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# Understand how and why consumers perceive and react to CSR in an Asian country: the case of Vietnam

Thi Hai Yen Le

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# THÈSE DE DOCTORAT DE

LE MANS UNIVERSITÉ  
COMUE UNIVERSITÉ BRETAGNE LOIRE

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*Sciences Economiques et Sciences De Gestion*  
Spécialité Marketing

par **LE Thi Hai Yen**

## **Understand how and why consumers perceive and react to CSR in an Asian country: the case of Vietnam**

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Thèse N° 2021LEMA2001

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We're part of a story, part of a tale

We're all on this journey

No one is to stay

Where ever it's going

What is the way?

– *Never-ending Story* by Within Temptation –

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This is not the end.

This is the new beginning.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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AVE	average variance extracted
CHIME	Comprehensive Inventory of Mindful Experiences scale
CSR	corporate social responsibility
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio
KIMS	Kentucky Inventory on Mindfulness Skills scale
PLS-SEM	partial least squares structural equation modeling
SEM	structural equation modeling
SME	small and medium enterprises
VIF	variance inflation factors

## ABSTRACT

---

Considered as a universal concept, CSR was actually originated from occidental perspective, making it inadequate to be imposed globally. The CSR perceived by firms and consumers might be divergent in an oriental context. Besides, whether CSR plays a requisite role in purchasing decision process is still unclear, creating the exaggeration of consumers' responses which in turn generates the overreaction of firms. Aiming to expand the understandings of consumer perceptions and their responses to CSR in oriental context, we therefore conducted our studies in Vietnam, an emerging East Asian market. We carried out a qualitative study to explore consumer CSR perceptions and built a 5-Persona typology of consumers, and two scenario-based experiments in food sector and cosmetics & skincare sector to test consumer reactions to CSR. The replicated experiment was integrated with a larger survey later used to form a structural equation model, explaining the psychologic mechanisms behind consumer responses to CSR. Our findings reveal that CSR has a real impact on consumer evaluations of the firm and its products, whereas surprisingly, country-of-origin and production process have no significant impact. Moreover, even though no cue of the quality control process was provided, consumers still form their evaluations on product quality, making it the mediator between the effect of firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses (brand attitude, purchase and recommendation intentions). We found that consumption habituation moderates the effect of perceived product quality on consumer responses. Also, perceived firm CSR motives (related to firms' benefits) moderate the relationship between firm engagement in CSR and perceived product quality while CSR skepticism mediates this effect. Beneath the surface of consumer responses, some individual constructs can explain the psychologic mechanisms, among which we highlight consumer green values, playing the moderating role between firm green engagement and perceived product quality. Five constructs together contribute to form green values including mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, internal locus-of-control, connectedness to nature, and death anxiety. With these studies, we hope to bring broader understandings of how consumers perceive and react toward CSR in the oriental context that might be more sophisticated than the appearances.

*Keywords: CSR, consumer perception, consumer response, consumption habituation, mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, internal locus-of-control, death anxiety, connectedness to nature, green values, CSR motives, CSR skepticism*

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## INTRODUCTION

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We have been witnessing the increasingly critical issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a rapidly changing world, inextricably linked to societal and humanity concerns (e.g., inequality, food security, poverty, child labors, workers' conditions, human rights, gender discrimination, health care availability)<sup>1</sup>. The “fast and furious” race among countries to obtain a higher rate of economic development has been exchanged with the harsh living conditions for many people, not to mention the depletion of natural resources and other environmental issues (e.g., severe pollutions, climate changes, desertification, land degradation). Within several decades, human beings will really “feel the heat” if allowing the temperature of this planet to be increased by over 1.5°C to 2°C each year, warned by The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2019<sup>2</sup>.

Back in the 1950s and 1980s, scholars have already begun to discuss the role of enterprises in solving the critical issues of society. Davis (1960) argued that firms could not be able to ignore the responsibilities related to both socio-economic and socio-human obligations. Equally important, the holistic view was also considered, stating that humankind is one among the parts of the ecology and should play the symbiotic role with others in the jointly developing process. With this in mind, it is important to shift from the tenacious view of thinking that human beings are dominant on earth to the harmonized view that we are also a part of the natural world. Then, human beings may start to behave with responsibility and respect to nature (Leopold 1949, Naess 1973). During these years, even though the concept of CSR was discussed broadly, it was still no more than an interesting idea (Heald 1961, Elbing Jr 1970, Bhattacharya and Sen 2004) due to the fact that changing business practice definitely provoked many challenges to enterprises (Davis 1960, Eilbirt and Parket 1973, Hay and Gray 1974).

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<sup>1</sup> See “*UNDESA World Social Report.*” by United Nations – Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020)

<sup>2</sup> See “*Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems.*” by The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2019)

### *General introduction*

After many decades, CSR now has an indispensable part in business practices and is applied widely among enterprises, whether voluntarily or obligatorily. As indicated by Kim and Moon (2015), the definitions of CSR for this century should be expanded with the good impacts that firms can bring to the society as “the responsibility that businesses take for their societies and their social impacts, and specifically refer to policies and practices of corporations that reflect business responsibility for some wider societal good”.

Henceforth, CSR is considered as a universal concept and has been widely studied since the end of the last century. Nevertheless, the current understandings of CSR might be inadequate in terms of international application. Previously from the very beginning, CSR studies were extended in occidental countries but not so numerous in the oriental countries (Birch and Moon 2004, Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006, Ewing and Windisch 2007, Tian et al. 2011). As a result, the universal CSR standards and codes nowadays are mainly based on the characteristics of the occidental markets, making it insufficient to be imposed globally (Visser 2003, Birch and Moon 2004, Ewing and Windisch 2007).

While the oriental markets have been considered important in the new century for their contributions to world economics through their impressive growth rates, they have got less attention from scholars than they should have (Palihawadana et al. 2016). Under the impacts of inherent characteristics (e.g., Buddhism and Confucianism), there may exist some CSR values sparking from those unique eastern characteristics or ethical culture, which in turn, influence the manner of doing business and consumer expectations in eastern Asia (Birch and Moon 2004, Whelan 2007). Besides, CSR conceptualization might be divergent in oriental markets, resulted from the economic development and some cultural values of their society (e.g., collectivism, the bonds of family and friendship) (Birch and Moon 2004, Welford 2004, Chapple and Moon 2005, Ramasamy and Yeung 2009, Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014, Vu 2021). These aspects might result in the consumer perceptions and responses to CSR in oriental markets being different from the occidental counterparts (Welford 2004, Li et al. 2010, Lund-Thomsen et al. 2016).

Responding to the call-to-action to fill in the gap of CSR literature that is supposed to reflect international facets (Pisani et al. 2017), we aim to expand the understanding of CSR

### *General introduction*

perceptions and reactions of consumers toward firm engagement in CSR under the oriental context of Vietnam, an emerging market in East Asia.

Thus, we defined three main research objectives:

**Research objective 1:** Understand the meaning of CSR concept for consumers in Vietnam and identify the importance of CSR to consumers and their attitudes toward CSR;

**Research objective 2:** Examine the relative importance of firm involvement in CSR on perceived product quality, compared to usual variables like production process or firm's country-of-origin, and study the consequences on consumer attitude and behavioral intentions toward the products;

**Research objective 3:** Explain the mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and their responses to CSR.

These research objectives may be developed more precisely through the following questions.

First of all, we want to understand the meaning of CSR in Vietnam. How is CSR perceived by Vietnamese consumers? Which dimensions of CSR do Vietnamese consumers consider as important? Can we build a typology of consumers regarding their perceptions and behaviors regarding CSR? (***research question n°1***)

Secondly, what is the impact of firm involvement in CSR on consumer responses? Furthermore, what is the relative effect of firm involvement in CSR compared to other frequently studied variables like firm's country-of-origin or production process? How do all these variables impact consumer perceptions of product quality and what are the consequences on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions? (***research question n°2***)

Thirdly, which factors can explain the mechanisms behind consumer perceptions and responses to CSR? We identified individual characteristics potentially linked to responsible behaviors and also frequent in an Asian culture. How could these individual variables have an effect on consumers' propensity to be more responsible, and in turn, on consumer responses to the firm, according to its engagement in CSR? (***research question n°3***)

## General introduction

To answer these research questions, we built a research design based on qualitative and quantitative approaches and conducted three studies (exploratory study, experiments, and structural equation modeling) (see figure 0.1).

First, we chose to conduct an **exploratory study** (study 1) on Vietnamese consumer perceptions about CSR as well as their relative behaviors in the past, which is suitable due to the fact that CR has not been broadly studied in Vietnam (Palihawadana et al. 2016, Dekhili and Nguyen 2021). The exploratory study was based on 21 *semi-directive interviews* which is a common approach for social science (Ritchie et al. 2003, Mack et al. 2005, Belk 2007, Taylor et al. 2015). This study helped to answer the **research question n°1**.

Then, we carried out a **scenario-based experiment** (study 2), in which the scenarios are related to a fictive firm. This method requires readers to judge and evaluate the given situation on their own (Wason et al. 2002) and allows to reduce the biases caused by the inconsistency during the process of retrieving memory when asking them to judge and evaluate things from their own experience (Lii and Lee 2012). Besides, the scenarios also help respondents to imagine the situations and thereupon their intentions to perform some certain expected behaviors (Gregory et al. 1982, Anderson 1983, Schlosser 2003) *in* (Elder and Krishna 2012). The food sector was chosen due to the fact that it is considered as an essential everyday matter with its direct influence on human health (Hartmann 2011). Together with determining the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR, production process, and country-of-origin on perceived product quality, we also measured the consequences of these stimuli to consumers' responses and examined potential factors that could help to explain their perceptions and responses toward CSR. Put together, this study allowed us to answer partly to the **research questions n°2 and n°3**.

Finally, we conducted a **field survey** (study 3). This study replicated the first experiment in another sector (skincare and cosmetics) and specifically tested consumer responses to environmental CSR (green engagement) to confirm the robustness of the results obtained in the previous study. This study also went further in explaining the psychologic mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and responses toward CSR, as individual

General introduction

variables were integrated into the model to explain consumer responses to the firm, depending on its engagement in CSR. Thus, this study built a bridge between the literature on both CSR and responsible consumers, answering the **research questions n°2 and n°3**.

The table below summarized the research design of our three studies.

Table 0.1: Synthesis of the research design

<b>Research problem</b>	Understanding consumers' perceptions and responses toward CSR in Vietnam		
	<b>Question n°1</b>	<b>Question n°2</b>	<b>Question n°3</b>
<b>Research questions</b>	<p>How is CSR perceived by consumers in Vietnam?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which are the dimensions of CSR considered important to Vietnamese consumers?</li> <li>• Can we build a typology of consumers regarding their perceptions of CSR?</li> </ul>	<p>What are the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR, production process, and country-of-origin on perceived product quality and the consequences on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions?</p>	<p>Which factors can explain the mechanisms behind consumer perceptions and their responses to CSR?</p>
<b>Approaches</b>	Qualitative	Quantitative	
<b>Types of research</b>	Exploratory	Descriptive and causal	
<b>Methods</b>	In-depth interviews	Scenario-based experiments + Field survey	

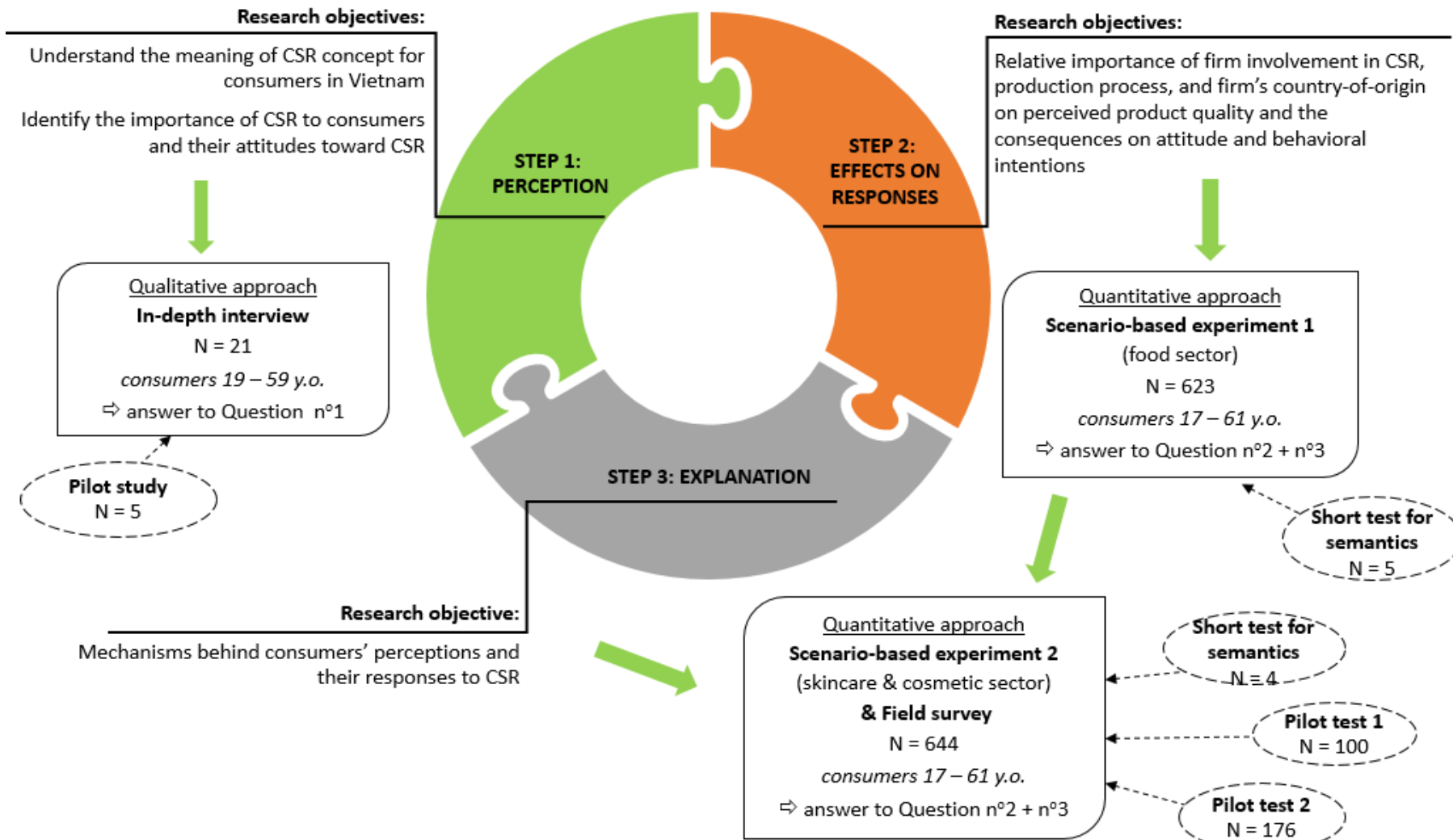
Through three studies, we made some main contributions to the current literature on CSR. Aiming to expand the understandings of consumer perceptions and their responses to CSR in an oriental context, we conducted an exploratory study in Vietnam, an emerging East Asian market. The qualitative findings reveal consumer perceptions of CSR and results in a 5-Persona typology of consumers. Through two scenario-based experiments, we confirm the real impact of firm involvement in CSR on consumer evaluations of the firm and products. Even though not any cue of quality control process was provided, consumers still form their evaluations on product quality. In turn, perceived product quality mediates the effect of firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses (brand attitude, purchase and recommendation intention). Besides, consumption habituation and perceived firm CSR motives moderate the relationship



### *General introduction*

between firm engagement in CSR and consumer responses while CSR skepticism mediates this relationship. We also found that firm country-of-origin and production process have no significant impact as predicted. Furthermore, the integrative survey in the second data collection was used to form a structural equation model. We found the individual constructs can explain the beneath psychologic mechanisms, among which we highlight consumer green values, playing the moderating role between firm green engagement and perceived product quality. Five constructs that directly and indirectly contribute to form green values are characterized: mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, internal locus-of-control, connectedness to nature, and death anxiety. With these studies, we hope to expand the understandings of how consumers perceive and react toward CSR in the oriental context.

Figure 0.1. Research design in three steps



This dissertation is divided into three parts as described in the figure 0.2 below.

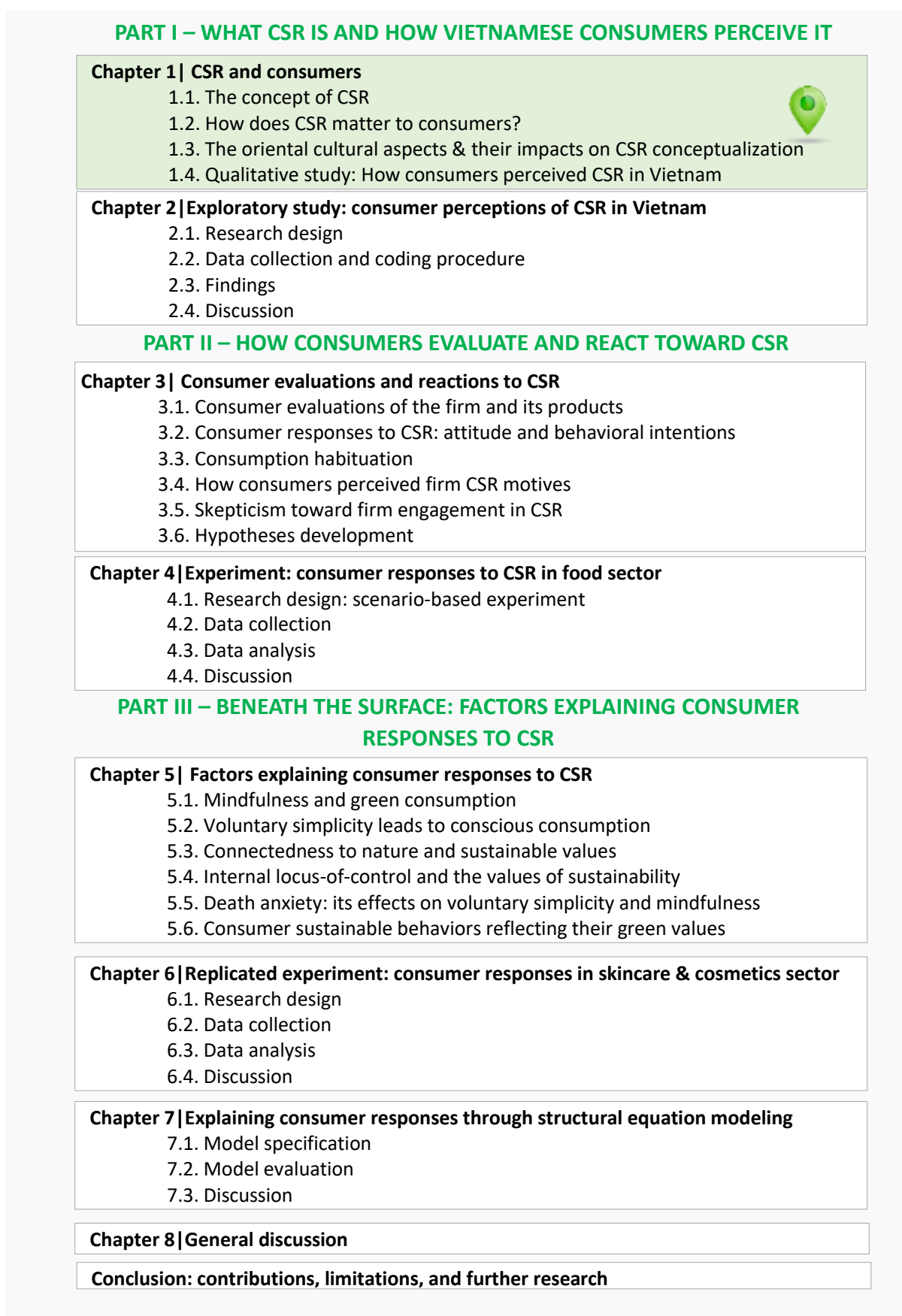
**Part I** addresses the literature review on CSR and how consumers perceive it in the oriental context. In **Chapter 1**, we capture the current concepts of CSR in general as well as how consumers perceive the CSR efforts of firms. Next, **Chapter 2** reports the exploratory study on consumer perceptions of CSR, inducing a typology of consumers.

**Part II** tackles the question of how consumers evaluate and react toward CSR, compared to other variables. It includes two chapters that present a literature review and an empirical study. **Chapter 3** addresses the related literature on the relationship between firm involvement in CSR, production process (industrial or artisanal), and firm's country-of-origin (domestic or foreign) on perceived product quality and the consequences on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions as well as consumers' beliefs on CSR (such as consumption habituation, perceived firm CSR motives, and CSR skepticism). **Chapter 4** then presents the research design and findings of a scenario-based experiment of consumer responses to CSR in food sector.

**Part III** proposes to explain consumer reactions to CSR. **Chapter 5** reveals the extant research related to individual psychologic factors that together can explain the consumer responses to CSR. Through each chapter, the conceptual framework and hypotheses are developed, paving the way for the following empirical studies. After that we report our replicated experiment on consumer responses to one particular dimension of CSR, firm engagement toward environment (**Chapter 6**). The global model testing simultaneously the relationships among the individual factors and the intentions of performing sustainable consumption will be presented, helping to expand our understandings of how and why consumers respond to CSR (**Chapter 7**).

The general discussion of the empirical findings would be presented in **Chapter 8**. Finally, we address the **Conclusion** of this dissertation and consider the contributions, limitations, and avenues for further research.

Figure 0.2. The organization of the dissertation



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**PART I | WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE  
CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT**

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## CHAPTER 1 | CSR AND CONSUMERS

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Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, CSR has been vigorously investigated in both theoretical and empirical studies, reflecting the urgent quests of firms in the modern era, and above all, the concern of consumers more and more engaged on these themes and regularly questioning firms. As a matter of fact, CSR is not only engaged by firms but also concerned by consumers, an important stakeholder in the business ecosystem. We therefore consider the link between firm involvement in CSR and the perceptions of consumers toward it. In this chapter, we firstly overall review the concept of CSR in which we present the definitions of CSR and related theories that were well-established within this domain (section 1.1). Then in section 1.2, we review the magnitude of CSR in the eyes of consumers as well as their responses to firms' CSR efforts. In addition, we address the oriental cultural aspects, which are supposed to have the impacts on CSR conceptualization in an oriental context (section 1.3). Next, section 1.4 explain the reasons and the research context (Vietnam), leading to our first study with exploratory approach. Finally, the summary presented in the end will recap the all main points of this chapter.

### 1.1. THE CONCEPT OF CSR

In this part, we present the overall definitions of CSR, the related models as well as the dimensions of CSR in extant literature.

#### 1.1.1. Definitions and related theories

The very first notion of CSR actually might be traced back to 1953. Bowen, in *Social responsibilities of the businessman*, introduced the concept in which each businessman is considered as the “servant of society” and has the obligation of fulfilling the desirability of society (Bowen 2013).

In agreement with Bowen, Frederick stated, “In the new era of business power, the old philosophy of business responsibility has been outdated”, implying that the firms should



follow the new standards of doing business which profits the society as well (Frederick 1960). This perhaps well captured the new zeitgeist from the late 1950s when scholars started to discuss the firms' responsibilities to society, which were actually beyond the scopes of business at that time.

However, during these years, the concept of CSR was started to discuss broadly, but it was still no more than an interesting idea (Heald 1961, Elbing Jr 1970). Even though many scholars appeared to agree that the social responsibilities of businessmen are a necessary response to the environmental and social problems of the era, changing business practice was admitted to generating many challenges to enterprises (Davis 1960, Eilbirt and Parket 1973, Hay and Gray 1974, Tuzzolino and Armandi 1981).

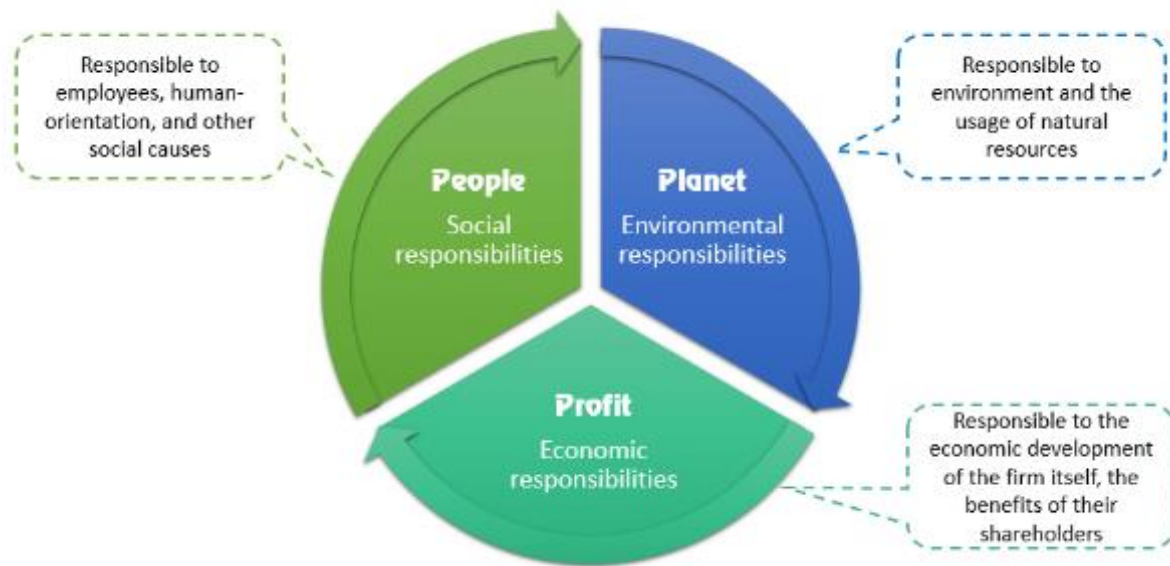
Then in the 1990s, Carroll proposed the pyramid model of CSR, describing the main components of CSR via four types of firm responsibilities. They are arranged in order, with the highlights of 'economic responsibilities' and 'legal responsibilities' by putting them in the first and second levels of the pyramid base accordingly, implying the priority of a firm is to be profitable and well maintain their business operations by respecting the law. The third and fourth levels are 'ethical responsibilities' and 'philanthropic responsibilities' respectively (Carroll 1991, Jamali and Mirshak 2007), reflecting the outside responsibilities that firms are supposed to take (i.e., be a good corporate citizen and be ethical). The figure below presents how these responsibilities are organized, following a bottom-up direction. To be noticeable, the responsibilities linked to the environmental issues were not taken into account on a separate level.

Figure 1.3. The pyramid model of CSR (Carroll 1991)



Examining the most important pillars of firms, during the 1990s, Elkington suggested the Triple Bottom Line model (also called 3Ps formulation) in which the social responsibilities of firms turn around three domains namely *people* (responsibilities related to employees, human orientation, and other social causes), *planet* (responsibilities to environment and the usage of natural resources), and *profits* (responsibilities to the economic development of the firm itself, the benefits of their shareholders) (Elkington 1994, 2013, Henriques and Richardson 2013), as the figure below. Different from the previous model of Carroll (1991), the Triple Bottom Line model started to add environmental concerns into corporate responsibilities.

Figure 1.4. Elkington's Triple Bottom Line Model (3Ps formulation)



Using the term “bottom line”, this model might be misleading to be only related to the revenues and profits within the firm. Nevertheless, the notion of Triple Bottom Line model is beyond this boundary. Actually, the application of this model contributed to transform global markets through the responsible business practices of firms when referring to economic, environmental, and social responsibilities at an equal level of importance. In other words, it reflects the concept of CSR and sustainable development at the same time (Henriques and Richardson 2013, Hammer and Pivo 2017). Moreover, the model gives no privilege position to any domain of firm responsibilities. This implies that firms can put in priority the corresponding responsibilities based on the stage of their operations. Therefore, it is probably more practical and flexible for any firm to evaluate its engagements in CSR.

In a general perspective, CSR refers to firms’ “status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations” (Brown and Dacin 1997). Standing in this viewpoint, CSR introduced by Business for Social Responsibility organization refers to “achieving commercial success in ways that honor ethical values and respect people, communities, and the natural environment” (White 2006).

To the present time, in *A renewed European strategy 2011-14 for corporate social responsibility*, the European Commission<sup>3</sup> defined CSR under a broader perspective, highlighting the role of firms in making impacts on society. Specifically, CSR is considered as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society [and] to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights, and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy”. By the same token, The United Nations Industrial Development Organization<sup>4</sup> characterized the CSR concept as “a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders”.

Globally, it is apparent that, beside the domain of making profits and maintaining business activities, firms nowadays are supposed to integrate the social and environmental responsibilities into their operations, not only with their goodwills but also with obligations.

### **1.1.2. The dimensions of CSR**

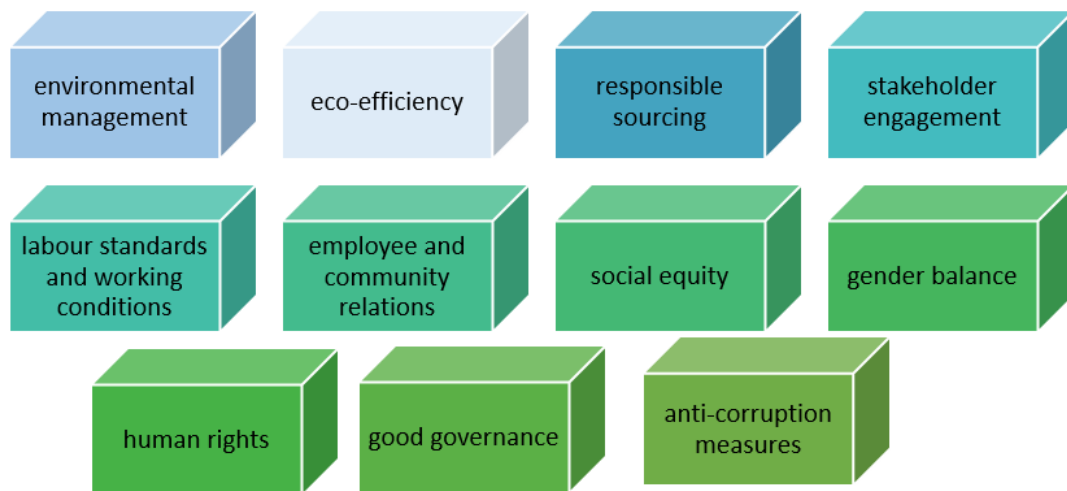
Globally, The United Nations Industrial Development Organization determined eleven dimensions of CSR (the key issues), corresponding to the definition presented in the section above, consisting of (1) environmental management, (2) eco-efficiency, (3) responsible sourcing, (4) stakeholder engagement, (5) labour standards and working conditions, (6) employee and community relations, (7) social equity, (8) gender balance, (9) human rights, (10) good governance, and (11) anti-corruption measures as described in the figure below.

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<sup>3</sup> See *A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for corporate social responsibility*, Brussels, p.6.

<sup>4</sup> see <https://www.unido.org/our-focus/advancing-economic-competitiveness/competitive-trade-capacities-and-corporate-responsibility/corporate-social-responsibility-market-integration/what-csr>, retrieving 27 Sept 2021

Figure 1.5. The key issues of CSR defined by The United Nations



Another classification of CSR dimensions was synthesized by Dahlsrud (2008) in which CSR is approached through five key domains presented in the table below. They are related to (1) environmental, (2), social, (3) economic, (4) stakeholder, and (5) voluntariness dimensions in which the environmental domain, even though is so important for the long-term prosperity of human kinds, is globally received significantly lower attention than the others (Dahlsrud 2008).

Table 1.2. Dimensions of CSR (Dahlsrud 2008)

Dimensions of CSR	Descriptions	Example of the related concept
<b>Environmental dimension</b>	related to the natural environment	a cleaner environment' 'environmental stewardship' 'environmental concerns in business operations'
<b>Social dimension</b>	related to the relationship between business and society	'contribute to a better society' 'integrated social concerns in their business operations' 'consider the full scope of their impact on communities'
<b>Economic dimension</b>	related to socio-economic or financial aspects, including describing CSR in terms of a business operation	'contribute to economic development' 'preserving the profitability' 'business operations'

Dimensions of CSR	Descriptions	Example of the related concept
<b>Stakeholder dimension</b>	related to stakeholders or stakeholder groups	interaction with their stakeholders' 'how organizations interact with their employees, suppliers, customers and communities' 'treating the stakeholders of the firm'
<b>Voluntariness dimension</b>	related to actions not prescribed by law	based on ethical values' 'beyond legal obligations' 'voluntary'

Furthermore, CSR dimensions might be considered different across sectors. In food sector, for instance, the important aspects of CSR include the responsibilities related to quality and safety, philanthropy and social activities, labor rights, animal welfare as well as transparent information (Schröder and McEachern 2005, Maloni and Brown 2006, Forsman-Hugg et al. 2013, Hartmann et al. 2013, Ursin et al. 2016, Vo and Arato 2019). However, these dimensions are considered under multi-stakeholder perspectives and may not necessarily reflect the importance of CSR in the eyes of consumers.

## 1.2. HOW DOES CSR MATTER TO CONSUMERS?

As presented in the previous section, CSR is not only the voluntary engagement of firms but also a requirement, partly because of the expectations of their consumers. It is very important for enterprises with CSR activities to get to know how consumers perceived their efforts. In this section, we review the literature on how CSR is perceived by consumers and how they respond to firms' CSR initiatives.

### 1.2.1. Consumer perceptions of CSR

Since the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been an increasing interest in consumer perceptions of corporate associations in general (i.e., the information that consumers form on their own about a company/a brand) (Clark 1987, Brown and Dacin 1997, Berens and Van Riel 2004). However, very little research particularly paid attention to consumer perceptions of CSR until the early 2000s (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004, Aguinis and Glavas 2012). And even that, extant research still shows that what we have known about consumers' perceptions of CSR is just like the "tip of the iceberg".

CSR, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder. This saying is so ancient that no one could remember who said it first (Passmore 1936) but the idea has never been old-fashioned. The concept is still thought-provoking when referring to the actual quest of firms for CSR and consumers' perception of it. As a matter of fact, being recognized by stakeholders consumers is one of the important motivations of firms when engaging in CSR (Ellen et al. 2006, Aguilera et al. 2007) so that CSR would play a role in consumer evaluations of the firm and its product afterward (Klein and Dawar 2004).

Through socially responsible activities, firms may reasonably expect that their CSR efforts can convey some positive messages to their audiences about their goodwill. It seems that the more socially responsible a firm is; the better image it wants to have in the minds of its audiences. Simply put, it is obvious for firms - when engaging in CSR - to expect a positive relationship between the firms' CSR actions and consumers' reaction (Aguilera et al. 2007) such as liking the brand, purchasing their products, spreading positive word-of-mouth, to name but a few.

However, CSR initiatives may or may not result in firms' expected outcomes. In other words, what consumers perceive about the CSR efforts of firms is not necessarily exact as what the firms want to convey through their activities (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). To put it another way, the favorable responses of consumers (e.g., favorable attitude, purchase intention) that the firms would like to achieve somehow depends on how their consumers, so-called "the beholders", perceive these activities (Bianchi et al. 2019). Consumers' perceptions of CSR are substantive, which in turn, depict how responsible a firm is "in their eyes". The perceived CSR in the eyes of consumers then would induce their evaluations afterward (e.g., product quality) (Berens et al. 2005).

With this reality in mind, the influence of CSR on consumers' perceptions may be variable in separated contexts related to different product categories or to specific causes that one may concern (Auger and Devinney 2007). Specifically, consumers in one particular culture may consider a firm involved in CSR as having already been fulfilled its responsibilities toward society or contributed considerably to solving the environmental issues in the community. Nevertheless, the similar CSR practices applied in another part of the planet may be considered insufficient, and consumers there may expect more from firms in terms of their

engagements in responsible activities. For example, a comparison study about evaluating CSR practices of multinational corporations confirmed this. Conducted with young participants (16-24 years old) in the United States and South Korea, the study revealed that those in the US perceived more favorably toward the CSR initiatives of firms than those in South Korea (Kim and Choi 2013).

As can be seen, it is apparent that consumer responses to CSR depend on their perceptions toward it. Nevertheless, consumers' reactions may not always be consistent with what they said, even when they consider CSR as an important notion in their identity (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004, Paliawadana et al. 2016), as presented in the section following.

### **1.2.2. No clear-cut responses of consumers toward CSR**

Previous researches show that there are controversial perspectives and heterogeneity among the way consumers react to firms' CSR efforts (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004, Loussaïef et al. 2014).

After several decades, CSR up-to-now has been considered important among the factors of purchasing decisions (Creyer and Ross Jr 1997). As concluded in the study of US consumers toward CSR, consumers generally show positive attitude and evaluation for firms committing to social responsibilities (Mohr and Webb 2005). However, consumers do not react to CSR initiatives of firms in the same way. The degree of consumer support to CSR engagement of firms depends on the magnitude of CSR to him or her (Mohr et al. 2001).

The extent that CSR matters to consumers can be explained by self-congruity theory of Sirgy (1986) in which the purchasing behavior of a person for a certain brand consists with the matching of that brand to his or her core value or self-image value. That is to say, CSR may not broadly matter to all consumers but will be **salient** to those who appreciate the socially responsible engagements of corporates and to those who consider CSR is important to their self-esteem. As a result, the choice of supporting to firms who are socially responsible, in turn, enhances the self-image of these consumers (Sirgy 1986, Mohr et al. 2001, Lindquist and Sirgy 2009, Shin 2014, Fan et al. 2019).



## Chapter 1: CSR and consumers

Furthermore, in terms of cross-culture, each nation has its own characteristics, illustrated by the differences in the six-dimensional comparison by Hofstede (2011). For example, individualism (widely in Western countries) vs. collectivism (widely in Eastern countries), or long-term orientation (e.g., China, Germany, Japan) vs. short-term one (e.g., the US) (Hofstede 2011). As an illustration, previous cross-culture comparison showed that consumers in different countries perceived differently to CSR engagements of firms (Maignan 2001, Mueller Loose and Remaud 2013, Loussaïef et al. 2014).

Simply put, consumers in some different countries may lean more on several kind of responsibilities than others. In comparison to consumers in the US, consumers in France and Germany (where collectivism is highly appreciated) tend to highly support responsible business in terms of legal and ethical aspects, while consumers in the US have higher appreciation for the economic responsibilities of firms (Maignan 2001). In another study comparing consumer behavior in seven different markets of Europe and North America, the authors pointed out that for a certain type of product (e.g., wine), consumers generally have similar perception in terms of social and environmental responsibilities of firms but are willing to pay more for products/services from firms engaged in environmental activities (Mueller Loose and Remaud 2013).

Based solely ethical aspect of CSR, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) classified consumers into four groups accordingly to their ethical awareness and ethical purchase intention as well as the ethical information claimed by firms. The figure below illustrates these four types: (1) *caring and ethical* (those who highly aware of ethical issues and response positively to ethical firms), (2) *confused and uncertain* (those who would like to shop for ethical firms but not stable), (3) *cynical and disinterested* (those who purchase based on price, quality, and ethical marketing), and (4) *oblivious* (those do not know much about ethical issues and may or may not like to purchase ethically). However, the characteristics of all types are seemly vague and not distinct to each other, especially between type 2 (confused and uncertain) and type 4 (oblivious). Besides, it was noticeable that this categorization might emphasize the stability of four consumer types, making it insufficient to explain the changeable tendency in human beings' mindsets.

Figure 1.6. Consumer ethical awareness and their attitudes to ethical purchasing (Carrigan and Attalla 2001)

		Ethical Awareness	
		High	Low
Ethical Purchase Intention	High	Caring and Ethical	Confused and Uncertain
	Low	Cynical and Disinterested	Oblivious

*Consumer attitudes to ethical purchasing*

In the same time, consumer responses to CSR were classified by Mohr et al. (2001) through the model adopting the theory of behavioral change introduced by Andreasen (1995) with four stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance (Andreasen 1995, 2002). This model suggests that consumer behaviors toward CSR are diversified based on their CSR perceptions (as in the table below).

Table 1.3. Consumer responses to CSR (Mohr et al. 2001)

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Features</b>
<b>Pre-contemplators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ really not think about basing their purchase behavior on CSR;</li> <li>▪ unaware of any need to consider CSR when choosing products;</li> <li>▪ essentially believe that they should only base their purchasing on standard economic and other rational criteria;</li> <li>▪ believe that companies should only be responsible for making a profit.</li> </ul>
<b>Contemplators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ think about basing purchasing on CSR or have used CSR as a criterion in the past, but this criterion still does not play much of a role in their decision processes or purchase behavior;</li> <li>▪ seem to occasionally think about CSR in relation to purchasing, but this criterion still does not play a large role when they choose products;</li> <li>▪ unable to give any examples of their behavior being influenced by CSR;</li> <li>▪ may have boycotted at least one company for what they perceived to be irresponsible behavior;</li> </ul>
<b>Actioners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ more aware of CSR issues, and, as a result, have made a decision to use CSR as a factor when purchasing;</li> <li>▪ avoid buying from certain companies they consider irresponsible;</li> <li>▪ even buy products occasionally from companies they view as socially responsible;</li> </ul>
<b>Maintainers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ consider CSR important to them;</li> <li>▪ work to learn about social issues and the behaviors of specific firms;</li> <li>▪ believe that they can have an impact on the social responsibility of companies;</li> <li>▪ often willing to switch brands or stores and even willing to pay a little more to make purchases that they consider socially responsible;</li> <li>▪ tend to have a higher socioeconomic status and educational level; rate themselves as more politically liberal than the rest of the sample.</li> </ul>

Although this may be true, it is still too optimistic to conclude that consumer responses toward CSR will be straightforward and apparent in terms of punishing bad behaviors or rewarding good behaviors of firms as emphasized by Creyer and Ross Jr (1997). Studies in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century imply that the ethical era of consumption has not yet come due to the fact that consumers are still very far from what they say and what they do to support firm engagements in social activities (Roberts 1996, Carrigan and Attalla 2001, Maignan 2001) as well as firms' environmental involvements (Belk et al. 2005, Carrington et al. 2010, Eckhardt et al. 2010). In the cross-cultural study investigating the lack of ethical patterns in consumptions in eight countries of four continents (Germany, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, India, China, Australia, and the US), Eckhardt, Belk et al. (2010) found that consumer perceptions and responses of

(ir)responsible firms/products are very divergent. Needless to say, the different cultural aspects (i.e., occidental vs. oriental) may induce consumers to react to CSR very differently, making CSR unable to be one-size-fits-all across continents.

