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Organic Food Consumption Trend among Vietnamese Youth Aged 24-34

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Abstract

The organic food market has grown significantly in recent years from the North to the South and from the West to Asia, driven by various factors which include health consciousness, environmental concerns, and changing consumer attitudes. This study explores the factors influencing organic food consumption among young Vietnamese consumers (aged 25–34), focusing on motivations, barriers, and consumption trends. While organic food consumption is expanding worldwide, Vietnam remains a developing market with unique socio-economic and cultural factors affecting consumer behavior.

The findings indicate that health concern is the primary motivator for people to choose organic food, with many consumers associating it with reduced exposure to harmful chemicals and improved long-term well-being. Environmental awareness and social influences, particularly friend and family recommendations and social media exposure, also play an important role in shaping organic food choices. However, several barriers hinder widespread adoption, including high costs, limited availability, and skepticism about product authenticity. Many consumers perceive organic food as a “*luxury item*” due to its significantly higher price compared to conventional food, limiting regular consumption. Moreover, accessibility remains an issue, as organic food is mainly available in supermarkets and specialty stores rather than local markets. Additionally, concerns over fraudulent labeling and weak regulatory enforcement create doubts about organic certification and discourage purchasing decisions in the Vietnamese market.

This study suggests that by increasing consumer education, improving labeling transparency, expanding distribution channels, and implementing government incentives, they could enhance organic food adoption in Vietnam. Businesses and policymakers must collaborate to address these challenges and build a more accessible and trustworthy organic food market. Future research should examine regional disparities, the role of digital marketing, long-term health impacts to develop more effective strategies for promoting organic food consumption and the behavior of the group of people with income lower than GDP. By overcoming the existing barriers and leveraging key motivators, Vietnam can foster a more sustainable food system that benefits public health and environmental sustainability.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the global organic food market has transitioned from a niche segment to a significant force shaping contemporary food systems. Consumer concerns over chemical residues, environmental sustainability, and public health have propelled interest in organic agriculture, driving demand for clean-label and eco-friendly products. In 2023, the global organic food market was worth USD 205.90 Billion, and it is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 11.14% from 2024 to 2032 [1]. This growth is particularly strong in North America and Europe, where people generally have more disposable income and are increasingly aware of environmental issues. [2] [3]. The United States accounted for approximately 43% of global organic retail sales in 2022, followed by the European Union (45.1 billion euros, 34 percent). Within Europe, Germany is a major market, accounting for 11% of global organic retail sales in 2022 [4]. France is another significant market in Europe, accounting for 9% of global organic retail sales in 2022.

Similar to America and Europe, while the organic market in the Asia-Pacific region is still developing, it shows significant growth potential due to rising incomes and increasing health consciousness. Notably, China and India have emerged as the fastest-growing markets for organic agriculture and food consumption in the region. In 2022, China ranked third in organic food consumption, with total retail sales amounting to €12.398 billion, accounting for 9% of the global organic retail sales. This growth is driven by rising incomes, changing lifestyles, and increasing awareness of the benefits of organic food.[4]. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift as consumers prioritized healthier and safer food options [10].

This discussion will explore the various factors influencing organic food consumption and the barriers hindering the development of the organic food market.

One of the main factors driving the growth of organic food consumption is health consciousness, which is seen as a key motivator [6]. In [5], Research by Wang et al. shows that people's awareness of health significantly affects their decisions to buy organic foods, suggesting that more individuals are linking organic products to improved health and safety from foodborne illnesses. Another study by Hu Tong et al.

found that consumers who strongly believe in the importance of health view organic foods as beneficial, which makes them more willing to pay extra for these products [3].

In addition to health awareness, environmental considerations greatly influence consumer perceptions of organic foods. Those who value sustainability are likely to choose organic products instead of traditional ones. Increasing awareness of environmental concerns has led consumers to pursue organic foods as a component of their overall dedication to sustainable lifestyles. [7].

Despite its positive attributes, the organic food market still faces several challenges that influence consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. One of the most significant barriers is price sensitivity. Most consumers view organic foods as being pricier than their conventional food, which can deter them even if they have a “big” interest in making healthier or more environmentally conscious choices. This perception leads to the belief that purchasing organic foods is a luxury they cannot afford, therefore limiting their willingness to explore these options further [3][8].

Another challenge for consumers when it comes to organic food is limited awareness or ignorance about organic products. Consumers often find that they are unsure about how to differentiate the organic product certifications and the range of organic foods available. This lack of understanding can lead to confusion, leaving potential buyers hesitant and unsure about their purchasing decisions [10]. People may feel overwhelmed by the information and labels, making them stick with familiar conventional food instead of venturing into organic options. This is particularly important in developing countries like Vietnam, where the economy is rapidly growing, and lifestyles are changing daily. However, regulations regarding the origin of food are not clearly defined, and consumer awareness of the benefits and standards of organic food remains incomplete.

Despite the fact that the largest market volume of Organic food consumption is in developed countries such as North America and European countries, the interest in “Green food” in developing and emerging markets such as Vietnam dramatically increased. With the rapid development of living standards over the last few years, Vietnam has seen strong development in its health and wellness sectors in general and in its organic products sector in particular. Similar to the world, Vietnam has faced several

food safety incidents, including melamine and gutter oil .. which have significantly impacted public health. The widespread use of pesticides and fertilizers is the reason for this medical health concern. According to [12], 45 percent of Vietnamese respondents were willing to spend up to 25 percent more on organic food than conventional food products.

According to Vietnam's General Statistics Office, the country has a population of over 97 million, half of whom are under the age of 35. This "young generation" is estimated at around 40 million people and includes well-educated consumers who are open to new experiences and international trends [11]. They are also the main resource willing to pay (WTP) for health products. However, there is still a lack of research investigating this potential market.

2. Literature Review

Food consumption trends have been studied using different theories, which help explain how individual motivations, social influences, and lifestyle choices shape consumer behavior. These theories are particularly useful for understanding why people choose organic food. By looking at both personal and social factors, we can better understand the key reasons behind consumer decisions and the challenges they face.

Various theoretical frameworks have been utilized to study organic food consumption, with some of the most prominent being the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Norm Activation Model (NAM), the Food-Related Lifestyle (FRL) Model, and the Theory of Consumption Value (TCV). These frameworks offer valuable perspectives on the psychological, social, and lifestyle factors that influence consumer behavior.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape consumer intentions and actions. It is particularly useful in understanding organic food consumption as it focuses on how personal beliefs, social expectations, and perceived challenges or ease influence purchasing decisions.

The Norm Activation Model (NAM) highlights the importance of personal moral norms in encouraging ethical behaviors, such as choosing sustainable and organic food. NAM suggests that individuals are driven to act when they recognize the negative consequences of their actions (e.g., environmental damage caused by conventional farming) and feel a personal responsibility to address those issues.

The Food-Related Lifestyle (FRL) Model takes a broader approach by analyzing how food-related values, preferences, and behaviors are influenced by overall lifestyle patterns. This model categorizes consumers based on factors like cooking habits, food preferences, and shopping behaviors, offering a way to segment the organic food market effectively.

The Theory of Consumption Value (TCV) provides a detailed view of the values that guide consumer choices, such as functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values. This framework helps to understand why consumers prioritize organic food, whether it is for health benefits, environmental reasons, or other perceived advantages.

By applying these frameworks, this literature review examines the diverse factors that influence organic food consumption among young Vietnamese consumers. It explores individual motivations and societal factors to shed light on the motivations, challenges, and emerging trends in this growing market.

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) [13]

TPB is a widely used model for predicting and understanding behaviors, particularly those related to health and consumption. This theory suggests that a person's **intention** to perform a behavior is the most immediate and significant predictor of whether or not they actually engage in that behavior [14]. In the context of Vietnamese organic food consumers, TPB posits that the intention to purchase organic food is influenced by three key factors:

Attitude towards organic food: This refers to an individual's overall evaluation of organic food, including their beliefs about its benefits and drawbacks [17]. For example, a person who believes organic food is healthier and tastier might have a more positive attitude towards it [16].

Subjective Norms: This reflects the perceived social pressure to buy or not buy organic food. This pressure can come from family, friends, peers, or even broader societal trends [15]. For example, a person whose friends and family regularly purchase organic food might feel a greater social pressure to do the same.

