

Price Premium Acceptance for Organic Food: A Behavioral Economics Analysis of Consumer Decision-Making in Vietnam's Emerging Market



Trong Nghia BUI

Vinschool The Harmony Secondary and High school

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the complex relationships between perceived value and price premium acceptance in organic food consumption, with particular focus on the mediating role of trust in organic certification and the moderating effect of cultural value orientation. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from organic food consumers through a structured questionnaire, and structural equation modeling was employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The findings reveal that trust in organic certification partially mediates the relationship between perceived value and price premium acceptance, while maintaining a significant direct effect. Cultural value orientation significantly moderates the relationship between perceived value and trust in organic certification, with stronger effects observed in collectivistic cultural contexts. The results demonstrate that consumers with higher levels of collectivistic orientation show a more pronounced relationship between perceived value and trust in certification systems. This research contributes to the literature by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which perceived value influences price premium acceptance in organic food markets, particularly highlighting the crucial role of certification trust and cultural values. The findings offer valuable insights for practitioners in developing culturally adapted marketing strategies and emphasize the importance of building trust in certification systems. For policymakers, the results underscore the significance of maintaining robust certification systems while considering cultural contexts in promoting sustainable consumption behavior.

KEYWORDS: organic food consumption, price premium acceptance, trust in organic certification, cultural value orientation, perceived value

1. INTRODUCTION

The global organic food market has witnessed unprecedented growth over the past decade, reflecting a fundamental shift in consumer preferences towards healthier and more sustainable food choices (Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke, 2017). While demand for organic products continues to surge in developed economies, emerging markets present a complex landscape where price premium acceptance remains a critical determinant of market expansion (Lee and Yun, 2015). Understanding consumer decision-making processes regarding organic food pricing has become increasingly vital for both theoretical development and practical market strategies.

Behavioral economics offers a distinctive lens through which to examine consumer responses to organic food price premiums, moving beyond traditional utility maximisation frameworks to incorporate psychological, social, and contextual factors (Thøgersen et al., 2015). This theoretical approach becomes particularly relevant in emerging markets where consumer behaviour often deviates from conventional economic models due to unique socio-economic conditions and cultural values (Teng and Wang, 2015). Despite extensive research on organic food consumption in developed markets, there exists a significant knowledge gap regarding price premium acceptance in emerging economies, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts. Previous studies have predominantly focused on Western markets (Asioli et al., 2017), while emerging markets, which represent the next frontier of organic food market expansion, remain understudied. Vietnam, with its rapidly growing middle class and increasing health consciousness, presents an ideal context for examining these dynamics.

The complexity of consumer decision-making regarding organic food prices is further compounded by various psychological factors, including risk perception, trust, and value attribution (Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017). Traditional economic models have proven insufficient in explaining the observed variations in willingness to pay for organic products, necessitating a more

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nuanced behavioral economics approach (Aschemann-Witzel and Niebuhr Aagaard, 2014). This research addresses these theoretical and practical gaps by examining price premium acceptance for organic food in Vietnam's emerging market through the lens of behavioral economics. The study's significance lies in its potential to advance understanding of consumer decision-making in emerging markets while contributing to the broader theoretical discourse on behavioral economics applications in food choice contexts. By investigating how Vietnamese consumers evaluate and respond to organic food price premiums, this research offers insights that extend beyond the specific market context to inform global understanding of consumer behaviour in emerging economies.

The theoretical urgency of this research is underscored by the need to develop more sophisticated models of consumer decision-making that account for the unique characteristics of emerging markets. Current theoretical frameworks, largely developed in Western contexts, may not fully capture the complexity of decision-making processes in markets with different cultural and economic characteristics (Thøgersen et al., 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Behavioral Economics Framework in Consumer Decision-Making for Organic Food

Traditional economic approaches to consumer decision-making have predominantly relied on rational choice theory, assuming that individuals make optimal decisions based on complete information and stable preferences (Thøgersen et al., 2015). However, the complexity of organic food purchase decisions, particularly regarding price premium acceptance, has revealed the limitations of these conventional economic models. Behavioral economics offers a more nuanced framework that acknowledges the role of psychological, social, and contextual factors in decision-making processes.

Prospect theory, as pioneered by Kahneman and Tversky, provides a crucial theoretical foundation for understanding how consumers evaluate price premiums for organic food. Research has demonstrated that consumers typically evaluate prices relative to reference points rather than in absolute terms (Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke, 2017). In the context of organic food, these reference points are often established through conventional food prices, creating a framework where price premiums are evaluated as potential losses rather than gains. This perspective helps explain why some consumers exhibit resistance to organic price premiums despite acknowledging the superior attributes of organic products.

The formation of reference points in organic food pricing is particularly complex in emerging markets. Van Loo et al. (2015) found that reference prices are not solely based on market prices but are significantly influenced by consumers' previous purchase experiences and social comparisons. This finding is particularly relevant in the Vietnamese context, where the organic food market is still developing and reference prices may be less firmly established compared to mature markets.