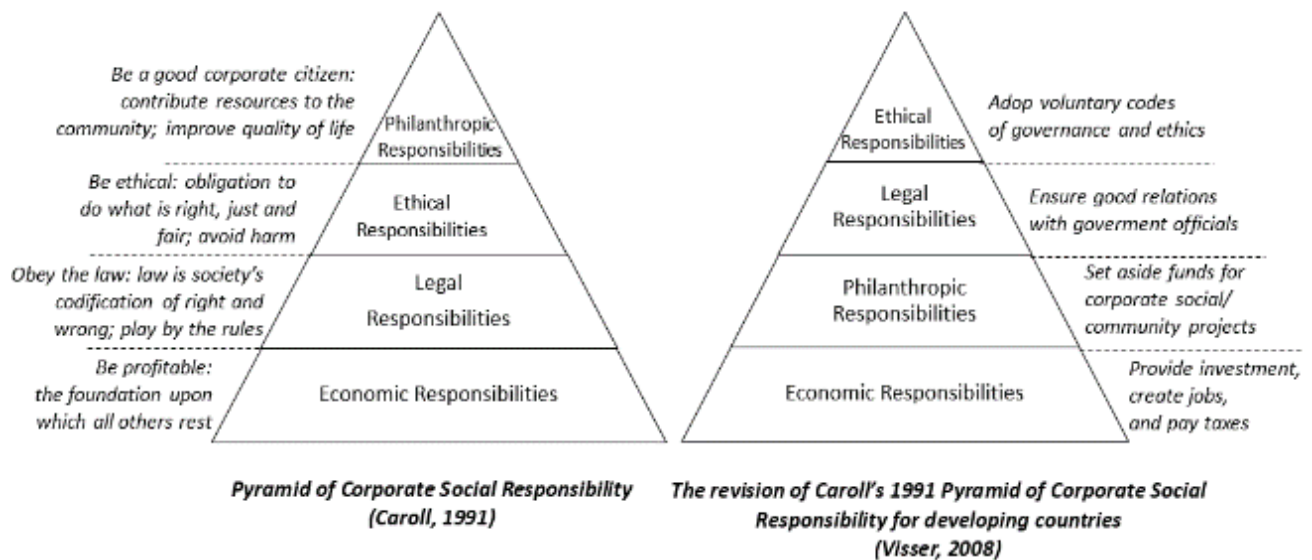
### **1.3. THE ORIENTAL CULTURAL ASPECTS AND ITS IMPACTS ON CSR CONCEPTUALIZATION**

The current literature on CSR, however, reveals some drawbacks when referring to the application of CSR on different cultural contexts.

For decades, most of the CSR studies were conducted under the western-centric approaches (Birch and Moon 2004), resulting in the universal CSR standards and codes nowadays. Even though these CSR attributions partly align with and may be applicable for other markets (Chapple and Moon 2005), CSR may not be well fit across countries but rather highly contextualized and differ across various contexts (Vu 2018). Under the impacts of religions, social norms, business practices, socio-economic development, CSR conceptualization might be divergent (Birch and Moon 2004, Welford 2004, Chapple and Moon 2005, Ramasamy and Yeung 2009, Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014, Vu 2021).

In 2008, the revision of Carroll's 1991 Pyramid model was suggested by Visser in order to adapt to the perspective of developing countries. Together with economic growth, the legal systems there are inadequately developed. As a result, firms in developing countries are under less pressure than those in developed countries in terms of legal responsibilities. With this in mind, the author introduced the revised model in which the aspect of 'economic responsibilities' is still put on the first level of the CSR pyramid while the aspect of 'philanthropic responsibilities' is set on the second level. Then comes the 'legal responsibilities' and 'ethical responsibilities' correspondingly (Visser 2008).

Figure 1.7. The original pyramid model of CSR and the revised one for developing countries



Although this revised pyramid model of CSR was designated to developing countries and is not necessarily the same for all oriental countries, it reflects some similar characteristics of oriental countries as well. Besides, many oriental countries are in the stage of emerging economics (e.g., China, Vietnam, Thailand) in which people expect enterprises to contribute to social causes together with the government (May et al. 2007, Ramasamy and Yeung 2009). The higher expectation toward firms in terms of ethical and philanthropic activities is also among CSR-related values emerging from the inherent characteristics in oriental culture.

Cross-culture studies by Hofstede (2011) indicated the six outstanding cultural dimensions in East Asia, consisting of the high level of power distance, the low level of uncertainty avoidance, the low level of individualism, the moderately low level of masculinity, the long-term orientation, and the low level of indulgence. These aspects are consistent with the inherent cultural values of oriental societies that are strongly influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, collectivism, among other cultural traits, which in turn might shape the business practices as well as the perception of consumption (Welford 2004, Li et al. 2010, Lund-Thomsen et al. 2016).

Across East Asian countries, Buddhism has strong impacts on daily life and the perception of consumption, emphasizing that material possession is not the proper way leading to ones' life satisfaction but the values of love, tolerance, kindness (Daniels 2011, Thich 2019). Besides, the Buddhism philosophy relating to "the consequences of karma" and "the responsibility of

others' well-beings" might induce corporate leaders to deliver the values such as humanity orientation, benevolence, philanthropic activities (Gunasekara 1982, Zsolnai 2011) as well as the "skillful means" in business practices (referring to the response to contemporary issues with a contextualized and cleverness rather than ubiquitous approach) (Vu 2018, Vu and Tran 2021).

Moreover, Confucianism, which existed for over 2500 years, has a great influence across East Asia on business operation and shapes particular business traits that are different from the ones in other parts of the world (Whelan 2007, Rozman 2014). For instance, Confucian ethics, implying that the firm leaders should be responsible not only for providing jobs for many but also for the well-beings of their employees, are popularly expected among firms in East Asia such as in China (Lu 2009, Yin and Zhang 2012), South Korea (Chan 2008), or Vietnam (Smith Jr and Pham 1996). Besides, Confucian values related to the respect to hierarchy, friendship, and the bonds of family play an important role in business practices (Tai 1989, Rozman 2014), which in turn result in the dominance of family business in East Asia (Sharma and Chua 2013), not to mention the perception of making profit in Confucian morality, in which the "righteousness" is considered as "the real profit" and highly appreciated rather than financial profit (Chan 1963, Chan 2008, Liu and Stening 2016).

Furthermore, collectivism is also considerably appreciated among East Asia countries. Contrary to western culture, individualism is not widely encouraged in almost all aspects of the culture there. Also, CSR obligations depend on levels of economic development and local business practices in oriental countries (May et al. 2007, Whelan 2007).

Moreover, the indirect communication culture is popular across Asian countries, relating to the favored manner to express the politeness of communicators, requiring listeners to read between the lines or base on non-verbal cues (e.g., postures, attitudes, tones of voice) to get to know what exactly they imply (Yum 1988, Kádár and Mills 2011). With this in mind, it might be very common for consumers in oriental cultures not to behave straightforward as what they say and think.

In short, these aspects above probably make the conceptualization of CSR in oriental markets different from those in occidental counterpart, leading us to our exploratory study in an oriental country to expand the understandings of consumer perception of CSR.

#### **1.4. QUALITATIVE STUDY: HOW IS CSR PERCEIVED IN AN ORIENTAL COUNTRY?**

After several decades, studies on CSR in non-western contexts have been relatively stronger; however, the number of countries observed in empirical studies, especially in East Asia, was relatively small (Pisani et al. 2017).

Due to the fact that studies on CSR were broadly studied in occidental context but not so numerous in oriental context and how the cultural aspects could create differences in conceptualizing CSR, we therefore investigated our topic in an emerging oriental context (Vietnam), which inherently is different from extant literature of CSR due to their cultural and socio-economic development (Hofstede 2011). Through this study, we aimed to add a new nuance to the CSR palette that has been dominant with studies under the occidental context.

Concretely, this research explored the perceptions and responses of consumers toward CSR in the context of the food sector in Vietnam, employing a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews. More precisely, this work seeks to examine the understanding of CSR concept for consumers in an oriental country, its structure (dimensions), and how different they are from those presented in previous works of western countries.

##### ➤ ***Research context (consumers perceiving CSR in Vietnam)***

Vietnam is an emerging market in East Asia. Despite being a dynamic part of the worldwide economy, this region has been quite under-researched up to now (Palihawadana et al. 2016, Vo and Arato 2019).

As said before, there may be differences in the conceptualization and effects of CSR in an oriental context compared to occidental one (e.g., Ramasamy and Yeung, 2009). Though not very numerous, previous studies indicate that Vietnamese consumers show high concerns about firm engagements in CSR (Pham 2011, Vo et al. 2018). However, unlike Western consumers, they mostly have not yet played an active role in urging the firms to do business responsibly (Huang et al. 2019). Several empirical studies showed that a part

of Vietnamese consumers is likely to stop buying products from irresponsible firms, urge others to do the same as well as give recognition to the responsible firms through the willingness for higher prices. Nevertheless, it takes time for the transmission from attitudes to real actions (Palihawadana et al. 2016, Bui and Ha Nam 2020). However, empirical studies in Vietnamese context were barely numerous enough for generalization.

This leads to our first study based on an exploratory approach, conducted in the context of an oriental country (Vietnam), responding to the call of Pisani et. al (2017). Based on the dimensions of CSR presented in extant research (Dahlsrud 2008), we built the interview guides that served for the semi-directive interviews with consumers (*see more details in the research design in the following parts*).

We chose the food sector to launch our exploratory study on consumer perceptions of CSR for several reasons.

- Globally, CSR studies primarily focus on cross-sections rather than specific industries (Aguinis and Glavas 2012) and are not very plentiful in food sector, an essential for everyday matter and a sensitive sector because of its direct influence on human health (Hartmann 2011). Even though consumers, with their evaluations of firms and products, are the most important audiences of firms' policies, the studies on CSR in food sector under the consumer perspective are not so numerous, especially in oriental contexts. The studies of CSR primarily deal with institutional and corporate level (i.e., CSR corporate strategies, the perspectives of multi-stakeholders) rather than individual level (i.e., how consumers perceive and react to firms' CSR initiatives), making it difficult to reach to a global perspective of CSR (Birch and Moon 2004, Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014, Pisani et al. 2017).
- Similarly to other oriental countries (Ramasamy and Yeung 2009, Li et al. 2010, Tian et al. 2011, Kong 2012), the issues of product quality and safety are still the main concerns in Vietnam. For instance, consumer attitudes appear to be strongly pessimistic toward the issues of food quality and food safety such as chemical residues (Figuié and Moustier 2009, Mergenthaler et al. 2009), foodborne



illnesses<sup>5</sup>, bacterial contamination and other serious issues of food quality<sup>6</sup> have pushed consumers to reconsider the requirement to firms in food sector for more responsible engagement (Palihawadana et al. 2016) as well as the expectations toward the consumer associations for more enforcement (Figuié and Moustier 2009).

- Furthermore, not only more sensitive to irresponsible than responsible actions of firms, a previous study argued that Vietnamese consumers tend to punish firms' irresponsible activities relating to "food quality and safety" and show their reward for firms' good actions relating to "environmental, social and ethical" responsibilities (Vo et al. 2018). Besides the issues of food quality and safety, firms are also required to behave in a socially responsible way regarding the environmental issues, employee welfare, and other social concerns as indicated by previous studies in Asian countries (Visser 2003, Birch and Moon 2004, Welford 2004, Chapple and Moon 2005, Arya and Zhang 2009, Vo and Arato 2019).

In a nutshell, consumers in different markets do not have the same concerns or put the same priority toward the social responsibilities of enterprises. While there are plenty of researches focusing on consumers in occidental markets, the CSR topic is still under-researched in oriental markets, and thus necessary to study to complete the global picture of CSR. This study, therefore, seeks to expand the understandings of consumers in Vietnam, an emerging country in East Asia, toward CSR and the CSR dimensions that together explain the variance in consumer responses toward firm engagement in CSR. Based on the consumer perceptions of CSR, we would like to build a typology of consumers, reflecting how CSR is perceived by consumers in East Asia.

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<sup>5</sup> See Food safety activities in Vietnam, reported by FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, retrieving 19 Oct 2021, <https://www.fao.org/3/ab532e/ab532e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See World Bank's policy brief relating to food safety in Vietnam, retrieving 19 Oct 2021 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/publication/food-safety-risk-management-in-vietnam-challenges-and-opportunities>

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1

This chapter paved the way for our empirical studies afterwards, addressing the **research question n°1**: *How is CSR perceived by consumers in Vietnam? and specifically, which are the dimensions of CSR considered important to Vietnamese consumers? Can we build a typology of consumers regarding their perceptions of CSR?*

Through reviewing related literature on CSR, we captured the current concepts of CSR in general as well as how consumers perceived CSR efforts of firms. It is apparent that there exist no clear-cut responses of consumers toward CSR, taking into account the congruence of CSR and individuals' values. Moreover, we also addressed in this chapter the cultural characteristics of East Asia regions and the influences of Buddhism, Confucianism, and collectivism, which are supposed to play the role in conceptualizing CSR and its related dimensions. Specifically, the bonds of family and friendship, the respect toward hierarchy, and the indirect communication style - among other traits - shape business practices in East Asia as well as how CSR is executed by firms and how it is perceived by consumers.

Aiming to add a new nuance to the current palette of CSR literature, we envisaged an empirical study in oriental context, with a representative of an emerging East Asian country (Vietnam). Through this study, we highlighted the oriental cultural aspects that possibly create the variance in CSR conceptualization, contributing for a generalized CSR concept globally. Concretely, we carried out a qualitative study, employing in-depth interviews to explore the perceptions and responses of consumers toward CSR in Vietnamese food sector, which is related to the daily essentials, and also considered as a sensitive sector because of its direct influence on health. In addition, we sought to define the dimensions of CSR that are important to consumers in an oriental context as well as to suggest a generalized typology of oriental consumers based on their perceptions of CSR.

The details of this qualitative study together with research design and findings will be presented in the following chapter.

## PART I – WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT

### Chapter 1 | CSR and consumers

- 1.1. The concept of CSR
- 1.2. How does CSR matter to consumers?
- 1.3. The oriental cultural aspects & their impacts on CSR conceptualization
- 1.4. Qualitative study: How consumers perceived CSR in Vietnam

### Chapter 2 | Exploratory study: consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam

- 2.1. Research design
- 2.2. Data collection and coding procedure
- 2.3. Findings
- 2.4. Discussion



## PART II – HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR

### Chapter 3 | Consumer evaluations and reactions to CSR

- 3.1. Consumer evaluations of the firm and its products
- 3.2. Consumer responses to CSR: attitude and behavioral intentions
- 3.3. Consumption habituation
- 3.4. How consumers perceived firm CSR motives
- 3.5. Skepticism toward firm engagement in CSR
- 3.6. Hypotheses development

### Chapter 4 | Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector

- 4.1. Research design: scenario-based experiment
- 4.2. Data collection
- 4.3. Data analysis
- 4.4. Discussion

## PART III – BENEATH THE SURFACE: FACTORS EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR

### Chapter 5 | Factors explaining consumer responses to CSR

- 5.1. Mindfulness and green consumption
- 5.2. Voluntary simplicity leads to conscious consumption
- 5.3. Connectedness to nature and sustainable values
- 5.4. Internal locus-of-control and the values of sustainability
- 5.5. Death anxiety: its effects on voluntary simplicity and mindfulness
- 5.6. Consumer sustainable behaviors reflecting their green values

### Chapter 6 | Replicated experiment: consumer responses in skincare & cosmetics sector

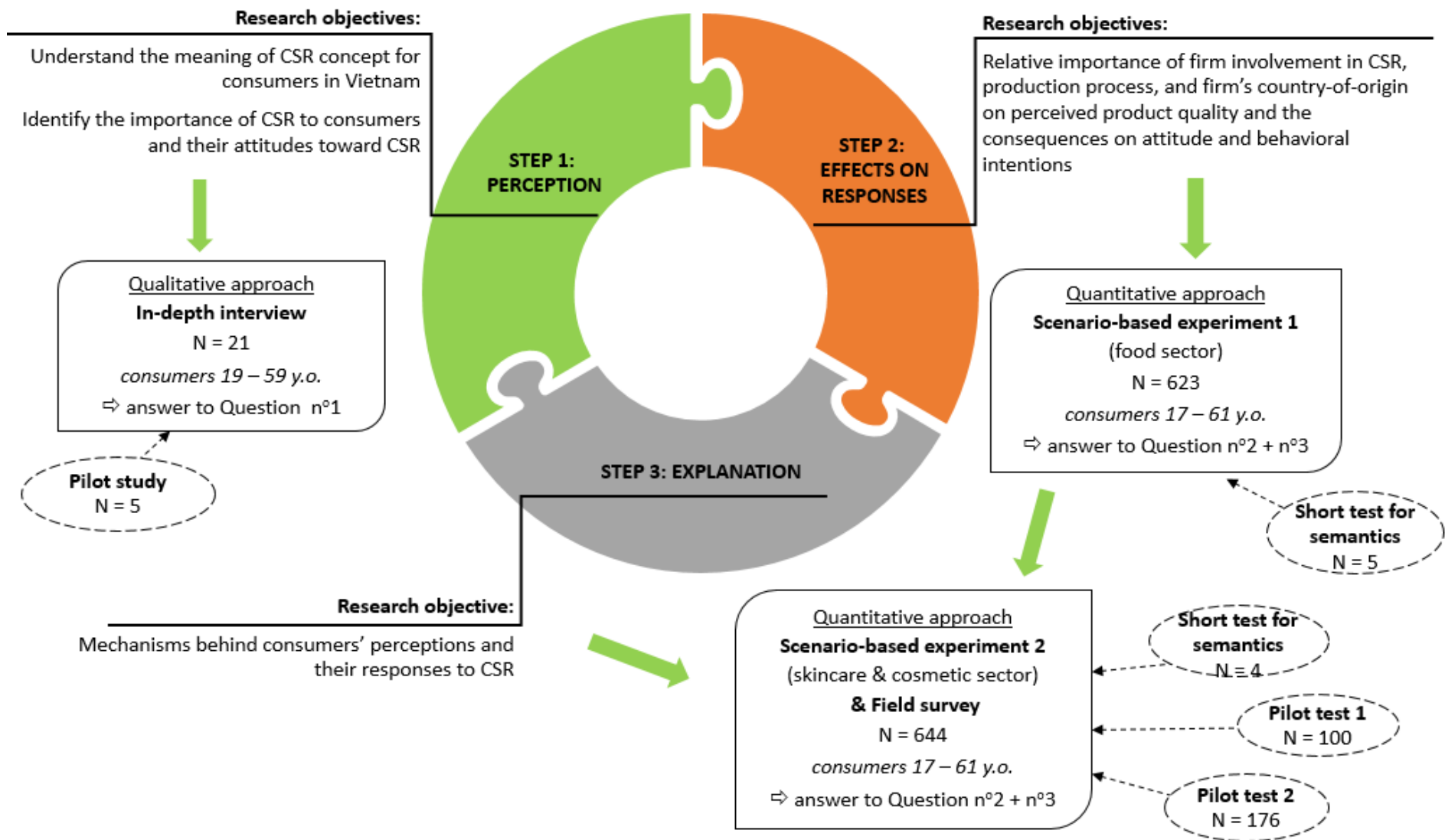
- 6.1. Research design
- 6.2. Data collection
- 6.3. Data analysis
- 6.4. Discussion

### Chapter 7 | Explaining consumer responses through structural equation modeling

- 7.1. Model specification
- 7.2. Model evaluation
- 7.3. Discussion

### Chapter 8 | General discussion

### Conclusion: contributions, limitations, and further research



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## CHAPTER 2 | EXPLORATORY STUDY: CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF CSR IN VIETNAM

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In this chapter, we firstly present the research design of our exploratory study based on in-depth interviews (section 2.1) and the data collection and coding procedure (section 2.2). Then the findings are presented with the interpretation of consumers' perceptions of CSR in Vietnam and the relevant importance of five CSR dimensions to consumers (section 2.3). In the discussion afterwards (section 2.4), based on the consumer insights, we also propose a typology of consumers regarding their perceptions toward CSR and their corresponding behaviors in the past. Besides, we shed light on the differences between our typology and the previous categorizations. The attitude-behavior gap of consumers is also mentioned as a part of this study. The summary section is presented in the end, capturing all the main points of the chapter.

### 2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section, we present the process of designing interview guide, the procedures of conducting interviews, the sampling technique used as well as ethical considerations.

#### ❖ **The process of designing interview guide:**

We designed the interview guide for interviews face to face with Vietnamese consumers, firstly in English, then translated into Vietnamese in consideration of usage as much as possible of daily speaking words and expressions. Five pilot interviews were conducted in two months, November and December of 2018 to get the half-finalized version of the interview guide. Then, it was updated on-the-go on the field trip to reach the highest effectiveness without changing the direction of the study. The pilot interviews were kept as qualified samples of this qualitative research.

The interview guide was based on the semi-structured technique which previously prepare some essential structures that aligned with planned research purpose while letting participants to freely go on further particular themes by their own words and allowing the interviewer to

give some probing phrases when needed. All the questions were open-ended to avoid any preset ideas (Belk 2007).

The process of the interview went from general to more particular questions (Öberseder et al. 2011) firstly to draw initial feelings about CSR. In order to draw as much as possible information to get a deeper understanding of the participants and their responses, the interview guide employed follow-up questions which were designed in a manner that could explore partly or all the facets of the discussed issues including experience/behavior, opinions/values, feelings, sensory impressions, knowledge, and demographic data (Patton 2003).

Other techniques were employed in the interviews include using 'mirror technique' in which the interviewer verified the unclear responses or dig deeper the ideas raised by informants by asking for confirmation of the informants' responses; avoiding leading questions with the answers were already installed in the questions; as well as using neutral questions without any preset attitude of the interviewers (Taylor et al. 2015) (*see the detailed interview guide and the translated version in the appendices*).

❖ **Procedures of conducting interviews:**

In order to draw initial feelings about CSR among respondents, at the beginning, the researcher did not reveal the specific subject of the study or mention the term 'corporate social responsibility'. The interviews went from general questions such as consumers' habits of buying products/services and their opinions about responsibilities of firms to specific questions toward firm responsibilities in food sector, following the flow of responses. Through this process, respondents gradually revealed their own definitions of CSR (Öberseder et al. 2011).

Applying Mack et al. (2005) approach, we captured the responses of interview through audio recording and hand-writing field notes. Basic information of the interview included ID of respondent, time and date of the interview, demographic information (name, age/approximate birth year, occupation, etc.), and personal information. Right after the interview, the researcher took time to finish the field notes by recapturing the feelings, attitude of participants; feelings of researchers; highlight information; and possible key points to improve for next interview.

❖ **Sampling technique:**

The study firstly employed convenient samplings. During the data collection, we caught the opportunity to enlarge the sample size as much as possible until reaching the point of saturation (Mack et al. 2005, Öberseder et al. 2011, Taylor et al. 2015). Afterwards, the study employed *snowball sampling technique* in which majority of participants are introduced by the previous ones (Ritchie et al. 2003, Taylor et al. 2015). Besides, the snowball sampling method proves itself practical and less time-consuming (Ritchie et al. 2003, McEachern 2015). In reality, this method did help to minimize the rejection rate that the researchers might have to deal with other method of approaching. The initial sample size that we aimed to reach was about 20 participants with different age groups and diverse occupations.

❖ **Ethical considerations**

A number of ethical considerations to protect the privacy of informants, for example, anonymity, in which the real name and exact identity of participants were not revealed (McEachern 2015). Before the in-depth interviews, we applied the *consent form* following the instructions of Ritchie et al. (2003) and Mark et al. (2005), in which all participants should agree to join in the study either by verbal or by written. Also, they are informed that the interviews were recorded under their permissions.

## **2.2. DATA COLLECTION AND CODING PROCEDURE**

The initial sample size that we aimed to reach was around 20 participants with varied age groups and diverse professions. At the end, totally 21 participants were recruited with 19/21 face-to-face interviews and 2/21 interviews via video calls. These interviews were conducted with consumers in three different regions of Vietnam (Hochiminh City, Dalat, and Phu Yen). Their ages range from 19 to 59 years old, and their professions are diversified consisting student, university lecturer, architect, marketing executive, human resource executive, law executive, accountant, auditor, quality control manager, sale manager, farmer, housewife, and policeman. The average duration of each interview was 43 minutes. Each interviews took around 5 hours of transcribing, resulting in totally 210 pages of transcripts (*see the samples of transcripts in Appendices*).



### **Coding process**

Coding scheme was established according to both applicable theoretical elements and participants' responses from in-depth interviews (Mohr et al. 2001). Keeping ongoing analysis of data, we started to code and analyze data right after the first interviews to make sure having the good quality of interpretation from the beginning (Rallis and Rossman 2012, Taylor et al. 2015) with quick glimpses for the ideas and patterns emerging from qualitative collected data (Ritchie et al. 2003).

The coding process was carried out with NVivo software which allows the frequent phrases and ideas to be grouped into themes and sub-themes. Through that procedure, the considerable themes rise up and the pattern are revealed (Mack et al. 2005).

*Cross-researcher reliability* (Perreault Jr and Leigh 1989, Mohr et al. 2001, Hair Jr et al. 2017) was implemented on three samples (CON01\_Duong, CON04\_Luu, and CON21\_Le Trang) in order to see the similarity between two coders. Coding separately, they got more than 70 % of consensus of coding into accordingly themes. Concerning the parts that the coders did not arrive in the same way, they were discussed and recoded to get the final agreements on the main themes.

The coding techniques employed in the study were both *axial coding* and *selective coding*. The former technique allows the qualitative data to be firstly coded into themes emerging up from the responses of informants. This coding process also allows to form the initiative constructs. The latter technique involves in building the storyline around the main themes of the study (Hair Jr et al. 2017). In our research, the two main themes consisted *perception of corporate social responsibility* and *behaviors of consumers*.

During the coding process, themes and sub-themes were designed and collapsed consecutively (Ritchie et al. 2003, Mack et al. 2005, Taylor et al. 2015, Hair Jr et al. 2017) when we went back-and-forth on the coding journey for reviewing and refining the themes and sub-themes. We classified consumer responses according to themes, respecting MECE principle method (mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive) (Minto 2003).

As an illustration, we coded consumers' attitudes toward CSR from extremely negative to extremely positive. Specifically, the attitudes were identified as *extremely positive* when respondents express their fascinations, gave much of hope and smiles when referring to CSR involvements of firms. The *positive* attitudes were categorized when respondents revealed their beliefs that good outcomes would happen, their tolerance and understanding for the firms' challenges when engaging in CSR practices. Next, consumers' attitudes were considered *neutral* if respondents gave no strong emotions and feelings to the critical issues of CSR that were raised during the conversation. Besides, neutrality was also attributed when respondents did not reveal neither favorable sentiment toward responsible firms nor unfavorable sentiment toward irresponsible firms. In addition, the *negative* attitude was defined once respondents showed angry and sad sentiments and/or raised their voice tone. In cases that respondents swore or gave their contempt, disregard or smiles transmitting their sorrowful or mocking implications, the attitude was classified as *extremely negative*.

At the end of the coding process, the total themes and sub-themes remain 6 main themes, 24 subthemes of level 1, and 23 subthemes of level 2, as presented in the table below.

Table 2.4. Themes and subthemes arising from the coding operation

Themes	Subthemes	
	Level 1	Level 2
<b>1. Purchasing habits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buying location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional market/grocery store</li> <li>• Supermarket/Convenient Store</li> <li>• Online</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors to buy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price</li> <li>• Suitability (demand)</li> <li>• Availability (convenience)</li> <li>• Well-known brand</li> <li>• Firms doing good (CSR)</li> <li>• WOM/review</li> </ul>
<b>2. Attitude toward CSR activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buddhism spirit keeps people doing good</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young generation starting up</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neutral</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative</li> <li>• Extremely negative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unqualified food</li> <li>• Degradation of morality (Crisis of credibility)</li> <li>• Low efficiency of authorized agencies</li> <li>• Necessity of intervention of legislation</li> </ul>

Themes	Subthemes	
	Level 1	Level 2
<b>3. Perception of CSR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible to consumers</li> <li>• Responsible to environment</li> <li>• Responsible to society and philanthropy</li> <li>• Responsible to employees</li> <li>• Responsible to firm itself</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Firm motivations of doing good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goodwill of firm owner</li> <li>• Marketing/reputation</li> <li>• Personal fame for firm leaders</li> <li>• Requirement of law</li> <li>• Competitive strength</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Barriers of doing good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial issues</li> <li>• Mindset of firm owner</li> <li>• Demanding of consumers</li> <li>• Lax management of government</li> <li>• Other available resources (e.g., human, time)</li> </ul>	
<b>6. Reactions toward CSR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaction to responsible behaviors of firms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep good impression of firm</li> <li>• Preference among different firms' products</li> <li>• Willing to pay more</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaction to irresponsible behaviors of firms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue using products</li> <li>• Report to consumer protecting agency</li> <li>• Quit using/switch brand</li> <li>• Boycott and urge others to boycott</li> <li>• Review on social media</li> </ul>

## 2.3. FINDINGS

The data analysis of the interviews resulted in the emergence of CSR concept from the viewpoint of Vietnamese respondents and the perceived CSR dimensions, covering five aspects of responsibilities of firms that were substantive to them.

### 2.3.1. Consumer perceptions of CSR

Below, we highlight the general consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam, partly influenced by the philosophy of Buddhism; their attitudes toward (ir)responsible firms; and the most considerable concern of consumers when referring firm responsibilities in food sector: product quality.

➤ **General perception of CSR and the influence of Buddhist philosophy**

CSR is not a term inherently existing in daily using vocabularies of majority of the Vietnamese, which is consistent to previous studies in both occidental and oriental countries (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, Ramasamy and Yeung 2009, Hartmann et al. 2013). It is usually labelled as academic or business term or considered a new concept (Ramasamy and Yeung 2009). However, the in-depth interviews revealed that Vietnamese consumers are familiar with some equivalent phrases such as *'làm ăn có tâm'* (heart-centered business), *'đạo đức trong kinh doanh'* (ethical in doing business), or *'doanh nghiệp làm lợi cho cộng đồng'* (firms doing good for community) which have been naturally and inherently corresponding with ethical values of Buddhism in East Asian societies (Hill 2007, Kim and Moon 2015).

Dominating the daily lives of Vietnamese people, the *'law of cause and effect'* in Buddhism, or *'consequence of karma'*, is broadly understood that the totality of all good/bad actions of a person would lead to the consequences that person would have to face in the future. Besides, each individual is expected to take responsibility for the ethical judgements of the society. Not separated from daily life, these philosophies also influenced on the conceptualization of ethics in doing business (Zsolnai 2011, Kim and Moon 2015). It therefore influences on how consumers foster responsible firms and refuse irresponsible firms, as indicated by two respondents:

*"If they sell food with bad quality for their profits, I feel they are not ethical and will bear the consequences of karma."* (CON15\_Phuong)

*"Heart-centered firms are so important. I am easy to skip small mistakes for those who are such kind of firms. For example, a vegetarian restaurant who is doing philanthropy. Their way of serving may be not perfect [...] But I came anyway. They lived in spirit of Buddhism, making food with all their heart [...] So I accept their limitation and keep eating there even though it is quite far."* (CON03\_Duyen)

Generally, good behaviors of firms are appreciated regardless of firm motivations, as mentioned by a respondent:

*“Personally, I think it is 50-50. Doing such activities [community activities]<sup>7</sup> brings firms with a win-win situation in which the firms earn better image while they are actually advertising[..] Through such manners, they pay back the values to local areas.” (CON01\_Duong)*

➤ **Consumer attitudes toward CSR**

As reported in the annually global surveys by Gallup International (2017, 2018), Vietnamese people are generally considered optimists in their daily lives. However, in food sector, consumer attitudes appear to be more negative toward issues related to irresponsible firms, in which extremely negative attitudes are expressed tremendously through verbatims:

*“I was so surprised and wondered how they [the irresponsible firms] could be so cruel. Food products are what we eat directly [...] their activities were so harmful for society. They are unethical!” (CON15\_Phuong)*

This tendency is consistent with the findings in previous studies suggesting that Vietnamese consumers hold a more sensitive mindset toward CSR in terms of negative bias (Palihawadana et al. 2016, Vo et al. 2018). It is reasonable that in recent years, many issues related to unethical firms in food sector induced consumers to lose their confidence toward the industry (Figuié and Moustier 2009, Vo et al. 2018). In comparing to the study of Mohr et al. (2001), this propensity of Vietnamese consumers is contrasted with US consumers who lean more on positive attitude and almost expressed no extreme negative attitude toward CSR-related matters.

➤ **Product quality: the most considerable concern of Vietnamese consumers**

More than price, the issue of product quality and food safety is put in the spotlight of Vietnamese consumers' concerns. For western markets, this issue is considered quite important among other CSR aspects (Ursin et al. 2016). However, in the context of oriental

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<sup>7</sup> All the words in square brackets were added by the authors to indicate the implication of the respondents. See complete transcripts in Appendices.

countries like China (e.g., Kong, 2012) and Vietnam (e.g., H. Vo and Arato, 2019), firm responsibilities related to food safety (or quality of food) are much more critical and have become a dominant issue that concerns consumers. This matter is strongly confirmed through our qualitative study.

### **Consumer evaluations of product quality**

When asked about social responsibilities of firms, many consumers respond unhesitatingly either the associations to products (e.g., quality, price, suitability) or the way the firms behave in cases of incidents. In the last decade, Vietnamese consumers are more sensitive to the excessive usage of pesticide and chemicals as well as the unsafe process of manufacturing in food industry. There have been so many cases of foodborne illnesses due to unqualified food products (Figuié and Moustier 2009, Mergenthaler et al. 2009). A respondent mentioned the issues by reflecting her experience with an unqualified coffee product:

*“Give me a cup of roasted coffee and the one consisting roasted corn powder, I cannot recognize which one is proper coffee. Then how can I raise my voice? But when I know it [the fake ingredients] thoroughly by my own eyes, I absolutely get angry.” (CON02\_Uyen)*

Through verbatims, almost all respondents mentioned the so-called “clean food” (*thực phẩm sạch*). The meaning behind the word “clean” is not related to “clean eating” (i.e., an eating diet in healthy way) but literally was to indicate “safe, qualified, and proper” food products. Some mentioned the negative words such as “dirty food” (*thực phẩm bẩn*) or “contaminated food” to express the contrary meanings. “Clean food” is essential to consumers, and they expect that the products available on the food markets should meet the basic standards of safety, whether applied to organic food or conventional ones. Besides, brand name is perceived as a guarantee for quality and credibility. This insight is consistent with a previous study in food sector, implying that brand is considered as a good sign of quality in consumer minds (Vranešević and Stančec 2003).

*“In Vietnam now, the most concern is quality and cleanness of food. I don’t know how to describe it, but ‘clean’ means that the companies don’t use bad ingredients, the components causing cancer, to name but a few. We got cancer*

*and other diseases mainly due to the food that we consumed on markets [...] The unqualified food used for long time would cause bad consequences for our health. Then I realize that I really care about clean food. I am afraid of no branded products. And food with brand are not surely clean, but at least they are better.” (CON08\_Tan)*

### **The role of word of mouth and trust**

Most of the respondents expect firms to be responsible in providing quality verifications assessed by authorized agencies. In Vietnam, low and middle-class people own less capacity to comprehend scientific explanations regarding to quality control, making them unable to judge the quality by themselves. This is a dilemma, however, that when asked, consumers mostly hesitate to trust public agencies either, as mentioned by a respondent:

*“In Vietnam, consumers automatically comprehend the background of food industry. The management of quality is confused. There's not any confirmation by the relevant authorities for you to feel safe. [...] I do not trust them. It is problematic because at that time we have to play the role of both consumer and quality examiner without scientific background but the feeling of safeness. Therefore, in Vietnam it is inevitable to choose a product giving you the feeling of reliability.” (CON01\_Duong)*

In this case, when the information is confused, consumers are inclined to base on word of mouth transmitted within their network of friends, family members or acquaintances rather than the information diffused by firms themselves or by traditional media. There is even the tendency of purchasing through social media such as Zalo<sup>8</sup> or Facebook, which gives them the feelings of confidence and familiarity, as expressed by the respondents below:

*“On social media or even through word of mouth, if I see that Ms. X or Ms. B produce very good fish sauce, based on no verification but the feeling of trust, I will possibly buy it. It seems that we try to seek for credibility from somewhere*

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<sup>8</sup> Vietnamese social media

*else because the firms already drop their credit. We have no choice but find small firms that they can trust. My friends trust, so do I.” (CON01\_Duong)*

*“My family chooses to buy food at familiar providers because we think that these sources of vegetable, meat and fish may be safe and clean rather than other places we don’t know.” (CON05\_Phuong Anh)*

Besides, witnessing many firms performing irresponsibly in recent years gradually pushes consumers to the point that they might not trust firms either. However, some informants indicated that they chose to trust on the firms engaging in CSR activities as they have no better choices. A respondent expressed that,

*“It is really a hard step for the firms who chose that irresponsible directions. They play with the credibility of consumers [...]. It is difficult work to build a belief that they are providing safe, clean products. At the moment, you can confirm those products are qualified to be called 'clean'. After a while, there would be some evidences showing the opposite. As a result, the fragile belief among us is collapsed [...]. However, a failed pioneer is still better than nothing. So, the path is challenging, but if there are firms going that way, I will bet again.” (CON11\_Thoa)*

### ***The willingness for higher price***

To all respondents, talking about food is talking about health. Even though price is inherently an important factor in buying decision process, higher price is somehow acceptable, supposing that higher price is a sign to indicate higher quality. This insight is in line with the argument of Loussaïef et al. (2014) that consumers in food sector accept that CSR-related products are corresponding to higher price. Besides, the crisis of credibility in the market and the overspill of unsafe food are among the reasons for this acceptance in Vietnam. Many consumers indicate that they try to buy even if the price is over their affordability, especially when buying for their children. Others indicate that the price should not be too high. When asked, several informants give a clue that “too high price” is equal to 10 times of the conventional prices. Others expect that product price should be equivalent to product value and accessible to the majority with acceptable level of quality.



*“Regarding to food, I do not judge. It is an essential product category. I will base on price to buy. Usually, I prefer those at higher price. Yes, they are expensive, but I can handle to pay. I look on price because in the Vietnamese market, there is not much verification to make sure of the quality. So, the price is the most accessible sign.” (CON04\_Luu)*

### **The adoption of organic products**

It is similar to the tendency in the US where consumers partially switch to organic products because of the anxiety over the influence of food industry on the environment (Maloni and Brown 2006). A part of Vietnamese consumers, due to the health concerns resulting from food manufacturing process, gradually pay more attention to organic food through increasing the proportion of organic food to their weekly purchases. The other parts, especially in downtown, begin to grow vegetables themselves for their family usage as a temporary solution, facing the too high price of organic products on the market. The reason is explained that many Vietnamese people are familiar with vegetable cultivation because of their families' occupations, which is a unique trait of an agricultural country like Vietnam. The other reason is that they did not trust the products on the market to be properly organic. Through verbatims, all of the respondents reveal that they either grow vegetables themselves or have at least a friend/family member cultivating vegetables.

*“I choose organic products to make sure that what I am eating contains no chemicals, no pesticides, no genetic modification, and no harm for my body. Especially vegetable, fruits, eggs, milk, cooking oil, soya, and canned corn, I buy in supermarket for the feeling of credibility. I definitely choose the product without genetic modification. I'm scared of genetically modified products. But I buy meats and fish raised in normal process because the bio products are too expensive. Buying foods in Vietnam is just like tossing the dice.” (CON02\_Uyen)*

*“Now, I just eat the lettuce I grow by my own. I don't dare to eat those bought from markets. I am really scared.” (CON19\_Dung)*

In a nutshell, a firm showing responsibilities in terms of product quality would be highly appreciated by consumers, even though it has not fulfilled the responsibilities on the other aspects such as the ones for society, environment, or their employees.

### 2.3.2. Perceived dimensions of CSR

The perception of Vietnamese consumers encompasses the responsibilities of firms on five aspects: responsibilities to consumers, to environment, to society, to employees, and to firm itself.

#### ➤ **Responsibilities to consumers**

When asked, most of the respondents consider “responsibility to consumers” as the most importance dimension of CSR. All of the respondents mention this aspect directly or indirectly.

