Research on Vietnamese Consumer Behaviour Towards Organic Products at Mini Supermarkets

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Abstract. This study explores and analyses the factors affecting consumers' buying behaviour towards organic food at a mini supermarket, thereby proposing some implications. Partial least squares structural equation modelling was used to test the study hypotheses. Data was collected by surveying customers who had experienced consuming organic products at the mini supermarket. The testing outcomes demonstrated that seven of the eight proposed hypotheses were supported. Price sensitiveness is the only variable in the model that showed a positive link to consumers' purchase behaviour but no significant relationship with consumers' purchase intention. From a practical perspective, the study suggests several important implications for marketers and mini supermarket owners to encourage their customers to buy organic food. This study provides important insights into the widely recognized yet little-researched topic of consumers' behaviour towards organic food.

Keywords: Mini Supermarket · Organic Food · Purchase Intention · Purchase Behaviour

1 Introduction

Food safety and avoiding the risk of harmful contaminants to health are among the top priorities of consumers. As living standards improve, consumers demand the safety and quality of the products they consume because food provides the energy and nutrients needed to sustain life [13]. Food safety is a burning issue for developing countries, where people have few opportunities to consume products with high-quality standards, including Vietnam. Along with the momentum of economic development, Vietnamese consumers' demand for safe shopping and consumption increases. According to Nielsen research, about seventy percent of Vietnamese say they pay attention to the ingredients in the foods and drinks they consume and that they want to know everything that makes up that food. Besides, the pressure of work, time, and traffic of modern life makes the convenience of shopping especially important. Mini supermarkets with outstanding

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advantages such as convenient location, longer opening hours, and certified origin goods can meet the requirements of consumers at the same time. This facilitates the rapid development of the mini supermarket system.

To meet the increasing shopping needs of consumers, the Vietnamese retail market has witnessed an increase in the number of mini supermarkets. The mini supermarket system has exploded in Vietnam in recent years, in which there has been a strong contribution from many reputable. According to the global shopper trends report, the average frequency of shopping in a month among Vietnamese consumers at the mini supermarket has increased significantly; meanwhile, within eight years, the average frequency of shopping in traditional markets and supermarkets tends to decrease. Thus, shopping at the mini supermarket has gradually entered the subconscious of Vietnamese consumers.

Like other business activities, consumers are in the most critical position and the factor holding the success and failure of mini supermarket chains. Moreover, with the type of business where the interaction between suppliers and consumers is direct, such as at mini supermarkets, understanding and assessing consumers' needs, attitudes and behaviors will contribute to part to help businesses be favorable and successful in the market. The question is what factors determine the organic products shopping behavior of consumers at the mini supermarket system, mini supermarket, or belief in safety? There have been studies on organic product buying behavior and factors affecting shopping decisions at mini supermarkets individually and separately. However, there has not been any research on consumer behavior in buying organic products at the mini supermarket. This practical, relevant topic can help retail suppliers better understand consumer needs, attitudes, and behaviors. From there, these suppliers can develop appropriate marketing strategies, contributing to a favorable and successful business in the market. This study tries to address the gap by exploring Vietnamese consumers' behavior toward organic products at the mini supermarket template.

2 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

The theory of planned behavior has been widely used to predict many types of behavior with great success. The research results show that the significant ability to explain consumer buying intention and behavior of this theory in various fields, including consumers' behavior towards organic food. According to Ajzen, the model of this theory can be adjusted by adding new factors affecting behavioral intention if those factors contribute to the explanation of behavioral intention. In this study, besides using most of the factors consistent with the theoretical model of planned behavior theory, some adjusting will be made to suit the characteristics of organic food and mini supermarket to explain consumers' organic food purchasing behavior at mini supermarket.

Organic products include products that are produced using methods that comply with the standards of organic agriculture. Standards may vary from country to country, but organic farming essentially includes practices that rotate resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. Some pesticides and fertilizers are often restricted from being used in organic farming by organizations that manage organic products.

The use of irradiation, industrial solvents or synthetic food additives is generally prohibited in the manufacture of these products. Organic production can be identified as a system of ecological production management promoting and enhancing biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. The process is based on minimal use of non-agricultural inputs and on management practices that allow the restoration, maintenance, and enhancement of ecological harmony. Organic foods are required to growth without synthetic pesticides, antibiotics, growth hormones, chemical fertilizers, modern genetic engineering techniques (including genetically modified crops), or sewage sludge [47].