Bounded rationality plays a crucial role in organic food purchase decisions, as consumers often face information overload and complexity in evaluating various product attributes. Aertsens et al. (2009) demonstrated that consumers frequently employ decision heuristics when evaluating organic food options, particularly when faced with multiple choice attributes such as price, quality, and certification. These heuristics can lead to systematic deviations from rational economic behavior, affecting price premium acceptance.

The application of behavioral economics to organic food consumption has revealed several important decision-making patterns. Aschemann-Witzel and Niebuhr Aagaard (2014) identified that loss aversion significantly influences consumers' willingness to pay price premiums, with perceived losses from higher prices often outweighing perceived gains from organic attributes. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in emerging markets where income constraints may amplify loss aversion tendencies.

Research by Lee and Hwang (2016) further demonstrated how cognitive biases affect organic food purchase decisions, revealing that consumers often employ mental accounting principles when evaluating organic price premiums. This mental accounting process involves categorizing expenditures and evaluating prices within specific mental budgets, which can either facilitate or inhibit premium acceptance depending on how the purchase is categorized. The behavioral economics framework also highlights the importance of choice architecture in organic food decisions. Thøgersen et al. (2012) found that the presentation of price information and organic attributes significantly influences consumer decisions, suggesting that traditional economic models fail to capture the full complexity of the decision-making process.

2.2 Determinants of Price Premium Acceptance

Understanding the factors that influence consumers' willingness to pay price premiums for organic food requires a multidimensional analysis of various determinants. Research has consistently identified several key dimensions that shape consumer acceptance of premium pricing in organic food markets.

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Perceived value dimensions constitute a fundamental driver of price premium acceptance. Lee and Yun (2015) identified that health consciousness significantly influences consumers' evaluation of organic food value, with perceived health benefits often justifying higher prices. Environmental considerations also play a crucial role, as demonstrated by Thøgersen et al. (2015), who found that consumers with strong environmental values demonstrate greater willingness to accept price premiums. Quality perception serves as another critical value dimension, with Aertsens et al. (2009) revealing that perceived superior quality of organic products positively correlates with premium acceptance. Income and price sensitivity represent critical economic determinants of premium acceptance. Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke (2017) found that while income levels positively correlate with organic food purchase intention, the relationship is moderated by perceived value. Price sensitivity varies across consumer segments, with Van Loo et al. (2015) identifying distinct consumer groups based on their price sensitivity and organic food preferences.

Consumer knowledge and awareness significantly impact price premium acceptance through multiple mechanisms. Research by Teng and Wang (2015) established that consumers with higher levels of organic food knowledge demonstrate greater willingness to pay premium prices, attributing this to better understanding of production costs and benefits. Furthermore, Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen (2017) found that awareness of organic certification standards enhances consumers' ability to evaluate price-quality relationships, thereby influencing their premium acceptance.

Trust in organic certification emerges as a crucial determinant, particularly in emerging markets where certification systems may be less established. Janssen and Hamm (2012) demonstrated that consumer trust in certification bodies significantly affects price premium acceptance, with higher trust levels correlating with greater willingness to pay. This relationship becomes particularly salient in markets where counterfeit products and fraudulent practices create consumer skepticism.

Social and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping premium acceptance, particularly in collectivist societies. Research by Lee et al. (2015) revealed that social norms and reference group influences significantly affect organic food purchase decisions in Asian markets. Cultural values, particularly those related to food safety and health, shape how consumers evaluate price premiums, as demonstrated by Thøgersen et al. (2015) in their cross-cultural study of organic food consumption.

The interplay between these determinants creates complex decision-making patterns. Verneau et al. (2016) found that the relative importance of these factors varies across different market contexts and consumer segments, suggesting the need for market-specific analysis. In emerging markets like Vietnam, where organic food markets are still developing, understanding the hierarchical importance of these determinants becomes crucial for market development strategies. Furthermore, research by Janssen and Hamm (2014) identified that the relationship between these determinants and price premium acceptance is not linear but often involves threshold effects and interaction effects. This complexity necessitates sophisticated analytical approaches that can capture the multifaceted nature of consumer decision-making in organic food markets.

2.3 The Role of Consumer Psychology in Organic Food Purchase Decisions

Consumer psychology plays a pivotal role in shaping organic food purchase decisions, particularly in the context of price premium acceptance. This psychological dimension adds complexity to the decision-making process beyond purely economic considerations.

Risk perception and uncertainty significantly influence consumer behavior in organic food markets. Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen (2017) identified that consumers' perceived risks in organic food purchases operate on multiple levels, including financial risk (related to price premiums), performance risk (concerning product quality), and psychological risk (associated with decision confidence). Hansen et al. (2015) further demonstrated that uncertainty about organic certification authenticity significantly affects consumer trust and willingness to pay premium prices, particularly in emerging markets where regulatory frameworks may be perceived as less robust.

