity*

PA_groups			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Low</b>	1	Regression	0,271	1	0,271	0,940	,510 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	0,289	1	0,289		
		Total	0,560	2			
<b>Medium</b>	1	Regression	27,483	1	27,483	35,444	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	21,711	28	0,775		
		Total	49,195	29			
<b>High</b>	1	Regression	193,726	1	193,726	246,454	<,001 <sup>b</sup>
		Residual	150,136	191	0,786		
		Total	343,862	192			

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transparency

Table 13 Analysis of Variance for Transparency and Trust per level of Physical Activity

### 4.3. Mediating effect

The results above show that for both dependent variables there are separate positive significant relationships with the independent variable Transparency. However, it is also interesting to look at a possible mediating effect for this relationship. Possibly, these separate relationships can be summarized into one framework, where the effect of independent variable X on dependent variable is influenced by a variable M. To analyse the mediating effect, the PROCESS method by [Hayes \(2013\)](#) is used. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 14. The analysis suggests that Transparency has no direct significant effect on Buying Intention, since the direct effect is seen as not significant ( $B = 0.0900$ ,  $t = 1.3707$ ,  $p = 0.1719$ ). However, an indirect effect exists through the level of trust. This implies that Trust mediates the relationship between Transparency and Buying Intention, since the indirect effect is strong and significant ( $B = 0.643$ , 95% CI [0.5319, 0.7677]). In the first model, we look at Trust as a dependent variable and Transparency as an independent variable. This shows a significant and positive relationship between Transparency and Trust,  $B = 0.6956$ ,  $t = 16.9057$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The second model looks at the dependent variable Buying Intention and the predictors Transparency and Trust. Interestingly, the effect of level of Transparency on Buying Intention now is not significant ( $B = 0.0900$ ,  $t = 1.3707$ ,  $p = 0.1719$ ) and Trust has a very positive correlation with Buying Intention ( $B = 0.9233$ ,  $t = 13.0587$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This highlights the important role of Trust in shaping buying intention among consumers. The total effect model shows a significant total effect of Transparency on Buying Intention ( $B = .7323$ ,  $t = 12.6888$ ,  $p = >.000$ ). The direct effect of Transparency on Buying Intention is not significant, indicating a mediating role of Trust. The indirect effect of Transparency on Buying Intention via Trust was significant ( $B = 0.6423$ , 95% CI [0.5275, 0.7717]). This model shows

that Transparency is not a direct driver of Purchase Intention, but Trust is, which then has a strong effect on Purchase Intention. The analysis suggests a full mediation, since the direct effect of Transparency on Buying Intention becomes non-significant when Trust is included in the model.

Outcome variable	Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
TR	Constant)	1.4122	0.1978		7.1388	0.0000
	TP	0.6956	0.0411	0.7487	16.9057	0.0000
BI	Constant	-0.7584	0.2319		-3.2699	0.0012
	TP	0.0900	0.0657	0.0795	1.3707	0.1719
	TR	0.9233	0.0707	0.7575	13.0587	0.0000
Total Effect BI	Constant	0.5455	0.2775		1.9661	0.0505
	TP	0.7323	0.0577	0.6467	12.6888	0.0000

Table 14 Mediating effect Trust on Transparency and Buying Intention.

#### 4.4. Research framework

After the analysis, we can conclude that multiple hypotheses are supported based on this research. We found a positive significant correlation between Product Transparency, Price Transparency and Inventory Transparency with Buying Intention. So, hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c are supported. Product Transparency can be seen as the most important predictor of Buying Intention. After Product Transparency, the variables of Price Transparency and Inventory Transparency are significant predictors of Buying Intention. The coefficients of these two variables are close to each other, meaning they have about the same influence on Buying Intention. The independent variable Process Transparency shows a non-significant relationship with Buying Intention and can't be considered as a predictor of Buying Intention. Therefore, the level of Buying Intention of the respondents in this study are significantly influenced by the level of transparency in terms of product information, information on pricing structures and information on inventory levels. It implies that consumers are more likely to make a purchase when they have clear information about the product, its price and the availability of the product. On the other hand, it could imply that consumers have less interest in information about business processes when making a purchase.

For the relationship between Trust and Product Transparency, Inventory Transparency, and Process Transparency, positive and significant relationships were found. This means that H2a, H2c, and H2d are supported. In this research framework, Product Transparency can be seen as the most important predictor of Consumer Trust. Inventory and Process Transparency are the other predictors in this research. This implies the level of trust of the respondents in this research are significantly influenced by the level of transparency on price structures, inventory level information and business process information. Price Transparency shows a non-significant relationship with Consumer Trust and thus cannot be seen as a

predictor of Trust. This may imply that additional transparency on pricing does not contribute to generating consumer trust.

Hypotheses H1d and H2b cannot be supported by the data. Both hypotheses showed a level of significant that was greater than .05. As mentioned in chapter 3 of this study, a hypothesis will be rejected at the Alpha level of .05 or higher. This would mean that the values are not significant. To conclude, hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c of the first framework and H2a, H2c and H2d of the second framework are supported. See Figure 4.