2.1 Attitude

Consumers' attitudes toward buying organic food denote their favorable consideration of purchasing organic food or not. Many studies have treated attitudes as an indispensable antecedent of organic food purchase and consumption [25, 45], as well as confirming the crucial impact of attitude on purchase intention [49] and buying behavior [33]. Several studies such as in the case of Indians [45] did not successfully demonstrate the significant link between attitude towards organic products and consumers' behavior buying. Following this line, Ajzen and Cote proposed that attitudes can be an nonsignificant factor in projecting consumer behavior. However, most extant literature agrees on the positive connection between purchasing attitudes and purchasing behaviors [37, 48]. Using econometric modeling analysis, [1] found a significant decisive relationship between consumers' attitudes toward organic product and the amount of the product they consumed. A regression analysis conducted by [10] also indicates that students consume greater amount of organic products for their daily basis when they show favorable evaluation on the products. In the cases of Tanzanian and Kenyan contexts [46], research findings confirm that personal attitudes together with health consciousness significantly determine consumers' purchase intention. Applying structural model, Meyer-Hofer et al. also affirm a significantly positive correlation between consumers' viewpoint on organic products and purchase decision in the case of German consumers [26]. [22] found that intention of using organic products is significantly influenced by customers' positive attitudes towards the products. The determinant role of attitude in organic purchasing decisions has also been assured in the context of developing countries [35]. In general, consumers having positive attitudes towards organic product tend to hold the view that organic product is important and purchasing them is a wise choice [25]. That is the reason of practically positive linkage between favorable attitude toward organic food buying intention behavioral intention [31, 42]. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Consumers' attitudes have a positive impact on their purchase intention towards organic products at mini supermarkets.

2.2 Convenience

Consumers' perceptions of service convenience are found to be one of the most prioritized criteria to choose their shopping destination. Berry et al. considered service convenience as all sorts of convenience lowering consumers' effort and time in buying, such as operating hours, or credit conditions, belong to the field of service convenience [5]. Accordingly, the concept of convenience covers features related to operation time, payment method, location, parking, customer care service and store access.

Mini supermarket is a retail facility managed by a person; a group of people or a corporation with business registration in accordance with state regulations, and often located in urban areas. It is completely different from traditional market retail; The supermarket is strictly and uniformly managed based on the manager and the supermarket staff. Specific criteria may slightly vary among countries. Mini supermarkets can more likely gain customer preferences partly thanks to higher quality products and convenience attribute in comparison with traditional supermarkets. Mini supermarkets often more targeted on the advantages of efficiency, quick checkout, longer hours of operation with fewer staff to compensate the disadvantages of smaller space and less diversified assortment of goods. Recent studies suggest that customers' satisfaction with a store' service provision is fundamentally positively associated with customers' buying behavior [21]. It can be stated that good location can help build up customer satisfaction [16] and then their buying repetition. Thus, two following hypotheses are developed:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). The customer's assessment of convenience has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic products at mini supermarkets.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). The customer's assessment of convenience has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behavior towards organic products at mini supermarkets.

2.3 Health Consciousness

"Health consciousness determines to what extent individuals are concerned about their health" [4, 11] and the willingness to involve in health and wellness-fostering behaviors [27]. Consumers' level of interest in health determines their health-related actions. The more people are conscious of health, the healthier habits they have, which are the basis for individuals to implement health measures. In recent years, the influence of health consciousness on health behaviors has become center of various studies, using different approaches, mostly in a healthy diet [15, 20], or health information [14]. Many studies have found a significant positive relationship between health consciousness and intention to buy organic product [2, 18, 28, 29, 49], suggesting that health and lifestyle concerns are increasingly influencing consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions [3], a significant determinant driving organic food consumption [6, 29]. Health-conscious consumers have a appreciative viewpoint of organic products consumption and higher intention of purchasing them [35]. In Spain, [23] found that health perceptions stimulate young consumers' purchase of low-fat foods. Meanwhile, Chinese consumers are

always concerned about food safety issues related to personal health, which is one of the reasons why they choose organic food [9]. Guided by such argumentations, the fourth hypothesis is stated as follows:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Health consciousness* has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic products at mini supermarkets