#### ***Information transparency is essential***

Firstly, Vietnamese consumers suppose that transparency is essential, in line with consumer expectation in an empirical study in Norway (Ursin et al. 2016). Specifically, Vietnamese consumers expect firms to be transparent in quality, labelling, product information or manufacturing process. In other words, firms should sell exactly as what they say and should not exaggerate the information. Cheating is not tolerated. Some respondents indicated that in other sectors, a mistake might be forgiven, but in food sector, it is definitely not, suggesting that Vietnamese consumers are more sensitive in food sector than others, as expressed by an informant:

*“Now alternative options are available. In other sectors, consumers may skip the mistakes, but it doesn't work like that in food sector. It is difficult to forgive when we have to pay for harmful products.” (CON21\_Trang)*

Additionally, firms are supposed to be transparent in product origin and ingredients. In our study, it is noticeable that Vietnamese consumers preferred imported products of western countries and of some Asia countries (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Thailand). However, there are a consensus that Chinese products are hardly considered to have good quality. There is an existing prejudice toward any Chinese-text products, implying that the products from Chinese related territories including Taiwan and Hong Kong are treated as Chinese origin. This mindset could be explained by *country-of-origin effects* (Schooler 1965, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999) that consumers are usually subject to nationality's affection bias when encountering a certain product. In other words, they might be influenced by the image of

the origin country, which in turn forms the perceived product quality and other associations. Given the choice between Vietnamese products and Chinese ones, consumers prefer the domestic ones, as mentioned by a respondent:

*"Those who are affordable are willing to buy products by foreign firms [...]. First choice comes with products from US, EU, or Australia. And the products come from Thailand, a country close to Vietnam, I will choose them even though the price can be a little bit higher." (CON08\_Tan)*

*"In Vietnam, what we concern is to avoid buying Chinese products regardless of their competitive price." (CON03\_Xuan)*

Moreover, some consumers insist that the information introduced in the food advertisements must be ethical and scientifically appropriate. They indicate that consumers are not supposed to master scientific knowledge. Besides, they believe that firms in food sector might have great impacts on changing eating habits of consumers. With this in mind, they suppose that firms must take the responsibilities of showing proper product information, both good and bad side of them, especially for products of fastfood and soft drinks, which are controversial and have negative influence on health. In the long term, firms are supposed to provide products that are safe and good for health.

However, while stakeholders usually demand more CSR disclosure of firms (Blumenthal and Bergstrom 2003), for example, consumers in food sectors of France and Norway (Loussaïef et al. 2014, Ursin et al. 2016), a part of Vietnamese consumers indicate that too much information makes them confused. In case there is overwhelming information diffused by firms, through media or social media networks, consumers who are unable to judge the accuracy of information would tend to 'close their eyes' and 'cover their ears'. As a result, the overflowing volume of information, both right and wrong, might contribute little difference in their purchasing behavior. It is correspondingly with the mindset of UK consumers in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century that when giving more information of firms' CSR activities, consumers might make little changes in their purchasing decision (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000, Carrigan and Attalla 2001). This is to say, in case that information is adequate, 'no news is good news', indicating that the firms are operated responsibly (Mohr and Webb 2005). The respondents below express this insight through their sharing:

*“It is easier said than done. Nowadays, anyone can declare that his or her firm behaves responsibly. But I don’t know whether it is true or not. [...] The market is also confusing. Even though the company actually provides products with good quality, when they come to the market, consumers like me don’t know whether they are actually in good or bad quality. So, I just go with the cheap price.” (CON09\_Son)*

*“Now media are widespread. But the media talk so much about firms, and this affects housewives. If we cannot comprehend properly, we cannot choose the actually clean products.” (CON10\_Cam)*

### **Customer complaint management and feedback handling**

Equally important, Vietnamese consumers expect firms to be responsible in customer complaint management. There are many negative attitudes around the point of receiving and responding to consumer feedback. To some extent, the responses of firms in Vietnam are unreasonable and therefore make them hesitate to give feedback.

*“Perhaps, giving feedback may be complicated and consumers hesitate to do it for firms to modify their technologies. They are afraid of being imposed upon some unclear motives.” (CON11\_Thoa)*

*“I think that firm [a Vietnamese beverage firm whose product is caught with an insect inside] behaved improperly. Any product can be faulty, but the way the firm behaves is more important. [...] In this case, that firm counterclaimed against the consumer [...]” (CON15\_Phuong)*

In addition, some respondents also reveal that consumers appreciate the responsible firms who actively seek for consumer reviews and do not hesitate to listen to their feedback. The finding is in agreement with Halstead and Droge (1991) that firms’ responsible complaint treatment could bring back positive evaluations as well as repurchase intention of consumers (Halstead and Droge 1991). As a consumer says,

*“Giving feedback is also to protect our benefits. It is our favorite products, so why don't we tell them when there is any technical problem of product? I do not do it for a compensation. I never receive any compensation because I do not*

*want misleading thoughts of my purpose. In my opinion, I want them to improve their process for better quality control. And they have to show me the evidence that they have already done it.” (CON11\_Thoa)*

Furthermore, many consumers raise the issue of credibility toward public agencies who are in charge of protecting consumers. Most of the respondents indicate that consumers are not protected, that their voices are not heard, and that consumers themselves have to be active in digging the information about firms for their good sake.

*“The unqualified products overspread on the market without proper control of public agencies. That makes us angry. We pay tax but no one protects us.” (CON15\_Phuong)*

*“In Vietnam, the firms can bribe the relevant authorities, so the issues are not resolved completely.” (CON02\_Uyen)*

#### ➤ **Responsibilities to environment**

Consumers believe that a firm is considered responsible to environment only when they could balance between their economic effectiveness and the usage of natural resources. Responsibilities to environment include: investing in proper waste treatment systems; ensuring living environment of the neighborhoods where firms were locating; creating and fostering environment-friendly products; offering recycled packages and involving consumers in recycling; saving natural resources; reducing global warming by planting more trees in the neighborhoods; to name but a few. Some respondents express their opinions as follows:

*“The waste during their manufacturing process can be harmful for the environment, creating pollution. Nowadays, there is the issue of global warming as well, which is very headache for the whole world. The enterprises should be partly responsible for this.” (CON14\_Tho)*

*“They must use the recyclable materials.” (CON03\_Xuan)*

Furthermore, positive consumer responses lie in firms' creative ecological activities taking place in recent years. For example, there are supermarkets and fresh food SMEs pioneered in using banana leaves to wrap vegetable; giving fabric tea holders and fabric bags; serving

grass/rice flour/stainless steel straw; reducing plastic usage; cleaning up public spaces; etc. To them, firms are expected to contribute to a more sustainable way of consumption, not just use up all natural resources, as mentioned by the informants below:

*“Fruits and vegetable are before covered by plastic wraps now bundled by banana leaves. We can get a discount when bringing our own cups at drink shops [...] Now, tendency of purchase is environment-friendly. If those firms are unable to catch up the trend or hesitate to follow it, they hardly have support from consumers.” (CON21\_Le Trang)*

*“I also hope that food enterprises will be heart-centered and care for environment. Some may think that one single firm creates no harm. But it's yes indeed. We all stay here on earth, go nowhere, so it [the consequence] will come back to you.” (CON07\_Binh)*

➤ **Responsibilities to society**

There is a similar perceptions of Vietnamese consumers to previous studies under western perspectives, covering plentiful of activities that firms should perform, for instance, paying tax, contributing to solve social causes of the neighborhoods, or improving the living conditions of community (Dahlsrud 2008). The bigger the scope of firms are, the more their responsibilities they should take. This mindset of consumers is also consistent with previous findings that there is a corresponding between the scope of firms and the breath of CSR involvements that firms are expected to handle (Li et al. 2010).

*“A firm will be associated to many responsibilities between them and the neighborhoods where they are located [...] The more influential they are; the bigger responsibilities they should have.” (CON01\_Duong)*

In addition, firms are supposed to create the so-called *positive spillover effect* through their social responsibilities. In food sector, firms should be in charge of leveraging the longevity of Vietnamese or creating healthy eating manners among their consumers, especially the young generations, as expressed by respondents below:

*“The most important of these activities are to change the mindset of people around us in a positive way. It will create a spillover effect that make people realize their responsibilities too.” (CON21\_Le Trang)*

*“And young generation now begins to consider this issue [eating manner]. Whatever you eat impact you for the whole lifetime.” (CON07\_Binh)*

*“Social responsibilities are not just philanthropic activities but also to enhance community health [...] and to improve the longevity of people. It is the kind of social responsibilities that food and beverage firms should take.” (CON08\_Tan)*

➤ **Responsibilities to employees**

To consumers, firms are supposed to express their kindness toward their employees as well. This aspect of responsibilities is defined as ensuring proper welfares, keeping a fair treatment among employees, creating good working environment, and so on. Needless to say, respondents believe that when firms fulfill these responsibilities, they are able to attract employees with higher working performance; to get higher staying time among their staffs; and to earn loyalty and commitment of consumers as well.

*“Carrying out such activities for employees brings value to firms. When they connect their staffs together, the stay time of employees may increase.” (CON11\_Thoa)*

*“Firms need to take care of their employees and treat them well in order that their staffs will be loyal to them and work more efficiently [...] Sometimes, I keep working at a firm even though the salary is not such high because I feel respected and comfortable.” (CON04\_Luu)*

Nevertheless, many respondents concern that not all firms in Vietnam care enough for these responsibilities. It is so popular that firms pay low salaries, give quite minimum welfares while requiring their employees to work more hours than written on contract.

*“The first importance is fairly income for their employees. Second, the firms should follow the Labor Law adequately [...] I hope that the payment for workers will be higher in the near future.” (CON18\_Viet-Anh)*

Notably, in the qualitative study about CSR under multi-stakeholders' perspective in Vietnam, the authors indicate that Vietnamese consumers barely consider "responsibilities to employees" among social responsibilities of firms (Vo and Arato 2019). Different from the findings above, in our study conducted after a few years, we found that "responsibilities to employees" plays a more important role when all informants mention it directly in their expressions when referring their expectations toward firms. Needless to say, in consumer mindsets, "responsibilities to employees" gradually become an essential dimension in their own CSR understandings.

➤ ***Responsibilities to the firm itself***

In contrast to some other Asian business cultures (e.g., in South Korea and the Philippines) where economic-related notions are not considered as a dimension of CSR (Lorenzo-Molo 2009, Kim and Moon 2015), Vietnamese consumers generally appreciate the responsibilities to firms itself, reflecting in the engagement in CSR even for profit purposes.

***Making profit paves the way for further social contributions***

Generally, consumers expect the firms to have CSR-related activities written in firm strategies. Because to them, there is nothing wrong when a firm firstly focus on making profits, which ensures the long-term operative capacity of the firm itself. This is consistent with the suggestions of Visser (2008) that in developing countries, economic achievement is among top priorities, paving the way for further social contributions of the firms. Many respondents believe that it would not make sense for a firm who focuses too much on philanthropy or other social activities beyond their capacities, then have to drop the responsibilities to itself and go bankruptcy.

*"We must think of society in whatever we do, right? But even me, if I open a business, I will hesitate to think for society at the first hand. I just think of my revenue firstly. That's why we cannot impose those responsibilities for enterprises while there's no requirement in terms of legislation [...]. If I am the business owner, I will not be sure that I am socially responsible (CON02\_Uyen)*

*"In my opinions, a firm without any philanthropic activities is ok. Because they still create jobs and pay attention to produce qualified products. So... fair enough." (CON18\_Viet-Anh)*



***Making profit together with undertaking social responsibilities***

Although to most of consumers, it is reasonable for a firm to put profit-earning in their higher priority, but it does not mean that making profit could occupy the whole proportion of firm responsibilities. Consumers are tolerant for the firms in the beginning stages of operations or during economic crisis, when they are unable to pay attention to social responsibilities. However, when they operate stably for a while, they are supposed to care for other social responsibilities namely toward environment, society, and employees.

*“If they do for their own profit while keeping good quality of product, I don’t judge them badly. But if they can balance both sides, revenues and community’s benefit, I appreciate that.” (CON09\_Son)*

Furthermore, many of respondents imply that socially responsible behaviors of firms help to create the sense of affection from the public. Put in another way, performing responsible activities for the society is also serving the firm itself. With this in mind, the firms could build better image in the eye of consumers. Some consumers explain that deep inside human exists the kindness, and therefore ethical activities are encouraged with any cost. Simply put, consumers would pay good attention to socially responsible firms, which might result in purchase preferences for those firms in the near future, as expressed in the verbatims below:

*“Even rich firms are not compulsory to do philanthropy. Bu if they can balance over this, they can create great image and get affection from people.” (CON17\_Duyen)*

In a nutshell, Vietnamese consumers appreciate five dimensions of CSR, covering the responsibilities (1) to consumers; (2) to environment; (3) to society; (4) to employees; and (5) to firm itself. These insights under consumer viewpoints are close to the Quadruple Bottom Line model under the viewpoint of enterprises, developed from Triple Bottom Line (Elkington 1998), in that the economic aspect is considered as equally important in four main pillars of firm responsibilities (i.e., social, environmental, economic, and future-oriented domains) (Elkington 2013). To be noticed in Quadruple Bottom Line model, the responsibilities to employees are arranged under the umbrella of social domain. For an emerging country

context like Vietnam, when asked about the order of those responsibilities, most of the consumers indicate that the most important aspect is responsibilities to consumers. However, depending on the stages of operation, the order might be modified to be reasonable to firm capacity in fulfilling these responsibilities while maintaining very well in their main operations. Simply put, Vietnamese consumers impose no fixed order for those five dimensions. The responsibilities should be undertaken corresponding to firm strategies and the consumer requirements.

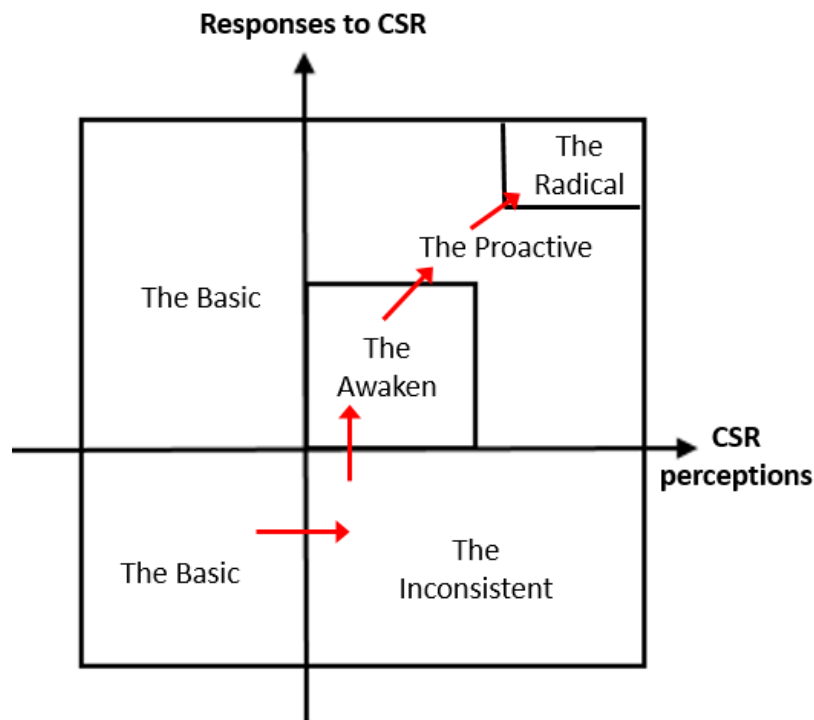
## **2.4. DISCUSSION**

Based on the consumers' insights toward CSR, we proposed a consumer typology reflecting their perceptions and past reactions toward CSR in the context of an oriental market. Besides, we clarified how different this typology was when comparing to the ones under western perspectives in the UK and the US.

### **2.4.1. 5-Persona: Consumer typology in the oriental context**

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), behavioral intentions and then actual behaviors of a person arise from his/her systems of beliefs, evaluations, motivations, attitudes, and subjective norms (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, Sheppard et al. 1988, Davis et al. 1989). To put in this light, the perceptions of consumers in oriental countries would be aligned with the beliefs and social norms inherently existing in the society, which in turn might form their perceptions different from those in occidental countries. Based on the main themes revealing consumer insights of CSR in the oriental context, we proposed the typology of consumers that reflects their perceptions of CSR as well as their responses toward socially (ir)responsible firms. Through this typology, we suggest that a certain behavior/response of a consumer (e.g., product evaluations, purchase decisions, recommendation intentions, favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward firms) might be corresponding to his/her perceptions toward CSR. Simply put, the categorization is illustrated by two main axes: *CSR perceptions* and *CSR responses* as shown in the figure below. Based on these two main properties, we suggest a 5-Persona categorization including *The Basic*, *The Inconsistent*, *The Awaken*, *The Proactive*, and *The Radical*. Their characteristics are described as follows.

Figure 2.8. 5-Persona categorization in the oriental context



➤ **Type 1 - The Basic**

On the illustrating graph above, *The Basic* accounts for two quarters on the left, suggesting that they have the common stand in which CSR probably is not important to their values. In other words, they neither appreciate CSR-related involvements of firms nor have steady CSR obligations themselves to guide their decisions. Many of them possibly have low-income, as a respondent's viewpoint:

*"In Vietnam, the majority of people are not rich. How could they set their mind for that? Firms with inexpensive products are welcomed." (CON03\_Xuan)*

Their behaviors might probably reflect the naïve understanding of CSR, and in case they express some supports toward socially responsible firms (e.g., buying green products), the reasons behind might be related to the basic factors (e.g., good price, promotions, product quality, special occasions, or convenient buying locations). Some informants do not hesitate to share that they bought some products just because of good price; and if the price and the quality are both good, they would barely care if the firms employ child labors or is involved in experiments with animals, as revealed by a respondent:

*“Between two packages of vegetables, I choose the fresher and more nice-looking. If they look the same, and the price is equal, I choose the one from more renown firm. [...] I am practical, so I choose lower-price package”.*  
(CON01\_Duong)

Furthermore, they may never notice or think about the concept of CSR, mostly would not likely care much about the environmental or social issues. Many of them might believe that these big issues should be in charge by others and are not their main concerns. The respondents below share this stand through their verbatims:

*“When I told my mother to quit using plastics because they are harmful for environment, she said, “Don’t use plastic bags, then use what? [...] Unless all people in the world stop, I keep using them””* (CON07\_Binh)

*“That issue, I don’t know... I am not a woman with social works. I saw the companies on TV, but I don’t really care. It’s not my interest so I don’t care what they are doing.”* (CON19\_Dung)

Last but not least, they barely perceive or admit that social responsibilities should be in charge by firms. In other words, to them, firm responsibilities are mainly profit-making, not solving social causes or environmental issues.

*“Actually, the nature of business is profit-earning regardless of how the business operations.”* (CON21\_Le Trang)

### ➤ **Type 2 - The Inconsistent**

This type of consumers is illustrated by the lower right quarter of the graph above. Different from *The Basic*, consumers in this category might form some certain extent of CSR perceptions and have their own definitions of how ethical and responsible a firm should be. However, they would not respond as if these are their own values. By the same token, their behaviors are not likely straightforward as the words they say, and clearly incompatible with their perceptions. The contradiction between their behaviors and perceptions forms their inconsistency among them.

*“We may want to contribute to society through our purchases, but spending a penny should be considerable [...] There are firms treating their employees really*

*well, and their products reach the good social standard. However, the way we spend money is mainly based on our affordability, not on the things above.”*  
(CON01\_Duong)

Consumers in this category have some supports for firms with CSR activities but passively. Those activities of firms are mostly in promotion programs, and the price must be competitive. When offered other products involving no CSR activities but having better prices, they do not hesitate to switch brands. Some believe that “wise consumption” is likely to be practical and put themselves on the top priority. Moreover, they seemly believe that making profit should be the main role of a firm.

*“The final goals of firms are profits. If they are responsible for environment, there are costs that they should be affordable.”* (CON03\_Xuan)

*“Wise consumers seem to choose what is best for themselves. They focus on themselves rather than others.”* (CON21\_Le Trang)

Last but not least, as explained by the Theory of Cognitive dissonance, people are not always consistent in their perceptions but are likely to be exposed to contradictions in their cognition (Festinger 1968). With this in mind, even when expressing favorable attitude toward CSR, as many consumers in this category might be inconsistent between what they say and what they actually would do.

### ➤ **Type 3 - The Awaken**

This type of consumers is illustrated by the square on the center of the figure above, suggesting from this point forward, they are probably more compatible between perceptions and responses to (ir)responsible firms. Consumers in this category may begin to support for firms engaging CSR activities even though they have not done it before. They can start to appreciate the goodwill of firms involving in CSR, no matter what their purposes are. To them, doing something for society may be better than doing nothing, as shared by respondents below:

*“First of all, they do because their goodwill. They want to bring something good for community.”* (CON07\_Binh)

*“For the firms who engage in social and environmental activities, I will buy for them”. (CON17\_Duyen)*

To be noticed, CSR values probably become an important factor for the decision-making process of *The Awaken*. Before purchasing, they may review the CSR practices of firms (e.g., whether they employ animal testing, use eco-friendly materials, or explore children labors; whether firms have community activities in the neighborhoods).

*“For example, skin care, now I just buy from Innisfree as they collect old containers for recycling and do not use nylon bags.” (CON17\_Duyen)*

Moreover, they may begin appreciate sustainable initiatives and be conscious in terms of sustainability. Also, they can actively follow those movements. They are possibly willing to pay higher price for responsible products as well. The two informants express their insights as follow:

*“As a consumer, I now prefer socially responsible firms as they contribute to society or help people out. I am therefore willing to buy their products. They might be at a little higher price, but it's still applicable for me because I can contribute indirectly to society.” (CON11\_Thoa)*

*“I heard lately that Starbucks supported to 'Zero Waste Saigon' in plastic straw issues [...] For a long time, they serve consumers with so many plastic cups, then those cups were thrown out to environment. Wastes will not be decomposed in the near future but take really long time.” (CON07\_Binh)*

➤ **Type 4 - The Proactive - Socially responsible consumer**

More profound than *The Awaken*, *The Proactive* owns thorough perceptions toward CSR and the roles of firms. They believe that even making profit is the firm's main role, firms are firstly the organizations within sociality, earning benefits from their stakeholders. So, doing good for society should be an important role of firms (e.g., bring more jobs for community; engage in social causes; be pioneer in social changes). To them, these responsibilities must be written in firm strategies.

*“Being responsible to community is very easy to say. We need to see how firms do, whether that responsibility has a place in their business strategy, and whether their strategy leans toward sustainability or not.” (CON21\_Le Trang)*

Besides, they are likely to raise the issues of sustainable development and require the permanence of CSR activities. Thus, they may lead or actively follow the sustainable movements beyond the CSR initiatives of firms. Many of them probably have a great voice in their networks, as revealed by a respondent:

*“We must be ethical consumers first. If you want to make this society better and want to enjoy fresh air, firstly you have to be 'clean' within yourself. If everyone doesn't care these issues and ask for someone else to take the burden, the issues are not solved.” (CON17\_Duyen)*

Counterbalance to socially responsible firms, The Proactive could be socially responsible consumers which are very close to the concept “ethical minded consumers” who use their purchasing power as a mean to express their concerns about society (Webster Jr 1975, Francois-Lecompte and Roberts 2006, Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher 2016). Differently to the previous types, The Proactive may not hesitate to question a firm who do not fulfill the environmental and social responsibilities, generally with a harmonized fashion. Moreover, they may be willing to challenge the firms performing CSR activities with suspicious motivations (e.g., greenwash):

*“If firms' operation can bring benefits permanently for community, for their consumers, and for themselves, that's ok. That's truly heart-centered. But if they just claim to be 'heart-centered' through some scattered activities, it just fame-earning. It is not enough.” (CON21\_Le Trang)*

*“It's very easy to recognize a firm doing marketing for their image. Just have a quick look on their advertising campaign, whether they are just beating the drum or asking people to join them in their responsible initiatives.” (CON11\_Thoa)*

➤ **Type 5 - The Radical**

It has been several decades since radical behaviorism was proposed for further research, but not until the beginning of this century, the issues attract much debates from scholars (Foxall 1987, Oliveira-Castro 2021). In this typology, *The Radical* is identified as those who understands about CSR very well, but different from *The Awaken* and *The Proactive*, they mostly have extreme behaviors corresponding to extreme perceptions toward CSR. They may not only use their buying power as a weapon to challenge firms but also urge and even force others to behave the way they think. However, when defending too much for the causes, they can turn out to be radicalized or even unethical toward the firms that they perceived to be irresponsible, as the responses of the informants below:

*“The only way is to boycott. We cannot win the case by suing them to the court. They are big, so they can make it disappear. [...] I no more drink any bottle of their product. And if I see my friends drinking it, I would stop them.”*  
(CON13\_Truong)

*“The complaints may not be heard in the meantime, so the first reaction will be to boycott and call people around to do the same thing.”* (CON01\_Duong)

*“It's me who usually write review through Foody application. I wrote negative reviews for some firms [...] If firms do something wrong, the reviewing tool will push them into bankruptcy.”* (CON17\_Duyen)

Furthermore, *The Radical* may be more negatively sensitive to CSR-related issues, without holding a balance mindset between firm benefits and firm social responsibilities. They therefore are likely to confront with irresponsible firms or easy to judge the motivations of firms behind their CSR involvements (e.g., activities for marketing purpose and sale boosting). This insight is taken seriously, as expressed by the respondents below:

*“In an era that money is a priority, such good behaviors are for marketing purpose. I think when doing so, they aim firstly at profit.”* (CON02\_Uyen)

*“Somehow it is for the PR objectives and polishing their image rather than it is something with goodwill.”* (CON03\_Xuan)



In a nutshell, The Basic, The Inconsistent, The Awaken, the Proactive, and The Radical form the typology of consumers reflecting their CSR perceptions in the oriental context.

#### **2.4.2. Comparing 5-Persona typology to the previous ones**

Comparing to two consumer typologies under studies describing consumers in the UK (Carrigan and Attalla 2001) and in the US (Mohr et al., 2001), our typology of consumers suggests some differences.

##### ➤ ***The categorization of Carrigan and Attalla (2001)***

Based solely ethical aspect of CSR, Carrigan and Attalla (2001) classified consumers into four groups accordingly to their “ethical awareness” and “ethical purchase intention” as well as the ethical information claimed by firms. Meanwhile, our typology is extended toward consumers’ CSR perceptions and responses in the oriental context. Besides, we address broader issues in which ethical domain is placed next to others (e.g., philanthropic, environmental, economic domain).

The figure below illustrates the four types by Carrigan and Attalla (2001): (1) *caring and ethical* (those who highly aware of ethical issues and response positively to ethical firms), (2) *confused and uncertain* (those who would like to shop for ethical firms but not stable), (3) *cynical and disinterested* (those who purchase based on price, quality, and ethical marketing), and (4) *oblivious* (those do not know much about ethical issues and may or may not like to purchase ethically). However, the characteristics of four types in the typology are seemly vague and not distinct to each other, especially between type 2 (confused and uncertain) and type 4 (oblivious). Besides, it was noticeable that this categorization might emphasize the stability of four consumer types, making it insufficient to explain the changeable tendency in human beings’ mindsets.

Figure 2.9. Carrigan (2001)'s typology in the UK based on ethical perspective

		Ethical Awareness	
		High	Low
Ethical Purchase Intention	High	Caring and Ethical	Confused and Uncertain
	Low	Cynical and Disinterested	Oblivious

*Consumer attitudes to ethical purchasing*

➤ **The categorization of Mohr et al. (2001)**

As explained by the behavior changes model of Andreasen (1995), behaviors of people might change, and when changing, they might follow four continuous stages, starting from *precontemplator*, *contemplator*, *actioner* to *maintainer*. This model is applied to classify consumers in the study of Mohr et al. (2001) indicating that perceptions and behaviors of consumers (toward firm involvement in CSR) might follow the route of four stages above, starting from the point where they are prepared to change to the point where they would maintain the new behavior (Mohr et al. 2001, Andreasen 2002).

Figure 2.10. Mohr (2001)'s typology of consumers regarding CSR perceptions in the US



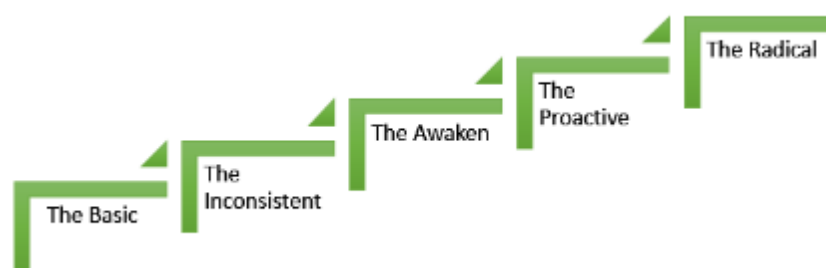
By the same token, our typology helps to describe the dynamic nature of human beings' behaviors in which they possibly move from one category to others. However, slightly different from Mohr et al. (2001)'s study, we propose that the behavioral changes would depend much in the changes of consumer perceptions. Explained under the light of theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), the behavioral changes are resulted from precedent elements such as beliefs, evaluations, motivations, attitudes, and subjective norms in the society (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, Sheppard et al. 1988, Davis et al. 1989). Thus, it could

be inferred that once the perception of consumers toward CSR remains in a certain extent, their behaviors/responses may not change. Our typology therefore suggests that, on the one hand, consumers might modify their behaviors according to their on-going changing perceptions. In this case, they might follow the stages of the evolution path from *The Basic*, *The Awaken*, *The Inconsistent* to *The Proactive* and even to *The Radical* (illustrated by the figure below and by the arrows in the figure of typology above). It is noticeable that these stages might not be separate but can be overlapped with each other. Besides, *The Awaken* is the important stage, marking the critical point for a consumer to move from the lower stages to the higher stages of the evolution path, as revealed by a consumer:

*“Before, my consuming habit was different. Now, beside the demand of which products necessary for me, I consider the firms producing the products, whether they are ethical and socially responsible.” (CON17\_Duyen)*

Through this study, we agree with Mohr et al. (2001) and Andreasen (1995) that consumers in higher stages tend to put CSR as a priority and that they believe in their influencing power on CSR policies of firms more than the previous stages. When stepping up to a new stage, consumers base more on the nature of CSR engagement of firms to decide whether they would buy or support for responsible firms. In other words, CSR gradually become among the main factors that urge them to buy or not to buy a product as well as lead to their call-for-action behaviors. At the stage of *The Proactive*, consumer perceptions and behaviors would be closely to “socially responsible consumer behavior” or “ethically minded consumer behavior” (Francois-Lecompte and Roberts 2006, Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher 2016). More precisely, they may switch brands if finding out the firms behave unethically or be willing to pay a little more for the socially responsible firms.

Figure 2.11. Evolution path of consumers when changing their perceptions of CSR



On the other hand, a part of consumers possibly would stay permanently in their stage without changing of behaviors, corresponding to their stable perceptions of CSR. With this reality in mind, many consumers probably keep being *The Basic*, and in other case, many of them definitely would not become *The Radical*. In other words, the changes in quality must be accumulated enough (i.e., the perceptions of CSR) so that it would lead to the change in quality (i.e., changing behaviors), as the famous assertion of Hegel (Carneiro 2000). This insight is illustrated by a respondent's sharing, whose buying behavior would always be based on her affordability:

*"When buying, I give a high priority to positions that close to my house. [...] I usually try new selling points to compare price and the quality of products. Of course, I go with those having the better price corresponding with quality."*  
(CON05\_Phuong Anh)

### 2.4.3. Attitude-behavior gap

Last but not least, the discrepancy between attitudes and behaviors must be taken into account.

When asked directly, many consumers say that CSR matters to them and that they care to social causes. However, there is a gap between attitudes and behaviors of consumers toward CSR initiatives. In other words, they probably do not act like they say. Some consumers more or less admit this discrepancy. For others, the attitude – behavior gap is revealed through the contradictions of their verbatims:

*"A firm should be associated to many responsibilities: within their firms, between them and their consumers, between them and their business partners, between them and the neighborhoods where they are located [...] When buying something, I do not care the operation behind [...] To me, the quality is more important than what the firm had done for society or whether it did not pay taxes. In fact, if those behaviors do not impact on product quality, I do not care and still buy it."* (CON01\_Duong)

Previous empirical studies revealed that consumers would response differently and heterogeneously to CSR initiatives (Brown and Dacin 1997, Bhattacharya and Sen 2004). Even when they regard CSR as an important issue, the influence of CSR on their behaviors might

vary in separated contexts (Auger and Devinney 2007). That is to say, both consumers with the same attitudes toward CSR would possibly response differently in terms of intentions and more differently in further behaviors.

Many respondents in our study reveal their characteristics quite corresponding to *The Basic*. Notably, the attitude-behavior gap is barely found among the consumers in this stage, and if this is true, it would be paralleled with findings of Boulstridge and Carrigan's (2000) study, indicating that there is no attitude-behavior gap among respondents who do not care about the responsible activities of firms and do not use CSR as a factor in their purchasing consideration (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000). However, through this qualitative study, it might be insufficient to confirm in which stages, consumers might disclose more their attitude-behavior gap. We therefore suggest further research on this issues.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

The chapter gave answers for **research question n<sup>o</sup>1**: *How is CSR perceived by consumers in Vietnam?* To go further, we identified the dimensions of CSR considered as important by Vietnamese consumers. Finally, we built a typology of consumers regarding their perceptions about CSR and their own behaviors.

Our findings highlighted the general perceptions of consumers toward CSR in Vietnam, a recently emerging market in Eastern Asia where the cultural context strongly influences how people perceive the importance of CSR, such as *the law of cause and effect* or *consequence of karma* in Buddhism. A part of the interviews reflects consumer insights in food sector where the issues are relevant to their daily lives and therefore are broadly concerned. Notably, **product quality** is always in the spotlight of consumers' attentions, related to: *product quality evaluations, the role of word-of-mouth, trust, the willingness for higher price, the adoption of organic products*. Together with environmental issues and others, consumers come up with the **negative sensitivity** in their attitudes toward firm engagement in CSR.

Through this exploratory study, we found five dimensions of CSR that are important to consumers in the oriental context: **responsibilities to consumers** (related to information transparency, customer complaint management, and feedback handling), **to environment, to society, to employees, and to firm itself** (related to the perceptions of making profit). Based on consumer insights of CSR, we then proposed **5-Persona categorization**, regarding their perceptions toward CSR and their corresponding behaviors in the past, consisting of **The Basic, The Inconsistent, The Awaken, the Proactive, and The Radical**. Compared to the typologies proposed by Mohr et al. (2001) and Carrigan and Attalla (2001), our typology goes further when highlighting the dynamic nature in consumer perceptions and behaviors and toward CSR.

Lastly, the attitude-behavior gap of consumers is generally discussed, depicting the circumstances when consumers react to the firms engaging in CSR differently to their attitudes. Later, we would conduct two experiments in two different sectors to examine how people really act corresponding to their perception of CSR, given a specific situation related to a firm and a product type for daily usage.

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## **PART II | HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR**



## PART I – WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT

### Chapter 1 | CSR and consumers

- 1.1. The concept of CSR
- 1.2. How does CSR matter to consumers?
- 1.3. The oriental cultural aspects & their impacts on CSR conceptualization
- 1.4. Qualitative study: How consumers perceived CSR in Vietnam

### Chapter 2 | Exploratory study: consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam

- 2.1. Research design
- 2.2. Data collection and coding procedure
- 2.3. Findings
- 2.4. Discussion

## PART II – HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR

### Chapter 3 | Consumer evaluations and reactions to CSR

- 3.1. Consumer evaluations of the firm and its products
- 3.2. Consumer responses to CSR: attitude and behavioral intentions
- 3.3. Consumption habituation
- 3.4. How consumers perceived firm CSR motives
- 3.5. Skepticism toward firm engagement in CSR
- 3.6. Hypotheses development



### Chapter 4 | Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector

- 4.1. Research design: scenario-based experiment
- 4.2. Data collection
- 4.3. Data analysis
- 4.4. Discussion

## PART III – BENEATH THE SURFACE: FACTORS EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR

### Chapter 5 | Factors explaining consumer responses to CSR

- 5.1. Mindfulness and green consumption
- 5.2. Voluntary simplicity leads to conscious consumption
- 5.3. Connectedness to nature and sustainable values
- 5.4. Internal locus-of-control and the values of sustainability
- 5.5. Death anxiety: its effects on voluntary simplicity and mindfulness
- 5.6. Consumer sustainable behaviors reflecting their green values

### Chapter 6 | Replicated experiment: consumer responses in skincare & cosmetics sector

- 6.1. Research design
- 6.2. Data collection
- 6.3. Data analysis
- 6.4. Discussion

### Chapter 7 | Explaining consumer responses through structural equation modeling

- 7.1. Model specification
- 7.2. Model evaluation
- 7.3. Discussion

### Chapter 8 | General discussion

### Conclusion: contributions, limitations, and further research

## CHAPTER 3 | LITERATURE REVIEW ON CONSUMER EVALUATIONS AND REACTIONS TO CSR

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As already presented in Chapter 1, the fact that consumers perceive firm engagement in CSR through their own lens forms their evaluations of the firms and their products. In this chapter, we would review other factors that are also involved in the evaluations of consumers through literature, to better identify the role and weight of perceived firm engagement in CSR. We firstly consider the respective effect of firm involvement in CSR on perceived product quality and on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions. As such, we introduce our following hypothesis:

***H1:** When high (vs. low), firm involvement in CSR positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.*

After having reviewed consumer evaluations of the firms and their products through **country-of-origin** and firm **production process** on **perceived product quality** (section 3.1), we successively present the review on consumer responses to CSR including **attitude toward the firm, purchase intention, and recommendation intention** (section 3.2). Besides, we review the current literature related to the factors reflecting the way consumer behave – like **consumption habituation** (section 3.3) -, and their beliefs about social responsibility for firms – like **perceived firm CSR motives** (section 3.4) or **skepticism** toward firm engagement in CSR (section 3.6). Finally, the summary of the main points will be shown in the end of the chapter.

### 3.1. CONSUMER EVALUATIONS OF THE FIRM AND ITS PRODUCTS

Besides *firm engagement of CSR* that we presented in the previous part, we now review in this section the factors that could impact on consumer evaluations of the firms and their products: *country-of-origin* and *production process*. As presented, the findings of the exploratory study

(Chapter 2), product quality is one among the important issues of Vietnamese consumers, in which the origin of product and the information related to quality control are the essential signs for consumers' evaluations. Then, we address the role of *perceived product quality* in the relationships of three determinants above and consumers' responses to CSR.

### **3.1.1. Country-of-origin: domestic vs. foreign**

Country-of-origin is usually considered as an extrinsic cue for consumer evaluations when they encounter a certain firm or product. Cognitively, there is a bridging belief that the country where the firm/product is originated and the properties of the firm/product itself share the same characteristics (Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999). This psychologic phenomenon was explained as the product-country image correlation. With attention to the evaluation of products, previous studies confirmed that the country-of-origin image of product directly impacts on the perception of product quality (Schooler 1965, Erickson et al. 1984, Wang et al. 2012). Simply put, the evaluations of consumers on the same product would depend partly to country-of-origin (Schooler 1965). In turn, the perceived product quality is translated into further behavioral intentions or/and attitudes toward the firm.

However, the effect of country-of-origin is heterogeneous among different nations as well as different product categories (Bilkey and Nes 1982). As presented previously, under the influences of cultural aspects and socio-economic development, consumer perceptions on country-of-origin and their subsequent evaluations of products would vary under different cultural contexts.

In some cases, consumers may avoid the products originated from a certain country due to the problematic reputations. For example, US and UK consumers have low intention to purchase the products originated from China because they associate Chinese brands with less reliability or troubles related to health incidents (e.g., Chinese toys (Kabadayi and Lerman 2011)). Besides, we have been witnessing the tendency in western culture that consumers gradually prefer locally-produced goods across product categories, which is considered as the essential facet of consumer ideology (Reich et al. 2018). Put in another way, in those markets, domestic products are perceived as higher quality and

more preferred than foreign ones, for example in Finland (Autio et al. 2013), in Germany (Hartmann et al. 2013) or in Norway (Ursin et al. 2016).

Nevertheless, the preference patterns were opposite in oriental context when extant research showed that consumers' preferences are more favorable of foreign than local brands, expressing the dynamic tendency of the socio-economic development in adopting products outside their territory. Especially consumers in emerging East Asian markets such as in Vietnam and China, usually have higher favorable attitudes toward foreign products (e.g., those produced in Japan, European countries, the US) and even perceive them as superior and being high quality than local ones (Wang and Chen 2004, Lee and Nguyen 2017).

As such, we introduce our following hypothesis:

***H2:** When foreign (vs. domestic), firm origin positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.*

### **3.1.2. Production process: artisanal vs. industrial**

The manufacturing process may influence the way people perceive quality of products (e.g., a product with or without putting artificial flavors, the safety of product).

On the one hand, many authors agreed that with some product categories such as food and drinks, consumers prefer craft-made (or artisanal-made<sup>9</sup>) products rather than industrial-made ones (e.g., beer (Aquilani et al. 2015) or cheese (Kupiec and Revell 1998)). In fact, a brand to be labelled as 'artisanal' may be required to meet plenty of criteria such as the craft fabrication for some phases or the small size of production, to name but a few, as guidelines by Belgian authorities (SPF Economie) (2017).

Interestingly, the fact that human contact influences consumer's perceptions of naturalness was confirmed by Abouab and Gomez (2015). In food sector, since artisanal-

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<sup>9</sup> Even though *craft-made* and *artisan* concepts are not completely identical and have not reached a consensus among scholars in terms of definition, as explained by School of Artisan Food, we used these two terms alternatively in this manuscript.

See <https://www.schoolofartisanfood.org/page/what-is-artisan-food> retrieving 29 Sep 2021

made products are associated with and required partly the manual process, they are perceived as being able to keep the superior naturalness or the authentic values of food thanks to the involvement of human during the fabrication (Abouab and Gomez 2015, Rivaroli et al. 2020). Moreover, artisanal process is well considered to preserve the traditional aspects associated with the craft professions and the product types (Autio et al. 2013, D ez cot and Fleck 2021).

