

Organic Foods: What Are the Driving Factors of Purchase Intention?

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The main objective of this study is to understand the behaviour of organic food consumers and their intention to purchase. The study aims to determine the driving factors influencing consumer behaviour towards organic food in the Vietnamese market. The method used for data collection includes a face-to-face interview and using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. In total, there are a total of 243 valid respondents who are actual consumers of organic products participating in the survey. It has been decided to use various multivariate analyses such as multiple regressions, factor analysis, and cluster analysis with a large sample size. The results indicate that price, taste, environmental concern, nutritional value, certification, and labelling as well as subjective norms positively influence the Vietnamese consumers' intention to buy organic foods. The findings make an empirical contribution to the literature of organic consumption studies worldwide.

Key words: *Organic food, intention to purchase, planned behaviour theory, Vietnam.*

Introduction

Organic food is the fastest-growing market in the food industry in many countries (Dettmann and Dimitri, 2010), including in Europe and South Asia (Al-Swaid et al., 2014). Moreover, in the last decade or so, its production area and sales volume have achieved a compound annual growth rate of more than 10 percent (Willer and Kilcher, 2012). Lee and Yun (2015) note that existing studies on organic food lack a strong theoretical foundation. Rana and Paul (2017) state that health-conscious consumers show a growing preference for organic food over conventionally grown food. This shift in the attitude of modern consumers is greatly influenced by the rising incidence of lifestyle-related diseases, such as heart disorders and

depression. The need to purchase organic food to improve quality of life will have huge implications for the retail, distribution, and marketing functions of a business. The overall satisfaction of consumers for organic food consists of more than inorganic food itself, but includes levels of satisfaction due to a range of factors (Rana and Paul, 2017). Bagher et al. (2018) state that ethical orientation, organic knowledge, attitude towards organic food products, environmental concerns, subjective norms, healthy lifestyle, health awareness and perceived behavioural control respectively have the most significant effect on the intention to purchase organic food products. There is substantial confusion about The term “organic” still amongst customers (Chrysochoidis, 2000). Some have heard of the term and believe that it mainly features chemical-free ingredients while others are unaware of organic farming standards and practices (Davies et. al., 1995; Harper and Makatouni, 2002; Hill and Lynchehaun, 2002). Moreover, the level of market development, the use of other positively associated food terms (e.g., ‘cage-free’ and ‘natural’) and the product category (e.g., farmed salmon) can increase the confusion (Hutchins and Greenhalgh, 1995; Fotopoulos and Krystallis, 2002; Aarset et. al., 2004).

The term “organic” refers to the method by which agricultural products are produced (e.g., fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics) and processed (e.g., food additives, including artificial flavourings, preservatives, and colourings) and within this stage particular requirements must be completed step by step to achieve the certified product being recognised as “organic” (USDA, 2008; First and Brozina (2009). The key point is the fact that genetically modified organisms and antibiotics are forbidden in organic criteria for animal agriculture, while only 30 extensions are authorised in certain conditions (Soler et. al., 2002). Farmers don't use any synthetic chemicals (pesticides and fertilisers) to produce organic foods. Animal for meat production is not treated with prophylactic medication to avoid possible illness. As a result, organic products will not contain any synthetic residue (Dreezens et. al., 2005). Therefore, organic foods are essentially developed to keep the entirety of the food, excluding fictitious elements, preservatives, or irradiation (Yi, 2009). Finally, organic foods are related to the high quality of goods and fresh (Saleki et al., 2012). Additionally, organic food is not subjected to irradiation (Mohsen and Dacko, 2013).). Thus, oorganic food is considered healthy because synthetic chemicals are not used in their production (Suprpto and Wijaya, 2012). In Vietnam, the demand for organic foods is rapidly growing, but even though customer demand for organic food is on the rise, the number of enterprises offering organic food products remains small (Saigontimes, 2020). The shortage of organic foods in Vietnam is both an opportunity and a challenge for growers, and there is great hope for the future of organic food in Vietnam (“Great hope for organic food in Vietnam | Business | Vietnam+ (VietnamPlus),” 2020). As a result, the main objective of this study is to understand the behaviour of Vietnamese organic food consumers and their intention to purchase organic food. The study aims to determine the driving factors influencing consumer behaviour towards organic food in the Vietnamese market. In addition,

