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FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS' PURCHASE DECISIONS FOR GREEN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN VINH LONG PROVINCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROMOTING GREEN CONSUMPTION

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ABSTRACT

Growing environmental concerns and increasing demand for sustainable consumption have highlighted the importance of promoting consumers' purchasing decisions for green agricultural products in Vietnam. This study investigates the factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions regarding green agricultural products in Vinh Long Province and proposes practical measures to encourage green consumption. The research adopts a mixed analytical approach by synthesizing relevant literature and collecting empirical data through a survey of 300 consumers in Vinh Long Province. The findings provide evidence on consumers' purchasing decisions and identify key issues affecting the adoption of green agricultural products in the local market. Based on these findings, the study proposes five major groups of solutions: (1) enhancing communication and community awareness, (2) developing distribution systems and expanding market access, (3) implementing appropriate pricing and promotional policies, (4) strengthening product transparency and quality assurance, and (5) supporting farmers in adopting green production practices. The study contributes practical recommendations for policymakers, producers, and distributors to promote green agricultural consumption and advance sustainable agricultural development in Vinh Long Province.

***Keywords**: green agricultural products; purchase decision; green consumption; sustainable agriculture; Vinh Long Province.*

Introduction

Environmental issues and their impacts on human health are currently among the top concerns of the scientific community, state management agencies, and many international organizations (Yadav & Pathak, 2016; Haytko & Matulich, 2008). According to Leung, H. (2018, April 21), Vietnam is among the top five Asian countries - along with China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand - that contribute the largest amount of plastic waste to the ocean, exceeding the combined total of all other countries worldwide.

At the same time, air pollution, water pollution, unsafe food, and products of unclear origin are becoming increasingly widespread, directly affecting public health and increasing social costs in healthcare and social security. Recognizing the essential role of sustainable consumption in environmental protection and public health, the Vietnamese Government issued Decision No. 1393/QD-TTg on the National Green Growth Strategy for the period 2011-2020, with a vision to 2050. In this strategy, the tasks of "greening production" and "greening consumption" are identified as strategic pillars to shift the growth model from extensive to intensive and sustainable development.

In practice, more and more domestic and foreign companies and producers have proactively adjusted their production and business strategies towards sustainable development, accompanying consumers in environmental protection. However, the development and diffusion of green products in Vietnam still face many barriers. In this context, conducting research to identify feasible solutions to promote green product consumption decisions is necessary and urgent. This is not only an economic or environmental issue but also a social and ethical responsibility toward public health and future generations.

1. Theoretical Background and Research Methods

Theoretical Background

The term "green" was used by Olson (2013) in his study on the effects of trade-offs on green products. In this context, "green" and "environmentally friendly" refer to reducing environmental impacts, saving energy and/or natural resources, and avoiding the use of polluting and/or environmentally destructive chemicals (Johnstone & Tan, 2015).

Yi (2017) defined green agricultural products as those that comply with the principles of sustainable development, are produced under specific conditions, and are certified by professional agencies to use green food labels, being non-polluting, of good quality, and nutritious. Currently, the consumption of green agricultural products is quite common in developed countries (Braimah, 2015). According to Yi (2017), products produced under gap standards are also considered green agricultural products, and promoting gap marketing is of great significance worldwide. Gap consumption not only enhances the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises but also contributes to environmental protection.

Many studies on consumer behavior decisions have applied well-established theories that have been tested and empirically validated worldwide. Accordingly, this study revisits several common models, including the theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), the theory of planned behavior (TPB) by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), and the consumer behavior model by Kotler et al. (2005).

Based on the review of previous studies, most existing models on green consumption mainly focus on analyzing factors affecting green purchase intention in general, while few studies have examined green agricultural products in depth - a distinctive feature of Vietnam's economy in general and Vinh Long province in particular.

