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Drivers and Barriers Shaping Consumer Adoption of Organic Agri-Food Products: A Case Study in Can Tho City, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

The main factor driving the fast expansion of the international organic agri-food products markets is raising concerns related to food safety and hygiene, public health, and environmental protection. Nonetheless, in developing countries such as Vietnam, consumer acceptance of organic agri-food products remains relatively low due to the coexistence of driving and structural factors. The purpose of this research is to seek and measure factors influencing consumers' acceptance of organic agri-food products in Can Tho City, using a theory combination: Intentional Behavior Theory (TPB), Innovation Resistance Theory (IRT), and Dual Factor Theory (DFT). A mixed research method was used, which consisted of expert interviews, mock surveys, and formal surveys with 398 consumers. The data is analyzed using a partial linear structure model (PLS-SEM) to simultaneously evaluate the measurement model and the structural model. The results showed that three driving factors, health awareness, quality safety, and quality labels, had a positive and statistically significant impact on acceptance intent, while three functional barriers, value barriers, use barriers, and risk barriers, had the opposite effect. The study model explained about 94.4% of the variation in acceptance intent, reflecting a very strong explanatory capacity for consumer behavior in the context of the study. Theoretically, the study contributes by simultaneously examining the dynamic structure and barriers

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in an integrated model, overcoming the limitations of previous studies that mainly looked at individual groups of factors. In practical terms, the results are the basis for businesses and regulators to develop market development strategies, emphasizing the health and welfare benefits of ecosystems, while minimizing perceived risks, inconveniences of use, and improving the perception of value for organic agri-food products in Vietnam.

Keywords: Agricultural Products; Organic Food; Organic Agri-Food Products; Intention to Accept; Motivations and Barriers

1. Introduction

In the context of the world facing increasingly serious problems and consequences from agricultural production models that use chemicals, organic agricultural products have become an important consumption orientation, allowing for the simultaneous achievement of food safety goals, health and environmental sustainability^[1–4]. International and Vietnamese research notes that concerns about health risks and ecological degradation are the core factors driving consumers towards organic agricultural products^[5–8]. According to Tandon et al.^[9] and Thuy^[10], it is also highlighted that the growing role of health awareness and environmental concerns is reshaping global consumer behavior. At the same time, the global market for organic agriculture accounts for nearly EUR 135 billion, in 2022 the largest organic market was the United States with EUR 58.6 billion, Germany with EUR 15.3 billion, and China with EUR 12.4 billion^[11]. On the other hand, there have been studies that have shown a slowdown in growth trends, reflecting structural and behavioral barriers that current analytical models have not adequately addressed^[7, 12, 13].

One of the core challenges of organic agri-food products, specifically characterized by organic food agriculture, lies in its trust-based nature^[13]. That is, the quality and level of organic cannot be directly confirmed by the senses, but depend on the reliability of the certification label and the transparency of market information^[14–18]. This trait leads to an increased degree of variation in acceptance intent and purchasing decisions, thereby giving rise to a large gap between attitude and behavior intent, which has been well documented in many empirical studies^[5, 19]. When consumers do not have enough information or low trust in the certification system, barriers such as perceived risk, high prices,

or lack of availability can overwhelm positive dynamics, causing the intention to accept a purchase not to translate into actual behavior^[20–22].

Although organic product consumption behavior (organic food; clean food; organic agricultural food; clean agricultural food) has been extensively studied, the majority of the work focuses on analysis related to motivations such as health benefits, environmental values, or positive attitudes^[9, 23]. Meanwhile, barriers such as perceived risk, low trust, difficulties in access, and incomplete information quality are seen as secondary factors, lacking co-valuation models^[17, 22]. This leads to a lack of understanding of the mechanism of operation that has a reciprocal relationship between two groups of factors that take place in parallel in practice^[13, 19, 20, 22]. As Sica and Franco^[13] point out, the failure to integrate motivations and barriers in the same theoretical model leads to a marked one-sided interpretation of the intention to accept organic consumption (organic food, clean food, organic agricultural food). Especially in immature markets or emerging markets^[13, 22].

In the context of developing economies, this problem is even more pronounced because distribution systems, information infrastructure, and legal frameworks are often incomplete^[2, 10]. In particular, Vietnam is a typical example of the points just mentioned related to the dynamics and barriers and mechanisms of information infrastructure systems and legal frameworks that are not yet complete^[1, 3, 18, 24, 25]. Despite the demand for clean agricultural food; Organic agricultural products have increased sharply in recent years; the acceptance of organic agricultural food products is still significantly lower than the potential^[8]. Studies in Vietnam show the important role of health perception in purchasing intent^[2, 24–26], but at the same time pointed out barriers to accessibility, lack of informa-

tion transparency, and difficulty in verifying product origin^[2, 10, 27]. However, most domestic studies only analyze individual groups of factors, lacking comprehensive theoretical models to assess the simultaneous effects and counterbalance between motivations and barriers, thereby forming an important and very narrow gap in the context of the current drastic change in consumer behavior in Vietnam.

This gap is even more obvious when considering the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. Where agriculture plays a central role, the behavior of accepting organic products has not been fully exploited academically^[10]. The research location was selected because of the role of Can Tho as the central city. It is the largest trade and service center in the Mekong Delta. The research emphasizes urban areas in order to explain the development of commercial, service, and urban infrastructure activities. These are the elements that illustrate most the role of the city as a center. The choice of Can Tho city as the research context allows for the analysis of consumer behavior in a developing market where consumers are simultaneously impacted by food safety needs and constraints related to information, distribution systems, and market beliefs^[2, 10]. This context is particularly suitable for testing behavioral models that integrate dynamics and barriers, helping to expand the comparative understanding between the Vietnamese market and other countries. Stemming from these limitations, this study, drivers and barriers shaping consumer adoption of organic agri-food products: evidence from Can Tho City, Vietnam, proposes an integrated theoretical model based on a combination of three theories, including Intentional Behavior Theory, Dual Factor Theory and Innovation Resistance Theory, to explain the mechanism of interaction between motivators, pushes and barriers in the formation of the intention to accept organic food agricultural products. By using a research method combining qualitative, quantitative and experimental testing in a representative market of a key agricultural region in the Mekong Delta. The research brings new theoretical and practical contributions and adds evidence to the growing stream of research on organic product consumption behavior in emerging economies.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Organic Agri-Food Products

Organic agri-food products are defined based on production systems that comply with the principles of natural farming, without the use of chemical fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, growth stimulants and genetically modified materials; at the same time, it requires a clean production environment, isolated from pollution sources^[28, 29]. On the other hand, in Vietnam, the Ministry of Science and Technology promulgates and regulates the national standard for organic agricultural products DT 3-TCVN 11041:2017^[30]. This production process not only places an emphasis on chemical removal, but also requires maintaining soil fertility, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring a production life cycle in the direction of ecological balance^[29, 31]. The naturalized process of care and harvest also affects the creation of value chains that are not equivalent to traditional farming practices^[29]. In terms of nutritional value, various studies indicate that organic commodities generally possess higher vitamin, mineral, and antioxidant levels as well as an approximate index to the taste of nature^[26, 32]. Not only limited to health points, but environmental values are also embedded within the concept of organic commodities by decreasing national pollution levels as well as emission levels within the supply value chain^[28, 30, 33]. Experimental results also consistently demonstrate that the levels of chemical residues within organic commodities are close to zero, which further increases the value index for consumer perception to appreciate their safety, thus increasing their attractiveness among consumers^[5, 9, 10, 22].