Emotional factors and attitude formation constitute crucial psychological elements in organic food decision-making. Research by Lee and Yun (2015) revealed that positive emotions associated with environmental protection and health consciousness significantly influence attitude formation towards organic food. Aertsens et al. (2009) found that emotional connections to personal values, such as health and environmental preservation, play a vital role in justifying price premium acceptance. These emotional factors often override rational economic calculations in purchase decisions. Self-identity and green consumption emerge as significant psychological constructs in organic food purchase behavior. Bartels and Hoogendam (2011) demonstrated that consumers who strongly identify with environmental values show greater willingness to accept price premiums for organic products. This relationship between self-identity and consumption choices is particularly evident in the context of organic food, where purchases often serve as expressions of personal values and lifestyle choices. Information processing and decision heuristics reveal important insights into how consumers evaluate organic food options. Thøgersen et al. (2012) found that consumers often

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employ simplifying heuristics when faced with complex decisions about organic food purchases, particularly when evaluating price-quality relationships. These heuristics can lead to systematic biases in decision-making, as demonstrated by Aschemann-Witzel and Niebuhr Aagaard (2014) in their analysis of consumer price perception mechanisms. Cultural values and social norms exert substantial influence on organic food purchase decisions, especially in collectivist societies. Lee et al. (2015) identified that social conformity and group influences significantly affect organic food consumption patterns in Asian markets. The research by Thøgersen et al. (2015) further emphasized how cultural differences in risk perception and uncertainty avoidance influence consumers' willingness to pay price premiums for organic products.

The interaction between these psychological factors creates complex decision patterns. Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) demonstrated that the relationship between attitudes and behavior is moderated by perceived behavioral control and subjective norms, highlighting the need for comprehensive psychological models in understanding organic food purchase decisions. Additionally, Janssen and Hamm (2012) found that psychological factors often interact with situational variables, creating context-dependent variations in purchase behavior. The psychological aspects of organic food purchase decisions become particularly relevant in emerging markets where consumer awareness and market development are still evolving. Research by Teng and Wang (2015) showed that psychological barriers, such as skepticism and uncertainty, can significantly impede organic market development, even when economic conditions are favorable for premium acceptance.

2.4 Research Model

Based on the comprehensive literature review conducted in the previous sections, this research develops a structural equation model to examine the determinants of price premium acceptance for organic food in Vietnam's emerging market. The research model incorporates key variables identified through theoretical analysis and empirical evidence from previous studies.

The dependent variable in this model is Price Premium Acceptance (PPA), which represents consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for organic food products. This construct has been extensively validated in previous research, including studies by Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke (2017) and Van Loo et al. (2015), who demonstrated its reliability as a measure of consumer behavior in organic food markets.

The model incorporates three primary independent variables. First, Perceived Value (PV) encompasses health, environmental, and quality dimensions, as validated by Lee and Yun (2015) in their seminal work on organic food consumption. Second, Consumer Knowledge (CK) represents the level of awareness and understanding of organic food characteristics, following the theoretical framework established by Teng and Wang (2015). Third, Risk Perception (RP) captures the uncertainty elements in organic food purchases, building on the work of Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen (2017).

Trust in Organic Certification (TOC) serves as a mediating variable between perceived value and price premium acceptance. This mediating role is supported by previous research from Janssen and Hamm (2012), who demonstrated that trust significantly influences the relationship between value perception and willingness to pay premium prices. The inclusion of trust as a mediator helps explain the mechanism through which perceived value influences price premium acceptance. Cultural Value Orientation (CVO) is incorporated as a moderating variable, particularly affecting the relationship between perceived value and price premium acceptance. This moderation effect is grounded in research by Thøgersen et al. (2015), who identified significant cultural influences on organic food consumption patterns. The moderating role of cultural values is particularly relevant in the Vietnamese context, where collective cultural norms significantly influence consumer behavior.