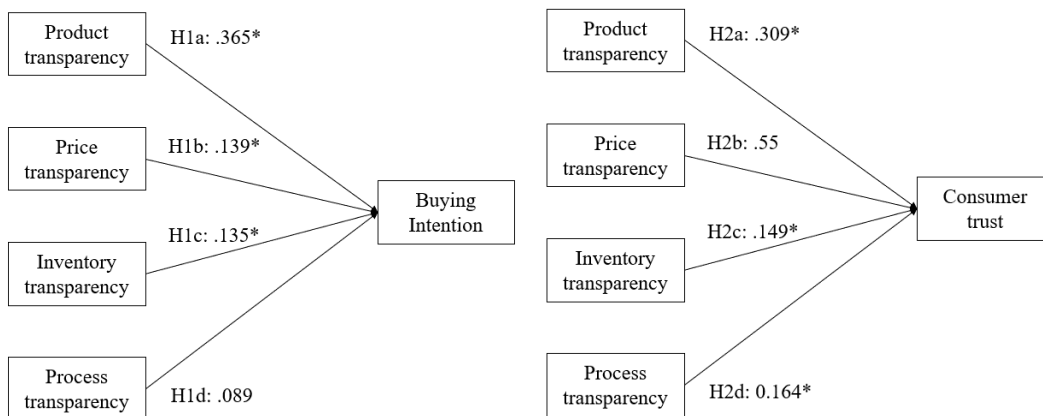


Figure 4 Research frameworks

Additionally, a fully mediating effect between Transparency, Trust and Buying Intention was discovered. This shows that there is no direct, significant relationship between Transparency and Buying Intention. In contrast, an indirect effect does exist between Transparency and Buying Intention via Trust (.6423\*), see Figure 5.

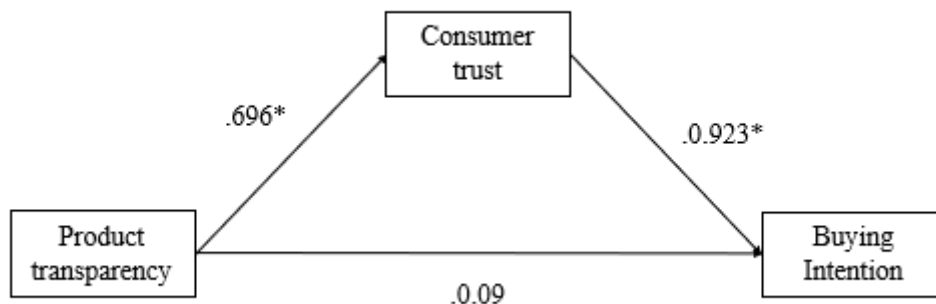


Figure 5 Mediating effect of Trust

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to build on existing theory around transparency. Where previous studies did not go beyond mapping the different elements of the Transparency Framework, this study looked further into the proportion of each element of Transparency in the framework. This included looking at the relationship of Transparency, Trust and Buying Intention. The main research question was:

**To what extent do the specific informational elements of Transparency Strategy individually and collectively influence consumer trust and consumers' Buying Intention in B2C context.**

A number of findings emerged from the study. Product Transparency, Price Transparency and Inventory Transparency showed significant positive correlations with Buying Intention, supporting hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c. Product Transparency, Inventory Transparency and Process Transparency showed significant positive relationships with Trust, supporting hypotheses H2a, H2c and H2d.

In addition, transparency shows a strong correlation between transparency and buying intention and transparency and trust for both genders. However, a stronger effect was found for women. The research concludes that Transparency has more influence on a female consumer's trust and buying intention. Also, the level of physical activity has a strengthening effect on the relationship between transparency, trust and buying intention. A stronger effect was found for the group with high physical activity than for the group with an average level of physical activity.

Lastly, a mediating effect was found through Trust between Transparency and Buying Intention. However, there is a correlation between Transparency and Buying Intention, the direct effect is non-significant. The indirect effect through trust is significantly high.

These findings show that food and supplement companies should make the level of transparency a priority in their day-to-day operations, focusing on certain elements in the research framework to build trust and thus increasing the consumers' intention to buy. Organizations may also consider implementing transparency into their operations in some way, such as communicating product information, inventory information and business process information more actively. These strategies can have a positive effect on consumer trust and their intention to buy, and especially to individuals with high physical activity or women.

The study highlights the importance of transparency in building consumer trust and stimulating purchase intentions. By strategically applying product transparency, price transparency, inventory transparency and process transparency, organizations can strengthen customer loyalty, potentially leading to higher sales or profits. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the role of transparency in the food and supplement industry and form a good basis for further implementation of transparency in business strategies. In addition, it provides a good basis for follow-up research on Transparency, Trust and Buying Intention

## 6. Discussion

Chapter 6 is about interpreting the results from the previous chapter. The findings are discussed and explained in more detail. In addition, it looks at how the results of this study will find a place in the already existing literature. It also looks at the limitations of the study and provides directions for future studies. While the topic of transparency is increasingly popular in empirical research, the topic has been relatively unexplored in the industry of sports supplements and sports nutrition. In an industry where health plays an essential role and people are becoming increasingly conscious of their nutrition, this presented an interesting area for investigation. For example, the purchase of nutritional products has different characteristics compared to products like clothing or a mobile phone. This study provides new insights into the topic of transparency, trust, and buying intention, examined within the context of an (online) Business-to-Consumer environment. This research focuses on answering the following research question: *“To what extent do the specific informational elements of Transparency Strategy individually and collectively influence consumer trust and consumers' Buying Intention in B2C context.”*. The research has yielded actionable findings and identified guidelines for future research. It shows that there is a correlation between the level of transparency for both consumer trust and consumers' buying intentions. However, when these constructs are merged into a single model, it appears that the direct relationship between the level of transparency and purchase intent is blurred and completely mediated by consumer trust. This is an insight not previously encountered in the literature. In addition to the insights gained from answering the central research question and testing the hypotheses, other insights were revealed. Survey participants were also asked for their demographics. The study respondents were asked about gender, age, level of education, level of physical activity and income. The educational levels, income levels and age did not show clear groups to compare. However, within the demographic characteristics of gender and level of physical activity, clear groups could be identified. Although this was beyond the scope of the study, it

provided interesting insights about strengthening factors of the relationships examined in the study.