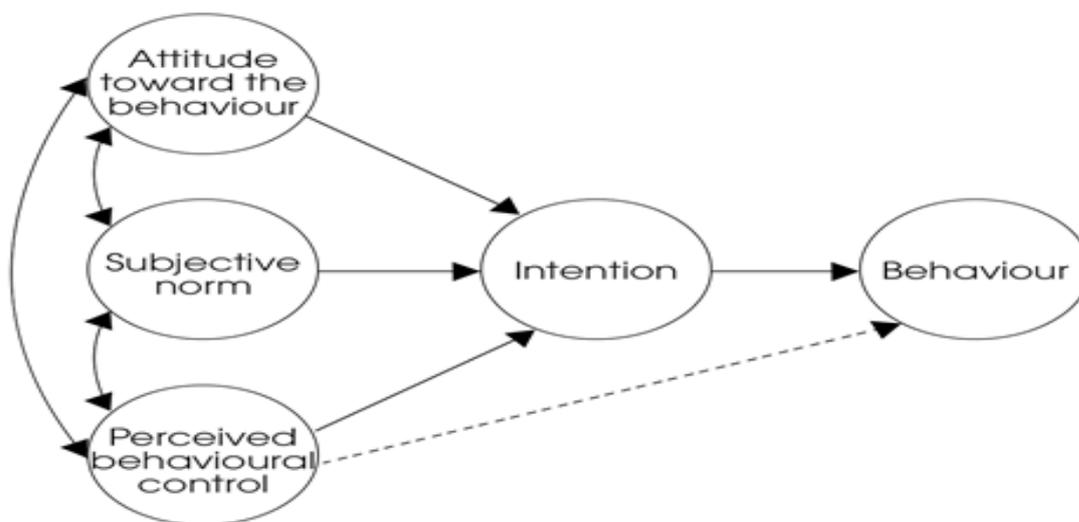
this study may provide further insights about consumer behaviour regarding organic food by examining the factors that influence consumer intention to purchase organic foods in Vietnamese. The findings make an empirical contribution to the literature of organic consumption studies worldwide.

Research Framework and Hypothesis Development

Theory of Planned Behaviour

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is a model developed by Ajzen (1991). This model is used to explain the question of why we undertake certain behaviour. Behavioural intention is considered as a factor leading to certain behaviour; it predicts how much effort will be spent on undertaking a specific behaviour. The stronger intention will enable the more likely occurrence of the behaviour. TPB is also used as a fundamental theory to assess factors affecting purchase intention and behaviour regarding organic foods. The result from studies by scholars including Zeinab and Sleki (2012), Sudyanti (2009) prove that the ability to explain purchase intention and behaviour on organic products is significant. Wang et. al. (2019) confirm that knowledge positively moderates the relationship between subjective norms, personal attitude, health consciousness, and organic food purchase intention. However, perceived behaviour control was found to be a weak influence on consumer purchase intention in Kenya, and no knowledge interaction between perceived behavioural control and consumer purchase intention in Tanzania was found. TPB is built from three constructs: attitudes to behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. The first two reflect the perceived desirability of performing the behaviour, while the third is to determine if personal behaviour is controllable (Chen, 2007).

Figure 1. Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)



Attitudes toward the Behaviour

Attitudes refer to the positive or negative feelings of individuals regarding performing a particular behaviour. It involves a consideration of the consequences of conducting the behaviour. Personal attitudes are decided by mixing the outcome of beliefs and evaluations. For example, as indicated by Ahmad and Juhdi (2010), if consumers believe organic foods are superior and more beneficial to their health than conventional products, they will have a positive attitude toward it. Consequently, the chances of them buying organic foods will also increase.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms refer to whether most people agree or disagree about a certain behaviour. It is a perceived expectation from people around the person that can have an impact on carrying out a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It depends on people's motivation to comply with the behaviour. They can be relatives, family members, friends, companions, or others of importance. In other words, according to Lutz (1991), subjective norm measures social influences on behaviour.

