

## A STUDY ON GEN Y CONSUMERS' ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION OF ORGANIC FOOD IN HO CHI MINH, VIETNAM

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### Abstract

This research aims to examine factors influencing Gen Y consumers' online purchase intention of organic food in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. The conceptual framework contains key variables including reasons against organic food purchase, health consciousness, reasons for organic food purchase, attitudes, social influence, perceived risk, and online purchase intention. This study applied quantitative approach to distribute the questionnaire to 500 respondents. The sampling techniques are judgmental sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were applied to analyze the data. The findings were that attitudes are significantly influenced by reasons against and reasons for organic food purchase, and health consciousness but not by social influence. Furthermore, Online purchase intention is significantly influenced by reasons against and reasons for organic food purchase, and attitudes but not by perceived risk. The study sheds light on the Vietnamese consumers' attitudes toward online shopping which can be useful for academic practitioners, online food retailers and marketers.

**Keywords:** Organic Food, Gen Y, Online Purchase Intention, Attitudes, Perceived Risk

## Introduction

In 1970s, organic certification began to develop (Compagnoni, 2009). The organic food certification process is a standards-based process in which organic growers are assessed for compliance with specific standards, for example including their land use, growing techniques and processes, and avoidance of many (though not all) commercially produced chemicals and products. Organic food sales in Asia comprised about 10% of the world's total organics market in 2019 (Wunsch, 2021). Vietnam's organic food market is small but growing, with an estimated market size of US\$130 million in 2019 (Nguyen, 2021). Generation Y as persons who were born between 1981 and 1996 are the large group of online shoppers in Vietnam (Smith, 2021).

The problem of this research is that it is unclear how Vietnamese consumers choose to buy organic foods online, and what factors influence that choice. However, various research focused predominantly on psychological factors related to the use of online shopping channels, rather than organic food consumption per se (Vo & Laukkanen, 2021). This research focuses less on the usability of the technology, and more on the factors that may influence consumers toward – or against – buying organic food online.

## Significance of the Study

In Vietnam, both organic food and online shopping are recent and growing consumer trends have received little academic attention compared to the rest of the world. Consumer adoption of both organic food and online shopping are relatively new trends in Vietnam and there has not been much research into how Vietnamese online shoppers respond when faced with a credence good such as organic food. Therefore, this study is potentially useful in the managerial and business importance. The findings will offer practical guidance and insight to organic food retailers in Vietnam, giving them information about how they can effectively market their products to consumers.

## Objectives of the Study

This research aims to examine the causal relationships of reasons against organic food purchase, health consciousness, social influence, and reasons for organic food purchase on attitudes that the research is to examine the causal relationships of reasons against organic, attitudes, reasons for organic food purchase, perceived risk effect on online purchase intention for Gen Y consumers in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.

## Literature Review

### 1. Reasons Against Organic Food Purchase

Reasons against are subjective factors that are negative; these are often described as disadvantages or “cons” (Westaby, 2005). This research conveys in the context of organic food

purchase that reasons against organic food consumption imply usage barriers, which occur when a new product forces consumers to change their current usage purchases. It can be extended that existing habits and the risk barrier arise due to consumers' perceptions of underlying threats or dangers from adopting a new product or innovation (Tandon et al., 2020). Tandon et al. (2020) found a significant influence of reasons against organic food consumption on attitudes and purchase intention. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H1: Reasons against organic food purchase have a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food.*

*H2: Reasons against organic food purchase have a significant influence on online organic food purchase intention.*

## **2. Reasons for Organic Food Purchase**

The basic definition of reasons for a given behaviour is that they are the reasons that support the adoption of the behaviour, sometimes called advantages or “pros” (Westaby, 2005). Tandon et al. (2020) included context-specific reasons for buying organic food by adding common attitudes (animal welfare concern and environmental concern). In the case of general green consumption, the effect of reasons for green consumption on attitudes was positive and significant (Wang et al., 2021). Similar to the findings of Talwar et al. (2021), the effect of reasons for organic food purchase was a significant influence on purchase intentions. Reasons for organic food consumption are the dominant influence on attitude towards organic food and affects consumer's purchase intention (Tandon et al., 2021). Based on the above assumptions, the following hypotheses are developed:

*H3: Reasons for organic food purchase have a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food.*

*H4: Reasons for organic food purchase have a significant influence on online organic food purchase intention.*

## **3. Health Consciousness**

Health consciousness is a widely acknowledged belief or value that can influence consumer views and tendencies toward organic food consumption and other food choice decisions (Van Huy et al., 2019). Health consciousness disposes consumers to engage in behaviors that improve or maintain their health (Shin & Mattila, 2019). Despite the findings of Tandon et al. (2020), health consciousness has a positive effect on attitude toward organic food consumption, rather than having a negative effect. Broadly speaking, all other studies found that health consciousness had a positive effect on the attitude toward organic food. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is stated:

*H5: Health consciousness has a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food.*

## **4. Attitudes**

In a consumer perspective, the definition of attitude can be refined to “consumers

favorable or unfavorable predilection toward a particular behavior” (Tandon et al., 2020). Several studies on organic, functional and other green foods tested a relationship between attitudes toward the behavior and the behavioral intention (including purchase intention for organic or other foods). A few studies have also investigated the relationship in the context of online purchase intentions without focusing on organic food purchase or other green behavior (Bhatti et al., 2018; Hsu & Le, 2020). Thus, it is anticipated that attitudes and behavioral intentions will have a positive relationship – therefore, consumers with positive attitudes toward consumption of organics are expected to be more likely to form purchase intentions for them. This relationship is formalized in Hypothesis 6:

*H6: Attitudes toward organic food have a significant influence on online organic food purchase intention.*

### **5. Social Influence**

Social influence is the result of what individuals view as the opinions of others and their actual actions, which influence their decision processes (Hansmann et al., 2020). Ketabi et al. (2014) framed the social influence considering friends which has a significant effect on attitude toward organic food. Such social influences may have an effect on individual decisions because they establish behavioral and injunctive norms for the group, although whether individuals follow those norms is highly dependent on context and situation (Hansmann et al., 2020). Consequently, a hypothesis is set:

*H7: Social influence has a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food.*

### **6. Perceived Risk**

Perceived risk is a construct of perceived situation with two major components; the probability of a loss and the subjective feeling of unfavorable consequences (Li & Huang, 2009). Theoretically, perceived risk can be expected to have a negative effect on the purchase intention (Mitchell, 1999). However, perceived risk is multidimensional in this research, encapsulating both the risk of organic food and the risk of online shopping. In addition, the relationship between perceived risk and online organic food purchase intention was recognized (Wei et al., 2018). Therefore, the final hypothesis of the research is indicated:

*H8: Perceived risk has a significant influence on online organic food purchase intention.*

### **7. Purchase Intention**

The purchase intention is a form of behavioral intention, which can be defined as an indication of how much effort they are planning to exert in order to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Consumers’ subjective probability of associating themselves with an action, specifically an action such as purchasing organic food (Tandon et al., 2020). The purchase intention is a special case of the behavioral intention, where the intention formation relates specifically to one context of consumption behavior – selecting products or services that the individual intends to purchase (Chang & Wildt, 1994).

## Research Framework

As of Figure 1, the conceptual framework incorporates components from the three previous studies (Wei et al., 2018; Tandon et al., 2021; Ketabi et al., 2014). Dependent variables are reasons against organic food purchase, health consciousness, reasons for organic food consumption, attitudes and social influence. Independent variables are perceived risk and online purchase intention.