### 6.1. Theoretical contributions

This research makes several theoretical contributions. First of all, this study contributes to theory on Business-to-Consumer Transparency Strategy by [Granados et al. \(2010\)](#). It uncovers insights about the individual and joint effects of product, price, process and inventory transparency on consumer behaviour. This research shows that elements relate to each other in a different way depending on the goal.

This research also comes with contributions to the literature of information transparency from [Zhou et al. \(2018\)](#), who argued that new studies could investigate which transparency antecedents companies should focus their efforts on. In this study, it emerged that Product Transparency and Price Transparency were the most important drivers for generating trust as well as stimulating buying intention.

In addition to that, this study also contributes to the literature on Perceived Transparency and Purchase Intention from [Zhou et al. \(2018\)](#) by identifying Trust as a mediator in the relationship between Transparency and Purchase Intention. The study by [Zhou et al. \(2018\)](#) found that perceived risk had a partial mediating role on this relationship. The results from this study show that consumer trust also has a mediating role in the relationship between transparency and purchase intention. The findings advance the understanding of Trust, demonstrating that there is no direct relationship between Transparency and Buying Intention. The direct effect of Transparency on Buying Intention became non-significant after including Trust in the model. However, transparency may not directly lead to buying intentions, it plays an important role in building trust. This fits well with the theory from [Anisimova and Vrontis \(2024\)](#) which suggests that trust removes uncertainty in the buying process. Thereby, it confirms the findings from [Kang and Hustvedt \(2014\)](#)

Furthermore, this study also explored the difference between male and female consumers. Where prior studies by [Zhou et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Granados et al. \(2010\)](#) do not discuss the differences between the two genders, it turns out that there is a difference between men and women in the strength of the relationship between transparency and trust or buying intention. This study contributes to the literature of [Zhang et al. \(2014\)](#) recognizing differences in the effect between (emotional) trust and purchase behaviour between men and women. This study adds to the literature by confirming significant differences between male and female consumers. This research extends our understanding of the role of different genders in

literature of transparency, trust and buying intentions. This study shows that the effect of Transparency on Trust and Buying Intention is stronger for female consumers than for men. This is a valuable contribution to the literature of around Trust and Buying Intention, highlighting significant differences between the two genders.

To conclude, this study contributes to the literature on transparency by proposing that physical activity level strengthens the Business-to-Consumer Transparency Strategy Framework of [Granados et al. \(2010\)](#). The study revealed significant differences how transparency directly and indirectly affects the level of trust and the level of buying intentions based on the level of physical activity. This variable was not included in the study of [Granados et al. \(2010\)](#). Although the sample size of respondents with low physical activity was too small, the groups with medium physical activity and high physical activity were of a sufficient sample size to draw conclusions.

## 6.2. Practical contributions

The results show that Transparency has a significant positive effect on both Trust and Buying Intention. The knowledge can be applied in practice by marketers by including Transparency in marketing strategies and communications aimed at customers when the marketing goal is to increase customer trust and improve buying intention.

The data shows that Transparency has a significant impact on Trust. This means that Transparency has a significant share in building consumer trust. Transparency should be included in the strategy of an organization to create trust with their (potential) target group. This can be done for example on the company's website, product packaging or customer service. It also appears that the effect for both dependent variables is stronger for a female consumer. A marketer can take this fact into account in marketing communications.

It also appears that the effect for both dependent variables is stronger for a female consumer. A marketer can take this into account in an organizations' marketing communications. For example, by emphasizing the transparency of products that are mainly bought by female consumers. When organizations' marketers have insight in their CRM system into which products are mainly purchased by female customers, they can take advantage of this by communicating more transparently about the product or organization. In this way, the organization can create extra trust among these female consumers, which leads to a higher buying intention.

In addition, this research shows that the effect between Transparency, Trust and Buying Intention is also stronger for people who have a more active lifestyle. Organizations,



especially in the health and fitness industry, could incorporate transparency more into their marketing strategy to attract consumers with active lifestyles. For organizations that already target consumers with a high level of physical activity, for example, companies that focus on selling sportswear, sports supplements and sports nutrition, it can be actionable. This research shows that the effect between transparency and the independent variable Trust and Buying Intention is stronger for consumers who are physically active. Emphasis can be placed on transparency within the organizations' communication towards (potential) customers, as mentioned in previous paragraph.

