UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE, EXPERIENCES, AWARENESS, AND STUDENT SATISFACTION WITH SUSTAINABLE FOOD: A CASE STUDY IN HO CHI MINH

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the impact of perception, attitude, and consumer experience on student satisfaction regarding sustainable food in Ho Chi Minh City. A quantitative research method was employed, and data were collected from 395 students. After filtering, 300 responses were used for analysis. The study used SPSS software to measure perception, attitude, experience, and satisfaction reliability. The Smart-PLS software was used to test the research framework. The research findings indicate that perception, attitude, and consumer experience positively impact student satisfaction when consuming sustainable food. The study provides valuable insights into students' perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and satisfaction regarding sustainable food. It identifies the positive effects of perception, attitude, and consumer experience on the ultimate satisfaction of students with sustainable food. Therefore, improving student satisfaction is necessary to improve their perception, attitude, and experience towards sustainable food.

Keywords: Sustainable Food, Perception, Attitude, Experience, Satisfaction, Students

Introduction

One of the primary goals of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, established in 2015, is to ensure the production and consumption of sustainable food (Colglazier, 2015; Grosso et al., 2020). Ensuring sustainability in food production and consumption plays a crucial role in addressing food security and nutrition challenges while also being an important part of safeguarding the environment, promoting sustainable economic development, and building a sustainable future for future generations (Pachapur et al., 2020).

In contemporary Western society, sustainable food consumption is becoming an important aspect of sustainable development (Hoek et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2022). The global food system significantly impacts climate change and gives rise to serious environmental issues such as biodiversity loss, water exploitation, and pollution (Baloch et al., 2023; Rehman et al., 2022). Consumers in developed countries are increasingly concerned about community health, quality of life, and natural resource conservation, leading to a clearer preference for sustainable food choices and the emergence of selectively and rigorously managed products (Marinova et al., 2022).

Promoting sustainable food is not limited to developed nations but is a matter of global significance (Adesogan et al., 2020; Qaim, 2020). In Vietnam, advocating for sustainable food consumption is crucial in the country's sustainable development strategy (Yagi & Kokubu, 2020). The Vietnamese population is becoming increasingly aware of the significance of consuming sustainable food for personal well-being and environmental preservation (Nguyen et al., 2021). Nevertheless, numerous challenges persist, such as raising awareness, shaping consumer attitudes, improving experiences, and strengthening the management and adherence to sustainable food standards.

Examining student groups is crucial as they represent a youthful demographic that significantly impacts future societal trends and consumption patterns (Bui et al., 2021; Luong & Nguyen,

2024). This research establishes the relationship between perception, attitude, experience, and student satisfaction concerning sustainable food consumption. The study employs SPSS and Smart-PLS software to analyze survey data to achieve research objectives. The results of this inquiry will provide significant knowledge regarding the interrelation of these variables and positively contribute to the progression of sustainable consumption, particularly sustainable food consumption.

Literature Review

Sustainable Food

From a product lifecycle perspective, sustainable consumption behavior encompasses the stages of purchase, use, and disposal or, more specifically, buying and using sustainable products and managing and disposing of used products (Geng et al., 2017). This definition highlights the efficient use of products and services, reducing the use of natural resources and hazardous materials, and minimizing pollution emissions (Nguyen et al., 2021). Sustainable food consumption ensures food security, nutrition, and a healthy life for the present and future (Clark et al., 2020) (19). Sustainable food consumption respects biodiversity and ecosystems, ensures economic fairness and affordability, and optimizes natural and human resources (Biesbroek et al., 2023).

Attitude

Consumers' attitude towards sustainable food products can influence their shopping experience and overall satisfaction. Previous research has indicated that consumer attitudes towards sustainable food can impact their shopping experiences (Costa et al., 2021; Hoek et al., 2017). Furthermore, an individual's attitude can also affect their intention to consume and behavior toward sustainable food products (Ajzen, 1991; Hill et al., 1977). Therefore, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis H1: Attitude has a significant impact on the satisfaction levels of consumers regarding sustainable food.

Perception

Previous studies have examined the relationship between perception, behavior control, and purchase intention across various domains, including the food sector (Ran et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2020). For instance, the relationship between risk perception and benefit perception in consumer food consumption behavior has been investigated (Li et al., 2020; Nardi et al., 2020). Risk and benefit perceptions are important theoretical constructs that explain consumer behavior and purchase intentions when selecting products or services (Luong & Ho, 2023; Nardi et al., 2020). Furthermore, attitude, trust, subjective norms, and behavior control influence green consumption intentions and behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Luong & Ho, 2023; Rita et al., 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:
Hypothesis H2: Perception significantly impacts satisfaction with sustainable food consumption.