Perceived Behavioural Control: This relates to an individual's perceived ease or difficulty purchasing organic food. Factors like availability, affordability, and convenience can influence this perception [14]. For example, if a person believes that organic food is too expensive or difficult to find, they might have lower perceived behavioral control and be less likely to purchase it.

2.2 Norm Activation Model (NAM)

While TPB focuses on general attitudes and social influences, the Norm Activation Model (NAM) zeroes in on the role of **personal norms** in driving ethical behaviors like organic food consumption [14]. Personal norms represent an individual's sense of moral

obligation to act in a certain way, even if it goes against perceived social norms or personal convenience.

NAM posits that these personal norms are activated when individuals become aware of the negative consequences of their actions (e.g., the environmental impact of conventional food production) and ascribe responsibility for mitigating those consequences [14]. For example, a person who understands the detrimental environmental effects of pesticide use in conventional agriculture might feel personally responsible for supporting more sustainable practices through their food choices.

A sense of responsibility combined with their awareness of the issue may motivate them to buy organic food, even if it is more expensive or less convenient than conventional options.

These sources particularly emphasize the relevance of NAM in the Vietnamese context, where collectivist cultural norms often focus on social harmony and conformity [14]. Even within this context, NAM suggests that individuals can be motivated by personal moral convictions to make ethical choices, even if they deviate from mainstream practices.

2.3 Food-Related Lifestyle (FRL) Model

The FRL model offers a different lens for analyzing Vietnamese organic food consumers, shifting the focus from individual psychological processes to broader **lifestyle patterns** [18]. This model classifies consumers based on their food-related values, beliefs, and behaviors, including the following factors:

Cooking habits: How often people cook, their cooking preferences, and what if they are willing to try new recipes.

Food preferences: if consumers prefer healthy foods, natural products, local produce, and organic foods.

Shopping behaviors: Where consumers buy food, their attention to food labels, and their willingness to pay more for certain food attributes.

The FRL model allows researchers and marketers to segment the organic food market into distinct groups with shared characteristics, enabling more targeted and effective marketing strategies [18]. For instance, a segment of consumers who highly value health and are willing to pay a premium for organic food can be targeted with messages emphasizing the health benefits of organic produce. Conversely, a segment that prioritizes convenience and affordability might be more receptive to messaging highlighting the accessibility and value of organic options.

2.4 Theory of Consumption Value (TCV)

The Theory of Consumption Value (TCV) was developed in 1991 by Sheth et al. [19] ; it is a valuable framework for understanding organic food choices [20]. TCV is used to classify the drivers and barriers in organic food consumption. It suggests that consumers make decisions based on a variety of perceived values, including functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional. Each of these dimensions offers specific insights into why consumers might choose organic food, making it a robust tool for examining this phenomenon.

Functional Value refers to the practical benefits or utility a consumer gains from a product or service. It addresses attributes like quality, reliability, and efficiency. For instance, a consumer choosing a product for its durability or nutritional benefits prioritizes functional value.

Emotional value: Emotional value reflects the feelings and emotional experiences of consuming a product or service. These could include joy, pride, comfort, or nostalgia. A consumer may choose a product not for its utility but for the positive emotions it evokes, such as selecting a locally made item to feel connected to one's cultural heritage.

Social value: When a product or service helps an individual connect with others or enhances their social identity, social value arises. Consumers often make choices that align with their social groups or reflect their desired status. For example, purchasing eco-friendly products may signal environmental awareness and align with socially conscious communities.

Epistemic value: the benefits of a product, service, or experience that sparks their curiosity, offers something new, or satisfies their desire to learn. It taps into our natural drive to seek knowledge, try unfamiliar things, and enjoy variety.

Conditional value: Conditional value depends on the specific context or situation that influences the consumer's choice. Certain circumstances, such as seasonal promotions or special events, can enhance the appeal of a product. For example, organic produce may be particularly valued during a health-focused campaign or after a food safety scare.

The **Theory of Consumption Values** is highly relevant for understanding Vietnamese consumers, particularly in the context of organic food consumption, as evidenced by the study by Van Huy et al. (2019) [21]. The research highlights that Vietnamese consumers are influenced by diverse factors, including health consciousness, environmental concerns, and social norms, which align closely with the five dimensions of the theory: functional, social, emotional, epistemic, and conditional values. For instance, the study found that health benefits and food safety—key aspects of functional value—are significant drivers for choosing organic products in Vietnam. Additionally, social value is reflected in how organic food consumption is tied to status and signaling environmental responsibility. Emotional and epistemic values are also evident as consumers derive satisfaction from aligning their choices with personal values and exploring new, sustainable food options. The theory provides a robust framework for analyzing and segmenting the Vietnamese organic food market by capturing these multidimensional motivations.

While the **Theory of Consumption Values** offers a highly applicable framework for explaining the drivers behind consumer choices, particularly in the context of organic food, it is essential to note that my research is focused on a specific demographic: young Vietnamese individuals aged 24 to 34, who are in the first decade of their professional careers following graduation, commonly referred to as the Millennial generation. This age group exhibits distinct behavioral patterns and values that may not be fully captured by the traditional consumption value dimensions alone. Given the complexities and nuances of this cohort's consumption habits, particularly in a rapidly developing market like Vietnam, I have chosen a **qualitative approach** for my research. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the subjective and context-specific factors influencing organic food consumption among Millennials in Vietnam, uncovering insights that

quantitative methods might overlook. By focusing on qualitative data, I aim to capture the multifaceted motivations, attitudes, and social influences that shape their purchasing decisions, thereby providing a richer understanding of this particular demographic's engagement with organic food.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

As explained in Chapter 3, this study uses a qualitative research approach to investigate the factors that influence organic food consumption among Vietnamese youth aged 25-34. The goal of our research is to explore the personal experiences and viewpoints of the participants about their motivations, obstacles, and consumption behaviors in relation to organic food. The main research question guiding this study is: “***What are the factors that affect the organic food consumption of Vietnamese youth aged 25-34?***” Through this question, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the influences shaping their choices regarding organic food.

3.2 Participant Selection

The study employed purposive sampling to select nine participants between the ages of 24 and 34. This method was chosen to ensure diversity in terms of occupation, income, socioeconomic background, and geographic representation. The participants came from various professional fields, including marketing, sales, software development, and office administration, allowing for a broad perspective on organic food consumption.

In addition, the study included individuals residing in different urban areas across Vietnam, such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Quang Ninh, Hai Duong, and Ninh Binh. By selecting participants from multiple locations, the research aimed to capture a broader range of experiences and attitudes influenced by regional differences in lifestyle, access to organic products, and consumer behavior.

All participants had prior experience with organic food through regular consumption or general familiarity with the concept. This criterion ensured that they could provide meaningful insights into their perceptions, motivations, and potential barriers related to organic food consumption. The sampling approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the factors influencing organic food choices among individuals from different professional and geographical backgrounds.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET). ZMET can uncover deep-seated perceptions and emotions related to organic food consumption. Traditional qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, often rely heavily on verbal communication, which may not fully capture subconscious thoughts and associations (Hancock & Foster, 2019) [22]. ZMET, in contrast, employs visual stimuli to prompt participants to explore their deeper cognitive and emotional responses, making it particularly suitable for understanding complex consumer attitudes.

Before the interview, participants were instructed to select and bring **six to ten images** that best symbolized their perceptions, feelings, and experiences related to organic food. These images could come from various sources, including personal photographs, magazine clippings, online searches, or any visual materials resonating with their thoughts. Participants were given time to reflect on their choices, ensuring that each image connected to their understanding and emotions toward organic food.

During the interview, which lasted between 40 to 60 minutes and was conducted online for participant convenience, each individual first presented their selected images. They were asked to describe each image in detail, explaining why they chose it, what it represented, and how it connected to their experiences with organic food. This process was an entry point into deeper discussions, allowing the interviewer to explore participants' cognitive and emotional associations beyond their immediate verbal responses.

Following this initial explanation, the interviewer guided the conversation using open-ended questions tailored to the visual prompts. Probes were used to uncover hidden meanings behind the images, encouraging participants to elaborate on their attitudes, beliefs, and past experiences with organic food. Techniques such as storytelling, laddering, and metaphor exploration were employed to identify underlying themes and subconscious perceptions.