Product Transparency is a key predictor of Buying Intention, while Price Transparency is a key predictor of Trust. Organizations can utilize these insights by focusing on these two elements of the Transparency framework. For example, when organizations are forced to decide what information to communicate, think of product pages, product packaging or in-store displays where there is only a limited amount of space for communication. Too much information can actually cause confusion for a consumer. When modifying the user interface of a website, for example, the website's User Experience (UX) should be considered. When the inaccurate presentation of information leads to degradation of other important facets (e.g., conversion rates), it may be better to leave out certain information or make it available to the customer in a different way. In such a case, an organization may choose to initially focus on sharing information about pricing structures or product information before sharing (additional) information about business processes or stock levels. In addition, every organization is different and in specific cases a different approach may better suit the needs of the target audience. For target groups that are less price sensitive, price information might be less relevant, while consumers who are more sustainability conscious might be more interested in information about suppliers, sustainability measures and carbon footprint.

Also, it is interesting for organizations to know that the level of transparency affects the level of trust and indirectly the buying intention of consumers. This is partly caused by a mediating effect through Trust. Organizations aiming to increase their customer's trust (and so buying intention) may want to consider putting more effort into one of the elements of the framework. This fact can be factored into decisions in the organization's product development or web development. In product development and web site development, an organization can better align its designs and products with the transparency framework to improve trust and buying intention. Organizations can also invest in systems that provide current and accurate information about an organization's products to increase trust and indirectly buying intention. In this way, consumers have access to the information they need at all times. It is important

to present the information in an understandable and convenient way ([Feng, 2015](#); [Granados et al., 2010, p. 209](#); [Yang & Battocchio, 2020](#); [Zhu, 2002, p. 93](#)).

### 6.3. Limitations and future research directions

Although this study was able to make valuable contributions to the literature, this research faces several limitations. This paragraph will review the limitations of the research.

The first limitation to this study is the research sample. The survey was initially distributed to 1st and 2nd degree connections of the researcher. In addition, the following from a supplement company was used in a later stage of data collection. The company posted a comment on a LinkedIn post with the link to the survey, which resulted in a substantial growth in impressions on the post (impressions times 10) and ultimately the number of completed surveys. This company stands for transparency, so the results may be biased because these followers are not entirely neutral. In addition, the target audience is limited to Dutch respondents only. It is also good to consider the researcher's ability to conduct the research. The researcher does not have budgets to reach large numbers of people who fall within the target population of the study. A complete random sample was difficult to achieve with the resources available to the researcher. Therefore, this study used convenience sampling. When looking at the composition of the sample, it is noticeable that the composition of the sample is more difficult to generalize. Young, highly educated respondents mainly completed the survey, namely 90% of the sample. Also, when we look at the different level of physical activity, we see that the group with low physical activity is underrepresented in this survey. The research took place within a very specific niche, that sports nutrition industry. Results from this research could potentially be different when similar research is conducted among a different target audience. This makes it more difficult to generalize the results of the study. New studies can build on this research by investigating new target groups, for example in other countries, continents or industries to discover new insights.

Secondly, the constructs surveyed are very narrow constructs. It may be that survey respondents might have thought that the questions were very similar to each other, so the results are more likely to be similar to each other. Small minimal differences within one construct, or even across constructs, may mean that constructs do not generalize equally well. As a result, it is also possible that survey respondents found survey questions to be so similar that they inadvertently gave the same answers because of this.

Thirdly, it is also important to consider possible self-reported bias ([Babbie, 2016](#)).

Beforehand, the participants in the study were informed about the topic of the research.

Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that participants, consciously or unconsciously, filled in answers according to the wishes of the researcher. This may affect the reliability of the survey responses, and thus the results of the study. This problem was partially solved by distributing two versions of the survey, which resulted in clear differences between the data. If respondents intentionally gave more positive answers based on the examples given, there is still a clear difference here. In addition, there was an extremely high Cronbach's Alpha, possibly suggesting that some survey items were redundant. While a high Cronbach's Alpha is an indicator of high reliability, it may also mean that survey items carry the same information. This could be considered in subsequent studies so that each survey item carries a unique piece of information.

The sample of this study consists mainly of highly educated young adults with an average or high physical activity. This makes the generalizability of the study more limited. Future research could investigate these relationships between Transparency, Trust and Buying Intention in other research settings. This could be done by using a new research sample or by executing the research in a different research setting, Future research can use random sampling instead of convenience sampling to improve the generalizability and reliability of the study.

The study shows that there is a significant difference between the different genders, male and female, when looking at the relationship between Transparency and the two dependent variables Trust and Buying Intention. Future research could examine what might be underlying factors of this difference. In addition, sample composition can be considered in subsequent studies. For example, researchers can look at the relationship between transparency and consumer behaviour in different cultures, different industries and with a different type of consumer. Thus, the results can be better compared with different age or levels of physical activity.

Finally, it is good to keep in mind that the relationships studied are not causations, but correlations. Interpreting the relationships between the independent and dependent variables should therefore be done with care.