2.4 Consumers' Trust

Consumers' trust refers to consumers' perception of the organic product quality at mini markets. When buying organic products, most purchasers expect the products are healthier when compared to conventional produce, free of mineral fertilizers and other harmful chemicals, and has minimal negative impact on the environment [34]. In fact, many consumers still do not trust the organic product quality standard claims made by food providers [44]; thus, trust has an important role in pushing consumers to make decision on paying for organic products [40]. Therefore, one of the consumers' motivations for choosing a shopping destination is that they believe in the quality of their products. Some studies acknowledge that trust is a determinant of consumer intention and purchase behavior towards organic products, along with several other marketing variables, perceived quality and labeling [32]. For instance, [50] argued that consumers are more likely to choose organic products when they feel confident in organic labels. Fundamentally, concern about the quality is strongly associated with the intention to buy organic food. [31] suggest that consumers believe in organic producers and marketers' statement to make their decision of buying. [17] found that information available in the market has a significantly positive influence on knowledge about organic products. In the specific case of milk products, [8] demonstrated that consumers' trust in milk farmers producers had positive influence on their buying decision, rather than their trust in retailers, manufacturers, and government,. Consumers see certification and labeling as important signals to strengthen their confidence in organic products [38, 39]. Other studies emphasize on retailer trust in motivating consumers' intention to purchase organic products [7, 40]. In Mainland China [9] found that the purchase intention of organic product is affected by product safety, regulations of the government, and accurate labeling. Therefore, the fifth and sixth hypotheses are addressed as follows:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Consumers' trust has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic products at mini supermarkets

Hypothesis 6 (H6). Consumers' trust has a positive impact on consumers' purchase behavior towards organic products at mini supermarkets

2.5 Price Sensitiveness

The price of organic food plays an important role in the generation of consumers' purchase intention and buying behavior. Krystallis and Chryssohoidis affirm that price is of most important basis taken into account by consumers when buying food. Price is a fundamental factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions as it often determines the

quality and value of products. High price perception positively impacts the intention of consumers to purchase organic products. Decisions to buy organic products are driven by consumer interests and perceptions of price [30]. Usually, consumers often perceive the price of organic food as higher than that of regular food. In fact, consumers often have to pay high price for organic products because they are 16–50% more expensive to produce than conventional products. [24], and consumers seem to be willing to purchase them at the higher prices [36, 47]. Paying premium amount of money for organic products can make buyers excited and happy, and positively affects their utilitarian and hedonistic purchasing attitudes [36]. [12] found that consumers are interested in paying high prices for what they consume. [41] supposed that the perception of price was positively associated with purchase intentions, while [43] found a negative impact on consumer purchasing behavior. In contrast, many studies suggest that price can be used strategically as strategic a barrier that prevents consumers from buying products [13, 19]. Price perception negatively impacts consumer attitudes towards buying organic food, especially towards price-conscious consumers. A supermarket's price and price policy are a significant factor affecting the shopping behavior of consumers. In particular, Chinese consumers are identified as having high price sensitivity; when supermarkets have reasonable prices and policies compared to other retail stores, consumers are more likely to switch from small shops or mini supermarkets to large-scale ones. In a survey conducted by Xie et al., about 82% of consumers agreed that high price is one of the main causes for not buying organic products. Thus, price and price policy and price perception affect the decision to buy safe food and where to buy it. Therefore, particular emphasis is put on how price barriers boost or hinder consumers' intention to buy of organic products. This is in the line with some previous studies identifying that the high prices of organic product have been the most applicable barrier to organic product buying and consuming [6].

As mini marts own similar features with convenience stores, price is an important influencer to customers' behavior. Mini supermarket customers can have a wide range of shopping experiences, because they often have had the experience of shopping and comparing many different types of stores. Conventional supermarkets often adopt discounting strategies, so buyers become price sensitive and expect discounted prices in mini marts.

Considering the relationship between price sensitivity and organic food buying behavior, the following hypotheses were developed in this study:

Hypothesis 7 (H7). High prices have a negative impact on consumers' purchase intention towards organic products at mini supermarkets

Hypothesis 8 (H8). High prices have a negative impact on consumers' purchase behavior towards organic products at mini supermarkets

3 Research Methods

3.1 Data Collection

To collect the research data, a self-administered questionnaire survey was conducted. To ensure consistency, only customers who purchased organic products within the last

two months were surveyed. The questionnaire was distributed both online and offline. Participants were approached during the weekdays and weekends to ensure a relatively representative sample. The participants responded through paper-based or online questionnaires on mobile phones/tablets. The survey site is near mini supermarkets and some public places such as parks, restaurants, and food courts. The sampling method is convenient. Online data collection was also done through an online questionnaire using Google Docs and a link shared on Facebook's social network. Respondents were instructed to the website containing the questionnaire through shared link to answer the questions themselves. The sample size was determined based on the study of Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black about the expected sample size, whereby to ensure the reliability of the study, the sample size should be at least 5 times the total number of questions. After filtering the nonconforming samples, the remaining samples were analyzed. The questions are designed based on a 5-point Likert scale to assess the customer's feelings, in which the satisfaction level varies from one point being strongly disagreed and five points strongly agreeing. Customers will rate the actual perception and importance of these factors.

