

FACTORS AFFECTING ETHICAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: THE CASE OF RETAIL SHOPPERS IN THE MEKONG DELTA, VIETNAM

FATORES QUE AFETAM O COMPORTAMENTO ÉTICO DO CONSUMIDOR: O CASO DOS COMPRADORES NO VAREJO NO DELTA DO MEKONG, VIETNÃ

Article received on: 8/15/2025

Article accepted on: 11/14/2025

Le Minh Truong*

*Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ho Chi Minh city, Viet Nam

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0699-4179>

lmtruong@ntt.edu.vn

Nguyen Thanh Van**

**University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH), Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2416-2392>

thanhvan@ueh.edu.vn

Ha Hong Nguyen***

***College of Economics and Law, Tra Vinh University, Vinh Long Province, Viet Nam

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7404-0599>

hongha@tvu.edu.vn

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Abstract

The paper investigates ethical consumer behavior among retail shoppers in the Mekong Delta, addressing the lack of localized measurement scales within developing market contexts. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, the study extends the theoretical framework by incorporating variables such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, alongside social-capital-related constructs including involvement, support, sustainability, and advocacy. Employing a mixed-methods approach and survey data collected from 312 consumers across multiple provinces in the region, the research validates a multidimensional measurement model using PLS-SEM. The findings reveal that perceived behavioral control and subjective norms exert strong influences on ethical consumption intentions, while ethical perception plays a crucial role in shaping behavioral outcomes such as support and sustainability. Notably, attitude does not demonstrate a significant effect within the cultural context of the Mekong Delta. The study underscores the importance of social influence and self-efficacy in shaping ethical purchasing behavior and proposes a contextually adapted measurement scale that can serve as a valuable foundation for future research in this domain.

Resumo

Este artigo investiga o comportamento ético do consumidor entre compradores do varejo no Delta do Mekong, abordando a falta de escalas de mensuração localizadas em contextos de mercados em desenvolvimento. Fundamentado na Teoria do Comportamento Planejado, o estudo amplia o arcabouço teórico ao incorporar variáveis como atitude, normas subjetivas e controle comportamental percebido, juntamente com construtos relacionados ao capital social, incluindo envolvimento, apoio, sustentabilidade e defesa. Empregando uma abordagem de métodos mistos e dados de pesquisa coletados de 312 consumidores em diversas províncias da região, a pesquisa valida um modelo de mensuração multidimensional utilizando PLS-SEM. Os resultados revelam que o controle comportamental percebido e as normas subjetivas exercem forte influência sobre as intenções de consumo ético, enquanto a percepção ética desempenha um papel crucial na formação de resultados comportamentais como apoio e sustentabilidade. Notavelmente, a atitude não demonstra um efeito significativo dentro do contexto cultural do Delta do Mekong. O estudo destaca a importância da influência social e da autoeficácia na formação do comportamento de compra ética e propõe uma escala de mensuração adaptada ao contexto,



Keywords: Ethical Consumer. Shoppers. Behavior. Retail. Customers. Mekong Delta.

que pode servir como uma base valiosa para pesquisas futuras nesta área.

Palavras-chave: Consumidor Ético. Compradores. Comportamento. Varejo. Clientes. Delta do Mekong.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and increasing concerns about environmental pollution, business ethics and social inequality, ethical consumer behavior is increasingly seen as an important element in the orientation of sustainable development. Consumers do not only choose products based on price and quality, but also care about ethical aspects, are willing to boycott businesses that violate standards and support brands that demonstrate social responsibility and transparency (Akintimehin et al., 2022; Brunk & Blümelhuber, 2011; Davies & Gutsche, 2016). However, the concept and measurement of ethical consumer behavior still lack consensus, due to the diversity of cultures, value systems and motivations for expressing consumers' ethical identity in different contexts (Andrei et al., 2017; Carrington et al., 2015; Zollo et al., 2018). Empirical studies are limited in developing economies, including the Mekong Delta, despite the region experiencing rapid expansion of retail and e-commerce, and being heavily impacted by climate change and resource pressures. In an online consumer environment where direct contact with products and retailers is limited, factors such as trust in businesses, social norms, social capital, and relationship networks play a key role in shaping ethical purchasing intentions and behavior (Yoon, 2020; Johnson & Chattaraman, 2021; Nadeem et al., 2020). The spread of social media has also made behaviors such as calling for boycotts, encouraging “buy-to-support” or sharing information about ethical products more popular, associated with perceptions of personal effectiveness and civic responsibility in consumption (Carrier, 2008; Ghvanidze et al., 2016; Delistavrou et al., 2019). However, existing scales were mainly developed in European-American or developed urban contexts and are often reused without being adjusted to suit the cultural, social and behavioral characteristics of consumers in the Mekong Delta, leading to the risk of bias when assessing the level and form of ethical consumption in this region (Doyduk, 2018; Gandhi & Kaushik, 2016; Villa Castaño et al., 2018). At the same time,

many studies have not clearly separated attitudes, intentions and actual behaviors, nor have they adequately addressed the paradox of “saying one thing, doing another” in ethical consumption, especially in the digital environment where the spontaneity and impact of promotions and advertising are very large (Lades, 2014; Deng, 2015; Oke et al., 2020). In that context, the development and validation of an ethical consumption behavior scale, localized for retail consumers in the Mekong Delta and capable of integrating factors of social capital, trust, norms and e-commerce specificity, is an urgent requirement both in theory and practice, and at the same time creates a foundation for planning marketing strategies, CSR and customer relationship management in a more sustainable direction (Ertz et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Yoon, 2020).