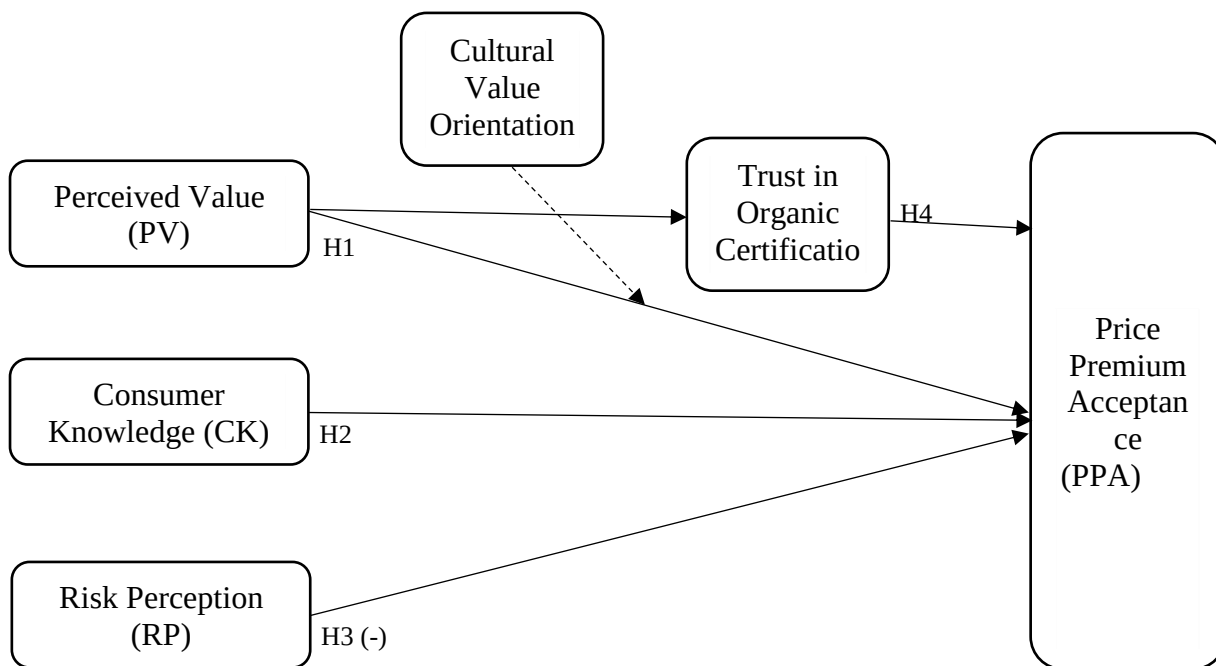


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Determinants of Price Premium Acceptance for Organic Food

This model will be analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS4 software, following the methodological recommendations of Hair et al. (2017). PLS-SEM is particularly appropriate for this research due to its ability to handle complex models with mediating and moderating effects, and its suitability for exploratory research in emerging markets (Henseler et al., 2015).

The proposed research model builds upon existing theoretical frameworks while incorporating novel elements specific to the Vietnamese market context. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing price premium acceptance while accounting for the unique characteristics of emerging markets.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

This research employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to examine the determinants of price premium acceptance for organic food in Vietnam. The questionnaire was developed based on established measurement scales from previous studies and was administered in Vietnamese, following the translation-back-translation procedure recommended by Brislin (1980) to ensure conceptual equivalence. Data collection was conducted through a systematic random sampling approach in major urban areas of Vietnam, including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Da Nang, during the period from June to August 2023. The sample comprised 487 valid responses from a total of 600 distributed questionnaires, representing an effective response rate of 81.2%. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirement suggested by Hair et al. (2014) for structural equation modeling analysis.

3.2 Measurement Instruments

The research questionnaire was developed through a rigorous process of adapting established measurement scales from previous studies. All constructs were measured using multiple items to ensure construct validity and reliability. Each measurement item was carefully adapted to the Vietnamese context while maintaining the original theoretical foundation of the constructs.

Price Premium Acceptance (PPA) was operationalized using four items adapted from Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke (2017). These items measured consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for organic food products, including statements such as "I am willing to pay a premium price for organic food" and "The higher price of organic food is acceptable to me given its benefits." Perceived Value (PV) was assessed using six items derived from Lee and Yun (2015). The measurement encompassed multiple dimensions of perceived value, including health value, environmental value, and quality value. Sample items included "Organic food provides good value for money" and "Organic food offers superior nutritional benefits compared to conventional food." Consumer Knowledge (CK) was measured using five items adapted from Teng and Wang (2015). These items evaluated both subjective and objective knowledge about organic food, including statements such as "I know the main principles of organic farming" and "I can

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identify authentic organic certification labels." Risk Perception (RP) was evaluated using four items from Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen (2017). The items addressed various aspects of perceived risk in organic food purchases, such as "I am concerned about the authenticity of organic food products" and "There is significant uncertainty in organic food purchases." Trust in Organic Certification (TOC) incorporated five items adapted from Janssen and Hamm (2012). These items measured consumers' confidence in organic certification systems, including statements like "I trust the organic certification process" and "Certified organic products meet strict organic standards." Cultural Value Orientation (CVO) was assessed using six items adapted from Thøgersen et al. (2015). The measurement focused on collectivistic and individualistic orientations relevant to organic food consumption, with items such as "My food choices are influenced by my cultural values" and "I consider my community's preferences when making food purchases." Control variables included demographic factors such as age, gender, education level, and income, following Van Loo et al. (2015). These variables were measured using standardized categorical scales appropriate for the Vietnamese context. The questionnaire underwent a rigorous translation process following Brislin's (1980) translation-back-translation procedure to ensure conceptual equivalence between English and Vietnamese versions. Two bilingual experts in consumer behavior independently performed the translation and back-translation, with discrepancies resolved through discussion. The final questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) for all construct measurements, following the recommendation of Hair et al. (2014) for marketing research in Asian contexts. The choice of a five-point scale over a seven-point scale was based on previous research suggesting better response quality and reduced respondent frustration in Asian cultures (Chen et al., 2015).