Throughout the session, audio recordings were made with the participants' consent to capture the richness of their narratives. Additionally, transcripts were created to facilitate in-depth qualitative analysis, ensuring that verbal expressions and nonverbal cues linked to the images were thoroughly examined. This structured yet flexible

approach comprehensively explored participants' organic food perceptions, bridging the gap between conscious reasoning and deeper psychological associations.

3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the interview data, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and meanings within participants' responses systematically. The process began with primary coding, where each image and its accompanying discussion were carefully examined. During this stage, descriptive codes were assigned to capture the immediate meanings participants attributed to their selected images and the key points emerging from their verbal explanations. This step aimed to establish a foundational understanding of how participants perceived organic food through visual representation and personal narratives.

Following the primary coding, a second analysis coding focused on identifying recurring patterns and deeper thematic connections across different interviews. Codes were grouped into broader categories that reflected commonalities in participants' motivations, barriers, and perceptions of organic food. For instance, themes such as health benefits, environmental consciousness, trust in organic labels, financial constraints, and accessibility challenges emerged as critical factors influencing organic food consumption. This phase allowed for a structured data organization, making interpreting the underlying psychological and social dynamics easier.

Iterative reviews were conducted to ensure coding reliability and consistency. Transcripts were revisited multiple times, refining the codes and adjusting categorizations to capture nuances in participant responses. In cases where ambiguities or overlaps occurred, themes were cross-checked to maintain clarity and avoid misinterpretation. This approach ensured that the findings accurately represented participants' perspectives while minimizing researcher bias.

This thematic analysis revealed key themes, offering valuable insights into the diverse factors shaping organic food consumption among the target demographic. These findings provided a deeper understanding of the conscious motivations driving consumer choices, and the subconscious associations revealed through the ZMET

method, highlighting the complex interplay of emotions, beliefs, and external influences on organic food preferences.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Before beginning data collection, ethical approval was obtained to ensure that the study adhered to research ethics guidelines and protected the rights and well-being of participants. All participants were informed about the study's objectives, the nature of their involvement, and how their data would be used. This information was provided in written format to ensure clarity and complete understanding.

Interviewees were explicitly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary. They had the right to withdraw at any stage without providing a reason or facing any consequences. Additionally, participants were reassured that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes. All identifiable information, such as names or specific workplace details, was anonymized during data processing and analysis to protect participant privacy further.

At the end of the interview, participants signed the consent letter and returned it to us.

4. Results

As mentioned in Chapter 4, nine participants varied in demographics, occupation, and age. They were interviewed to explore what affects their organic food consumption and perception. Participants chose **six to ten images** that express their views on organic food or any topic related to organic food. The interview was structured into three main sections: background questions, a picture-based discussion, and personal reflections on barriers and motivations.

These questions were asked flexibly during the interviews to adapt to each participant's responses and the natural flow of the conversation. Some questions were asked directly, while others were omitted if the participant had already provided relevant information earlier in their answers. This approach ensured a more open and dynamic discussion while still addressing the key research objectives.

The questions aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Understand Demographic Influences:** Basic questions about age, occupation, residence, and income provided context for how individual circumstances, such as financial resources or geographic location, affected participants' organic food choices.
2. **Encourage Personal Reflection:** Open-ended questions allowed participants to share personal perspectives and experiences, uncovering deeper insights into their attitudes and behavior.
3. **Capture Emotional and Subconscious Perceptions:** Questions based on visual stimuli helped reveal participants' underlying thoughts and feelings about organic food, which might not surface through direct inquiry.
4. **Identify Barriers and Motivations:** By asking about challenges and drivers, the questions explored both the obstacles participants faced in consuming organic food and the factors that encouraged them to prioritize it.

Through these questions, we gained valuable insights into how Vietnamese youth aged 25-34 perceive organic food, what factors influence their consumption behavior, and what challenges they face. The responses provided a comprehensive understanding of

the motivations, barriers, and personal experiences shaping organic food choices in this demographic.

Income level also plays an important role in identifying participant's organic food choices. Below is a table (*figure 1*) of the income statistics of the participants who participated in the interview.

Interviewee	Reported Monthly Income (USD)
1	600
2	400
3	600
4	700
5	500 - 700
6	1500
7	1600
8	600
9	700

Figure 1: Reported Monthly Income of participants

Besides, the demographic could be an essential factor that affects participant's organic food choices. The following table records the participant's birthplace and residence.

Interviewee	Reported Residence
1	Ho Chi Minh City
2	Ho Chi Minh City
3	Ho Chi Minh City
4	Ho Chi Minh City
5	From Quang Ninh, lives in Hanoi city
6	From Hai Duong, live in Hanoi city
7	Ho Chi Minh city
8	From Ninh Binh lives in Hanoi city
9	From Nam Dinh lives in Hanoi city

Figure 2: Recorded residence of participants

Compared to Vietnam's average GDP per capita in 2024 [23], which is \$4,649.05 (figure 3), all participants in this study had an income above the national average, starting from

\$400 or higher per month. This is a noteworthy factor when analyzing the determinants of young Vietnamese consumers' purchasing behavior. A higher income level may indicate greater financial flexibility, potentially influencing their ability and willingness to purchase organic food despite its higher cost than conventional alternatives. This aspect should be considered when evaluating economic influences on organic food consumption among this demographic.

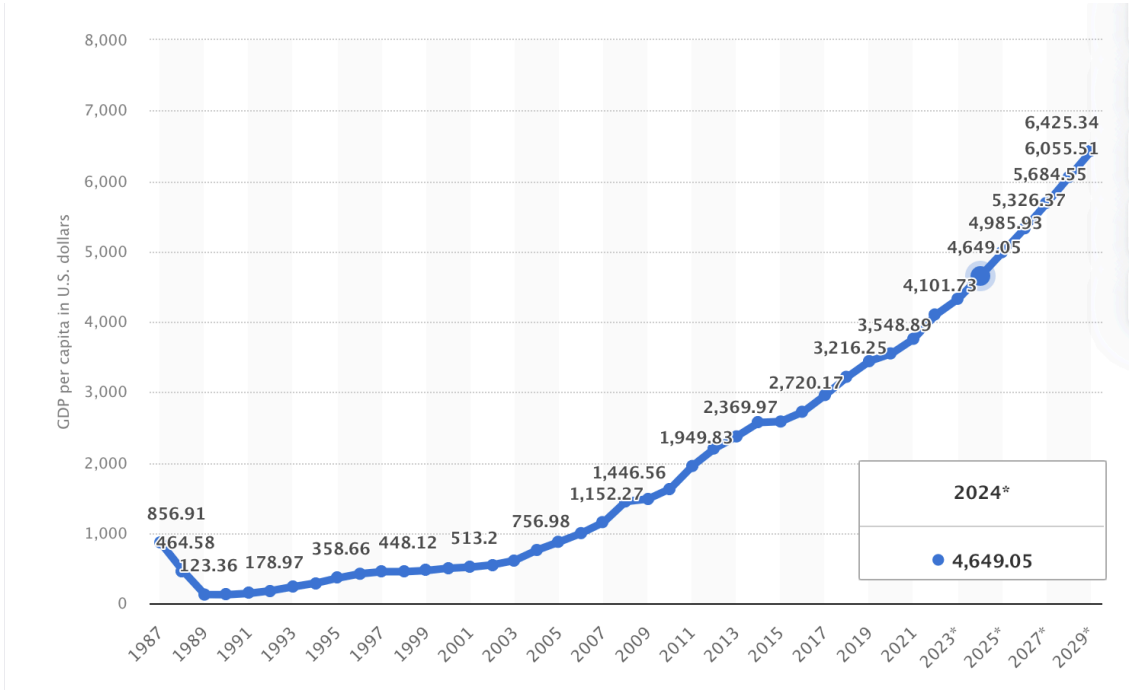


Figure 3: Vietnam: Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in current prices from 1987 to 2029* (in U.S. dollars)

The following table (figure 4) presents the coding scheme, illustrating how participant responses were categorized into themes. This structured approach helps provide deeper insights into the key drivers and obstacles affecting organic food consumption in this demographic.