Research Methodology

The study collected and analyzed previous research and reports on the green agricultural market, while also reviewing major theories of consumer behavior, such as the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Based on these sources, logical reasoning was employed to synthesize a general theoretical framework for the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey with a sample size of 300 consumers in Vinh Long province. The measurement scales and research model adopted in this study were based on the findings of Le Ngoc Doan Trang and Truong Thi Hoang Oanh (2024) regarding the factors affecting intention to purchase green Products in Vinh Long city. On this basis, statistical analyses were conducted to examine the mean values of consumers' evaluations of these factors in the Vinh Long market.

Convenience sampling was applied to ensure representation across different consumer groups in terms of age, income, and residential area (urban and rural). After data collection, the dataset was processed to identify similarities and differences in consumer behavior. Based on the synthesis of the obtained results, the study provides a comprehensive view of the current state of green consumption in the locality and proposes relevant policy and managerial solutions.

2. Results and Discussion

Based on the survey of 300 residents in Vinh Long province regarding the purchase of green (agricultural) products, the main results are as follows:

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Content		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	119	39,7
	Female	181	60,3
Education	High school	11	3,7
	University	255	85,0
	Postgraduate	34	11,3

Interest in green products	Yes	270	90
	No	30	10
Ever purchased green agricultural products	Yes	201	67
	No	99	33,9

(Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)

Among the surveyed sample, only 201 respondents (67%) had ever purchased green products. The green agricultural products most frequently purchased were fruits (75%), followed by rice (60%) and vegetables (58%). Other products, such as seafood, processed products, and livestock products, were also of interest, but at lower rates.

This can be explained by several reasons. First, these are essential food groups consumed daily. Second, consumers have high awareness of health risks, as fruits, vegetables, and rice are easily affected by pesticide residues, preservatives, and growth stimulants. Therefore, consumers tend to seek "green" products to minimize health risks. Third, fruits, vegetables, and rice are widely promoted under labels such as "clean," "organic," and "biologically safe," making them easier to recognize.

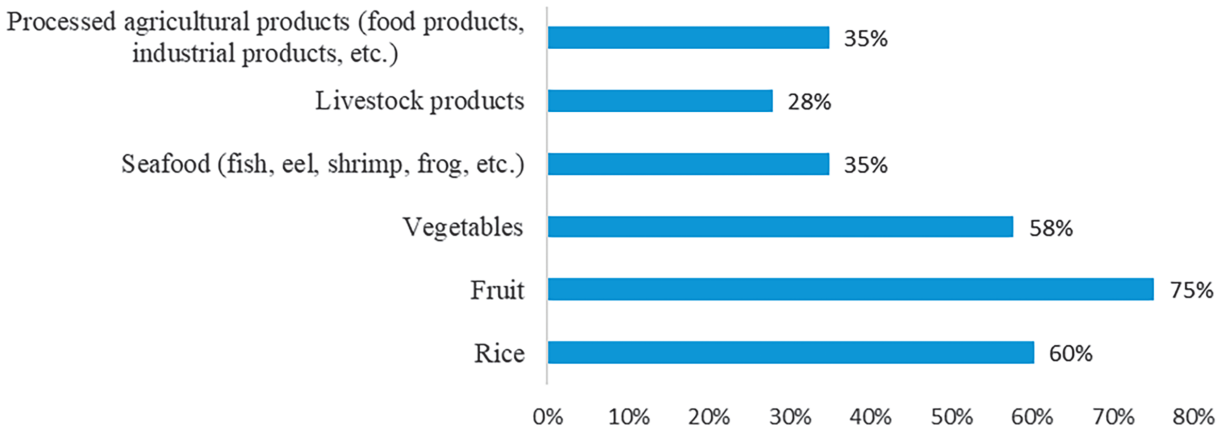

Figure 1. Chart of Green Agricultural Products Previously Purchased

(*Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)*

These products are also widely available in supermarkets and clean food stores, facilitating access. Survey results on purchasing locations show that supermarkets are the most preferred outlets, followed by clean food stores. This reflects the growing preference for official and reliable distribution channels for safe and environmentally friendly food:

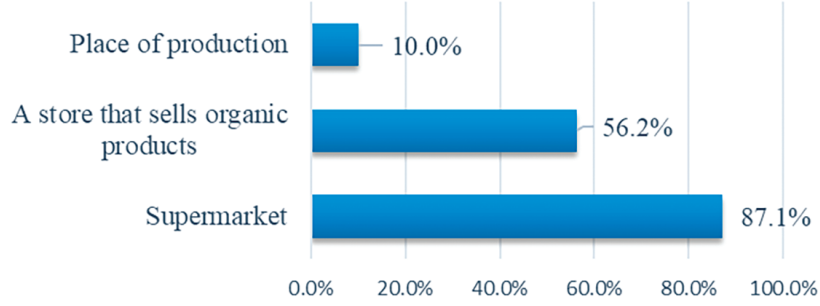

Figure 2. Chart of Places Where Green Agricultural Products Are Purchased

(Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)

Thus, supermarkets were identified as the most preferred purchasing locations for green agricultural products, followed by specialized clean food stores. This pattern indicates that

consumers are increasingly paying attention to official and highly reliable distribution channels when accessing safe and environmentally friendly food. This trend can be explained by the fact that supermarkets and clean food stores typically implement strict quality control procedures, provide clear information on product origin, and ensure adequate labeling, thereby enhancing consumers' confidence in selecting green products. Products sold in these outlets usually carry visible labels and certifications, such as VietGAP, organic, and GlobalGAP. In addition, modern consumption psychology, particularly in urban areas, tends to place greater trust in modern distribution channels such as supermarkets and specialized retail stores, as these outlets are perceived as more reputable and less prone to commercial fraud than traditional markets.

Subsequently, the study examined the ease of purchasing green agricultural products, and the results are presented as follows:

Figure 3. Chart on Whether It Is Easy to Purchase Green Agricultural Products

(Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)

Regarding purchase convenience, most respondents reported that purchasing green agricultural products was easy or normal. However, about 10% still found it difficult due to concerns about counterfeit products, limited outlets, high prices, or information overload. Regarding price, 47.76% of respondents considered green products expensive, although still acceptable.

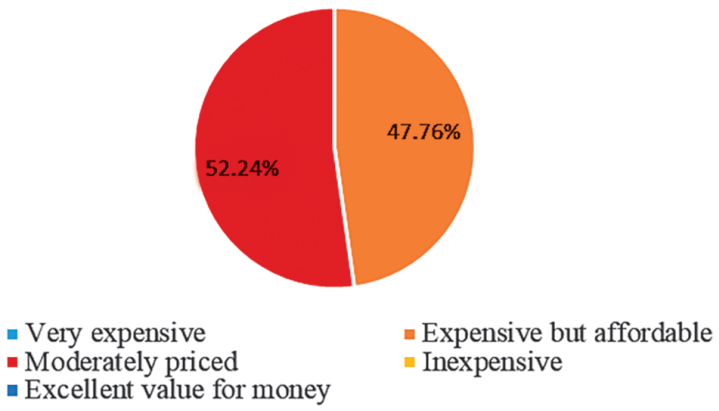

Figure 4. Chart Evaluating the Prices of Green Agricultural Products

(Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)

Regarding marketing programs, 31% of consumers believed that promotional policies were still limited. This may be because many green agricultural producers are small-scale with limited marketing resources and

insufficient investment in promotions. The lack of promotions may hinder market expansion, making it difficult to attract new customers or those who do not yet trust green products.