Perceived Behavioural Control

Perceived behavioural control is defined as a personal perception of the ease or difficulty in implementing the desired behaviour. The individual's perception of behavioural control can be changed based on various circumstances. The availability of current resources and opportunities contributes to determining the behaviour. It consists of external factors that may affect consumers' judgments of risks and benefits when buying organic foods (Chen, 2007). There are also external factors that consumers perceive to prevent them from achieving their goals. For example, if consumers perceive that it is difficult for them to buy organic foods or identify organic foods labels, they are less likely to purchase.

Price

According to consumers viewpoints, organic foods are costly compared to conventional food (Radman, 2005). Various consumers see price as a major barrier in their purchase. They further clarify that the price of organic food must not be more costly than conventional substitutes (Magnusson et. al., 2001). This demonstrates that consumers require more value worth the high price they are paying (Padel and Foster, 2005). Lea and Worsley (2005) have mention that if the price was more affordable, the majority of consumers would purchase more organic foods. Consumers ordinarily do not comprehend the reasons why organic food price is higher than normal alternatives, while some consumers state that high price discourages them from purchasing organic foods, the individuals who understand the reasons

for price difference are more willing to pay for it (Hill and Lyncheaun, 2002). Interestingly, the price premium also acts as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it takes the role of an obstruction towards purchase. On the other hand, consumers use the high cost to assess and measure the quality and taste of products (Shaw et. al., 2007). Hill et. al. (2002) found that the opinions of consumers about whether the taste of organically produced milk is different from conventionally produced milk were dependent on their perception that the higher price implied superior quality, which caused them to believe that there are differences in taste. In Malaysian study in Malaysia, Quah and Tan (2009) confirm that price is an important attribute regarding the decision to purchase organic food. Ozguven (2012) also confirms that price motivates purchasing decisions of organic food. Pino et. al. (2012) maintain that consumers require more confidence to purchase higher-priced goods, so that relational embeddedness in a channel exerted more influence on purchase intentions. By contrast, , consumers tended to choose lower-priced goods based on personal preferences compared to the high-price scenarios. In a study conducted in Vietnam, the results show that potential Vietnamese consumers were not price sensitive towards organic foods due to their perceived superior quality (Truong et. al., 2012). Based on the literature review, the first hypothesis is stated as follows:

Hypothesis H1: Price (PR) has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.

Taste

Several studies have found 'taste' to be the main motive in organic food purchase (Roddy et. al., 1994; Schifferstein and Ophuis, 1998; Magnusson et. al., 2001; Fotopoulos and Krystallis, 2002; Radman, 2005; Wier et. al., 2008). Lockie et. al. (2004) state that consumers who care about natural food prefer greater consumption of organic foods. Hill and Lyncheaun (2002) suggest that due to high prices correlated with organic foods, consumers discern organic foods that have a higher quality of taste than conventionally grown foods. Interestingly, taste will become a crucial consideration in consumer choice after consuming organic food (Fillion and Arazi, 2002). Krystallis and Chryssohoidis (2005) state that organic foods are generally safer, and more flavoursome when compared to non-organic products. Consequently, Saba and Messina's study (2003) with a sample size of 947 Italian consumers who have positive perceptions towards organic products, and on average, they recognise that organic products are healthier, more environmentally friendly, nutritious and taste better. In addition, Radman (2005) also state that one of the motivating factors that encourage consumers to consume in organic products is the belief that they taste superior taste compared with other products. Furthermore, other studies highlight the fact that the quality of food, quality, safety and freshness drive demand (Loureiro et. al., 2001; Botonaki et. al., 2006; Kihlberg and Risvik, 2007). Based on the literature review, the second hypothesis is stated as follows:

Hypothesis H2: Taste (TA) has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.