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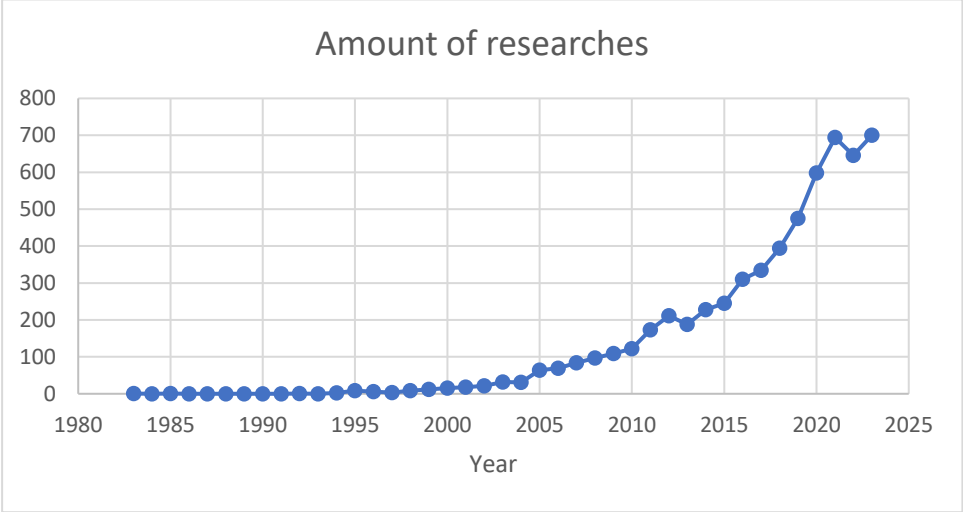


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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

*Appendix 1 Amount of research on 'transparency', limited to the following subject areas: Social Science, Business, Management and Account, Economics, Econometric*



## Appendix 2

Introduction of the questionnaire. (Dutch)

*Beste deelnemer,*

*Dank u wel dat u een bijdrage wil leveren aan mijn enquête. Mijn naam is Maurice Morsink, student Master Business Administration aan Universiteit Twente. Momenteel ben ik bezig met het laatste onderdeel van mijn master: de master thesis. In mijn thesis onderzoek ik de relatie tussen de mate van transparantie van een bedrijf en het vertrouwen van de consument.*

*Uw bijdrage aan deze enquête is van grote waarde voor mijn onderzoek. Wanneer u deelneemt, geeft u toestemming om de verkregen informatie te verwerken voor deze thesis. De resultaten zullen enkel voor dit onderzoek gebruikt worden. Het onderzoek is volledig anoniem. Het staat u daarnaast vrij om dit onderzoek op ieder gewenst moment af te breken. De informatie die voortkomt uit deze enquête zal zorgvuldig worden verwerkt en wordt geanalyseerd middels statistische en analytische technieken, om zo inzichten te vergaren die nodig zijn voor dit onderzoek. Uw bijdrage aan deze enquête zou mij helpen bij het onderzoek en ik waardeer dan ook uw medewerking. Het onderzoek zal slechts enkele minuten duren.*

*Heeft vragen over de enquête of wilt u in contact komen over iets met betrekking tot dit onderzoek? Stuur dan een mail naar [m.r.morsink@student.utwente.nl](mailto:m.r.morsink@student.utwente.nl).*

*Nogmaals dank voor uw deelname.*

*Met vriendelijke groet,*

*Maurice Morsink*

## Appendix 3

#	Survey question	Source
	This brand provides clear information about their <b>price structure</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is transparent in <b>price structure</b> disclosure.	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is straightforward in delivering information about their <b>price structure</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	I believe this brand offers access to information about their <b>price structure</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides enough information about their <b>price structure</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides useful information about their <b>price structure</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )

#	Survey question	Source
	This brand provides clear information about their <b>products</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is transparent in <b>product information</b> disclosure.	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is straightforward in delivering information about their <b>product</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	I believe this brand offers access to information about their <b>products</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides enough information about their <b>products</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides useful information about their <b>products</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )

#	Survey question	Source
	This brand provides clear information about their <b>stock levels</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is transparent in <b>stock level</b> disclosure.	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is straightforward in delivering information about their <b>stock levels</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	I believe this brand offers access to information about their <b>stock levels</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides enough information about their <b>stock levels</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides useful information about their <b>stock levels</b> .	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )

#	Survey question	Source
	This brand provides clear information about their <b>business practices</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is transparent in <b>business practices</b> disclosure.	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	This brand is straightforward in delivering information about their <b>business practices</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	I believe this brand offers access to information about their <b>business practices</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides enough information about their <b>business practices</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )
	I believe this brand provides useful information about their <b>business practices</b>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> ; <a href="#">Lin et al., 2017</a> )

#	Survey question	Source
1	I think this brand is reliable	( <a href="#">Shafieizadeh &amp; Tao, 2020</a> )
	The information provided by this brand is reliable	( <a href="#">Chopdar &amp; Paul, 2024</a> )
2	I have confidence in the products that this brand sells	( <a href="#">Shafieizadeh &amp; Tao, 2020</a> )
3	I think this brand has high integrity	( <a href="#">Shafieizadeh &amp; Tao, 2020</a> )
4	I trust this brand	( <a href="#">Chopdar &amp; Paul, 2024</a> )
5	I feel secure in ordering <b>food supplements</b> through this brand	( <a href="#">Chopdar &amp; Paul, 2024</a> )
6	I'd probably think about shopping at this brand.	( <a href="#">Yin et al., 2019</a> )
7	If I need sporting nutrition, I would like to buy it at this brand.	( <a href="#">Yin et al., 2019</a> )

