



## Environmental Concern and Ethical Obligation Influencing the Purchase Intention of Consumers Towards Vegan Fashion Products -A Case in Hanoi, Vietnam

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### ABSTRACT

*The fundamental purpose of this study is to identify and evaluate factors influencing Hanoi consumers' intention to purchase vegan fashion products based on the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The ultimate result indicates that there is an outstanding factor significantly impacting the intention of Hanoi residents towards vegan fashion products: Ethical obligation ( $\beta=0.236$ ). In addition, Environmental concern indirectly has an influence on the intention via attitudes. This study has important and practical consequences for governmental agencies and public organizations in terms of encouraging vegan fashion consumption. Based on the study's findings, some feasible solutions are proposed to help authorities, businesses in Hanoi in particular, and Vietnam in general as well as motivating their customer intention.*

**Keywords:** Vegan fashion, sustainable consumption, ethical consumption, environmental concern, TPB.

### 1. Introduction

How to reconcile environmental protection and fashion production has become an alarming question in society because the actions of production and consumption of fashion products accidentally or intentionally show indifference, destroying the environment to satisfy the trend of flashy, frivolous fashion is not a strange problem in today's society. The materials such as leather, wool, and furs from the billions of animals that are slaughtered each year for the fashion industry, which are the clearest manifestation of this-not to mention the inhumane of testing products on animals. In this context humans are now suffering the consequences of not protecting the environment, lack of product knowledge, environmental and ethical issues are increasingly being pushed up. Although this concept is still unfamiliar to Vietnamese consumers, "Vegan fashion" - The fashion model that pursues the principle of eliminating harmful actions to animals in the

production process, thereby actively protecting and improving animal welfare was born as a necessity.

This article's content will show an overview of the theoretical model to verify the research model's feasibility. The following samples of Hanoi surveys are based on the proposed framework, to identify characteristics that influence customer intentions to buy vegan clothing. The final section of the essay, using a defined quantitative model PLS-SEM, will present advice and solutions to promote the vegan fashion purchase intention of individuals of all generations, especially those in their 20s and 30s.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1. Theoretical model

*The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB):* Planned Behavior Theory developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991 is based on reasonable action theory (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980). The TPB model is considered more optimal than the TRA model in



predicting and explaining consumer behavior due to its ability to account for involuntary behaviors. Similar to the TRA model, the central factor is identified as the intention to perform the behavior, influenced by attitudes to behavior, subjective norms of behavior and one new factor is the perceived behavioral control.

### ***Vegan Fashion***

Vegan fashion was defined by the NGO ProVeg as fashion products that do not involve any animal-related materials or gone through any processes that harm the animals, the vegan fashion product is produced from renewable plant-based substitutes instead of feathers, skin, and other animal slaughter materials.

### ***The intention of purchasing vegan fashion products***

According to Ajzen (2012), behavioral intentions are motivational factors to assess the level of effort of a person to perform a behavior. Behavioral Intention measures the subject's subjective ability to perform a behavior and can be viewed as a special case of belief (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which is determined by an individual's attitude toward subjective norms and behaviors. According to another perspective, the purchasing intention of vegan fashion products stems from an individual's desire and affordability towards the environmentally friendly identity of sustainable products rather than the non-sustainable one. In conclusion, vegan fashion purchase intention in this study can be defined as the consumers' willingness to buy vegan fashion products.

### ***2.2 Hypothesis development***

PEBs (pro-environmental behaviors) are defined by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) as "aware behaviors geared proactively toward limiting the negative repercussions of human activities on the natural world, as well as the artificial world". As a result, one of the PEBs can be identified as the consumption of vegan fashion products. However, studies and research on vegan fashion are still restricted on a global scale, notably in Vietnam. As a result, past research in the areas of "Green consumption" and "Sustainable consumption" is used in this study. Since green, sustainable, and ethical consumption are also considered as environmental behaviors in the PEBs, the fields of " Ethical consumption," " Sustainable fashion," and " Slow fashion" can be used as a judicious basis for ethical consumption and vegan fashion.

Attitude is an important factor motivating the intention of ethical consumption (Verbeke and Viaene, 1999). Many studies have shown that a positive attitude towards ethical consumer products leads to easier purchase intention. The study "Factors affecting green consumption behavior of Nha Trang people" conducted by Ho Huy Tuu, Nguyen Van Ngoc, Do Phuong Linh (2018) has also shown that attitude is a factor that affects green consumption intentions. In Vietnam, where the concept of vegan fashion is new, and the market for vegan fashion is limited, attitude is a key issue to consider because it has a significant impact on customer intent. In this study, the

attitude was defined as a person's attitude toward vegan fashion.