Experience

Previous research has demonstrated that when consumers feel satisfied with a product and have positive experiences, they are more likely to become satisfied and loyal consumers of sustainable food in the future (Arslan, 2020; Cachero-Martínez et al., 2024). Furthermore, they may share their positive experiences with others, creating a positive ripple effect for sustainable

food products (Cachero-Martínez et al., 2024). Satisfaction responds to consumers' understanding and evaluation of their experiences (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H3: Consumer experience significantly impacts satisfaction with sustainable food. Figure 1 displays the research framework:

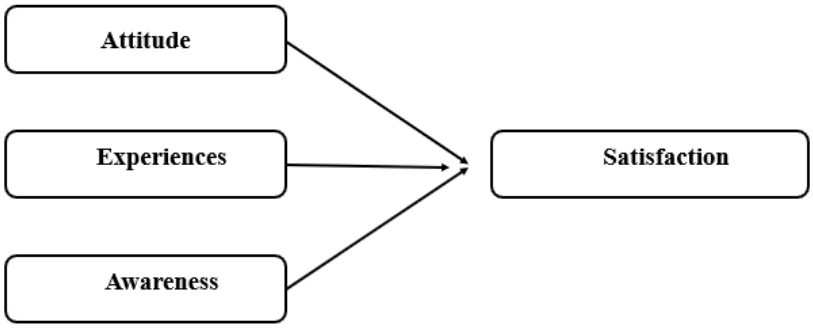

Figure 1. Research Framework

Methodology

Measurements

This study employed a questionnaire to gather information on four factors: perception, attitude, experience, and satisfaction of students regarding sustainable food consumption in Ho Chi Minh City. The questions were constructed based on hypotheses and theoretical foundations from previous research in the food domain. The survey consisted of 26 questions divided into four main sections. The initial questions were drafted in English and professionally translated into Vietnamese to ensure accuracy and consistency. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all the questions.

Part 1 comprised 7 attitude-related questions, adapted and modified from previous studies (Luong & Nguyen, 2024). Part 2 consisted of 6 perception-related questions, adjusted and revised from previous studies (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020; Zhang & Dong, 2021). Part 3 included 6 experience-related questions, adjusted and revised from previous research (Arslan, 2020). Part 4 comprised 7 satisfaction-related questions, adjusted and revised from previous research (Parashar et al., 2023). Additionally, there were demographic questions related to students' loyalty towards sustainable food consumption.

Data Collection and Analysis

After determining the age group and sample size, the researcher proceeded with the survey following the steps outlined below:

Step 1: The author designed a questionnaire using Google Forms, consisting of Part I for collecting personal information and Part II for the main survey questions. Subsequently, a survey link and QR code were generated for convenient sharing.

Step 2: The survey link was published and distributed to research groups in multiple universities in Ho Chi Minh City through social media platforms such as Facebook and Zalo. Additionally, the research team visited some universities in Ho Chi Minh City to randomly survey students, aiming to enhance the effectiveness and accuracy of the study. This approach allowed for wide accessibility and facilitated the collection of diverse responses. By leveraging

the popularity and accessibility of these platforms, the researchers aimed to maximize the survey's visibility and encourage the participation of many individuals.

Step 3: The survey was conducted from February 21, 2024, to March 7, 2024, and received 395 responses. The data was efficiently collected and screened to ensure its relevance to the research topic. Finally, 300 valid responses were retained after excluding 95 invalid responses. On May 10, 2024, the research team transferred the data to SPSS 22 and Smart-PLS 4.10 software for analysis.

Results

Participant Demographic

SPSS was used to analyze the data collected through survey research. The following is a statistical description of gender, age, marital status, income, residence, and consumer behavior. The male-to-female ratio was 31.3% (n=94), and the female-to-male ratio was 68.7% (n=206). Among the participants, 38.3% (n=115) fell into the age range of 18 to 21. Notably, 52.7% (n=158) were in a romantic relationship with the opposite gender, and 38.3% (n=115) of students had a monthly income of over 5 million Vietnamese dong. Additionally, 40% (n=120) of the participants lived in rented houses or apartments, and 43.7% (n=131) were in university dormitories. The ratio between those who participated in self-cooking was 48% (n=144), and those who used processed food was 52% (n=156), nearly equal. Remarkably, 42% (n=126) prioritized using clean and organic food. Regarding health, most of them did not follow restrictive diets, with a rate of 98.7% (n=296). (Table 1)