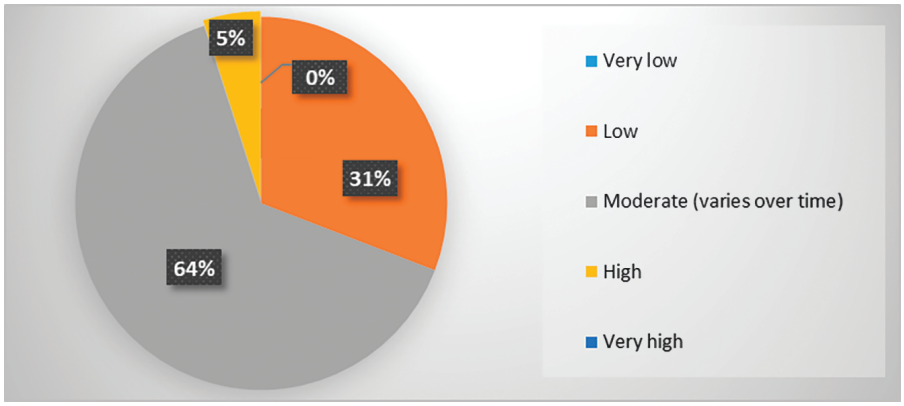

Figure 5. Chart Evaluating the Prices of Green Agricultural Products

(Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)

Most consumers learned about green agricultural products through self-searching for information. Specifically, 57.2% relied on product certifications, 50.2% through advertising channels, 43.3% through recommendations from relatives or friends, and 35.8% through direct introduction by sellers.

Overall, green agricultural consumption in Vinh Long province shows a positive development trend. However, there are still barriers that hinder expansion, requiring specific solutions such as strengthening communication, increasing information transparency, diversifying distribution channels, and implementing appropriate pricing and incentive policies.

Table 2. Analysis of the Mean Values of the Measurement Scales

Criteria	Sample	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Evaluation
You consider yourself a health-conscious consumer.	201	1	5	4.55	Agree
You always choose healthy products.	201	1	5	4.42	Strongly agree
You are aware of global warming.	201	1	5	4.36	Strongly agree
You are aware of green products.	201	1	5	4.22	Strongly agree
You are aware of climate change.	201	1	5	4.30	Strongly agree
You are familiar with the term “greenhouse gas.”	201	1	5	4.05	Agree
You are aware of environmental issues.	201	1	5	4.36	Strongly agree
You frequently read/listen to product reviews from other consumers to identify which products/brands create a good impression	201	1	5	4.14	Agree

You read/listen to product reviews from other consumers to ensure that you are purchasing the right product/brand.	201	1	5	4.26	Strongly agree
You often consult other consumers to help choose a suitable product/brand.	201	1	5	4.19	Agree
You frequently collect information from other consumers' reviews before purchasing a specific product/brand.	201	1	5	4.13	Agree
You feel concerned about your purchase decision if you do not read/listen to product reviews from other consumers.	201	1	5	4.12	Agree
Product reviews from other consumers make you feel more confident when purchasing a product.	201	1	5	4.29	Strongly agree
You believe that companies conduct promotional programs that explain the positive environmental impacts they bring.	201	1	5	4.02	Agree
You feel responsible for environmental pollution.	201	1	5	4.45	Strongly agree
You feel responsible for the greenhouse effect.	201	1	5	4.27	Strongly agree
You feel responsible for air quality conditions.	201	1	5	4.23	Strongly agree
Buying green products is a smart choice.	201	1	5	4.40	Strongly agree
Switching to green products brings many benefits.	201	1	5	4.43	Strongly agree

(Source: Results from the consumer survey data in Vinh Long)

Based on the analysis of the mean values from 201 consumers who have used green products in Vinh Long Province, the findings indicate that the levels of awareness, environmental responsibility, and consumption behavior toward green products are relatively high. The average scores of the criteria range from "agree" to "strongly agree." This suggests that most consumers are not only concerned about their personal health but also possess a certain level of understanding of global environmental issues.