The quality of organic food agricultural produce, however, cannot be ascertained by human senses directly; rather, it relies upon the quality criteria offered by the organization certified through their signals of reliability^[30]. The ideals reinforced by consumer faith generate consumer judgment for the product not by experience but by market signals, which establish the reliance levels of the consumer, thus embedding consumer motives for consuming organically produced goods with inherent subjectivity^[21, 22].

2.2. Intention to Purchase Organic Agri-Food Products

In behavioral research, intention is considered the most important premise for forecasting actual behavior, reflecting the level of readiness and motivation that the individual has for the behavior^[34]. Purchase intent has been confirmed to be an important psychological mechanism, demonstrating a willingness to choose and continue to use the product in the future^[35]. In the opinion of Pham et al.^[27], “purchase intent is the capacity indicating how well the individual is able to assess the product as the appropriate one,” while Lin and Lu^[36] understand intent “as an indication of consumer expectation.” Background in consumer behavioral prediction intent is particularly confirmed in respect to risky or unknown products (Bagozzi, 1982; Haines, 1970)^[37,38]. Lastly, in the case of organic farming and organic food products that are reputation-based, “the development of intentions is particularly affected by factors relating to perception, attitudes, social norms, and belief in the certification system”^[39]. Conversely, as per Mullett and Karson (1985)^[40], “intention-behavior discrepancies are often attributable to perceived risk or lack of relevant resources to facilitate intentional Behaviour.” Indeed, research studies demonstrate that enhancing the purchase intent on organic products can be facilitated by positive word-of-mouth communication or certain social cues that work toward decreasing information uncertainty^[41]. Ramayah et al. (2010)^[42] also argue that “purchase intent is the direct indicator of real purchasing intent,” thus affirming that the intent is basically the focal variable analyzed in research models on organic farming products.

2.3. Theoretical Basis

2.3.1. Theory of Rational Action (TRA) and Theory of Intentional Behavior (TPB)

Rational action theory: one of the most influential paradigms in consumer behavior studies, asserting that intention is a key determinant of behavior; constructed from subjective attitudes and norms identified by Fishbein and Ajzen^[39]. However, TRA assumes that the individual has full control over his or her behavior, which

is inappropriate in the context of organic production, where behaviour is influenced by perceived risk, limited access and uncertainty about quality. Therefore, Ajzen^[34] developed the theory of intentional behavior (TPB) by adding a cognitive component that controls behavior, which allows predicting behavior in situations where the individual feels a low level of control. TPB has become the most widely used model in the study of organic consumption behavior due to its ability to explain the role of attitudes, social influences, and perceived enforceability in the formation of purchase intent. In the context of organic products, which are inherently uncertain, TPB provides a logical theoretical mechanism to explain why consumers have positive attitudes but do not take action if they find it difficult to access or lack behavioral resources.

2.3.2. Innovation Resistance Theory (IRT)

Innovation resistance theory, Ram and Sheth^[43], provides an important additional perspective to explain barriers in organic product acceptance behavior. According to IRT, consumers often resist new products if they perceive functional or psychological risks. IRT divides barriers into three functional groups: value barriers, usage barriers, and risk barriers; and two psychological barriers are tradition and image. In the organic food agri-products market, functional barriers are proven to be the most important^[5]. Many consumers are skeptical of the price difference or the declared organic benefits^[5,9]. Perceived risks associated with the reliability of certification and transparency of origin are further factors that diminish purchase intention. Use and access barriers crop up in markets where the distribution systems are limited or with a lack of formal channels, as in large parts of Vietnam. Though psychological barriers are important, recent studies have dug deep into them, so the present study has focused on three functional barriers that bear a more direct and pervasive impact on organic consumption behavior.

2.3.3. Dual Factor Theory (DFT)

Under the dual factor theory, Herzberg^[44] contended that human behavior is directed by opposing forces-two groups of factors that come in conflict with each other, namely the motivator and the inhibiting fac-

tor. In this instance, DFT highlights that “an act is only executed when the motivations are strong enough to overcome the barrier that exists.” This fact provides great support for its implementation in the organic agri-food products market, in which consumers have to trade perceived health and environmental benefits against risks in cost, authenticity, and accessibility. DFT has had success in predicting consumer behavior in different technological and online service fields, and more recently, organic markets, by Rey-Moreno and Medina-Molina^[45]. According to Tandon et al.^[46], it was proven that drivers and barriers, when analyzed together, provide a deeper interpretation of the motivations that form the intention to buy organic products than models considering only one group of factors. For all these reasons, the dual factor theory is the proper alternative to the study of the behavior implied by organic food agricultural products, a group of products influenced at the same time by perceived benefits and risks.

The integration of three base theories: Intentional Behavior Theory (TPB), Innovation Resistance Theory (IRT), and Dual Factor Theory (DFT), helps understand the mechanism of intention formation regarding acceptance of the organic agri-food product market in the new market setting of Vietnam. TPB examines the factors governing behavioral change, indicating the importance of positive beliefs and their influence on the intention of purchasing the organic produce that is largely dependent on the subjective assessment of the consumer^[9, 34]. In this manner, IRT encompasses functions of risk barriers, difficulty of access, value doubts, and psychological factors that may lead the consumer to resist or hinder the acceptance of organic produce with positive attitudes toward health as an environmentally integral value indicator above positive attitudes toward health benefits, as indicated in Tandon et al.^[9].

However, it is only by placing these two systems of motivation and barriers in a counterbalancing interaction that the behavior is fully explained; This is the role of DFT. DFT provides an intermediate mechanism for describing the competition between drivers and barriers, thereby allowing for more accurate modeling of the pro-

cess of transforming intentions into behavior in an organic context, which is characterized by information uncertainty and a high level of trust^[45, 46]. By integrating these three theories in the same model, the study can explain both the positive and negative sides of the behavior of purchasing organic agricultural and food products, thereby being in line with the goal of the project to evaluate the mechanism of interaction between motivation and barriers in the formation of the intention to accept agricultural products. organic food industry in Can Tho, Vietnam, a market characterized by increased demand but limited adoption due to uncertainties about trust and distribution systems^[10, 22].