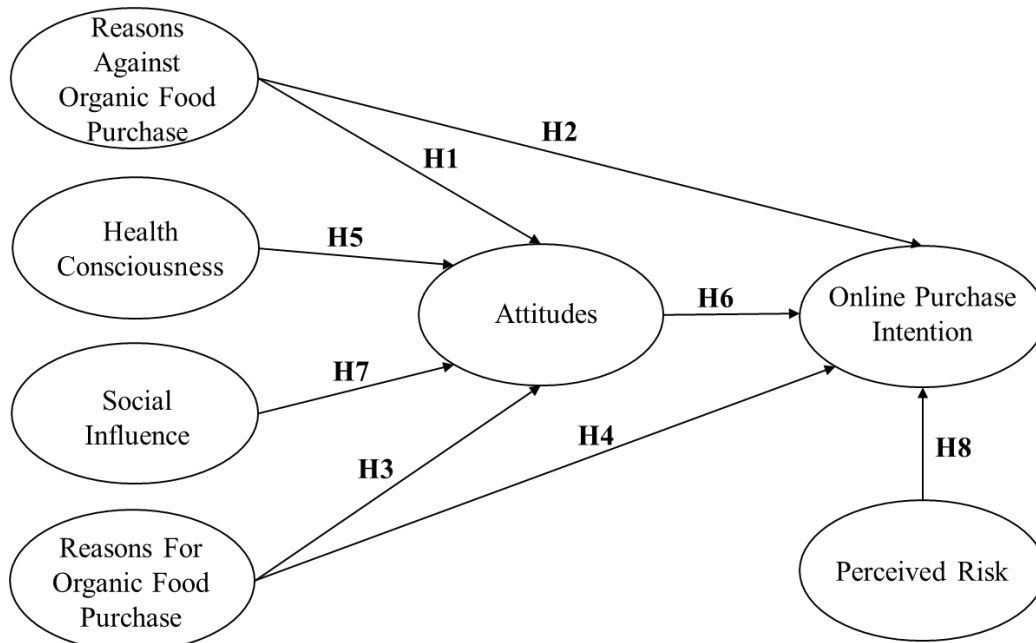


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

Before the data collection, item-objective congruence (IOC) index by three experts and Cronbach's alpha reliability test with the pilot group of 50 respondents were approved. After the data collection to test KMO more than 75 for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were applied to analyze the data. The questionnaire is composed with three parts which are screening question (3), measuring items of five-point Likert scale (29), and demographic profile (4).

### 1. Population and Sample Size

The target population of the research is Gen Y residents of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, who were born between 1981 and 1996. According to (Soper, 2020), this calculator indicated that given the model structure and the anticipated effect size of 0.2, the recommended minimum sample size was 425 members. The online questionnaire was distributed to approximately 1,000 respondents. Consequently, 500 responses were received and passed the data screening.

### 2. Sampling Technique

This study applied are judgmental sampling, convenience sampling and snowball

sampling. For judgmental sampling, Gen Y residents of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, who were born between 1981 and 1996 were selected. The convenience sampling was employed to distribute online survey to 500 Gen Y consumers during April to July 2022. Snowball sampling method was to encourage respondents to share survey link to their friends and family.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Demographic Information

The data were derived from 500 Gen Y residents of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, who were born between 1981 and 1996. The demographic results are demonstrated as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Demographic Results

Demographic and General Data (n=500)		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	278	55.6%
	Female	222	44.4%
Occupation	Students	12	2.4%
	Self-employed	104	20.8%
	Housework	53	10.6%
	Retired	44	8.8%
	Government agency	115	23.0%
	Employees	152	30.4%
	Others	20	4.0%
Frequency of online shopping	Everyday	75	15.0%
	1-2 times a week	248	49.6%
	Once a month	146	29.2%
	Once in 3 months or less	31	6.2%
How do you find out about organic food?	TV	81	16.2%
	Books/ Magazine	42	8.4%
	Friends/ Family	115	23.0%
	Online	223	44.6%
	Others	39	7.8%

Source: Created by the author.

The Gen Y consumers sampling for Male and Female are not difference that their occupation to employees 30.4% to have frequency of online shopping 1-2 times a week 49.6% and find out about organic food to Online 44.6% and friends or family 23.0%.