Environmental Concern

Numerous studies have researched that environmental concern has an effect on consumers' attitudes towards organic foods (Roddy et al., 1994; Wandel and Bugge, 1997; Squires et al., 2001). Organic consumers view organic foods as being environmentally friendly while viewing conventional food products as environmentally harmful due chemicals and pesticides (Ott, 1990; Jolly, 1991; Wilkins and Hillers, 1994). De Magistris and Gracia (2008) also confirm that consumers have verified that environmental protection is also a factor when purchasing organic foods. Tung et. al. (2012) maintain that modern farming techniques ordinarily use chemicals to accelerate the growth process to gain high profits, and these chemicals can harm the environment. Moreover, Hughner et. al. (2007) also mention that animal welfare in organic production systems also relate to organic buying. Consumers who purchase organic foods become aware of their role in their local environment (Pirog and Larson, 2007). According to Werner and Alvensleben (2011), there is a relationship between the amount of customer disquiet for the environment and their motivation to buy organic foods. Based on studies by Huang (1996), growth in organic food consumption is followed by the growth public concern for the environment. As outlined by Mayo (2011), a part of consumer purchases of organic foods for environmental reasons as organic farming procedures, which help reduce pollution and protect the environment. From another point of view, ethical consumerism falls under the umbrella of consumer activism, which either involves purchasing ethical products with low social and environmental costs or a moral boycott of unethical products (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). Practicing ethical consumerism inspires consumers to buy green products in order to fulfil their ethical responsibility (Cho and Krasser, 2011). For numerous brands, the fact that the use of the green element and innovations can improve the attitude of consumers is positive (Olsen et. al., 2014). By contrast, environmental and sustainability concerns do not influence the purchasing decisions of Vietnamese organic consumers (Truong et al., 2012). Since there are differences in environmental concerns, the third hypothesis is stated as follows:

Hypothesis H3: Environment concerns (EC) have an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.

Nutritional Value

Nutritional value is one of the independent variables that will influence the purchasing behaviour of organic foods. Harris et al. (2000) maintain that scientific evidence to prove that organic products could absorb more nutrition, such as vitamins and minerals than conventional products are not yet available. However, most studies point out that consumers

prefer to purchase organic products because they believe they contain higher nutritional value than conventional foods. According to Dauncey (2002), another perspective is that organic foods have higher nutrition and are healthier than conventional foods. About 20 % of non-organic foods contain chemical pesticides that affect human health, including birth defects and cancer (Picard, 2002). As a result, consumers will shift to purchasing organic foods that do not contain chemical ingredients if they are concerned about pesticides and additives. Other scholars believe that organic foods are much healthier and will have a positive attitude toward it (Ahmad & Juhdi, 2010). Health consciousness necessitates the inclusion of good nutritional food in consumer diets, thus, it is linked with the purchase of organic food s(Megicks et. al., 2008; Kumar and Ali, 2011; Paul and Rana, 2012). Nutritional value is an important aspect related to the personal health and welfare of consumers. The perceived higher nutritional value of organic foods is an important demand driver (Kihlberg and Risvik, 2007; de Magistris and Garcia, 2008). High vitamins content, healthy dietary and nutritious meals are the reason for customers deciding to purchase organic products. At the same time, the danger and insecurity of conventional foods are the elements that encourage consumers in purchasing organic foods (Iqbal, 2015). In the Vietnamese context, potential Vietnamese consumers' willingness to purchase organic foods is linked positively to health and safety, whilst females appreciated their nutritional value (Truong et al., 2012). As a result, the fourth hypothesis is proposed as follows:

Hypothesis H4: Nutritional value (NV) has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.

Organic Certification and Labelling

Dankers (2003) stated that some food labelling systems recorded in history have made an effort to protect consumers from unfair activities in selling food. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the first general food law required compliance with supervision of a basic food control system. In the early 1990s, by using reasonable standards, food trade associates helped the world trade easier. Since the 1950s, consumers approach more negative information about food markets. It is not only about poor quality, cheating on weight and size, but also about pesticide residues, environmental contaminants, and even the processing and cultivation of products. As a result, labelling has to describe more information for customers. According to Greene (2001), in the United States, certification requires a third party by both private and public sectors. The standard of certification is different depending on the certifying organisations. Janssen and Hamm (2012) point out that labels and certifications of organic foods are tools to draw the attention of consumers regarding certified organic products. There are several kinds of organic labelling systems available in European countries. Consumers will perceive organic foods as conventional if they does not have a label (Giannakas, 2002). Consumer awareness about organic labelling is instinctive,

popular organic certification and labelling will create more faith in consumer perception. In addition, nearly all consumers want to know what they are buying through information on products. Research by Aryal, et. al. (2009) also state that 60 % of consumers would not trust an organic product if it is not certified containing a label and contain complete information. Consumers and suppliers have to be consistent (Harris, 2000). In addition, Pion et. al. (2012) report that consumer attitudes towards organic food labelling/certification institutions had a positive impact on trust in food labelling. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis is stated as below:

Hypothesis H5: Organic certification and labelling (CL) have an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.