2 THEORY AND RESEARCH MODEL

2.1 Consumer intention and ethics

Ethics, according to the authors, is understood as a system of values and social norms that guide individual behavior towards the common good, social responsibility and co-creation of value with the community, not just a simple distinction between right and wrong (Yoon, 2020). In the context of globalization and complex situations, ethics is a dynamic process, requiring individuals and organizations to continuously consider, interpret and reconstruct values to behave appropriately in cultural, institutional and conflicting interest contexts (Goswami, 2025; Guimarães-Costa et al., 2014). At the organizational level, ethics is expressed through fair, responsible and respectful behaviors, contributing to improving employee satisfaction, engagement and performance (Lindblom et al., 2015). However, many organizations still lack a unified concept and ethical standards, indicating an urgent need to develop and apply clear ethical standards towards sustainable development and harmony between economic, social and environmental benefits (McCartney, 2015).

Consumer behavior can be understood as a purposeful process in which individuals respond to stimuli from the external environment (advertising, promotions, online reviews, socio-cultural factors) while being influenced by internal motivations such as needs, preferences, identity and personal values (Ryu et al., 2025; Mohammed et al., 2022). From the perspective of the theory of reasoned action and planned behavior,

consumer behavior is a goal-oriented problem-solving process, including the steps of need recognition, information search, evaluation of options and purchase decision making to achieve the expected outcome, not only in terms of function but also in terms of value (Junaidi et al., 2022; Daly et al., 2003). At the same time, this behavior reflects cost-benefit considerations, when consumers compare the expected value and probability of achieving with the risk or cost incurred, which is especially evident in the context of ethical consumption, which is often associated with higher prices or lower convenience (Puteri et al., 2022). Thus, consumer behavior is the result of the interaction between external factors, internal motivations and rational evaluation processes, both instrumental and value-based, especially when linked to social and ethical goals in consumption

2.2 Ethical consumer behavior

Ethical consumer behavior is understood as the process of selecting, deciding and using products and services based on ethical values, social justice and environmental responsibility, not just for personal benefit or convenience. It includes both buying to support (buycott) and boycotting (boycott) businesses, along with considering the impact on people, society, environment, local areas and animals (Ertz, 2016; Oke et al., 2020; Elhoushy & Ribeiro, 2023). Ethical consumers evaluate products on a variety of dimensions, such as labor conditions, fair trade, sustainable origins, green packaging, animal testing, etc., and this behavior is often seen as a form of civic engagement in everyday life through purchasing – not purchasing and “speaking up” with businesses (Yoon, 2020; Long & Murray, 2014). However, the gap between attitudes and behavior remains large due to price barriers, convenience, information ambiguity, and the paradox between corporate ethical commitments and consumer expectations (Akintimehin et al., 2022; Toti & Sánchez Romero, 2023; Yu et al., 2019). Specific knowledge and understanding of products, environmental and social impacts play a key role in shaping ethical consumption attitudes and intentions; The more knowledgeable a person is, the less abstract and “herd-driven” the evaluation process becomes (White et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2013). Norms of reciprocity, social capital, the need to express a positive identity, and cultural-religious contexts also make ethical consumption behavior vary greatly across industries, countries, and regions (Andrei et al., 2017; Gandhi & Kaushik, 2016; Delistavrou et al., 2019; Sharif, 2016). In a crisis, fear can override ethical intentions,

while unclear ethical communication increases consumer hesitation and skepticism (Elhoushy & Ribeiro, 2023; Toti & Sánchez Romero, 2023).

2.3 Related background theory

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) serves as the core foundation for research on ethical consumer behavior in the context of retail consumers in the Mekong Delta. TPB suggests that behavioral intention is the strongest predictor of actual behavior, and that this intention is made up of three components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude reflects a positive or negative evaluation of ethical consumption; subjective norms represent social pressure and expectations from influential people; and perceived behavioral control describes the extent to which individuals believe they are capable of performing the behavior. Completing the scale and testing the influencing factors based on TPB helps to clearly explain the psychological mechanism that motivates consumers to engage in ethical consumption behavior, while accurately reflecting the cultural, social characteristics and specific market context of the Mekong Delta region

2.4 Developing hypotheses and research models

Intention is considered the most direct and strongest premise leading to actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In ethical consumption, intention reflects the consumer's psychological commitment to choosing socially and environmentally responsible products. When the intention is strong enough, ethical behavior will be performed with a high level of consistency (Carrington et al., 2015). Many studies have demonstrated that purchase intention is a central variable predicting ethical consumption behavior in many product categories, from food and fashion to bioplastics and e-commerce (Chi, 2022; Oke et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). Intentions not only reflect desires but also involve cognitive and emotional preparation, helping consumers overcome practical barriers such as high prices, lack of information transparency, or limited choices (Ertz et al., 2018; Sharif, 2016). Therefore, the stronger the intention, the more likely the behavior is to occur.

H4: Ethical consumption intentions have a positive influence on ethical consumption behavior

Attitudes toward ethical consumption reflect the degree of positive or negative evaluation of individuals toward purchasing socially and environmentally responsible products. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitudes are the strongest predictors of intentions in purposive choice behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of ethical consumption, consumers form attitudes based on the belief that their behavior is not only “right” in terms of values but also “worth it” in terms of social consequences, which strengthens their sense of self and civic responsibility (Davies & Gutsche, 2016). This makes ethical consumption a meaningful choice, increasing the probability of forming purchase intentions that are consistent with personal values. Empirical research shows that positive attitudes are formed from multiple sources. Intentional boycotts or endorsements give consumers a sense of efficacy, which in turn strengthens favorable attitudes and promotes continued intention to engage in ethical behavior (Akintimehin et al., 2022). In addition, the need to express ethical identity – the desire to be seen as a responsible individual – leads consumers to associate their purchase behavior with their self-image, thereby increasing their intention to act (Andrei et al., 2017; Johnson & Chattaraman, 2021). This explains why attitudes are not only rational judgments but also have a social-psychological component. Therefore, based on theory and empirical evidence, the study suggests that: Attitudes not only predict intentions but in many cases directly influence behavior, especially when the behavior is ethical or linked to personal values. Consumers with strong attitudes toward ethical consumption tend to exhibit appropriate behavior even in the absence of supportive social pressure (Carrington et al., 2015). Positive attitudes help individuals maintain internal consistency, i.e., live up to their moral beliefs, thereby making purchasing or boycotting an expression of moral identity. Research across multiple product categories confirms that favorable attitudes can lead to actual consumption behavior even when market barriers such as price, availability, or information are not entirely ideal (Ha-Brookshire & Norum, 2011; Chi, 2022). This is especially evident in emerging economies, where socially conscious consumers are more likely to act for community goals (Gandhi & Kaushik, 2016). Therefore, attitudes not only drive intentions but also directly translate into behavior when psychosocial support factors are strong enough.