Table 1. Participants Demographic

Items		Frequency	Percent (%)
1. Gender	Male	94	31,3
	Female	206	68,7
2. Age	Under 18 years old	26	8,7
	18 to 21 years old	115	38,3
	22 to 24 years old	87	29
	Over 24 years old	72	24
3. Marital status	Single	118	39,3
	In a relationship	158	52,7
	Married	24	8
4. Monthly income	Below 1 million VND per month	25	8,3
	1 to 3 million VND per month	73	24,3
	3 to 5 million VND per month	87	29
	Above 5 million VND per month	115	38,3
5. Accommodation	Rented accommodation or apartment	120	40
	Residing in the university dormitory	131	43,7
	Own a house in Ho Chi Minh City	49	16,3
6. Type of eating	Cook their meals	144	48
	Consume pre-prepared food	156	52
7. Diet status	Prioritize using clean, organic food	126	42
	Do not follow any specific dietary rules	174	58
8. Limitation in eating	Yes	4	1,3
	No	296	98,7

Measurement Descriptive

Table 2 provides descriptive information about the constructs and their corresponding items, including the mean values, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients. To focus on the highest mean values for each construct, the following descriptions can be provided:
Attitude: The item with the highest mean value is "You care about the food preservation methods of suppliers" (Mean = 4.22). Perception: The item with the highest mean value is "You are concerned about animal welfare" (Mean = 4.17). Experience: The item with the highest mean value is "You understand the origin and production process of the food you consume" (Mean = 4.14). Satisfaction: The item with the highest mean value is "You have switched to using sustainable food more frequently" (Mean = 4.28).

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha analysis was used to assess the reliability of each construct. Cronbach's alpha values greater than or equal to 0.7 are generally acceptable (42). Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for attitude (Cronbach's alpha = 0.835), perception (Cronbach's alpha = 0.808), experience (Cronbach's alpha = 0.858), and satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = 0.898), all of which exceed the threshold of 0.7. Therefore, all items are considered reliable within an acceptable range (Table 2).

Table 2. Measurement Descriptive

Construct/Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude			0,831
You prioritize shopping at supermarkets.	4,21	0,979	0,809
You are concerned about the food preservation methods of the supplying establishments.	4,22	0,943	0,81
You are willing to pay a higher price to obtain higher-quality food.	4,02	0,976	0,803
You prioritize purchasing food that represents the local region.	4,04	1,066	0,789
To save costs, you should refrain from using food nearing its expiration date.	4,09	0,941	0,811
Awareness			0,832
You care about environmental protection.	4,11	1,083	0,745
You care about pesticide residues in food.	4,14	1,072	0,761
You care about animal welfare.	4,17	0,952	0,778
You would use genetically modified food if it has health benefits.	4,07	1,09	0,754
Experiences			0,849
Sustainable food provides better nutritional value.	4,04	1,014	0,839
Using sustainable food helps limit environmental waste.	4,03	1,142	0,833
You clearly understand the origin and production processes of the food you consume.	4,14	0,962	0,836
You have the financial means to afford the cost of regularly using sustainable food.	4,01	1,108	0,81
Sustainable food is not necessarily completely free of chemicals.	4,12	1,016	0,835
Satisfaction			0,899
You are satisfied with the quality of sustainable food.	4,1	1,148	0,881

You are satisfied with the health benefits that sustainable food brings.	4,21	1,075	0,88
You are satisfied with the variety of sustainable food and its processing methods.	4,09	1,083	0,874
You trust the information provided on food packaging.	4,18	1,067	0,874
You trust the credibility of suppliers of sustainable food.	4,18	1	0,886
You have switched to using sustainable food more regularly.	4,28	0,816	0,754

SEM results

After all the tests, the effects were assessed using the Bootstrapping method with 5000 samples to determine statistical significance. Figure 2 and Table 3 present the statistical analysis of the hypotheses/pathways related to the relationships between different variables. Statistical significance is generally attributed to a p-value below 0.05, which suggests that the observed relationship between the variables is improbable to have occurred by coincidence.