Themes	Key Ideas	Explanation
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Understanding of organic food		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most participants understood organic food is produced in a way that is good for health and safe for the environment. - However, few of them misunderstand that organic food is natural and does not include meat, dairy products, or processed food.
Motivation for organic food consumption	Health benefit	The health benefit is the most crucial factor that makes participants consider using organic food.
	Environment awareness	Some of the participants care about the environment when considering organic food.
	Social influence	Participants are affected by the communities around them when consuming organic food
Barriers for organic food consumption	High cost	<p>High price is the most crucial factor that prevents people from using organic food frequently</p> <p>Participants noted that organic food was primarily available in large supermarkets or specialty stores, making it inaccessible to those reliant on local markets.</p>

	Limited Availability	Participants noted that organic food was primarily available in large supermarkets or specialty stores, making it inaccessible to those reliant on local markets.
	Skepticism about authenticity	Participants expressed doubts about the authenticity of organic labels in Vietnam. Concerns about mislabeling and lack of stringent regulatory oversight led to hesitation in purchasing products marketed as organic.
Consumption patterns	Habits of using organic food	Organic food does not completely replace conventional food in participant's diets.
	Selective purchasing	Participants buy organic food, especially for high-risk food such as fruits and vegetables.
	Occasional consumption	The frequency of using organic food is different for each participant, but in general two to three times a week.
	Preference for fresh produce	Participants strongly preferred raw or minimally processed organic products, believing these retained their natural

		nutrients and were safer than conventional alternatives.
Perceived drawbacks	Price sensitivity	Participants described organic food as a luxury, affordable only sporadically or for select items.
	Taste	While some participants described it as fresher and more flavorful, others noted little to no difference compared to conventional options.
	Shelf-life	In the participant's opinion, organic fruits and vegetables tended to spoil faster, requiring more frequent purchases and careful meal planning.
	Inconvenience	The limited availability of organic food, combined with its higher price, made it less convenient for participants to incorporate into their regular shopping routines.

Figure 4: Themes and key ideas of interviews

4.1 Understanding of Organic Food

Participants demonstrated varying levels of understanding about organic food. Most define it as food produced without harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, and they often associate it with higher nutritional value. Some participants recognized environmental benefits, such as sustainable farming practices and reduced

pollution. However, misunderstandings were apparent, leading to different interpretations of what qualifies as organic food.

One common misunderstanding was **equating organic food with natural food**. Interviewee number 4 exemplified this by assuming that a product labeled "100% natural" automatically meant it was organic. This belief highlights a misunderstanding of organic certification and production standards, which involve strict regulations beyond being natural. Similarly, interviewee number 3, despite recognizing some organic labels like USDA and EU Organic, did not fully grasp their significance, demonstrating a lack of deep understanding of certification processes and farming methods.



Figure 4: Image was provided by interviewee 4, shitake mushroom flake is organic food with lable “100% of mushroom with nature flavor”

Another misunderstanding involved the **exclusion of certain food groups**. Many participants initially believed that organic food only included fruits and vegetables, excluding processed foods, dairy, or meat. Interviewee number 8 challenged this notion, pointing out that organic food also includes animal products, such as salmon and eggs. This response highlights the need for greater consumer awareness regarding the full range of organic products available in the market.



Figure 5: Image was provided by interviewee 8, organic food also includes animal products

Participants' understanding of organic food was often influenced by **product labeling, advertising, or recommendations from trusted sources like family and online communities**. Interviewee number 5 emphasized the importance of food sources being clear, safe, and environmentally friendly. They stated, *"I think that the sources to produce organic fruit must be clear and safe and environmentally friendly. And they are produced without harmful substances, so we can eat it raw and no need to clean it thoroughly or cook it well."* This perspective suggests that trust in organic labels and certification significantly impacts purchasing decisions.



Figure 6: Image was provided by interviewee 5, proving that organic food must be clear and safe and environmentally friendly.

Additionally, interviewee number 9 reinforced the idea that organic food must adhere to strict quality standards, explaining, *"Organic food, I'm thinking of organic food, is that it's produced and processed based on a standard that ensures quality, like good health quality or some criteria to be organic food."* This indicates an awareness of the regulatory aspect of organic food production, though the depth of understanding varied among participants.

Furthermore, concerns over food safety and health benefits were common themes among participants. Interviewee number 7 stated, *"Organic food is like products that are grown without the use of any harmful chemical substances such as pesticides and it must be non-GMO as well because those are toxic entities that can cause diseases to the human body in the long run, for example, I saw several science reports mentioning cancer and cardiovascular issues."* This response underscores the perceived health advantages of consuming organic food, particularly in reducing long-term health risks associated with conventional agricultural practices.



Figure 7: Image was provided by interviewee 7 that organic food must be non-GMO

Interviewee number 4 added another dimension by linking organic food to regulatory compliance. He mentioned, *"I think the picture with vegetables and fruits best represents my idea about organic food because nowadays there are lots of foods and they ensure compliance with regulations. And it will help my health and my health better when I eat it."* This reflects the importance of clear labeling and stringent regulatory oversight in reinforcing consumer trust in organic products.

Overall, while many participants demonstrated an awareness of organic food and its benefits, their understanding varied, with some holding misconceptions about its definition, scope, and certification. These insights suggest that increasing consumer education and transparent labeling could play a vital role in clarifying misconceptions and promoting informed decision-making regarding organic food consumption.

4.2 Motivations for Organic Food Consumption

4.2.1 Health Benefits

Health considerations emerged as the most significant motivator for organic food consumption. Many participants associated organic food with improved health outcomes due to its reduced exposure to harmful substances, such as pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. Several interviewees specifically highlighted its role in preventing chronic illnesses like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. For example, interviewee 7

stated, *"I think organic food has significant health benefits. Like it improves our metabolism, it prevents us from some diseases like cancer, cardio or diabetes."* Similarly, interviewee 5 reinforced this notion by emphasizing that eating organic food reduces the chances of developing cancer by avoiding toxins or pesticide residues in conventional food.

In addition to disease prevention, participants noted the superior nutritional content of organic food. Interviewee 8 expressed that organic food provides essential nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, that contribute to overall well-being: *"I can see the organic food can bring us many nutritional values and it contains high levels of certain nutrients, maybe such as, um, vitamins or minerals. And it will help our other parts of our body live better or healthier."* Interviewee 2 further supported this claim by comparing the mineral content of organic vegetables to conventional ones, explaining that *"all the minerals that is required for the human body, it's actually at least twice or three times compared to conventional food."* This higher nutritional value was a key reason participants preferred organic food for maintaining a healthier lifestyle.

Additionally, some participants reported a noticeable difference in taste, reinforcing their preference for organic food. Interviewee 6 mentioned, *"When I buy organic veggies and make any dishes, I feel it has a very different taste compared to the normal. So that's also my target in the future, I want to consume more organic food because I know that it's really good for my health."* The perceived improvement in taste further motivated some participants to incorporate organic food into their diets.

4.2.2 Environmental Awareness

Another critical factor influencing organic food consumption was environmental consciousness. Many participants recognized that organic farming contributes to sustainability by minimizing soil degradation, reducing pollution, and conserving water resources. Interviewee 9 highlighted that organic farming reduces pesticide use and utilizes excess organic food as fertilizer, which benefits soil health: *"Organic food is also good for the environment because it reduces pesticides in the soil, and the excess of organic food can be used as fertilizer for plants."*

Interviewee 8 also emphasized how organic farming methods positively impact the environment, stating, *"Because the organic food is planted environmentally friendly,*

that's why we will reduce pollution, conserve water, reduce soil erosion, and improve soil food life." Similarly, interviewee 6 linked organic food consumption to environmental protection by noting that organic farmers do not use growth hormones or synthetic chemicals, making the entire agricultural process more sustainable.

Moreover, the role of environmental messaging in advertising was noted as a contributing factor in shaping consumer perception. Interviewee 4 recalled seeing promotional materials from organic food companies that highlighted environmental benefits: *"I see in the promotions in advertising of some companies, they mention about the environment; if we consume organic food, we can protect the environment from harmful chemicals and pesticides."* These marketing strategies helped reinforce the idea that choosing organic products supports ecological conservation.

