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Can sustainable lifestyles bridge the intention–behavior gap in organic food purchasing? A new perspective from the theory of planned behavior

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ABSTRACT

Although scholars have demonstrated a positive relationship between attitude and intention across various fields, the link between intention and behavior has received less attention, especially in the context of sustainable food purchasing. This is understandable, as not all intentions are translated into actual behavior. Recent studies have suggested that examining the moderating effects between intention and behavior is essential to explain why consumers rarely engage in responsible food purchasing behavior. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the role of sustainable lifestyles (SL) in bridging the gap between intention and behavior in organic food purchasing. Using attitude, a key component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), as an input variable, data were collected from 773 consumers in Vietnam and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings reveal two key insights: (1) SL significantly helps bridge the gap between intention and behavior in organic food purchasing, and (2) attitude effectively predicts behavior through intention. These results contribute significantly to the existing literature on organic food consumption behavior.

Contribution/Originality: This study offers a novel contribution by integrating sustainable lifestyle as a moderator in the intention-behavior gap for organic food purchasing. Unlike prior research, it applies a streamlined Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model focusing solely on attitude, providing new empirical insights into organic food consumption within Vietnam's emerging market context.

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, environmental pollution, depletion of natural resources, and climate change have become increasingly severe (Cuong, Minh, & Chinh, 2025; Minh, Huong, Thang, Hoang, & Cuong, 2025; Minh, Huong, Trang, Mai, & Trang, 2025). This presents a significant challenge, requiring more sustainable actions from humanity. Sustainable actions must be implemented synchronously across various sectors such as education, healthcare, economy, culture, and society. However, in reality, human efforts remain limited, as negative environmental issues continue to rise (Trenberth, 2018). Particularly, the agriculture and food sectors contribute up to 32% of annual CO2 emissions (Frank et al., 2017). These emissions mainly result from energy-intensive processes such as food processing, packaging, and storage, especially for frozen products, canned goods, and other items requiring special preservation (Sonesson, Davis, & Ziegler, 2010; Zhu et al., 2023). Additionally, food waste during supply chain management and at the consumer level contributes to greenhouse gas emissions through decomposition and methane release from landfills, as well as resource wastage in food production (Shah, 2022; Wahlquist, 2013).

To reduce the environmental impact of the food industry, organic food has long been recognized as an effective solution. Organic food offers significant benefits to human health and environmental sustainability (Magkos, Arvaniti, & Zampelas, 2003; Mondelaers, Verbeke, & Van Huylenbroeck, 2009). It is produced through natural processes that avoid synthetic chemicals such as growth stimulants, pesticides, and artificial fertilizers (Kahl et al., 2014). This approach emphasizes ecological balance, resource conservation, and the role of living organisms in relation to food. Most recently, the market for organic food has also seen tremendous growth amid increased consumer interest in sustainable consumption. According to GlobeNewswire (2025), estimates predict this market to further grow at an 11.20% yearly rate between the years 2025-2034. In relation to health, various studies have indicated that organic food is generally regarded as healthier, safer, and more nutrient-dense in supportive micronutrients for digestion (Teng & Wang, 2015). Environmentally, organic food production and consumption lower pollution, promote biodiversity, and sustainably use resources (Parashar, Singh, & Sood, 2023).

Through the literature review, we find that despite the many benefits of organic food, consumer attention to organic products remains limited. Although the market potential is predicted to be strong in the future, in practice, consumers often prioritize their initial intentions or preferences over environmental concerns (GlobeNewswire, 2025; Kumar, Sezersan, Garza-Reyes, Gonzalez, & Al-Shboul, 2019; Song et al., 2019). This is particularly true in developing and less-developed countries, where environmental issues tend to be neglected by consumers (Wang, Ghadimi, Lim, & Tseng, 2019). Moreover, market growth primarily concentrates in developed countries such as Germany, France, China, and the United States. For instance, in 2021, the global organic food market value reached $132.7 billion, with the U.S. as the main consumer market at $52 billion, accounting for 39% (Economic Research Service, 2025). This indicates that sustainable consumption behavior in developing countries such as Vietnam has not been adequately studied.