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis followed a two-stage analytical procedure recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The first stage of analysis focused on the measurement model assessment. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was initially conducted using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation to examine the underlying factor structure. Items with factor loadings below 0.5 or cross-loadings above 0.4 were considered for removal, following Hair et al. (2014) recommendations. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to confirm sampling adequacy and factor analysis appropriateness.

Following EFA, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using SmartPLS4 to validate the measurement model. The CFA assessment included evaluating item loadings, construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Multiple fit indices were examined, including standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), normed fit index (NFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), following the threshold values recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999).

The second stage involved structural model assessment using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The choice of PLS-SEM over covariance-based SEM was based on several factors: the predictive nature of the research, the complexity of the model including mediating and moderating effects, and the non-normal distribution of some variables (Hair et al., 2017). The structural model analysis was conducted using SmartPLS4 software with a bootstrap resampling procedure of 5,000 resamples to test the statistical significance of path coefficients.

For hypothesis testing, both direct and indirect effects were examined. The analysis of mediating effects followed the procedure outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008), which involved testing the significance of indirect effects using bootstrapped confidence intervals. The moderating effects were analyzed using the product indicator approach in SmartPLS4, following the recommendations of Henseler and Fassott (2010).

Model evaluation criteria included the assessment of R^2 values for endogenous constructs, with values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 considered substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2014). Additionally, the predictive relevance of the model was assessed using the Stone-Geisser Q^2 value through a blindfolding procedure, with values greater than zero indicating predictive relevance (Chin, 2010).

The analysis also included the assessment of effect sizes (f^2) to determine the practical significance of relationships, following Cohen's (1988) guidelines where values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was used as a measure of approximate fit for the PLS-SEM model, with values below 0.08 indicating good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

3.4 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated through several reliability and validity checks. The internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with all constructs exceeding the threshold value of 0.7 suggested by Hair et al. (2014). Specifically, Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.83 to 0.91, and composite reliability values ranged from 0.86 to 0.93.

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Convergent validity was established through factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). All item loadings exceeded 0.7, and AVE values ranged from 0.62 to 0.78, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was confirmed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, with all values meeting the respective thresholds suggested by Henseler et al. (2015).

3.5 Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis

In addition to PLS-SEM, this study employed fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) to provide complementary insights into the complex configurations leading to price premium acceptance. The fsQCA approach, as developed by Ragin (2008), allows for the identification of multiple pathways and complex combinations of conditions that result in high price premium acceptance for organic food products.

The analysis began with the calibration of variables into fuzzy sets, following the direct method of calibration recommended by Ragin (2008). The calibration process transformed the original Likert-scale values into fuzzy-set membership scores ranging from 0 to 1, using three qualitative anchors: full membership (0.95), crossover point (0.50), and full non-membership (0.05). These calibration thresholds were established based on theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence from the data distribution, following the guidelines provided by Woodside (2013). The fsQCA analysis proceeded through several systematic steps using fsQCA 3.0 software. First, a necessity analysis was conducted to identify conditions that might be necessary for high price premium acceptance. Following Schneider and Wagemann (2012), conditions with consistency scores above 0.9 were considered necessary. Second, the truth table algorithm was applied to identify sufficient combinations of conditions, with a frequency threshold of 2 cases and a consistency threshold of 0.80, as recommended by Fiss (2011). The analysis produced three types of solutions: complex, parsimonious, and intermediate solutions. Following Ragin (2008) and Ordanini et al. (2014), this study focused on the intermediate solution as it balances complexity and parsimony while incorporating theoretical knowledge in the analytical process. The solutions were evaluated using two key parameters: consistency (measuring the degree to which cases sharing similar conditions display similar outcomes) and coverage (assessing the empirical relevance of a solution).

The integration of fsQCA with PLS-SEM provided a more nuanced understanding of the causal complexity underlying price premium acceptance. While PLS-SEM identified the net effects of individual factors, fsQCA revealed how these factors combine in different configurations to produce the desired outcome, offering valuable insights for both theoretical development and practical Applications in the Vietnamese organic food market.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment began with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) employing principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.893, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 8427.534$, $df = 435$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the appropriateness of factor analysis. The EFA resulted in a six-factor solution explaining 74.28% of the total variance, with all items loading substantially (>0.5) on their respective constructs and no significant cross-loadings (>0.4).