4.2.3 Social Influence

Social influence played a crucial role in shaping participants' attitudes toward organic food. Family habits, online communities, and peer recommendations significantly impacted purchasing decisions. Interviewee 7 described how they were introduced to organic food through a Facebook group dedicated to fitness and healthy living. They stated, *"It was like five years ago, I joined a community on Facebook. So at that time, I was very into fitness and I wanted to find a place where I could connect with other people with the same interests and where I could buy clean food, high-quality groceries. So I found this community. And within that group, we have like farmers, we have trustable agricultural businesses and owner sellers in that group have to show some certifications to prove their product."*

This example illustrates how online communities and social networks act as platforms for spreading awareness about organic food. Participants also noted that these groups often provided valuable tips on how to choose high-quality organic products and shared best practices for cooking and storing organic groceries. The ability to directly engage with trusted suppliers and farmers through these communities further strengthened participants' confidence in the authenticity of organic food.

Family influence was another recurring theme. Some participants mentioned that their parents or relatives encouraged them to consume organic food from an early age. Interviewee 3 remarked, *"The benefits for human beings is that they are having a really*

healthy lifestyle, and also, the health will be better if you use food that is organic without any chemicals." This statement reflects how family members' health-conscious choices can influence younger generations to adopt organic food consumption habits.

Overall, the combination of health benefits, environmental awareness, and social influence contributed significantly to participants' decisions to consume organic food. While health remained the primary driver, environmental concerns and social factors also played vital roles in shaping attitudes and purchasing behaviors. These insights suggest that increasing public education, transparent labeling, and community engagement can further promote organic food consumption in Vietnam.

4.3 Barriers to Organic Food Consumption

4.3.1 High Cost

The price of organic food was consistently cited as a significant barrier, making it inaccessible to a large portion of Vietnamese consumers. Participants estimated that organic products cost 1.5 to 3 times more than conventional food, which often limited their ability to incorporate organic items into their daily diets.

Interviewee 9 reinforced this concern by stating, *"Organic food is often found in supermarkets and those types of food are quite expensive compared to regular foods. The second thing is about convenience. Convenience here means that it is easy to find where you live, but organic food is not available everywhere."* This suggests that cost is not only a barrier but is compounded by limited accessibility.

Interviewee 8 added that the high price results from the effort required in organic farming: *"I think it will be more expensive when you spend money on organic food. Mm-Hmm. Because you know, you have to take more time, take more effort to grow a plant, to raise an animal that follows an organic rule. So that's why you will have less quantity of organic food. So that's why when you put more effort and you have a lower quantity, it means more expensive."*

The financial challenge is further emphasized by Interviewee 7, who noted that Vietnam's economic situation makes organic food an option mainly for the upper middle class: *"Organic food is double the price of conventional food. I mean like in Vietnam, it's*

a third-world country and the income of people is not that high. It's actually one of the lowest incomes in Asia. So I think organic products are still expensive options and, uh, only reserved for the upper middle class of the society."

Interviewee 5 further illustrated how financial constraints affect purchasing behavior, stating, *"I think with an average income of Vietnamese young laborers, we cannot afford it every day, just like once or twice a week, um, for vegetables or sometimes a dairy product. It usually triple double, or maybe triple the price of normal regular food."* This statement suggests that despite an interest in organic products, financial limitations prevent frequent consumption.

4.3.2 Limited Availability

Limited availability was another major barrier to organic food consumption. Participants reported that organic products were mainly sold in large supermarkets or specialty stores, making them difficult to access for individuals who typically shop at local markets.

Interviewee 6 described the challenge of finding organic food in certain areas: *"Where I live now, it is not easy to find. I need to go really far from my house, about seven kilometers, to a big supermarket."* This suggests that consumers who do not live near major urban centers face significant barriers to accessing organic food.

Similarly, Interviewee 3 explained, *"We cannot reach organic food easily because nowadays, they are not commonly sold in the civil market. They are mainly found in really big supermarkets or in specific stores that sell organic food."* This reinforces the idea that the distribution of organic food is still limited, making it less accessible to the general public.

Interviewee 2 echoed this concern, noting, *"They might always think about organic food, but it's not that easy for everyone to reach because of the price. Because of the price is always like higher, like about 50% to maybe twice the price of the conventional one."* In addition to cost, the lack of variety in organic products further limits accessibility. Interviewee 2 added, *"The variety of the types of food that organic food can provide is still limited for me right now. And I think that when there is more variation in organic food, it would reach out to more people."*

4.3.3 Skepticism About Authenticity

Skepticism about the authenticity of organic food was a recurring theme in participant responses. Many consumers expressed concerns about mislabeling and the lack of stringent regulatory oversight in Vietnam, leading to hesitation in purchasing products marketed as organic.

Interviewee 6 highlighted the issue of fraudulent labeling: *"I think organic food is not common in Vietnam. So the consumer easily gets a fake one. They intend to buy organic food at expensive prices, but the one they get back is a fake one. It's, it's kind of a lie to the consumer."* This statement reflects a widespread concern that not all organic-labeled products meet actual organic standards.

Interviewee 7 also pointed out that a lack of education about organic food contributes to skepticism: *"There is a lack of education about the health benefits of food. And we, like young people, we don't know about the difference between organic and regular ones, and we just buy what is like cheaper and what is more convenient or delicious to us."* This suggests that increasing consumer awareness and transparency in labeling could help reduce skepticism and build trust in organic food products.

Interviewee 4 further explained that while organic food has advantages, its high price often deters buyers, especially when they are unsure of its authenticity: *"Organic food is expensive, but organic food has more advantages than other foods. Organic foods are always more expensive than other foods. I think maybe it is three-quarter or half-quarter."* The concern here is that without clear labeling and verification, consumers may not see the value in paying a premium for organic food.

Interviewee 1 mentioned another challenge related to organic food: *"I noticed one more point that the shelf life of organic products is shorter. They expire faster than conventional food. I can see that they take a lot of time and effort and money to grow these organic foods. So that's why in the market, it is also more expensive."* This shorter shelf life further complicates purchasing decisions, as consumers may feel hesitant to buy organic products that spoil quickly.

The findings reveal that while many participants recognize the benefits of organic food, significant barriers prevent widespread adoption. **High costs** remain the primary

challenge, limiting access to organic food for lower-income consumers. **Limited availability** in local markets and **skepticism about authenticity** further compound these challenges, making organic food less attractive or feasible for many consumers in Vietnam. Addressing these issues through policy reforms, better certification standards, and wider distribution networks could help make organic food more accessible to a broader demographic.

4.4 Consumption Patterns

4.4.1 Habits of Using Organic Food

Participants indicated that organic food does not completely replace conventional food in their diets. Consumption patterns vary based on individual circumstances, financial stability, and personal preferences. Some participants integrated organic food into their meals frequently, while others used it selectively based on affordability and necessity.

Interviewee 9 reflected on how their perception of organic food changed over time, stating, *"Since I was a student, I gradually changed my perception, and around the age of 24, I completely changed my mind about choosing organic products for good health."* This suggests that exposure to new information and financial independence influenced organic food adoption. Similarly, Interviewee 6 mentioned, *"My family saw the news at 7:00 PM every day. They kept talking about how we should change from normal food to organic food. So it kind of repeated in my mind."* This demonstrates how external influences, such as media, shaped consumption choices.

However, some participants only adopted organic food after experiencing health issues. Interviewee 8 recounted, *"When I go to college and when I have a part-time job, I can earn money and I can provide myself with healthier food... When I come back to my hometown to visit my parents, my father bought me one of my favorite foods... but it was not organic. And when I consumed it, I had to go to the hospital. That's when I realized I needed to choose safer food."* This experience illustrates how health concerns can be a strong motivator for shifting towards organic food.

4.4.2 Selective Purchasing

Participants displayed selective purchasing habits, prioritizing organic options for food items they considered high-risk, such as leafy vegetables, fruits, and dairy products. This selective consumption was largely based on concerns regarding food safety and nutritional value.

Interviewee 9 described their approach, stating, *"Now I use it every day, for example, legumes. Instead of having breakfast with noodles or pho, I will have breakfast with bean porridge. Sometimes black beans, sometimes red beans. That way, I find that my stomach is quite stable and not heavy, and I think that is one of the things that is good for health."* This suggests that organic food choices are often linked to specific dietary habits and personal health benefits.