**H1:** Attitude has a positive effect on vegan fashion purchasing intention

Subjective norm is one of the factors that have a positive influence on the consumer's intention. A study by Bearden (1982) affirms that individual views on a situation affected by the reference group are the important people to them and social influence has a significant impact on consumer behavior. Consumers living in society will be greatly influenced by society, especially for goods such as green products-due to the low awareness and income of people in Vietnam-the influence of society. The association has a critical role in changing people's perceptions of green consumption and, as a result, influencing consumers' green consumption intentions. Therefore, in this specific study on consumer intentions in Hanoi, the subjective standard is understood as the individual perception of the reference group's expectations to use vegan fashion products.

**H2:** Subjective norms have a positive influence on vegan fashion purchasing intention.

Perceived behavioral control has a positive effect on consumer intention. PBC is defined as an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In addition, PBC is reflected not only through the individual's past experiences but also on expected outcomes or anticipated obstacles in the future. In addition, the accessibility and affordability of sustainable clothing are one of the major obstacles consumers face when trying to buy eco-friendly and ethical clothing due to not having enough shops. stock and limited choice in terms of style, and size (Connell, 2010). In this study, perceived behavioral control is considered to be the perception of the ability to perform the behavior using vegan fashion products.

**H3:** Perceived behavioral control positively affect the intention to purchase vegan fashion products

The notion of ethical obligation is known as ethical issues that consumers perceive as should or should not be done based on each individual's perception. Consumers' purchase intention depends on ethical perceptions of issues related to morality (Shaw, Hogg, Wilson, Shiu, and Hassan, 2006). In the context of consumer behavior research, the ethical obligation is considered as an important influencing factor driven by the sense of responsibility of individuals for ethical issues (Shaw and Shiu, 2002). Shaw and Shiu demonstrated a strong influence of ethical obligation on the intention to consume green products. Research conducted by Chanmi G. Hwang, Young-A Lee, and Sonali Diddi (2015) confirmed a positive relationship between ethical responsibility and the intention to consume sustainable products.

**H4:** Ethical obligation has a positive influence on the intention to buy vegan fashion products

Environmental concern is defined as awareness and understanding about the impact of human behavior on the

environment, from which people can carry out proper attitudes and actions to protect the environment. Kim and Choi (2005) found that environmental concerns directly influence ethical purchasing behavior. Research in 2000 by Schuzltz et al. showed a correlation between environmental concern and consumer attitudes. Subjective norms were closely associated with environmental concerns (Chaudhary et al. (2018), Vu Anh Dung et al (2012b)). Chaudhary et al., in the same study, also confirmed that environmental concern has a positive

Suggestive model:

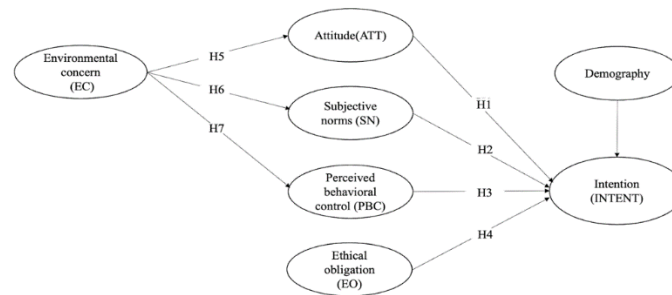


Figure 1. Proposed Research Model

### 3. Research method and process

The research employs qualitative research methods to construct a research model, as well as to investigate components and construct a preliminary scale through expert interviews and group discussions to rectify and augment the scale and questionnaire used in the interview. Following that, in quantitative research, the observed variables in the survey questionnaire are developed using qualitative research findings. The research team processes data using SPSS 23.0 software for descriptive statistics and frequency commands, as well as SMARTPLS 3.3.3 software for synthesis, coding, and analysis.

#### Research description

The researcher's team surveyed all Hanoi residents and analyzed 423 legitimate responses after evaluating 440 official ballots (including 100 direct ballot responses and 323 online ballot responses). official. According to Hair et al (2014), the sample size of the study is N= 423, which is determined as reliable sample size when applying the factor analysis (EFA) approach. The survey is created using Google Forms and is available in two formats: online (through email and social

influence on perceived behavioral control. In this study, the environmental concern will be tested about attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

**H5:** Environmental concern has a positive effect on attitude

**H6:** Environmental concern has a positive effect on subjective norm

**H7:** Environmental concern has a positive effect on perceived behavioral control

media) and in-person (direct survey at sites that fulfill the requirements, such as shopping malls, fashion stores, etc.). A Likert scale of 1 to 5 is used in the survey (1 - Disagree, 5 - Agree).