On the other hand, consumers may prefer industrial-made products partly because they attach 'being industrial-produced' to 'quality control process'. As a matter of fact, industrial-made process is involved with automation and mass-production as well as is required many modern techniques to meet the industrial standards so that the quality of product can be well controlled (Dub e et al. 2016). As a result, this way of production reaches the optimization, and very often, is able to offer lower price (Kupiec and Revell 1998). Besides, industrial-made products are systematically well-known with industrial brands. This facilitates consumers during their decision-making process as well (Vrane evic and Stan ec 2003) and therefore, industrial-made goods are easily preferred by consumers.

With this reality in mind, in the context of East Asia country where the inherent issues related to product quality and food safety have become critical in recent years (Figui e and Moustier 2009, Kong 2012, Vo et al. 2018), consumers would probably lean toward industrial (vs. artisanal) products, considering industrial brands the optimized choice (Vrane evic and Stan ec 2003).

We therefore hypothesized that:

**H3:** *When industrial (vs. artisanal), firm production process positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.*

### **3.1.3. Perceived product quality**

As proved by many studies, product quality is an essential factor of consumers' evaluation toward a certain product or firm. Consumers normally evaluate products or

firms based on what they encounter, as explained by cue utilization theory. Specifically, consumers use the available information related to *intrinsic cues* (e.g., size, shape, color) or *extrinsic cues* (e.g., price, firm image) to infer the corresponding quality (Szybillo and Jacoby 1974, Rao and Monroe 1988, Bodur et al. 2016). Firms' CSR efforts also play the role of a salient cue that induce consumers to form their product evaluations (Klein and Dawar 2004, Berens et al. 2005). Based on these evaluations, consumers then come up with the preferences toward products before continuing with further decisions. As a results, consumers' responses to CSR (whether supporting for firms or not) depends partly on the product quality (e.g., in food sector (Vo et al. 2018)).

Under the perspective of manufacturers, product quality is determined by the technical involvement and the industrial standards related to input ingredients, materials, procedure, etc. (Gatti et al. 2012). In other words, quality of product is confirmed through the quality control process. However, under the perspective of consumers, it is the product quality perceived by themselves plays the main role on forming further decisions such as buying or recommend the product to others (Zeithaml 1988). This is to say, the product quality that consumers perceive may or may not be directly related to quality control process. In many cases, the judgment of consumers is irrational and not involved with the objective quality that is controlled by strict standards. For example, consumers may judge a product as having good quality just because of the well-known brand (Caruana and Ewing 2010). In other cases, consumers perceive a product as good quality because of the judgment of people surrounding them or because of the past familiar pattern of consumption (Rao and Monroe 1988, Wathieu 2004).

Furthermore, in the CSR domain where we would like to examine the perceptions and responses of consumers toward CSR, it is noticeable that green products appear to be more outstanding in the eyes of some consumers than others (Berger and Heath 2007, White et al. 2019). This can be explained partly that those who appreciate responsible firms (or sustainable attributes) will have these values already anchored in their minds as something symbolic. When encountered, firms' CSR efforts play the role of a salient cue that trigger these values and therefore induce consumers to form some certain evaluations of the firm and its products (Berens et al. 2005). Also, the phenomenon is consistent to the back-and-forth embodied cognition process when consumers are

under the on-going journey of changing behaviors based on their continuously updated perceptions of CSR (Solomon et al. 2017, Varela et al. 2017, Shapiro 2019). In other words, consumers' favorable values related to CSR, sooner or later, would be transferred to favorable perception of quality and further outcomes.

As can be seen, perceived product quality is considered as an important determinant that induces consumers to come up with attitude and behavioral intentions (Zeithaml et al. 1996, Wang et al. 2012). More concretely, previous authors reached the consensus that positively perceived quality enhances consumer attitudes toward the firm as well as the likelihoods to purchase and recommend (Bou-Llusar et al. 2001, Gatti et al. 2012), which would be explained more in the following parts.

### **3.2. CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR: ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS**

In this section, we review the current literature of consumer responses, including attitude toward the firm/brand, purchase intention, and recommendation intention.

#### **3.2.1. Attitude toward the firm**

Attitude of a person was defined as 'a function of his (or her) salient beliefs at a given point of time' (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). As a matter of fact, when a person is exposed to the information provided by a firm, a set of salient beliefs toward that firm is assembled, whether this process is conscious or non-conscious by consumers. Attitude toward the firm is also a function of one's internal evaluation on the firm's information and products that are provided (e.g., the evaluation of product quality). Then, through the filter of these beliefs and evaluations, his or her attitude is formed as being like or unlike, positive or negative (Mitchell and Olson 1981, Berens et al. 2005).

By the same token, the CSR initiatives can influence consumers' attitudes toward firms through their system of values and evaluations (Lichtenstein et al. 2004). Consumers' positive attitudes are what the firms always aim to achieve. However, the opposite attitudes, like negative attitudes during crisis, also bring added values to firms as a critical sign for necessary modification from the inside of firms. Under a value-added perspective, understanding the attitude of consumers, whether positive or negative, is

useful for firms in the sense that this enforces firms to reassess and modify their current business policies. For short-term, the modification can help to ease the negative outcomes that may harm the firms' intangible assets as well as to reach favorable attitudes among their consumers. For long-term, it helps to enhance the effectiveness of CSR by enforcing the firms themselves to go through the process of purification.

Attitude toward socially responsible firms, therefore, is an important outcome worthy to examine in our studies. As mentioned above, attitude toward firms is influenced by the evaluation of firms and their products. Therefore, in our following research design, we would measure how firm engagement in CSR and perceived product quality among consumers cause the attitude toward the firm.

### **3.2.2. Purchase intention**

Before coming to a certain actual behavior, people firstly form the intention toward that behavior, as explained by Theory of Reasoned Action by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) about the mechanism of forming a behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, Sheppard et al. 1988, Davis et al. 1989). In other words, the behavior is considered as 'a function of intention' (Ajzen 2015) and therefore, predicting intention will likely contribute to predicting the actual behavior (Taylor and Todd 1995, Armitage and Conner 1999, Shaw et al. 2000).

Noticeably, it may take a long road from intending to do something to actually performing it, rather than a straightforward path. Many times, people fail to perform a behavior (e.g., doing exercise, drinking more water instead of coke) even though they already had good intention to do. However, previous empirical studies have eased the arguments by showing that, significantly high intention of a certain behavior will likely induce ones to perform that behavior later. In the like manner, a person revealing low intention of doing an action will be likely not to do it or have very low possibility to do (Armitage and Conner 1999, Ajzen 2015). Of course, it was taken into account that the other intervening factors were put in hibernate. These factors may include changing one's mind, having new motivation of doing alternative actions, to name but a few. This was confirmed by previous studies measuring both intention and actual behavior of participants over times such as adopting low-fat diet as a lifestyle (e.g., Armitage and Conner, 1999) or consuming organic food (e.g., organic milk, Carfora et al., 2019).



Concretely, these studies showed the consistency between intention and real behavior among participants whether measuring at one time and or at different periods of time.

In marketing and consumer research, the intention of purchasing is among the targeted important constructs, revealing the actual purchase behavior afterwards. With attention to this target, purchase intention helps researchers to come closer to the real behavior of consumers that makes sense, i.e., consumers may show their supports to a brand or a product through their buying power. Given the understanding of intention as a predictor of real behavior, we therefore would measure purchase intention of consumers among our expected outcomes in this study, together with attitude toward firms and recommendation intention that we will go in details right afterward.

### **3.2.3. Recommendation intention**

Besides purchase intention, researchers have been interested in its relevant facets, recommendation intention. This outcome is associated with appreciating a brand or a product/service through the good words to others (Jin and Su 2009). In other words, this factor describes the willingness of people to introduce the brand or the product that they believe to have good quality or good attributes that make them feel interested.

Recommendation and its related concept, 'word-of-mouth', are often used equivalently to refer to a similar notion, the so-called 'referencing' (Keiningham et al. 2007, Olaru et al. 2008). All of them are similar in the sense of reflecting the intent to influence others and providing information to others (Swanson and Kelley 2001). Besides, to be able to recommend or transmit word-of-mouth about products, consumers may or may not have purchased and used them. However, there are slightly differences among these concepts. Word-of-mouth is more relating to spread information of a firm/brand in oral form to others in both manners including positive (e.g., supporting for the firm/brand) and negative ones (e.g., complaining, expressing unsatisfied testimonials) based on corresponding emotions generated from the brand/firm (Keiningham et al. 2007, Currás-Pérez et al. 2013). Meanwhile, recommendation is directly related to the intention of introducing the brand/firm to others as well as encouraging them to use, in a positive and favorable manner toward the brand/firm. The willingness to recommend might be resulted only from positive values that consumers gained from product usage

(including the evaluation of product quality) (Olaru et al. 2008). In other words, once the products of the firm are perceived with good quality, it may positively impact on recommendation intention of consumers.

In terms of products by responsible firms (i.e., green products, responsible products), recommendation intention is among practical outcomes that give the message back to firms that their policy (e.g., CSR initiatives) has been on the right (or not right) track (Jin and Su 2009). In this sense, it helps the firms to measure their effectiveness of their engagement in CSR and make modifications if necessary. However, recommendation intention is directly influenced by perceived product quality rather than directly influenced by firm involvement in CSR. Simply put, CSR initiatives of firms are merely recognized as provided information. This information is then transmitted to consumers and is perceived through some certain evaluations (e.g., product quality), which in turn, have effects on the intention of consumers to recommend the product for others or to say positive things about the firm when they have chances.

In a nutshell, purchase and recommendation intentions are two related facets of supporting firms, that are worthy to study as outcome variables. While purchase intention is associated with the likelihood to spend money for oneself, recommendation intention is associated with the likelihood to tell others. However, extant researches have argued that saying good is easier than doing good (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000, Carrigan and Attalla 2001, Auger and Devinney 2007), especially in sustainable consumption area (Jin and Su 2009). Consistent with what we would like to focus on this study, we would examine both purchase intention and recommendation intention among consumers, given the context about the firm engagement in CSR, their country-of-origin, and the production process.

We therefore introduced our hypothesis as follows:

**H4:** *Perceived product quality plays a mediating role between firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.*

### 3.3. CONSUMPTION HABITUATION

Being the essential factor in behavioral science for years, habituation has been brought to studied in the domain of consumer behavior, facilitating scholars to understand more about how consumers form their behaviors and how habituation may prompt or retain their behavioral changes (Kaas 1982, Wathieu 2004, Wood and Neal 2009, Gardner et al. 2012).

Habits can be defined simply as a course of acts that a person performs automatically with the attention to achieve certain final outcomes (Verplanken and Aarts 1999, Verplanken and Orbell 2003) or even not related to reasoned actions (Beatty and Kahle 1988). In fact, habituation is established through the repetition of a certain pattern and therefore considered as a form of automaticity (Triandis 1977, Ouellette and Wood 1998, Wood and Neal 2009). Besides, a habit becomes stronger when its associated actions are activated as automatic responses to the familiar context cue (Neal et al. 2012; Wood and R nger 2016). Therefore, habituation is represented by three dimensions: *automatic activation* (e.g., doing something unconsciously or without thinking), *behavioral frequency* (e.g., a behavior done for a long time or belonged to daily routine), and *relevance to self-identity* (an action provoking the senses of 'me') (Verplanken and Orbell 2003, Gardner et al. 2012).

Habituation is believed to have an effect on predicting antecedents of behavior including attitudes and behavioral intentions (Ouellette and Wood 1998, Verplanken and Orbell 2003, Wood and Neal 2009). Since current habits are automated and easier to carry on, people may hesitate to change for the adoption of new behaviors, especially if the endorsement of the new behavior makes them uncomfortable (Murtagh et al. 2015, White et al. 2019). With this in mind, when put into a dilemma of long-term and short-term benefits, a person may find much more comfortable to maintain his/her current habits (e.g., the habit of purchasing because of convenience and/or in a closer proximity; consuming some certain favourite products) rather than to change.

Extant research showed that the strength of the current habit is important in several ways. If the current habit has not been well established, consumers might be easier to change for a new consumption behavior. Nevertheless, as the strength of habit increases, consumers may "slip back" to their existing consumption behavior (i.e., strongly attached the current product),

which in turn, may reduce consumer intention of performing new behavior (e.g., adopt a brand new product) (Verplanken and Aarts 1999, Labrecque et al. 2017). In other words, the more consumers are attached to their ongoing habit of consumption, the less they might intent to consume the new product that is an alternative to the current one that they are consuming. This mechanism can explain the circumstances when consumers initially appreciate a new product that is introduced by socially responsible firms, but they might be attached to their current consumption behavior and finally refuse the new brand. Equally important, consumers might continue repeating a behavior (e.g., buy the same product) as the automatic activation rather than perform that action on purpose. The automaticity of performing an action is also the result of sufficient repetition, helping human beings to save “cognitive work” as explained by Wilson and Golonka (2013). Also, the mechanism of automatic activation might pull back the intention of performing a new action.

Overall, when the existing habitual behavior is stronger, it would be more difficult for consumers to adopt new product, even though they reveal favorable attitudes toward firm engagement in CSR, and vice versa. As such, we hypothesized as follows:

*H5: Habituation negatively moderates the relationship between perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.*

### **3.4. HOW CONSUMERS PERCEIVE FIRM CSR MOTIVES**

Firms’ CSR agendas may be various depending on causes that the firm aims to reach. Nevertheless, no matter how cause-related the CSR engagements are, many consumers perceive the CSR efforts of firms as motive-related activities.

Previous researches classified the motivations of firms under several ways. The first position is based on the citizenship of firms, or in other words, considering firms as individuals. The classification thus includes *extrinsic* vs. *intrinsic* motivations, considering the source that the motives originate (Keaveney and Nelson 1993, Story and Neves 2015); or *egoistic* vs. *altruistic* motivations, reflecting the nature of the willingness to help (Maner and Gailliot 2007, Ramasamy et al. 2010). The second position is based on the beneficiaries of CSR activities. Firm’s motivation of doing good can be divided into self-interested motives (i.e., the activities

serve the benefits of firm itself) vs. *other-interested* ones (i.e., firms do something good because of others' benefits) (Mohr et al. 2001, Walker and Mercado 2016); *firm self-serving* motives (e.g., to develop firm reputation, to boost revenues) vs. *public-serving* motives (e.g., to contribute to community, to advocate the disadvantaged people, to extend the green space in the neighborhood) (Forehand and Grier 2003, Becker-Olsen et al. 2006, De Vries et al. 2015).

Broken into smaller pieces, CSR motivations of firms can be divided into four dimensions, giving a clearer look into the nature of CSR engagements. These dimensions include *values-driven* (e.g., the firm is morally attached to causes-related activities); *stakeholder-driven* (e.g., firms engage in CSR agenda because of the expectation of their stockholders, their consumers, or their employees); *egoistic* (e.g., firms will have some tax exemption); and *strategic* (e.g., CSR activities help to bring more profits or get more consumers) (Ellen et al. 2006, Vlachos et al. 2009). These perceived CSR motives, in turn, may impact on consumer evaluations (e.g., product quality) as well as consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Becker-Olsen et al. 2006, Bodur et al. 2016).

Given the firm disclosure of CSR campaigns, consumers may perceive the motives of these activities differently, which in turn might have an impact on their responses to CSR. We therefore hypothesized as follows:

**H6:** *Perceived firm CSR motives negatively moderates the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality.*

### **3.5. SKEPTICISM TOWARD FIRM ENGAGEMENT IN CSR**

Firm involvement in CSR has been considered more and more important nowadays. However, consumers do not hesitate to show their doubts on CSR claims since the CSR disclosures often come from the firms (Zhang and Hanks 2017, Newman and Trump 2019). The fact that consumers may be more or less cynic toward the responsible activities of firms was indicated in numerous studies (Skarmeas and Leonidou 2013, Loussaïef et al. 2014, Skarmeas et al. 2014, De Vries et al. 2015).

Consumer skepticism toward firms describes the degree of disbelief and distrust among consumers toward firms' messages (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998, Elving 2013, Bae 2018). By the same token, CSR skepticism underlines consumers' doubts about how much

authenticity of firms that launch CSR activities during their operations. With this in mind, consumers may question whether the firms' CSR activities are originated from their goodwills or whether those responsible engagements solely serve the benefit purposes. Besides, CSR skepticism is among the determinants indicating the negative responses to firms' activities. This perception is due to the fact that many firms carrying their caused-related programs are not because of sincerity but because of some underlined benefits (e.g., to have better revenues, to achieve more reputation) (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004, Lii and Lee 2012). In other words, consumers would evaluate the nature of firm involvement, whether it is related to extrinsic or intrinsic CSR attributions (Story and Neves, 2015). This negative perceptions of consumers, therefore, might induce them to be doubtful about the true commitment of firms (Loussaïef et al. 2014).

Depending on the extent, CSR skepticism among consumers may challenge the effects of firms' CSR efforts in several ways. Whether firms are doing responsible activities with or without sincerity, consumers with high extent of skepticism may hesitate to come up with supportive actions for firms' products, especially if CSR-related values are very important to them (Elving 2013, Zhang and Hanks 2017, Moreno and Kang 2020). For example, studies in the retailing sector measuring the extent of certainty of participants about the ethical standards of firms showed that consumers usually express their doubtful attitudes toward firms' CSR initiatives. Accordingly, those with high extent of uncertainty toward CSR would be more vulnerable to unfavorable information or rumors about firms, which, in turn, results in less supportive actions toward firms (Skarmeas and Leonidou 2013, Moreno and Kang 2020, Amawate and Deb 2021). In fast-food industry, the companies are usually considered untruthful about their products due to their controversial effects on health, consumers with high skepticism toward CSR initiatives of fast-food companies would be inclined to distrust these responsible engagements, which in turn negatively impacts on the evaluation of food quality as well (Schröder and McEachern 2005).

As can be seen, CSR engagements are considered important to firms because of their positive effects on consumer evaluations and further behavioral intentions. However, the skepticism of consumers toward CSR claims might diminish these effects. In other words, CSR skepticism among consumers might have a negative impact on the consumer evaluations toward the

firms (e.g., perceived product quality) (Forehand and Grier 2003, Rim and Kim 2016, Zhang and Hanks 2017).

Accordingly, we came up to the hypothesis that:

*H7: CSR skepticism negatively moderates the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality.*

### 3.6. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

As presented previously, consumers may react differently to responsible or irresponsible activities of firms. However, it is controversial whether consumers will have clear-cut response as punishing irresponsible firms and rewarding responsible ones. While studies confirmed this tendency among consumers (Creyer and Ross Jr 1997), others refuted it straightforwardly (Mohr et al. 2001, Palihawadana et al. 2016).

Therefore, we seek to investigate how consumers evaluate a specific firm and its products (i.e., the perceived product quality) when given the information of the firm with **(high vs. low) responsible engagements** and to examine the effects of firm's **country-of-origin (domestics vs. foreign)**, and its **production process (artisanal vs. industrial)** on perceived product quality. As argued formerly, we expected that consumers in Vietnam would prefer foreign (vs. domestic) firm origin, favor industrial-made (vs. artisanal-made) products, and reflect their preferences positively on **perceived product quality** as well as on further outcomes (i.e., brand attitude and behavioral intentions).

Perceived product quality is usually considered as an important factor that impacts outcome variables above. Moreover, it is also the main concern among Vietnamese consumers as what we found in previous qualitative study. Besides, we also examine the effects of perceived product quality in shaping consumer responses: **brand attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation intention.**

In the figure below, we introduce our conceptual framework, where:

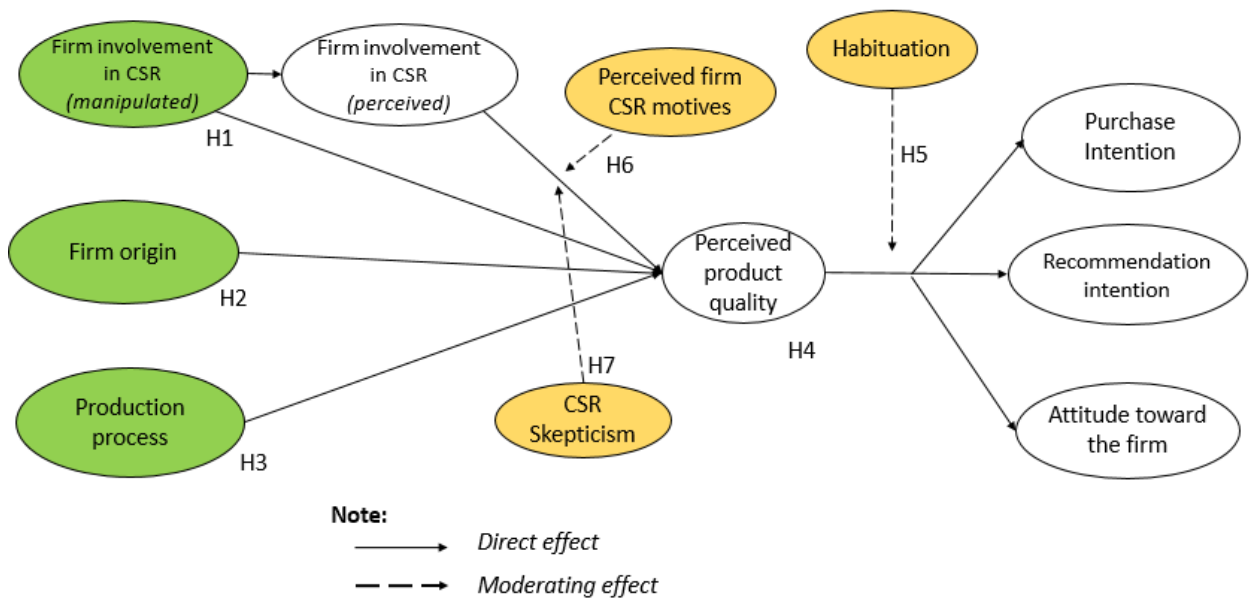
*Independent variables* consist of: firm involvement in CSR, firm origin, production process

**Dependent variables** consist of: consumer attitude, purchase intention, recommendation intention

**Mediating variable:** perceived product quality

**Moderating variables** consist of: consumption habituation, perceived firm CSR motives, CSR skepticism

Figure 3.12. Conceptual framework 1



Specifically, all hypotheses presented in previous sections are recapped as follows:

**H1:** When high (vs. low), firm involvement in CSR positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.

**H2:** When foreign (vs. domestic), firm origin positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.

**H3:** When industrial (vs. artisanal), firm production process positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.



**H4:** Perceived product quality plays a mediating role between firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.

**H5:** Habituation negatively moderates the relationship between perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.

**H6:** Perceived firm CSR motives negatively moderates the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality.

**H7:** CSR skepticism negatively moderates the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality.

In order to test these hypotheses, we conducted a scenario-based experiment in food sector. The research design of the first quantitative study is presented in the next chapter.

### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

This chapter addressed the related literature corresponding to the **research question n°2** (*What are the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR, production process, and firm's country-of-origin on perceived product quality and the consequences on consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions?*) and partly to the **research question n°3** (*Which factors that can explain the mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and their responses to CSR?*).

**Country-of-origin** (domestic vs. foreign) is related to the perception that the country where the product is originated and the product properties itself share the same characteristics. Generally, in occidental cultures, domestic products are preferred by consumers while in oriental cultures, consumers are more favorable of foreign brands.

**Production process** (artisanal vs. industrial) may influence the way people perceive product quality. Artisanal process is perceived to be able to keep the superior naturalness and the traditional aspects of products, while industrial process is associated with quality control process, lower price, and well-known brands. The industrial products are probably preferred by consumers in oriental countries.

Together with **firm engagement in CSR**, country-of-origin and production process were supposed to have impacts on **perceived product quality**. Then, in turn, perceived product quality has its effects on consumer attitudes toward the firm, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. Besides, **consumption habituation** (a course of consumption behaviors that a person performs automatically and repeatedly), **perceived firm CSR motives** (consumer perceptions of the motivation that firms may have when engaging in CSR activities), **CSR skepticism** (the doubtfulness toward firm engagement in CSR) might have the effects on the relationships between firm involvement in CSR and consumer evaluations (i.e., product quality). This leads to our empirical studies on the effects of three determinants above on consumer responses to CSR, with perceived product quality playing the role of a mediator, which we would present with more details in the following parts.

## PART I – WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT

### Chapter 1 | CSR and consumers

- 1.1. The concept of CSR
- 1.2. How does CSR matter to consumers?
- 1.3. The oriental cultural aspects & their impacts on CSR conceptualization
- 1.4. Qualitative study: How consumers perceived CSR in Vietnam

### Chapter 2 | Exploratory study: consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam

- 2.1. Research design
- 2.2. Data collection and coding procedure
- 2.3. Findings
- 2.4. Discussion

## PART II – HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR

### Chapter 3 | Consumer evaluations and reactions to CSR

- 3.1. Consumer evaluations of the firm and its products
- 3.2. Consumer responses to CSR: attitude and behavioral intentions
- 3.3. Consumption habituation
- 3.4. How consumers perceived firm CSR motives
- 3.5. Skepticism toward firm engagement in CSR
- 3.6. Hypotheses development

### Chapter 4 | Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector

- 4.1. Research design: scenario-based experiment
- 4.2. Data collection
- 4.3. Data analysis
- 4.4. Discussion



## PART III – BENEATH THE SURFACE: FACTORS EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR

### Chapter 5 | Factors explaining consumer responses to CSR

- 5.1. Mindfulness and green consumption
- 5.2. Voluntary simplicity leads to conscious consumption
- 5.3. Connectedness to nature and sustainable values
- 5.4. Internal locus-of-control and the values of sustainability
- 5.5. Death anxiety: its effects on voluntary simplicity and mindfulness
- 5.6. Consumer sustainable behaviors reflecting their green values

### Chapter 6 | Replicated experiment: consumer responses in skincare & cosmetics sector

- 6.1. Research design
- 6.2. Data collection
- 6.3. Data analysis
- 6.4. Discussion

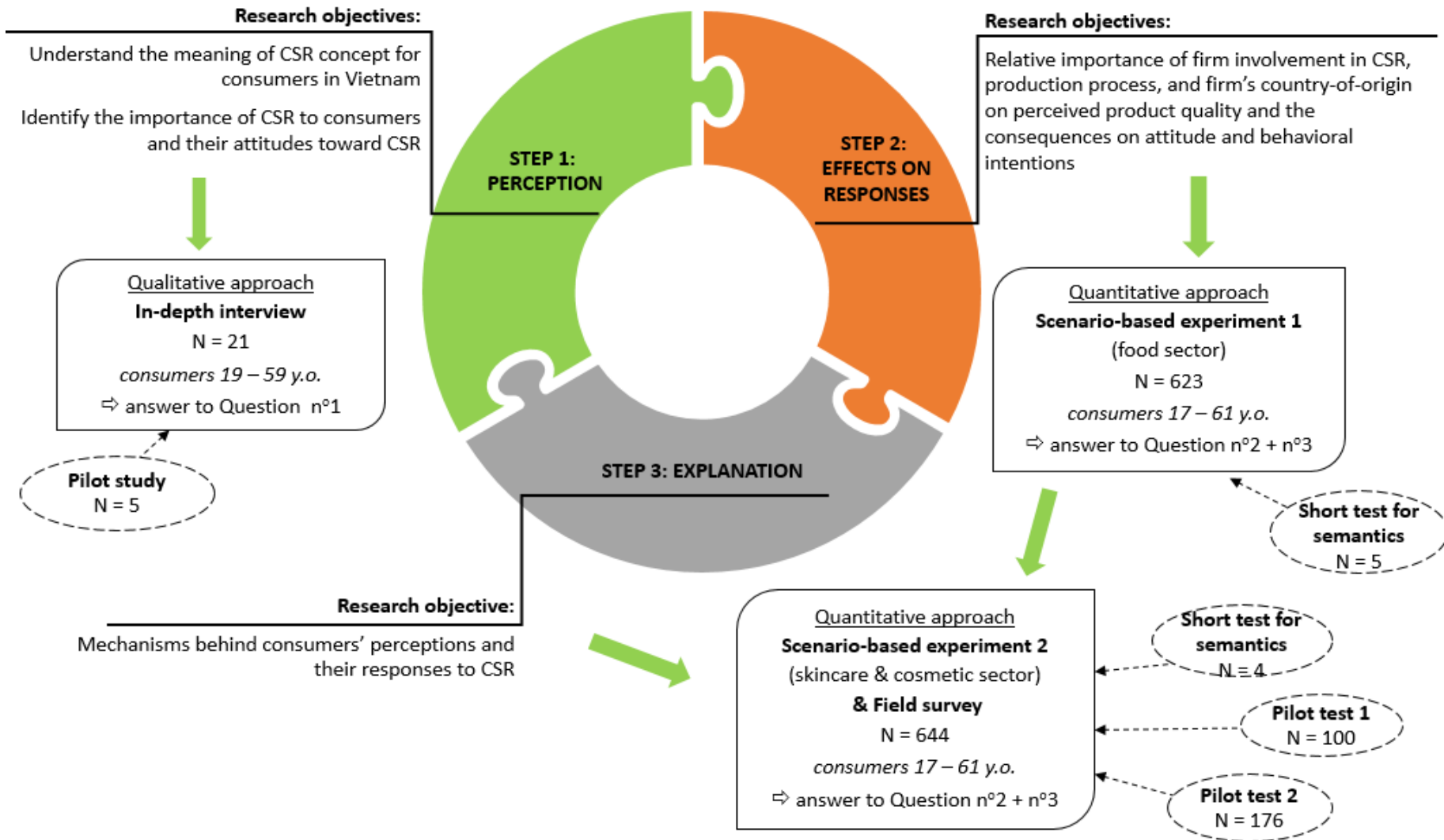
### Chapter 7 | Explaining consumer responses through structural equation modeling

- 7.1. Model specification
- 7.2. Model evaluation
- 7.3. Discussion

### Chapter 8 | General discussion

### Conclusion: contributions, limitations, and further research

Chapter 4: Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector



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## CHAPTER 4 | EXPERIMENT: CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR IN FOOD SECTOR

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This study aims to examine the effect of perceived product quality corresponding to three antecedents (firm involvement in CSR, firm country-of-origin, and production process). Simultaneously, we would like to examine consumer responses on consumer attitude and their intentions to purchase and to recommend the product/the firm to others. After having exposed the research design of a scenario-based experiment (section 4.1), we successively present data collection (section 4.2), data analysis (section 4.3), discussion on the results (section 4.4) and in the end, the summary of this chapter.

### **4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN: A SCENARIO-BASED EXPERIMENT**

We conducted a between-subject experiment to test our hypotheses, (i.e., to see the reactions of consumers when they were exposed to information about the firm involvement in CSR; the country-of-origin of the firm and the manufacturing process). Through this scenario-based experiment, we examined the effects of three manipulated variables on the outputs: consumers' attitude toward the firm, purchase intention, and recommendation intention.

Besides, in order to explain the responses of consumers toward the firm in food sector, related to specific product which was ground coffee, we also measured the constructs that were hypothesized to have the effects on consumers' responses. They were perceived firm involvement in CSR, perceived CSR firm motives, consumer skepticism about CSR, and habituation (of drinking coffee).

#### **4.1.1. Experimental design**

To examine the proposed hypotheses, we followed the factorial design using three treatments. Each treatment has two level of differences, forming the combination of treatments (Kirk 2014), allowing to investigate the independent and simultaneous effects

resulting from these treatments on randomly groups of respondents (Aaker et al. 2013). Specifically, we designed a 2 (CSR: high vs. low) x 2 (firm origin: domestic vs. foreign) x 2 (production process: artisanal vs. industrial) scenario-based experiment.

**Notation system:** The experiment would be denoted with:

EG1	R	X1 (Domestic, Artisanal, Low CSR)	O1	n = 75-80
-----				
EG2	R	X2 (Domestic, Artisanal, High CSR)	O2	n = 75-80
-----				
EG3	R	X3 (Domestic, Industrial, Low CSR)	O3	n = 75-80
-----				
EG4	R	X4 (Domestic, Industrial, High CSR)	O4	n = 75-80
-----				
EG5	R	X5 (Foreign, Artisanal, Low CSR)	O5	n = 75-80
-----				
EG6	R	X6 (Foreign, Artisanal, High CSR)	O6	n = 75-80
-----				
EG7	R	X7 (Foreign, Industrial, Low CSR)	O7	n = 75-80
-----				
EG8	R	X8 (Foreign, Industrial, High CSR)	O8	n = 75-80

Where:

- EG: denotes an experimental group exposed to a treatment level, ranging from 1 to 8;
- R: denotes random assignment of experimental groups and treatments;
- X: denotes the exposure of groups to the manipulation, ranging from 1 to 8;
- O: denotes the observation or measurement of dependent variable, ranging from 1 to 8;
- n: denotes the expected number of observations;
- The line represents the separate groups of experiments with separately randomly treatment levels.

We use no separate control groups. In this experiment, each of the treatments acts as a control group for the others. The point of this experimental design is to compare the different levels of experimental treatments (Aaker et al. 2013).

This experiment was conducted under the form of an online survey. Given that people nowadays have been using more and more their daily tasks and communications through mobiles, we appreciated the Microsoft survey template that brought consumers an extra

convenient option through answering directly from their phones, besides the options of responding on computer or laptop. The phone interface of Microsoft survey template helped to abroad the numbers of respondents in comparing to the only-computer template. At the time of conducting our studies, this template was free of charge, offering 200 responses for each time.

#### 4.1.2. Scenario development

In the experiment, we employed scenarios, each depicting a short text about the fictive firm. Among various food products, we chose ground coffee to be studied in the scenario-based experimental design. This product was daily-used and popular in Vietnam, the country of second ranked worldwide in the coffee export. The scenarios used A as the brand name of the ground coffee and X as the company name. This was to avoid confounding effects due to possible prior knowledge of consumers toward a specific brand name (Hwang and Griffiths 2017).

The scenarios were corresponding to the 2-level treatments of each manipulated variable, resulting in 8 scenarios, as the table followed:

Table 4.5. Eight scenarios by conditions

Treatment	Domestic		Foreign	
	Artisanal	Industrial	Artisanal	Industrial
Low CSR	SCENARIO 1	SCENARIO 3	SCENARIO 5	SCENARIO 7
High CSR	SCENARIO 2	SCENARIO 4	SCENARIO 6	SCENARIO 8

*(see the detailed scenarios in appendices)*

The scenarios and questions in the experiment then were localized into Vietnamese, complying a standard back-translation procedure (Brislin 1970) and considering using the vocabularies suitable to daily context to avoid any bias due to academic terms.

#### 4.1.3. Sample size of experiment

Based on the rules for sample size for experiments (Hair Jr et al. 2019), each experimental group needs to achieve at least 30 observations. With 8 scenarios, the total required sample was supposed to be 240 observations. Totally, we had a data set of 623 respondents, among



which each scenario exceeded 75 responses, satisfying the sample size rule at the statistic power of 80%.

All participants were voluntary, and no payment was made. Participants were recruited through online social media and through snowball technique. Specifically, each respondent who had participated in this experiment then was encouraged to introduce this survey to other people in their networks (Hair Jr et al. 2017).

#### ❖ ***Randomization***

The respondents therefore were invited to choose one among 8 scenarios. Microsoft survey template allowed to shuffle all the scenarios so that number 1 was not always in the first line of choices, avoiding introducing bias because of prefixed position. Respondents therefore were offered to freely choose the scenario. However, through the first responses, we noticed the fact that the number 1 (scenario 1) was always the most favorite choice for participants, no matter how the order it was put. Next preferences were number 5 and number 7. Given this fact, we often checked the numbers of responses by scenarios so that we can immediately control balance among scenarios chosen. Each time unbalance happened with a considerably higher number for a certain scenario, this scenario would be switched off temporarily, allowing respondents to choose among remaining scenarios. By keeping this protocol, the randomization of the study was successfully conducted, and we made sure the balance of respondents allocated for each scenario. At the end, we harvested quite equitable numbers of responses by scenarios, ranging from 75 to 80 response for each.

#### ❖ ***Short test for semantics***

Before gathering the data for analysis, a short test for semantics was carried out to get the insights of respondents toward the format and content of the questionnaire. From feedbacks, we revised the questionnaire in terms of wording/translation on the phrases as well as the word usage which were seen "easy to be confused", "difficult to understand", or "too academic". The length of questionnaire was also reduced to minimize the inaccuracy of responses (Currás-Pérez et al. 2013). The total time needs for answering the questionnaire was about 8 minutes, which then was communicated in the introduction of the online template.

#### 4.1.4. Flow of experiment

We designed the flow of the experiment as in the figure below.

Firstly, participants were invited to choose among eight numbers from 1 to 8, corresponding to scenario 1 to 8 about a fictive firm, named company X. Eight scenarios are the combination of three conditions (low vs. high-CSR involvement of firms; craft-made vs. industrial made; domestic vs. foreign origin). The numbers of scenarios are ordered randomly each time.

Then, a written scenario was presented. Each of participant was given to read one separate scenario only. The scenario involved with a new coffee product to be launched by a fictive firm.

Figure 4.13. Flow of experiment 1



The number of indicators per variable is presented on the left

After choosing a scenario, participants are asked to read it carefully as long as they want before answer to the questionnaire.

#### ❖ Manipulation check

In order to ensure that participants perceive and understand correctly the treatments that they are exposed in the experiment (Perdue and Summers 1986, Hoewe 2017),

manipulation check were carried out with 3 statements related to the stimulus: (1) CSR involvement of firm (high vs. low), (2) firm origin (domestic vs. foreign) and (3) production process (craft-made vs. industrial-made). To avoid the fact that manipulation check process might impact and pollute the responses of participants (Kühnen 2010), the statements related to manipulation check were only processed after participants had already read their scenarios and responded to questions used to measure the variables. These statements were put at the end of the questionnaire, right before demographic questions. Participants were invited to read three statements approximately three stimuli, including 'The activities that company X does in the scenario are *low/high CSR-involved*'; 'The coffee product of company X is *craft-made/industrial-made*'; and 'Company X is a *domestic/foreign one*'. At the same time, they were asked to rate their agreement on each statement through a 1-to-7 scale, where 7 were the favorable end. The purpose was to measure how good the experimental design was. In other words, we would like to double-check whether participants were well understood and correctly reacted to the predesigned conditions as expected (Hair Jr et al. 2019).

Finally, we asked them some demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire. The items were related to their current frequency of drinking coffee, coffee purchases, gender, age, current living place, education, and approximate income as well.

#### **4.1.5. Measurements**

Three manipulated variables include: (1) CSR involvement of firm, (2) firm origin, and (3) production process.

Two levels of firm engagement in CSR (low vs. high level) are associated with the activities of environmental domain (3 activities) and philanthropic domain (3 activities), adapted from the measure of Mohr and Webb (2005). We did not introduce a scenario with no CSR engagements at all or engagement in bad activities. To be noticeable, with the information of absolute irresponsible firms, it is easy to induce consumers to respond absolutely negatively, which in turn increase the bias of *floor effects* which means that the stimulus are too obviously (Elder and Krishna 2012).

- Low level of treatment: the activities were simplified and described as inadequate number of social responsibilities, using the adverbs of frequency such as ‘sometimes’ and ‘but very rarely’.
- High level of treatment: the firm fulfilled the social responsibilities, described with ‘as much as possible’ and ‘regularly’.

Two treatment levels of firm origin (domestic vs. foreign) and production process (artisanal vs. industrial) were also used in the experiment.

❖ **Measured variables:**

**Perceived CSR of consumers** was measured through 4-item scale (Currás-Pérez et al. 2009). Likert scale was used (1= Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree).

**Product quality** was measured through 3-item scale (Habel et al. 2016). Consumers were asked to rate the quality of product as (very poor quality/ very high quality; inferior/superior; poorly made/well made) corresponding to 7-point semantic differentiate scale.

**Attitude toward the firm** was measured through 3-item scale (Lii and Lee 2012). 7-point semantic differentiate scale type was used (dislike/like; unfavorable/favorable; negative/positive).

**Purchase intention** of consumers was measured through 3-item scale (Putrevu and Lord 1994, Coyle and Thorson 2001) in (Öberseder et al. 2014). On the online survey template, the 11-point behavioral intention scale (with 0 = Definitely not will; 10 = Definitely will) was displayed similarly as a real ruler which facilitates participants to determine the extent of processing for further actions.

**Recommendation intention** of consumers was measured through 2-item scale (Zeithaml et al. 1996). The same 11-point behavioral intention scale (with 0 = Definitely not will; 10 = Definitely will) was employed.

**Perceived CSR firm motives** was measured through 13-item scale (4 dimensions) (Ellen et al. 2006, Vlachos et al. 2009). A 7-point Likert scale was used (1= Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree).

**Habituation** (of drinking coffee) was measured through 12-item scale (Verplanken and Orbell 2003). 7-point Likert scale was employed (1= Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree).

**CSR skepticism** was measured through 4-item scale (Skarmeas and Leonidou 2013). Each question was assessed by a 7-point semantic differentiate scale.

The details of the measurements were presented in the table below.