Secondly, from a theoretical perspective, some previous studies have explored factors influencing customers' organic food purchasing behaviors. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), studies by Zayed, Gaber, and El Essawi (2022); Garg, Narwal, and Kumar (2024), and Chiciudean et al. (2019) showed that knowledge, beliefs, social influence, and health concerns significantly impact organic food purchase intentions. However, these studies were conducted in large markets such as China and India. Moreover, most prior research focused mainly on purchase intentions, neglecting the role of actual behavior. Encouragingly, some recent studies have begun to examine behavior (e.g., Singh & Verma, 2017; Wee et al., 2014). Their results suggest that intention can reasonably predict actual organic food purchasing behavior. However, the relationship between these two factors is often weak and inconsistent. For example, Singh and Verma (2017) found that intention only explained about 40% of the variance in actual purchasing behavior. A qualitative study by Padel and Foster (2005) also indicated that numerous barriers diminish consumer enthusiasm for organic products despite adequate awareness and positive attitudes. In summary, the intention-behavior relationship remains underexplored in previous literature. Studies often overlook actual behavior or fail to sufficiently explain the gap between intention and behavior.

Indeed, what prevents consumers from translating their intentions into actual organic food purchases? To answer this, this study focuses on assessing the moderating role of a sustainable lifestyle in the relationship between intention and actual organic food purchasing behavior. This lifestyle centers on consuming and using sustainable, environmentally friendly products and services while minimizing waste (Cohen, 2017). In other words, we propose that individuals with a sustainable lifestyle tend to buy and consume more organic food. This has been supported by some studies (e.g., Gilg, Barr, and Ford (2005) and Laurett, do Paço, and Mainardes (2020)). However, previous research mainly employed qualitative methods, limiting the empirical validity of findings. Additionally, studies on the link between a sustainable lifestyle and organic food consumption remain scarce.

To address these research gaps, we use the TPB as the theoretical foundation. However, we adopt a novel approach by focusing solely on attitude as the input factor. This allows the study to maintain a solid theoretical base

while concentrating on the main goal: bridging the gap between intention and behavior in the emerging market context of Vietnam.

This study is divided into six main sections: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature review and hypothesis development, (3) Methodology, (4) Results, (5) Discussion and implications, and (6) Conclusion and future research.

2. UNDERPINNING THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Research Framework

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), has been widely used in research and practice to explain human social behaviors. This theory helps clarify why individuals make decisions based on weighing the pros and cons before engaging in actual behaviors. For a long time, TPB has been applied to explain customer purchasing behaviors across various fields (Tarigan, Putri, & Sabrina, 2021). Similarly, it has recently been employed to understand organic food purchasing behavior (Khan, Hameed, & Akram, 2023) as sustainable behaviors are considered influenced by personal values, perceptions, and social factors. However, the relationship between the intention to buy organic food and actual behavior is often overlooked in previous studies.

In applying TPB, earlier research commonly uses all three components: subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and attitude. However, in this study, we focus solely on attitude as the primary antecedent of the intention-behavior relationship. This novel approach is adopted for several reasons. First, in behavioral research, it is not always necessary to include all three TPB components, as demonstrated in studies by Duong (2022b) and Cui and Bell (2022). The application of TPB depends on the main objective and the specific approach of the research. Second, some studies on organic food consumption behavior indicate that attitude is the strongest predictor of intention compared to the other two components, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control (Canova, Bobbio, & Manganelli, 2020; Istiasih, Irmayanti, Afandi, & Surindra, 2022). Furthermore, our research focuses on reducing the gap between intention and actual organic food purchasing behavior through the moderating role of a sustainable lifestyle. Therefore, including all three TPB components is unnecessary.