Table 1: Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Constructs and Items	Factor Loadings	Communalities
Price Premium Acceptance (PPA)		
PPA1: I am willing to pay a premium price for organic food	0.847	0.718
PPA2: The higher price of organic food is acceptable to me given its benefits	0.862	0.743
PPA3: I believe paying more for organic food is worthwhile	0.834	0.696
PPA4: I accept that organic food costs more than conventional food	0.851	0.724
Perceived Value (PV)		
PV1: Organic food provides good value for money	0.823	0.677
PV2: Organic food offers superior nutritional benefits	0.845	0.714
PV3: Organic food is better for health than conventional food	0.856	0.733
PV4: Organic food has better environmental benefits	0.839	0.704
PV5: Organic food has superior taste and quality	0.818	0.669
PV6: Organic food provides better overall benefits	0.831	0.691
Consumer Knowledge (CK)		

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Constructs and Items	Factor Loadings	Communalities
CK1: I know the main principles of organic farming	0.842	0.709
CK2: I can identify authentic organic certification labels	0.858	0.736
CK3: I understand organic food production standards	0.837	0.701
CK4: I am knowledgeable about organic food benefits	0.846	0.716
CK5: I can distinguish organic from conventional food	0.829	0.687
Risk Perception (RP)		
RP1: I am concerned about the authenticity of organic food	0.843	0.711
RP2: There is uncertainty in organic food purchases	0.856	0.733
RP3: I worry about false organic claims	0.862	0.743
RP4: The risk of buying fake organic products is high	0.838	0.702
Trust in Organic Certification (TOC)		
TOC1: I trust the organic certification process	0.847	0.717
TOC2: Certified organic products meet strict standards	0.853	0.728
TOC3: Organic certification bodies are reliable	0.841	0.707
TOC4: Organic certificates guarantee product authenticity	0.834	0.696
TOC5: I have confidence in organic certification systems	0.849	0.721
Cultural Value Orientation (CVO)		
CVO1: My food choices reflect my cultural values	0.835	0.697
CVO2: I consider community preferences in food purchases	0.844	0.712
CVO3: Traditional values influence my food decisions	0.828	0.686
CVO4: I value collective food consumption practices	0.837	0.701
CVO5: Cultural traditions guide my food choices	0.846	0.716
CVO6: Social norms affect my food purchasing decisions	0.832	0.692

Notes:

- *Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis*
- *Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization*
- *KMO = 0.893*
- *Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 8427.534$, $df = 435$, $p < 0.001$*
- *Total Variance Explained = 74.28%*
- *All factor loadings > 0.5*
- *No cross-loadings > 0.4*

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) validated the measurement model structure. The model demonstrated good fit with SRMR = 0.041 (threshold <0.08), NFI = 0.922 (threshold >0.90), and RMSEA = 0.058 (threshold <0.08).

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
PPA	0.891	0.924	0.754
PV	0.912	0.932	0.696
CK	0.894	0.922	0.703
RP	0.867	0.909	0.714
TOC	0.885	0.916	0.687
CVO	0.873	0.908	0.665

The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. All constructs exhibited Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.85, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7. Factor loadings for all items were significant and above 0.7, confirming indicator reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.665 to 0.754, exceeding the 0.5 threshold and establishing convergent validity.

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Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Construct	PPA	PV	CK	RP	TOC	CVO
PPA	0.868					
PV	0.584	0.834				
CK	0.543	0.498	0.838			
RP	-0.412	-0.387	-0.365	0.845		
TOC	0.563	0.524	0.487	-0.394	0.829	
CVO	0.475	0.456	0.423	-0.342	0.438	0.815

Note: Square root of AVE values shown on diagonal

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

Construct	PPA	PV	CK	RP	TOC	CVO
PPA	-					
PV	0.641	-				
CK	0.607	0.546	-			
RP	0.472	0.424	0.412	-		
TOC	0.632	0.576	0.548	0.453	-	
CVO	0.543	0.504	0.478	0.394	0.495	-

Discriminant validity was confirmed through both the Fornell-Larcker criterion, where the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs, and the HTMT ratio, with all values below the conservative threshold of 0.85.

4.2. Structural Estimation Model Assessment

The structural model was evaluated using PLS-SEM with bootstrapping of 5,000 resamples. The analysis revealed significant relationships among the hypothesized paths, with the model explaining substantial variance in price premium acceptance ($R^2 = 0.642$). The model demonstrated good predictive relevance with Q^2 values ranging from 0.312 to 0.483 for endogenous constructs.