Table 4.6. Measurements used in scenario-based experiment in food sector

<b>VARIABLES AND INDICATORS</b>
<b>MANIPULATED VARIABLES</b>
CSR involvement: low-CSR vs. high-CSR Production process: craft-made vs. industrial-made Firm origin: domestic vs. foreign
<b>MEASURED VARIABLES</b>
<b>Perceived firm involvement in CSR</b> (Currás-Pérez et al. 2009) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Company X is aware of environmental issues.</li> <li>2 Company X fulfils its social responsibilities.</li> <li>3 Company X gives back to society.</li> <li>4 Company X acts in a socially responsible way.</li> </ol>
<b>Habituation</b> (of drinking coffee) (Verplanken and Orbell 2003) <p><b>Automatic activation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Drinking coffee is something I do automatically</li> <li>2 Drinking coffee is something I do without having to consciously remember.</li> <li>3 Drinking coffee is something I do without thinking.</li> <li>4 Drinking coffee is something I start doing before I realize I'm doing it.</li> <li>5 Drinking coffee is something I have no need to think about doing.</li> </ol> <p><b>Behavioral frequency</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Drinking coffee is something I do frequently.</li> <li>2 Drinking coffee is something that belongs to my (daily, weekly, monthly) routine.</li> <li>3 Drinking coffee is something I have been doing for a long time.</li> </ol> <p><b>Self-identity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Drinking coffee is something that makes me feel weird if I do not do it.</li> <li>2 Drinking coffee is something I would require effort not to do it.</li> <li>3 Drinking coffee is something I would find hard not to do.</li> <li>4 Drinking coffee is something that's typically 'me'.</li> </ol>
<b>Perceived CSR firm motives</b> (Ellen et al. 2006, Vlachos et al. 2009) <p>Company X is making such activities (CSR activities) because</p> <p><b>Values driven</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 They feel morally obligated to help.</li> <li>2 They have a long-term interest in the community.</li> </ol>

<b>VARIABLES AND INDICATORS</b>
<p>3 They are trying to give something back to the community.</p> <p><b>Stakeholder driven</b></p> <p>1 They feel their customers expect it.            2 They feel society in general (i.e., consumers) expects it.            3 They feel their stockholders expect it.            4 They feel their employees expect it.</p> <p><b>Egoistic</b></p> <p>1 They are taking advantage of the non-profit organization to help their own business.            2 They are taking advantage of the cause to help their own business.            3 They want it as a tax write-off.</p> <p><b>Strategic</b></p> <p>1 They will get more customers by doing this activity.            2 They will keep more of their customers by doing this activity.            3 They hope to increase profits by doing this activity.</p>
<p><b>Perceived product quality (Habel et al. 2016)</b>            Products of company X...</p> <p>1 ...have very poor quality/have very high quality.            2 ...are inferior/are superior.            3 ...are poorly made/are well made.</p>
<p><b>CSR skepticism (Skarmeas and Leonidou 2013)</b></p> <p>1 It is <i>doubtless/doubtful</i> that this is a socially responsible company.            2 It is <i>certain/uncertain</i> that this company is concerned to improve the well-being of society.            3 It is <i>sure/unsure</i> that this company follows high ethical standards.            4 It is <i>unquestionable/questionable</i> that this company acts in a socially responsible way.</p>
<p><b>Attitude toward the firm (Lii and Lee 2012)</b>            Please indicate your overall attitude toward company X:</p> <p>1 <i>dislike---like</i>            2 <i>unfavorable---favorable</i>            3 <i>negative---positive</i></p>
<p><b>Purchase intention (Coyle and Thorson 2001, Putrevu and Lord 1994)</b></p> <p>1 It is very likely that I will buy products from company X.            2 I will purchase products from company X the next time I need coffee.            3 I will definitely try other products from company X.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation intention (Zeithaml et al. 1996)</b></p> <p>1 I would say positive things about company X to other people.            2 I would recommend company X if anyone asked me for advice.</p>

Afterwards, we applied almost the same experiment that we conducted in food sector to another sector, skincare and cosmetics, in order to see how robust our results were and to examine deeper in the link between consumers' auto-evaluation of their own responsible behaviors and their response to firm efforts on CSR.

## 4.2. DATA COLLECTION

### ❖ Data screening:

Total 623 responses were collected. Before further data analyses, we screened the whole sample to detect and clean invalid responses.

Suspicious case detection: we detected and excluded 28 suspicious responses where the values are 98-100% straight line pattern. Some of them were alternated extreme pole responses with high confliction. Finally, the sample remained 595 valid responses.

Two variables had missing values including Firm's CSR motive and habituation, as show in the table below. There were 47 missing values at two dimensions of firm's CSR Motives (Egoistic and Strategic). The missing values of habituation variables were 193.

*Table 6.7. Missing values*

Variables	N Valid	N Missing	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Firm's CSR Motives:					
1. Value-driven	595	0	5.34	5.33	1.284
2. Stakeholder-driven	595	0	5.09	5.00	1.243
3. Egoistic	548	47	4.71	5.00	1.360
4. Strategic	548	47	5.52	5.67	1.194
Habituation	402	193	3.80	3.83	1.674

## 4.3. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.3.1. Preliminary analysis

#### ➤ Demographics information

The table below presents the demographics information of respondents in this experiment. Among them, female participants are dominant with more than 70%.

In terms of age, we classify respondents into three generations (Madden 2019). 6.2% of respondents are belonged to gen X (born 1965- 1979). Gen Y (born 1980 – 1994)

Chapter 4: Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector

accounts for 39%, and the majority of participants are gen Z (born 1995 – 2009) with approximately 55% of the sample.

Respondents in 21 cities and provinces of Vietnam participated in this experiment. Approximately 68% of them are living in Hochiminh City, the biggest city of Vietnam (see the details in appendices).

The education levels among participants cover from high school, college/technical school, graduate to postgraduate. Majority of respondents have the corresponding level of graduate (47,6%) and college/technical school (36,6%).

Besides, the income of participants is wide-ranging from under 200€ (40%), 200€ to under 400€ (21.5%), 400€ to under 800€ (24.4%), 800€ to under 1.600€ (8.4%), and over 1.600€ (5.7%).

Table 4.8. Demographics information

Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	420	70.6
Male	175	29.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Age group</b>		
Gen X (1965-1979)	37	6.2
Gen Y (1980 - 1994)	234	39.3
Gen Z (1995 - 2009)	324	54.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Education</b>		
Highschool	18	3.0
College/Technical School	218	36.6
Graduate	283	47.6
Postgraduate	76	12.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Approximate income</b>		
Under 200€	238	40.0
200€ to under 400€	128	21.5
400€ to under 800€	145	24.4
800€ to under 1.600€	50	8.4
Over 1.600€	34	5.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>100</i>



The table below presents the actual behaviors of participants in terms of drinking and buying coffee. Approximately 48% of respondents have the coffee drinking habit of at least once per day.

Concerning to purchasing habit, the majority of participants normally purchase coffee product for their own usage (49%) or for others' usage (31%).

*Table 4.9. The current behaviors of drinking and purchasing coffee*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
<b>Drinking coffee</b>		
1 time/day	142	23.9
2 times/day	54	9.1
3 times/day or more	19	3.2
I don't drink coffee	71	11.9
Sometimes	309	51.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>100.0</i>
<b>Purchasing coffee</b>		
No, I don't buy coffee products	120	20.2
Yes, I buy for my family/others' usage	184	30.9
Yes, I buy for my own usage	291	48.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>595</i>	<i>100.0</i>

➤ **Reliability and validity of measurement**

The table below shows the reliability analysis of measurement scales. All Cronbach's alphas are satisfactory, ranging from 0.749 to 0.944, over the threshold of 0.70.

The scales are validated through factor analysis. The table below shows the factor loading of each item on its variable. All the factor loadings are high, ranging from 0.728 to 0.957, except one item measuring self-identity dimension of habituation (factor loading of 0.649) which is acceptable.

Concerning Habituation variable with totally twelve measured items in the original scale by Verplanken and Orbell (2003), we conducted the reduce dimension process. The results reveal that three components (or dimensions) help to explain 75,15% total variance of the variable.

In the same manner, Habituation is defined by a set of questions related to the automaticity of the behavior; his/her frequency to carry out that behavior as well as how the behavior define the self-identity of that person (Verplanken and Orbell 2003, Labrecque et al. 2017). Therefore, *face validity* is also processed based on our judgment (Hair Jr et al. 2019) together with reduce dimension process (by SPSS) to assign twelve items into three relevant dimensions above. They are ‘automatic activation’ (5 items), ‘behavioral frequency’ (3 items), and ‘self-identity’ (4 items) as the table below.

Table 4.10. The reliability and validity of measured variables

No.	Variables	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Perceived CSR of consumers</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 76.13%</i>	0.894
1	Company X is aware of environmental issues.	0.870	
2	Company X fulfils its social responsibilities.	0.891	
3	Company X gives back to society.	0.823	
4	Company X acts in a socially responsible way.	0.904	
<b>Product Quality</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 83.27%</i>	0.899
1	Products of company X have very poor quality/have very high quality.	0.911	
2	Products of company X are inferior/are superior.	0.909	
3	Products of company X are poorly made/are well made.	0.918	
<b>Attitude toward the firm</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 90.06%</i>	0.944
<i>Please indicate your overall attitude toward [company X]:</i>			
1	dislike---like	0.947	
2	unfavorable---favorable	0.957	
3	negative---positive	0.943	
<b>Purchase Intention</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 85.52%</i>	0.914
1	It is very likely that I will buy products from company X.	0.935	
2	I will purchase products from company X the next time I need coffee.	0.950	
3	I will definitely try other products from company X.	0.888	
<b>Recommendation Intention</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 91.53%</i>	0.843 <sup>a</sup>
1	I would say positive things about company X to other people.	0.957	
2	I would recommend company X if anyone asked me for advice.	0.957	
<b>Perceived Firm's Motives</b>			0.904
<b>Values driven</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 72.48%</i>	0.809

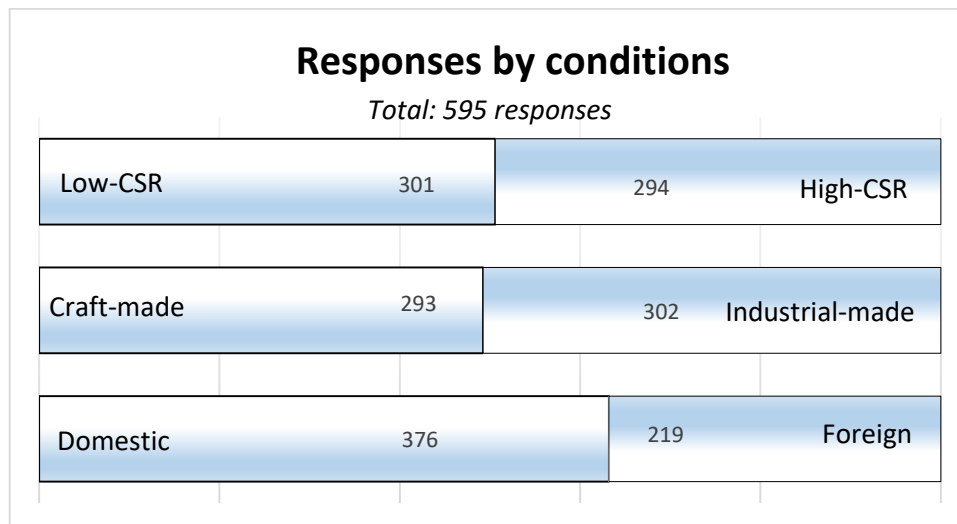
No.	Variables	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha
1	They feel morally obligated to help.	0.866	
2	They have a long-term interest in the community.	0.874	
3	They are trying to give something back to the community.	0.812	
	<b>Stakeholder driven</b>	<i>Total Variance Explained = 67.20%</i>	<b>0.837</b>
4	They feel their customers expect it.	0.783	
5	They feel society in general (i.e., consumers) expects it.	0.851	
6	They feel their stockholders expect it.	0.875	
7	They feel their employees expect it.	0.765	
	<b>Egoistic</b>	<i>Total Variance Explained = 67.33%</i>	<b>0.749</b>
8	They are taking advantage of the non-profit organization to help their own business.	0.873	
9	They are taking advantage of the cause to help their own business.	0.852	
10	They want it as a tax write-off.	0.728	
	<b>Strategic</b>	<i>Total Variance Explained = 74.40%</i>	<b>0.822</b>
11	They will get more customers by doing this activity.	0.889	
12	They will keep more of their customers by doing this activity.	0.910	
13	They hope to increase profits by doing this activity.	0.783	
	<b>Habituation</b>		<b>0.938</b>
	<b>Automatic activation</b>	<i>Total Variance Explained = 63.26%</i>	<b>0.854</b>
1	Drinking coffee is something I do automatically	0.831	
2	Drinking coffee is something I do without having to consciously remember.	0.825	
3	Drinking coffee is something I do without thinking.	0.796	
4	Drinking coffee is something I start doing before I realize I'm doing it.	0.786	
5	Drinking coffee is something I have no need to think about doing.	0.734	
	<b>Behavioral frequency</b>	<i>Total Variance Explained = 79.11%</i>	<b>0.867</b>
1	Drinking coffee is something I do frequently.	0.902	
2	Drinking coffee is something that belongs to my (daily, weekly, monthly) routine.	0.899	
3	Drinking coffee is something I have been doing for a long time.	0.867	
	<b>Self-identity</b>	<i>Total Variance Explained = 66.85%</i>	<b>0.829</b>
1	Drinking coffee is something that makes me feel weird if I do not do it.	0.876	

No.	Variables	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha
2	Drinking coffee is something I would require effort not to do it.	0.867	
3	Drinking coffee is something I would find hard not to do.	0.856	
4	Drinking coffee is something that's typically 'me'.	0.649	
<b>CSR Skepticism</b>		<i>Total Variance Explained = 81.59%</i>	0.906
1	It is doubtless/doubtful that this is a socially responsible company.	0.930	
2	It is certain/uncertain that this company is concerned to improve the well-being of society.	0.897	
3	It is sure/unsure that this company follows high ethical standards.	0.895	
4	It is unquestionable/questionable that this company acts in a socially responsible way.	0.891	

➤ **Descriptive Statistics**

**Responses by conditions**

Figure 4.14. The responses by conditions



The sample of 595 respondents is valid and used for further analysis. The figure above shows the frequency of cases by conditions with which 301 responses are low-CSR involvement, and 294 responses were high-CSR involvement. Relating to production process, 293 responses are craft-made, and 302 responses were industrial-made. In terms of firm origin, 376 responses were domestic, and 219 responses were foreign.

**Descriptive statistics of measured variables**

The table below presents the overall descriptions of variables measured in this study. Descriptive statistics show the value of min, max, mean and standard deviations of each item in the measured variables.

The mean values of perceived CSR of consumers (4-item scale) are between 5.03 and 5.48 on a 7-point Likert scale. Standard deviations are between 1.560 and 1.672.

The mean scores of product quality range from 5.29 to 5.46 on a 7-point semantic differential scale (3-item). Standard deviations are between 1.238 and 1.281.

The mean values of consumer attitude toward the firm are between 5.58 and 5.79 on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Standard deviations are between 1.185 and 1.312.

On an 11-point behavioral intention scale, the mean scores of purchase intention (3-item) range from 6.87 to 7.07. Standard deviations are between 2.251 and 2.393.

The mean values of recommendation intention (2-item) are 7.11 and 7.13. Standard deviations are between 2.395 and 2.422.

Thirteen items are used to measure firm CSR motives on a 7-point Likert scale. The mean scores range from 4.17 to 5.59. Standard deviations are between 1.341 and 1.784.

Habituation is measured by 12 items. The mean scores are between 2.97 and 4.52 on a 7-point Likert scale. Standard deviations are between 2.092 and 2.301.

Lastly, CSR skepticism is measured by four items and has the mean scores between 3.65 and 3.84 on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Standard deviations are between 1.854 and 1.897.

*Table 4.11. Descriptive statistics of measured variables*

No.	Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Perceived CSR of consumers</b>					
1	Company X is aware of environmental issues.	1	7	5.48	1.672
2	Company X fulfils its social responsibilities.	1	7	5.14	1.598
3	Company X gives back to society.	1	7	5.03	1.634

No.	Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
4	Company X acts in a socially responsible way.	1	7	5.44	1.560
<b>Product Quality</b>					
<i>Products of company X...</i>					
1	...have very poor quality/have very high quality	1	7	5.32	1.238
2	... are inferior/are superior	1	7	5.29	1.281
3	... are poorly made/are well made	1	7	5.46	1.240
<b>Attitude toward the firm</b>					
<i>Please indicate your overall attitude toward company X:</i>					
1	dislike---like	1	7	5.58	1.312
2	unfavorable---favorable	1	7	5.66	1.296
3	negative---positive	1	7	5.79	1.185
<b>Purchase Intention</b>					
1	It is very likely that I will buy products from company X.	0	10	6.87	2.251
2	I will purchase products from company X the next time I need coffee.	0	10	6.92	2.366
3	I will definitely try other products from company X.	0	10	7.07	2.393
<b>Recommendation Intention</b>					
1	I would say positive things about company X to other people.	0	10	7.11	2.422
2	I would recommend company X if anyone asked me for advice.	0	10	7.13	2.395
<b>Perceived Firm's CSR Motives</b>					
<i>Company X is making such activities (CSR activities) because</i>					
1	They feel morally obligated to help.	1	7	5.23	1.515
2	They have a long-term interest in the community.	1	7	5.52	1.474
3	They are trying to give something back to the community.	1	7	5.26	1.540
4	They feel their customers expect it.	1	7	5.35	1.477
5	They feel society in general (i.e., consumers) expects it.	1	7	4.91	1.571
6	They feel their stockholders expect it.	1	7	4.98	1.593
7	They feel their employees expect it.	1	7	5.16	1.482
8	They are taking advantage of the nonprofit organization to help their own business.	1	7	4.84	1.662
9	They are taking advantage of the cause to help their own business.	1	7	5.13	1.547
10	They want it as a tax write-off.	1	7	4.17	1.784
11	They will get more customers by doing this activity.	1	7	5.59	1.363
12	They will keep more of their customers by doing this activity.	1	7	5.55	1.341
13	They hope to increase profits by doing this activity.	1	7	5.41	1.462
<b>Habituation</b>					
1	Drinking coffee is something I do frequently.	1	7	4.52	2.095
2	Drinking coffee is something I do automatically.	1	7	4.45	2.109
3	Drinking coffee is something I do without having to consciously remember.	1	7	3.31	2.092
4	Drinking coffee is something that makes me feel weird if I do not do it.	1	7	3.40	2.288

No.	Variable	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
5	Drinking coffee is something I do without thinking.	1	7	3.87	2.191
6	Drinking coffee is something I would require effort not to do it.	1	7	4.29	2.208
7	Drinking coffee is something that belongs to my (daily, weekly, monthly) routine.	1	7	3.91	2.301
8	Drinking coffee is something I start doing before I realize I'm doing it.	1	7	2.97	2.113
9	Drinking coffee is something I would find hard not to do.	1	7	3.23	2.186
10	Drinking coffee is something I have no need to think about doing.	1	7	4.14	2.167
11	Drinking coffee is something that's typically 'me'.	1	7	3.14	2.122
12	Drinking coffee is something I have been doing for a long time.	1	7	4.44	2.210
<b>CSR Skepticism</b>					
1	It is doubtless/doubtful that this is a socially responsible company.	1	7	3.65	1.897
2	It is certain/uncertain that this company is concerned to improve the well-being of society.	1	7	3.84	1.854
3	It is sure/unsure that this company follows high ethical standards.	1	7	3.82	1.872
4	It is unquestionable/questionable that this company acts in a socially responsible way.	1	7	3.75	1.872

#### ➤ Manipulation check

This study is designed as 2 (CSR: high vs. low) x 2 (firm origin: domestic vs. foreign) x 2 (production process: artisanal vs. industrial) between-subject experiment. Prior to further analysis, we examine whether the manipulations are adequately conducted.

Conducting independent samples t-tests in SPSS, we seek for the statistical differences between two conditions of each above stimulus.

The results of t-test, on two levels of manipulation of CSR involvement, show that the two conditions of low CSR (M = 4.92, SD = 1.550) and high CSR (M = 5.52, SD = 1.326) are significantly different at  $t(594) = -5.144, p < 0.001$ .

The results obtained from t-test on two conditions of firm origin including domestic firm (M = 3.55, SD = 2.308) and foreign firm (M = 5.20, SD = 2.162) are significantly different at  $t(480) = -8.721, p < 0.001$ .

On the final manipulation of production process, the results of t-test also reveal the significant difference between the craft-made (M = 3.31, SD = 2.137) and industrial-made (M = 5.86, SD = 1.541) at  $t(532) = -16.679, p < 0.001$ .

The results of manipulation check are showed in table 5 below, suggesting all three stimuli are successfully manipulated.

Table 4.12. Results of Independent samples t-tests

Manipulated variables	Conditions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
CSR involvement	Low-CSR	301	4.92	1.550	-5.144	594	0.000
	High-CSR	294	5.52	1.326			
Firm origin	Domestic	376	3.55	2.308	-8.721	480	0.000
	Foreign	219	5.20	2.162			
Production process	craft-made	294	3.31	2.137	-16.679	532	0.000
	Industrial-made	302	5.86	1.541			

#### 4.3.2. Hypotheses testing

##### ➤ The effects of stimulus

In this experiment, each of three stimuli has two conditions. Specifically, the manipulations are designed as 2 (CSR involvement of firm: high vs. low) x 2 (firm origin: domestic vs. foreign) x 2 (production process: artisanal vs. industrial). No control group is employed.

Before further analysis, we recoded and transformed the scenarios into three separated new variables including CSR involvement (low-CSR: code 1; high-CSR: code 2), firm origin (domestic: code 1, foreign: code 2), and production process (artisanal: code 1, industrial: code 2).

##### ***Main effects of stimulus on consumer attitude and behavioral intentions***

Firstly, we examine the main effects of three above stimuli on consumer attitude and behavioral intention (i.e., purchase and recommendation) toward the coffee product described in the corresponding scenarios.

We conducted multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with CSR involvement, firm origin, and production process as independent variables and consumer attitude, purchase and recommendation intention as dependent variables.

The results reveal the effects of firm involvement in CSR on consumer attitude, purchase and recommendation intention are significant, supporting our previous



hypotheses. Specifically shown in the table below, participants exposed to scenarios related to high level of firm involvement in CSR result in higher attitude score toward the firm than those with low level of firm involvement in CSR ( $M_{low-CSR} = 5.36$ ;  $M_{high-CSR} = 6.00$ ;  $F = 46.56$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). By the same token, they report higher purchase intention ( $M_{low-CSR} = 4.36$ ;  $M_{high-CSR} = 4.96$ ;  $F = 27.87$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) as well as higher recommendation intention ( $M_{low-CSR} = 6.62$ ;  $M_{high-CSR} = 7.62$ ;  $F = 29.43$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) comparing to those given scenarios with low level of firm involvement in CSR.

However, no evidence of the main effect is found on consumer attitude, purchase and recommendation intention from two conditions of firm origin (domestic vs. foreign) ( $p > 0.1$ ) and two conditions of production process (artisanal vs. industrial) ( $p > 0.1$ ).

In other words, there are no significant differences on consumer attitude and behavioral intention among the participants given the scenarios in which the firm is domestic and those given the scenarios in which the firm is foreign.

In the same manner, the participants who read scenarios in which the coffee is produced in artisanal way are not significantly different from those with industrial way of production in terms of consumer attitude and behavioral intentions.

Tests of between-subject effects for all three stimuli also do not reveal any interaction effects among them on attitude toward the firm and behavioral intention (all  $p > 0.1$ ).

Table 4.13. Effects of firm involvement in CSR on product quality, consumer attitude, purchase intention and recommendation intention

Independent variable	MANOVA Results		N	Univariate Results							
				Product quality		Consumer attitude		Purchase intention		Recommendation intention	
	Wilk's $\lambda$	F		Mean	F	Mean	F	Mean	F	Mean	F
Firm involvement in CSR	0.94	11.96		23.66*		46.56*		27.87*		29.43*	
High-CSR			301	5.14		5.36		4.36		6.62	
Low-CSR			294	5.58		6.00		4.96		7.62	

\* $p < 0.001$

***Main effects of stimulus on product quality***

We conducted 3-way ANOVA to examine the effects of three manipulations (firm involvement in CSR, firm origin, and production process) on product quality.

The results on the table above shows that the main effect of firm involvement in CSR on product quality ( $M_{\text{low-CSR}} = 5.14$ ;  $M_{\text{high-CSR}} = 5.58$ ;  $F = 23.66$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). On average, higher level of firm involvement in CSR results in higher level of consumer evaluation of product quality.

We found no evidence of the main effect on product quality of the other two manipulating variables (firm origin and production process) (both  $p > 0.10$ ).

***Difference effects of CSR involvement among groups of gender and educational levels***

Once the statistically significance is found on the impact of CSR manipulation on consumer attitude and behavioral intentions, we re-conduct one-way ANOVAs with firm involvement in CSR as independent variable; attitude toward the firm, purchase and recommendation intentions as dependent variables; participants' gender and education as covariates.

***Concerning gender as a covariate***, the tests of between-subjects effects reveal the significantly differences between male and female on three outcome variables (see the table below).

Looking at the means of participants by gender, we found that female's attitude toward the firm are statistically higher than male's one ( $M_{\text{female}} = 5.82$ ;  $M_{\text{male}} = 5.34$ ;  $F = 19.08$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). The same results are found with purchase intention ( $M_{\text{female}} = 4.77$ ;  $M_{\text{male}} = 4.37$ ;  $F = 9.22$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and recommendation intention ( $M_{\text{female}} = 7.35$ ;  $M_{\text{male}} = 6.57$ ;  $F = 13.36$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, female responses toward CSR are more positively than male.

Table 4.14. Different effects of gender and education on consumer attitude toward the firm and behavioral intentions

Independent variable, Covariates	Univariate Results								
	Consumer attitude			Purchase intention			Recommendation intention		
	Mean	F	p-value	Mean	F	p-value	Mean	F	p-value
<b>Firm involvement in CSR</b>									
Gender		19.08	< 0.001		9.22	< 0.05		13.36	< 0.001
<i>Male</i>	5.34			4.37			6.57		
<i>Female</i>	5.82			4.77			7.35		
Education		6.60	< 0.001		5.78	< 0.05		6.50	< 0.001
<i>Highschool</i>	5.39 <sup>b</sup>			4.24 <sup>b</sup>			6.75 <sup>b</sup>		
<i>College/ Technical school</i>	5.95 <sup>a</sup>			4.95 <sup>a</sup>			7.65 <sup>a</sup>		
<i>Graduate</i>	5.51 <sup>a</sup>			4.52 <sup>a</sup>			6.81 <sup>a</sup>		
<i>Postgraduate</i>	5.68 <sup>b</sup>			4.37 <sup>b</sup>			6.81 <sup>b</sup>		

Post-hoc (Turkey):

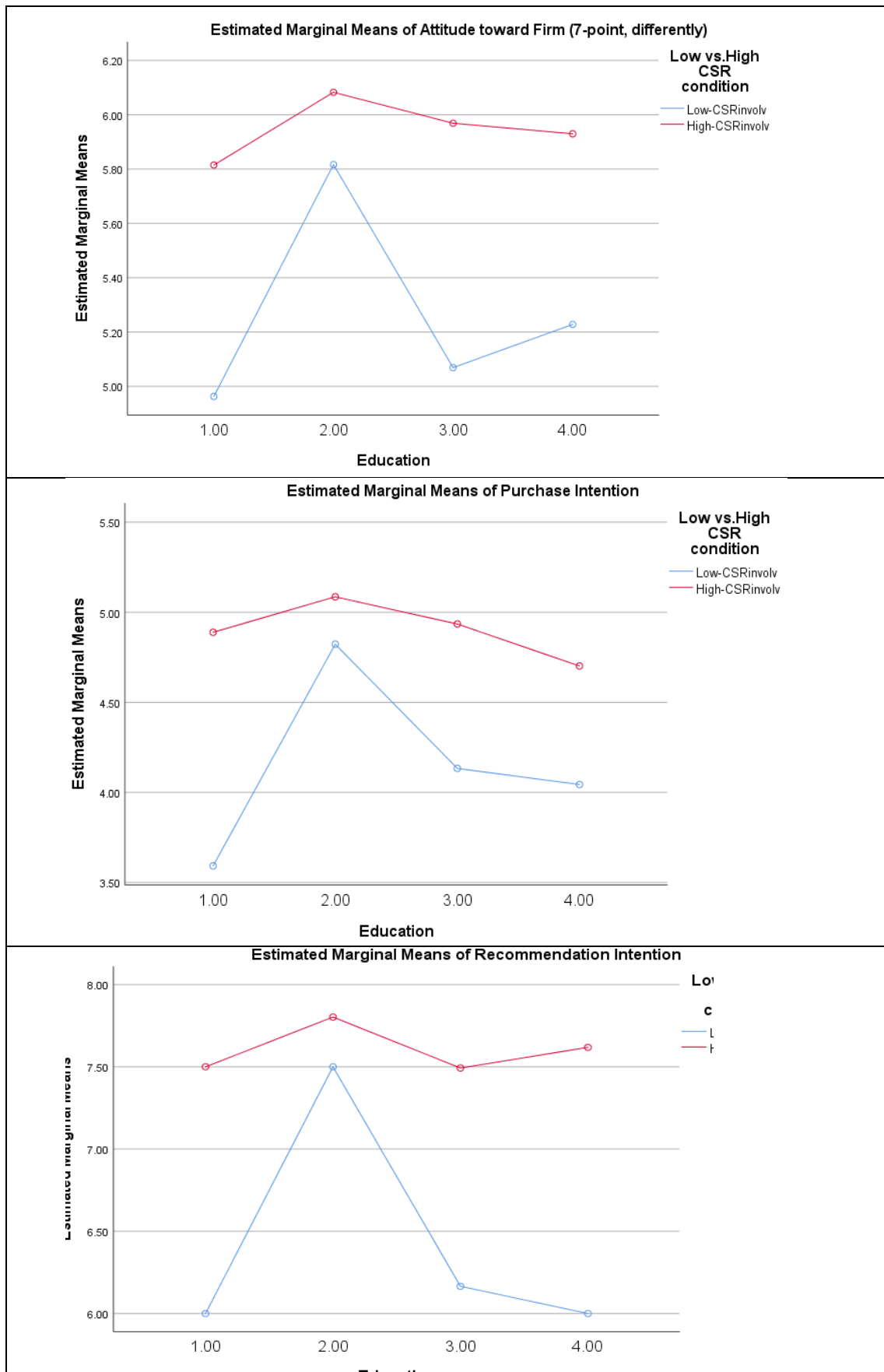
<sup>a</sup> The means of two subgroups (college/Technical school and graduate) are significantly different with each other at  $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>b</sup> not significantly different with others

**Concerning education level as a covariate**, the results reveal the significantly differences among different levels of education on attitude toward the firm ( $F=6.60$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), purchase intention ( $F=5.78$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and recommendation intention ( $F=6.50$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

The figure below visualizes these differences. It is noticeable that consumers whose educational level is college/technical school (level 2) have highest mean score for their attitude toward firm and behavioral intentions. However, post-hoc test reveals that only the means of two subgroups (College/Technical school and graduate) are significantly different with each other ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Figure 4.15. Difference effects of educational level on consumer responses



### Firm involvement in CSR, perceived CSR and gender

We run 2-way ANOVA with firm involvement in CSR (manipulation: low vs. high) and gender as independent variables and perceived CSR as dependent variable. As presented before, perceived CSR are in metric scale, measured by four items (Currás-Pérez et al. 2009) by a 7-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

The results reveal that the perceptions of consumers are significantly different in terms of gender ( $M_{\text{male}} = 5.01$ ,  $M_{\text{female}} = 5.38$ ;  $F = 7.848$ ,  $p < 0.10$ ). On an average, female consumers showed more positive perception toward firm engagement in CSR as compared to male, given the same condition (low or high-CSR).

#### ➤ Mediating effects of perceived product quality

We hypothesized that perceived product quality plays a mediating role on the effect of firm engagement in CSR on consumer attitude and behavioral intentions. In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted analysis through Hayes's (2021) process macro v3.5.2 (model 4).

The results reveals that perceived product quality mediates the effect from firm engagement in CSR on consumer attitude toward the firm. The table below presents the direct effect, indirect, and total effect in which all the effects are positive and significant ( $p < .001$ ) as well as the percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero.

Table 4.15. Effect of firm involvement in CSR on consumer attitude toward the firm with perceived product quality as a mediator

Effects		Results			Note
		Size**	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.236	.060	<.001	Effect of firm involvement in CSR on consumer attitude toward the firm
Indirect effect	ab	.301	.077	[.217; .516]*	
	a	.391	.092	<.001	Effect of firm involvement in CSR on perceived product quality
	b	.769	.026	<.001	Effect of perceived product quality on consumer attitude toward the firm
Total effect	c	.537	.095	<.001	$c = ab + c'$

\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero

*\*\*standardized coefficient*

The analysis is repeated with purchase intention and recommendation intention as dependent variable, correspondingly. The tables below present the analysis results, giving the evidences that all the direct, indirect and total effect are positive and significant. The percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero for both analyses.

*Table 4.16. The effect of firm involvement in CSR on purchase intention with perceived product quality as mediator*

Effects		Results			Note
		Size**	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.165	.087	.007	Effect of Firm involvement in CSR on Purchase intention
Indirect effect	ab	.258	.080	[.217; .518]*	
	a	.391	.092	< .001	Effect of Firm involvement in CSR on Perceived product quality
	b	.661	.038	<.001	Effect of Perceived product quality on Purchase intention
Total effect	c	.423	.114	<.001	c = ab + c'

*\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero*

*\*\*standardized coefficient*

*Table 4.17. The effect of firm involvement in CSR on recommendation intention with perceived product quality as mediator*

Effects		Results			Note
		Size**	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.182	.143	.004	Effect of Firm involvement in CSR on Recommendation intention
Indirect effect	ab	.252	.130	[.336; .848]*	
	a	.391	.092	<.001	Effect of Firm involvement in CSR on Perceived product quality
	b	.645	.063	<.001	Effect of Perceived product quality on Recommendation intention
Total effect	c	.434	.185	<.001	c = ab + c'

*\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero*

*\*\*standardized coefficient*

➤ **Mediating effects of CSR Skepticism**

As we hypothesized that CSR skepticism plays the role of moderator, we conducted a moderating model through Hayes' s (2021) process macro v3.5.2 (model 1) with firm involvement in CSR as dependent variable, perceived product quality as dependent variable, and CSR skepticism as moderating variable. However, the moderating effect is not significant.

We then re-conducted a mediating model through Hayes' s (2021) process macro v3.5.2 (model 4) with CSR Skepticism as mediating variable.

We found that CSR skepticism plays the mediating role on the influence of firm involvement in CSR (manipulating variable) on perceived product quality (with  $p < .001$ ). It is interesting that the effect of CSR skepticism on perceived product quality is negative, revealing that the higher CSR skepticism a consumer is; the lower evaluation he/she would evaluate on product quality.

The direct effect and total effect are significant (both  $p < .001$ ). For the indirect effect the percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero.

Table 4.18. Effect of firm involvement in CSR on perceived product quality with CSR skepticism as mediator

Effects		Results			Note
		Size* *	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.341	.091	<.001	Effect of firm involvement in CSR on Product quality
Indirect effect	ab	.048	.024	[.016; .108]*	
	a	-.246	.138	.003	Effect of firm involvement in CSR on CSR skepticism
	b	-.197	.270	<.001	Effect of CSR skepticism on perceived product quality
Total effect	c	.391	.092	<.001	$c = ab + c'$

\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero

\*\*standardized coefficient

➤ Moderating effects of firm CSR motives

Firm CSR motives is measured through four dimensions consisting of value-driven ( 3 items), stakeholder-driven (4-items), egoistic (3 items), and strategic (3 items) (Ellen et al. 2006, Vlachos et al. 2009).

We tested the hypothesis of moderating effect through Hayes' s (2021) process macro v3.5.2 (model 1). However, the value-driven dimension of the scale does not result in statistical significance. We then replicated the test with the three other dimensions combined (SES - stakeholder-driven, egoistic, and strategic motives).

The table below illustrates the interacting effect of firm CSR motives toward firm involvement in CSR was significant ( $p = .003$ ). It is noticeable that the coefficient of the effect is negative. In other words, the perceived product quality would be lower when consumers perceive the firm motives strongly related to firm-self benefits.

The value of Johnson-Neyman of 5.711 represents the point from there the moderating effect of firm CSR motives is no more statistically significant ( $p \geq .094$ ).

Table 4.19. Moderating effect of Firm CSR motives (Model 1 process macro)

Antecedent	Consequent: perceived product quality (Y)	
	Coeff.	p-value
<b>Conditional effects:</b>		
X (firm involvement in CSR)	1.511	<.001
W (firm CSR motives)	.835	<.001
<b>Interaction effect:</b>		
X*W	-.232	.003
Constant	.633	.298
		R <sup>2</sup> = .261
		F = 69.541, p <.001
Johnson-Neyman Firm's Motives = 5.711		

#### ➤ Moderating effects of consumption habituation

We tested our hypothesis through Hayes' s (2021) process macro v3.5.2, using model 1. The analysis results reveal no evidence for the moderating effects of Habituation on the relationship of firm involvement in CSR and consumer attitude and behavioral intentions ( $p > 0.10$ ).



Alternatively, we replicated the analysis with perceived CSR as independent variable and habituation as moderating variable.

With purchase intention as dependent variable in the moderating model, the interacting effect of habituation and perceived CSR ( $X*W$ ) is statistically significant (coeff. =  $-.080$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ). The negative sign of coefficient represents the negative effect of the interaction between perceived CSR of consumers ( $X$ ) and habituation ( $W$ ) on purchase intention. Besides, there is no transition point of the moderating effect, suggesting this moderating effect is significantly on the entire range of the data (Hayes 2018).

These results support our prediction that among consumers at the same degree of perceived CSR, those who have higher degree of habituation would result in lower purchase intention for the new coffee product.

We then replicated the analysis with consumer attitude toward the firm and recommendation intention as dependent variables, respectively. However, the moderating effect of habituation is not statistically significant in the model when the outcome variable is consumer attitude ( $p$ -value is approximate 0.10). Also, when the outcome variable is recommendation intention, the moderating effect of habituation is not statistically significant either ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 4.20. Moderating effect of habituation

Antecedent	Consequent						
	(Y) Consumer attitude		(Y) Purchase intention		(Y) Recommendation intention		
	$\beta$	$p$ -value	$\beta$	$p$ -value	$\beta$	$p$ -value	
<b>Conditional effects:</b>							
X (perceived firm involvement in CSR)	.634	< 0.001	.913	< 0.001	1.153	< 0.001	
W (habituation)	.220	.047	.506	< 0.001	.499	.027	
<b>Interaction effect:</b>							
X*W	-.033	.994	-.080	.001	-.079	.051	
Constant	2.132	< 0.001	-.443	.430	.794	.396	
		$R^2 = .365$		$R^2 = .366$		$R^2 = .283$	
		$F = 76.273, p < .001$		$F = 76.662, p < .001$		$F = 52.245, p < .001$	

### ***The frequency of drinking coffee and consumption habituation***

In order to test the consistency of drinking coffee frequency and habituation scale, we firstly ran correlation test. The results reveal high correlation with the coefficient of 0.602.

As there are many categories in drinking coffee frequency (already recoded into values: 0 = I don't drink coffee; 1 = Sometimes; 2 = 1 time/day; 3 = 2 times/day; 4 = 3 times/day or more), we conducted one-way ANOVA.

The results of ANOVA reveal that there is significant difference among groups ( $F = 68.412$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Besides, the habit score increases together with the frequency of drinking coffee. To understand deeper, we conducted the post-hoc tests for multi comparisons among groups.

The results show that the subsample of those who “do not drink coffee” and those who “drink sometimes” ( $p < 0.001$  for both groups) are significantly different from the subsample of those who “drink coffee once or more”.

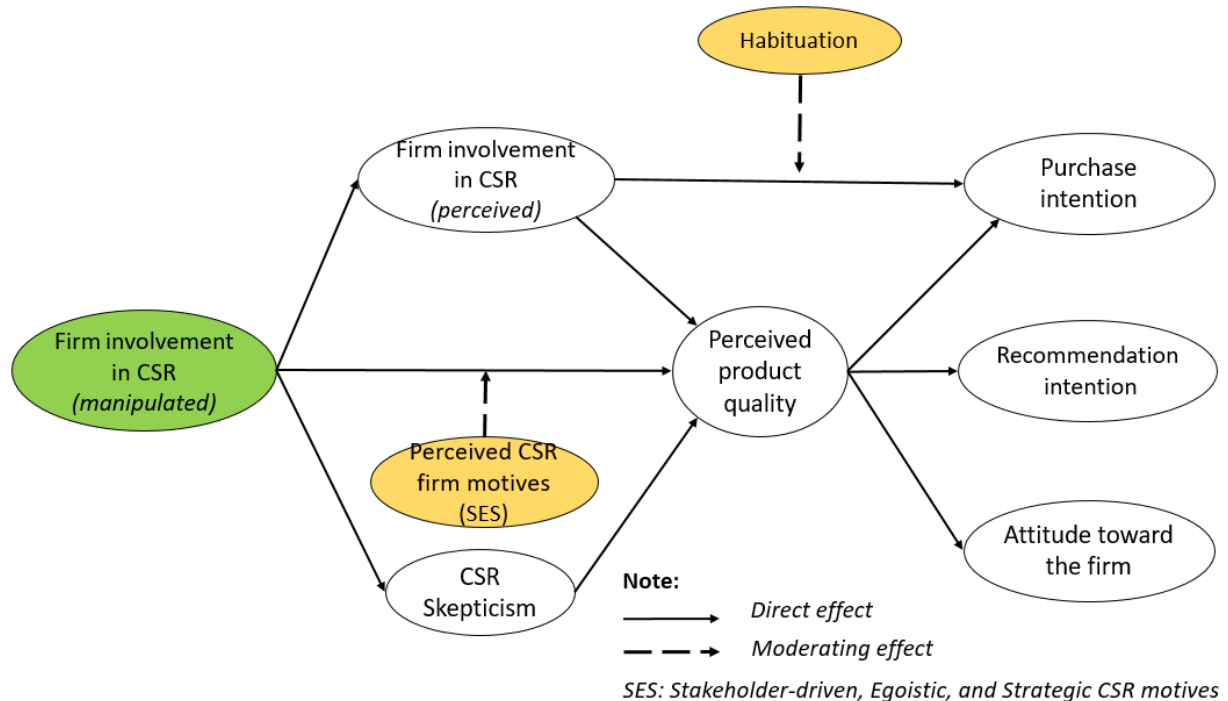
Among those who “drink coffee daily” (no matter how many times a day, e.g., 1, 2, 3 times or more), post-hoc tests show no significant difference between these groups ( $p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that once a person drinks coffee repeatedly each day, the drinking coffee habit has been established. In other words, their habituations are significantly different in comparing to those who do not drink or drink sometimes, but there is no evidence for the higher habit score among those who drink coffee daily. This is to say, the frequency of the behavior (drinking coffee) contributes to the consumption habituation rather than the quantity of consumed coffee.