H1: Attitude has a positive influence on ethical consumption intentions.

H5: Attitude has a positive influence on ethical consumption behavior.

Subjective norms reflect the social pressure or reference group expectations that an individual feels when deciding to perform a behavior. In ethical consumption, subjective norms play a particularly important role because behaviors such as boycotting, pro-buying, or sustainable consumption are often motivated by shared family, friends, or community values (Akintimehin et al., 2022). When individuals perceive their social group to value social and environmental responsibility, they tend to form stronger intentions toward ethical consumption. Cross-cultural studies show that subjective norms are a stable predictor of intentions, regardless of economic, cultural, or market development differences (Delistavrou et al., 2019; Sharif, 2016). In societies that value community cohesion and reciprocity, ethical intentions are more likely to be formed when the reference group provides signals supporting ethical behavior (Yoon, 2020). In the digital media environment, social media also amplifies normative pressure, helping green buying or anti-plastic waste movements spread faster (Sharma & Singh, 2023). Subjective norms not only shape intentions but in many cases also directly influence behavior, especially when the behavior is highly social, such as ethical consumption. Consumers often want to avoid inconsistency with group expectations, so they engage in behavior that is consistent with social norms to maintain social acceptance (Johnson & Chattaraman, 2021). This makes ethical consumption a form of “social conformity”. In contexts such as religion, local community, or environmental movements, the stronger the subjective norm, the more likely the actual behavior is to occur, even if the intention is not yet fully established (Sharif, 2016; Oke et al., 2020). Studies have also shown that ethical behavior is often contagious: individuals imitate the behavior of the group to maintain harmony (Long & Murray, 2014). Therefore, subjective norms can directly influence ethical consumer behavior.

H2 Subjective norms have a positive effect on ethical consumer intentions.

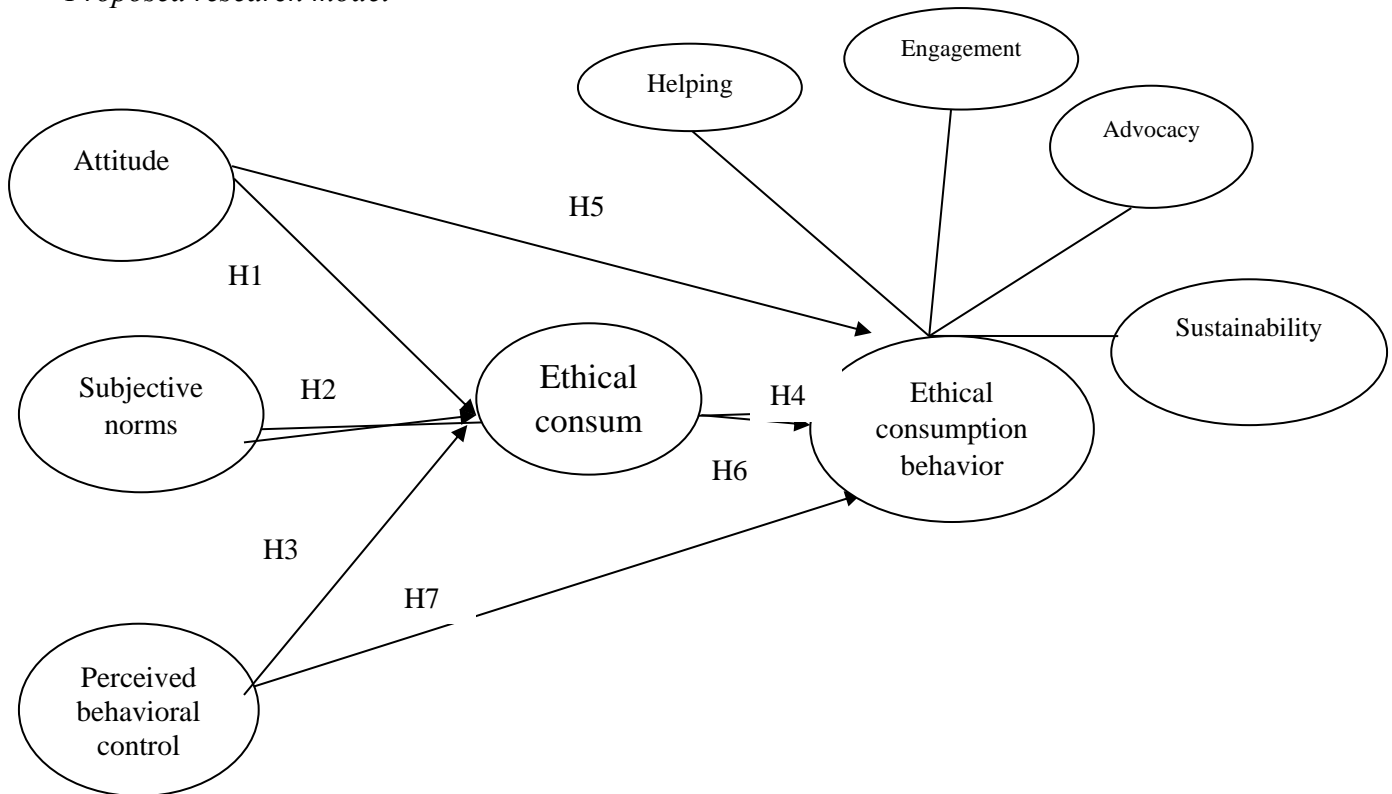
H6: Subjective norms have a positive effect on ethical consumer behavior.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) represents the extent to which individuals feel they have the ability, resources, and conditions to perform the behavior. In ethical consumption, PBC is particularly important because ethical behavior typically requires higher costs, longer information search times, and the ability to evaluate product transparency (Davies & Gutsche, 2016). When consumers believe they “can do it,” their intention to purchase ethical products increases significantly. Several empirical studies