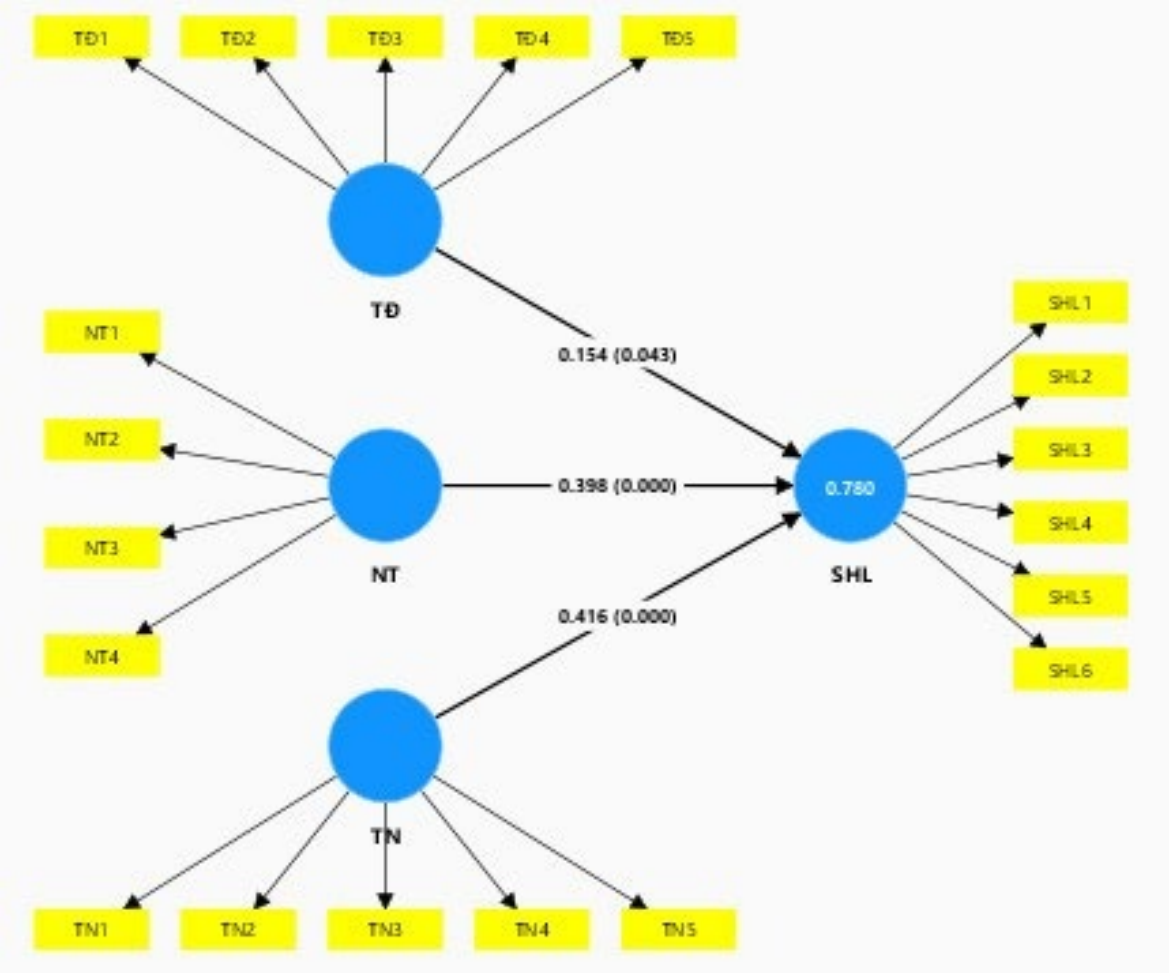

Figure 2. PLS-SEM Results

Based on the results in Table 3, attitude positively influences satisfaction (ß = 0.154, t = 2.021, p < 0.05), supporting hypothesis 1. Perception positively influences satisfaction (ß = 0.398, t = 6.365, p < 0.05), supporting hypothesis 2. Experience positively influences satisfaction (ß = 0.416, t = 7.040, p < 0.05), supporting hypothesis 3.

Table 3. PLS-SEM Results

Hypotheses	O	M	STDEV	T	P
H1: Attitude -> Satisfaction	0.154	0.156	0.076	2.021	0.043
1H2: Awareness -> Satisfaction	0.398	0.397	0.063	6.365	0.000
H3: Experiences -> Satisfaction	0.416	0.415	0.059	7.040	0.000

Note: "Original sample (O); Sample mean (M); Standard deviation (STDEV); T statistics (O/STDEV); P values (P)".

Predictive

The coefficient of determination, R-squared (R^2), represents the model's predictive ability and the proportion of variance explained by the independent variables. R^2 values range from 0% to 100%, with higher values indicating better predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2019).

The R^2 value of 0.780 indicates that the independent variables explain 78% of the variability observed in the satisfaction construct. Based on Table 4, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.778 suggests that the independent variables account for 77.8% of the variability observed in satisfaction. The R^2 value indicates that the independent variables significantly impact the dependent constructs, suggesting that the model has a robust explanatory capability in forecasting experience and satisfaction.

Table 4. The Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Constructs	R-square	R-square adjusted
Satisfaction	0.780	0.778

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Table 5 summarizes that attitude influences students' satisfaction with sustainable food (H1). Specifically, students' attitudes towards the store's location, consumer behavior, food preservation methods of suppliers, local food products, and the seasonal nature of food impact their satisfaction with sustainable food products (Csordas et al., 2022; Feil et al., 2020).