#	Survey question	Source
	<p>I can best describe my physical activity according to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moving only for necessary chores</li> <li>2. Walking or other outdoor activities one or two times per week</li> <li>3. Walking or other outdoor activities several times per week</li> <li>4. Exercising one or two times per week to the point of perspiring and heavy breathing</li> <li>5. Exercising several times per week to the point of perspiring and heavy breathing</li> <li>6. Keep-fit heavy exercise or competitive sport several times per week.</li> </ol> <p>1-2: low PA, 3-4: moderate PA 5-6: high PA</p>	( <a href="#">Webster et al., 2011</a> )
	<p>Heb je afgelopen jaar gebruik gemaakt van sportsupplementen</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>	( <a href="#">Murofushi et al., 2024</a> )
	<p>Hoe vaak maak je gebruik van sportsupplementen?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1 dag in de week</li> <li>2. 2 dagen in de week</li> <li>3. 3 dagen in de week</li> <li>4. 4 dagen in de week</li> <li>5. 5 dagen in de week</li> <li>6. 6 dagen in de week</li> <li>7. 7 dagen in de week.</li> </ol>	( <a href="#">Murofushi et al., 2024</a> )
	<p>Number of different types of supplements</p> <p>- 1-10 options</p>	( <a href="#">Murofushi et al., 2024</a> )

#	Survey question	Source
	<p>What is your gender</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Male</li> <li>2. Female</li> <li>3. Prefer not to say</li> </ol>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )
	<p>What is your age</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please specify _____</li> <li>2. I prefer not to answer</li> </ol>	( <a href="#">Hughes et al., 2016</a> )
	<p>What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Some high school</li> <li>2. High school diploma or equivalent</li> <li>3. Vocational training</li> <li>4. Some college</li> <li>5. Associate degree</li> <li>6. Bachelor's degree</li> <li>7. Some post undergraduate work</li> <li>8. Master's degree</li> <li>9. Specialist degree</li> </ol>	( <a href="#">Hustvedt &amp; Kang, 2013</a> )

	10. Applied or professional doctorate degree 11. Doctorate degree 12. Other, please specify	
	What is your annual household income? 1. Less than €20.000,- 2. €20 - €39.999 3. €40-€59.999 4. €60-€79.999 5. €80-€99.999 6. €100.000 +	( <a href="#">DePriest, 2021</a> ; <a href="#">Kang &amp; Hustvedt, 2013</a> )

Table 15 Demographic survey questions

## Appendix 4

Examples of product pages in the questionnaire:

The screenshot shows a product page for 'Whey proteïne poeder' on the NUTRI Sportvoeding website. The page features a navigation bar with the NUTRI logo, 'Producten', 'Kenniscentrum', a search bar, and a shopping cart icon showing '0 Items'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column contains four images: a large tub of 'WHEY' powder, a bowl of powder, a glass of chocolate shake with chocolate shavings, and a bowl of powder next to almonds. The right column contains the product title 'Whey proteïne poeder', a star rating of 4.7 (511 reviews), a description: 'Natuurlijke en hoogwaardige whey proteïne poeder, perfect voor spierherstel en -groei na trainingen. Rijk aan essentiële aminozuren en laag in vet en koolhydraten. Een smakelijke en effectieve toevoeging aan je fitnessroutine.', a price box showing '1kg - €36' and '33 shakes (€1,09/shake)', three flavor options: 'Chocolate' (available), 'Strawberry' (available), and 'Vanilla' (niet op voorraad), and a green dot indicating 'Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis'.

**NUTRI**  
Sportvoeding

Producten Kenniscentrum

Home > Eiwitpoeder

## Whey proteïne poeder

★ 4,7 (511 reviews)

Natuurlijke en hoogwaardige whey proteïne poeder, perfect voor spierherstel en -groei na trainingen. Rijk aan essentiële aminozuren en laag in vet en koolhydraten. Een smakelijke en effectieve toevoeging aan je fitnessroutine.

**1kg - €36**  
33 shakes (€1,09/shake)

Chocolate Voeg toe +


Strawberry Voeg toe +

Vanilla niet op voorraad


Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis

Example 1 standard product page





Producten
Kenniscentrum

 **0 Items**

### Ingrediënten




Wei eiwit concentraat (melk, lactose), cacao (smaakstof), Wei eiwit isolaat (melk, lactose), chocolade aroma (smaakstof), creamer (smaakstof, melk), Wei eiwit hydrolysaat (melk, lactose), karamel (kleurstof), guargom (verdikkingsmiddel), lecithine (uit zonnebloem, emulgator), sucralose (zoetstof), acesulfaam k (zoetstof), carmine (kleurstof).

### Voedingswaarden

	Per 100 gram	Per 35 gram
<b>Energie</b>	1657,6 kJ	580,2 kJ
<b>Calorieën</b>	392,6 Kcal	137,4 Kcal
<b>Koolhydraten</b>	10,6 gram	3,71 gram
- Waarvan suikers	6,60 gram	2,31 gram
<b>Vet</b>	6,90 gram	2,42 gram
- Waarvan verzadigd vet	2,30 gram	0,81 gram
- Waarvan enkelvoudig verzadigd vet	2,70 gram	0,95 gram
- Waarvan meervoudig verzadigd vet	1,80 gram	0,63 gram
<b>Eiwit op droge stof basis</b>	72,9 gram	25,5 gram
<b>Vezels</b>	1,80 gram	0,67 gram
<b>Zout</b>	0,44 gram	0,15 gram
	0,17 gram	0,06 gram

### Allergenen en waarschuwingen

- Dit product bevat melk.
- Kan gluten, ei, vis, pinda en soja bevatten
- Een voedingssupplement kan een gevarieerde voeding en een gezonde leefstijl niet vervangen.
- Buiten het bereik van jonge kinderen houden.
- Maximaal 3 porties per dag. Dagelijkse dosering niet overschrijden.

