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Determinants of consumers' purchasing intention toward organic foods: A study in Danang city, Vietnam

Tran Thuy An NGUYEN¹

1. First Author & Corresponding Author Ph.D. Student, Nutritional Science and Food Management, Ewha Womans University, Korea. Email: nguyentranthuyan@ewhain.net

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Abstract

The term “Organic Food” is no longer strange to consumers around the world. Many people are concerned about their safety and health, so they have chosen this safe food. However, the decision to buy this product still faces some difficulties and challenges, such as the high price of organic products, short-time use, supply of products and so on. This study conducted an analysis to investigate the determinants of Danang City consumers' intention to purchase organic foods in Vietnam. The results show that, there are 6 influencing factors, including: subjective norm, food safety & health consciousness, consumer knowledge & environment consciousness, price of the product, availability product and trust in brands and certifications. The study uses a combination of 2 qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are used through analysis, evaluation and synthesis of previous studies to build research models and scales for variables. Quantitative method with 250 samples applied SPSS 25.0 to test the scale by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, to analyze the discovery factor EFA and regression analysis. The findings of the study provide useful information for consumers to buy organic foods and for marketers to increase sale of organic foods in Vietnam in general and Danang city in particular.

Keywords: Organic food, Consumer, Purchase intention, Consumer behavior.

Major classifications: Customer Behavior, Marketing.

1. Introduction

In recent years, many negative issues related to unsafe food affecting the health of people in Vietnam in general and in Danang city in particular. Vietnam's food market is quite diverse but many items are imported with unknown origin and may contain dangerous chemicals. In particular, there are many cases of chemical pollution from waste by companies like Vedan, Formosa affecting food quality or food poisoning due to unsafe food happening in Vietnam. It says that the problem of unsafe food is a serious problem and needs more attention from people and the government. In fact, nowadays, due to the deterioration of food quality, this makes it very difficult for consumers to choose food to ensure their health. The development of organic

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foods is an inevitable trend that can meet the consumers' demand in the future because organic foods are safe and provide a lot of nutritional content.

During two decades, organic foods have exploded influence and become popular all over the world, especially strongly consumed in developed countries. In 2017, Global organic food sales exceeded \$95 billion, of which Europe accounted for \$37 billion. The organic food market is growing strongly in European countries, especially Germany, France and Denmark. The German organic food market has surpassed \$11 billion while the figure in France is \$9.4 billion, doubling within five years. Denmark continues to be Europe's leading organic country as organic food sales increased by 23% in 2017, bringing the organic market share to 13.3% and ahead of Germany (5.4%), France. (4.2%). Sales of Swiss organic food reached \$2.6 billion, up 8% from the previous year, market share increased from 8.4% to 9%, cultivated land area increased to 14.4 %. Organic agriculture organization Bio-Suisse (Switzerland) said organic milk and cheese are the two most profitable items. Despite its many achievements, Europe still ranks second in the world for organic foods, behind North America. In 2016, North American organic sales rose 1.4% to reach \$38 billion. Figures released by the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) at the 2018 BIOFACH World's Leading Organic Show showed that this uptrend will continue in the coming years (Cao, 2018). In Vietnam, the term "Organic Food" is no stranger to consumers, more and more people are concerned about their safety and health, so they have chosen this safe food, however, the decision to buy this product still faces some difficulties and challenges, such as the high price of organic products, short-time use, supply of products and so on.

Although many previous authors have studied on the factors affecting the behavior of organic food consumption, none of these studies have been studied in Da Nang, Vietnam. This is a food market that is receiving a lot of attention from consumers, but consumption is still very low due to some aforementioned obstacles. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the determinants of Danang City consumers' intention to purchase organic foods. The findings of the study provide useful information for consumers to buy organic foods and for marketers to increase sale of organic foods in Danang city and Vietnam.