Other participants mentioned the difficulty of exclusively purchasing organic food due to availability constraints. Interviewee 9 shared, *"It's actually very difficult to always buy organic food, especially animal products like milk, eggs, or processed fish. I always prioritize choosing organic food, which can be bought in supermarkets. However, sometimes we cannot buy in supermarkets but have to buy at the market, and we do not know if it is organic or not."* This highlights concerns about accessibility and transparency in organic labeling.

4.4.3 Occasional Consumption

While some participants consumed organic food regularly, others used it only a few times a week, often for specific meals or occasions. Financial constraints played a significant role in this behavior.

Interviewee 8 explained, *"I use it three times a week, mostly producing organic milk. I use enough, and as I mentioned before, to produce milk formula because I cannot consume the milk from cows. So I had to drink organic food from the nuts. Vegetables, not usually, maybe about three or four times a month. Meat, more often, maybe once or twice a week."* This indicates a structured approach to organic consumption, prioritizing specific food types over others.

Similarly, Interviewee 7 stated, *"My family used to buy organic food two or three times a week. And I use these ingredients to cook every day. But not all products I buy are organic; we buy them randomly."* This suggests that organic food consumption is often unplanned and mixed with conventional food options.

Some participants explained that their income level affected their consumption habits. Interviewee 6 noted, *"From high school and university, I got sponsorship from my parents. So they gave me just enough for my living costs. I always thought about the price and didn't get a chance to eat organic food. Now that I work and am independent, I can choose food with a better price."* This illustrates how financial independence enables individuals to make healthier choices.

4.4.4 Preference for Fresh Produce

Many participants preferred raw or minimally processed organic products, believing they retain more nutrients and are safer than conventional alternatives.

Interviewee 6 emphasized this point, stating, *"Personally, I take the taste and experience as my first priority. So I do not care too much about whether it's organic or not. I only care about the flavor, the experience, whether I cook it well or not."* However, they also acknowledged the importance of organic options for raw consumption: *"I care because the food I will eat raw. So I think when I eat raw, any product should be organic. Because it is not cooked. So, I just buy strawberries, apples, bananas. They are all organic. But for meat and other vegetables that I can cook, I still buy conventional food."* This demonstrates how organic food choices vary depending on cooking methods.

Interviewee 3 described a different approach, stating, *"For organic food? Maybe once or twice a month. I would use organic because of the price. And also, I can feel that I cannot reach organic food easily within my local area. I just go to the supermarket or even a specific store that sells organic ones."* This highlights both financial and accessibility concerns in organic food consumption.

Interviewee 2 shared a more frequent pattern, explaining, *"Right now, I would say at least three to five times a week. In my daily life, I usually drink a lot of milk. And for now, I really prefer some dietary products that are more organic."* This suggests that

organic food consumption frequency is influenced by dietary preferences and lifestyle choices.

It is suggested that organic food consumption patterns among participants are shaped by a combination of *financial constraints, health awareness, accessibility, and personal preferences*. While some individuals prioritize organic food for specific products, others integrate it more frequently based on their changing financial status or dietary needs. Selective purchasing and occasional consumption remain common practices due to the higher cost and limited availability of organic food in Vietnam. Additionally, a preference for fresh and raw organic products highlights the importance of food safety concerns in shaping organic consumption choices. Addressing affordability and expanding the distribution of organic food could encourage broader adoption among consumers.

4.5 Perceived Drawbacks

4.5.1 Price Sensitivity

The high cost of organic food was the most frequently cited drawback, making it a luxury that many participants could only afford occasionally or for select items. Organic food was perceived as being 1.5 to 3 times more expensive than conventional products, which significantly impacted purchasing decisions.

Interviewee 9 highlighted this issue by stating, *"Organic food is often found in supermarkets, and those types of food are quite expensive compared to regular foods. The second thing is about convenience. Convenience here means that it is easy to find where you live, but organic food is not available everywhere. I think it can be twice as expensive or even more."* Similarly, Interviewee 8 noted, *"I think it will be more expensive when you spend money on organic food. Because you know, you have to take more time, take more effort to grow a plant, to raise an animal that follows an organic rule. So that's why you will have less quantity of organic food, which makes it more expensive."*

For many participants, organic food was seen as an option primarily for the upper middle class. Interviewee 7 remarked, *"Organic food is double the price of conventional food. In Vietnam, a third-world country with one of the lowest incomes in Asia, organic*

products remain an expensive option and are only reserved for the upper middle class of society. It can't be popular because only about 20% of the population can afford it." This perspective suggests that affordability is a major barrier to wider organic food adoption.

Income levels also played a crucial role in shaping consumption patterns. Participants with lower incomes, such as Interviewee 2 (\$400) and Interviewee 5 (\$500-\$700) (*figure 1*), indicated that they could not afford organic food regularly. In contrast, Interviewees 6 and 7, who had the highest reported incomes (\$1500 and \$1600, respectively) (*figure 1*), expressed greater flexibility in purchasing organic food. This suggests that organic food remains an option primarily for those with higher disposable incomes, limiting widespread adoption among lower-income groups.

4.5.2 Taste

Opinions on the taste of organic food were mixed. Some participants described it as fresher and more flavorful, while others noted little to no difference compared to conventional food.

Interviewee 6 emphasized that personal preference played a role in purchasing decisions, stating, *"Personally, I take the taste and experience as my first priority. I don't care too much about whether it's organic or not. I only care about the flavor, the experience, and whether I cook it well or not."* This suggests that for some consumers, taste outweighs health or environmental benefits when choosing between organic and conventional food.

Other participants believed that organic food had a superior taste, particularly when consumed raw. Interviewee 6 added, *"I care about organic food only when I eat raw products. So, I just buy organic strawberries, apples, and bananas. But for meat and other vegetables that I can cook, I still buy conventional food."* This indicates that the perceived taste advantage of organic food is more relevant for raw foods rather than cooked meals.

4.5.3 Shelf Life

Another major drawback of organic food cited by participants was its shorter shelf life. Many noted that organic fruits and vegetables tended to spoil faster, requiring more frequent purchases and careful meal planning.

Interviewee 1 pointed out, *"One more point I noticed is that the shelf life of organic products is shorter. They expire faster than conventional food. I can see that they take a lot of time, effort, and money to grow these organic foods. That's why in the market, they are also more expensive."* This suggests that while organic food may have health benefits, the need for frequent purchases due to spoilage can deter consumers.

4.5.4 Inconvenience

Limited availability, combined with the higher price, made organic food less convenient for many participants to incorporate into their regular shopping routines. Many noted that organic food was primarily sold in large supermarkets or specialty stores, making it difficult for those who shop at local markets to access it regularly.

Interviewee 6 shared their experience: *"Where I live now, it is not easy to find organic food. I need to go really far from my house, about seven kilometers, to a big supermarket."* This inconvenience, especially for those living outside major urban centers, poses a significant barrier to frequent organic food consumption.

Interviewee 3 echoed this sentiment, stating, *"We cannot reach organic food easily because nowadays, it is not commonly sold in local markets. We just find it in big supermarkets or specific stores that sell organic food. The quantity and variety available are still limited because of planting natural methods."* This lack of accessibility restricts organic food choices and discourages broader adoption.

Interviewee 2 added, *"The pricing is still higher than conventional food, which is the most important thing that prevents the majority of people from reaching organic food right now, especially in Vietnam. The variety of organic food is still limited for me right now. When there is more variation in organic food, I believe it would reach more people."*

While organic food is valued for its health and environmental benefits, several significant drawbacks hinder its widespread adoption. High cost remains the primary barrier, limiting organic food consumption to wealthier demographics. While some participants found organic food to be fresher and more flavorful, others did not perceive a noticeable taste difference, which influenced their willingness to pay a premium price. The shorter shelf life of organic products also posed challenges, making frequent purchases necessary. Additionally, the inconvenience of limited availability further discouraged regular consumption. Addressing these issues by increasing affordability, expanding distribution channels, and improving consumer education on organic food benefits may help promote greater adoption among Vietnamese consumers.