2.3.4. Research Hypothesis Development

In the context of agricultural products, organic food is a novel, regularly updated category of goods that shapes consumers’ intentions to accept it, which are simultaneously influenced by driving factors and barriers. Based on the TPB, IRT and DFT frameworks, this study focuses on three key drivers: health awareness, quality safety and quality labels, along with three functional barriers, including value barriers, usage barriers and risk barriers.

To ensure that research concepts are measured consistently and in accordance with the context of organic agri-food products, the study uses a set of scales derived from and adapted from prior work, fully reflecting the characteristics of the drivers and barriers in the TPB model, IRT and DFT. These scales have been selected for their strong theoretical foundation, have been used in several international research studies, and have been contextually adapted to align with Vietnam’s specific consumer behavior patterns. A description of the observed variables representing each factor in relation to this research hypothesis has been given in **Table 1**.

These factors were selected based on a synthesis of recent studies on organic behaviour, which emphasized the role of health awareness, quality perception, certification signals. They highlighted the importance of cost, usability, and perceived risk in shaping purchase intention^[2, 5, 9, 10, 22, 32, 33].

Table 1. Measurement Scale for Drivers and Barriers of Organic Agri-Food Acceptance.

Symbol	Variable Name	Variable	Sources
Health Awareness of Organic Agri-Food Products (HAOAF)	HAOAF1	I'm a health-conscious person.	Thuy (2023) ^[10] ; Hansen et al. (2018) ^[47]
	HAOAF2	I am worried about the manifestation of health when using unsafe food.	
	HAOAF3	I am aware of which foods should be used that are good and safe for health.	
	HAOAF4	I am always looking for information about nutrition and healthy diets to improve my health.	
	HAOAF5	Exercising and eating healthy are part of my routine.	
	HAOAF6	I'm willing to shop for the healthiest eating.	
Safety of Quality of Organic Agri-Food Products (SQOAF)	SQOAF1	I feel that organic agri-food products contain many vitamins and minerals.	Kareklas et al. (2014) ^[48]
	SQOAF2	I feel organic agri-food products contain more nutritional content.	
	SQOAF3	I feel organic agri-food products No additives are used.	
	SQOAF4	I feel that organic agri-food products contain a lot of protein.	
Quality Labels of Organic Agri-Food Products (QLOAF)	QLOAF1	I feel that organic agri-food products contribute to reducing herbicides, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides.	Kushwah et al. (2019) ^[5] ; Loi et al. (2023) ^[14]
	QLOAF2	I feel that organic agri-food products are environmentally friendly.	
	QLOAF3	I feel that organic agri-food products do not harm animals.	
	QLOAF4	I feel that organic agri-food products and food protect animal rights.	
Barriers to Using Organic Agri-Food Products (BUOAF)	BUOAF1	I feel that organic agri-food products have a short shelf life, so they are easily damaged and difficult to store.	Huong et al. (2022) ^[2] ; Kushwah et al. (2019) ^[5]
	BUOAF2	I noticed that it is not easy to find a reputable store selling organic agri-food products.	
	BUOAF3	I am used to the brand of products I am using, the use of organic agri-food products requires the start of a new habit.	
	BUOAF4	Where I usually buy food, I don't sell organic agri-food products.	
Barriers to the Value of Organic Agri-Food Products (BVOAF)	BVOAF1	I see the price of organic agri-food products is higher than that of other foods.	Huong et al. (2022) ^[2] ; Tandon et al. (2020) ^[9]
	BVOAF2	I see that the information on organic agri-food products and food products is still advertising, which takes time to search.	
	BVOAF3	I lost time comparing prices from an organic food agri-food product store	
	BVOAF4	I am concerned that the money spent on buying organic agri-food products and food is not worth the value received.	

Table 1. Cont.

Symbol	Variable Name	Variable	Sources
Barriers to Risks of Organic Agri-Food Products (BROAF)	BROAF1	I suspect that the label printed on the packaging is incorrect.	Huong et al. (2022) ^[2] , Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen (2017) ^[49]
	BROAF2	I am afraid that the certificate of meeting the standards is not reliable.	
	BROAF3	I am worried that the organic agri-food products available on the market are not of good quality.	
	BROAF4	I find it difficult to evaluate the quality of organic agri-food products.	
	BROAF5	I find it difficult to distinguish organic agri-food products from other foods.	
Intention to Accept Organic Agri-Food Products (IAOAF)	IAOAF1	When there is a choice between two foods with similar uses and functions, I will choose to buy foods that contribute to environmental protection.	Huong et al. (2022) ^[2] , Ramakrishna and Pinakapani (2025) ^[22]
	IAOAF1	I am likely to buy organic agri-food products in the near future.	
	IAOAF1	I will actively look for organic agri-food products to consume.	
	IAOAF1	I am willing to buy organic agri-food products, organic food instead of other foods.	
	IAOAF1	I will recommend organic agri-food products to relatives and friends.	

Health Awareness: Understood as the degree to which an individual cares, actively monitors, prevents, and performs behaviors to maintain and improve physical and mental health^[26, 47]. For organic agri-food products, many studies show that highly health-aware consumers often prefer them because they believe the products do not contain chemicals or genetically modified ingredients and have better nutritional value than conventional products^[47, 50, 51]. When they are aware that organic products help reduce exposure to pesticides and synthetic additives, they are willing to adjust their behavior, shifting from traditional to organic products as a long-term strategy to protect the health of themselves and their families^[27, 52]. On the TPB platform, health consciousness can be seen as a form of foundational belief that forms a positive attitude towards organic products and thereby promotes the intention to accept. Therefore, the study recommends:

H1. *Health awareness has a positive impact on the intention to accept organic agri-food products.*

Quality Safety: Reflects the extent to which con-

sumers evaluate organic agricultural and food products as ensuring both nutritional value (vitamin, mineral, antioxidant content) and safety in the production process without the use of genetically modified chemicals and ingredients^[48]. According to Ditlevsen et al.^[33] demonstrate that positive perceptions of safety and quality are one of the most important drivers in forming attitudes and intentions towards organic products. Consumers believe that organic food is more natural, fresher, and purer, which in turn is willing to pay higher prices to reduce health risks and enhance long-term benefits^[6, 53]. When consumers are convinced that organic agri-food products offer superior safety and quality benefits over conventional products, the intention to accept is strengthened.

H2. *Quality safety has the same impact on the intention to accept organic agricultural and food products.*

Product Quality Labels: Organic agri-food products are seen as an important information signal in the context that consumers cannot directly verify the tangible and intangible attributes of the product. Organic cer-

tification labels, eco-labels, or other signs of trust help reduce information asymmetry, increase confidence in the production process and product origin^[15, 48]. From the empirical literature, the presence of trustworthy quality labels can make a huge difference to the value and risk perceptions of the product. Hence, it can influence the acceptance intention of the purchase of organic agri-food products^[13]. In the emerging countries, which lack the ability to monitor the quality of the product and the information system, the role of the quality label is critical. Hence, for the proposed research, the quality label can be considered as a key factor that influences the acceptance intention of organic agri-food products.