2.2. The Relationship between Attitude and Intention in Organic Food Purchasing

The dynamics of intention and attitude towards organic food purchasing have been extensively studied in various settings and theoretical frameworks. Several studies emphasize the key role of attitude as a predictor of purchase intention. Li and Jaharuddin (2021) analyzed the connection between individual attitudes and the purchase behaviors of Chinese university students and identified that a positive attitude towards organic food is associated with greater purchase intentions. Similarly, Yazdanpanah and Forouzani (2015) coupled attitude with self-identity and moral norms to predict Iranian students' intention, highlighting the significant role of attitude in molding behavioral intentions towards organic food. In addition, Ly and Minh (2022) determined such variables as post-pandemic health concerns and environmental awareness as antecedents of such positive attitudes that lead to purchase intentions among Vietnamese consumers. However, the above studies are limited by their research samples, as they focus solely on student populations. Such topics are revealed to have more reckless consumption patterns rather than thoughtful, long-term consumption (George & Yaoyuneyong, 2010; Han, Morgan, Kotsiopulos, & Kang-Park, 1991). The approach does not also analyze the conduct of other groups such as entrepreneurs, educators, and others who, in most instances, exhibit more steady consumption.

Theoretical frameworks, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), have been employed to further elaborate on this relation. Ferreira and Pereira (2023) employed the TPB in order to derive predictors of purchase intention and confirmed that attitude is a key variable to predict intention to behave in the context of the Portuguese market. Kim, Kim, and Lee (2011), for instance, analyzed the effect of food choice motives on attitudes and organic food purchase intention, and they noted that motives are a strong predictor of attitudes and, consequently, of purchase intention among Koreans. Although the above studies contribute to extending the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

in the context of developed countries, they also reveal two research gaps. First, developed countries generally have stronger institutional frameworks and policies that support consumers and producers of sustainable products more effectively than other nations. Second, sustainable purchasing behaviors in developed and developing countries have been shown to differ (Thøgersen, 2010; Wang et al., 2019).

Literature also cites the influence of background values and factors on the attitude-intention connection. Li and Jaharuddin (2021) recognized the influence of health consciousness and labeling on influencing consumer attitudes, which in turn affect their purchase intentions in China. Kamboj and Kishor (2022) took this concept further by demonstrating that perceived values health, hedonic, and social act as mediators between the relationship of attitude and green purchase intention, demonstrating that perceived value reinforces the attitude-intention relationship. In addition, research conducted in non-Western settings demonstrates that moral norms and environmental concerns also influence attitude and intention development. Furthermore, Saleki, Quoquab, and Mohammad (2019) determined that moral norms and environmental concern significantly influence Malaysian consumers' purchase intentions through their attitudes. However, the aforementioned studies focus on investigating the factors influencing attitude and intention rather than examining the relationship between attitude and intention specifically within the context of sustainability and organic food.

Based on the above arguments, we propose the following hypothesis: *(H_1) There is a positive relationship between attitude and intention in organic food purchasing.*

2.3. The Relationship between Intention and Actual Behaviour in Organic Food Purchasing

The relationship between intention and real behavior in purchasing organic foods has been extensively explored through the application of various theoretical frameworks and empirical studies. One of the typical methods employed in these kinds of studies is the use of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), to the extent that the intention to enact a behavior is an essential predictor of actual behavior as affected by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ham, Pap, & Stanic, 2018; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). However, the strength of this relationship varies depending on contextual factors and additional variables.

Several studies highlight the fact that while intention is a robust predictor, it does not always translate into direct behavior. Singh and Verma (2017) discovered that although consumers showed a high intention to buy organic food, this depended on availability and perceived hindrances to purchase. In the same context, Mohammed (2021) illustrated that subjective norms, trust, and perceived values drive purchase intention of customers, but such variables as product availability drive behavior in bridging the intention-behavior gap. Individual and social determinants are underscored by the research in bridging the intention-behavior gap. Hung, Lin, and Chen (2013) empirically demonstrated the influence of social capital in health communities on consumer behavior and knowledge exchange, and by implication, that social environments can facilitate or impede intention-behavior relations. Similarly, Saleki et al. (2019) found moral norms and self-categorization as determinant predictors of intention formation, and environmental concern further increases purchase behavior potential.