Secondly, the findings of this study demonstrate that positive perception influences consumers' satisfaction with sustainable food (H2). Specifically, perceptions of sensory value, food safety, environmental protection, pesticide residues, animal welfare, and genetically modified foods contribute to overall satisfaction with sustainable food (Ajzen, 1991; Luong, 2023).

Thirdly, experience positively impacts consumers' satisfaction with sustainable food (H3). Specifically, experiences related to nutritional value, sensory attributes, origin and production process, packaging information, price, and acceptance that sustainable food does not necessarily have to be entirely chemical-free contribute to the formation of positive satisfaction with sustainable food (Geng et al., 2017; González-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

Table 5. Results of Hypotheses

	Hypothesis	Decision
H1	Attitude influences satisfaction.	Supported
H2	Awareness influences satisfaction.	Supported
H3	Experiences influence satisfaction.	Supported

Theoretical Implications

The study emphasizes the crucial role of attitude, perception, and experience in shaping students' satisfaction with sustainable food consumption (Kim & So, 2022; Luong & Nguyen, 2024). The findings of this study confirm the influence of attitude on consumer satisfaction, highlighting the importance of fostering a positive attitude towards sustainable food (Feil et al., 2020; Parashar et al., 2023). This implies a challenge for the government and businesses to devise strategies for improving consumer attitudes towards sustainable food products, thereby altering their consumption behavior.

Furthermore, the research underscores the role of perception in promoting consumer satisfaction, particularly regarding sensory values, food safety, environmental preservation, and other factors related to sustainable food (Feil et al., 2020; González-Rodríguez et al., 2020). This necessitates sustainable food businesses consistently providing accurate and transparent information to consumers and impart knowledge about the benefits of consuming sustainable food to enhance consumer awareness (González-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Luong, 2023).

Ultimately, the study also emphasizes the impact of various experiential factors on consumer satisfaction, including sensory attributes, nutritional value, and packaging information (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020; Zhang & Dong, 2021). This creates opportunities for researchers and businesses to develop marketing strategies and products that optimize consumers' experiences and satisfaction with sustainable food.

In conclusion, this study's findings and theoretical significance contribute to the existing knowledge base and guide future theoretical and empirical research on sustainable food consumption, particularly within the specific context of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Practical Implications

This study's results have various real-world applications for those working to encourage healthy eating habits among Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's student population.

Due to the influence of attitudes on satisfaction with sustainable food, interventions should be made to foster a positive attitude towards sustainable food among students. Student organizations at universities in Ho Chi Minh City can collaborate with educational institutions, government bodies, or sustainable food businesses to develop educational programs, workshops, lectures, or discussions on sustainable food. These activities can provide students with alternative perspectives on sustainable food and contribute to cultivating increasingly positive attitudes.

Since perception influences satisfaction with sustainable food, efforts should focus on raising students' awareness. Educational programs, workshops, and information campaigns can be organized to educate students about the health, environmental, and community benefits of consuming locally sourced and regional specialty food products. It is also important to emphasize the significance of understanding the information provided on food packaging. These actions contribute to enhancing students' awareness of sustainable food products. Additionally, businesses that sell sustainable food products should provide clear and transparent information about their products through accurate labelling. Furthermore, reliable and accessible online information channels are needed to help consumers seek the necessary information to make informed consumption choices.

The research results highlight specific factors that impact consumer satisfaction, such as the location of food vendors, consumer behaviour, supplier food preservation practices, local food products, and seasonal characteristics of food. Experiential factors related to sensory attributes and nutritional value significantly influence consumer satisfaction. The affordability of sustainable food products is also a concern for students with unstable incomes. Therefore, stakeholders must pay attention to these issues and propose reasonable solutions to promote student satisfaction, ultimately increasing their preference for sustainable food products.

Limitations and Recommendations

Self-reporting results could be affected by social desirability bias, which is when people answer in a way they think is socially normal or desirable instead of giving honest feedback. Furthermore, the study did not consider other factors that may have influenced participants' responses, such as mood, current circumstances, or external events. The study's small sample size also raises doubts about the generalizability of the findings. The findings may not necessarily apply to a larger group of students across Vietnam. Additionally, the focus of the study on students in Ho Chi Minh City may limit the generalizability of the research to other regions of Vietnam or other countries. Therefore, the interpretation and generalization of the findings should consider these factors. Suggestions for future research include using larger and more diverse samples and employing objective measures of attitudes, perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction to address these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

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