

NFORMATION ON DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Dissertation title: Researching the relationship between organic food labels, trust in producers, customer engagement and repurchase intention for organic food

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1. ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to research the relationship between organic food labels, trust in producers, customer engagement, and repurchase intention for organic food. The research model and hypotheses are based on the repurchase decision-making theory, the S-O-R model, the cue utilization theory, and the social exchange theory. The data analysis used SPSS for descriptive statistics and PLS-SMART for model testing. The results have shown that trust in producers and customer engagement directly and positively impact repurchase intentions. In addition, the study also shows that organic food labels indirectly impact repurchase intention through the mediating role of trust in producers and customer engagement. In particular, customer engagement - a higher-order construct with four components (augmenting behavior, co-developing behavior, influencing behavior, and mobilizing behavior) - plays a complementary partial mediation role in the relationship between trust in producers – the individual/customer's internal state (Organism) and the customer's repurchase intention – positive response (Response). Finally, proposed management implications can help businesses increase the repurchasing tendency for organic food.

Keywords: repurchase intention, organic food, customer engagement, trust in producers

2. NEW ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Firstly, the dissertation has added a new addition to the research literature on organic food repurchase intention by applying a combination of repurchase decision theory, the S-O-R theoretical model, social exchange theory, and cue utilization theory. Specifically:

- + The research theories applied separately in previous studies to explain the factors affecting the intention to repurchase organic food have only focused on explaining the impact of volitional factors (including aspects related to attitudes and subjective norms) and non-volitional factors (factors of perceived behavioral control), so they have ignored

other important variables associated with the process of forming repurchase intentions/repurchase decisions. Therefore, the statistically significant test of the influence of customer engagement - a new variable related to post-purchase behavior on customers' repurchase intentions for organic food, has contributed to expanding the awareness of the intention to repurchase organic food and resolving the limitations of previous studies. This result is also the premise for further studies.

+ On the other hand, since most of the research on customer engagement focuses on the service sector, research on customer engagement in the tangible product sector still needs to be improved, especially organic food consumption. Therefore, the validation of the customer engagement scale in the study of organic food repurchase intention has also made a new contribution to the literature on customer engagement - a high-order construct with four components (augmenting behavior, co-developing behavior, influencing behavior, and mobilizing behavior) in organic food consumption - sustainable consumption. This empirical result shows that customer engagement is not only a mechanism of interaction between customers and companies/businesses but also an interaction between customers and customers. This engagement and interaction address social benefits and environmental and health-related issues. These are also important issues that previous scholars have recommended need to be expanded upon when studying customer engagement.

+ In parallel, the content of the scale of trust in producers not only focuses on the reliability and integrity of the organic food producer but also shows the concern for food safety issues and the capacity of the producer to handle food safety issues. Therefore, it shows the difference compared to the scale of trust in producers proposed in some previous studies. In addition, the results demonstrated the direct influence of trust in producers on repurchase intention, which also shows the importance of this factor in explaining the intention to repurchase organic food. Therefore, this result has contributed a new addition to the literature on trust in producers - the trust of stakeholders in the organic food supply chain when previous studies on the intention to repurchase organic food have yet to pay attention.

Secondly, by combining the repurchase decision theory, S-O-R theoretical model, social exchange theory, and cue utilization theory, the mediating role of trust in producers in the relationship between organic food labels and customer engagement and in the

relationship between organic food labels and repurchase intention is confirmed and tested to be statistically significant. This finding is meaningful because it has added new to the related literature. Specifically:

- + The study results have added to the relevant literature on customer engagement by demonstrating that organic food labels have significant direct and indirect effects on customer engagement. Accordingly, organic food labels are considered a new antecedent of customer engagement compared to previously tested antecedents. Therefore, this is the first study to confirm a new and positive relationship between organic food labels – the cue, stimulus factor - and customer engagement – the response factor.

- + At the same time, the proven mediating role of trust in the producer means that the study confirms a new role for trust in the producer. Accordingly, the result confirms the partial mediating role of trust in the producer - the internal state of the individual/customer (O) in the new relationship between organic food labels and customer engagement. Thus, in addition to the fact that organic food producers increase customers' trust in them, as well as reduce customers' skepticism about the food they produce by providing complete, transparent, authentic, and certified information on food labels, trust in producers also contributes to increasing the influence of food labels on their engagement to producers and other customers in the food supply chain. Once customers have had a positive experience and trust in the producers from whom they have been purchasing food, they will also have a good and positive evaluation of the food label, thereby increasing the label's influence on customer engagement.

- + In addition, trust in producers also fully mediates the relationship between organic food labels and customers' repurchase intentions. Accordingly, although organic food labels do not directly impact repurchase intentions, the indirect impact through the mediating effect of trust in producers is significant. This finding again emphasizes the importance of trust in the manufacturer in promoting customers' repeat purchase tendency.

Thirdly, the previous literature on customer engagement and repurchase intention of organic food has yet to document empirical results on the mediating role of customer engagement in the relationship between repurchase intention and the antecedents of repurchase intention. Therefore, through the lens of social exchange theory, S-O-R model, and repurchase decision theory, the results confirm the partial mediating role of

customer engagement in the positive relationship between trust in producers – the internal state of the individual/customer (O) and customer repurchase intention – positive response (R) have added to the research literature on customer engagement in the context of organic food repurchase behavior. This finding implies that the higher the trust in producers, the higher the customer engagement and the higher their repurchase intention for organic food provided by that producer. Customer engagement can be viewed as a social exchange and increases the influence of trust in producers on the intention to repurchase organic food. On the other hand, customer engagement also fully mediates the relationship between organic food label – cue factor, stimulus (O), and repurchase intention – response factor (R). Organic food labels indirectly and significantly affect repurchase intention by mediating the impact of customer engagement. Previously, through the mediating role of trust in producers, organic food labels also affected repurchase intention. These results reveal that organic food labels alone do not promote repurchase intention. Instead, the presence of customer engagement and trust in the producers is significant in explaining the customer's repurchase decision-making process.

3. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS/LIMITATIONS

The study has demonstrated the direct and significant impact of trust in the producer and customer engagement on the intention to repurchase organic food. Therefore, the research results help managers in organic food production and business understand customers' intention to repurchase this food. Instead of being passive buyers, customers and businesses create value for the product through interactive activities, engaging with businesses and other customers in the organic food consumer community. Therefore, organic food businesses need to grasp and care about customer engagement in the production and business of this food. In addition, the results also show that establishing and maintaining customer trust in the producer - the trust of stakeholders in the organic food supply chain - is necessary. Finally, the research results are an essential basis for helping businesses improve their operations and increase their intention to purchase organic food by proposing and discussing policies related to organic food labeling, trust in producers, and engagement.

In addition to the results achieved, this study has some gaps that need further study. Specifically, the study only focused on the market in Ho Chi Minh City - the most populous city in the country, with about 86% of consumers willing to pay for organic

food because of its health benefits and environmental friendliness. Therefore, future studies can expand the scope to other major cities and provinces. In addition to the factors tested in the model, future studies should consider the influence of other factors on the intention to repurchase organic food, especially factors related to post-purchase behavior. In addition, future studies should analyze and test the controlling role of demographic variables such as age, income, and gender in the relationship between the influence of organic food labels, trust in producers, and customer engagement to the intention to repurchase organic food.

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