## 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This included tests of convergent validity using composite reliability (CR) of  $\geq 0.7$ , average variance extracted (AVE) of  $\geq 0.5$ , and factor loading of all loading items were greater than 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker 1981). Furthermore, internal consistency reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha (CA) at a score  $\geq 0.7$  (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

**Table 2** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result, Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Source of Questionnaire (Measurement Indicator)	No. of Item	CA $\geq 0.7$	Factors Loading $\geq 0.5$	CR $\geq 0.7$	AVE $\geq 0.5$
Reasons Against (RA)	Tandon et al. (2020)	5	0.850	0.783-1.023	0.782	0.695
Health Consciousness (HC)	Tandon et al. (2020)	4	0.869	0.495-0.709	0.715	0.613
Reasons For (RF)	Tandon et al. (2020)	6	0.814	0.591-0.675	0.733	0.624
Attitude (ATT)	Nguyen et al. (2019)	4	0.847	0.538-0.604	0.762	0.625
Social Influence (SI)	Nguyen et al. (2019)	3	0.878	0.470-0.547	0.713	0.578
Online Perceived Risk (PR)	Wei et al. (2018)	3	0.886	0.542-0.607	0.720	0.635
Purchase Intention (PI)	Wei et al. (2018)	4	0.863	0.721-0.807	0.801	0.655

Source: Created by the author

In Table 2, indicated that the discriminant validity was evaluated by computing the square root of each AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The result of this study showed the value of discriminant validity is larger than all inter-construct/factor correlations, hence, the discriminant validity is supportive. Besides, multicollinearity's problem can be ensured through correlation coefficient. The factor correlations in Table 3 did not surpass 0.80. Accordingly, the problem of multicollinearity is not issued (Studenmund, 1992)

**Table 3** Discriminant Validity

	RA	HC	RF	ATT	FRI	PR	PI
RA	<b>0.845</b>						
HC	0.725	<b>0.760</b>					
RF	0.751	0.701	<b>0.780</b>				
ATT	0.770	0.677	0.743	<b>0.750</b>			
FRI	0.743	0.695	0.760	0.625	<b>0.790</b>		
PR	0.752	0.682	0.750	0.660	0.720	<b>0.781</b>	
PI	0.745	0.729	0.740	0.656	0.640	0.756	<b>0.792</b>

Note: The diagonally listed value is the AVE square roots of the variables

Source: Created by the author.

### 3. Structural Equation Model (SEM)

In both measurement model and structural model, the goodness of fit for the was measured by CMIN/DF, GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. The model showed acceptable fit with no adjustment required. Consequently, convergence validity and discriminant validity were also verified in the measurement model as shown in Table 4

**Table 4** Goodness of Fit for Measurement and Structural Model

Index	Acceptable Values	Statistical Values	Statistical Values
		Of Measurement Model	Of Structural Model
CMIN/DF	≤ 5.0 (Wheaton et al., 1977)	3.505	3.70
GFI	≥ 0.85 (Kline, 2011)	0.905	0.901
AGFI	≥ 0.85 (Kline, 2011)	0.915	0.902
NFI	≥ 0.85 (Kline, 2011)	0.920	0.921
CFI	≥ 0.85 (Kline, 2011)	0.920	0.905
TLI	≥ 0.85 (Kline, 2011)	0.922	0.920
RMSEA	≥ 0.08 (Pedroso et al., 2016)	0.059	0.051
<b>Model Summary</b>		<b>Acceptable Model Fit</b>	<b>Acceptable Model Fit</b>

Source: Constructed by the author

### 4. Hypothesis Testing Result

In Table 5, the hypotheses were accepted based on the direction of the relationship and the significance of the relationship at the accepted value of  $p < 0.01$  (Hair et al., 2016).



**Table 5** Hypothesis Result of the Structural Equation Model

Hypothesis	( $\beta$ )	p-value (t)	Result
H1: RA→ATT	0.156	<.001	Supported
H2: RA→PI	0.315	<.001	Supported
H3: RF→ATT	0.182	<.001	Supported
H4: RF→PI	0.278	<.001	Supported
H5: HC→ATT	0.201	<.001	Supported
H6: ATT→PI	0.196	<.001	Supported
H7: SI→ATT	0.081	.06	Not supported
H8: PR→PI	-0.095	.08	Not supported

The hypotheses testing results from Table 5 can be detailed below:

**H1** confirms that reasons against organic food purchase have a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food with the standardized coefficient value of 0.156.