H3. *Quality labels positively affect the intention to accept organic agri-foods.*

Barriers to use: Reflects consumers' view that organic agri-food products are hard to integrate into contemporary consumption patterns, which is, in fact, inconvenient in terms of format, product, or distribution channel^[43, 54]. In many instances, this type of barrier occurs among consumers who are used to conventional products, loyal to brands, and uninterested in changing, or among those who have challenges in finding reputable shops that retailer organic goods^[27, 49]. Inconveniences in shopping, for example, in terms of location, options, or accessing information, cause consumers to perceive using organic agri-food products as being much more complicated compared to conventional ones^[5]. In line with IRT & DFT, barriers to use, which are high, usually cause consumers to continue with their prevailing behaviors, thereby not changing or using new products.

H4. *Barriers to use have an inverse impact on the intention to accept organic agri-food products.*

Value Barrier: This entails the difference between the perceived benefits and costs faced in the selection of organic agri-food products. If the consumers feel that the amount invested on the products does not offset the benefits, or the information offered on the benefits is unclear, the consumers are expected to feel that the value for the money is underestimated, thus restraining the acceptance^[5, 54]. It is evident that the time needed for searching, the value of the cost, and the perception that the benefits provided are not greater compared to the

benefits offered by the conventional products are significant factors that shape value barriers^[32, 55]. When the income is considered to be restricted, the value barriers are emphasized, thus having a deleterious effect on the acceptance of intent for the organic agri-food products based on the principles of IRT.

H5. *The value barriers negatively affect the intention to adopt organic agri-food products.*

Risk Barriers: Linked to uncertainties among consumer groups with regard to the authenticity of organic agrifood products, the reliability of the certification process, as well as the information disclosed through labels of such products^[5, 16–18, 32]. According to Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen^[49], doubts about the organic authenticity of the product, lack of transparency in monitoring and the perception that stakeholders (farmers, retailers, businesses) may not be fully compliant are factors that increase perceived risk and reduce purchase intent. Basha and Lal^[55] added that confusion in the eco-label system and lack of understanding of the meaning of certifications make it difficult for consumers to distinguish organic products from other “natural” or “clean” products, thereby increasing the risk barrier. Within the framework of IRT, perceived risk is one of the decisive barriers that hinder acceptable behavior.

H6. *Barriers to risk adversely impact the intention to accept organic agri-food products.*

The above set of six hypotheses reflects the theoretical structure of the research model, in which the group of motivating factors (health awareness, quality safety, quality labels) is expected to increase the intention to accept organic agricultural and food products, while the group of inhibiting factors (value barriers, barriers to use, barriers to risk) undermines that intent. This model not only inherits the underlying theories but also concretizes the logic of the dual factor theory in the context of organic agricultural and food products in Vietnam.

2.3.5. Proposed Research Model

The research model is based on the integration of key fundamental theories, including rational action theory (TRA), intentional behavior theory (TPB), innovation resistance theory (IRT), and dual factor theory

(DFT). In accordance with the characteristics presented by the consumer behavior in agricultural and organic food products, that is, products with a high level of uncertainty, which imply that consumers will trust in the use of trust instruments, certifications, and psychological aspects in the decision-making process, the research model presents a synthesis that primarily focuses on two principal groups for the explanation of the results, including the group of motivating factors, and the group of inhibiting factors, that is, based on the integration of fundamental theories related to consumer behavior. Based on the synthesis, these two principal groups were included in the research model, which will be explained further in the next section.

The factors that belong to the motive group are: health consciousness of organic agri-food products, and quality safety of organic agri-food products, and quality of organic agri-food products. It can be understood that this set of factors emanates from the perceived advantages associated by consumers with organic agri-food products. The factors that belong to the barrier group

are: value barriers, usage barriers, and risk barriers that symbolize the potential to decrease the acceptance intention due to lack of clarity associated by consumers concerning cost, convenience, and lack of information transparency. The simultaneous presence of two groups of factors makes it possible to explain consumer acceptance of a phenomenon that has limitations for acceptance intentions if studied from a one-dimensional perspective.

The hypotheses are represented in the proposed research model (**Figure 1**), where each factor represents a component in the consumer evaluation process. This model not only reaffirms the role of traditional drivers such as health and quality, but also adds the risk dimension and capital value that are important characteristics of organic markets in developing countries. The full integration of these factors allows the model to more comprehensively explain the intention to accept organic agri-food products in the context of the study, and as a basis for empirical validation in the subsequent sections of the research paper.

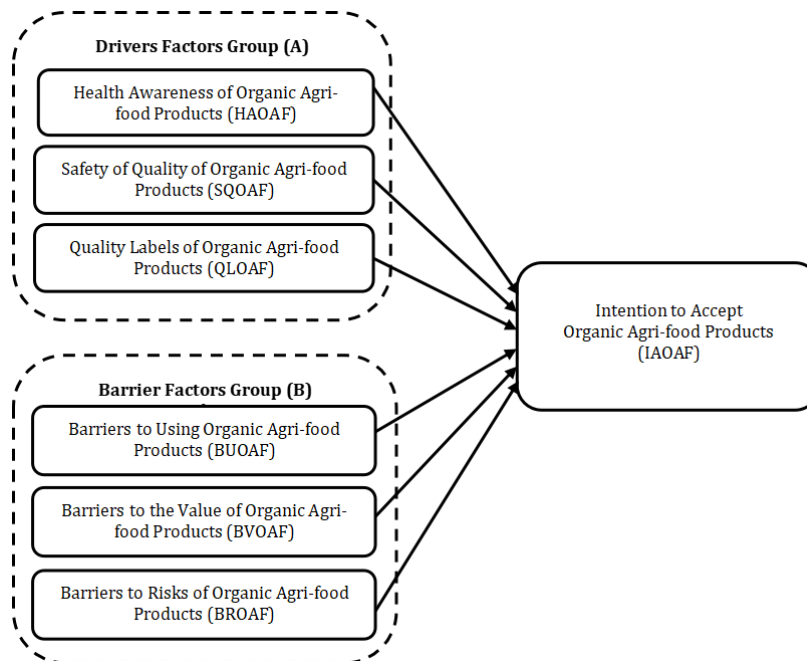


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

The study was designed to ensure the reliability and measurement value of the model of driving factors and barriers to the intention to accept organic agri-food products in Can Tho City. Strongly relying on the risk

perception and subjective assessment of consumers, the development of the scale and the survey process are carried out in many steps to ensure scientificity, rigor and relevance to the research context. The entire scale

is evaluated using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the total variable correlation coefficient, according to the recommended threshold by Hair et al.^[56], where the scale achieves good reliability when Cronbach's Alpha is between 0.8 and close to 1, acceptable when it is between 0.7 and 0.8, and can be used when it is 0.6 or higher. Observed variables with a sum variable correlation coefficient of less than 0.3 will be discarded. The questionnaires in the questionnaire were measured using a five-level Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), combined with nominal, hierarchical, and proportional scales to increase the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire and reduce measurement bias. According to the formula $n = 8m + 50$ ^[57], with $m = 32$ observed variables, the minimum required sample size is 306; Therefore, the current sample size ensures statistical strength for the analysis. The collected data is then analyzed through the SmartPLS software package and the testing of hypotheses and the SEM/PLS SEM structural model for a rigorous testing of the experiment. This research work is conducted in three phases:

Phase 1: Perform qualitative interviews with experts involving 10 people (scientists with expertise and experiences in organic agri-food products, marketing lecturers with knowledge of consumer behavior, sellers of clean agricultural products with expertise, consumers with experiences and interests in organic agri-food products). Recalibrate the scale in response, and calibrate the research questions in preparation for the mock interview survey, aiming to calibrate the questions, evaluate the relevance of content, and refine the first scale for the subsequent pilot survey. Findings of this stage are utilized to eliminate multiple questionnaires, achieve more clarity, and improve the compatibility of the theoretical framework and the reality of the market in the city of Can Tho. Moreover, the convenience sampling technique has been adopted in order to guarantee the feasibility and effectiveness of the data gathering process, in line with the socio-economic aspects of the city of Can Tho, which presents the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

Phase 2: Conduct a preliminary survey of 100 observations, then evaluate the analysis and recalibrate the 2nd time. The preliminary survey was conducted with

100 consumers in Can Tho City in July, February 2025 and August 2025. After removing the 20 invalid panels, the remaining 80 observations were used for the initial reliability test analysis. The results showed that all scales achieved a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.715 to 0.859, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.6^[56] and the total variable correlation coefficient was greater than 0.3, confirming the measurement quality of each observed variable. Therefore, the entire scale is kept the same for the official survey. This is an important pilot test step, helping to ensure that the observation variables operate stably and in accordance with the actual consumption behavior of people in Can Tho.

Phase 3: Large-scale formal survey, to ensure that the scale is reliable and suitable for the context of consumption of organic agri-food products in Vietnam. The study was officially conducted in October 2025 and November 2025 through a direct survey of 450 consumers in 5 wards in Can Tho City, Vietnam. The results of the filtering floor have 398 satisfactory survey papers and 52 invalid votes due to errors.

The survey subjects are consumers between the ages of 18 and 65, who have basic awareness or understanding of organic agri-food products. This criterion ensures that respondents have the ability to assess the level of acceptance of a particular type of product based on trust. A total of 500 survey panels were issued. After a screening process according to data quality standards that included the removal of tables that followed a fixed pattern, missing information, or inconsistent responses, a total of 398 valid panels were included in the analysis.

3. Results

The official sample structure of 398 observations relatively fully reflects the characteristics of consumer groups in Can Tho City in the context of research on organic agri-food products. According to **Table 2**, Geographical distribution, the survey sample collected from five wards in areas with high consumption density in Ninh Kieu, Cai Khe, Tan An, An Binh and Cai Rang shows the level of spread and uniform participation of consumers in commercial and service centers and suburban areas.

Table 2. Description of survey area.

No	Commune/Ward	Frequency	Rate (%)
1	Ninh Kieu ward	80	20.1
2	Cai Khe ward	80	20.1
3	Tan An ward	73	18.3
4	An Binh ward	75	18.8
5	Cai Rang ward	90	22.6
Total		398	100

Source: Field survey.

This allocation ensures a high level of representation when researching a specific product category such as organic agri-food products, which is strongly influenced by access conditions and the popularity of distribution channels.

According to **Table 3**, Demographic analysis shows that the gender ratio is fairly balanced, with females accounting for 50.3% and males accounting for 49.7%, reflecting the trend of food consumption in which women often play a major determinant role in the selection and evaluation of the quality of agricultural products for the family. Regarding age, the structure of the sample is primarily interested in those aged 25 to 40 years old, particularly those aged 25 to 30 years old (19.8%), 31 to 35 years old (22.6%), and 36 to 40 years

old (12.1%).

The data represent a sector of consumers who are generally mature in economic activity, possess high information access, but with peculiar sensitivities on issues concerning health associated with food safety, which makes them highly valuable to the study on the acceptance intent of organic agri-food products. At the same time, the 50-year-old and beyond category possesses relatively low magnitude age distributions reflecting a decrease or limited access to organic products distribution. As for the occupation of the targeted population, a high level of differentiation was recorded by the sample survey conducted among office workers at 24.9%, students at 22.1%, workers at 18.1%, employees at 19.8%, and self-employed persons at 14.6%.

Table 3. Profile of responders.

Information		Frequency	Rate (%)
Gender	Male	198	49.7
	Female	200	50.3
Occupation	Student	88	22.1
	Officer	99	24.9
	Worker	72	18.1
	Employees	79	19.8
	Freelancer	58	14.6
	Other	2	0.5
Age	From full 18 years old to 24 years old	68	17.1
	From 25 years old to 30 years old	79	19.8
	From 31 years old to 35 years old	90	22.6
	From 36 years old to 40 years old	48	12.1
	From 41 years old to 45 years old	28	7.0
	From 46 years old to 50 years old	36	9.1
	From 51 years old to 60 years old	28	7.0
	From 61 years old to 65 years old	21	5.3
Education	Elementary (grades 1–5)	1	0.3
	Middle School (grades 6–9)	37	9.3
	High School (10–12)	136	34.2
	College/University	197	49.4
	Postgraduate	27	6.8

Table 3. Cont.

Information		Frequency	Rate (%)
Income	Lower than 5 million VND/month	1	0.2
	From 5 million to less than 10 million VND/month	209	52.5
	From 10 million to less than 15 million VND/month	135	34.1
	From 16 million to less than 20 million VND/month	35	8.8
	From 20 million to less than 25 million VND/month	17	4.2
	From 25 million VND/month or more	1	0.2
Total		398	100

Source: Field survey.

In the study of behavior towards organic food, the participants of the group was highly educated. In particular, the university college group accounted for the largest proportion (49.4%), which is an important factor because they often have a better awareness of the health risks, food safety levels, and long-term benefits of organic food. Income distribution shows that more than half of the survey sample (52.5%) have an income of 5–10 million VND/month, followed by the group of 10–15 million VND (34.1%).

This is a common average income level in grade I urban areas, such as Can Tho and is also a suitable income level for segments that are able to consider spending on higher-priced products, such as organic agricultural products. Higher-income groups make up a small proportion, but still contribute to reflecting affordability diversity and price sensitivity, an important factor in the mechanism of impact of value barriers in research. Refer to **Table 3** in the text.