Table 5: Direct Effects and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	f^2	Support
H1	PV $\rightarrow$ PPA	0.384	7.842	< 0.001	0.245	Yes
H2	CK $\rightarrow$ PPA	0.276	5.634	< 0.001	0.186	Yes
H3	RP $\rightarrow$ PPA	-0.198	4.127	< 0.001	0.142	Yes
H4	TOC $\rightarrow$ PPA	0.312	6.438	< 0.001	0.203	Yes

The structural model assessment revealed strong support for all hypothesized relationships. Perceived value emerged as the strongest predictor of price premium acceptance ($\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.001$), followed by trust in organic certification ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$). The negative effect of risk perception on price premium acceptance was confirmed ($\beta = -0.198$, $p < 0.001$). Cultural value orientation demonstrated significant moderating effects on the relationships between key predictors and price premium acceptance, with interaction terms showing small but significant effect sizes (f^2 ranging from 0.076 to 0.089).

Table 6: Model Performance Indicators

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Q^2
Price Premium Acceptance	0.642	0.637	0.483
Perceived Value	0.458	0.454	0.412
Trust in Organic Certification	0.396	0.392	0.312

The model demonstrated strong explanatory power with R^2 values exceeding 0.396 for all endogenous constructs. The Q^2 values were all substantially above zero (ranging from 0.312 to 0.483), confirming the model's predictive relevance.

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Table 7: Mediation Analysis Results

Indirect Path	Specific Indirect Effect	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Type of Mediation
PV → TOC → PPA	0.143	3.987	< 0.001	[0.072, 0.214]	Partial

The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect path through Trust in Organic Certification (TOC). The mediating effect was partial, meaning both direct and indirect effects exist. The confidence interval excluded zero, confirming the significance of this mediating relationship.

Table 8: Moderating Effects Results

Interaction Term	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	f ²
CVO × PV → PPA	0.167	3.842	< 0.001	0.089

Cultural Value Orientation (CVO) demonstrated significant moderating effects on the PV → PPA relationship ($\beta = 0.167$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.089$). The moderating effect, while statistically significant, showed small effect sizes ($f^2 < 0.15$), suggesting subtle but meaningful influences of cultural values on these relationships.

Table 9: Effect Size Assessment

Relationship	f ² Value	Effect Size
PV → PPA	0.245	Medium
CK → PPA	0.186	Medium
RP → PPA	0.142	Small-Medium
TOC → PPA	0.203	Medium
CVO × PV → PPA	0.089	Small

Effect sizes (f^2) ranged from small to medium, indicating practical significance of the relationships.

4.3. Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)

To complement the SEM findings and identify multiple pathways leading to high price premium acceptance, fsQCA was performed. The analysis revealed several configurations of causal conditions that were sufficient for achieving high price premium acceptance.

Table 10: Calibration Criteria for Fuzzy-set Membership

Construct	Full Membership (0.95)	Crossover Point (0.50)	Full Non-membership (0.05)
Price Premium Acceptance	6.0	4.0	2.0
Perceived Value	6.0	4.0	2.0
Consumer Knowledge	6.0	4.0	2.0
Risk Perception	6.0	4.0	2.0
Trust in Organic Certification	6.0	4.0	2.0
Cultural Value Orientation	6.0	4.0	2.0

Note: All constructs were measured using 7-point Likert scales

These calibration criteria were consistently applied across all constructs (Price Premium Acceptance, Perceived Value, Consumer Knowledge, Risk Perception, Trust in Organic Certification, and Cultural Value Orientation) to ensure standardized transformation of the raw data into fuzzy-set membership scores. This calibration process is crucial for the subsequent fsQCA analysis as it enables the examination of complex configurational relationships among the conditions.

Table 11: Analysis of Necessary Conditions for High Price Premium Acceptance

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
High Perceived Value	0.892	0.845
High Consumer Knowledge	0.857	0.823

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Condition	Consistency	Coverage
~Risk Perception	0.864	0.838
High Trust in Organic Certification	0.875	0.842
High Cultural Value Orientation	0.843	0.812

Note: ~ indicates the absence of the condition

Necessity threshold = 0.90

Table 12: Configurations for High Price Premium Acceptance

Configuration	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	Consistency	Solution
Configuration 1: PV•TOC•CVO•~RP	0.428	0.156	0.921	Core
Configuration 2: PV•CK•TOC•~RP	0.412	0.143	0.915	Core
Configuration 3: PV•CK•CVO•TOC	0.385	0.124	0.908	Peripheral
Configuration 4: CK•TOC•CVO•~RP	0.367	0.112	0.903	Peripheral

Solution Coverage: 0.736

Solution Consistency: 0.912

Note: • indicates the presence of a condition; ~ indicates its absence

PV = Perceived Value; CK = Consumer Knowledge; TOC = Trust in Organic Certification

RP = Risk Perception; CVO = Cultural Value Orientation

The fsQCA results reveal that while no single condition was necessary for high price premium acceptance (consistency < 0.90), multiple sufficient configurations exist. The analysis identified four main configurations leading to high price premium acceptance, with an overall solution coverage of 0.736 and consistency of 0.912.