confirm that PBC is a key factor predicting ethical consumption intentions (Chi, 2022; Wang et al., 2021). Consumers with high PBC are more likely to feel confident in distinguishing ethical from unethical products, are willing to pay for sustainable choices, and believe that their behavior has a meaningful impact (Ogiemwonyi & Jan, 2023). Conversely, low PBC weakens intentions even when attitudes and subjective norms are favorable. PBC not only affects intentions but also directly affects behavior, especially in behaviors that require effort or have high barriers. TPB suggests that when PBC is high, individuals will easily translate intentions into actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In ethical consumption, this is reflected in consumers' feeling of having enough financial resources, information, and skills to choose products that are consistent with their ethical values (Ha-Brookshire & Norum, 2011). Studies show that PBC also determines the ability to overcome barriers such as price, availability, or information ambiguity, factors that often hinder ethical consumption behavior (Yu et al., 2019). In the context of e-commerce, PBC is even more important when ethical products depend on consumers' ability to search, compare, and verify information (Wang et al., 2021). Therefore, PBC acts as an “action capability” that helps consumers realize their ethical commitments.

H3: Perceived behavioral control has a positive influence on ethical consumption intentions.

H7: Perceived behavioral control has a positive influence on ethical consumption behavior.

Figure 1*Proposed research model*

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data and sampling methods

The study was conducted to complete the ethical consumer behavior scale and examine the factors affecting the purchasing behavior of retail consumers in the Mekong Delta region, a dynamic market with rapid retail development in recent years. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used to ensure the comprehensiveness and reliability of the conclusions. The initial qualitative phase was conducted through small group discussions and in-depth interviews with a number of experts and consumers who regularly shop at supermarkets in the region, in order to calibrate the language of the scale, ensure its suitability to the local socio-cultural characteristics and the level of understanding of the survey subjects about concepts such as attitudes, behavioral control, subjective norms or sustainability in consumption.

The quantitative phase was conducted by direct survey method through a designed questionnaire. The survey subjects were individuals with shopping experience at large

supermarkets in the provinces of An Giang, Can Tho, Dong Thap and Vinh Long, which represent the population characteristics and consumer behavior of the entire region. Respondents were selected by convenience sampling, but with control over their understanding of shopping behaviors and their ability to identify research concepts such as ethical consumption intentions, support, participation or ethical consumption behavior. Before the official survey, the questionnaire was pilot tested on a small group to assess its clarity, comprehensibility and ability to measure variables. The collected data were coded and processed using modern statistical tools, in which the PLS-SEM linear structural model was used to test the relationship between factors and assess the suitability of the scale. The application of PLS-SEM is suitable for the exploratory research objective and with the characteristics of a medium-sized sample. The data collection process complies with research ethics principles, ensuring voluntariness, anonymity and serving academic purposes only.

Table 1

Respondents' demographics and behaviors

Variable	Attribute	Quantity	Percentage
Education	High school and below	151	48.4
	Intermediate	71	22.8
	College	62	19.9
	university degree or higher	28	9.0
	Total	312	100.0
Gender	Male	147	47.1
	Female	165	52.9
	Total	312	100.0
Age	Under 25 years old	68	21.8
	25 to 30 years old	81	26.0
	Over 30 to 40 years old	80	25.6
	Over 40 years old	83	26.6
	Total	312	100.0
Income	Under 12 million VND	75	24.0
	From 12 to 15 million VND	88	28.2
	Over 15 to 20 million VND	74	23.7
	Over 20 million VND	75	24.0
	Total	312	100.0

The results of the descriptive study sample show that the demographic characteristics of the 312 consumers participating in the survey are quite diverse. In terms of educational level, the group with high school education or lower accounts for the highest proportion at 48.4%, followed by intermediate level (22.8%) and college level (19.9%), while the group with university degree or higher accounts for only 9.0%. In

terms of gender, women have a slight advantage with 52.9%, compared to 47.1% of men. The age distribution is also quite even, in which the group from 25-30 years old accounts for 26.0%, the group over 40 years old accounts for 26.6%, followed by the group over 30-40 years old (25.6%) and under 25 years old (21.8%). In terms of income, the proportions between groups are almost balanced, with the group under 12 million and the group over 20 million VND per month both accounting for 24.0%, while the group 12-15 million accounts for 28.2% and the group 15-20 million accounts for 23.7%. These characteristics show that the survey sample has a fairly even distribution, reflecting many different demographic groups in the research area

3.2 Measurement

In this study, a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of consumer consensus on statements related to ethical consumption behavior. The observed variables in the scale were inherited and adjusted from reputable previous studies, ensuring theoretical inheritance and suitability to the local context. Using a 5-point Likert scale increases the sensitivity of the data, while supporting a highly reliable quantitative analysis

3.2.1 Attitude

According to Berki-Kiss and Menrad (2022), attitude is an individual's overall assessment of the positive or negative level of a behavior, based on the belief that the behavior will bring beneficial results to people and society. The scale for this concept is measured by three observed variables inherited from the author's research, expressed through the statements: "I think that buying products from ethical businesses brings benefits to people.", "I feel that buying green products is a positive and pleasant action.", and "I believe that using products from sustainable businesses is good for society." These three observed variables show that positive attitudes play a key role in promoting sustainable and ethical consumption intentions.