3.2 Questionnaire

A 28-item questionnaire was developed to assess consumer attitudes and behavior towards organic products. These items use response categories on a five-point Likert scale, ranked from 1 to 5, corresponding to "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)", plus according to statements regarding the consumption of organic produce at mini supermarkets. Based on previous studies in the field of mini supermarket consumption and organic products, the questionnaire was designed into seven separate sections with: consumers' attitude, consumers' trust, heath concern, convenience, price, purchase intention and purchase behavior. The questionnaire was checked for its reliability and validity. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, principal component analysis, more specifically varimax rotation was performed. The process results indicated that the questionnaire was both reliable and valid.

3.3 Data Analysis

Structural equation model (SEM) has been increasingly applied in management, marketing, sociology, education, psychology, and other social science fields. SEM has several advantages useful for scientific research, such as modelling of latent variables, covariance matrix construction, measurement error correction, and simulation estimates. In line with some of the previous studied mentioned in the literature review, we used SEM to test relationships hypothesized in our framework of the theory of planned behavior.

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Profile

Demographic profile result indicates that the gender of participants was differently distributed, representing 87.3% female and 12.7% male. The dominant age group of respondents is between 31–40 years old (50.1%), followed by 30 years old and below (26.6%), 51–60 years old (18.2%), and lastly 61 years old and above (5.1%) respectively. Most respondents work as officer (47.6%), followed by self-employed (28.4%), retired people (10.1%), students (9.4%), and the others (4.5%). The income of majority of respondents is 10–20 million VND per month (41.5%), followed by more than 20 million VND per month (31.7%) and less than 10 million VND per month (26.8%).

4.2 Reliability and Validity Test

Confirmatory factor analysis was employed to test the reliability and validity, including factor loadings, convergent validity, evaluations of the internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity of the reflective constructs: Attitude (AT), convenience (CV)), health concern (HC), prices (PR), purchase intention (PI), purchase behavior (PB) and consumers' trust (TR). The model's reliability of was evaluated based on factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (CA). In Table 1 and Table 2, all factors showed loadings of more than 0.7, CA > 0.7 and CR > 0.7, therefore confirming the measurement model' reliability at the item and construct levels. Average variance extracted (AVE) representing the amount of variance that the constructs possibly explain in their respective indicators was applied to evaluate convergent validity. AVE was greater

Table 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attitude	0.856	0.873	0.903	0.700
Convenience	0.867	0.876	0.909	0.714
Health consciousness	0.794	0.861	0.860	0.609
Price sensitiveness	0.889	0.897	0.923	0.752
Purchase Behavior	0.910	0.912	0.936	0.787
Purchase Intention	0.917	0.919	0.941	0.800
Trust	0.827	0.830	0.885	0.658

Source: Authors' calculation (2021)

Table 2. Outer loading result

	Attitude	Convenience	Health consciousness	Price sensitiveness	Purchase Behavior	Purchase Intention	Trust
AT1	0.892						
AT2	0.889						
AT3	0.826						
AT4	0.731						
CV1		0.845					
CV2		0.867					
CV3		0.801					
CV4		0.865					
HC1			0.744				
HC2			0.844				
HC3			0.790				
HC4			0.826				
PB1					0.870		
PB2					0.882		
PB3					0.901		
PB4					0.894		
PI1						0.919	
PI2						0.857	
PI3						0.915	
PI4						0.887	
PR1				0.829			
PR2				0.923			
PR3				0.894			
PR4				0.817			
TR1							0.789
TR2							0.819
TR3							0.849
TR4							0.785

Notes: AT: Attitude towards organic products, CV: Convenience, HC: Health consciousness; PB: Purchase behavior; PI: Purchase intention; PR: Price sensitiveness; TR: Trust. Source: Authors' Calculation (2021).