Home > **Eiwitpoeder**

## Whey proteïne poeder

★ 4,7 (511 reviews)

Natuurlijke en hoogwaardige whey proteïne poeder, perfect voor spierherstel en -groei na trainingen. Rijk aan essentiële aminozuren en laag in vet en koolhydraten. Een smakelijke en effectieve toevoeging aan je fitnessroutine.

**1kg - €36** >

33 shakes (€1,09/shake)

**€15,42**

totale productiedrijs per stuk

**€20,58**

Winnemarge

**€14,50**

Productie

**€0,66**

Verpakking

**€0,26**

Transport

Chocolate
Voeg toe +

Let op! Er zijn nog **76** stuks op voorraad!

Strawberry
Voeg toe +

Vanilla
niet op voorraad

- Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis
- Niet goed, geld terug-garantie
- Verzonden door PostNL

**FAQ**

Een antwoord op de meeste gestelde vragen vind je hieronder!

Example 2 Product Transparency (high transparency)

The image shows a product page for 'Whey proteïne poeder' on a website. A semi-transparent overlay on the left side contains shipping information and frequently asked questions. The product page itself includes a search bar, a shopping cart icon with '0 Items', a breadcrumb trail 'Home > Eiwitpoeder', a product title 'Whey proteïne poeder', a star rating of 4.7 from 511 reviews, and a description. The product is available in a 1kg pack for €36, which includes 33 shakes. A price breakdown shows a total product price of €15.42 per unit, with a profit margin of €20.58, a product cost of €14.50, a packaging cost of €0.66, and a transport cost of €0.26. Three flavors are listed: Chocolate (available), Strawberry (available), and Vanilla (out of stock). Delivery promises include 'Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis', a 'Niet goed, geld terug-garantie', and 'Verzonden door PostNL'. An FAQ section is partially visible at the bottom.

**Verzendingkosten en levertijden**

**Verzending binnen Nederland**

**Standaard verzending: €3,95 (PostNL)**

- Levering is maandag t/m vrijdag
- Gewoonlijk geleverd binnen 3-5 werkdagen

**Express verzending: vanaf €14,99**

- Levering is maandag tot en met vrijdag
- Gewoonlijk geleverd binnen 1 werkdag, mits besteld voor 13:30
- Tijdens drukke periodes kan Expressbezorging mogelijk niet beschikbaar zijn

**Veelgestelde vragen over ons retourbeleid**

- Wat is jullie retourbeleid?
- Hoe kan ik een artikel retourneren?
- Kan ik een artikel retourneren als ik deze niet langer wil houden?
- Wat gebeurt er als mijn artikel retour is ontvangen?
- Wanneer ontvang ik mijn terugbetaling?

Home > Eiwitpoeder

## Whey proteïne poeder

★ 4.7 (511 reviews)

Natuurlijke en hoogwaardige whey proteïnepoeder, perfect voor spierherstel en -groei na trainingen. Rijk aan essentiële aminozuren en laag in vet en koolhydraten. Een smakelijke en effectieve toevoeging aan je fitnessroutine.

**1kg - €36**  
33 shakes (€1,09/shake)

<b>€15,42</b> <small>totale productieprijs per stuk</small>	<b>€20,58</b> <small>Winstmarge</small>	<b>€14,50</b> <small>Productie</small>	<b>€0,66</b> <small>Verpakking</small>	<b>€0,26</b> <small>Transport</small>
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- Chocolate Voeg toe +
- ! Let op! Er zijn nog **76** stuks op voorraad!
- Strawberry Voeg toe +
- Vanilla niet op voorraad

- Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis
- Niet goed, geld terug-garantie
- Verzonden door PostNL

**FAQ**  
Een antwoord op de meeste gestelde vragen vindt u hieronder!

Example 3 Process Transparency (high transparency)

**NUTRI**  
Sportvoeding

Producten Kenniscentrum

0 Items

Home > Eiwitpoeder

## Whey proteïne poeder

★ 4.7 (511 reviews)

Natuurlijke en hoogwaardige whey proteïnepoeder, perfect voor spierherstel en -groei na trainingen. Rijk aan essentiële aminozuren en laag in vet en koolhydraten. Een smakelijke en effectieve toevoeging aan je fitnessroutine.

**1kg - €36**  
33 shakes (€1,09/shake)

**€15,42**  
totale productieprijis per stuk

€20,58  
Winstmargin

€14,50  
Productie

€0,66  
Verpakking

€0,26  
Transport

Chocolate Voeg toe +

⚠ Let op! Er zijn nog **76** stuks op voorraad!

Strawberry Voeg toe +

Vanilla niet op voorraad

● Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis

● Niet goed, geld terug-garantie

● Verzonden door PostNL

**FAQ**  
Een antwoord op de meeste gestelde vragen vindt u hieronder!

Example 4 Price Transparency (high transparency)

**NUTRI**  
Sportvoeding

Producten Kenniscentrum

Home > Eiwitpoeder

## Whey proteïne poeder

★ 4,7 (511 reviews)

Natuurlijke en hoogwaardige whey proteïne poeder, perfect voor spierherstel en -groei na trainingen. Rijk aan essentiële aminozuren en laag in vet en koolhydraten. Een smakelijke en effectieve toevoeging aan je fitnessroutine.