#### Sample

Among 423 respondents, women account for 79.4% (336 respondents), while men account for 19.4% (82 respondents). With 5 respondents, the other gender group receives up to 12%. The age group 18-34 has the highest number of participants (326), accounting for 77.1 percent of the total. The study team looked into how vegan fashion products were perceived by the participants. The findings revealed that young people under the age of 18 and those between the ages of 18 and 34, as well as adults between the ages of 35 and 45, have heard of and are aware of vegan fashion, whereas the middle-aged (46-54 years old) and elderly (55 years old and over) groups account for the majority of the population who have never heard of or known about vegan fashion.

### 4. Results

#### Verify convergence and differentiation values of variables (Figure 2)

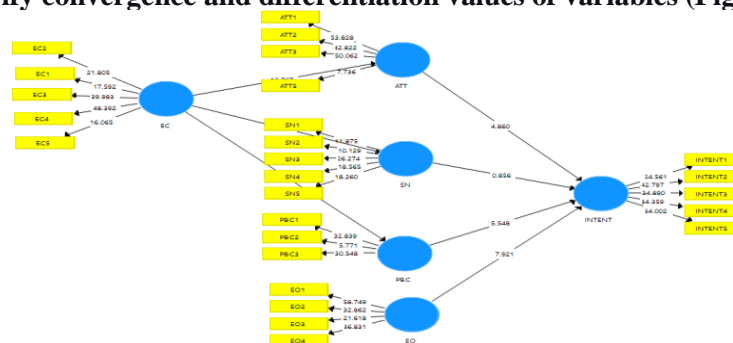


Figure 2. Estimation model via SMART PLS-SEM

The steps to test the reliability and validity of the scale in this study follow the suggestion of Hair et al (2016) including testing for internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

## • Analysis of the linear structural model (SEM)

Several rationales for the use of PLS-SEM have been extensively discussed in the methodological literature (Hair et al., 2013). Because the use of PLS-SEM is relatively new in accounting, it often requires a detailed explanation and valid justification for why it is preferred over other methods (Chin, 1998). The impact test model includes 5 factors: (1) Attitude, (2) Subjective Norm, (3) Perceived Behavioral Control are intermediate variables; (4) Ethical Obligation, (5) Product Knowledge affects the intention to consume vegan fashion products of consumers in Hanoi city.

## Composite Reliability

Composite reliability is a test of convergent validity in a reflective model. Composite reliability varies from 0 to 1, with 1 being perfect estimated reliability. In a model adequate for exploratory purposes, composite reliabilities should be equal to or more than 0.6 (Chin, 1998); equal to or more than 0.70 for an adequate model for confirmatory purposes (Henseler, et al., 2015); and equal to or more than 0.80 is considered good for confirmatory research. After removing the scales ATT4, ATT6, PBC4, and PBC5 with outer loadings less than 0.7 respectively, the result shows that the Composite reliability value of all factors proves that all reflective paradigms have more levels of internal consistency reliability.

**Table 1. Reliability Test**

	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ATT	0.809	0.856	0.608
EC	0.816	0.867	0.566
EO	0.836	0.885	0.659
INTENT	0.871	0.905	0.656
PBC	0.588	0.755	0.515
SN	0.869	0.872	0.577

Source: Model estimation via SmartPLS

## Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

AVE may be used as a test of both convergent and divergent validity. AVE reflects the average commonality for each latent factor in a reflective model. In an adequate model, AVE should be greater than 0.5 (Chin, 1998) as well as greater than the cross-loadings, which means factors should explain at least half the variance of their respective indicators. AVE below .50 means error variance exceeds explained variance.

## Discriminant validity

Mackinnon, (2008) suggested that to establish discriminant validity, the square root of AVE must be higher than the correlations of the constructs with all other constructs in the structural model. The inter-construct correlations show that each construct shares larger variance values with its measures than with other measures. In sum, the measurement model ensured that the discriminant validity is well established.