## **4.4. DISCUSSION**

In this section, we discuss about the mediating role of perceived product quality on the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and further outcomes (attitudes and behavioral intentions) as well as the moderating roles of consumption habituation and perceived firm CSR motives. Different from what we expect, CSR skepticism mediates the role of firm

involvement in CSR and perceived product quality (see the conceptual model after tested below).

Figure 4.16. The conceptual model after being tested



#### 4.4.1. Mediating role of perceived product quality

In the experiment, we did not give any information of technical quality control which usually serve as the basis for actual quality of products. Participants were merely exposed to the scenarios related to how the firm engaged in CSR. It is interesting that the cue of CSR could induce some sort of evaluations related to product quality. In turn, the positively perceived product quality results in positive intentions of purchasing and recommending the product, as well as a more favorable attitude toward the firm.

#### 4.4.2. Moderating role of consumption habituation

Habituation significantly moderated the impact of perceived CSR on purchase intention. However, no evidence of the moderating role of habituation was found when the outcome variables were consumer attitude or recommendation intention.

Higher level of firm involvement in CSR resulted in higher perceived CSR, and in turn, resulted more positive attitude toward that firm as well as higher degree of behavioral intention (for both purchase and recommendation). However, when the habit of drinking coffee took

position (stronger habit, in other words), the habit seemingly reduced the impact of perceived CSR on the outcomes, but not all of them. The influence of perceived CSR among consumers on their attitude toward firm and their intention of recommendation were not under moderating effect of habituation. Interestingly however, when dealing with more engaged intention (i.e., buying in this circumstance), comparing to consumers who had low degree of coffee drinking habit, those who had higher degree of coffee drinking habit revealed lower intention of purchase for the new launching coffee product. It was noticeable that previously they did appreciate the firm commitment in CSR but this was not reflected in their intentions afterwards. The purchase intention created because of good image of the firm in terms of doing good for society and environment was pulled back due to the attachment toward their current coffee drinking habit. Through this moderating effects of habituation on relationship of perceived quality and target consumers behaviors (i.e., purchasing), our study confirmed the results on the same issues (Labrecque et al. 2017). We went further by providing explanation for the circumstance when a part of consumers even though was favorable to new products but finally still did not buy it.

This interpretation was significant within the experiment product (coffee) and therefore, the implication for other type of products should be carried out under consideration while taking into account the habituation related to that type of products.

#### **4.4.3. Moderating role of perceived firm CSR motives**

Through this study, we found that not all four dimensions of firm CSR motives (i.e., Value-driven, Stakeholder-driven, Egoistic, and Strategic) have the same impacts on consumer evaluations but only the combination of three dimensions related to firm-self benefits (SES motives: Stakeholder-driven, Egoistic, and Strategic). Besides, the negative direction of the moderating effect indicates that the perceived product quality would be lower when consumers perceive the firm motives strongly related to firm-self benefits. Our findings are consistent to those of Hildebrand et al. (2017) who suggested that consumers evaluate a company more favorably when its activities related to in-kind contributions (i.e., associated to values and emotions) rather than monetary ones.

#### **4.4.4. No effect of country-of-origin and production process**

Despite having successfully manipulated all three variables (firm involvement in CSR, firm origin, and production process), we obtained no considerable differences between experiment groups for the two manipulated factors: firm origin (domestic vs. foreign) and production process (artisanal vs. industrial). These are contradictory to previous studies had noted the important impacts of country-of-origin (Bilkey and Nes 1982, Elliott and Cameron 1994, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999) and production process (Dubé et al. 2016, Rivaroli et al. 2020) on consumer evaluations of products (e.g., perceived product quality), which in turn impacted on the attitude toward firms as well as their behavioral intentions. Specifically, many studies on different product categories had suggested consumer preferences especially in food category (e.g., cheese, wine, or beer (Kupiec and Revell 1998, Aquilani et al. 2015)). However, our experiment in the context of oriental market did not detect any evidence for the impact of firm origin and production process on consumers' evaluation of product quality, attitude toward the firm and behavioral intention afterwards. In other words, these two factors had no effect on measured outcomes, at least for the coffee product tested in the experiment. As such, the implication for other product types should be made under consideration while taking into account consumers' habituation related to the product category.

#### **4.4.5. CSR skepticism and "hidden" CSR-related values**

Different from our hypothesis that CSR skepticism plays the moderating role in the relationship between firm engagement in CSR and consumer responses to it, we found that CSR skepticism mediates this effect in a counterintuitive manner. Probably, when given a scenario related to high (vs. low) firm involvement in CSR, consumers – corresponding to the CSR-related values – may form some certain judgements on the firms, which in turn have an impact on their skepticism on the CSR activities of that firm. The mediating role of CSR skepticism in our findings is consistent with the suggestions in several studies (Moreno and Kang 2020, Amawate and Deb 2021). This leads us to examine and explain the consumers' "hidden" CSR-related values that could have effect on their evaluations. More details will be presented in the next chapters.

#### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

The chapter gave answers for **research question n°2** (*What are the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR, firm origin and production process on perceived product quality and the consequences on consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions?*) and a part of **research question n°3** (*Which factors that can explain the mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and their responses to CSR?*).

The scenario-based experiment in this chapter formed a bridge between two components: firm green involvement and consumers' responses. Among three manipulated variables, we found the main effect of **firm involvement in CSR** on perceived product quality, attitude toward the firm, purchase intention, recommendation intention. However, no evidence of the same effect of firm origin and production process was found.

Moreover, **perceive product quality** played the essential role of a mediator. Notably, consumers formed their own evaluations of product quality even though no cue of quality control was given but only the information of how the firm engaged in CSR activities. Contradictory to our assumption, **CSR skepticism** does not play the role of moderator but instead of mediator between the relationship of CSR involvement on perceived product quality.

Furthermore, we found that **habituation** moderates the effect of perceived CSR on purchase intention but not on other two outcome constructs (attitude toward the firm and recommendation intention). Besides, partly **perceived firm CSR motives** (those related to stakeholder-driven, egoistic, strategic - SES) also moderate the effect of CSR involvement on perceived product quality.

The results of this experiment guided us for the replicated experiment in another sector (cosmetics and skincare) that would be presented in the next chapter.

## **PART I – WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT**

### **Chapter 1 | CSR and consumers**

- 1.1. The concept of CSR
- 1.2. How does CSR matter to consumers?
- 1.3. The oriental cultural aspects & their impacts on CSR conceptualization
- 1.4. Qualitative study: How consumers perceived CSR in Vietnam

### **Chapter 2 | Exploratory study: consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam**

- 2.1. Research design
- 2.2. Data collection and coding procedure
- 2.3. Findings
- 2.4. Discussion

## **PART II – HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR**

### **Chapter 3 | Consumer evaluations and reactions to CSR**

- 3.1. Consumer evaluations of the firm and its products
- 3.2. Consumer responses to CSR: attitude and behavioral intentions
- 3.3. Consumption habituation
- 3.4. How consumers perceived firm CSR motives
- 3.5. Skepticism toward firm engagement in CSR
- 3.6. Hypotheses development

### **Chapter 4 | Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector**

- 4.1. Research design: scenario-based experiment
- 4.2. Data collection
- 4.3. Data analysis
- 4.4. Discussion

## **PART III – BENEATH THE SURFACE: FACTORS EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR**

### **Chapter 5 | Factors explaining consumer responses to CSR**

- 5.1. Mindfulness and green consumption
- 5.2. Voluntary simplicity leads to conscious consumption
- 5.3. Connectedness to nature and sustainable values
- 5.4. Internal locus-of-control and the values of sustainability
- 5.5. Death anxiety: its effects on voluntary simplicity and mindfulness
- 5.6. Consumer sustainable behaviors reflecting their green values



### **Chapter 6 | Replicated experiment: consumer responses in skincare & cosmetics sector**

- 6.1. Research design
- 6.2. Data collection
- 6.3. Data analysis
- 6.4. Discussion

### **Chapter 7 | Explaining consumer responses through structural equation modeling**

- 7.1. Model specification
- 7.2. Model evaluation
- 7.3. Discussion

### **Chapter 8 | General discussion**

### **Conclusion: contributions, limitations, and further research**

PART III | BENEATH THE SURFACE:  
FACTORS EXPLAINING  
CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR



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## CHAPTER 5 | LITERATURE REVIEW ON FACTORS

### EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR

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Numerous studies have examined consumer and responses to CSR but the mechanism of how, when, and why consumers reacting to CSR still remains unclear. In this chapter, we review the current literature on the factors that together could explain the variances in consumer responses to firm engagement in CSR. They include the individual beliefs connected with the values explaining responsible consumption like mindfulness (section 5.1), voluntary simplicity (section 5.2), connectedness to nature (section 5.3), internal locus-of-control (section 5.4), death anxiety (section 5.5). as well as the general beliefs about social responsibility for themselves like consumer green values (section 5.6). Together with each section, we introduce the corresponding hypothesis of its effect on the relationship between firm engagement in CSR and consumer responses to it. The last section summarizing the chapter will be presented in the end of the chapter.

#### 5.1. MINDFULNESS AND GREEN CONSUMPTION

Aligned with Buddhism philosophy, mindfulness refers to the inner stillness of the mind as a tranquil and soothing response to present moment (Shapiro and Carlson 2009, Grossman 2015) (Shapiro and Carlson, 2009; Grossman, 2015). In the simplest way of understanding, mindfulness is the “here and now” attitude, emphasizing the presence of the mind and the acceptance of the happening events as they are, without judging or evaluating (Brown and Ryan 2003, Geiger et al. 2018). Usually studied as a factor related to well-beings, mindfulness has been recently received significant attention of scholars and considered an important notion relating to sustainable consumption (Amel et al. 2009, Barbaro and Pickett 2016, Schutte and Malouff 2018, Geiger et al. 2019).

Extant research describes mindfulness through multi-facets of the mind such as two main dimensions including *attention* and *awareness* (Brown and Ryan 2003, Rau and Williams 2016); five facets as in in the measurement of Kentucky Inventory on Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) by Baer et al. (2004). They include *observe inside* (e.g., the sensations while walking or

## *Chapter 5: Literature review on factors impacting consumer responses to CSR*

showering), observe outside (e.g., sounds, aromas, visual elements), *describe* (e.g., finding words to express feelings or sensations), *act with awareness* (e.g., being absorbed in what is done), and *act without judgment* (e.g., do not criticize the emotions of oneself) (Baer et al. 2004, Baer et al. 2006, Höfling et al. 2011).

Mindfulness also can be described broadly with seven aspects in the Comprehensive Inventory of Mindful Experiences scale (CHIME), introduced by Bergomi et al. (2015). They reflect the *acceptance* (e.g., being tolerant to ourselves when making mistakes), *acting consciously* (e.g., not being get distracted in the present), *awareness* (e.g., noticing the changes in body or the environment around), *decentering* (e.g., notice the distressing thoughts without acting something immediately), *openness* (e.g., not trying to hide when having unpleasant emotions), *relativity of thoughts* (e.g., believe that the evaluations or thoughts are changeable), and *loving insight* (e.g., understanding that the actual situation is not always as difficult as thought) (Bergomi et al. 2015). No matter how many facets that mindfulness was defined, scholars have come to a consensus that mindfulness urges people to appreciate the present moment and find the system of inner values that gives them happiness and life satisfaction.

Though not very numerous, recent studies found evidences of mindfulness' effects on individual sustainable behaviors. Since mindfulness encourages us to respect the "here and now" moment, it induces people to reconsider the values of their lives. In other words, there is a correlation between mindfulness and ecological consciousness, which is akin to sustainable behaviors referring to a large span of activities that consumers can perform to protect/reduce harm to environment and retain the resources for future generations (Ericson et al. 2014, Geiger et al. 2018, Li et al. 2021). Consciously or not yet, those who are mindful also perform some kinds of sustainable behaviors such as reducing consumption, improving their well-beings in a natural and environmental-friendly manner, carrying out the responsible attitudes and actions, which are closely related to the notion of "green values" (Mayer and Frantz 2004, Amel et al. 2009, Fischer et al. 2017). Later, we would review the relating literature of consumer's green values with more details.

Through the review of current literature above, we set the hypothesis as follows:

**H8:** *Mindfulness has a positive effect on green values of consumers.*

## **5.2. VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY LEADS TO CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION**

For such a long time, media and advertising have been propagating that purchasing and owning as much as possible bring people happiness, pleasure and satisfaction, as if it would have been an apparent fact. Urging consumers to purchase more and more brings revenues for firms but whether this is the only way for people to be satisfied in life?

In contrast to consumerism which motivates robust consumption, voluntary simplification has emerged recently, enhancing the tendency to buy less and own less, or “conscious consumption”. Although much discussed in recent years as a trendy movement adhere to minimalistic consumption lifestyle, this concept is not totally new. Already in 1965, Richard Wollheim, a British philosopher, advocated minimalism as a way of living (Oliveira de Mendonça et al. 2020, Pangarkar et al. 2021). Revolving from the idea of freeing oneself from attachment, it is really akin to the core discussion of Buddhist tenet indicating that attachment is one among original causes of sufferings (Gunasekara 1982, Sahdra et al. 2010, Daniels 2011, Thich 2019). Therefore, the detachment from excessive materials brings in the feelings of release, and therefore, set people free for a new and lighter life, just as extant research reveals that materialism is negatively related to life satisfaction (Richins and Dawson 1992, Urien and Kilbourne 2008, Kuanr et al. 2020).

Existing studies found the direct link between voluntary simplicity and sustainable consumption (Lee and Ahn 2016, Pangarkar et al. 2021). The concept is related to the simplification of material ownership, which is a way to reserve the resources (e.g., finances, energy, attentions) and make room for the important purchases that are really necessary. Voluntary simplicity, considered as a self-concept (Turner 2010) involved with detachment from unnecessary matters and focus on what are necessary, is therefore consistent with the notion of responsible consumption (McDonald et al. 2006, Iyer and Muncy 2009, Peyer et al. 2017). Put in this light, the more people give possessions to others, the higher state of well-being they can achieve (Leonard-Barton 1981, White et al. 2019), which in turn results in the less possessiveness and consumption as well, contributing to positively sustainable implication. Through the process of purification of what matters and what does not, minimalistic consumption helps to avoid repurchase and enhance the quality of life (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002).

As can be seen, while encouraging people to limit their excess buying behaviors, the idea of simplicity might lead to responsible behaviors (Shama 1985, Meissner 2019, Kuanr et al. 2020). At the same time, the behavior of reducing consumption, which is broadly seen among voluntary simplifiers, belongs to the span of sustainable behaviors (Leonard-Barton 1981, McDonald et al. 2006, White et al. 2019). With green motivation or not yet, while focusing on the most necessary products and avoiding repurchase, those practicing simplification have already put their first steps in the path of sustainable consumption, consistent with green values.

We therefore introduced the hypothesis as follows:

*H9: Voluntary simplicity has a positive effect on green values of consumers.*

### **5.3. CONNECTEDNESS TO NATURE AND SUSTAINABLE VALUES**

Connectedness to nature was defined as the comfortable, relaxing or healing feelings when someone let himself/herself in the natural world. It is also described as one considers the natural environment as one among notions that shape up his/her identity (Schultz 2002, Clayton 2003). Moreover, contact with nature gives people a good state of mind, which in turn benefits them with great psychological and health impacts. Substantial research on this subject showed that letting oneself contact with nature might tremendously contribute to cure patients from mental illness such as anxiety disorder and depression (Capaldi et al. 2014, McMahan and Estes 2015, Richardson and Sheffield 2015).

The connection with nature is not only in terms of feeling free but also of feeling to be home, the happiness of being “safe and sound” (Nisbet et al. 2011, Capaldi et al. 2014). It seems that those who feel themselves to be connected to nature usually find the strong relationship and harmonization between human beings and the nature world. Looking under this lens, it helps to understand why those who had got the feelings of oneness with the natural world would have the propensity to protect it (Leary et al. 2008, Nisbet et al. 2009). Put in this light, the notion of nature relatedness is linked closely to ecological consciousness, performing their purchases based on the systems of values that favor the planet and future generations (Mayer and Frantz 2004, Barbaro and Pickett 2016).

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Though not very numerous, recent studies found that connectedness to nature is a contributing factor that foster people to perform sustainable behaviors and/or to adopt green products (Hartmann et al. 2016, Dong et al. 2020, Li et al. 2021). Since the effects may not be straightaway and obvious, it is worthy to examine deeper whether connectedness to nature helps to build a set of ecological values (or green values), which in turn inducing someone to behave environmental-friendly.

As such, we formed the following hypothesis:

**H10:** *Connectedness to nature has a positive effect on green values of consumers.*

### **5.4. LOCUS-OF-CONTROL AND THE VALUES OF SUSTAINABILITY**

Locus-of-control has received increasing attention in the domain of consumption research in recent years. This concept is to indicate the stand of controlling one's life, containing two propensities: internal vs. external locus-of-control. Specifically, *internal locus-of-control* is to consider what happens to one's life depends on his or her decisions, perspectives, or mistakes; while *external locus-of-control* is to indicate that one cannot do anything for what happens to his or her life which is dependent on the circumstances or random events happening around (Lefcourt 1991, Wong-McDonald and Gorsuch 2004, Lefcourt 2014). Once the believes of control are established, a person thus forms the next believes related to his or her chains of actions. Consistently, those who believes that they can control over their lives and events happen to them (i.e., related to internal locus-of-control), therefore, might actively choose what to do rather than stay and wait, and vice versa for those who are external locus-of-control.

Recently, scholars in consumer behavior found the link between internal locus-of-control and the participation of sustainable consumption (Cleveland et al. 2012, Cheng et al. 2020). It is likely that the raising hands for sustainable movements come from those who believe that they can control their lives and who are more determined in giving active actions (i.e., internal locus-of-control). Put in this light, they may be inclined to support for values of sustainability and the long-lasting prosperity because this tendency, inherently reflecting durable living conditions, is suited with the locus-of-control characteristics. Though not so numerous, recent studies found that a person with internal locus-of-control personality is likely to have positive

attitudes and values toward sustainable products and put this preference in their consumptions (Cleveland et al. 2005, Patel et al. 2020, Toti et al. 2021). However, as the call for further studies by Cleveland et al. (2005), more evidences need to be found about the link between locus-of-control and green consumption.

Accordingly, we set the hypothesis as follows:

***H11: Internal locus-of-control has a positive effect on green values of consumers.***

## **5.5. DEATH ANXIETY: ITS EFFECTS ON VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY AND MINDFULNESS**

The incidents such as natural disasters (e.g., floods, tsunami, earthquake), environmental damages (e.g., pollution, deforestation, climate change), disease pandemics, and so on, often evoke not only the feelings of insecurity but also those of anxiety among people (Fritsche and Häfner 2012, Kesebir 2014, Severo et al. 2021). That anxiety is closely consistent with to the scaredness of the death of one's self (e.g., the isolation of death; the shortness of life) as well as the fear of the death of beloved ones (e.g., never being able to communicate with the person again; regret not being nicer to the person when he or she was alive) (Collett and Lester 1969, Lester and Abdel-Khalek 2003, Vess and Arndt 2008).

The fear of death and mindfulness practicing were found to have a link in existing studies (Hofmann et al. 2010, Kashdan et al. 2011, Park and Pyszczynski 2019). Negative feelings like death anxiety are intensive and therefore may urge people to seek for any way to get rid of the uncomfortable state (Urie and Kilbourne 2008, Kesebir 2014). This propensity can be explained by feelings-as-information theory (Schwarz 2011), an cognitive process happening as a response to the feelings of insecurity. The anxiety, which is also an indicator of problematic matters, can play an important role of tuning the information process to cope with the reality (Krishna and Schwarz 2014). Put in this light, the intensive feelings like the fear of death may create the back-and-forth process of triggering and establishing new perceptions of the situation, bringing chances for modifying/overwriting the old perceptions with the new ones. Subsequently, the new formed perceptions will result in new behaviors as a way to escaping the fear (Wilson 2002, Varela et al. 2017, Shapiro 2019). By the same token, one may seek for a cure like practicing mindfulness to ease the anxiety of death (e.g., pay attention to

what is happening in the body; observe and describe the uncomfortable feelings; untie of the judgments) (Hofmann et al. 2010, Kashdan et al. 2011, Bianco et al. 2019).

In addition, people might be paralyzed and panic by the terror caused by the thoughts of death. In other cases, this anxiety might lead to the diminution of choices in one's daily life (Vess and Arndt 2008, Huang and Wyer 2015). With this reality in mind, those who are exposed by the death anxiety will be likely to modify their daily behaviors toward retaining what are truly important to them and getting rid of what are not. This choice perhaps facilitates them to keep the resources (e.g., time, finance) for themselves and for related ones over other excess and unnecessary needs, consistent with the behaviors of voluntary simplifier (McDonald et al. 2006, Iyer and Muncy 2009, Peyer et al. 2017).

Recently, the association of death anxiety and the tendency of responsible behaviors has attracted more attention of scholars (Vess and Arndt 2008, Fritsche and Häfner 2012, Rahimah et al. 2020). Specifically, people might choose to pursue sustainable behaviors due to the fear of death, especially when the fear for others' death is stronger than the fear for themselves. As a consequence, this fear (together with hope) makes them choose to follow a set of behaviors that benefits other people as well. By the same fashion, people who are in high level of death anxiety would probably be in favor of the responsible values (or green values) that guide them to perform ethical and responsible behaviors (Vess and Arndt 2008, Rahimah et al. 2018), which in turn helps them to ease the existential terror of death. Since more empirical evidences are needed to understand the role of death anxiety in shaping responsible behaviors, we would like to examine this factor in the link with green values.

As such, we set the following hypotheses:

*H12: Fear of death has positive effects on (a) voluntary simplicity, (b) mindfulness, and (c) green values.*

## **5.6. CONSUMER SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THEIR GREEN VALUES**

An action favorable of ecological consumption may be under the direct or indirect impacts of contributing factors. As having reviewed in previous sections, extant literature reveals the potential links between responsible behaviors and a number of antecedents including



## *Chapter 5: Literature review on factors impacting consumer responses to CSR*

connectedness to nature (Barbaro and Pickett 2016, Li et al. 2021), mindfulness in daily life (Fischer et al. 2017, Geiger et al. 2019), the capacity to control over one's life (Toti et al. 2021), the tendency of reducing consumption (McDonald et al. 2006, Leonard-Barton 1981, White et al. 2019) as well as the death anxiety (of one's death and of others') (Vess and Arndt 2008, Rahimah et al. 2018). Although this may be true, the impacts of these factors might not result in ecological behaviors immediately but go through an intermediary before a behavior to be embedded. Instead, these impacts of the antecedents above may firstly help to form a set of values related to sustainability (the so-call "green values") (Haws et al. 2014).

The final behaviors of human beings are the results of an on-going process, originating from learning new information, forming new perceptions, testing new actions, even back-and-forth corrections or the modifications of and behaviors, reflecting the values that they continually established in their lives (Wilson and Golonka 2013, Varela et al. 2017, Shapiro 2019). Therefore, sustainable behaviors of consumers (e.g., adopting a responsible product, supporting firm green engagements) are the reflection of their responsible values (or green values). These values might be considered closely to the identity values of a person (Michaelidou and Hassan 2008, Patel et al. 2020), which in turn, guide him or her to behave in the manner that relevant to these values (e.g., identifying oneself as organic consumers (Berens et al. 2005), consuming the products that do not harmful impact on the environment and/or the willingness to consider the ecological issues in their daily decisions (Haws et al. 2014). To put it another way, the congruence between consumers' personal values and firms' CSR activities probably enhances consumer evaluations and responses to CSR (Sen and Bhattacharya 2001, Fleck and Maille 2010, Aguinis and Glavas 2012). Put in this light, the behaviors among consumers such as choosing sustainable products, supporting the ecological lifestyle or concerning the impacts on future generations are well-matched with their values of favoring the planet (Urien and Kilbourne 2011). By the same manner, the reactions preferable of sustainability may be the consequences of a set of values that are important to, inducing them with corresponding actions (Haws et al. 2014, Zou and Chan 2019). With this in mind, it is coherent to witness a person who believes that environmental aspect is important to him or her, will be likely to pursue those values in their daily lives. The behaviors may contain from very simple ones such as carrying out an environmental friendly action (Haws et

al. 2014) to highly ecologically supportive ones (e.g., boycotting the firms performing unethical manners (Klein et al. 2004).

Through our arguments previously, we argued that green values of consumers are a result of following antecedents: connectedness to nature, mindfulness in daily life, the capacity to control over one's life, the tendency of reducing consumption as well as the death anxiety. In turn, the green values would play a role in forming the further outcomes (e.g., attitude toward the responsible firms, purchase and recommendation intention).

We therefore came up with the hypotheses related to the green values (H13, H14) and perceived product quality (H15), together with the hypotheses presented in the previous sections:

**H8:** Mindfulness has a positive effect on green values.

**H9:** Voluntary simplicity has a positive effect on green values.

**H10:** Connectedness to nature has a positive effect on green values.

**H11:** Internal locus-of-control has a positive effect on green values.

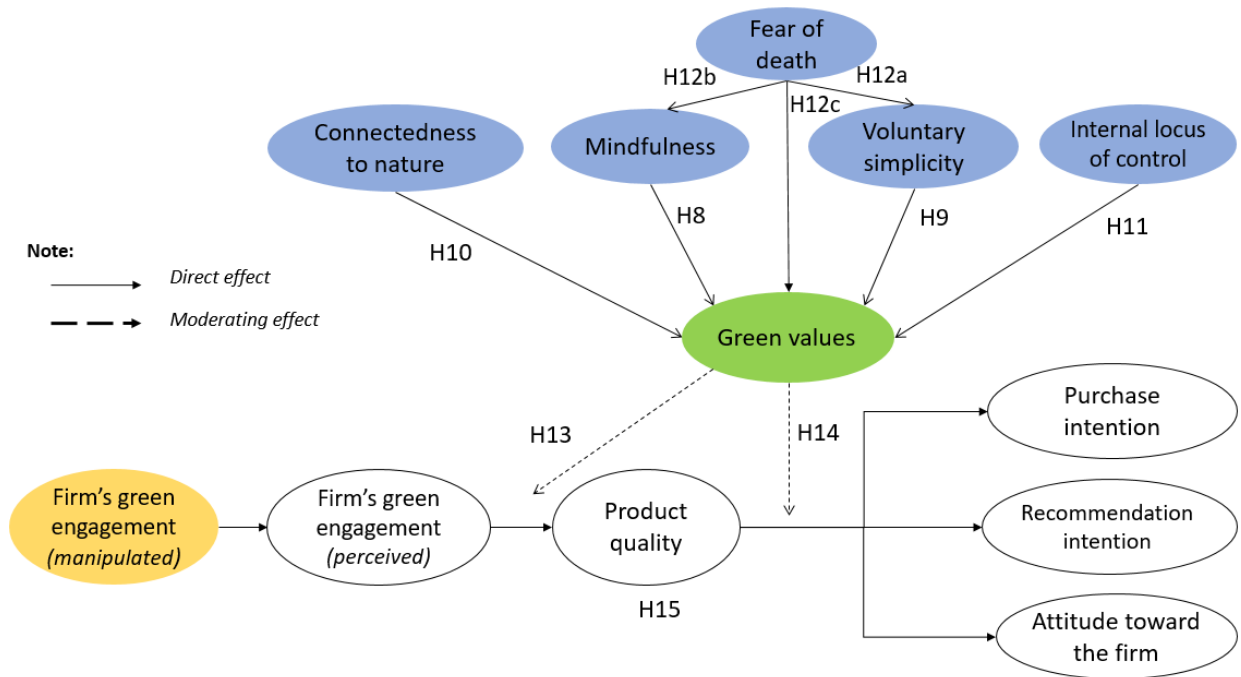
**H12:** Fear of death has positive effects on (a) voluntary simplicity, (b) mindfulness, and (c) green values.

**H13:** Green values positively moderate the relationship between perceived firm green engagement and perceived product quality.

**H14:** Green values positively moderate the relationships between perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.

**H15:** Perceived product quality mediates the relationships between perceived firm green engagement and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.

Figure 5.17. Conceptual framework of the replicated experiment and integrative survey



The figure above visualizes our conceptual framework of the relationships among the individual constructs, perceived product quality, and consumer responses to CSR. In the next chapters, we will present the research design for a replicated experiment on one dimension of CSR (firm environmental engagement), integrated with a large survey to test all the hypotheses.

### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5

This chapter addressed the related literature corresponding to the **research question n°3** (*Which factors that can explain the mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and their responses to CSR?*).

The current literature reveals the potential links between **mindfulness** in daily life (the inner stillness of the mind as a tranquil and soothing response to present moment), **internal locus-of-control** (the capacity to control over one's life), **voluntary simplification** (the tendency of reducing consumption), connectedness to nature (the comfortable, relaxing or healing feelings toward the natural world) and **death anxiety** on the set of values that guides consumers to perform sustainable consumption behaviors (the so-called "**green values**" that favors the planet and future generations). We also consider the effects of consumer green values on forming the further outcomes (e.g., attitude toward the responsible firms, purchase and recommendation intention).

These concepts were recognized interestingly in the domain of well-beings and behavioral science. However, the relationships among these individual factors and the intentions of performing sustainable consumption have not been tested simultaneously. This leads us to our empirical study afterwards to examine the effects of these constructs. The research designs of the empirical study will be presented with more details in the following chapter.

## **PART I – WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT**

### **Chapter 1 | CSR and consumers**

- 1.1. The concept of CSR
- 1.2. How does CSR matter to consumers?
- 1.3. The oriental cultural aspects & their impacts on CSR conceptualization
- 1.4. Qualitative study: How consumers perceived CSR in Vietnam

### **Chapter 2 | Exploratory study: consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam**

- 2.1. Research design
- 2.2. Data collection and coding procedure
- 2.3. Findings
- 2.4. Discussion

## **PART II – HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR**

### **Chapter 3 | Consumer evaluations and reactions to CSR**

- 3.1. Consumer evaluations of the firm and its products
- 3.2. Consumer responses to CSR: attitude and behavioral intentions
- 3.3. Consumption habituation
- 3.4. How consumers perceived firm CSR motives
- 3.5. Skepticism toward firm engagement in CSR
- 3.6. Hypotheses development

### **Chapter 4 | Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector**

- 4.1. Research design: scenario-based experiment
- 4.2. Data collection
- 4.3. Data analysis
- 4.4. Discussion

## **PART III – BENEATH THE SURFACE: FACTORS EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR**

### **Chapter 5 | Factors explaining consumer responses to CSR**

- 5.1. Mindfulness and green consumption
- 5.2. Voluntary simplicity leads to conscious consumption
- 5.3. Connectedness to nature and sustainable values
- 5.4. Internal locus-of-control and the values of sustainability
- 5.5. Death anxiety: its effects on voluntary simplicity and mindfulness
- 5.6. Consumer sustainable behaviors reflecting their green values

### **Chapter 6 | Replicated experiment: consumer responses in skincare & cosmetics sector**

- 6.1. Research design
- 6.2. Data collection
- 6.3. Data analysis
- 6.4. Discussion

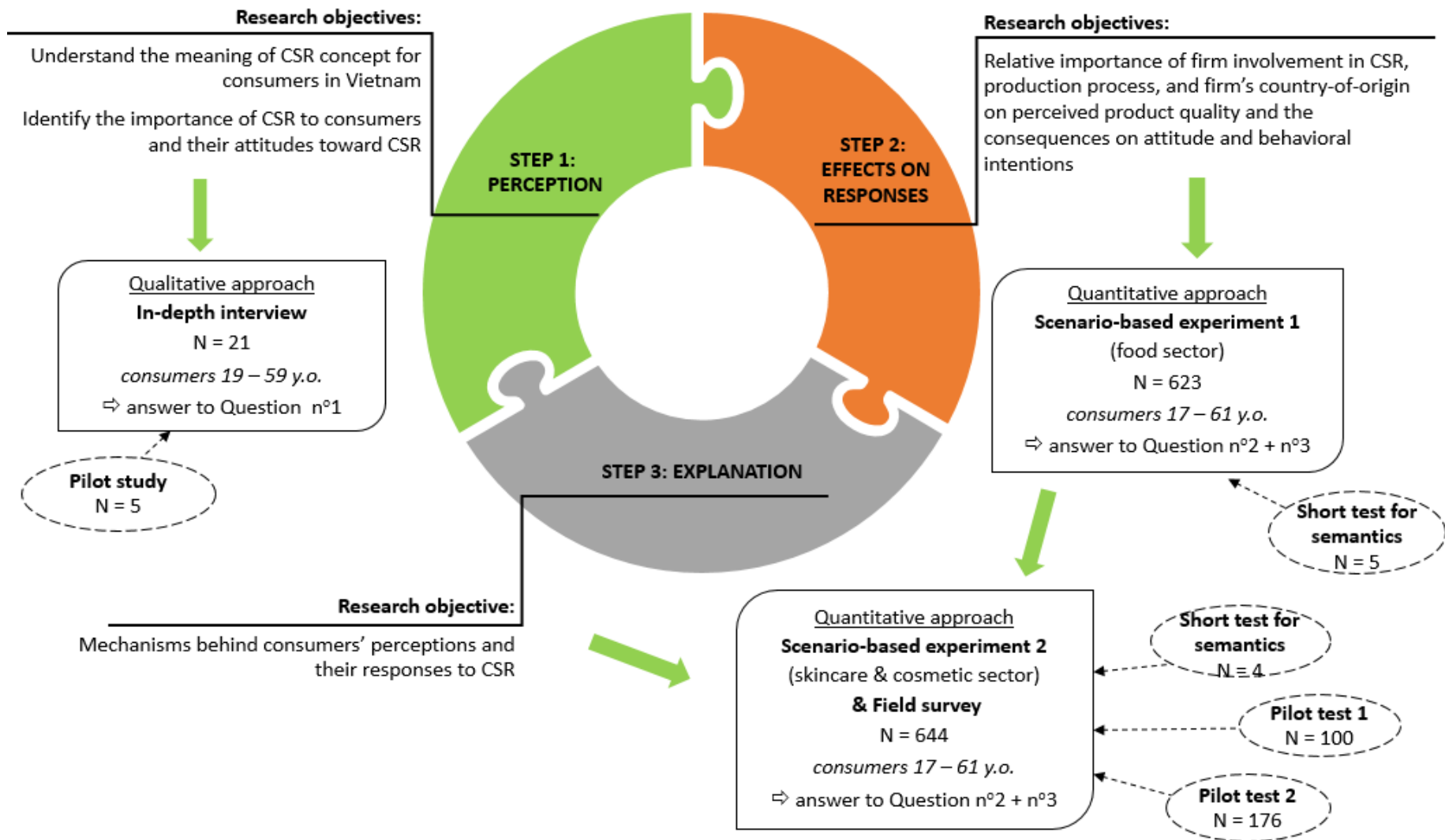


### **Chapter 7 | Explaining consumer responses through structural equation modeling**

- 7.1. Model specification
- 7.2. Model evaluation
- 7.3. Discussion

### **Chapter 8 | General discussion**

### **Conclusion: contributions, limitations, and further research**



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## CHAPTER 6 | REPLICATED EXPERIMENT: CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR IN SKINCARE & COSMETICS SECTOR

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In this study, we first replicated the previous experiment on firm involvement in CSR in another sector with three conditions (low CSR-involved vs. high CSR-involved vs. control), which allowed us to re-examine the robustness of the first experiment's results (Chapter 4). We conducted this experiment in skincare and cosmetics sector with a specific product (facial cleanser). Specifically, we picked a concrete aspect of CSR (firm environmental engagement), helping to examine deeply how consumers react to a specific facet of CSR. Simultaneously, we would like to reexamine consumer responses (attitudes toward the firm and behavioral intentions), with the mediating role of perceived product quality. After having exposed the research design of a scenario-based experiment (section 6.1), we successively present data collection (section 6.2), data analysis (section 6.3), discussion on the results (section 6.4) and in the end, the summary of this chapter.

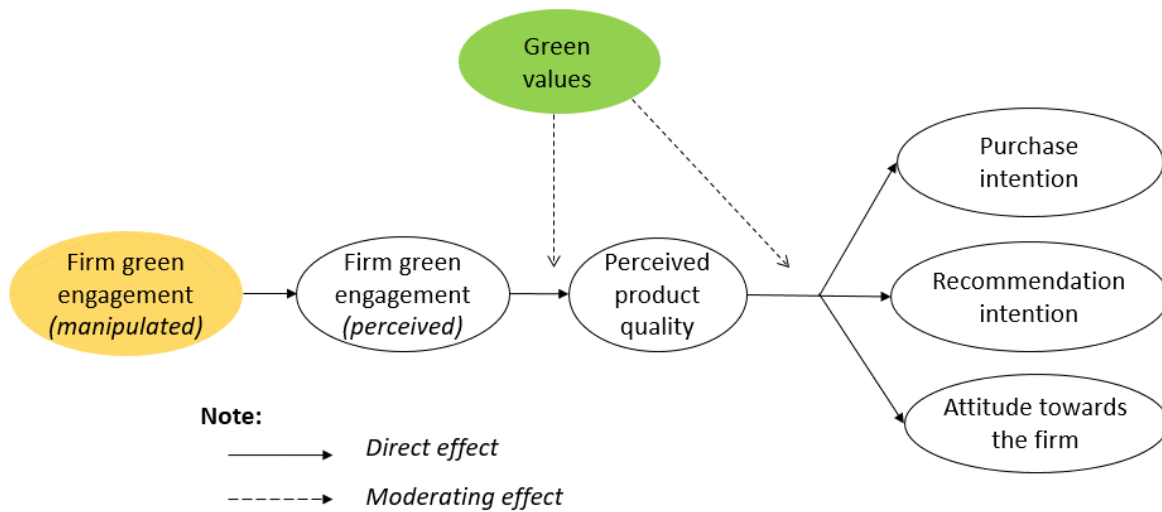
### 6.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

We examined the effects of stimulus of firm's green engagement on perceived product quality as well as three outcome variables: (1) attitude toward firm; (2) purchase intention; and (3) recommendation intention. Besides, we also tested the effect of green values as the moderator and the effect of product quality as the mediator, illustrated by the figured below.

Integrated in the data collection with this replicated experiment, we added the questionnaire measuring the individual factors that were hypothesized to have a contribution in the formation of consumer responses to CSR, especially to firm environmental engagement (presented in details in the next chapter).



Figure 6.18. Conceptual framework



### 6.1.1. Scenario development

We conducted a survey with a questionnaire following by a scenario-based experiment (three levels of differences) between-subject design.

In each scenario, participants were introduced to company Alpha in Vietnam, a fictive cosmetic and skincare firm which would launch a new product line of facial cleanser for daily usage. Each scenario was corresponding to an extent of environmental engagement by company Alpha. The high (vs. low) green condition indicated high (vs. low) engagement of firm. A control condition was also employed, where participants were merely introduced with information of company Alpha launching its new facial cleanser, with no information on environmental engagement of the firm.

This type of product was chosen because it is daily used, essential, and applied on face, which might induce consumers to choose with care, supposing people normally are more sensitive to a facial care product than others. Moreover, it is a daily product used by both men and women, which makes it relevant to both genders. Besides, products distributed by both conventional firms as well as socially responsible firms were already available on market, giving participants an ordinary sense about this type of product, for a good ecological validity of the study.

*Chapter 6: Replicated experiment in skincare & cosmetics sector*

In order to facilitate the participation of respondents, we included a neutral picture of facial cleanser products. We chose among 20 pictures to come up to the most neutral one. The picture was supposed to be neutral, simple, with a set of facial products without label, without decorative details and in white color. The product packaging style should be simple and not give any particular sense of its quality or its origin. The neutral picture was also to help participants quickly notice the product type but at the same time not to introduce any supplement bias arisen from the picture itself.