2. Literature Review/ Theoretical Framework

2.1. Organic food

Organic foods, also known as natural or healthy foods, are products that are based on natural farming or livestock systems, without using fertilizers and pesticides, herbicides, growth antibiotics (WHO). According to the Agriculture Marketing Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Organic is a labeling term that indicates that the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods. The organic standards describe the specific requirements that must be verified by a USDA-accredited certifying agent before products can be labeled USDA organic. Organic food is a food produced according to certain standards, free from pesticides, herbicides, inorganic fertilizers, antibiotics and growth hormones (Honkanen, Verplanken, & Olsen, 2006). According to (Nguyen M. T., và những tác giả khác, 2018), organic food is a food produced and processed with the method and materials that do not use harmful pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and chemicals.

2.2. Purchasing intention

Consumer behavior includes decision-making processes that take place before, during, and after activities directly related to the process of finding, collecting, purchasing, possessing, using and disposing of products or services (Blackwell R. D., Miniard, Engel, & Rahman, 2017). In which the purchase intention is formed before the consumer's purchase decision occurs. When consumers intend to buy a certain product, they will search and collect information about the product from many different sources, and then form a decision to buy and consume it (Nguyen & Cho, 2021).

According to (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001), purchasing intention is a factor used to evaluate the ability to perform behaviors in the future, often considered as one of two factors that have a decisive influence on purchasing behavior of consumers. Purchasing intention toward organic food is a group of motivating factors that motivate consumers to buy organic foods, it shows the efforts of the individuals in the purchase of organic food (Phan, 2019). According to (Setiawati, Hartoyo, & Simanjuntak, 2018), health awareness and environmental awareness have a positive relationship to attitudes over organic foods. Then, the attitude of organic food has a positive influence on the purchase intention of organic food, subjective norm also positively influences the intention of purchasing organic food. In addition, perceptions of consumer behavior control also positively influence the intention of purchasing organic foods.

2.3 Factors affecting the intention to buy organic foods

Subjective norm: According to (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), Subjective norm is a social factor affecting a person's consumer behavior through others such as their family, friends, doctors and so on. Subjective norm is the formation of one's beliefs based on the beliefs of others in their lives. In addition, subjective norm is a factor that positively influences a consumer's intention to buy organic foods (Tran, Leyer, Ploeger, & Krikser, 2019). In some developed countries, subjective norm also influences the intention to buy organic foods, for example Italian consumers are influenced by advices from their family and then their friends to buy organic foods (Vassallo, Scalvedi, & Saba, 2015). And some studies in developing countries, such as Vietnam also identified subjective norm affects the purchasing intention toward the green food (Nguyen M. T., Nguyen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2017), or directly influence purchasing intention of organic food (Nguyen M. T., và những tác giả khác, 2018).

Food safety & Health consciousness: Concerns about food safety also influence consumers' intentions to buy organic foods. Consumers worry about pesticides in conventional foods being the main reason for them to buy this product line (Dickieson & Arkus, 2019). The safety perception of organic food products positively affects buying intent (Lian & Yoong, 2019), also investigated that consumers buy organic foods because they are safe.

Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness: (Bagher, Salati, & Ghaffari, 2018) confirmed that concern about the environment greatly affects the intention to buy organic food products. Environmental factors also have a positive relationship with intention to buy organic food (Shamsollahi, Chong, & Nahid, 2013).

Price of the Product: A study by (Tran, Leyer, Ploeger, & Krikser, 2019) shows that the price is the negative factor of purchasing intention toward organic food, if the price is high, it will hinder the buying decision of consumers. If the price of organic food is relatively higher than that of conventional produce, consumers are less likely to buy organic food (Kavaliauske & Ubartaite, 2014). In fact, organic foods in all circumstances have a higher price than conventional foods, so some families with a good income can afford to buy organic foods. But Vietnam is still a developing country, the average income of the Vietnamese is not high, so the high price of organic foods will be a major barrier to purchasing intentions (Phan, 2019). However, in some other studies, consumers still accept to buy organic food at a higher price than conventional food, and the price does not affect consumers' intention to buy organic foods (Sobhanifard, 2018).