Overall, the sample structure with 398 observations clearly demonstrates the consistency with the study's objectives: a group of young, middle-aged, relatively educated and stable income consumers, who are considered to be the pioneers in the trend of green consumption and the transition to organic agri-food prod-

ucts. The survey sample not only ensures representation according to the demographic distribution of the city, but also reflects the characteristics of Vietnam's organic market, where health awareness, confidence in quality and affordability are key factors that determine the intention to accept the product.

Prior to analyzing the structural model, the study conducted an evaluation of the measurement model to ensure that the implicit concepts in the drivers and barriers model for the intention to accept organic agri-food products were reliably and validly measured. The results in **Table 4** show that the Cronbach's Alpha (CA) coefficients of the seven structures all range from 0.834 to 0.934; the rho_A value ranges from 0.841 to 0.935; while the aggregate reliability (CR) is greater than 0.88. These value thresholds all exceed the minimum recommended level of 0.70, indicating that the scale of each structure has good intrinsic consistency and can be used for further analysis^[58]. At the same time, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of the structures were greater than 0.50^[41]. Specifically, between 0.600 and 0.753 proves that each set of observed variables explains more than 50% of the variance of the factor it represents, thereby confirming the convergence value of the scales according to the standards of Fornell and Larcker^[59].

Table 4. Construct reliability validity.

Factor	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
BROAF	0.834	0.841	0.882	0.600	1.728–1.874
BUOAF	0.857	0.861	0.903	0.700	1.677–2.211
BVOAF	0.867	0.870	0.909	0.715	2.009–2.164
HAOAF	0.934	0.935	0.948	0.753	2.299–3.994
IAOAF	0.896	0.903	0.924	0.709	1.736–3.969
QLOAF	0.884	0.892	0.920	0.742	2.208–2.749
SQOAF	0.857	0.862	0.903	0.700	1.848–2.194

Evaluation of the overall suitability of the model shows that the indicators meet the statistical requirements according to the PLS-SEM standard. The SRMR index of the saturation model reached 0.078 and the estimated model reached 0.070, both below the threshold of 0.08 recommended by Hu and Bentler^[60], indicating that the degree of normalized deviation between the observed correlation matrix and the modeling matrix was within the acceptable limit and that the model had a good degree of consistency with the empirical data. At the same time, examining the multi-linear phenomenon through the VIF index showed that all VIF values of the structures were below the threshold of 5, which ranged from 1.677 to 3.994 according to **Table 4**.

This implies that there is no serious multicollinearity between the independent structures, and that the path coefficients in the structural model can be reliably estimated. At the same time, the results also reflect that each conceptual structure that includes the motivators and barriers to the intention of accepting organic agri-food products contributes separate information and does not overlap in variance, thereby ensuring relative independence between concepts. Combining the SRMR and VIF evidence, it is possible to confirm that the research model achieves a satisfactory level of relevance, does not violate the underlying assumptions

of PLS-SEM, and is ready for the interpretation of causal relationships in the structural model.

The external load coefficient results presented in **Table 5** show that all observed variables have a load greater than 0.74 and most of them are above 0.80. This implies that each observed variable has a high level of contribution to the corresponding latent structure, and that none need to be removed due to weak loading. At the same time, cross-load comparisons show that each observed variable always has the highest load coefficient on the target factor compared to the other factors, thereby reinforcing the evidence of the value of differentiation between concepts^[59]. The study also examines the phenomenon of multilinearity between independent structures through the IF index. The results showed that all VIF values ranged from approximately 1.68 to less than 4.0, which is less than the 5 threshold recommended by Hair et al.^[58]. This shows that the model does not have a serious multi-community problem and that the path factors in the structural model can be interpreted reliably. Summing up the above results, the measurement model in this study fully meets the requirements of reliability, convergence value and differential value, serving as a solid foundation for the validation of hypotheses of drivers and barriers to the intention of accepting organic agri-food products.

Table 5. Outer loading.

	BROAF	BUOAF	BVOAF	HAOAF	IAOAF	QLOAF	SQOAF
BROAF1	0.759						
BROAF2	0.781						
BROAF3	0.742						
BROAF4	0.800						
BROAF5	0.792						
BUOAF1		0.838					
BUOAF2		0.856					
BUOAF3		0.860					
BUOAF4		0.791					
BVOAF1			0.846				
BVOAF2			0.844				
BVOAF3			0.861				
BVOAF4			0.831				
HAOAF1				0.860			
HAOAF2				0.870			
HAOAF3				0.889			
HAOAF4				0.856			
HAOAF5				0.913			
HAOAF6				0.816			

Table 5. Cont.

	BROAF	BUOAF	BVOAF	HAOAF	IAOAF	QLOAF	SQOAF
IAOAF1					0.892		
IAOAF2					0.808		
IAOAF3					0.905		
IAOAF4					0.752		
IAOAF5					0.844		
QLOAF1						0.845	
QLOAF2						0.832	
QLOAF3						0.889	
QLOAF4						0.877	
SQOAF1							0.858
SQOAF2							0.810
SQOAF3							0.817
SQOAF4							0.861

Table 6 shows the results of the HTMT values to determine the discriminant validity. It is noted that all the HTMT values are below the cutoff value of 0.90, which implies that the discriminant validity for the measurement model is achieved. Even if some pairs of constructs

exhibit high values for the HTMT, the values are acceptable, especially given that the concepts are interrelated, such that consumers may view certain attributes, such as health, quality, and safety, of organic agri-food products in a holistic manner.

Table 6. Results of HTMT.

	BROAF	BUOAF	BVOAF	HAOAF	IAOAF	QLOAF	SQOAF
BROAF							
BUOAF	0.883						
BVOAF	0.878	0.897					
HAOAF	0.809	0.827	0.898				
IAOAF	0.775	0.836	0.833	0.883			
QLOAF	0.781	0.795	0.796	0.850	0.867		
SQOAF	0.710	0.797	0.719	0.787	0.723	0.861	

After confirming the quality of the measurement model, the study conducted an estimation of the structural model using PLS-SEM and tested the hypotheses through the bootstrapping procedure. The structural model and **Table 7** of the bootstrapping results show that all paths from the seven independent structures to the intent dependent variable on the acceptance of agricultural and organic food products (IAOAF) are statistically significant at 1% ($p \leq 0.01$), thereby confirming the entire research hypothesis. In terms of explanation, the R^2 value of the IAOAF variable reached approximately 0.945 and the corrected R^2 was approximately 0.944, suggesting that the dynamics and barriers in the model explained more than 94.4% of the variation in the intention to accept organic agri-food products. According to the rating scale by Hair et al. (2019)^[58], this is a high R^2 level, reflecting the model's strong ex-

planatory ability to consumer behavior in the context of the study. In terms of dimension and intensity of impact, the group of promoters exhibits positive path coefficients and is statistically significant. In particular, the organic product quality label (QLOAF) had the strongest effect on the intention to accept, with a coefficient of $\beta = 1.058$ and a value of $|t| = 14.836$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating the central role of certification signals and trust labels in reinforcing trust and motivating consumer decision-making towards organic food agri-cultural products.