3.2.2 Subjective norm

According to Berki-Kiss and Menrad (2022), subjective norm reflects the extent to which an individual feels social pressure or expectation from important people around them regarding the performance of a behavior, especially in the context of sustainable and ethical consumption. The scale for this concept is inherited and measured by the author through four observed variables, expressed through the statements: “My family and friends support my purchase of ethically practiced businesses.”, “People around me expect me to choose sustainable products.”, “My family and friends think it is right to buy ethically practiced businesses.”, and “People who share my views are more likely to support environmentally-oriented businesses.” These observed variables highlight that subjective norms have a significant influence on ethical consumption intentions through support and orientation from the proximate social environment

3.2.3 Ethical consumption behavior

According to Yoon (2019), ethical consumption behavior is understood as voluntary consumer behavior to support socially responsible businesses, based on moral beliefs and the desire to contribute to the common good. This concept includes manifestations such as actively participating in interactions with businesses, supporting sustainable activities, supporting businesses in the service delivery process, as well as introducing businesses to the surrounding community. In this study, ethical consumption behavior is measured through four sub-components: involvement, sustainability, support, and referral, inherited from the scales of Yi & Gong (2004), Groth (2005), Seo et al. (2009), and Yoon (2019).

The participation component is understood as the extent to which consumers actively interact with businesses by regularly suggesting solutions, contributing ideas when businesses need to improve, as well as giving ideas to improve product quality. This scale is expressed through three observed variables: "I often suggest solutions for businesses that care about business ethics", "I intend to contribute ideas when businesses encounter problems that need to be improved", "I intend to propose ideas to help businesses improve product quality". These variables show that participation is a manifestation of consumer citizenship responsibility in the Yoon model (2019).

According to Yoon (2019) Sustainability describes a personal commitment to responsible consumption, expressed through the belief in the need for sustainable consumption to protect the environment and resources for future generations, interest in products that have a positive impact on the environment, demand for transparency from businesses, willingness to continue supporting ethical businesses, and the ability to change consumption habits to minimize negative impacts on the environment. “I believe that sustainable consumption is necessary to protect the environment and resources for future generations”, “I am interested in choosing products that have a positive impact on the environment”, “I believe that businesses should adhere to principles of transparency in their operations”, “I will continue to support businesses that care about ethical business in the future”, These variables reflect a strong consumer orientation to maintain responsible choices in the long term. According to Groth (2005) and Seo et al. (2009) argue that support reflects the extent to which consumers are willing to align with socially responsible businesses, including support for policies that benefit ethical businesses, feelings of closeness and trust toward these businesses, and a preference for products produced using environmentally friendly processes. This component is measured by four observed variables: “I believe that sustainable consumption is necessary to protect the environment and resources for future generations”, “I am interested in choosing products that have a positive impact on the environment”, “I believe that businesses should adhere to the principles of transparency in their operations”, “I will continue to support businesses that care about business ethics in the future”

According to Yi & Gong (2004) and Yoon (2019), referral represents the tendency of consumers to spread positive information and recommend others to use products of ethical businesses, including recommending products, considering socially responsible businesses when making purchases, choosing products of businesses that practice ethics, and regularly recommending others to use these products. This scale is formed by four observed variables: “I will recommend products of businesses that care about business ethics to others”, “I consider products of businesses that when making purchases”, “I prefer to choose products from companies that practice corporate ethics”, “I often recommend others to use products from companies that practice corporate ethics”. These variables clearly demonstrate the role of positive word-of-mouth in ethical consumer behavior

3.2.4 Ethical consumer intention

Ethical consumer intention reflects the willingness of consumers to choose products that are consistent with ethical and environmental values. This intention is expressed through consumers “willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products even if there are cheaper options”, “when I have a choice, I always prioritize products that cause the least harm to the environment”, “I always try to buy products with reusable or recyclable packaging”, and “I do not buy products from companies that I know are socially irresponsible.” These expressions show that ethical consumer intention is a commitment to prioritizing responsible choices, even when cheaper or more convenient solutions exist.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Reliability and validity

The results of reliability and convergent validity analysis showed that the scales in the study all achieved high levels of fit according to PLS-SEM standards. The Introduction Scale (ADVO) had CA = 0.903, CR = 0.932 and AVE = 0.776, with loading weights greater than 0.8, reflecting good internal consistency. Similarly, Attitude (ATTI) achieved CA = 0.881, CR = 0.907 and AVE = 0.766, confirming the stability and explanatory power of the observed variables. The Behavioral Control Scale (BECO) also demonstrated strong reliability (CA = 0.874; CR = 0.922; AVE = 0.798), indicating that the conceptual structure was effectively measured. In addition, Involvement (ENGA) achieved CR = 0.887 and AVE = 0.724, ensuring a satisfactory level of convergence. For Support (HELP), the CR = 0.948 and AVE = 0.819 values, along with high external loadings, indicate a strong association of the observed variables with the concept. The Ethical Consumption Intention (INTE) scale continues to demonstrate good measurement quality with CA = 0.903, CR = 0.933 and AVE = 0.777. The Subjective Norm (SUBJ) and Sustainability (SUST) scales both achieved CA from 0.849 to 0.879, CR from 0.899 to 0.917 and AVE exceeding 0.69, indicating a strong level of reliability and convergence. Overall, all scales met the standards, demonstrating that the measurement tool used in the

study on ethical consumer behavior of retail shoppers in the Mekong Delta is of high quality and fully suitable for inclusion in the structural model analysis.

Table 2

Measurement model assessment.