**1kg - €36**  
33 shakes (€1,09/shake)

<b>€15,42</b> <small>totale productieprijz per stuk</small>	<b>€20,58</b> <small>Winstmarge</small>	<b>€14,50</b> <small>Productie</small>	<b>€0,66</b> <small>Verpakking</small>	<b>€0,26</b> <small>Transport</small>
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- Chocolate Voeg toe +
- ! Let op! Er zijn nog **76** stuks op voorraad!
- Strawberry Voeg toe +
- Vanilla niet op voorraad

● Vandaag besteld - morgen in huis  
● Niet goed, geld terug-garantie  
● Verzonden door PostNL

**FAQ**  
Een antwoord op de meeste gestelde vragen vindt u hieronder.

Example 5 Inventory Transparency (high transparency)

Appendix 5

Q-Q plots of Trust and Buying Intention

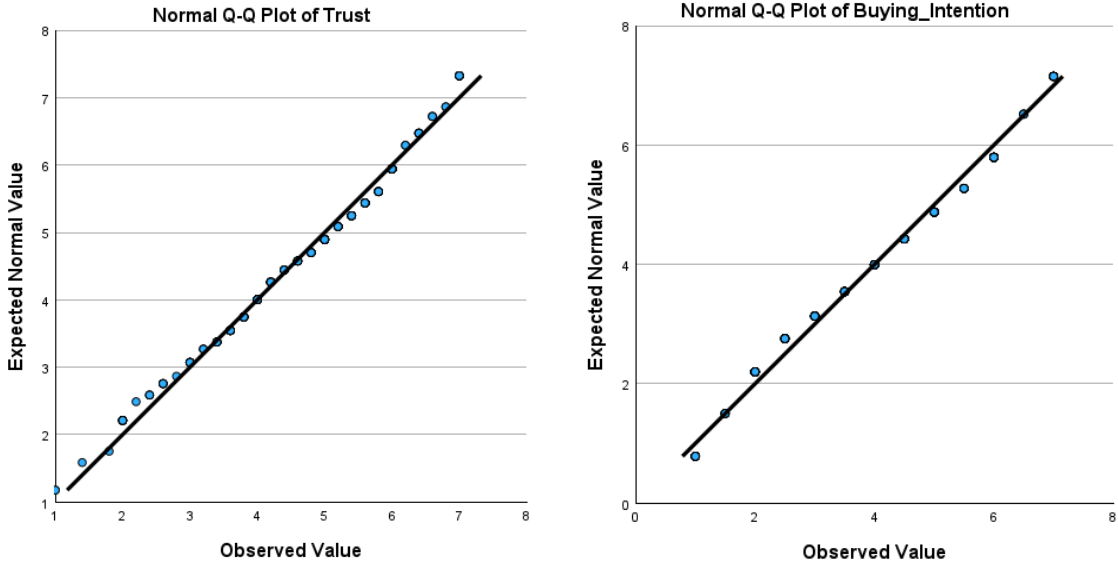


Figure 6 Q-Q Plots of Trust & Buying Intention

## Appendix 6

## Intercorrelation matrices

	PriceTP1	PriceTP2	PriceTP3	PriceTP4	PriceTP5	PriceTP6
PriceTP1	1	0,771	0,794	0,769	0,724	0,741
PriceTP2	0,771	1	0,899	0,867	0,791	0,723
PriceTP3	0,794	0,899	1	0,9	0,844	0,76
PriceTP4	0,769	0,867	0,9	1	0,846	0,728
PriceTP5	0,724	0,791	0,844	0,846	1	0,722
PriceTP6	0,741	0,723	0,76	0,728	0,722	1

	ProductTP1	ProductTP2	ProductTP3	ProductTP4	ProductTP5	ProductTP6
ProductTP1	1	0,905	0,838	0,82	0,817	0,786
ProductTP2	0,905	1	0,901	0,862	0,871	0,829
ProductTP3	0,838	0,901	1	0,868	0,851	0,804
ProductTP4	0,82	0,862	0,868	1	0,891	0,857
ProductTP5	0,817	0,871	0,851	0,891	1	0,883
ProductTP6	0,786	0,829	0,804	0,857	0,883	1

	InvTP1	InvTP2	InvTP3	InvTP4	InvTP5	InvTP6
InvTP1	1	0,876	0,822	0,82	0,829	0,752
InvTP2	0,876	1	0,877	0,826	0,806	0,784
InvTP3	0,822	0,877	1	0,837	0,816	0,783
InvTP4	0,82	0,826	0,837	1	0,821	0,762
InvTP5	0,829	0,806	0,816	0,821	1	0,813
InvTP6	0,752	0,784	0,783	0,762	0,813	1

	ProcessTP1	ProcessTP2	ProcessTP3	ProcessTP4	ProcessTP5	ProcessTP6
ProcessTP1	1	0,952	0,926	0,929	0,903	0,913
ProcessTP2	0,952	1	0,937	0,935	0,923	0,923
ProcessTP3	0,926	0,937	1	0,932	0,923	0,908
ProcessTP4	0,929	0,935	0,932	1	0,927	0,936
ProcessTP5	0,903	0,923	0,923	0,927	1	0,934
ProcessTP6	0,913	0,923	0,908	0,936	0,934	1