Availability Product: According to a study by (Shafie & Rennie, 2012), it is confirmed that one of the factors that encourage consumers to purchase organic foods is availability product. Availability product can motivate consumers to purchase organic foods. However, the lack of organic food in supermarkets or stores is a negative factor affecting consumers purchasing organic foods (Hossain & Lim, 2016).

Trust in Brands and Certifications: Currently, in the Vietnamese food market, it is very difficult to distinguish between organic foods and normal foods, so many businesses have used brands and certifications to identify their products that produced by organic farming. Therefore, it is also easily for consumers to distinguish and purchase quality organic foods (Phan, 2019). It can be said that trust in brands and certification is one of the factors that positively influences purchasing intention toward organic foods (Sobhanifard, 2018). Consumers' intentions to buy organic food are often influenced by their level of trust in the certifications that manufacturers provide (Nuttavuthisit & Thogersen, 2017). Based on the study of factors affecting the purchasing intention toward organic foods, the author has proposed the research model and research hypotheses as follows:

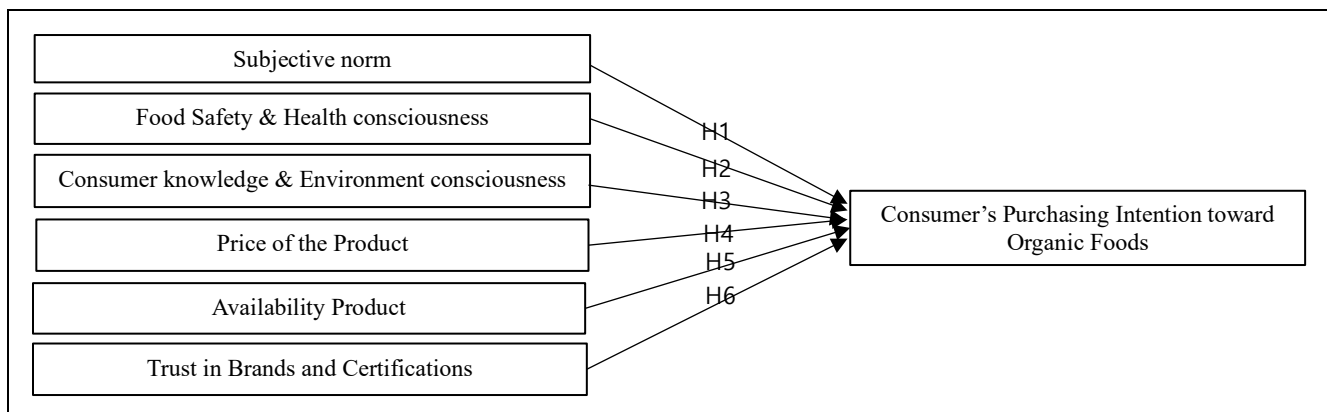


Figure 1: Proposed research model

- H1: Subjective norm has an influence on Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods
 H2: Food Safety & Health consciousness has an influence on Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods
 H3: Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness has an influence on Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods
 H4: Price of the Product has an influence on Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods
 H5: Availability product has an influence on Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods
 H6: Trust in Brands and Certifications has an influence on Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods

Table 1: Scale and observed variables

Variable	Observed variables	Indicator	Sources
Subjective norm (SN)	SN1	Family's influence in buying organic foods	(Setiawati, Hartoyo, & Simanjuntak, 2018); (Tran, Leyer, Ploeger, & Krikser, 2019)
	SN2	Friends' influence in buying organic foods	
	SN3	Doctors recommend in buying organic foods	
	SN4	Salespeople suggested in buying organic foods	
Food Safety & Health consciousness (FS)	FS1	Organic foods do not contain pesticides, fertilizers and genetically modified	(Nguyen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2020); (Setiawati, Hartoyo, & Simanjuntak, 2018); (Dickieson & Arkus, 2019); (Wee, và những tác giả khác, 2014); (Lian & Yoong, 2019)
	FS2	Organic foods are preferred because they are natural food products	
	FS3	Organic foods can reduce the risk of food poisoning	
	FS4	Eating organic foods is healthier	
	FS5	Organic foods are preferred because they contain a lot of nutrients	
Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness (KC)	KC1	Information search	(Nguyen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2020)
	KC2	Product knowledge	
	KC3	Organic foods contribute to reduce waste	
	KC4	Organic foods are produced using environmentally friendly methods	
Price of the Product (PP)	PP1	The price of organic foods is higher than the price of regular foods	(Nguyen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2020); (Yin, Wu, Du, & Chen, 2010); (Slamet, Nakayasu, & Bai, 2016); (Tran, Leyer, Ploeger, & Krikser, 2019);
	PP2	The price of organic foods is not commensurate with their quality	
	PP3	The price of organic foods is high but the lifetime is short	
Availability Product (AP)	AP1	Diverse distribution channels	(Ha & Duong, 2019)
	AP2	Organic food products are diverse	
	AP3	It is easy to find and buy organic foods	
Trust in Brands and Certifications (TB)	TB1	Characteristics listed on organic food brands are reliable	(Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014)
	TB2	Characteristics listed on organic food brands are strictly regulated	
	TB3	Characteristics listed on organic food brands are in compliance with the law	
Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward Organic Foods (PI)	PI1	Intention of buying organic foods when sufficient money is available	(Setiawati, Hartoyo, & Simanjuntak, 2018)
	PI2	Having a consideration that the first product to buy is organic foods	

	PI3	Intention of buying organic foods if they are available at a subscription store
	PI4	Having a plan to buy organic food if you have enough information on the products

Source: Literature review of the research

3. Methodology

The study uses a combination of 2 qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are used through analysis, evaluation and synthesis of previous studies to build research models and scales for variables. Quantitative method applied SPSS 25.0 to test the scale by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, to analyze the discovery factor EFA and regression analysis. According to (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), the number of suitable samples for exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis is determined by the formula: $n >= 8m + 50$, m: Number of factors. The author gives a research model with 6 factors, so the number of samples needed is 98 samples. But in order for the results to be highly representative, the author has conducted a survey of 270 consumers who intend to buy organic food in 6 districts in Danang city. The author created a survey on google form and used the network of personal relationships to send the survey to consumers in Da Nang. However, the desired number of questionnaires has not been reached, so the author continues to conduct a written survey at food sales points in 6 districts including Hai Chau, Son Tra, Ngu Hanh Son, Thanh Khe, Lien Chieu, Hoa Khanh in Da Nang. In addition, the author continues to send survey links to consumer groups on social networking platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. After obtaining more than the desired number of questionnaires, the author checked and removed the unsatisfactory questionnaires. Since this is a study on purchase intention, the author only focuses on surveying people who have never bought organic food before in Da Nang, so the author used the screening question "Have you ever bought organic food yet?" If the participant answers "No", they will continuously answer other questions, and if the answer is "Yes", the survey will be stopped. The results obtained have 250 satisfactory samples for analysis. I selected samples according to the random method, the time to collect data is from September 2021 to November 2021.

Table 2: Survey sample characteristics

	Counts	% of total
Gender		
Male	49	19.6
Female	201	80.4
Age		
<18	6	2.4
18-25	64	25.6
26-35	122	48.8
36-55	47	18.8
>55	11	4.4
Income		
<\$217	53	21.2
\$217-\$435	72	28.8
\$436-\$870	89	35.6
\$871-\$1,304	21	8.4
>1,304	15	6.0
District		
Hai Chau	45	18.0
Thanh Khe	58	23.2
Son Tra	41	16.4

Ngu Hanh Son	65	26.0
Lien Chieu	16	6.4
Hoa Vang	25	10.0

Survey results show that consumers participating in the survey are mainly women (Female: 80.4%; Male: 19.6%), aged from 26 to 35 years-old (Under 18 years-old: 2.4%; From 18-25: 25.6%; From 26-35: 48.8%; From 36-55: 18.8%; Over 55 years-old: 4.4%), income per month between \$435 and \$870 (Under \$217: 21.2%; From \$217-\$435: 28.8%; From \$436-\$870: 35.6%; From \$871-\$1,304: 8.4%; Over \$1,304: 6%).