Besides social and psychological influences, perceived values such as health value, sensory pleasure, and ecological sustainability play a significant role as well. Kamboj and Kishor (2022) elucidated that perceived values play a linking function between consumers' attitudes and behavior since positive perceptions tend to make intention-consistent behaviors probable. Similarly, Ali, Li, and Hao (2021) found that health consciousness and trust significantly impact purchasing behavior among university students, although actual behavior still depends on external factors like pricing and availability. Context-specific factors are also of particular importance. For instance, Mohammed (2021) and Ferreira and Pereira (2023) found that in the emerging markets context, perceived resource availability and trust formation are key determinants of intention to behavior conversion.. Additionally, Kushwah, Dhir, and Sagar (2019) clarified that consumer resistance rooted in ethical beliefs and perceived barriers has the capability to stop intention-to-behavior conversion, hence shedding light on the complexity of the relationship.

The literature indicates that although the intention to purchase organic food is a prerequisite, its influence on consumers' actual behavior is moderated by a number of variables. These variables range from social factors and subjective values to environmental concerns and situational factors such as availability and perceived barriers. Such findings point to the necessity of taking into account psychological and situational factors in examining the intention-behavior relationship in organic food buying (Ferreira & Pereira, 2023; Ham et al., 2018; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015).

However, most of the existing studies have not focused specifically on the organic food category. Therefore, in this study, we explore the moderating role of a sustainable lifestyle as a personal value and belief in bridging the gap between intention and actual purchasing behavior of organic food. Based on the above arguments, we propose the following hypotheses:

H_2: There is a positive relationship between intention and actual behaviour in organic food purchasing.

H_3: Intention to buy organic food mediates the link between attitude and actual behavior.

2.4. The Moderate Role of Sustainable Lifestyle

Currently, various definitions and perspectives exist regarding the term "sustainable lifestyle." However, a widely adopted view was developed by Papaoikonomou (2013), which conceptualizes a sustainable lifestyle through three dimensions. First, individuals with a sustainable lifestyle tend to use, purchase, or consume products based on considerations of social responsibility and ethics. Second, they express concern for the environment and society by refusing or avoiding certain actions perceived to have negative impacts. Third, they reduce consumption and adopt a simple lifestyle focused on reuse. This perspective has been supported by subsequent studies such as Rakic and Rakic (2015). However, the organic food consumption behavior of individuals pursuing such a lifestyle remains underexplored.

Indeed, prior empirical evidence supports this notion. Singh and Verma (2017) conducted an empirical study showing that availability, knowledge, and other factors positively influence the intention to purchase organic food. Moreover, purchase intention also positively impacts actual buying behavior. However, this relationship explained only about 40% of the variance. In other words, most respondents did not purchase organic food despite being aware of its benefits and even expressing the intention to do so. Another study by Wee et al. (2014), using the TPB model, also demonstrated a weak relationship between intention and actual organic food purchasing behavior, with a beta coefficient of 0.106 and an R-squared value of 0.165 (below 50%). This indicates that intention alone does not adequately explain behavior.

To address these research gaps, we explore the moderating role of a sustainable lifestyle in the relationship between intention and behavior. Some perspectives argue that a sustainable lifestyle is reflected in consumption behavior. This viewpoint suggests that a sustainable lifestyle focuses on fulfilling needs (not minimal needs) without degrading resources, emphasizes recycling, and avoids harming future generations (Bedford, Jones, & Walker, 2004). This aligns with the production methods of organic food, which emphasize sustainability aspects. For example, organic food production relies on natural methods, avoids synthetic chemicals, and prioritizes soil health (Reeve et al., 2016). Organic food is not produced using genetically modified organisms (Ghorbani, Koocheki, Brandt, Wilcockson, & Leifert, 2010). Finally, organic agriculture aims to create a closed-loop system that minimizes environmental impact and conserves natural resources (Ghorbani et al., 2010). Logically, a sustainable lifestyle may promote the purchasing and consumption of organic products, a dimension unexplored by previous studies. Based on the above arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_4: Sustainable lifestyles moderate the link between intention and behaviour to buy organic food.