**Table 2. Discriminant Validity**

	ATT	EC	EO	INTENT	PBC	SN
ATT	0.78					
EC	0.545	0.753				
EO	0.63	0.691	0.812			
INTENT	0.605	0.62	0.651	0.81		
PBC	0.477	0.456	0.469	0.559	0.718	
SN	0.258	0.27	0.3	0.266	0.225	0.76

## • Fit structural equation model

### Multicollinearity

The estimation of the path coefficient is based on the regression of each dependent variable and predictor (Hair et al., 2014). Among the independent variables, if there is multicollinearity, the path coefficients are not guaranteed. Kock & Lynn (2012) proposed the full collinearity test as a comprehensive procedure for the simultaneous assessment of both vertical and lateral. If all VIFs resulting from a full collinearity test are equal to or lower than 3.3, the model can

be considered free of common method bias. All coefficients are in the acceptable range ( $VIF = 1,085 - 2,374 < 5$ ) so the model does not violate any criteria.

In the PLS-SEM analysis, the explanatory power of the structural model is evaluated by the structural path and the coefficient R<sup>2</sup> of the dependent variable. The analysis results show that the R<sup>2</sup> value of the Intent model is 0.541. Through the analysis of the influence of the participating factors, 54.10% of the variation of Intent at the 5% statistical



significance level, in which the Attitude factor has the largest participation level. (29.7%)

**Table 3. R<sup>2</sup> of the endogenous latent variables**

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
ATT	0.297	0.296
INTENT	0.541	0.536
PBC	0.208	0.206
SN	0.073	0.071

In addition to the R<sup>2</sup> value, Q<sup>2</sup> is an additional measure of model fit (Stone, 1974). A value of Q<sup>2</sup> greater than 0 for a particular outcome endogenous latent variable indicates the predictive relevance of the path model for this particular dependency concept. To get the Q<sup>2</sup> value, researchers use the Blindfolding method in PLS to measure. The results show that the Q<sup>2</sup> predictive relevance of this study for all constructs is greater than 0 (0.099, 0.17, 0.347), showing that all dependent

variables in the model have a prior relationship. predictive except for the Subjective Norm variable which has the least relevance (0.036). The effect of predictors is tested by the effect of (f<sup>2</sup>) (Hair et al., 2013). The results show that there are 2 variables with weak influence, Subjective Norm. All other factors have relative influence ranging from 0.069 to 0.423.

### • Results of linear structure

**Table 4. Results of direct effects of relationships**

Hypotheses	Relationship between variables	Impact Level	Standard Deviation	T-Test	P values
H1	ATT → INTENT	0.427	0.044	9.649	0
H2	SN → INTENT	0.077	0.046	1.697	<b>0.09</b>
H3	PBC → INTENT	0.335	0.052	6.432	0
H4	EC → ATT	0.215	0.061	3.516	0
H5	EC → SN	0.058	0.078	0.739	<b>0.46</b>
H6	EC → PBC	0.145	0.075	1.942	<b>0.052</b>
H7	PK → ATT	0.467	0.05	9.382	0
H8	PK → SN	0.3	0.076	3.954	0
H9	PK → PBC	0.442	0.067	6.56	0

From the statistics table analyzing the regression coefficients in Table 3, it illustrates that the model consisting of all relationships is statistically significant except for the relationship from SN to INTENT due to  $p > 0.05$ .

In the correlation between Environmental concern and TPB variables, Attitude has the strongest impact (0.545), while Subjective norm has the weakest impact (0.27). In the group of factors that directly affect the intention to consume vegan fashion, Ethical obligation has the greatest influence whereas Subjective norm is removed because it is not reliable. The subjective norm in this study according to respondents' assessment is not important. Comparing the impact level of 6 independent variables on the dependent variable in descending order as follows: EO, PBC, ATT.

Therefore, the majority of Hanoi consumers use vegan fashion products because of their Ethical obligation ( $\beta = 0.366$ ), Attitude ( $\beta = 0.238$ ), and Perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = 0.266$ ) also create certain effects. Based on the research model and hypotheses, the survey with 423 respondents of the research team can make some conclusions about the following factors:

**Ethical obligation** has the strongest and most positive impact on the intention to consume vegan fashion. Hanoi

residents state that they recognize the accomplishment and the contribution to preserve the animal habitat as well as the civilization development through the replacement of fast fashion consumption to vegan fashion. It thus cultivates a higher possibility of consuming vegan fashion.

**Attitude** has a certain influence on the intention to consume vegan fashion. Individual's perception of vegan fashion will positively influence their intentions. **Environmental concern** plays an important role in promoting positive consumer attitudes.