4. Research results

4.1. Cronbach's alpha reliability

Cronbach's alpha's reliability test results show that FS3 variable is disqualified due to the corrected-item total correlation is $0.112 < 0.3$. The remaining 25 observed variables satisfy the conditions in analysis of reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale > 0.5 and the corrected-item total correlation > 0.3) (Table 2).

Table 2: Actual research reliability test results

	Mean	Sd	Cronbach's alpha Reliability	Corrected-item total correlation
Subjective Norm				
SN1	3.91	0.709	0.886	0.853
SN2				0.702
SN3				0.694
SN4				0.760
Food Safety & Health consciousness				
FS1	3.5	0.780	0.842	0.677
FS2				0.692
FS4				0.743
FS5				0.600
Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness				
KC1	3.66	0.626	0.829	0.658
KC2				0.612
KC3				0.672
KC4				0.689
Price of the Product				
PP1	3.48	0.528	0.807	0.596
PP2				0.680
PP3				0.697
Availability Product				
AP1	3.8	0.563	0.802	0.576
AP2				0.731
AP3				0.642

Trust in Brands and Certifications		4.45	0.592	0.828					
TB1									0.706
TB2									0.699
TB3									0.654
Consumer's Purchasing Intention toward organic foods		3.98	0.671	0.809					
PI1									0.670
PI2									0.657
PI3									0.622
PI4					0.556				

Source: Data analysis result of the research

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Results of analyzing the Exploratory factor EFA for independent variables: KMO = 0.789 ($0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$); Barlett test has Sig. = $0.000 \leq 0.05$; Total variance explained is 72,438% ($> 50\%$), Eigen value is $1,378 > 1$, showing that EFA model is suitable. Through the process of factor analysis with Principal component analysis method and Varimax rotation results 6 groups of factors with 21 observed variables, including: Subjective norm, Food Safety & Health consciousness, Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness, Price of the Product, Availability product and Trust in Brands and Certifications (Table 3).

Table 3: Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
SN1	0.920					
SN4	0.855					
SN2	0.825					
SN3	0.822					
FS4		0.844				
FS5		0.787				
FS1		0.786				
FS2		0.776				
KC1			0.828			
KC3			0.821			
KC4			0.803			
KC2			0.748			
TB1				0.868		
TB2				0.854		
TB3				0.845		
AP2					0.876	
AP3					0.847	
AP1					0.758	
PP2						0.828
PP1						0.816
PP3						0.791

KMO = 0.789
 Sig. = 0.000
 Total variance explained = 72.438%
 Eigenvalues = 1.378

Source: Data analysis result of the research

Results of analyzing the discovery factor EFA for the dependent variable: KMO coefficient = 0.785 ($0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$); Barlett test has Sig. = $0.000 \leq 0.05$; Total variance extracted is 63,684% ($> 50\%$), Eigen value is $2,547 > 1$, showing that the EFA model is suitable. The EFA analysis shows that the Buy Intent factor (YDM) includes 4 observed variables. (Table 4).

Table 4: Component Matrix^a

Component	
1	
PI1	0.830
PI2	0.822
PI3	0.796
PI4	0.741

KMO = 0.785
 Sig. = 0.000
 Total variance explained = 63.684%
 Eigenvalues = 2.547

Source: Data analysis result of the research

4.3. Regression analysis

The researcher has conducted linear regression analysis to analyze the impact of factors on the purchasing intention toward organic foods in Danang City. The results show that the model has adjusted R square: 68.9 %, meaning that the consumer's purchasing intention variation is explained by 68.9% factors; sig = 0.000 shows that the linear regression model is suitable for the data set, the model can be used. The Durbin-Watson coefficient = 1,954 in the range from 1.5 to 2.5 shows that the model has no autocorrelation phenomenon and the VIF coefficient of the independent variables is < 2 , which means that the regression model is not has multi-collinearity phenomenon (Table 5).