**H2** approves the significant relationship between reasons against organic food purchase and online organic food purchase intention, accounting for the standardized coefficient value of 0.315.

**H3** found that reasons for organic food purchase have a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food, accounting for the standardized coefficient value of 0.182.

For **H4**, reasons for organic food purchase significantly influence online organic food purchase intention in this study with the standardized coefficient value of 0.278.

**H5** approves the significant relationship between health consciousness and attitudes toward organic food as the standardized coefficient value of 0.201.

**H6** supports that attitudes toward organic food have a significant influence on online organic food purchase intention with the standardized coefficient value of 0.196.

**H7** fails to approve that social influence has a significant influence on attitudes toward organic food with a standardized coefficient value of 0.081.

In **H8**, perceived risk has no significant influence on online organic food purchase intention as the results found no support with the standardized coefficient value of -0.095.

## Conclusions, Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

### 1. Conclusions

The findings were that attitudes are significantly influenced by reasons against organic food consumption, reasons for organic food consumption and health consciousness but not by social influence. Furthermore, Online purchase intention is significantly influenced by reasons against organic food consumption, reasons for organic food consumption and attitudes but not by perceived risk. The results were aligned with previous studies that the reasons

against and the reasons for organic food consumption led to either favourable or unfavourable attitudes and purchase intention. (Westaby, 2005). As health consciousness relates to health improvement, it predicts a positive attitude toward organic food products (Shin & Mattila, 2019).

On the other hand, social influence (especially through friends) has no significant influence on attitude toward organic food. Testa et al. (2019) did not show that subjective norms had a significant effect on attitudes toward organic food purchases. Furthermore, perceived risk has no significant influence on online organic food purchase intention which contradicts previous research (Li & Huang, 2009; Mitchell, 1999; Wei et al., 2018). However, the study of Ismail and Mohd Mokhtar (2016) supported this insignificant relationship between perceived risk on purchase intentions.

## 2. Discussions

The attitudes are influenced from reasons against organic food purchases, health consciousness, and reasons for organic food purchases that there are not reflect social influence for Gen Y consumers in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. (RA→ATT, RF→ATT, HC→ATT, and SI → ATT).

Online purchase is influenced from reasons against organic, attitudes, and reasons for organic food purchase, that there are not reflect perceived risk for Gen Y consumers in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. (RA→PI, RF→PI, ATT→PI, and PR→PI).

## 3.. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the first recommendation is to emphasize reasons for organic food consumption and health consciousness to enhance favourable attitudes toward organic food consumption. These motivational factors can be communicated through public relations and marketing communication to endorse the benefits of organic food which tends to arouse consumers' online purchase intention. Secondly, though reasons against organic food consumption significantly impact attitudes and purchase intention, it is a negative factor as people resist acting. This could be assumed by the limited choices of organic food or it is considered a high price which can be solved by promotion and advertising campaigns.

Even though social influence has no significant impact on attitude, marketers can extend from groups of friends to influencers and celebrities to deploy attitudinal tests among Gen Y consumers. Also, perceived risk is expected to have a negative effect on the purchase intention but it is insignificant. It can be because there are low risks for organic food products in terms of health risks and only small transactions should be made for online shopping of such products.

## 4. Limitations and Future Research

This study was limited to several factors due to the need to ensure the research was methodologically manageable and to avoid requiring too much time from participants. Accordingly, a qualitative study should be further conducted to compare the results. Another

limitation is that as the questionnaire was distributed only in Vietnamese, it is likely that some residents of Ho Chi Minh City may be excluded due to inadequate language knowledge. Finally, the study is cross-sectional which means that the findings may be outdated quickly as it has been conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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