The remaining two other motivating factors had a pronounced positive influence: the first was focused on the meaning of healthy or personal interest concerning organic consumption (BROAF) with $\beta = 0.491$; $|t| = 6.842$; and the second was linked to the eco-environmental advantages or use value of organic con-

sumption (BUOAF) with $\beta = 0.419$; $|t| = 3.870$ ($p < 0.001$). The findings illustrate that, aside from trust in certification marks, both value and time have a significant bearing on forming acceptance intentions, following the thesis of behavioral theories and the several views of green consumption. Conversely, the set of barrier factors presented a negative β and was found to be statistically significant, supporting the inhibiting effect of the barrier factors on the intention to accept organic agri-food. The Value Barrier to Acceptance Factor (BVOAF) has $\beta = -0.439$; $|t| = 5.334$ ($p < 0.001$). This reflects the view that consumers feel that the price and transaction costs of organic agri-food products are not in line with the benefits derived, which will seriously worsen their

intention to accept. Another very powerful factor, with a $\beta = -0.341$; $|t| = 6.398$ ($p < 0.001$), was risk barriers, which expresses skepticism about authenticity, reliability of certification, or concerns about fraud in the supply chain (HAOAF).

Finally, the barrier to use or inconvenience in the process of finding, procuring, and integrating organic agri-food products into current consumption habits (SQOAF) has a coefficient of $\beta = -0.238$; $|t| = 3.423$ ($p = 0.001$), suggesting that although the intensity of the effect was lower than the other two barriers, convenience and habit compatibility still played a significant role in transforming positive attitudes into behavioral intentions.

Table 7. Path analysis (PLS-SEM).

	O	M	STDEV	O/STDEV	p-Values	Result
BROAF -> IAOAF	0.491	0.490	0.072	6.842	0.000	Supported
BUOAF -> IAOAF	0.419	0.417	0.108	3.870	0.000	Supported
BVOAF -> IAOAF	-0.439	-0.437	0.082	5.334	0.000	Supported
HAOAF -> IAOAF	-0.341	-0.339	0.053	6.398	0.000	Supported
QLOAF -> IAOAF	1.058	1.057	0.071	14.836	0.000	Supported
SQOAF -> IAOAF	-0.238	-0.238	0.069	3.423	0.001	Supported

Synthesizing the structural model results shows a behavioural picture consistent with the theoretical framework of motivations and barriers: incentives related to quality labels, health benefits, and ecological benefits increase the willingness to accept organic agri-food products, while barriers to value, risk, and use tend to drag down this intent. The fact that all paths are statistically significant, along with a high R^2 level for the IAOAF variable, allows us to confirm that the PLS-SEM model is suitable and has a strong explanation for the intention to accept organic agri-food products in Can Tho City and provides a solid quantitative basis for theoretical discussions and governance implications in the next section.

Testing of the structural model showed that all hypotheses H1 to H6 were accepted, when the path coefficients were statistically significant with p -values less than 0.05. This reflects that driving drivers, including health awareness, quality safety and quality labels, along with barriers related to value, risk and use, all have a significant influence on the intention to accept organic agri-food products. The test results at the 95% confi-

dence level show the stability of the estimation coefficients, confirming the empirical role of variables in explaining the dependent variable in the model. The fact that all hypotheses are accepted also suggests that there are no cases like in previous studies, where some factors are not statistically significant because consumers lack product knowledge or have little interest in the information channel.

In contrast, in the context of organic agri-food products, consumers show a higher level of sensitivity to factors related to health, quality, authenticity, and cost, making the impact of both motivation and barrier pronounced. This implies that consumers in the organic market are not indifferent to product attributes but actively evaluate based on both perceived benefits and perceived risks; Therefore, all hypotheses reach the level of statistical significance. Overall, the model results show that the acceptance of organic agri-food products is clearly differentiated, where incentives tend to increase behavioral intentions, while barriers tend to hinder. This reinforces the argument of TPB, IRT and DFT theory that behavioral intention is not a consequence

of a single dimension of impact, but is formed from the structure of the interaction between the perception of benefit and the perception of risk. Refer to **Figure 2** in the text.