*Figure 6.19. A picture might introduce a link with nature (leaves) or the bias of the premium quality*



Figure 6.20. The neutral picture was used in scenario-based experiment



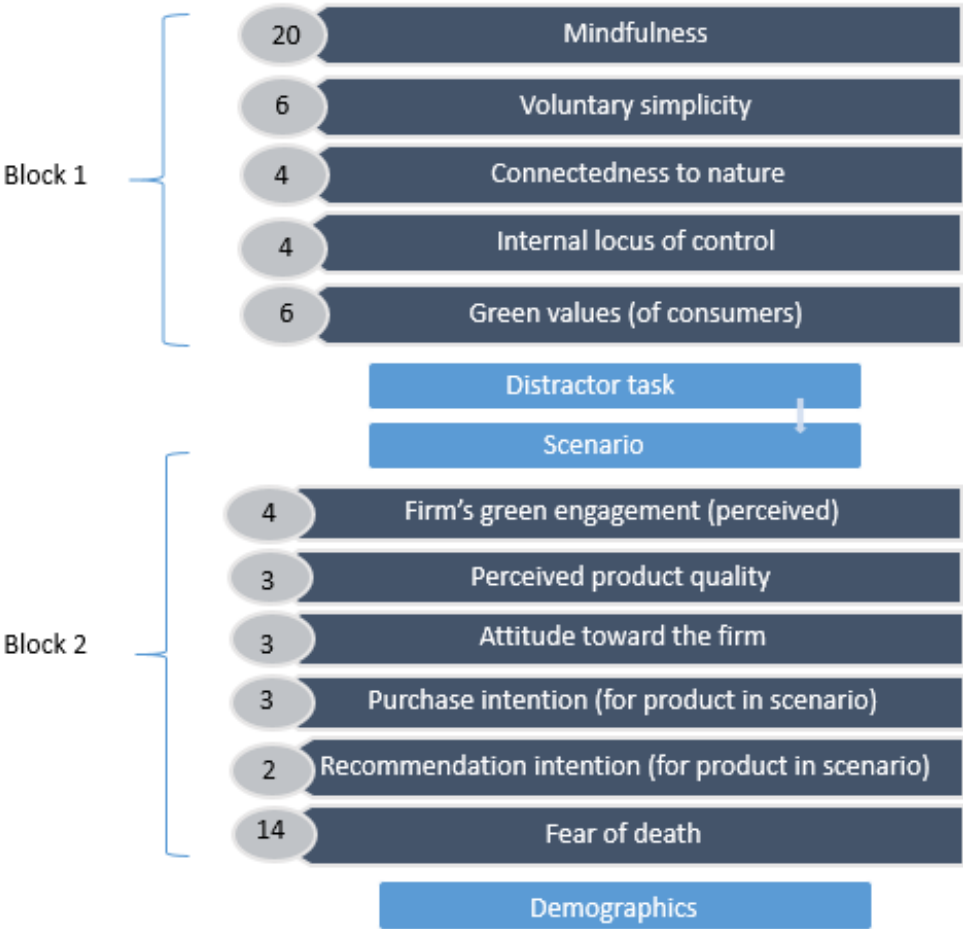
The involvement of firms in environmental aspects described in scenarios were based on the measurement scale of Öberseder et al. (2014). The high green condition employed almost all aspects in this scale to form a fictive firm which had engaged in highly environmental responsibilities, while the low green condition only used some elements to create a firm with little care of environmental and community. To be noticeable, we did not create scenario of an absolute bad firm but the one that was really less ecological-oriented.

### 6.1.2. Flow of study

Participants were invited to participate in our studies voluntarily and anonymously. They were ensured that all information they provided will be kept confidentially for scientific purpose and absolutely not for commercial purpose. They were also informed that they can freely quit the study at any time they want.

The figure below represents the flow of survey with two main blocks. The first block includes questions to measure five latent variables namely mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus of control, and green values (of consumers).

Figure 6.21. Flow of survey



The number of indicators per construct is presented on the left

In order to prevent the halo effect of the previous part, we inserted in the middle of the survey a quick distraction task related to a simple arithmetic problem involving addition and subtraction (Waris et al. 2017). Respondents were asked to calculate the solution and fill their answer manually in a box. This task helped to minimize the impact of the responses in block 1 on those in block 2.

Then, they were asked to continue with choosing one among three scenarios which were randomly distributed. The scenarios are related to a fictive company Alpha and its engagement to sustainability through its operation. Three levels of firms' engagement were presented, corresponding to three scenarios: (1) low green engagement, (2) high green engagement, and (3) control condition (merely information of company Alpha launching its products).

The second block came after, with questions to measure six latent variables including firm's green engagement (perceived by consumers); perceived product quality; attitude toward firm; purchase intention and recommendation intention (for the product in scenario); and fear of death. Due to the potential revoking of intensive feelings which could create bias on the responses of participants, the items to measure of fear of death (for oneself/for others) were asked at the nearly end of the questionnaire.

Finally, participants responded to five simple questions related to demographic information including their gender, ages, living place, education, and income.

### **6.1.3. Questionnaire design and back-translated process**

During the process of designing questionnaire, we took into account the essential techniques emphasized by Hair Jr et al. (2017a).

Within the research domain of consumer perceptions and behaviors, many constructs used in our studies were related to state-of-mind data (e.g., feelings, emotions, judgment). Therefore, we employed the odd-point and free-choice scale including a neutral response. Besides, a semantic differential scale was used to describe the value of attributes, and each was on a 7-point bipolar scale. For constructs of behavioral intentions, we measured them with a 11-point scale. Moreover, in order to facilitate respondents during the survey, key words in each item of the questions were put in italic with careful consideration not to introduce a supplementing bias. Furthermore, we also considered using screening questions to ensure the participants in a study were the representative of the target population. Screening questions also served as the tool to removed unqualified responses prior to data analysis.

Finally, with each latent variable that specified as a formative construct, we included a global-item capturing the generally perspective of respondents. These global-items were to assess formative measurement models, respectively related to *mindfulness*, *voluntarily simplicity*, *connectedness to nature*, *internal locus of control*, *green values of consumers* and finally, *fear of death* (that we will go in details afterwards). In order not to introduce any supplemental bias, these six global items were added at the end of each groups of indicators used to measure each formative latent construct.

➤ **Back-translated process**

The questionnaires and scenarios were back-translated to Vietnamese, then went through the refinement process with five voluntary Vietnamese translators and copywriters. The aim was to make sure to maximize the respondent's ability to understand all the questions, so that we could reach a widespread target population with various occupation, geography, age, and so on.

Specifically, the Vietnamese versions of the questionnaire were back-and-forth refined in terms of semantic so that the original measurement scales could be aligned to Vietnamese context. We considered using words and phrases that were closest to daily context and avoided academic terms. The comprehension was pre-tested on relatives and a short convenient sample of Vietnamese.

#### **6.1.4. Measurements**

For this integrated data collection, the measured constructs included: mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus of control, fear of death, green values (of consumers), firm's green engagement (perceived by consumers), perceived product quality, attitude toward firm, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. The table below describes in details all the original indicators of each construct as well as and the adaptations and the global items of formative constructs.

Specifically, the measure of **Mindfulness** was employed and modified from the short version of Kentucky Inventory on Mindfulness Skills (KIMS Short) (Baer et al. 2004, Höfling et al. 2011). Totally, the scale used in this study contained 20 items (five dimensions: observe inside, observe outside, describe, act with awareness, and act without judgment) measured on a 7-point Likert scale (where 1 = never true, 7 = always true).

Next, five constructs were measured by a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree):

**Voluntary simplicity** scale was borrowed and adapted from Voluntary Simplicity Consumer Scale (Shama 1985) with six items. Some items were adapted to suitable to Vietnamese context (e.g., item 2 and 5).

**Connectedness to nature** was measured by four items (Hartmann et al. 2016).

**Internal locus of control** was measured by four items (Toti et al. 2021).

**Consumer green values** was measured by six items (Haws et al. 2014).

**Firm green engagement (perceived)** was measured by four items (Wang et al. 2017).

**Fear of death** was measured by the scale of Collett and Lester (version 3.0) (Collett and Lester 1969, Lester and Abdel-Khalek 2003) with totally 14 items divided into two dimensions: *fear of death for oneself* and *fear of death for others*. A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = not at all; 7 = very much).

**Perceived product quality** was measured with three items corresponding to 7-point semantic differentiate scale (Habel et al. 2016).

**Attitude toward the firm** is measured by three items (Lii and Lee 2012) described by pairs of adjectives on a 7-point semantic differentiate scale.

**Purchase intention** of consumers is measured by three items on a 11-point behavioral intention scale (0 = definitely not will; 10 = definitely will) (Putrevu and Lord 1994, Coyle and Thorson 2001) in (Öberseder et al. 2014).

**Recommendation intention** in the near future was measured by two items on a 11-point behavioral intention scale (0 = definitely not will; 10 = definitely will) (Zeithaml et al. 1996).

Table 6.21. Measurements and adaptations

Constructs and Original indicators	Adaptations and notes <sup>10</sup>
<b>INDEPENDENT VARIABLES</b>	
<b>Mindfulness</b> ( <i>Baer et al. 2004, Höfling et al. 2011</i> )	
<b>Observe (inside)</b>	
1 Noticing body sensations while walking	Noticing the sensations of body moving while walking
2 Staying alert to sensations while showering	
3 Paying attention to sensations	Paying attention to sensations, such as the wind blowing through my hair; or the sunlight on my face
<b>Observe (outside)</b>	
1 Paying attention to sounds	Paying attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing
2 Noticing smells and aromas	
3 Noticing visual elements	Noticing visual elements around, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow
<b>Describe</b>	
1 Finding words to describe feelings	
2 Not finding words to describe thoughts (r)	
3 Not expressing the feelings about things (r)	
4 Not describing body sensations (r)	
5 Finding words if upset	
<b>Act with Awareness</b>	
1 Being focused only on what is done, nothing else	
2 Getting wrapped up in doing things and don't think about anything else	
3 Doing several things at once (r)	Doing one thing at once
4 Getting absorbed in what is done	
<b>Act without Judgment</b>	
1 Criticizing myself for having emotions (r)	
2 Believing that my thoughts are abnormal (r)	
3 Making judgments about my thoughts (r)	
4 Telling myself that thoughts should not be (r)	
5 Thinking emotions are not appropriate (r)	
<i>In general, I usually in the state of mindfulness (i.e., focus on what happens in the present; care to my emotions and feelings)</i>	<i>global item</i>

<sup>10</sup> This column presents the adaptations. The blanks mean that the original measures were used.



Constructs and Original indicators	Adaptations and notes <sup>10</sup>
<b>Voluntary simplicity</b> ( <i>Shama, 1985</i> )	
1 I believe in material simplicity, i.e., buying and consuming only what I need.	
2 I believe in "small is beautiful", e.g., I prefer smaller cars over larger cars.	I believe in "less is more", e.g., I prefer smaller house over a larger house.
3 I believe that product function is usually more important than its style.	
4 I am interested in personal growth more than economic growth.	
5 I am determined to have more control over my life as a consumer, e.g., stay away from instalment buying.	I am determined to have more control over my life as a consumer, e.g., stay away from instalment buying; control my spending.
6 I consider myself ecologically responsible.	
<i>Generally, I have a simplified living style.</i>	<i>global item</i>
<b>Connectedness to nature</b> ( <i>Hartmann et al., 2016</i> )	
1 When I am in natural environments, I feel connected with nature.	
2 It makes me sad to see natural environments destroyed.	
3 Spending time in nature makes me feel happy.	
4 I usually spend some of my time being in nature.	
<i>Generally, I have connectedness to nature.</i>	<i>global item</i>
<b>Internal locus of control</b> ( <i>Toti et al., 2021</i> )	
1 When I make plans, I'm almost certain to make them work.	
2 I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.	
3 My life is determined by my own actions.	
4 I am usually able to protect my personal interests.	
<i>Generally, my life depends on my own.</i>	<i>global item</i>
<b>Firm green engagement</b> (perceived) ( <i>Wang et al. 2017</i> )	
<i>In my opinion, [company] is...</i>	
1 ... committed to helping the environment.	
2 ... making a difference.	
3 ... doing environmentally friendly practices.	
4 ... committed to sustainability.	
<b>Fear of death</b> ( <i>Collett and Lester 1969, Lester and Abdel-Khalek 2003</i> )	
<i>How disturbed or made anxious are you by the following aspects of death?</i>	
<b>Your Own Death</b>	
1 The total isolation of death	



Constructs and Original indicators		Adaptations and notes <sup>10</sup>
<b>Purchase intention</b> ( <i>Coyle and Thorson 2001, Putrevu and Lord 1994</i> )		
1	It is very likely that I will buy products from (company).	It is very likely that I will buy products from company Alpha.
2	I will purchase products from (company) the next time I need a (product).	I will purchase products from company Alpha the next time I need skincare & cosmetics products.
3	I will definitely try other products from (company).	I will definitely try other products from company Alpha in the next 3 months.
<b>Recommendation intention</b> ( <i>Zeithaml et al. 1996</i> )		
1	I would say positive things about [...] to other people	I would say positive things about company Alpha to other people in the next 3 months.
2	I would recommend [...] if anyone asked me for advice	I would recommend company Alpha if anyone asked me for advice.
<b>MANIPULATED VARIABLE</b>		
<b>Firm green engagement</b> ( <i>Öberseder et al., 2014</i> )		
<i>Environmental domain</i>		
1	Reduce energy consumption	
2	Reduce emissions like CO2	
3	Prevent waste	low green - high green - control
4	Recycle	
5	Dispose of waste correctly	
6	Invest in research and development regarding environmental protection	

### ➤ Ethical considerations

For participants in the empirical studies, we offered an option for them to quit the study whenever they feel too uncomfortable and too hard to continue the survey, especially for the sensitive part of the studies which relates to the death or other private concerns. We indicated clearly from the beginning of the questionnaires that no personal information would be kept for those who chose to quit the procedure (*see more in appendices*).

## 6.2. DATA COLLECTION

**Sample size:** The study expected to reach 600 respondents in Vietnam (different occupations, geography, age), respecting the rule of preferable sample size which is five times of our measured variables (Hair Jr et al. 2019). The whole model included 11 constructs (69 indicators).

Online survey was conducted on Microsoft survey Template. This template facilitates not only the respondents who answer by computer/laptop but also those who access from smartphone/tablet interface. This type of survey reaches to the part of Vietnamese population who are more and more familiar with accessing internet and social media from smartphone/tablet.

The survey link was distributed via popular social media including Facebook, Instagram, and Zalo (Vietnamese social channel that is used by almost all citizens).

The potential respondents received a link and a brief introduction to the survey. They were invited to click on the link to directly answer the questionnaire.

### **6.2.1. Pilot tests and refinement**

The scales of many constructs that we would like to measure in this study are quite new and need to align to Vietnamese context. Before launching official data collection, we conducted a pilot test with 100 respondents to test for semantic issues and necessary modifications. Modifications were processed when necessary. A pre-test was conducted to test for the reliability and validity of the measures used.

*Dealing with imbalance among scenarios:*

- With three experimental conditions on small sample of pilot test (100 respondents), we did not encounter the imbalances.
- In official data collection with broader samples, imbalance happened due to the fact that people normally prefer number 1 more than other number.
- We dealt with this issue by counting the proportion of subgroups at the end of the day. Each time the imbalance was diagnosed, we would temporarily turn off the scenario that already had higher proportion.
- The same protocol was repeated with the subgroups already having high proportion, in order to reach respondents in other subgroups to get more saturated sample.

➤ **Issues detected after first pilot test:**

The first pilot test was conducted with 100 respondents (during 1 week, from 21 May to 28 May 2021) through a convenient sampling. The average time of completion among respondents are 12 minutes. we achieved 81% of the sample were female and 19% of them were male. Concerning the age of respondents, about 80% of them were 19-22 years old, and 20% of them were 23-37 years old.

Scenario refinement

With 100 cases in pilot test, we run t-test analysis to check whether manipulations in scenarios were perceived accurately by respondents.

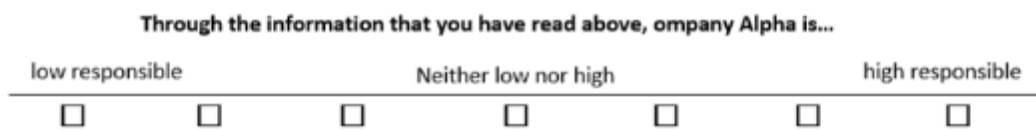
We detected the issues of scenario 2 (low-green condition) where no respondents realized the low responsibility of firm. In other words, 'low green' condition failed to be recognized among respondents. This condition appeared to be already too high.

The reasons behind this issue were discussed and found three possible reasons of failure:

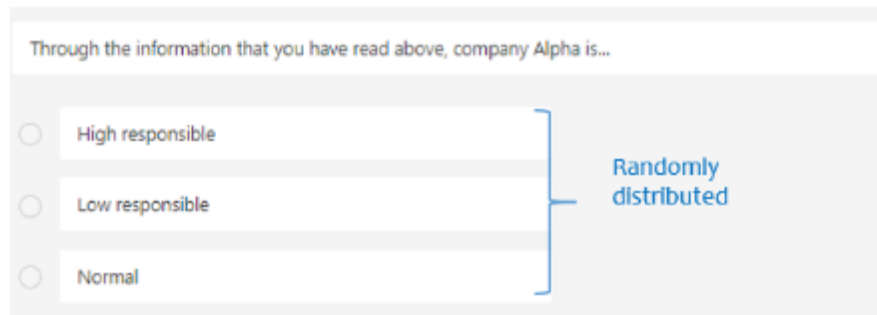
- (1) the low condition was not low enough to be recognized as such;
- (2) Incorrect usage of Vietnamese word for “*neither low nor high responsible*” which was translated into ‘*binh thuong*’, misunderstood as ‘*normal*’. Thus, both low green and control condition were perceived as ‘*normal*’, confounding the responses;
- (3) The scale type used in pilot test for manipulation check item was three absolute choices, which in turn, polluted the answers. Specifically, respondents by conditions were 37% (high green condition), 34% (low green condition), and 29% (control condition). However, we got 67% of samples perceived high responsible (high green) for the scenario they read, 33% of samples perceived ‘normal’ (control condition) for the scenario they read. No one evaluated the 'lowly responsible' condition (low green) as such. We concluded that the scale type may have contributed to a misunderstanding among respondents (*illustrated below*).

Figure 6.22. Illustrating the failure of manipulation in the first pilot test

Design:



Scale used in pilot test:



Three main refinements of scenarios and their measured scale type were made.

- (1) For both high and low green scenarios, we put in bold all adverbs and adjectives showing the extent of environmental engagement of firms.
- (2) We make the low condition lower by reducing the number of green actions of firm.
- (3) We changed the scale points for “*neither low nor high responsible*” to ‘*not relevant*’ and used 7-point scale type for the manipulation check item.

The two version of scenarios for pilot test 1 and 2 are available in appendices.

Other minor refinements

Measurement of Fear of Death:

- In designing stage, we considered between compulsory or optional choice. We analyzed the risks of losing a part of respondents or losing all responses if some participants might abandon whereas they had nearly completed the questionnaire.
- After considering all possible risks, we put an optional choice due to the ethical fact that this measurement might be sensitive for many of them. The pilot test

with 100 respondents shown that all of them chose to continue the survey. This reaction, even in small sample of 100 respondents, gave us confidence with the optional choice and positive acceptance in the official data collection if there would be some rate of giving up the response related to death.

Gender: We put ‘other’ option for LGBT respondents beside male and female, as proposed by a respondent in the pilot test.

➤ **Second pilot test**

After being refined, the questionnaire was launched for a second pilot test. 176 responses were collected then a quick analysis was conducted to make sure the previous refinement facilitated participants to accurately comprehend the manipulation in scenarios (i.e., the extents of the sustainable engagement of the firm).

After the second pilot test, using mean score of manipulation check item, we quickly calculated the independent t-test for each pair of conditions (high vs. low; low vs. control; high vs. control). The results show that they are all significantly different (as in the tables below). Data in the second pilot test and a part of the first pilot test were retained for analysis afterward.

Table 6.22. Descriptive analysis of three conditions of firm green engagement (pilot test)

Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Min	Max
High green	38	6.61	1.028	0.167	1	7
Low green	105	4.32	2.392	0.235	1	7
Control	100	5.33	1.928	0.193	1	7
Total	243	5.09	2.186		1	7

Table 6.23. Differences among conditions' mean values (pilot test)

Dependent variable: Manipulated check						
Tukey HSD (post-hoc)						
Condition		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High green	Low green	2,28*	0.387	0.000	1.37	3.19
	Control	1,28*	0.389	0.003	0.36	2.19
Low green	High green	-2,28*	0.387	0.000	-3.19	-1.37
	Control	-1,01*	0.286	0.001	-1.68	-0.33
Control	High green	-1,28*	0.389	0.003	-2.19	-0.36
	Low green	1,01*	0.286	0.001	0.33	1.68

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

### 6.2.2. Data preparation

Data were collected during 18 days, from 26 May to 13 Jun 2021, resulting in 664 questionnaires filled.

#### ➤ *Suspicious data:*

All respondents with too low or too high completing time (under 4 minutes and over 40 minutes) were detected. Among which, those respondents completed under 4 minutes were considered underqualified and removed immediately. Those respondents with long time of completion were kept and examined case by case.

All respondents with straight lining and pole extreme patterns were detected and considered as suspicious data.

Among 100 respondents in pilot test, there were 34 responses corresponding to the low condition that was not evaluated as such. We therefore removed the data of the second part of responses (the scenario part), considered as missing values. The remaining responses for other variables of those 34 responses were valid and therefore retained for the SEM later.



After back-and-forth considerations, 17 suspicious responses were considered invalid and removed (equivalent to 2.6% of the whole sample), therefore allowing to keep 647 responses for data analysis.

The missing values were treated with mean replacement, casewise and listwise deletion, depending on each type of analysis.

**Reverse-scored:** the questionnaire contained 8 items measuring Mindfulness using reverse-scored. Before proceeding the evaluation of measurement and structural models, all reverse-scored values were recoded before using as input for model assessments.

### 6.3. DATA ANALYSIS

#### 6.3.1. Preliminary analysis

##### ➤ **Demographics information**

The table below presents the demographics information of respondents in this second experiment. Among them, female participants are dominant with almost 60%. Males account for almost 38%, and the rest are LGBT.

In terms of age, we classified respondents into three generations (Madden 2019). 4.3% of respondents are belonged to gen X (born 1965- 1979). Gen Y (born 1980 – 1994) accounts for 18%, and the majority of participants are gen Z (born 1995 – 2009) with more than 77%.

Respondents in 35 cities and provinces of Vietnam participated in this experiment. Approximately 57% of them are living in Hochiminh City, the biggest city of Vietnam (*see the details in appendices*).

The education levels among participants cover from high school, college/technical school, graduate to postgraduate. Majority of the respondents have corresponding level of college/technical school (55%) and graduate (32%).

Besides, the income of participants is wide-ranging from under 200€ (60%), 200€ to under 400€ (22%), 400€ to under 800€ (11%), 800€ to under 1.600€ (4%), and over 1.600€ (3%).

Table 6.24. Demographics information

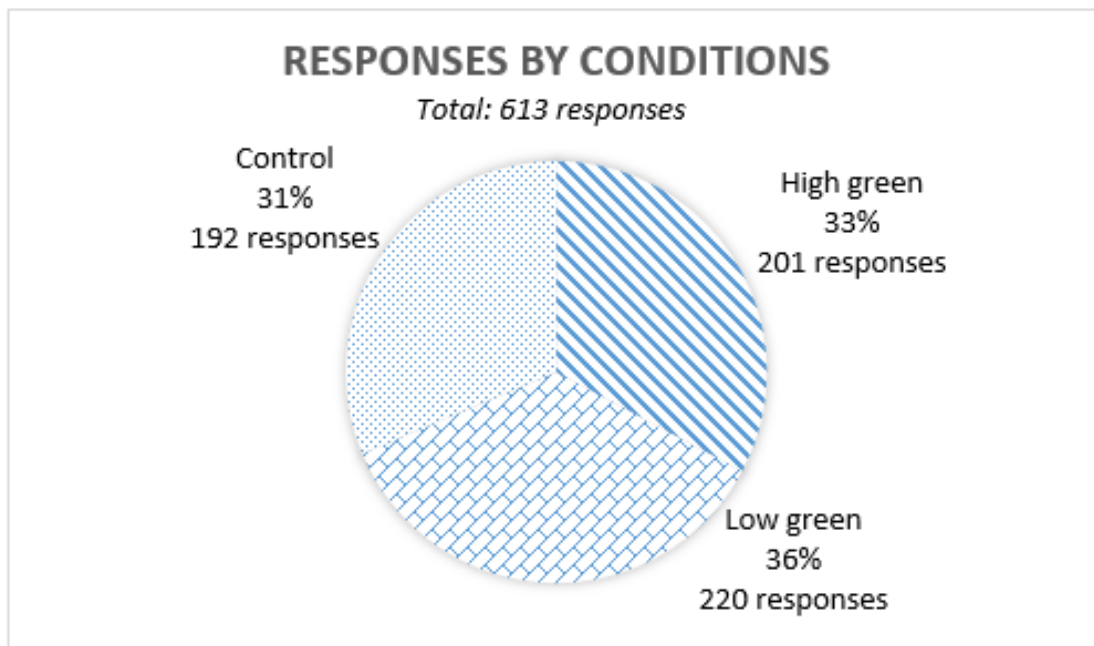
Characteristics	Frequency	Valid Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	386	59.7
Male	252	38.9
LGBT	9	1.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>647</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Generation</b>		
Gen X (1965-1979)	28	4.3
Gen Y (1980 - 1994)	116	17.9
Gen Z (1995 - 2009)	503	77.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>647</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Education</b>		
College/Technical School	355	54.9
Graduate	204	31.5
Highschool	51	7.9
Postgraduate	37	5.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>647</i>	<i>100</i>
<b>Income</b>		
Under 200€	392	60.6
200€ to under 400€	141	21.8
400€ to under 800€	71	11.0
800€ to under 1.600€	25	3.9
Over 1.600€	18	2.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>647</i>	<i>100</i>

➤ **Responses by conditions**

The sample of 613 respondents is valid and used in analysis of this experiment. The figure below shows the proportions of responses by conditions corresponding to three levels of involvements of firms in environmental aspects, including high-involved, low-involved, and control condition which gave no information of firm green engagement.

Among these, 201 responses are high green, equivalent to 33% of the whole sample. 220 responses are low green, accounting for 36% of the whole sample. The control condition contains 192 responses, equivalent to 31%. As illustrated by the figure above, it is quite balanced among three conditions, which is valid for us to access further analysis.

Figure 6.23. Responses by conditions



➤ **Descriptive Statistics**

The table below presents the overall descriptions of variables measured in this experiment. Descriptive statistics show the value of min, max, mean and standard deviations of each item in measured variables.

The mean values of firm green engagement (perceived by consumers) (4-item scale) are between 4.85 and 5.07 on a 7-point Likert scale. Standard deviations are between 1.874 and 2.021.

The mean scores of perceived product quality range from 4.84 to 4.99 on a 7-point semantic differential scale (3-item). Standard deviations are between 1.538 and 1.621.

The mean scores of green values (of consumers) range from 4.82 to 5.63 on a 7-point semantic differential scale (6-item). Standard deviations are between 1.462 and 1.785.

The mean values of consumers' attitude toward the firm are between 4.96 and 5.11 on a 7-point semantic differential scale. Standard deviations are between 1.647 and 1.681.

On an 11-point behavioral intention scale, the mean scores of purchase intention (3-item) range from 5.21 to 5.90. Standard deviations are between 2.981 and 3.015.

Lastly, on an 11-point behavioral intention scale, the mean values of recommendation intention (2-item) are 5.81 and 5.91. Standard deviations are 3.106 and 3.151.

Table 6.25. Descriptive statistics of measured variables

No.	Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
<b>Firm's green engagement</b> (perceived by consumers)					
1	Company Alpha is aware of environmental issues.	1	7	4.85	2.021
2	Company Alpha fulfils its social responsibilities.	1	7	4.93	1.943
3	Company Alpha gives back to society.	1	7	4.99	1.944
4	Company Alpha acts in a socially responsible way.	1	7	5.07	1.874
<b>Product Quality</b>					
<i>Products of company Alpha...</i>					
1	... have very poor quality/have very high quality	1	7	4.99	1.538
2	... are inferior/are superior	1	7	4.84	1.597
3	... are poorly made/are well made	1	7	4.97	1.621
<b>Green values</b> (of consumers)					
1	It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment.	1	7	5.63	1.587
2	I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions.	1	7	5.38	1.544
3	My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment.	1	7	4.82	1.785
4	I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet.	1	7	5.62	1.571
5	I would describe myself as environmentally responsible.	1	7	5.59	1.462
6	I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly	1	7	5.54	1.487
<b>Attitude toward the firm</b>					
<i>Please indicate your overall attitude toward [company Alpha]:</i>					
1	dislike---like	1	7	4.96	1.679
2	unfavorable---favorable	1	7	5.01	1.681
3	negative---positive	1	7	5.11	1.647
<b>Purchase Intention</b>					
1	It is very likely that I will buy products from company Alpha.	0	10	5.21	3.004
2	I will purchase products from company Alpha the next time I need coffee.	0	10	5.90	3.015
3	I will definitely try other products from company Alpha.	0	10	5.58	2.981
<b>Recommendation Intention</b>					
1	I would say positive things about company Alpha to other people.	0	10	5.91	3.106
2	I would recommend company Alpha if anyone asked me for advice.	0	10	5.81	3.151

➤ **Manipulation check**

The scenario-based between-subject experiment is designed with three levels of differences in firm sustainable engagement (i.e., high green vs. low green vs. control). Prior to further analysis, we examined whether the manipulations are adequately perceived among participants.

Table 6.26. Descriptive analysis of three conditions of firm green engagement

Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High green	196	5.93	1.773	0.127	5.68	6.18	1	7
Low green	208	3.83	2.313	0.160	3.51	4.14	1	7
Control	173	5.13	1.907	0.145	4.84	5.41	1	7
Total	577	4.93	2.205	0.092	4.75	5.11	1	7

Table 6.27. Differences among conditions' mean values

Dependent variable: Manipulated check  
Tukey HSD (post-hoc)

Condition		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High green	Low green	2.102*	0.201	0.000	1.63	2.57
	Control	.801*	0.211	0.000	0.31	1.30
Low green	High green	-2.102*	0.201	0.000	-2.57	-1.63
	Control	-1.300*	0.208	0.000	-1.79	-0.81
Control	High green	-.801*	0.211	0.000	-1.30	-0.31
	Low green	1.300*	0.208	0.000	0.81	1.79

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Conducting one-way ANOVA in SPSS, we seek for the statistical significances of the mean difference of each pair of conditions (high green vs. low green; high green vs. control; low green vs. control). The results in the table above with post-hoc test show that for two conditions (high green vs. low green), the mean difference is significant (M = 2.102, p <.001). The results obtained for high green vs. control conditions also reach the significance for the mean difference of two conditions (M = .801, p <.001). Finally, for two

conditions (low green vs. control), the mean difference is significant as well ( $M = 1.300$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

With all three means significantly different from each other, the manipulation of firm sustainable engagement is successfully carried out, and paved the way for further analysis.

### 6.3.2. Hypotheses testing

#### ➤ The effects of stimulus

This scenario-based experiment employs three levels of differences (high green, low green, and control) related to the firm green engagement, corresponding to three scenarios. Before further analysis, we recoded and transformed three scenarios into three conditions (high green: code 1; low green: code 2; control: code 3).

#### ***Main effects of stimulus on consumer attitude and behavioral intentions***

Firstly, we examine the main effects of three conditions on consumer attitude toward the firm and behavioral intentions (i.e., purchase and recommendation) toward the facial cleanser product described in the corresponding scenarios.

In SPSS, we conducted multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with green engagement of firm (i.e., three conditions) as independent variable (fixed factor) and perceived product quality, consumer attitude, purchase and recommendation intention as dependent variables.

The results reveal that the effects of firm green engagement on consumer attitude, purchase and recommendation intentions toward the firm are significant, supporting our previous hypotheses. Needless to say, all three conditions are significantly different with each other, and the responses by conditions (high green vs. low green vs. control) are almost equivalent to each other, as indicated previously. The table below reveals the main effects of firm green engagement on the outcome variables.

Table 6.28. Effects of firm green engagement on product quality, consumer attitude, purchase and recommendation intentions

Independent variable	MANOVA Results		N	Univariate Results							
	Wilk's $\lambda$	F		Product quality		Firm attitude		Purchase intention		Recommendation intention	
				Mean	F	Mean	F	Mean	F	Mean	F
Firm green engagement	0.85	12.66		34.37		50.89		32.04		30.96	
High green			201	5.40 <sup>b</sup>		5.66 <sup>a</sup>		6.41 <sup>b</sup>		6.81 <sup>b</sup>	
Low green			220	4.32 <sup>a</sup>		4.25 <sup>a</sup>		4.44 <sup>a</sup>		4.67 <sup>a</sup>	
Control			192	5.16 <sup>b</sup>		5.26 <sup>a</sup>		5.95 <sup>b</sup>		6.23 <sup>b</sup>	

Post-hoc tests (Turkey):

<sup>a</sup> significantly different with other conditions at  $p < 0.05$

<sup>b</sup> only significantly different with low green

Specifically, in terms of consumer attitude toward the firm, participants who expose to the scenario related to the firm's high green engagement result higher attitude score toward that firm than those with the firm's low green engagement ( $M_{\text{low green}} = 4.25$ ;  $M_{\text{high green}} = 5.66$ ;  $M_{\text{control}} = 5.26$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). The mean score of high green condition and control condition are also statistically different even though the difference of mean score is not large ( $M_{\text{control}} = 5.26$ ;  $M_{\text{high green}} = 5.66$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

For the likelihood to purchase, consumers who expose to the scenario related to the firm's high green engagement report higher intention of purchase ( $M_{\text{low green}} = 4.44$ ;  $M_{\text{high green}} = 6.41$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). However, post-hoc tests reveal that the means of high green vs. control condition are not statistically different with each other ( $p > 0.10$ ).

By the same token for the likelihood to recommend, higher (vs. lower) intention leans toward the participants with the scenario of high green (vs. low green) ( $M_{\text{low green}} = 4.67$ ;  $M_{\text{high green}} = 6.81$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). However, post-hoc tests reveal that the means of high green vs. control condition are not statistically different with each other ( $p > 0.10$ ).

### ***Main effects of green stimulus on perceived product quality***

In this experiment, we firstly aimed to examine the effects of firm green engagement (three conditions) on perceived product quality of consumers.

On the table above, the main effect of firm's green engagement on perceived product quality is also significant ( $F= 34.37$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, the pair of high green and low green conditions yields the mean scores statistically different with each other ( $M_{\text{low green}} = 4.32$ ;  $M_{\text{high green}} = 5.40$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). However, post-hoc tests reveal that the means of high green vs. control condition are not statistically different with each other ( $p > 0.10$ ).

***No evidence of difference effects between subgroups of gender***

Once the statistical significance is found on the test of differences among subsamples, we re-conduct 2-way ANOVA with gender as covariate. Unlike the results of previous experiment in food sector showing that the female consumers have more positive perception toward firm engagement in CSR as compared to male, given the same condition (low or high-CSR). In the repeated experiment in cosmetic and skincare sector, we did not find any evidence of statistical significance between male and female subgroups on their attitude ( $p = 0.10$ ), their purchase intention ( $p > 0.10$ ), and their recommendation intention ( $p > 0.10$ ) when given the same condition of green engagement of firm (high green vs. low green vs. control).

➤ **Mediating role of product quality**

We hypothesized that product quality played a mediating role on the relationship of green engagement of firm (perceived by consumers) on consumer attitude and behavioral intentions. In order to test this hypothesis, we conducted analysis in SPSS, using Hayes' s (2021) process macro v3.5.2 (model 4). Before this step, we already tested the correlation of the conditions and green engagement of firms (perceived by consumers). With  $p < .000$ , these two variables have high correlation with each other.

The results reveals that product quality mediated the relationship between firm green engagement (perceived by consumers) and attitude toward the firm. The table below presented the direct effect, indirect, and total effect in which all the effects are positive and significant ( $p < .001$ ). The percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero.



Table 6.29. The effect of perceived firm green engagement of firm on consumer attitude with product quality as mediator

Effects		Results			Note
		Size**	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.249	.026	<.001	Effect of perceived firm green engagement on consumer attitude
Indirect effect	ab	.454	.038	[.359; .507]*	
	a	.673	.026	<.001	Effect of perceived firm green engagement on perceived product quality
	b	.675	.030	<.001	Effect of perceived product quality on consumer attitude
Total effect	c	.703	.027	<.001	c = ab + c'

\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval did not include zero

\*\*standardized coefficient

The analysis is repeated with purchase intention and recommendation intention as dependent variable, correspondingly. The tables below present the analysis results, giving the evidences that all direct, indirect and total effect are positive and significant ( $p < .001$ ) and the percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero. This suggests that product quality played the mediating role between the relationship of perceived firm green engagement and behavioral intentions (i.e., purchase and recommendation).

Table 6.30. The effect of perceived firm green engagement on purchase intention with product quality as mediator

Effects		Results			Note
		Size**	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.238	.064	<.001	Effect of perceived green engagement on purchase intention
Indirect effect	ab	.354	.055	[.473; .692]*	
	a	.673	.026	<.001	Effect of perceived green engagement of firm on perceived product quality
	b	.526	.072	<.001	Effect of perceived product quality on purchase intention
Total effect	c	.592	.054	<.001	c = ab + c'

\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero

\*\*standardized coefficient

Table 6.31. The effect of perceived firm green engagement of firm on recommendation intention with product quality as mediator

Effects		Results			Note
		Size**	SE	p-value	
Direct effect	c'	.263	.071	<.001	Effect of perceived firm green engagement on recommendation intention
Indirect effect	ab	.327	.060	[.462; .699]*	
	a	.673	.026	<.001	Effect of perceived firm green engagement on perceived product quality
	b	.486	.080	<.001	Effect of perceived product quality on recommendation intention
Total effect	c	.590	.059	<.001	c = ab + c'

\* percentile bootstrap confidence interval does not include zero

\*\*standardized coefficient

### ➤ Moderating role of consumers' green values

We tested our hypothesis through Hayes' s (2021) process macro v3.5.2, using model 8 which allows to test two moderating effects on the mediating variable and on the outcome variable at the same time.

Firstly, we run the model 8 with purchase intention as dependent variable, perceived firm green engagement as independent variable, product quality as mediator, and green values (of consumers) as moderator.

The results in the table below reveals that green values (W) have moderating effect on the relationship of perceived firm green engagement (X) and perceived product quality (M), in which the interacting effect (X\*W) is statistically significant (coeff =.079; p<0.001). Also, green values (W) have a moderating effect on the relationship of perceived firm green engagement (X) and purchase intention (Y) in which the interacting effect (X\*W) is statistically significant (coeff. = .072; p < 0.05). Following the general rule (Hayes 2018), due to the fact that the interaction terms are significant, the other variable with insignificant p-value are still kept in the model for interpretation.

We then replicated the analysis with consumer attitude toward the firm and recommendation intention as dependent variables, respectively. However, the interaction effect of green values is only statistically significant in the model when the

outcome variable is recommendation intention (coeff. = .079;  $p = .053$ ,  $< 0.10$ ). Also, when the outcome variable is attitude toward the firm, the interaction effect of green values is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.10$ ).

Table 6.32. Moderating effects of green values

Antecedents		Consequents (Y)								
		Product quality		Consumer attitude		Purchase intention		Recommendation intention		
		coeff.	p	coeff.	p	coeff.	p	coeff.	p	
Constant		4.877	.000	1.423	.000	.701	.056	1.004	.014	
<b>Conditional effects</b>										
Perceived firm green engagement	X	.559	.000	.250	.000	.426	.000	.498	.000	
Green values	W	.123	.002	-.044	.146	.115	.116	-.072	.382	
Product quality	M			.675*	.000	.526*	.000	.486*	.000	
<b>Interaction effects</b>										
	X*W	.079	.000	.021	.156	.072	.047	.079	.053	
Johnson-Neyman significant region						-2.720		-2.908		
		R <sup>2</sup> = 69%		R <sup>2</sup> = 86%		R <sup>2</sup> = 71%		R <sup>2</sup> = 69%		
		F = 181.34		F = 448.79		F = 157.16		F = 141.46		
		p = .000		p = .000		p = .000		p = .000		

Variables related to interaction terms were mean-centered prior to analysis

\*standardized

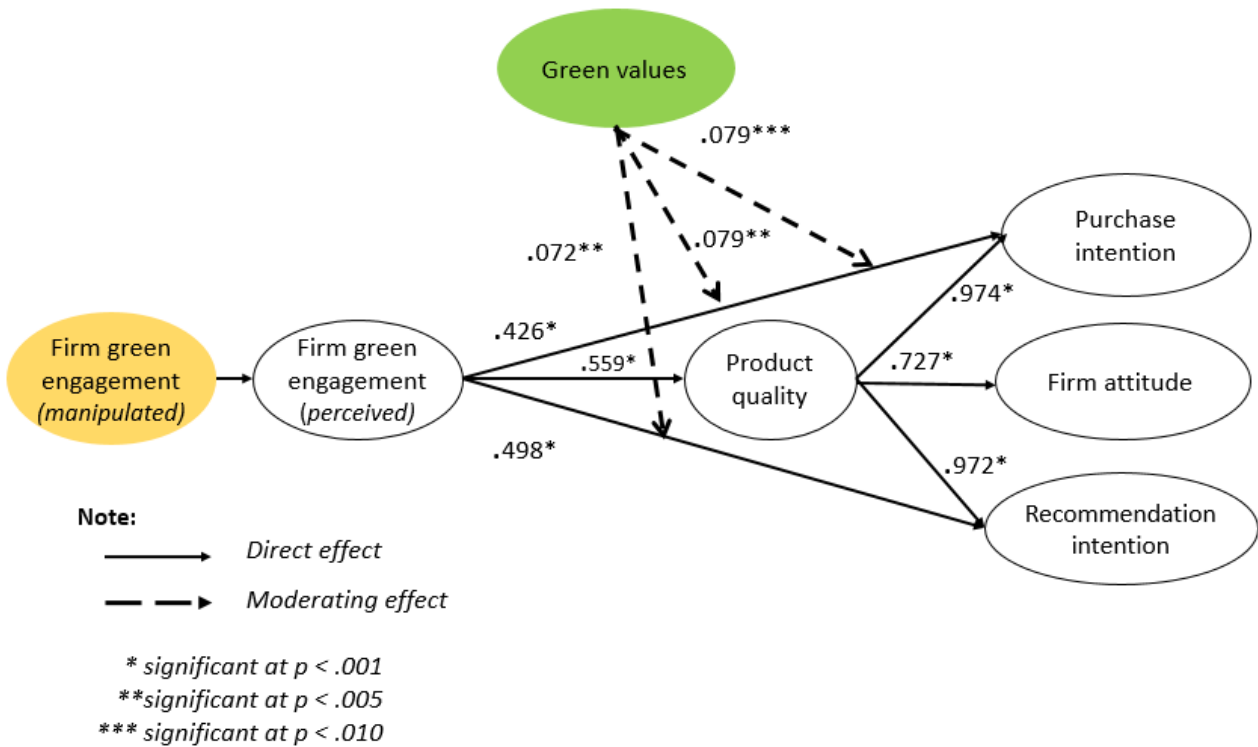
These results support three among four hypotheses of outcomes variables. Simply put, among consumers who perceive the same degree about firm green engagement, those who have higher score of green values will have higher evaluation of product quality. These consumers also have higher intention to purchase and recommend the new product. However, no evidence is found in terms of their attitude toward the firm.