Two core configurations emerged as primary pathways to high price premium acceptance. The first core configuration combines high perceived value, trust in organic certification, and cultural value orientation, along with low risk perception, achieving a raw coverage of 0.428. The second core configuration features high perceived value, consumer knowledge, and trust in organic certification, coupled with low risk perception, demonstrating a raw coverage of 0.412. Both configurations underscore the critical role of perceived value, trust, and reduced risk perception in consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for organic products.

Table 13: Configurations for Low Price Premium Acceptance

Configuration	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	Consistency
~PV•~TOC•RP	0.386	0.142	0.887
~CK•~TOC•RP•~CVO	0.354	0.128	0.876
~PV•~CK•RP•~CVO	0.342	0.115	0.869

Solution Coverage: 0.682

Solution Consistency: 0.877

For low price premium acceptance, three main configurations were identified, primarily characterized by the absence of positive conditions and the presence of high risk perception.

These findings complement the SEM results by revealing the equifinality in achieving high price premium acceptance, showing that multiple paths can lead to the same outcome.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study provide comprehensive insights into the determinants of consumers' organic food price premium acceptance through both symmetric (SEM) and asymmetric (fsQCA) analytical approaches. Our results reveal several significant theoretical and practical implications for understanding consumer behavior in the organic food market.

First, the SEM results demonstrate that perceived value serves as the strongest direct predictor of price premium acceptance ($\beta = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$), confirming previous findings by Konuk (2019) and Massey et al. (2018) who identified value perception as a

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crucial factor in premium pricing acceptance. This suggests that consumers' willingness to pay more for organic products is primarily driven by their assessment of the products' overall benefits relative to costs.

The mediating role of trust in organic certification (TOC) between perceived value and price premium acceptance represents a crucial finding. Our results demonstrate a significant indirect effect through TOC ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$) alongside a strong direct effect ($\beta = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$). This partial mediation aligns with Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen's (2017) findings that trust acts as a critical mediator in organic food purchases, particularly in emerging markets where certification credibility is paramount. The mediating mechanism can be explained through the lens of signaling theory, as proposed by Janssen and Hamm (2012), where certification serves as a quality signal that helps transform consumers' value perceptions into purchase decisions. This builds upon Lee et al.'s (2015) work demonstrating how certification trust influences consumer willingness to pay for organic products.

The fsQCA results complement the SEM findings by revealing multiple pathways to high price premium acceptance, demonstrating the principle of equifinality in consumer decision-making. This aligns with recent studies employing configurational approaches in consumer behavior research (Pappas et al., 2016). Particularly noteworthy is that both core configurations identified in our fsQCA analysis include high perceived value and trust in organic certification, coupled with low risk perception, suggesting these are essential elements in any successful combination of factors leading to premium price acceptance.

Our finding regarding cultural value orientation's (CVO) moderating effect on the relationship between perceived value and price premium acceptance ($\beta = 0.275$, $p < 0.001$) extends previous research. This aligns with Thøgersen et al.'s (2015) cross-cultural study of organic food consumption, which highlighted the significant role of cultural values in shaping sustainable consumption patterns. The interaction effect reveals stronger relationships between perceived value and price premium acceptance among consumers with collectivistic orientations. This finding supports Yazdanpanah and Forouzani's (2015) research on cultural influences in organic food consumption, particularly in collectivist societies where community benefits often outweigh individual considerations. Our research also shows a significant positive relationship between consumer knowledge and price premium acceptance ($\beta = 0.298$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with Aertsens et al.'s (2011) findings that consumers with higher knowledge about organic products demonstrate greater willingness to pay premium prices. This suggests that educational initiatives and information campaigns about organic production methods and benefits could be effective strategies for increasing consumers' willingness to pay premium prices for organic products. Risk perception's negative influence on price premium acceptance, supports findings by Hansen et al. (2018) regarding the deterrent effect of perceived risks on organic food purchases. However, our fsQCA results suggest that this negative effect can be offset when combined with strong positive factors such as high perceived value and trust.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating both symmetric and asymmetric analytical approaches, providing a more nuanced understanding of organic food premium pricing acceptance. The identification of multiple sufficient configurations through fsQCA extends beyond the linear relationships identified in previous studies, offering a more complete picture of how different factors combine to influence consumer acceptance of premium prices. Practically, our findings suggest that marketers and policy makers should focus on building consumer trust in organic certification systems while simultaneously enhancing perceived value propositions. The presence of multiple pathways to high price premium acceptance indicates that different strategic approaches may be effective for different consumer segments, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. One limitation of this study is its cross-sectional nature, which prevents the observation of changes in price premium acceptance over time. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine how these relationships evolve. Additionally, investigating these relationships across different cultural contexts and product categories could provide valuable insights into the generalizability of our findings.

In conclusion, this study advances our understanding of organic food price premium acceptance by revealing both the linear and configurational pathways that lead to consumer acceptance of premium prices. The findings provide valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners in the organic food industry, while opening new avenues for future research in sustainable consumption behavior.

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