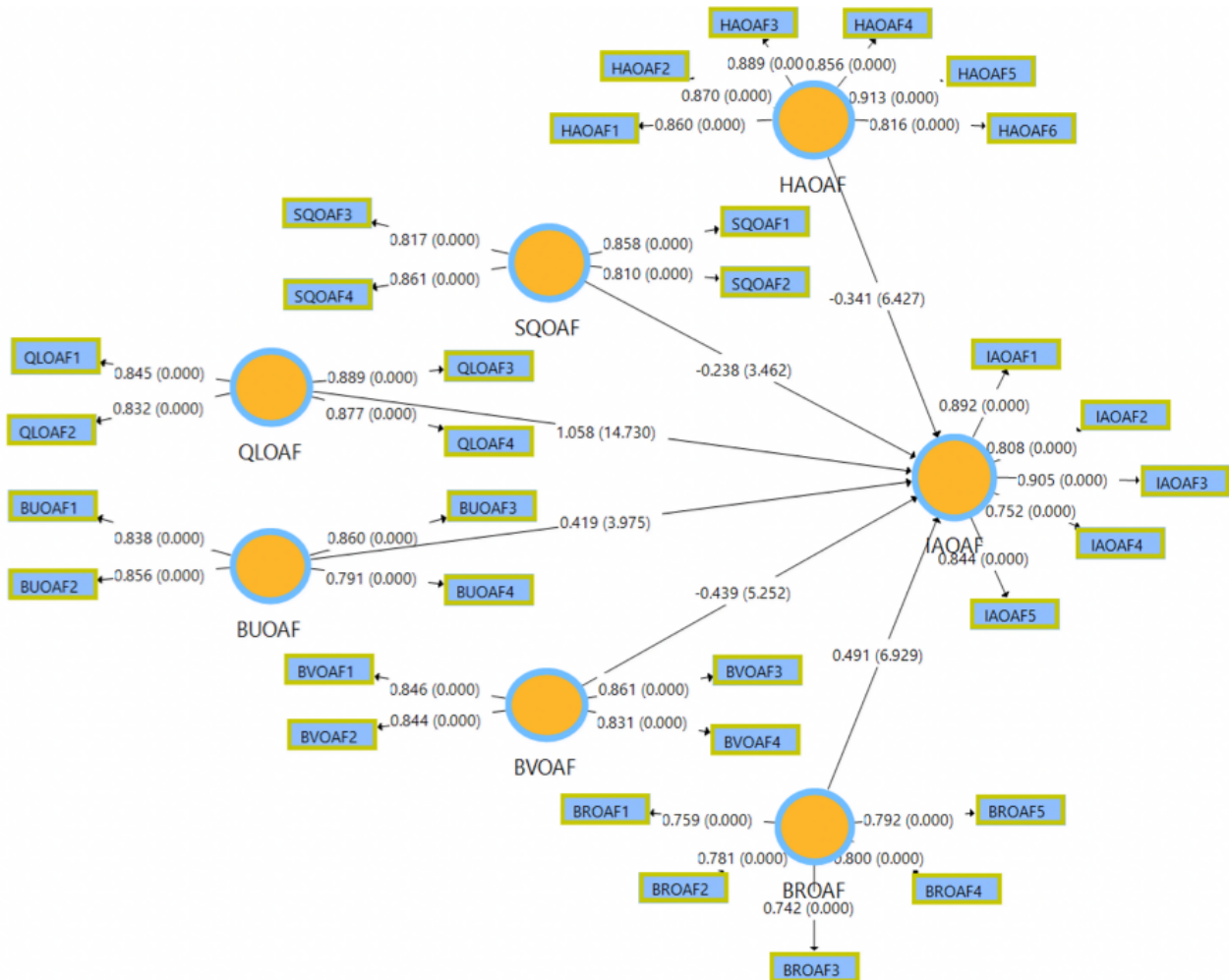


Figure 2. PLS-SEM path model.

4. Discussion

The results of the study show many similarities with previous works, particularly in the central role of health awareness, value barriers, and risk barriers in forecasting the intention to accept organic agri-food products, in line with the conclusions of Kushwah et al.^[5], Pham et al.^[27] and Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen^[49]. This consistency is expressed in the impact dimension: health consciousness reinforces the intention to accept, while value barriers and risk barriers degrade intentions, reflecting the psychological mechanisms that IRT and empirical studies have documented. However, the research also points out certain differ-

ences. Indeed, the greatest influencing factor is not health awareness, but the well-being of the ecosystem, indicating that the willingness to contribute to the environment and the social value are increasingly playing a significant part in organic consumption.

In addition, barriers to use appear as statistically significant inhibiting factors, contrary to some previous studies that have not recorded a significant impact. This clearly reflects the characteristics of an immature market, where convenience and traditional consumption habits still strongly influence the decision to choose organic. At the same time, while the value barrier still has a negative impact, its impact intensity is lower than the risk barrier and the barrier to use, implying that

in the current period, trust in authenticity and convenience may be more important than the cost factor for consumers who are considering organic products.

5. Conclusions

The study simultaneously examined the factors that motivated and inhibited the intention to accept organic agricultural and food products with a statistically significant level of 1%, providing a systematic view of the dynamic structure and barriers in the context of the Vietnamese market. Theoretically, the research contributes to strengthening and expanding the application of TPB, IRT and DFT in the field of green consumption behavior by building an integrated model of six specific factors associated with the context of organic agri-food products. The study also clarifies the gap between perception and intent by showing that both motivation (health consciousness, ecosystem well-being, quality safety) and barriers (value barriers, usage barriers, risk barriers) have a significant impact on acceptance intentions. Quantifying the intensity of each factor allows to identify key areas that need to be prioritized: strengthening communication about ecosystem and health benefits, and minimizing perceived risks and inconveniences of use. In practice, the research results are an important basis for businesses, distributors and management agencies to better understand the mechanism for forming the intention to accept organic agricultural and food products, thereby building a market development strategy suitable for Vietnamese conditions.

Firstly, regarding ecosystem welfare, businesses need to clearly emphasize the connection between their products and the goal of environmental protection and biodiversity. Communication, public education, and social responsibility programs should focus on clarifying how organic agricultural and food products contribute to reducing the use of chemicals, protecting the country, and protecting the country, and consumers will make it easier for consumers to make the decision to switch to organic products even in higher cost conditions.

Secondly, for health awareness, businesses and manufacturers need to provide scientific, easy-to-understand information about the nutritional benefits,

harms of “dirty” food, and the relationship between a healthy diet and long-term disease prevention. Nutrition counseling programs, seminars, and digital media campaigns can be used to reinforce this awareness, thereby enhancing positive attitudes and intentions to accept organic agricultural and food products.

Thirdly, in terms of quality and safety, businesses must strictly comply with the production, processing, and preservation processes, and at the same time make information transparent related to certification, origin and quality standards. Adherence to expired dates and the promotion of freshness and clearance of expired merchandise not only protects consumers, thereby enhancing safety, but also enhances brand reputation, which makes way for consumer loyalty.

Fourth, in efforts to limit risk barriers, an appropriate identity for businesses and an observational branding and packaging system should be incorporated. Additionally, public posting of certificates and ease of access, flexible return policies and comments, and review sites should be invested in to enhance perceptions and build firms that consumers find trustworthy. Exaggerated claims and advertising should be omitted, which may be difficult to prove.

Fifth, for barriers to use, businesses should expand their distribution network to residential areas that lack points of sale, improve product display, ensure appropriate storage conditions, and strengthen the direct support of salespeople. Taking advantage of online sales channels, door-to-door delivery, and integrating e-commerce platforms will help reduce inconvenience, thereby encouraging consumers to experience the product.

Finally, regarding the value barrier, businesses need to build a more flexible pricing strategy, which can diversify packaging specifications to create prices that are suitable for many income segments. Promotions, quantity discounts or loyal customer groups can help consumers feel the value for money more clearly. At the macro level, support policies on credit, land and certification costs from the State also play an important role in reducing production costs and creating conditions for the formation of stable and reasonable prices for organic agricultural and food products.

Research Limitations and Direction of Further Research

First, the convenience sampling method saves costs and time, but limits the ability to generalize the results to the entire market, especially for populations with little access to organic products. Secondly, the scope of research is concentrated in an urban area, so it does not fully reflect the behavior of consumers in rural areas or other provinces. Third, the sample size is still not large enough to be considered representative of the entire consumer in the country. Fourth, the model only considers three motivating factors and three inhibiting factors when, in fact, there may be many other factors, such as subjective norms, institutional beliefs, or the influence of social media.

Finally, the study uses multiple regression with a one-way impact direction, which has not yet examined more complex relationships such as indirect effects or regulatory roles between variables. From these limitations, some suggestions for further research are provided. Firstly, the stratified or random sample selection method should be applied to improve representation, combined with expanding the scope of the survey to many different localities. Secondly, the following studies can add factors such as subjective norms, belief in institutions, traditional barriers or social image, in order to better complete the picture of motivations and barriers in the acceptance of organic agricultural and food products.

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Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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