5. Discussion

The findings from this research highlight various factors influencing organic food consumption among Vietnamese youth aged 25–34. The thematic analysis revealed key motivations, barriers, consumption patterns, and perceived drawbacks, providing a broader understanding of how young consumers engage with organic food. These insights align with global trends and reflect Vietnam's unique socio-economic and cultural context. Organic food consumption among young Vietnamese consumers is primarily driven by health consciousness, environmental concerns, and social influence. Yet, barriers such as high cost, limited availability, and skepticism about authenticity continue to hinder widespread adoption.

Health consciousness was a predominant motivator, with many participants associating organic food with reduced exposure to harmful chemicals and long-term health benefits. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of health awareness in shaping organic food consumption. Research by Wang et al. (2023) [2] suggests that individuals who prioritize health are more likely to choose organic products due to their perceived nutritional advantages and lower levels of synthetic additives. This trend is observed globally but particularly in Vietnam, where food safety scandals have heightened consumer concerns about chemical contamination in conventional food.

While health was the primary driver, environmental awareness also played a role in influencing organic food choices. Many participants viewed organic farming as a sustainable alternative that helps protect ecosystems, reduce pollution, and improve soil health. This aligns with global research highlighting the connection between environmental concerns and organic food consumption. However, compared to consumers in developed markets who prioritize sustainability, Vietnamese consumers appeared to emphasize personal health more than ecological benefits. This suggests a need for more vigorous awareness campaigns to highlight the environmental advantages of organic agriculture, potentially shifting consumer motivations beyond individual well-being to broader sustainability goals.

Social influence emerged as another key factor, notably through family, peers, and online communities. Many participants reported being introduced to organic food

through social media groups focused on fitness and healthy living. This reflects a collectivist cultural trend in Vietnam, where social networks often shape purchasing behaviors rather than traditional advertising. Previous studies have also shown that peer influence and subjective norms significantly impact organic food buying decisions, particularly in emerging markets. This suggests that leveraging social media and community-based marketing strategies could effectively promote organic food adoption in Vietnam.

Despite these motivations, significant barriers prevent widespread organic food consumption. The cost was the most frequently cited deterrent, with participants noting that organic products are often priced **1.5 to 3 times higher** than conventional alternatives. This finding is consistent with research by Nguyen et al. (2019) [17] and Statista (2024) [23], which highlight price sensitivity as a significant factor limiting organic food adoption in Vietnam. While some consumers are willing to pay a premium for health reasons, many view organic food as an unaffordable luxury for the average household. This suggests that efforts to reduce production costs and implement subsidies for organic farmers could help make organic food more accessible to a broader demographic.

Limited availability further increases the accessibility challenge. Organic food is primarily sold in large supermarkets and specialty stores, making it difficult for consumers who rely on traditional markets. This issue is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where distribution networks for organic products remain underdeveloped. The USDA (2021) [12] similarly reported that Vietnam's organic food supply chain lags behind Western countries, restricting consumer access. Expanding distribution channels, including partnerships with local markets and online retailers, could help bridge this gap and improve accessibility.

Another critical barrier is skepticism about organic food authenticity. Many participants expressed doubts about the credibility of organic labels, citing concerns about fraud and weak regulatory enforcement. Similar problems have been documented in other emerging markets, where the lack of strict certification standards reduces consumer trust in organic products. Research by Cao et al. (2022) [11] highlights that improving transparency and strengthening regulatory oversight can play a key role in increasing consumer confidence. Implementing stricter labeling regulations and third-party

verification processes could mitigate skepticism and encourage greater adoption of organic food.

Consumption patterns among participants revealed selective purchasing habits, prioritizing organic options for high-risk food items such as leafy vegetables, fruits, and dairy. Most participants consumed organic food occasionally rather than as a staple in their diet, typically incorporating it two to three times weekly. Financial constraints significantly influenced this pattern, with organic food often viewed as a supplement rather than a complete replacement for conventional products. As incomes rise and organic food prices potentially decrease, more frequent consumption could become feasible for a more significant segment of the population.

Participants also showed a strong preference for fresh, unprocessed organic food. Many believed that raw organic products retained more nutrients and were safer than conventional alternatives. This preference for minimally processed food aligns with findings by Kushwah et al. (2019) [19], who noted that organic consumers often prioritize fresh produce over packaged goods due to perceived health benefits. Given this trend, businesses could focus on marketing fresh, locally sourced organic products to align with consumer preferences.

Perceived drawbacks of organic food further influenced consumption patterns. Beyond cost, the shorter shelf life of organic products was a notable concern. Many participants observed that organic fruits and vegetables spoiled faster than their conventional counterparts, necessitating more frequent purchases and careful meal planning. While this is a known characteristic of organic food due to the absence of preservatives, it presents a practical challenge for consumers. Addressing this concern through improved storage techniques and consumer education on properly handling organic produce could mitigate some drawbacks.

Inconvenience related to accessibility and shopping habits also hindered organic food adoption. Participants noted that organic food was challenging to incorporate into their regular shopping routines due to its limited availability in local markets. Expanding retail distribution to traditional markets and offering online delivery services could improve convenience and encourage higher adoption rates. Additionally, businesses

could explore alternative packaging solutions to extend shelf life without compromising organic integrity.

6. Implications

The findings of this research have several implications for policymakers, businesses, and public health advocates seeking to promote organic food consumption in Vietnam. Addressing the identified barriers and leveraging key motivators could help expand the organic food market and encourage sustainable dietary behaviors.

6.1 Policy Implications

Policymakers should strengthen organic certification regulations to enhance consumer trust and prevent fraudulent labeling. Implementing subsidies for organic farmers could help reduce production costs, making organic food more affordable for consumers. Additionally, government-backed awareness campaigns highlighting both health and environmental benefits could help shift consumer perceptions and increase demand. Strengthening food safety regulations and improving enforcement mechanisms will also reassure consumers about the authenticity of organic products, addressing skepticism about labeling. Collaborations between policymakers, farmers, and certification bodies could create a more transparent organic market, enhancing credibility and encouraging adoption.

In addition, initiatives to integrate organic food education into national health and nutrition policies could have long-term benefits. This could include mandating organic food education in schools, developing nutritional guidelines that emphasize organic produce, and funding research into the health effects of organic versus conventional food. A broader policy initiative aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture practices could also incentivize more farmers to adopt organic farming techniques, ensuring a larger supply of organic food at lower costs.

6.2 Business Implications

Retailers should expand organic food availability in local markets and implement transparent labeling systems to build consumer confidence. Marketing strategies should leverage social media and online communities to educate consumers about organic food benefits and counter misconceptions. Businesses could also explore partnerships with

local farmers to develop direct-to-consumer supply chains, reducing costs and improving accessibility.

Developing loyalty programs, discounts, and promotions for organic products can incentivize more consumers to integrate them into their regular diets. Subscription-based models for organic food deliveries could also appeal to busy urban consumers who seek convenience but struggle with availability. Collaborating with food delivery platforms and supermarkets to increase visibility and accessibility would further boost organic food consumption. Additionally, businesses should work on educating their sales teams to provide clear and reliable information to consumers, addressing doubts and increasing trust in organic products.

Restaurants and food service providers also play a crucial role in promoting organic food consumption. Establishing organic food sections in grocery stores, organic menus in restaurants, and providing incentives for food outlets to use organic ingredients could create a broader organic food culture. Highlighting the taste and quality of organic food through experiential marketing, such as cooking demonstrations, product sampling, and farm-to-table experiences, could further strengthen consumer interest.

6.3 Public Health Implications

Public health campaigns should emphasize the dual benefits of organic food, addressing both personal health and environmental sustainability. Collaborative efforts between the government and private sector could help increase consumer awareness and adoption rates. Educational initiatives in schools and community programs could further reinforce the importance of organic food in maintaining long-term health.

Nutritionists and health professionals should be more actively involved in organic food education, integrating it into dietary recommendations and wellness programs. Public health initiatives could highlight how organic food consumption aligns with broader goals of reducing exposure to pesticides and promoting healthier lifestyles. Establishing nutrition counseling programs that guide consumers on how to incorporate organic food into their diets without exceeding their budgets could be beneficial in dispelling the notion that organic food is unaffordable.