In addition, consumers highly value green products and expect businesses to clearly demonstrate environmental responsibility in their marketing activities. However, to enhance consumption effectiveness and expand the green product market, enterprises and policymakers need to implement solutions such as strengthening the provision of transparent and accessible product information and certifications, developing communication and promotional programs associated with environmental values, and effectively leveraging word-of-mouth channels and consumer communities to disseminate the value of green products.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights that green agricultural consumption in Vinh Long Province is gradually gaining momentum, driven by increasing consumer awareness of health and environmental issues. Although a considerable proportion of consumers have shown positive attitudes and

willingness to purchase green products, several barriers such as limited accessibility, price sensitivity, and information asymmetry still hinder market expansion. The findings underscore the importance of a coordinated approach involving government authorities, enterprises, and producers to enhance communication, improve distribution systems, ensure transparency, and support sustainable production practices. Addressing these challenges will not only strengthen consumer trust and purchasing behavior but also contribute to the long-term development of a sustainable green agricultural ecosystem in Vinh Long Province.

4. Managerial Implications and Research Limitations

Managerial Implications

Enhancing Communication and Community Awareness

Promoting green agricultural consumption requires systematic and consistent communication strategies. Authorities and stakeholders should strengthen mass communication through traditional and digital media, ensuring that information on green standards (e.g., VietGAP, GlobalGAP, organic certification), health benefits, environmental impacts, and product identification is clear and accessible. Community workshops, seminars, and school-based educational programs should be organized regularly to foster early awareness and sustainable consumption habits. In the digital era, multimedia content such as short videos, infographics, and inspirational stories can effectively engage younger consumers. The active involvement of local authorities and socio-political organizations is essential in organizing fairs, campaigns, and community initiatives that encourage collective participation in green consumption.

Developing Distribution Systems and Expanding Market Access

Expanding the availability of green agricultural products beyond urban centers is critical. Supportive policies should encourage the establishment of retail outlets in rural and suburban areas through financial incentives, cooperative linkages, and infrastructure support. The development of local green markets, where certified farmers sell directly to consumers, can enhance trust and strengthen producer-consumer relationships. Integrating e-commerce platforms and home delivery services will further improve accessibility and convenience. Modern retail systems should allocate dedicated sections for certified green products to increase visibility and reinforce consumer confidence.

Implementing Reasonable Pricing and Promotional Policies

Financial barriers remain a major obstacle to green consumption. In the early stages of market development, local governments may apply targeted subsidy programs to support production, certification, and price stabilization. Enterprises should implement strategic promotional activities, including seasonal discounts, product bundles, and trial programs, to encourage first-time purchases. Loyalty schemes and reward programs can enhance customer retention and foster long-term consumption behavior. Such measures help create favorable conditions for market expansion while maintaining sustainability.

Strengthening Transparency and Quality Control

Building consumer trust requires strict inspection, supervision, and enforcement against fraudulent labeling practices. Authorities should intensify market monitoring and impose sanctions on counterfeit certifications. The application of traceability technologies, such as QR codes and digital tracking systems, can enhance transparency across the value chain. Public dissemination of standardized identification criteria for certified products is also necessary to reduce consumer confusion. In addition, community-based feedback and rating systems may complement official certification mechanisms, contributing to accountability and continuous quality improvement.

Supporting Farmers in Green Production

A sustainable supply of green products depends on strengthening farmers' capacity. Technical training on organic farming, VietGAP and GlobalGAP standards, and sustainable practices should be provided regularly. Financial assistance, preferential loans, and subsidies for certification and equipment are necessary to reduce transition costs. Simplifying certification procedures and promoting collective certification models can increase participation among small-scale farmers.

Moreover, establishing stable contractual linkages between producers and enterprises will ensure secure market outlets, thereby encouraging long-term commitment to green production.

Overall, promoting green agricultural consumption in Vinh Long Province requires coordinated efforts among government authorities, enterprises, producers, and consumers. Removing structural barriers, enhancing transparency, and strengthening supply-demand linkages are fundamental to developing a sustainable green agricultural ecosystem.

Research Limitations

Despite achieving certain findings, this study has several limitations. The analysis remains primarily descriptive and relies largely on secondary data without employing advanced quantitative methods, limiting the depth of empirical validation. Furthermore, the research scope is confined to selected localities within Vinh Long Province, which may reduce the generalizability of the proposed implications to other regions. Future studies should expand the sample size and apply more rigorous quantitative approaches to enhance reliability and external validity.

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