The research model is presented below (see Figure 1).

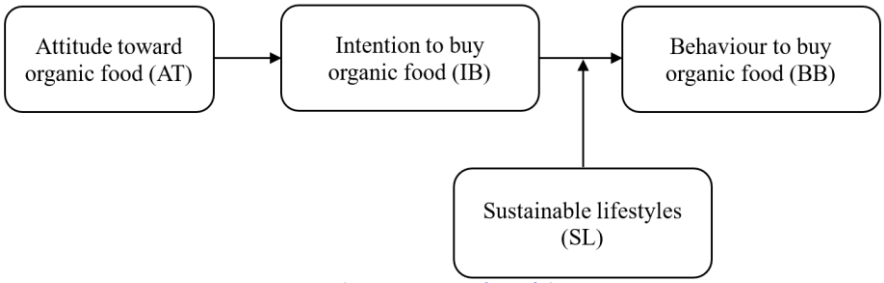

Figure 1. Research model.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Collection and Sampling

In order to validate the research hypotheses, data were collected from customers residing in the three most populated cities of Vietnam, namely Hanoi, Danang, and Ho Chi Minh City. The big cities were selected for several reasons. Firstly, big cities tend to have high populations, environmental contamination, and resource depletion (Nguyen, Nguyen, & Hoang, 2019). Second, the population residing in such cities is likely to be environmentally aware and oriented toward green consumption (Duong, 2022a), validating the data collected through the survey. Finally, green goods and services such as organic foods are readily available in such cities compared to rural towns (Duong, 2022a; Nguyen et al., 2019). This indicates that urban cities possess the prerequisites for green and sustainable consumption.

We selected major shopping centers in the three cities at random on which to conduct the survey. The mall-intercept technique was used to ensure randomness and representativeness of the samples. In each mall selected, trained interviewers randomly approached four shoppers and spoke with them. Respondents were first asked if they were willing to participate in the survey. They were then explained major concepts and the purpose of the research, also being informed that data would be used only for academic purposes.

Data collection was conducted between October 2024 and March 2025. 801 respondents gave consent to participate, out of which 773 valid samples were processed. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study sample.

Table 1. Descriptive sample.

Variables	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	350	45.3
	Female	423	54.7
Age	Below 18	50	6.5
	19 to 30	400	51.7
	31 to 50	250	32.3
	Above 51	73	9.4
Method	Online	300	38.8
	Offline	473	61.2
Buying organic food experience	Yes	173	22.4
	No	600	77.6

3.2. Scales and Questionnaire Development

To ensure consistency, we adopted measurement scales from previous studies. The scale for "Attitude toward Organic Food" was adapted from Canova et al. (2020). The scale for "Intention to Buy Organic Food" was adopted from Canova et al. (2020) and Istiasih et al. (2022). The scale for "Behavior to Buy Organic Food" was taken from Istiasih et al. (2022). The scale for "Sustainable Lifestyle" was derived from Jánská, Žambochová, and Kita (2023). The two different language experts translated each scale. We then conducted a pilot test on a small sample in order to assess the response clarity and ease for the participants.

3.3. Data Analyst

The collected data were processed using PLS-SEM with the assistance of SmartPLS 4 software, which is suitable for testing complex models based on latent variables, as well as mediating and moderating effects. PLS-SEM enables the simultaneous testing of measurement models (construct validity and reliability) and the structural model (hypothesized relationships among variables).