Standardized regression equation:

$$PI = 0.228*SN + 0.207*FS + 0.214*KC - 0.391*PP + 0.237*AP + 0.225*TB$$

All 6 factors included in the model are statistically significant, including: Subjective norm (SN), Food Safety & Health consciousness (FS), Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness (KC), Price of the Product (PP), Availability product (AP) and Trust in Brands and Certifications (TP). (Table 5). The factor that most positively affects the intention of consumers to purchase organic food in Danang City is availability product (the regression coefficient is 0.237). If the availability product factor increases by 1 unit, the intention to purchase organic food will increase by 0.237 units (the remaining factors do not change). The factor that negatively affects the intention of consumers to buy organic food in Danang city is the price of the product (the regression coefficient is -0,391). If a product's price factor increases by 1 unit, the intention to buy organic food will decrease by 0.391 units (provided the rest of the factors do not change). The remaining factors all have a positive impact on the consumers' purchasing intention toward organic foods in Danang city.

Table 5: Regression results

	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Subjective norm (SN)	0.228	6.260	0.000
Food Safety & Health consciousness (FS)	0.207	5.247	0.000

Consumer knowledge & Environment consciousness (KC)	0.214	5.728	0.000
Price of the Product (PP)	-0.391	-9.763	0.000
Availability product (AP)	0.237	6.360	0.000
Trust in Brands and Certifications (TB)	0.225	6.176	0.000

Adjusted R square = 68.9%

Sig. = 0.000

Durbin-Watson coefficient = 1.954

Source: Data analysis result of the research

5. Conclusions

This study is not the first to examine the factors that influence customers' purchase intention towards organic food. There have been a lot of previous studies looking at this issue [(Bagher, Salati, & Ghaffari, 2018); (Ha & Duong, 2019); (Hossain & Lim, 2016); (Kavaliauske & Ubartaite, 2014); (Lian & Yoong, 2019); (Nguyen M. T., và những tác giả khác, 2018); (Nguyen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2020); (Setiawati, Hartoyo, & Simanjuntak, 2018); (Shamsollahi, Chong, & Nahid, 2013)]. However, this is the first study to completely study the factors affecting the intention to buy organic food in Da Nang, Vietnam. Compared with previous studies, the study shows that the results of intention to buy organic food in Danang in line with previous studies. Some factors such as subjective norm (SN), food safety & health consciousness (FS), consumer knowledge & environment consciousness (KC), availability product (AP), trust in brands and certifications (TB) all have a positive influence on purchase intention toward to organic food. These findings make perfect sense with the consumer psychology of customers in general and Da Nang customers in particular. When a product is recommended by relatives, family or friends, the trust of the product is higher, making it easier for consumers to make a purchase decision. For organic food, as mentioned above, it is a healthy food, but consumers need to have knowledge and care about their health to be willing to buy this product. In addition, brands and food-related certificates also contribute to improving consumer confidence in foods, especially organic foods. On the contrary, price of the product (PP) has a negative effect on purchase intention, which can be easily understood since organic food in Danang is quite expensive compared to other conventional food, and this makes the low-income consumers need to consider when deciding to buy this food. The high price will discourage purchase intention of consumers and the remaining factors are positively related.

Therefore, if businesses want to promote organic food consumption in Danang city market, they need to strengthen communication for products, introduce foods that are grown naturally without chemicals, no growth drugs, no chemical fertilizers and provide many nutritional contents which bring many benefits to the health of consumers. In particular, businesses improve production factors to adjust the appropriate price for organic foods. This will help to raise awareness and understanding of consumers about the benefits of organic foods to their health and their families. In addition, businesses need to be active in bringing their products to the authorities to check and evaluate the quality of their products. This will help businesses selling organic products gain certifications and create brand trust with customers.

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