Constructs' Items	Outer Loading	CA	CR	AVE
		0.903	0.932	0.776
ADVO1	0.818			
ADVO2	0.932			
ADVO3	0.834			
ADVO4	0.932			
		0.881	0.907	0.766
ATTI1	0.745			
ATTI2	0.896			
ATTI3	0.970			
		0.874	0.922	0.798
BECO1	0.891			
BECO2	0.917			
BECO3	0.872			
		0.809	0.887	0.724
ENGA1	0.919			
ENGA2	0.826			
ENGA3	0.803			
		0.925	0.948	0.819
HELP1	0.944			
HELP2	0.931			
HELP3	0.940			
HELP4	0.797			
		0.903	0.933	0.777
INTE1	0.923			
INTE2	0.919			
INTE3	0.842			
INTE4	0.838			
		0.879	0.917	0.734
SUBJ1	0.843			
SUBJ2	0.879			
SUBJ3	0.851			
SUBJ4	0.854			
		0.849	0.899	0.691
SUST1	0.806			
SUST2	0.913			
SUST3	0.804			
SUST4	0.796			

The results of the Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity test show that the square root AVE of constructs such as ADVO (0.8808), ATTI (0.8755), BECO (0.8935), ENGA (0.8508), HELP (0.9052), INTE (0.8813), SUBJ (0.8569) and SUST (0.8313) are all superior to the correlation coefficients between the variables, confirming the clear level of discrimination between the scales. Although some pairs of variables show relatively

high correlations, typically ETCO–SUST (0.7599) or BECO–ETCO (0.5433), the AVE root values are still significantly larger, ensuring satisfactory discrimination. This demonstrates that the scales in the model including introduction, attitude, behavioral control, involvement, ethical consumption, support, ethical consumption intention, subjective norm and sustainability are measured independently and do not overlap concepts.

Overall, the results confirm that the scale structure has good discriminant validity and is completely suitable for further use in structural model analysis to study ethical consumption behavior of retail shoppers in the Mekong Delta.

Table 3

Fornell and Larcker table

	ADVO	ATTI	BECO	ENGA	ETCO	HELP	INTE	SUBJ	SUST
ADVO	0.880819								
ATTI	-0.03607	0.875464							
BECO	-0.15398	0.010537	0.893545						
ENGA	-0.03653	-0.06853	0.283359	0.850768					
ETCO	-0.20448	-0.07489	0.543319	0.642649	0.57309				
HELP	-0.05407	-0.05289	0.448824	0.40232	0.839937	0.905162			
INTE	-0.06666	-0.01577	0.481775	0.27638	0.510214	0.365672	0.881306		
SUBJ	-0.04995	-0.05112	0.434006	0.26002	0.533453	0.350745	0.50065	0.856882	
SUST	-0.08966	-0.06972	0.451708	0.299566	0.75989	0.40516	0.507248	0.592879	0.831312

The results of the Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity test show that the square root AVE of constructs such as ADVO (0.8808), ATTI (0.8755), BECO (0.8935), ENGA (0.8508), HELP (0.9052), INTE (0.8813), SUBJ (0.8569) and SUST (0.8313) are all superior to the correlation coefficients between the variables, confirming the clear level of discrimination between the scales. Although some pairs of variables show relatively high correlations, typically ETCO–SUST (0.7599) or BECO–ETCO (0.5433), the AVE root values are still significantly larger, ensuring satisfactory discrimination. This demonstrates that the scales in the model including introduction, attitude, behavioral control, involvement, ethical consumption, support, ethical consumption intention, subjective norm and sustainability are measured independently and do not overlap concepts. Overall, the results confirm that the scale structure has good discriminant validity and is completely suitable for further use in structural model analysis to study ethical consumption behavior of retail shoppers in the Mekong Delta

Table 4*Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT).*

	ADVO	ATTI	BECO	ENGA	ETCO	HELP	INTE	SUBJ	SUST
ADVO									
ATTI	0.064								
BECO	0.174	0.032							
ENGA	0.088	0.070	0.325						
ETCO	0.580	0.093	0.608	0.756					
HELP	0.063	0.047	0.501	0.456	0.836				
INTE	0.074	0.021	0.539	0.320	0.539	0.400			
SUBJ	0.057	0.052	0.495	0.298	0.563	0.390	0.560		
SUST	0.107	0.057	0.522	0.357	0.830	0.459	0.579	0.682	

The results of the discriminant validity test using the HTMT index show that the pairs of concepts in the model are all below the recommended threshold of 0.85, thereby confirming the required discrimination between the scales. Low HTMT values, including ADVO–ATTI (0.064), ADVO–BECO (0.174), ATTI–BECO (0.032) and ENGA–ATTI (0.070), indicate a very low level of conceptual interference. Some pairs with higher values such as ETCO–ENGA (0.756), BECO–ETCO (0.608) or SUST–ETCO (0.830) are still within the acceptable threshold, reflecting a moderate relationship but not causing conceptual conflict. Overall, no pair of variables exceeded the threshold of 0.90, thereby confirming that the measurement constructs such as introduction, attitude, behavioral control, involvement, ethical consumption, support, ethical consumption intention, subjective norm and sustainability were clearly differentiated. This result strengthens the suitability of the measurement model and allows for further analysis of structural relationships in ethical consumption behavior research in the Mekong Delta.