Subjective Norms

Subjective norms are defined as the social pressure placed on each of the considerations which motivate individuals regarding whether they should or should not complete a task. The subjective norms of each person reflects his or her beliefs which can be observed and evaluated through their behaviour (O'Neal, 2007). McClelland's (1987) demand theory suggests that individuals tend to act according to the rules followed by their close relatives, loved ones and other reference groups. Oliver and Bearden (1985) explain that these norms are based on the reference and personal appetite of the person who makes the decision. Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) claim that attitudes are in contact between people, and thus, people with positive attitudes regarding a product will have an effect on the attitude of surrounding people. It is believed that people follow norms not merely due to social pressure but as information about the actual behaviour that is most effective (Bamberg et al., 2007). Chang (1988) maintains that a relationship might be specified by the impact of subjective norms on the attitudes of consumers. Furthermore, Chen (2007) and Dean et al. (2008) proved that it has a positive and significant correlation between customers' behaviour when they buy organic foods and subjective norms. De Magistris and Gracia (2008) also confirm that health attributes and the environment are the most important factors that explain consumers' decision-making process regarding organic food products. Furthermore, Pino et. al. (2012) show various determinants of intention for the two subject groups: ethical motivations affect the purchase intentions of regular consumers, whereas food safety concerns influence the purchase intentions of occasional consumers. From the literature review, the last hypothesis is stated as below:

Hypothesis H6: Subjective norms (SN) have an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.

Research Methodology

Data Collection

The method for data collection was based on a face-to-face interview, using a structured questionnaire which was based on TPB. In total, this consisted of 243 valid respondents who are actual consumers of organic products in Ho Chi Minh City, which is the largest market for organic foods in Vietnam.

The research methodology consists of exploratory factor analysis and regressions, factor analysis, and cluster analysis using a large sample size. Exploratory factor analysis in SPSS was undertaken to identify and confirm the factors under each construct. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy had a value of 0.900, while Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, indicating that the data was suitable for factor analysis. Oblique rotation was used due to high correlations between factors. Items with loadings of less than 0.3 were excluded from further analysis.

Statistical Results

The statistical results are presented in the Reliability Test and Principal Components Analysis (See Appendix). The multiple regression model is applied to present the relationship between purchasing behaviour as the dependent variable and Price, Taste, Environmental concern, Nutritional value, Certification and Label and Subjective norms as independent variables.

Table 1: Multiple Regressions Analysis Results

Co-efficients					
Model		Unstandardised Co-efficients	Standardised Co-efficients	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
		B	Beta		VIF
1	(Constant)	0.233		0.333	
	PR	0.203	0.282	0.000	1.045
	TA	0.073	0.113	0.015	1.106
	EC	0.066	0.085	0.069	1.124
	NV	0.216	0.290	0.000	1.213
	CL	0.203	0.257	0.000	1.303
	SN	0.180	0.205	0.000	1.282
Adjusted R ²				0.534	
Sig value in ANOVA Table				0.000	

As can be seen above, Adjusted R² is equal to 0.534, which means that 53.4% of the variation in purchasing behaviour is explained by the independent variables. The goodness of fit for

this multiple regression model is confirmed. Next, Sig value = 0.0000 (<0.05); which means that this multiple regression model fits the data, and can be used when the Variance inflation factor (VIF) > 10 , multicollinearity may occur. The VIF of all independent variables in this analysis is < 10 , therefore there is no multicollinearity amongst the six independent variables. The multiple regression results can also be used to confirm the hypotheses as outlined in the below table:

Table 2: The hypothesis confirmation

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Price has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.	Confirmed
H2: Taste has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.	Confirmed
H3: Environmental concern has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods	Not confirmed
H4: Nutritional value has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.	Confirmed
H5: Organic certification and labelling have an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.	Confirmed
H6: Subjective norms have an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods.	Confirmed