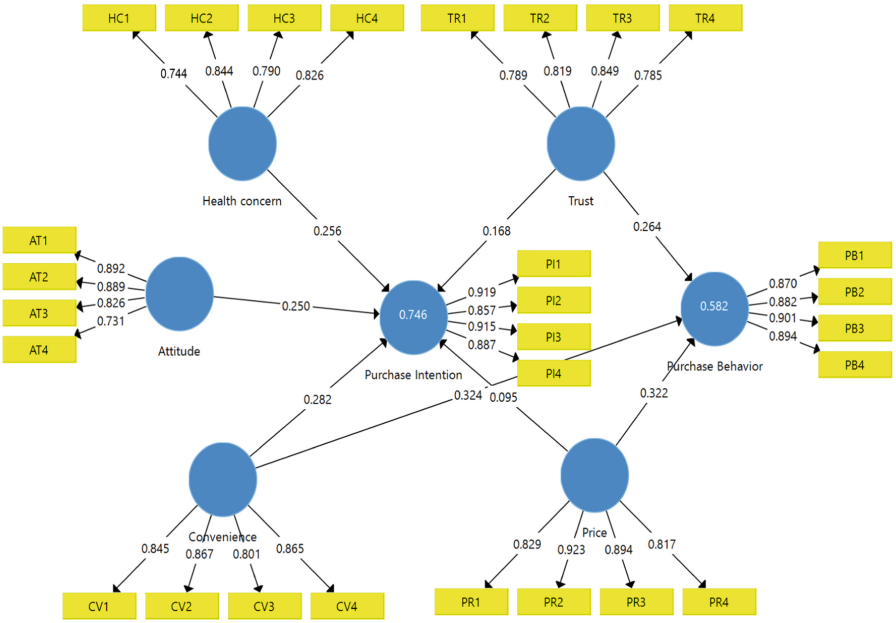

Fig. 1. Structural Model. *Source: Author's calculation (2021)*

than 0.50 indicating the construct shared substantial variance with its respective items. In Table 1, all constructs have average variance extracted values greater than 0.50, showing the convergent validity of all constructs. The square root of the average variance extracted suggested by Fornell and Larcker must be greater than all the correlations in column and row was used to assure discriminant validity (Fig. 1).

The evaluation of the structural model was determined based on several criteria consisting of explanatory power of the model, path coefficient, their corresponding t-values and effect size. Based on the t-statistics and path coefficients, there exists a significantly positive relation between organic products attitude and purchase intention ($\beta = 3.420$; $t = 3.420$ and $p < 0.01$), convenience and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.282$; $t = 4.793$ and $p < 0.001$), convenience and purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.324$; $t = 4.666$ and $p < 0.001$); health concern and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.256$; $t = 4.215$ and $p < 0.001$); prices and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.095$; 1.774 and $p < 0.001$); prices and purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.322$; 4.439 and $p < 0.001$); consumers' trust and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.168$; 2.791 and $p < 0.01$) and finally consumers' trust and purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.168$; 2.791 and $p < 0.01$). The only hypothesis failed to be supported is about the impact of prices on purchase intention ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 3. Path Coefficients

Hypothesis		Path coefficient	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Testing result
H1	Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.250	3.420	0.001	Supported
H2	Convenience → Purchase Intention	0.282	4.793	0.000	Supported
H3	Convenience → Purchase Behavior	0.324	4.666	0.000	Supported
H4	Health consciousness → Purchase Intention	0.256	4.215	0.000	Supported
H5	Price sensitiveness → Purchase Intention	0.095	1.774	0.077	Not supported
H6	Price sensitiveness → Purchase Behavior	0.322	4.439	0.000	Supported
H7	Trust_ → Purchase Intention	0.168	2.791	0.005	Supported
H8	Trust_ → Purchase Behavior	0.264	4.717	0.000	Supported

Source: Authors' calculation

5 Conclusion

Organic products have been given increasing consideration by marketers, academicians, and consumers in recent years due to concerns about food quality, safety, and health. This study used the TPB framework with some modifications to understand the factors affecting consumers' intention and behavior towards organic products at the mini supermarket. This study incorporates consumers' health concerns, trust, and convenience as explanatory variables, an approach that has not been much previously examined, especially concerning emerging countries like Vietnam. The theoretical framework was tested in the context of 224 Vietnamese consumers. The findings show that the four antecedents including have a positive and significant impact on purchase behavior. Meanwhile, for the impact of the variables on purchase intention, we found no evidence of the impact of price sensitivity on the purchase intention of Vietnamese consumers towards organic products. The study is limited to the geographic region of Vietnam, especially the big cities of Vietnam, i.e., the Hanoi capital. Further research may be directed toward other regions to understand consumers' reasons for and against purchasing organic food. Future research should also consider the moderating effect of different socio-economic segments of consumers, such as occupation, gender, income level, and educational background, or focus on different categories of organic products.

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