4.2 Hypothesetesting

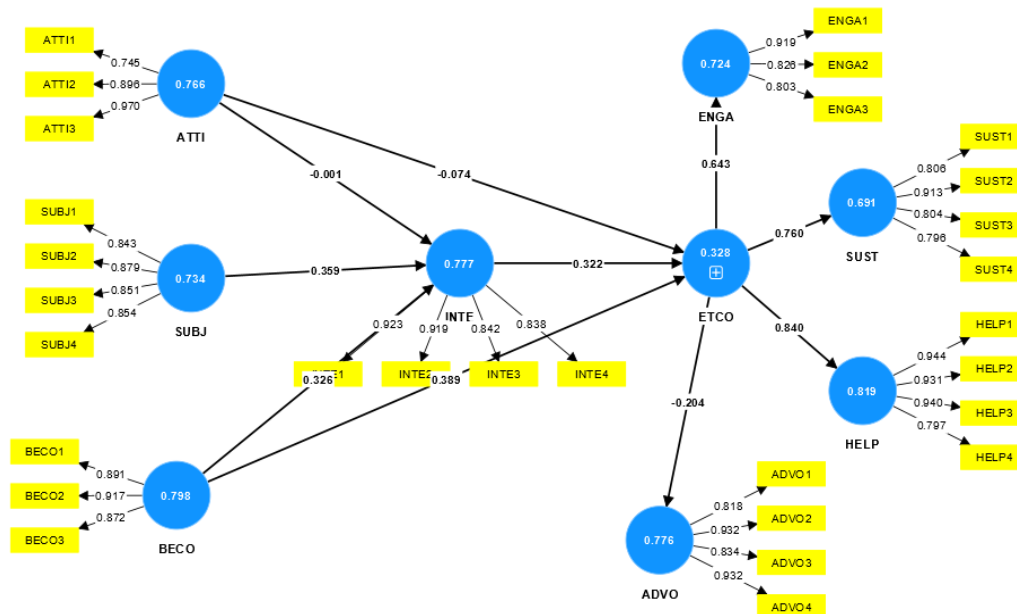
Table 5*Summary of structural model.*

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	VIF	Results
ATTI -> ETCO	-0.074	-0.065	0.057	1.290	0.197	1.001	Not Accepted
ATTI -> INTE	-0.001	-0.001	0.050	0.017	0.986	1.004	Not Accepted
BECO -> ETCO	0.389	0.388	0.057	6.767	0.000	1.303	Accepted
BECO -> INTE	0.326	0.327	0.060	5.467	0.000	1.234	Accepted
ETCO -> ADVO	-0.204	-0.171	0.174	1.172	0.241	1.000	Accepted
ETCO -> ENGA	0.647	0.644	0.045	14.333	0.000	1.000	Rejected
ETCO -> HELP	0.841	0.840	0.022	39.052	0.000	1.000	Accepted

ETCO -> SUST	0.755	0.753	0.034	22.441	0.000	1.000	Accepted
INTE -> ETCO	0.320	0.320	0.059	5.402	0.000	1.303	Accepted
SUBJ -> INTE	0.359	0.360	0.057	6.255	0.000	1.237	Accepted

The SEM model results showed that the hypotheses about the impact of Attitude on Ethical Consumption Perception and Ethical Consumption Intention were both rejected, with the beta coefficients being -0.074 ($p = 0.197$) and -0.001 ($p = 0.986$) respectively, implying an opposite but statistically insignificant impact. On the contrary, Behavioral Control showed a prominent role in the model when it impacted Ethical Consumption Perception with $\beta = 0.389$ ($p < 0.001$) and Ethical Consumption Intention with $\beta = 0.326$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating that both relationships were in the same direction and were strongly significant. For the impact group of Ethical Consumer Perception, the relationships towards Involvement, Support and Sustainability were all accepted with very high levels of significance, shown by beta coefficients of 0.647 ($p < 0.001$), 0.841 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.755 ($p < 0.001$), reflecting strong positive effects. However, the relationship between Ethical Consumer Perception and Referral was not accepted ($\beta = -0.204$; $p = 0.241$), although negative in sign but not reaching statistical significance. In addition, the hypotheses on the impact of Ethical Consumption Intention on Ethical Consumption Perception ($\beta = 0.320$; $p < 0.001$) and of Subjective Norm on Ethical Consumption Intention ($\beta = 0.359$; $p < 0.001$) were both accepted with a significant positive impact. All accepted relationships had positive betas, indicating that the increase of the independent variable promoted the dependent variable, while the rejected relationships had negative or very small betas.

Figure 2
SEM analysis results from the research model



5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Discussion of research results

The results of the study show that the ethical consumption behavior of retail shoppers in the Mekong Delta is simultaneously influenced by psychological, social, and behavioral control factors, consistent with the core thesis of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Although attitudes toward ethical consumption did not show a significant influence on ethical intentions or perceptions, factors such as behavioral control and subjective norms played a prominent role in shaping intentions and specific ethical behaviors. This suggests that consumers in the region tend to act based on self-efficacy and social pressure, rather than purely on personal attitudes. The SEM results also show that ethical perceptions have a strong impact on positive behaviors such as participation, support, and sustainability, which are important manifestations of ethical consumption behavior. However, referral behavior was not significantly influenced by ethical perceptions, suggesting that spreading positive information about ethical businesses may require stronger social motivations or deeper engagement with the brand.

The appropriateness of the measurement model was confirmed through the high standard of CA, CR and AVE indices, while the discrimination criteria such as Fornell–Larcker and HTMT ensured that the theoretical constructs were stably separated. This confirmed that the scale was effectively localized and suitable for the socio-cultural characteristics of the region. In addition, the combination of ethical consumer behavior components such as participation, support, sustainability and referral helps to more comprehensively reflect the role of consumers as active actors in the sustainable development ecosystem. The study still has some limitations that need to be considered in further studies, the convenience sampling method at some supermarkets in the Mekong Delta may not fully reflect the ethical consumption behavior of the entire region or other regions, the data collected based on self-report may be affected by social desirability bias, leading to differences between attitudes and actual behavior, the research model mainly relies on TPB so it has not considered contextual factors such as trust in businesses, level of understanding of ethics or product prices, the study focuses on a single measurement point in time so it has not reflected changes in consumer behavior over time.

5.2 Limitations and future research directions

From the above results, the study opens up some important directions for discussion. Attitude, although a central factor in many psychological models, does not play a significant role in the local context, suggesting that ethical consumption behavior in the Mekong Delta may be pragmatic and strongly dependent on consumers' ability to implement, subjective norms play a prominent role, demonstrating the importance of community, family and social networks in encouraging responsible purchasing behavior. This is consistent with the region's cultural characteristics that emphasize community, the strong impact of perceived behavioral control suggests that improving access to information, product transparency, as well as reducing barriers in price or availability can promote effective ethical consumption, the study makes a significant practical contribution by providing a validated scale suitable for the Vietnamese context, supporting retail businesses to build more sustainable marketing, CSR and customer relationship management strategies. These results also confirm the importance of continued cross-regional and cross-disciplinary research to address remaining barriers and narrow the gap between attitudes and behaviors in ethical consumption.