Conclusion and Further Research

Conclusion

Studies show that nutritional value has a significant influence on purchasing behaviour regarding organic foods and also identified as the most important factor. Organic foods producers and traders can rely on this information to carry out marketing and promotional activities that emphasise the nutritional value provided by organic foods. Marketers should focus on the message around health. For example, organic foods do not contain pesticides, are not genetically modified, and healthier than conventional foods. Furthermore, consumer workshops about nutrition and health benefits of organic foods should be conducted. These workshops are not only a way to show concern for customers but also a way to enhance the credibility of brands.

Price is one of the most important factors that has an impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods following nutritional value. The findings indicate that the more consumers perceive that organic foods have a premium price which is higher than conventional foods, and believe they are the price, the more they think their purchase is based on a correct decision. While operating promotion activities, organic foods, marketers should not lower price or offer too much discount. In Vietnam, the management of organic foods sold in the market is not rigid enough. Many foods are labelled organic but actually do not meet the

required standards. Therefore, consumers use price as an indicator of quality. Food with high prices is considered to be of high quality, safer, and genuinely organic. (Le, 2014). Instead of lowering the price, organic foods marketers should have other promotional activities such as gifting vouchers to loyal customers when they have enough points in membership cards. By doing so, customers can use the vouchers to pay less on their next purchase, but they perceive the same quality of food because the price does not change at all.

The results confirm that certification and labelling have a positive impact on the purchasing behaviour of organic foods. Most of the enterprises are not large in scale, so they need to build strong brands to enhance consumer confidence by obtaining more credibility. They need to use bar code, QR-Code printing to assist customer traceability and product origins more effectively. In addition, organic foods must have an organic certified label so that consumers can easily distinguish between organic and conventional foods. However, this challenge also needs to be supported by the government, as there are no official provisions for the granting of certificates for organic foods, and the Vietnamese market still does not currently have standards for organic certification. The government should support organic foods and enact the official rule of organic certification and labelling in Vietnam as soon as possible.

Subjective norm is one of the factors that affect the purchasing behaviour of organic foods. It is the perceived expectation of others that influence customers to purchase organic foods. Therefore marketing strategy should be designed to impact on the subjective norm of customers such as word of mouth marketing or using key opinion leaders (KOLs) for marketing campaigns. Word of mouth could be promoted by understanding the customers' esteem and need for belonging//love in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Customers want to promote products for their friends or relatives, to help people, connect and create their own community, or simply make them feel better and more important. As a result, the message about sharing the benefits of organic foods or protecting their health will have a strong impact on these kinds of customers. The KOL should be nutrition experts or chefs to reinforce the belief of customers. Moreover, marketers could take advantage of the Internet thanks to features such as share buttons via Facebook, Google+, Instagram. KOLs marketing and promotions which will be effective tools to support the spread of the campaign on social media. In this research, taste is the least important factor affecting purchasing organic foods. In fact, there are no scientific works that confirm that organic foods taste better than conventional foods. Although, customers have sound awareness that organic foods do not have any food additives and artificial flavouring, they may believe the taste of organic food is pure and natural. Organic food producers can use images associating fresh and natural taste, and emphasize the message “do not have any food additives and artificial flavouring” in their advertisements and packaging.



Limitations and Further Research

This study has some limitations besides its mentioned benefits. The research only focuses on a few factors that affect the purchasing behaviour of organic foods. In reality, there are many other factors that could influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers that need to be investigated, such as effort or market availability. In addition, this study only examined whether there are significant differences between groups in demographic factors but did not conduct further analysis. Moreover, the scope of research is limited to Vietnam, so its generalisability is limited. In addition, time and financial resources are also restricted. Last but not least, using a judgment sample is also a limitation. Personal bias is unavoidable when selecting the sample. Consequently, the result may not represent the whole organic market in Vietnam. Further research could be more specific by adding more factors to examine and further analyse demographic factors. It could also reflect in more detail about the whole context of organic foods in Vietnam. The geographical scope and sample size should be expanded to minimise the gap between research and reality.

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