Firstly, we conducted reliability and validity tests to ensure the measurement instruments were appropriate. Internal consistency reliability was established through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with all constructs surpassing the recommended value of 0.7. Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5 for all variables, indicating that the constructs explained a significant proportion of the variance in their respective indicators. Discriminant validity was confirmed by comparing inter-construct correlations with the square roots of AVE, meeting the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Next, the structural model was tested to examine the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. Path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values were evaluated through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to determine the significance of the direct, indirect, and moderating effects. Effect sizes (f^2) and variance explained (R^2 and VAF) were also calculated to assess the practical impact of the predictors and mediation/moderation effects.

4. RESULT

4.1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

The reliability of the variables was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with all variables having values above 0.88, exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating high stability and consistency of the measurement scales. The Composite Reliability (C.R.) values ranged from 0.91 to 0.93, also within the acceptable range, reflecting the overall consistency of the variables. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were all above 0.63, surpassing the minimum criterion of 0.5, demonstrating that the variables explain a substantial portion of the variance of their respective measurement items (see Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability and convergence.

Variables	Items	Outer loadings	Cronbach's alpha	C.R	AVE
Attitudes toward organic food (AT)	AT1	0.845	0.883	0.911	0.631
	AT2	0.750			
	AT3	0.824			
	AT4	0.820			
	AT5	0.751			
	AT6	0.771			
Intention to buy organic food (IB)	IB1	0.827	0.901	0.924	0.671
	IB2	0.771			
	IB3	0.791			
	IB4	0.802			
	IB5	0.809			
	IB6	0.909			
Behaviour to buy organic food (BB)	BB1	0.704	0.907	0.927	0.647
	BB2	0.700			
	BB3	0.858			
	BB4	0.842			
	BB5	0.853			
	BB6	0.921			
	BB7	0.723			
Sustainable lifestyle (SL)	SL1	0.879	0.880	0.911	0.673
	SL2	0.757			
	SL3	0.800			
	SL4	0.772			
	SL5	0.886			

4.2. Discriminant Validity

Table 3 presents the results of the discriminant validity test for the research variables, including Attitudes Toward Organic Food (AT), Behavior to Buy Organic Food (BB), Intention to Buy Organic Food (IB), and Sustainable Lifestyle (SL). The values on the main diagonal represent the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct, ranging from 0.794 to 0.821, all of which are higher than the correlations between constructs off the diagonal. Therefore, the results confirm that the model has good discriminant validity, ensuring that the measurement variables accurately reflect their respective research concepts.

Table 3. Discriminant validity.

Construct	AT	BB	IB	SL
AT	0.794			
BB	0.630	0.804		
IB	0.461	0.573	0.819	
SL	0.167	0.227	0.218	0.821

4.3. Hypotheses Testing

The Table 4 presents the results of hypothesis testing in the research model, including the beta coefficients (**β**), standard deviations (SD), t-values, p-values (**ρ**), effect size (f^2), and variance accounted for (VAF). The results show that Hypothesis H1, which examines the relationship between Attitudes toward Organic Food (AT) and the Intention to Buy Organic Food (IB), has a beta coefficient of 0.461, a very high t-value of 16.621, and a p-value less than 0.001, indicating a strong and statistically significant relationship. Similarly, Hypothesis H2, testing the effect of the Intention to Buy (IB) on the Behavior to Buy Organic Food (BB), has a high beta of 0.551, a t-value of 17.070, and a clearly significant p-value.

Hypothesis H3 assesses the mediating effect of Intention to Buy (IB) on the relationship between Attitude (AT) and Behavior to Buy (BB), with a beta of 0.254, $t = 9.505$, and $p < 0.001$, indicating that intention plays an important mediating role. The variance accounted for (VAF) is 36.38%, showing that a substantial portion of the effect of attitude on behavior is transmitted through purchase intention.