REFERENCES

- Akintimehin, O., Phau, I., Ogbechie, R., & Oniku, A. (2022). Investigating boycotts and buycotts as antecedents towards attitude and intention to engage in ethical consumption. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 38(4), 661–681.
- Andrei, A. G., Gazzola, P., Zbucnea, A., & Alexandru, V. A. (2017). Modeling socially responsible consumption and the need for uniqueness: A PLS-SEM approach. *Kybernetes*, 46(8), 1325–1340.
- Berki-Kiss, D., & Menrad, K. (2022). Ethical consumption: Influencing factors of consumers' intention to purchase Fairtrade roses. *Cleaner and Circular Bioeconomy*, 2, 100008. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clcb.2022.100008>
- Brunk, K. H., & Blümelhuber, C. (2011). One strike and you're out: Qualitative insights into the formation of consumers' ethical company or brand perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*, 64(2), 134–141.
- Carrier, J. G. (2008). Think locally, act globally: The political economy of ethical consumption. In G. De Neve, P. Luetchford, J. Pratt, & D. Wood (Eds.), *Hidden Hands in the Market: Ethnographies of Fair Trade, Ethical Consumption, and Corporate Social Responsibility* (pp. 31–50). Emerald Group Publishing.
- Carrington, M. J., Neville, B., & Canniford, R. (2015). Unmanageable multiplicity: Consumer transformation towards moral self coherence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(7/8), 1300–1325.
- Chi, N. T. K. (2022). Ethical consumption behavior towards eco-friendly plastic products: Implication for cleaner production. *Cleaner and Responsible Consumption*, 5, 100055.
- Davis, I. A., & Gutsche, S. (2016). Consumer motivations for mainstream “ethical” consumption. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(7/8), 1326–1347.
- Delistavrou, A., Katrandjiev, H., Sadeh, H., & Tilikidou, I. (2019). Exploring ethical consumption in different geographical places. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 14(3), 221–238.
- Deng, X. (2015). Understanding Chinese consumers' ethical purchasing decision-making process: A combination of qualitative and quantitative study. *Geoforum*, 67, 204–213.
- Doyduk, H. B. B. (2018). Business ethics, marketing ethics, consumer ethics, sustainable consumption and corporate social responsibility in Turkey. In S. Ozturkcan & E. Y. Okan (Eds.), *Marketing Management in Turkey* (pp. 29–47). Emerald Publishing.
- Ertz, M., Durif, F., Lecompte, A., & Boivin, C. (2018). Does “sharing” mean “socially responsible consuming”? Exploration of the relationship between collaborative consumption and socially responsible consumption. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 35(4), 392–402.

- Gandhi, M., & Kaushik, N. (2016). Socially responsive consumption behaviour – an Indian perspective. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 12(1), 85–102.
- Ghvanidze, S., Velikova, N., Dodd, T. H., & Oldewage-Theron, W. (2016). Consumers' environmental and ethical consciousness and the use of food product information: The role of perceived consumer effectiveness. *Appetite*, 107, 311–322.
- Groth, M. (2005). Customers as good soldiers: Examining citizenship behaviors in internet service deliveries. *Journal of Management*, 31(1), 7–27.
- Ha-Brookshire, J. E., & Norum, P. S. (2011). Willingness to pay for socially responsible products: Case of cotton apparel. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 28(5), 344–353.
- Johnson, O., & Chattaraman, V. (2021). Signaling socially responsible consumption among millennials: An identity-based perspective. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 17(1), 87–105.
- Kang, J., Liu, C., & Kim, S. H. (2013). [Thông tin chi tiết không đầy đủ trong bài – mô tả theo trích dẫn gốc].
- Lades, L. K. (2014). Impulsive consumption and reflexive thought: Nudging ethical consumer behavior. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 41, 114–128.
- Nadeem, W., Juntunen, M., Shirazi, F., & Hajli, N. (2020). Consumers' value co-creation in sharing economy: The role of social support, consumers' ethical perceptions and relationship quality. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 151, 119786.
- Ogiemwonyi, O., & Jan, M. T. (2023). The correlative influence of consumer ethical beliefs, environmental ethics, and moral obligation on green consumption behavior. *Resources, Conservation & Recycling Advances*, 19, 200171.
- Oke, A., Ladas, J., & Bailey, M. (2020). Ethical consumers: An exploratory investigation of the ethical food consumption behaviour of young adults in the North East of Scotland. *British Food Journal*, 122(11), 3623–3638.
- Sharif, K. (2016). Investigating the key determinants of Muslim ethical consumption behaviour amongst affluent Qataris. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 7(3), 303–330.
- Villa Castaño, L. E., Perdomo-Ortiz, J., Durán León, W. F., & Arredondo Trapero, F. G. (2018). Measuring socially responsible consumption: A study of Colombia–Mexico. *Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*, 31(3), 553–568.
- Wang, E., An, N., Geng, X., Gao, Z., & Kiprop, E. (2021). Consumers' willingness to pay for ethical consumption initiatives on e-commerce platforms. *Journal of Integrative Agriculture*, 20(4), 1012–1020.
- Yi, Y. J., Gong, T. S., & Yu, J. W. (2004). Impact of exchange relationship between service organization and customers on customer citizenship behavior. *Korean Studies of Business Administration*, 33(6), 1810–1845.

- Yoon, S. (2019). Testing the effects of reciprocal norm and network traits on ethical consumption behavior. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 31(4), 1024–1047.
- Yoon, S. (2020). Testing the effects of reciprocal norm and network traits on ethical consumption behavior. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 32(7), 1611–1628.
- Zollo, L., Yoon, S., Rialti, R., & Ciappei, C. (2018). Ethical consumption and consumers' decision making: The role of moral intuition. *Management Decision*, 56(3), 692–710

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

How to cite this article (APA)

Truong, L. M., Van, N. T., & Nguyen, H. H. (2025). FACTORS AFFECTING ETHICAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: THE CASE OF RETAIL SHOPPERS IN THE MEKONG DELTA, VIETNAM. *Veredas Do Direito*, 22(7), e224161. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v22.n7.4161>