A significant opportunity lies in linking organic food consumption to broader public health challenges, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. If organic food is framed as part of a holistic approach to preventive healthcare, consumers may be more willing to prioritize its consumption despite the higher cost. Government-backed food assistance programs could also include organic options for vulnerable populations, making organic food accessible beyond just the affluent segments of society.

7. Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing organic food consumption among Vietnamese youth, several areas warrant further research. Future studies should explore how regional differences within Vietnam impact organic food consumption patterns. Urban areas may have greater access to organic food, while rural consumers may face additional challenges related to availability and affordability. Investigating these regional disparities can help policymakers and businesses develop targeted strategies to promote organic food consumption across different demographics.

Additionally, further research could examine how cultural factors influence perceptions and attitudes toward organic food. While this study highlights social influence as a key factor, more in-depth analysis is needed to understand how familial traditions, religious beliefs, and generational differences shape organic food consumption behavior.

This study focused on participants with income levels above the national average. Future research should explore organic food perceptions among lower-income consumers to determine whether financial constraints significantly affect their willingness to adopt organic food. Understanding whether affordability is the primary barrier or if lower-income groups prioritize other factors, such as taste, convenience, or accessibility, will provide a more comprehensive perspective on the organic food market in Vietnam.

Another area for future research is the impact of digital marketing and e-commerce on organic food purchasing decisions. As online grocery shopping continues to grow, understanding how consumers engage with organic food retailers in the digital space can provide insights into effective marketing strategies. Investigating the role of social media influencers, online reviews, and digital advertising in shaping consumer preferences could further enhance efforts to increase organic food adoption.

Future research should also assess the long-term health outcomes of organic food consumption among different demographic groups. While existing literature suggests that organic food may offer health benefits, empirical studies tracking the dietary habits and health conditions of consumers over time would provide more concrete evidence.

This could support public health initiatives aimed at promoting organic food as part of a balanced diet.

Lastly, further investigation is needed into the economic feasibility of expanding organic food production in Vietnam. Understanding the financial barriers faced by farmers, as well as potential solutions such as government subsidies or cooperative farming models, could inform policies that make organic food more accessible and affordable. By addressing these gaps in knowledge, future research can contribute to the continued development of the organic food market in Vietnam and beyond.

Another promising direction for future research involves exploring behavioral interventions that can encourage organic food consumption. Behavioral economics studies could examine whether targeted incentives, such as price discounts, cashback programs, or eco-labeling, influence consumers' purchasing behavior. In Vietnam, some restaurants selling food prepared from organic foods are also doing this well by implementing campaigns to give away organic vegetables to customers who come to eat at the restaurant every Friday night, and at the same time, introducing a weekly organic vegetable delivery package with the message "Fresh & Healthy" [24]. Additionally, research on the role of habit formation and consumer psychology could shed light on how to encourage long-term adherence to organic food consumption rather than one-time purchases.

Given the increasing concerns about environmental sustainability, future research should also investigate the life-cycle impact of organic food production compared to conventional farming. Comparative studies assessing carbon footprints, resource consumption, and ecological sustainability could help determine whether organic farming practices provide substantial long-term environmental benefits.

8. Conclusion

This study explored the motivations, barriers, and consumption patterns surrounding organic food among young Vietnamese consumers. The findings reveal that health consciousness, environmental concerns, and social influences play key roles in shaping organic food consumption. However, several challenges, including high costs, limited availability, skepticism about labeling, and inconvenience, continue to hinder widespread adoption.

The study's findings suggest that while young Vietnamese consumers are increasingly aware of the benefits of organic food, structural and financial constraints limit their ability to incorporate it into their diets consistently. Addressing these barriers through targeted policies, business strategies, and public health initiatives could help bridge the gap between awareness and actual consumption.

Future research should expand on these findings by exploring regional disparities, cultural factors, and the impact of digital marketing on organic food consumption. Additionally, further investigation into behavioral interventions, economic feasibility, and long-term health outcomes could provide deeper insights into promoting sustainable dietary practices in Vietnam.

Overall, this research highlights the growing importance of organic food in Vietnam and underscores the need for collaborative efforts between policymakers, businesses, and consumers to build a more inclusive and accessible organic food market. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging key motivators, Vietnam can foster a more sustainable food system that benefits human health and the environment.

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10. Appendix

The question framework which use for the ZMET interview method was designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' perceptions, motivations, and challenges regarding organic food consumption. Each set of questions targeted specific areas of interest to provide insights into the factors shaping consumer behavior in a structured and meaningful way.

The list of question include:

Background Questions

At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked basic questions about their *age, occupation, place of residence, and average income*. These questions aimed to provide demographic insights and establish a foundation for understanding how individual differences might influence organic food consumption.

1. *How old are you?*

This question helped us categorize participants within the targeted age group of 25-34 and analyze whether age influenced their views on organic food.

2. *What do you do?*

Understanding participants' occupations helped identify potential links between their profession and food choices, such as whether health-conscious professions showed a higher tendency to consume organic food.

3. *Where do you live?*

Since organic food availability differs between urban and rural areas, knowing the participants' locations allowed us to examine whether accessibility affected their consumption habits. Also, the origin of the participants may affect their perception of organic food.

4. *What is your average income?*

As organic food is often more expensive than conventional food, income level was important in assessing financial barriers to organic food consumption.

Reacting to the Pictures

Participants were asked to choose six to ten images representing their thoughts and feelings about organic food. These images were used as visual stimuli to encourage more profound reflections.

1. *Can you share more about the pictures you chose? One by one.*

This question aimed to allow participants to express their initial thoughts freely and explain their choices in their own words.

2. *What do you think about these pictures?*

By asking this, we encouraged participants to verbalize their interpretations, which helped us uncover key themes related to organic food consumption.

3. *Why did you choose them?*

This question explored the reasoning behind their selections, revealing emotional, cultural, or personal associations with organic food.

4. *Does this picture remind you of organic food?*

By asking this, we sought to understand whether participants had clear associations with organic food or whether broader food-related themes influenced their perceptions.

5. *Choose an image that best represents your overall perception of organic food. Can you explain why you chose this one?*

This question aimed to identify a core image that symbolized their understanding of organic food, helping us pinpoint dominant themes in their perspectives.

6. *What does this image tell you about the benefits or drawbacks of consuming organic food?*

Participants were encouraged to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages associated with organic food, highlighting both positive and negative perceptions.

7. *Is there a picture here that reflects your values or beliefs about eating? How does it relate to organic food?*

This question helped us connect organic food choices with deeper personal values like health, sustainability, and ethics.

8. *Have you eaten organic food before?*

Understanding participants' past experiences with organic food helped us determine whether their views were based on direct consumption or external influences such as media or social norms.

Personal Connection to Organic Food

This section explored participants' emotional and experiential connections with organic food through storytelling.

1. *Can you describe a story these images tell you about why organic food is essential to you?*

By framing the discussion in a narrative format, we encouraged participants to reflect on significant life events or experiences that shaped their attitudes toward organic food.

2. *What is the most important factor that makes you consider using organic food?*

This question helped us identify key drivers influencing organic food consumption, such as health benefits, environmental concerns, or social influences.

3. *Did your opinion about organic food change now compared to the past?*

By comparing past and present perspectives, we assessed whether participants' attitudes had evolved and what factors contributed to these changes.

Barriers and Motivation

In this section, participants were asked to reflect on the challenges they faced in consuming organic food and what motivated them despite those challenges.

1. *Select an image that explains how you feel about the challenges or barriers to consuming organic food.*

This question provided a visual representation of perceived difficulties, such as price, availability, or trust in organic labeling.

2. *In your opinion, what are the barriers to consuming organic food?*

Participants were encouraged to articulate specific obstacles, allowing us to categorize common challenges among the group.

3. *What motivates you to choose organic food despite these challenges?*

By exploring motivations, we identified key factors that encouraged participants to prioritize organic food despite potential barriers.

Categorizing the Images

At the end of the interview, participants were asked to organize the images into larger groups based on their interpretation.

Can you please group the pictures that you have brought together in a bigger group and give a name to the group?

This activity allowed participants to create their own themes based on their understanding of organic food, helping us identify overarching patterns in their perceptions.

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