Finally, Hypothesis H4 examines the moderating role of Sustainable Lifestyle (SL) on the relationship between Intention to Buy (IB) and Behavior to Buy (BB), with a beta of 0.112, $t = 3.375$, and $p = 0.001$, demonstrating that this moderating effect is significant, though the effect size is small ($f^2 = 0.022$). Overall, these results support the proposed hypotheses and show statistically significant relationships between variables in explaining organic food purchasing behavior.

Table 4. Hypotheses testing.

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	SD	t	ρ	f^2	VAF (%)
H1	AT → IB	0.461	0.028	16.621	0.000	0.271	n/a
H2	IB → BB	0.551	0.032	17.070	0.000	0.198	n/a
H3	AT → IB → BB	0.254	0.027	9.505	0.000	0.322	36.38
H4	SL*IB → BB	0.112	0.033	3.375	0.001	0.022	n/a

5. DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that sustainable lifestyle (SL), an enduring commitment to health, environmental, and ethical values, plays a key role in closing the intention–behavior gap for organic food. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) holds that intention precedes action, and our results confirm that favorable attitudes strengthen purchase intentions. Crucially, however, we show that individuals scoring high on sustainable lifestyle are significantly more likely to act on those intentions. In other words, SL *moderates* the intention–behavior link: consumers who habitually prioritize sustainable consumption (e.g., avoiding chemicals, conserving resources, etc.)

convert positive intentions into purchases more reliably. This finding extends TPB-based models by incorporating a values/lifestyle perspective an addition rarely explored in organic food research (Kushwah et al., 2019). Prior literature notes that studies explicitly linking "sustainable lifestyle" and consumption behavior are sparse. Our contribution addresses this gap, showing that SL, a concept defined as a desire to consume in ways that support well-being and sustainability, strengthens the attitude–intention–behavior sequence. In doing so, it aligns with broader theories (e.g., value–action and identity frameworks) suggesting that stable personal values are needed to translate intent into action. These findings relate directly to earlier work on the organic purchase gap. For example, Singh and Verma (2017) in India and Wee et al. (2014) in Malaysia both found that intentions significantly predict actual organic buying, but also implied that other factors limit this translation. Our results corroborate those positive links as Wee et al. (2014) noted, higher purchase intention was significantly associated with actual behavior, but importantly, we identify why the translation is uneven. Specifically, we show that much of the unexplained variance in previous TPB studies can be accounted for by consumers' lifestyles and values. In other words, two people with equal purchase intentions may differ in outcomes because one lives a more environmentally conscious lifestyle. By modeling SL as a moderator, our study advances prior findings: it suggests that promoting sustainable living attitudes (for example, through education or social norms) could make the intention–behavior link more robust.

6. IMPLICATION

6.1. Theoretical Implication

This study offers a novel contribution to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by proposing a streamlined approach that utilizes only the "attitude" component as the input variable, rather than applying the full TPB model with all three components (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control). The results show that attitude has a strong and statistically significant impact on the intention to purchase organic food, suggesting that in the context of Vietnam, attitude alone is sufficient to reliably predict purchase intention. This finding enhances the flexibility and applicability of TPB, especially in specific and emerging market contexts.

In addition, the study confirms the mediating role of intention in the relationship between attitude and behavior, and identifies sustainable lifestyle as a significant moderating factor that strengthens the link between intention and actual behavior. These contributions not only deepen our understanding of the intention–behavior gap but also extend the TPB framework by integrating personal value-based variables specifically, sustainable lifestyle as a means to improve the model's explanatory power in the context of green consumption in emerging markets like Vietnam.

6.2. Managerial Implication

In this case, the finding that a sustainable lifestyle significantly enhances intention-to-behavior conversion suggests that framing organic food as a component of a healthy, ecological lifestyle will resonate with Vietnamese consumers. Campaigns and education programs linking organic consumption to family well-being, food safety, and nature preservation would be particularly effective in consolidating purchase intentions. Emphasizing the advantages of organic agricultural practices for public health, alongside their role in safeguarding natural resources like water and soil, can significantly bolster the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle among consumers. Consequently, the act of buying organic produce ought to be conceptualized not solely as a financial exchange, but rather as an individual commitment to a more extensive environmentally friendly lifestyle.