**Perceived behavioral control** also creates certain effects on the intention to consume. When consumers feel that they can easily perform product consumption behaviors (have time, easily find products, have the ability to pay, ...), vegetarianism will be promoted. Perceived behavioral control will be enhanced when consumers have **Environmental concerns**.

**Subjective norm** does not affect the intention to consume vegan fashion products. The majority of survey respondents are at a young age, so it can be seen that in today's young people, reference groups do not affect their intention to consume, but they will consume a product based on personal's discretion.



Among the three factors in the TPB model, after removing Subjective norms and considering the two factors that meet the criteria, an attitude has a stronger impact on intention than Perceived Behavioral Control. It means that consumers' perception of vegan fashion has a stronger influence on consumption intention than the perception of behavioral performance. In the relationship between Environmental concern and Attitudes, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control (H5-H7), the only factor rejected is H6 despite the impact coefficient is  $\beta = 0.27$ . However, because the Subjective norm is excluded from the model, it leads to the elimination of H6. Environmental concern affects the pressure coming from the reference group, but the reference group does not have a positive influence on the intention to use vegan products.

## **5. Recommendations**

### **5.1. Recommendations for state agencies**

In terms of protecting and ensuring consumers' rights, good consumer protection policies will build trust, foster positive attitudes, and encourage customers to participate in business operations, all of which will help the vegan fashion industry grow in Vietnam. Consumer protection in the consumption of vegan fashion products should contain the following elements: requiring businesses to make their production procedures public; requiring businesses to give consumers completely and clearly stated commitment policies on products and warranty policies.

Besides, state agencies also take a crucial role in supporting corporations that tend to join the vegan fashion industry. Businesses are unwilling to modify their business form due to high costs and demanding ethical certification standards. The state could encourage enterprises to adapt to ethical business practices by lowering taxes on ethical fashion businesses, such as environmental taxes, for vegan fashion. Support for the purchase of factory equipment and the development of innovative technologies for the production of fashion products with unique technical specifications.

Significantly, state agencies hold responsibility for raising customers' awareness via communication strategies and education. According to the research result, the impact of environmental concern on the intention to consume vegan fashion products is still low, and state management agencies should improve communication about the state of the environment, attitudes, and understanding of environmental concern to promote people's intention to consume ethically.

### **5.2 Recommendations for enterprises**

According to the study, the sustainable-consumption market is a market with strong potential for growth in the future. Therefore, fashion businesses need to urgently catch up with the trend and create their competitive advantages in the market. The research team would suggest some feasible recommendations to businesses who have already followed the

direction of sustainable fashion products in general and vegan fashion products in particular.

*First*, businesses should highlight the outstanding features and value of vegan products to buyers. Specifically, it is important to focus on the main benefits of sustainable consumption, which is the prevention of environmental damage by investing in product aspects, raising standards to gain domestic and international certifications of vegan standards. Besides, businesses need to expand their distribution channels, use multiple platforms to make products reachable, as customers still have difficulty finding points on sale of these items.

*Second*, businesses also need to pay attention to marketing information as it is the bridge leading customers to the business and product packages. Enterprises need to clearly define the customer segment to conduct the communication campaign in the best possible way. Enterprises should take advantage of forms of information transmission such as TVC, short videos, cooperate with KOLs, Influencers to inspire animal protection and ethical consumption.

*Third*, enterprises should pay attention to business ethics, prestige, and brand trust. The business needs to be aware of the importance of reputation and business ethics besides revenue and propagate it to the employees simultaneously. In particular, businesses need to ensure transparency in business as well as constantly publish their annual plans to protect animals from the brand's revenue.

### **5.3. Recommendations for consumers**

Consumers shall be aware of their demands before searching for information and deciding to use vegan fashion products. Research shows that if an individual perceives themselves as an ethical consumer, consuming for the sake of the environment and the community, they are more likely to prefer vegan fashion items. With regards to vegan fashion, consumers should be able to clearly define their image and goals for their lifestyles. Consumption decision-making is influenced by consumers' ethical obligations. This helps consumers make purchases that are environmentally friendly and avoid unethical purchases. Ethically responsible consumption helps customers comprehend how crucial it is to properly support the logistical systems established to recover used products for reuse, recycle, or dispose of responsibly.

## **6. Limitations and future research directions**

Like other studies, this research has certain limitations. To begin with, the elements that can impact the intention to consume vegan fashion products are not restricted to those discussed in this study; other factors may also influence the customer intends to use these items. Second, because this study is limited to Hanoi customers, future studies will need to broaden the scope of their analysis to get a more general conclusion.

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