To substantively unlock the potential of green consumption and sustainable lifestyles, there needs to be concerted efforts from the private sector and policymakers. NGOs and government agencies should encourage targeted education campaigns on the merits of sustainable living. This can include integrating lessons on sustainable consumption and the benefits of organic food into school curricula, community outreach, and national media programming. Public action should reconcile organic choices with prevailing cultural values in Vietnam, such as health, family well-being, and national pride in consuming safe food. Although Vietnamese consumers are increasingly

concerned about sustainability, their awareness is often limited or fragmented. To support the transition, policymakers can increase support through incentives such as tax rebates or subsidies to organic producers and retailers, thus improving the quantity and affordability of these products. They align with national development recommendations that promote the wider use of green marketing and enhance public awareness of environmental protection.

At the same time, the food and retail industry needs to adopt value-based marketing that aligns with consumers' individual and cultural identities. Brands need to explain clearly and honestly the personal health and environmental benefits of organic foods. This involves the application of eco-labels, providing frank accounts of sustainable agriculture, and making promotional content relevant to particular lifestyle segments, e.g., young urban professionals who are health-conscious or environmentally conscious. Green promotions also allow companies to engage consumers more, such as through cooking demonstrations, loyalty schemes, or point-of-sale educational displays. In doing so, they earn credibility and reinforce the message that organic food is a natural part of a responsible, modern lifestyle. Collaborations with social media influencers and wellness communities can also help normalize organic purchasing as a socially acceptable practice.

Finally, public-private partnerships can consider launching multi-channel campaigns that connect organic food to highly universal values. For example, messages emphasizing health such as "Organic for our children's health" or appeals to traditional values of family care and responsibility based on values can enhance the personal significance of sustainable consumption. When pro-environmental intentions are continuously supported by messaging that is aligned with one's own lifestyle, they will be more firmly established as habits. These initiatives would not only promote the use of organic food but also enhance the positive influence of sustainable living on bridging the intention–behavior gap that has been identified in this research.

7. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The results of this study confirm that positive attitudes toward organic food strongly predict purchase intentions, which in turn significantly predict actual buying behavior. More importantly, our analysis revealed that sustainable lifestyle (SL) significantly moderates the intention–behavior relationship. In other words, consumers who incorporate sustainability into their daily lives are much more likely to act on their organic purchase intentions. This finding extends Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior by demonstrating that a sustainability-oriented lifestyle can serve as a boundary condition on the intention–behavior. Theoretically, this enriches the TPB framework by showing that attitude alone may not guarantee action unless it is supported by a sustainable lifestyle orientation. Practically, it provides insights for sustainable consumption in Vietnam: interventions should not only foster positive attitudes and intentions but also cultivate sustainable living values. In Vietnam's emerging organic market, this means that marketers and policymakers should design programs (e.g., education campaigns, community initiatives) that reinforce sustainability values, since devoted sustainability-oriented consumers are more likely to overcome practical obstacles (such as limited availability or higher prices) and translate intentions into actual organic purchases.

Despite these contributions, this study has limitations that suggest clear avenues for future research. Our sample was drawn exclusively from urban centers in Vietnam, so future studies should extend the investigation to rural areas or other demographic segments to assess the generality of the findings. Similarly, future research could incorporate the full TPB model: including subjective norms and perceived behavioral control alongside attitude to determine if these factors (and their interactions with sustainable lifestyle) also influence organic buying behavior. Finally, comparative cross-cultural studies would clarify whether the moderating role of sustainable lifestyle holds in different national or cultural contexts.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study involved minimal risk and adhered to ethical guidelines for social science fieldwork. Formal approval from an Institutional Review Board was not required under the policies of School of Economic, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants, and all data were anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality.
Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.
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