#### 6.4. DISCUSSION

Theory of cognitive dissonance, firstly introduced in 1957, pointed out that people are likely to be exposed to the inconsistency in their cognition (Festinger 1968). To say it in another way, they may perceive positively the firms in terms of CSR engagement, but they may still be very inconsistent between what they perceive and what they intend to do, not to mention further actual corresponding behaviors (Bhattacharya and Sen 2004, Palihawadana et al. 2016).

Therefore, it is worthy to conduct more empirical studies in different markets and in different sectors in the economy to see how consumers react.

Figure 6.24. Conceptual model after being tested



#### 6.4.1. Mediating effects of perceived product quality

In our second experiment of consumers' responses, we confirmed the findings of previous experiment (presented in chapter 4) that perceived product quality mediated the relationship between (1) the perceptions of consumers toward firm involvement in CSR and (2) their outcome responses such as attitude toward the firm and behavioral intentions.

Replicated the first experiment, we do not provide in details the information related to technical quality control of products (e.g., ingredients, materials, procedure) (Gatti et al. 2012), which usually provide evidence to affirm the actual quality. Notably, consumers are exposed to the scenarios providing merely information of how the firm engaged in green activities such as recycling materials, environmental protection, sustainable investment, or eco-friendly programs. It is interesting that the cue of firm green engagement can induce some sort of evaluations related to quality. In turn, the positively perceived product quality results in positive intentions of purchasing and recommending for the product, as well as favorable

attitude toward the firm. The findings in our replicated experiment provides extra evidences for the mediating effect of perceived product quality with statistically significance (all  $p < .001$ ) and the confidence interval of indirect effect does not include zero. This effect size of perceived firm green engagement on perceived product quality is considerable (coeff. = .595), and the effect size of perceived product quality on consumer attitude, purchase intention, and recommendation are high as well (with coefficients respectively are .729, .983, .987).

Our study, together with previous studies (Zeithaml et al. 1996, Bou-Llusar et al. 2001, Gatti et al. 2012, Wang et al. 2012) therefore reach the consensus that firm engagement in CSR might be transferred to favorable perception of quality, and then consumers' perceived quality might enhance their attitudes toward firm as well as their likelihoods to purchase and recommend.

#### **6.4.2. Moderating effects of green values**

Consumers' green values have been recognized as the importance of consuming products that do not have harmful impact on the environment; the willingness to consider the ecological issues in their daily decisions (Haws et al. 2014); and highly ecologically supportive behaviors (e.g., boycotting the firms performing unethical manners (Klein et al. 2004).

In this second experiment, we found evidences that the consumers' green values moderate the effects of how they perceive firm green engagement and how they come up with their attitude toward the firm and their behavioral intentions. Consumers' green values together with perceived firm green engagement form the significant interacting effects on perceived product quality ( $p < .001$ ), purchase intention ( $p < .005$ ), and recommendation intention ( $p < .010$ ). No evidence is found in terms of their attitude toward the firm.

Even though the size of this effect on perceived product quality, purchase intention and recommendation intention are not very huge (with coefficients are equal .079, .072, and .079, respectively), when combined with conditional effects of firm green engagement, will produce considerable effect on the outcomes. The results suggest that the firms may not be the only force on the market of sustainable products. Put this effort on the light of consumers' green involvement, the two hands (firms and consumers) may create louder sound, enhancing the sustainable markets for green products. As a result, this becomes the backward support for

*Chapter 6: Replicated experiment in skincare & cosmetics sector*

firms, fostering them to go further toward responsible operations and sustainable development, contributing to efforts to resolve the ecological issues of the century.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6

The chapter gave answers for **research question n°2** (*What are the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR, firm origin and production process on perceived product quality and the consequences on consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions?*) and a part of **research question n°3** (*Which factors that can explain the mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and their responses to CSR?*).

The replicated scenario-based experiment in this chapter formed a bridge between two components: firm green involvement and consumer responses. We found the main effect of **firm involvement in CSR** on perceived product quality, consumer attitude toward the firm, purchase intention, recommendation intention.

The robust effect of **perceive product quality** as a mediator is confirmed through this study. It suggests that consumers would form their own evaluations of product quality even though no cue of quality control was given but only the information of how the firm engaged in sustainable activities. Furthermore, we found evidences that the consumers' **green values** moderate the effects of how they perceive the green engagement of firms and how they come up with their attitude toward the firm and their behavioral intentions. Consumers' green values together with perceived CSR involvement of firms form the significant interacting effects on product quality, purchase intention, and recommendation intention. No evidence was found in terms of their attitude toward the firm.

As indicated previously, we integrated in this second quantitative study with a large questionnaire on individual factors that might have the effects on how consumers evaluate and responses to firm green engagement. The next chapter will present the results with the structural equation model.

## PART I – WHAT CSR IS AND HOW VIETNAMESE CONSUMERS PERCEIVE IT

### Chapter 1 | CSR and consumers

- 1.1. The concept of CSR
- 1.2. How does CSR matter to consumers?
- 1.3. The oriental cultural aspects & their impacts on CSR conceptualization
- 1.4. Qualitative study: How consumers perceived CSR in Vietnam

### Chapter 2 | Exploratory study: consumer perceptions of CSR in Vietnam

- 2.1. Research design
- 2.2. Data collection and coding procedure
- 2.3. Findings
- 2.4. Discussion

## PART II – HOW CONSUMERS EVALUATE AND REACT TOWARD CSR

### Chapter 3 | Consumer evaluations and reactions to CSR

- 3.1. Consumer evaluations of the firm and its products
- 3.2. Consumer responses to CSR: attitude and behavioral intentions
- 3.3. Consumption habituation
- 3.4. How consumers perceived firm CSR motives
- 3.5. Skepticism toward firm engagement in CSR
- 3.6. Hypotheses development

### Chapter 4 | Experiment: consumer responses to CSR in food sector

- 4.1. Research design: scenario-based experiment
- 4.2. Data collection
- 4.3. Data analysis
- 4.4. Discussion

## PART III – BENEATH THE SURFACE: FACTORS EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES TO CSR

### Chapter 5 | Factors explaining consumer responses to CSR

- 5.1. Mindfulness and green consumption
- 5.2. Voluntary simplicity leads to conscious consumption
- 5.3. Connectedness to nature and sustainable values
- 5.4. Internal locus-of-control and the values of sustainability
- 5.5. Death anxiety: its effects on voluntary simplicity and mindfulness
- 5.6. Consumer sustainable behaviors reflecting their green values

### Chapter 6 | Replicated experiment: consumer responses in skincare & cosmetics sector

- 6.1. Research design
- 6.2. Data collection
- 6.3. Data analysis
- 6.4. Discussion

### Chapter 7 | Explaining consumer responses through structural equation modeling

- 7.1. Model specification
- 7.2. Model evaluation
- 7.3. Discussion



### Chapter 8 | General discussion

### Conclusion: contributions, limitations, and further research



## CHAPTER 7 | EXPLAINING CONSUMER RESPONSES THROUGH STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING

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The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the mechanisms behind consumer perceptions and reactions toward CSR. Corresponding to the research design of this study presented in chapter 6, we now report the results of the PLS-SEM which helps to explain the variance in the dependent variables (related to consumer responses toward firms' CSR activities). This chapter includes three sections. The first section presents the specifications of formative and reflective measurement models. The second section reveals the model evaluations: (1) formative measurement models, (2) reflective measurement models, and (3) structural model. The final section presents our discussion on these results.

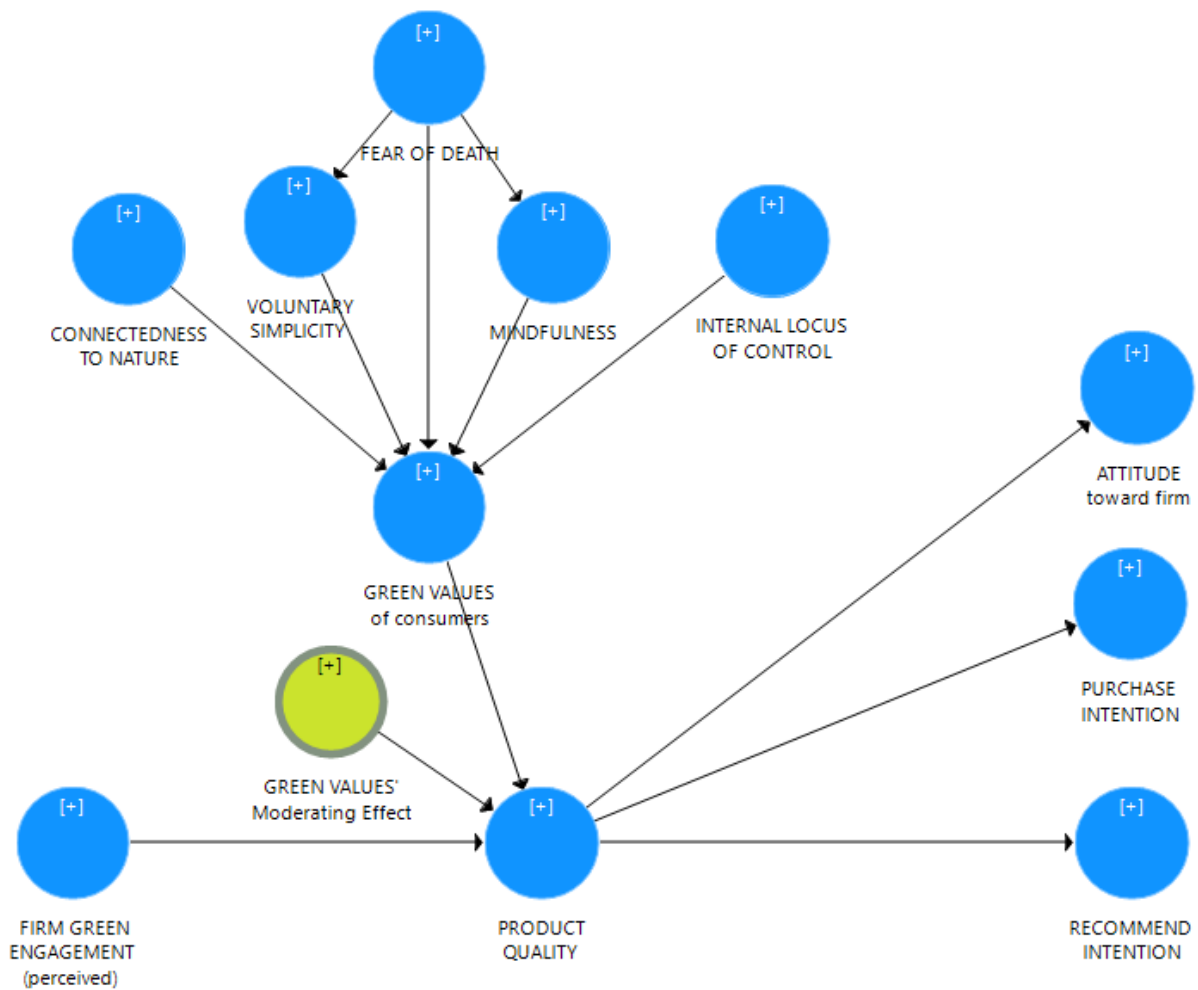
### 7.1. MODEL SPECIFICATION

#### 7.1.1. Specification of structural model

Initially, we defined the latent variables of the structural model, presented as the figure below, in which:

- **Exogenous constructs** consisted in: Fear of death, Internal locus of control, Connectedness to nature, Perceived firm green engagement;
- **Endogenous constructs** included: Attitude toward the firm, Purchase intention, Recommendation intention;
- **Mediators** included: Voluntary simplicity (intervening between Fear of Death and Green values of consumers), Mindfulness (intervening between Fear of Death and Green values of consumers), and Perceived product quality (intervening between Perceived firm green engagement and the exogenous constructs);
- **Moderator**: Green values (of consumers) (moderating the effect of Perceived firm green engagement and Perceived product quality).

Figure 7.25. Specification of structural model



### 7.1.2. Specification of measurement models

The table below specifies the measurement models of all constructs used in model.

- **Formative measurement** models include two constructs: voluntary simplicity and connectedness to nature.
- **Reflective measurement** models correspond to seven constructs: Internal locus-of-control, Green values (of consumers); Perceived firm green engagement; Perceived product quality; Attitude toward the firm, Purchase intention, and Recommendation intention.
- **Hierarchical component models**

In our study, there are two constructs measured by the large number of items: Mindfulness (20 items) and Fear of death (14 items). This can result in high correlation

among indicators within the construct (Lohmöller 1989, Hair Jr et al. 2017). Therefore, we employed hierarchical component models with two layers: *high-order component* and *low-order component* for each construct.

Both Fear of death and Mindfulness are identified as reflective-formative hierarchical models:

- **Fear of death:** The *low-order reflective model* involves two latent variables (two dimensions): *fear for one self's death* and *fear for others' death*. For *high-order model*, two dimensions are considered as formative indicators of Fear of death construct.
- **Mindfulness:** The *low-order reflective model* involves five reflective latent variables (five dimensions): *Observe inside, observe outside, describe, act with awareness, and act without judgment*. For high-order model, five dimensions are considered as formative indicators of Mindfulness construct.

Table 7.33. Specification of measurement models

No.	Construct and number of indicators	Measurement model	Hierarchical component model
1	Mindfulness	20	Reflective - Formative
2	Fear of death	14	Reflective - Formative
3	Voluntary simplicity	6	Formative
4	Connectedness to nature	4	Formative
5	Internal locus of control	4	Reflective
6	Green values	6	Reflective
7	Perceived product quality	3	Reflective
8	Perceived firm green engagement	4	Reflective
9	Attitude toward firm	3	Reflective
10	Purchase intention	3	Reflective
11	Recommendation intention	2	Reflective

## 7.2. MODEL EVALUATION

PLS-SEM is assessed on SmartPLS 3 software. The PLS-SEM algorithm converges in fewer 300 iterations, indicating that the solutions of the algorithm are stable for model assessment.

First, we examine the constructs of the outer models (reflective and formative measurement models). We also assess separately the constructs employed the hierarchical component

models. Then, structural model will be examined. All steps of assessments are strictly carried out under the guidelines of PLS-SEM by Hair Jr et al. (2017).

### 7.2.1. Assessment of reflective measurement model

There are seven reflective measurement models used in this study: Internal locus-of-control, Green values (of consumers), Perceived firm green engagement; Perceived product quality; Attitude toward firm; Purchase intention; and Recommendation intention. For each of these reflective models, we conducted three steps including (1) internal consistency reliability, (2) convergent validity, and (3) discriminant validity.

**For internal consistency reliability,** PLS-SEM results in the table below show that all Cronbach's alpha of 7 reflective constructs are above 0.70 (ranging from .772 to .960). The composite reliability of them are also above 0.70 (ranging from .845 to .974). The internal consistency reliability of each reflective construct is between Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, indicating the favorable reliability.

**For convergent validity,** all the outer loadings of all constructs are above threshold 0.70, except one item of Green values (CGreen3) which outer loadings yielded .665, slightly under the threshold. However, it does not have great influence on the whole constructs, and therefore, is kept in the model. Besides, all values of average variance extracted (AVE) are above the threshold of .50 (ranging from .578 to .934), indicating that the indicators within each reflective construct converge and share a high proportion of variance.

Table 7.34. Internal consistency and convergent validity of reflective constructs

	Construct and items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<b>iLOC</b>	<b>internal locus of control</b>		.772	.845	.594
<i>iLOC1</i>	<i>When I make plans, I'm almost certain to make them work</i>	.798			
<i>iLOC2</i>	<i>I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life</i>	.798			
<i>iLOC3</i>	<i>My life is determined by my own actions</i>	.746			
<i>iLOC4</i>	<i>I am usually able to protect my personal interests</i>	.739			
<b>CGREEN</b>	<b>Green values (of consumers)</b>		.853	.891	.578
<i>CGreen1</i>	<i>It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment</i>	.750			
<i>CGreen2</i>	<i>I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions</i>	.777			

Construct and items		Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<i>CGreen3</i>	<i>My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment</i>	.665			
<i>CGreen4</i>	<i>I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet</i>	.738			
<i>CGreen5</i>	<i>I would describe myself as environmentally responsible</i>	.822			
<i>CGreen6</i>	<i>I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly</i>	.798			
<b>FGREEN</b>	<b>Perceived firm green engagement</b>		.889	.924	.752
	In my opinion, company Alpha is...				
<i>FGreen1</i>	<i>... committed to helping the environment</i>	.868			
<i>FGreen2</i>	<i>... making a difference</i>	.794			
<i>FGreen3</i>	<i>... doing environmentally friendly practices</i>	.915			
<i>FGreen4</i>	<i>... committed to sustainability</i>	.886			
<b>QUAL</b>	<b>Perceived product quality</b>		.933	.957	.882
	Products of company Alpha...				
<i>Qual1</i>	<i>...have very poor quality/have very high quality</i>	.947			
<i>Qual2</i>	<i>...are inferior/are superior</i>	.924			
<i>Qual3</i>	<i>...are poorly made/are well made</i>	.946			
<b>ATTI</b>	<b>Attitude toward firm</b>		.960	.974	.926
	Please indicate your overall attitude toward company Alpha:				
<i>Atti1</i>	<i>dislike---like</i>	.958			
<i>Atti2</i>	<i>unfavorable---favorable</i>	.967			
<i>Atti3</i>	<i>negative---positive</i>	.963			
<b>PI</b>	<b>Purchase intention</b>		.918	.948	.860
<i>PI1</i>	<i>It is very likely that I will buy products from company Alpha</i>	.923			
<i>PI2</i>	<i>I will purchase products from company Alpha the next time I need skincare &amp; cosmetics products</i>	.917			
<i>PI3</i>	<i>I will definitely try other products from company Alpha in the next 3 months</i>	.941			
<b>RECO</b>	<b>Recommendation intention</b>		.930	.966	.934
<i>Reco1</i>	<i>I would say positive things about company Alpha to other people in the next 3 months</i>	.966			
<i>Reco2</i>	<i>I would recommend company Alpha if anyone asked me for advice</i>	.967			

AVE: average variance extracted

To assess the **discriminant validity** of seven reflective measurement models above, we firstly examined the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) values for all pairs of constructs. In other words, we would like to see the ratio of the between-trait correlations (between all constructs in the model) to the within-trait correlations (within the construct). The table below reveals

that almost HTMT values are under threshold of .85, except that the HTMT value of *Perceived product quality - Attitude toward firm* is under the threshold of .90, which is acceptable because these constructs are conceptually similar (Hair Jr et al. 2017). Besides, the HTMT value of *Purchase intention - Recommendation intention* is higher than acceptable threshold, yielding the value of .963.

Table 7.35. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of all pairs of reflective constructs

HTMT ratio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attitude toward firm							
2. Perceived firm green engagement	.762						
3. Green values ( <i>of consumers</i> )	.295	.421					
4. Purchase intention	.774	.656	.224				
5. Perceived product quality	.891	.741	.346	.742			
6. Recommendation intention	.741	.650	.240	.963	.712		
7. Internal locus of control	.228	.362	.598	.204	.294	.177	

Secondly, we run bootstrap with 5000 samples. The results obtained from bootstrap process reveal that the confident interval of HTMT statistics for all combinations of constructs does not include 1, suggesting that each pair of constructs are empirically distinct.

Thirdly, as shown in the table below, all indicator's outer loadings on its construct are higher than all its cross-loadings with others constructs in the models (see numbers in bold). It is apparent that the indicators within a construct have much in common than having with other constructs.

Table 7.36. Cross-loadings of indicators

	Fear of death	Mindfulness	Connectedness to nature	Voluntary simplicity	Internal locus of control	Green values	Perceived firm green engagement	Perceived product quality	Attitude toward firm	Purchase intention	Recommend intention
	FDEATH	MIND	NATURE	VS	iLOC	CGREEN	FGREEN	QUAL	ATTI	PI	RECO
iLOC1	.117	.348	.342	.433	<b>.798</b>	.420	.240	.169	.135	.120	.101
iLOC2	.058	.334	.250	.312	<b>.798</b>	.371	.175	.208	.149	.137	.140
iLOC3	.160	.352	.376	.389	<b>.746</b>	.339	.237	.158	.132	.117	.098
iLOC4	.189	.359	.267	.376	<b>.739</b>	.361	.273	.236	.188	.156	.125
CGreen1	.230	.405	.538	.514	.366	<b>.750</b>	.272	.193	.167	.083	.088
CGreen2	.136	.447	.469	.472	.418	<b>.777</b>	.305	.308	.259	.201	.226
CGreen3	.125	.364	.350	.317	.413	<b>.665</b>	.282	.276	.241	.185	.181
CGreen4	.170	.386	.506	.416	.312	<b>.738</b>	.216	.177	.165	.105	.120
CGreen5	.229	.419	.542	.473	.377	<b>.822</b>	.288	.220	.164	.139	.157
CGreen6	.195	.458	.530	.434	.334	<b>.798</b>	.304	.227	.217	.191	.200
FGreen1	.211	.273	.277	.309	.295	.326	<b>.868</b>	.550	.592	.486	.484
FGreen2	.205	.296	.198	.242	.224	.293	<b>.794</b>	.545	.586	.498	.482
FGreen3	.206	.297	.231	.237	.242	.331	<b>.915</b>	.605	.650	.552	.542
FGreen4	.224	.298	.208	.270	.278	.319	<b>.886</b>	.640	.612	.516	.540
Qual1	.172	.266	.193	.203	.236	.289	.647	<b>.947</b>	.818	.678	.655
Qual2	.200	.242	.191	.223	.237	.294	.606	<b>.924</b>	.716	.600	.583
Qual3	.194	.247	.189	.197	.230	.282	.651	<b>.946</b>	.843	.657	.631
Atti1	.203	.231	.187	.164	.173	.258	.681	.829	<b>.958</b>	.721	.690
Atti2	.188	.235	.199	.178	.193	.251	.687	.809	<b>.967</b>	.694	.678
Atti3	.208	.228	.189	.163	.199	.256	.665	.803	<b>.963</b>	.684	.653
PI1	.153	.156	.103	.082	.150	.154	.520	.633	.663	<b>.923</b>	.799
PI2	.169	.195	.172	.144	.155	.199	.574	.647	.690	<b>.917</b>	.823
PI3	.165	.181	.119	.125	.173	.197	.553	.633	.668	<b>.941</b>	.853
Reco1	.155	.183	.130	.141	.136	.217	.577	.641	.670	.852	<b>.966</b>
Reco2	.167	.192	.141	.106	.154	.196	.567	.644	.685	.869	<b>.967</b>

Finally, for the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the results provide evidences that the value of  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  of each construct (on the diagonal of the table) is higher than its highest correlation with any other constructs.

Table 7.37. Fornell-Larker criterion of reflective constructs

Fornell-Larcker criterion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attitude toward the firm	.962						
2. Perceived firm green engagement	.704	.867					
3. Green values ( <i>of consumers</i> )	.265	.366	.760				
4. Purchase intention	.727	.593	.198	.927			
5. Perceived product quality	.846	.677	.307	.688	.939		
6. Recommendation intention	.700	.592	.213	.890	.665	.967	
7. Internal locus-of-control	.195	.299	.486	.172	.249	.150	.771

Overall, the results of HTMT values and their confident intervals, the outer loadings and Fornell-Larcker criterion indicate that the indicators of each construct are unique and truly distinct from other constructs, paving the way for the structural model assessment later.

### 7.2.2. Assessment of formative measurement model

In this study, the formative measurement models include two following constructs: *connectedness to nature* and *voluntary simplicity*. Three steps to assess these outer models are (1) convergent validity; (2) collinearity between indicators; and (3) significance and relevance of outer weight.

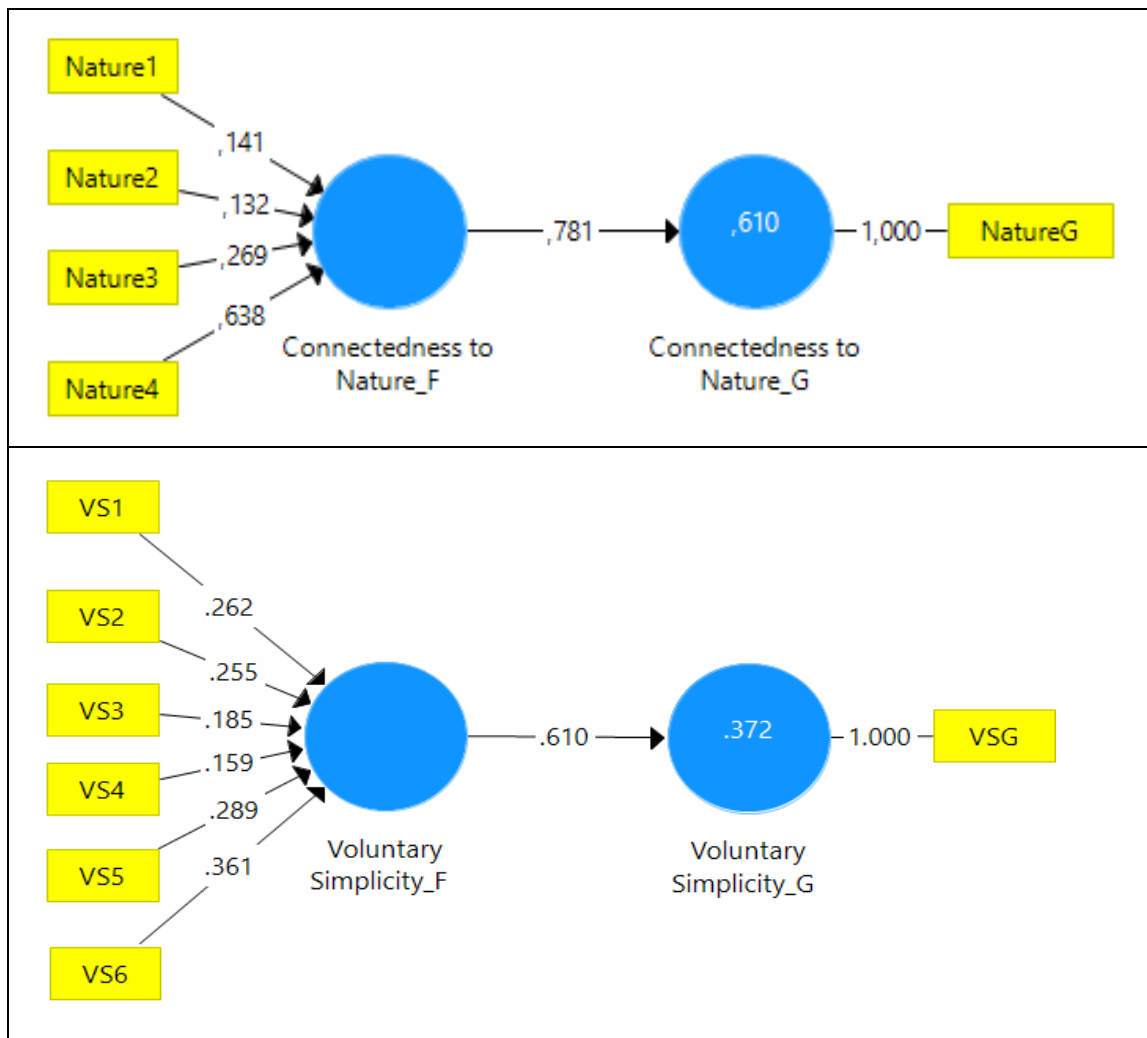
Firstly, we carried out **redundancy analysis** for each of formative constructs. In PLS-SEM, we created path models for connectedness to nature and voluntary simplicity separately as the figure below.

For connectedness to nature, the path model involves four formative items (Nature1 to 4) used to measure this construct and a global item (NatureG) to measure it generally. The PLS algorithm yields the path coefficient of .781 ( $R^2 = .610$ ), above the threshold of at least .70 for path coefficient and  $R^2$  value of at least .50.

For voluntary simplicity, the path model involves six formative items (VS1 to VS6) and a global item (VSG) to measure it generally. The results reveal the path coefficient of .610, slightly under the threshold ( $R^2 = .372$ ).



Figure 7.26. Redundancy analysis of formative measurement models



Secondly, we examined the **collinearity between indicators**. The analysis results in the table below reveal that all variance inflation factors (VIF) are uniformly lower than the threshold value of 5, indicating that there is no potential collinearity for both formative constructs.

Thirdly, **significance and relevance of outer weight** are assessed. Also in the table below, all p-values of outer weights are below 0.05 (except the value for VS5 which is acceptable at .067, slightly over the threshold). Besides, the confident intervals bias corrected of all outer weights do not include 0 (except for item VS5).

Table 7.38. Measurements of formative constructs used in the study

Construct and items		Outer VIF	Outer weight	p	CI BCa	
					2.5%	95.5%
<b>NATURE Connectedness to nature</b>						
Nature1	When I am in natural environments, I feel connected with nature	1.707	.368	.000	.247	.476
Nature2	It makes me sad to see natural environments destroyed	1.654	.368	.000	.234	.509
Nature3	Spending time in nature makes me feel happy	2.271	.185	.021	.028	.343
Nature4	I usually spend some of my time being in nature	1.843	.320	.000	.196	.446
NatureG	Generally, I have connectedness to nature					
<b>VS Voluntary simplicity</b>						
VS1	I believe in material simplicity, i.e., buying and consuming only what I need	1.354	.157	.030	.016	.296
VS2	I believe in "less is more", e.g., I prefer smaller house over a larger house	1.198	.169	.005	.049	.289
VS3	I believe that product function is usually more important than its style	1.286	.234	.002	.088	.378
VS4	I am interested in personal growth more than economic growth	1.185	.133	.026	.012	.243
VS5	I am determined to have more control over my life as a consumer, e.g., stay away from instalment buying; control my spending	1.431	.130	.067	-.009	.269
VS6	I consider myself ecologically responsible	1.384	.633	.000	.479	.763
VSG	Generally, I have a simplified living style					

### 7.2.3. Assessment of hierarchical component models

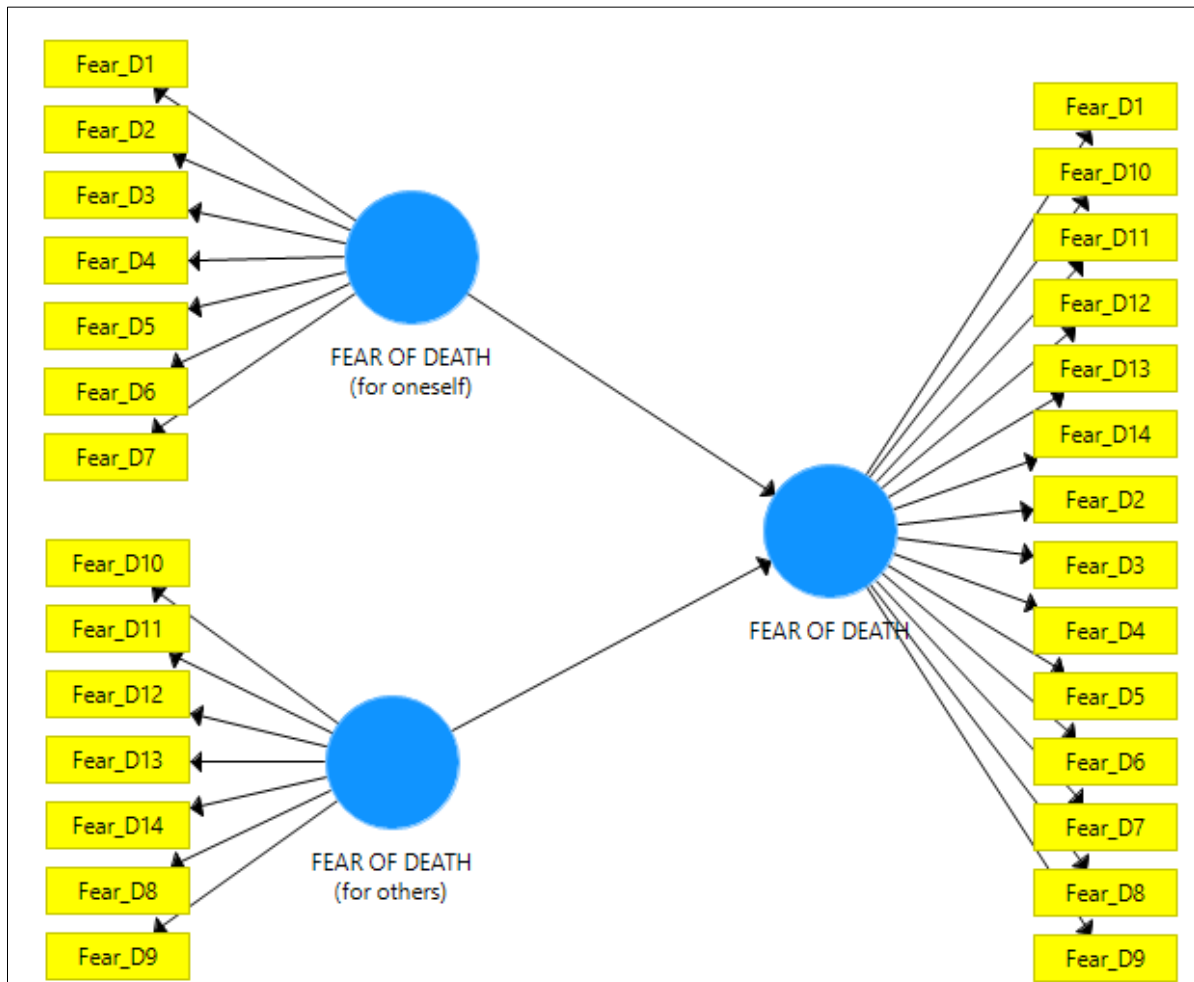
In this study, there are two constructs measured by the large number of items: mindfulness (20 items) and fear of death (14 items). Due to the fact that the coefficients among indicators are highly correlated, we employed hierarchical component models with high-order component and low-order component for these constructs (Lohmöller 1989, Hair Jr et al. 2017). For each construct, we created a separately hierarchical component model. The analysis results are presented as follows.

#### ➤ **Fear of death: reflective-formative hierarchical component model**

The measurement model of fear of death is specified with two layers: *reflective low-order component model* and *formative high-order component model*.

The **low-order reflective model** involves two latent variables (or two dimensions): *fear for one self's death* (measured by item FearD1 to FearD7) and *fear for others' death* (measured by item FearD8 to FearD17) as the figure below.

Figure 7.27. Reflective-formative hierarchical component model of fear of death



The Cronbach's alpha for each variable is higher than the threshold value of .70. Also, the composite reliability is higher than .90, indicating good internal consistency for these reflective latent variables.

Concerning convergent validity, the loadings of all indicators are higher than .70 except for item FearD11 (loading value of .578) and FearD14 (loading value of .614). However, they do not cause any issues because the models yield the AVE value of .620 and .575, thus much higher than .50, which is the threshold usually accepted for AVE.

For discriminant validity, we assessed HTMT ratio for the pair of two latent variables. With the value of .622, the HTMT ratio is lower than the threshold .85. Besides, the Fornell-Larcker criterion results show that the value of  $\sqrt{AVE}$  of each construct (on the diagonal of the table) is higher than its correlation with the other construct. The results suggest that the two dimensions of fear of death are technically distinct from each other.

Table 7.39. Formative low-order constructs of hierarchical component models

	Construct and items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<b>FEAR_OWN</b>	<b>Fear of death - Fear for oneself</b>		.897	.919	.620
<i>FearD1</i>	<i>The total isolation of death</i>	.792			
<i>FearD2</i>	<i>The shortness of life</i>	.797			
<i>FearD3</i>	<i>Missing out on so much after you die</i>	.744			
<i>FearD4</i>	<i>Dying young</i>	.805			
<i>FearD5</i>	<i>How it will feel to be dead</i>	.861			
<i>FearD6</i>	<i>Never thinking or experiencing anything again</i>	.753			
<i>FearD7</i>	<i>The disintegration of your body after you die</i>	.752			
<b>FEAR_OTHERS</b>	<b>Fear of death - Fear for others</b>		.872	.903	.575
<i>FearD8</i>	<i>Losing someone close to you</i>	.833			
<i>FearD9</i>	<i>Having to see the person's dead body</i>	.800			
<i>FearD10</i>	<i>Never being able to communicate with the person again</i>	.862			
<i>FearD11</i>	<i>Regret over not being nicer to the person when he or she was alive</i>	.578			
<i>FearD12</i>	<i>Growing old alone without the person</i>	.833			
<i>FearD13</i>	<i>Feeling guilty that you are relieved that the person is dead</i>	.737			
<i>FearD14</i>	<i>Feeling lonely without the person</i>	.614			
<b>M_OBSIN</b>	<b>Mindfulness - Observe inside</b>		.722	.844	.643
<i>Mind11</i>	<i>Noticing the sensations of body moving while walking</i>	.797			
<i>Mind12</i>	<i>Staying alert to sensations while showering</i>	.831			
<i>Mind13</i>	<i>Paying attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face</i>	.776			
<b>M_OBSOUT</b>	<b>Mindfulness - Observe outside</b>		.703	.835	.628
<i>Mind21</i>	<i>Paying attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing</i>	.773			
<i>Mind22</i>	<i>Noticing smells and aromas</i>	.828			
<i>Mind23</i>	<i>Noticing visual elements around, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow</i>	.775			

	Construct and items	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
<b>M_DES</b>	<b>Mindfulness - Describe</b>		.811	.888	.726
<i>Mind32</i>	<i>Not finding words to describe thoughts (r) *</i>	.826			
<i>Mind33</i>	<i>Not expressing the feelings about things (r)*</i>	.878			
<i>Mind34</i>	<i>Not describing body sensations (r)*</i>	.852			
<b>M_AWA</b>	<b>Mindfulness - Act with awareness</b>		.777	.857	.599
<i>Mind41</i>	<i>Being focused only on what is done, nothing else</i>	.775			
<i>Mind42</i>	<i>Getting wrapped up in doing things and don't think about anything else</i>	.813			
<i>Mind43</i>	<i>Doing one thing at once</i>	.729			
<i>Mind44</i>	<i>Getting absorbed in what is done</i>	.778			
<b>M_AWOJ</b>	<b>Mindfulness - Act without judgment</b>		.807	.866	.566
<i>Mind51</i>	<i>Criticizing myself for having emotions (r)*</i>	.737			
<i>Mind52</i>	<i>Believing that my thoughts are abnormal (r)*</i>	.785			
<i>Mind53</i>	<i>Making judgments about my thoughts (r)*</i>	.809			
<i>Mind54</i>	<i>Telling myself that thoughts should not be (r)*</i>	.759			
<i>Mind55</i>	<i>Thinking emotions are not appropriate (r)*</i>	.662			

\* all reverse-scored items were recoded before analyzing

Table 7.40. Fornell-Larker criterion of fear of death's components

Fornell-Larcker criterion (FDEATH LOC)	1	2
1. Fear for one self's death	.759	
2. Fear for others' death	.547	.787

For **high-order models**, two dimensions are considered as formative indicators of Fear of death. Firstly, we created a new path model for the redundancy analysis. The results yield a path coefficient of .761 ( $R^2 = .679$ ) which is favorable. Both VIF values are lower than the value of 5, indicating that there is no potential risk for collinearity between two dimensions. Finally, we assessed the significance and relevance of outer weight. Both outer weights are significant ( $p < .005$ ).

Table 7.41. Formative high-order constructs of hierarchical component models

Constructs and dimensions		Outer VIF	Outer weight	P	CI BCa		Outer loading (p-values)
					2.5%	95.5%	
<b>FDEATH</b>	<b>Fear of death</b>						
FEAR_OWN	Fear for oneself	1.436	.413	.044	.324	1.009	
FEAR_OTHERs	Fear for others	1.436	.710	.000	-.016	.782	
<b>MIND</b>	<b>Mindfulness</b>						
M_OBSIN	Observe inside	1.469	.490	.000	.193	.478	
M_OBSOUT	Observe outside	1.355	.453	.000	-.274	.012	
M_DES	Describe	1.307	.078	.321	-.069	.240	-.363 (p=.000)
M_AWA	Act with awareness	1.219	.332	.000	.295	.597	
M_AWOJ	Act without judgment	1.336	-.125	.087	.351	.628	-.492 (p=.000)

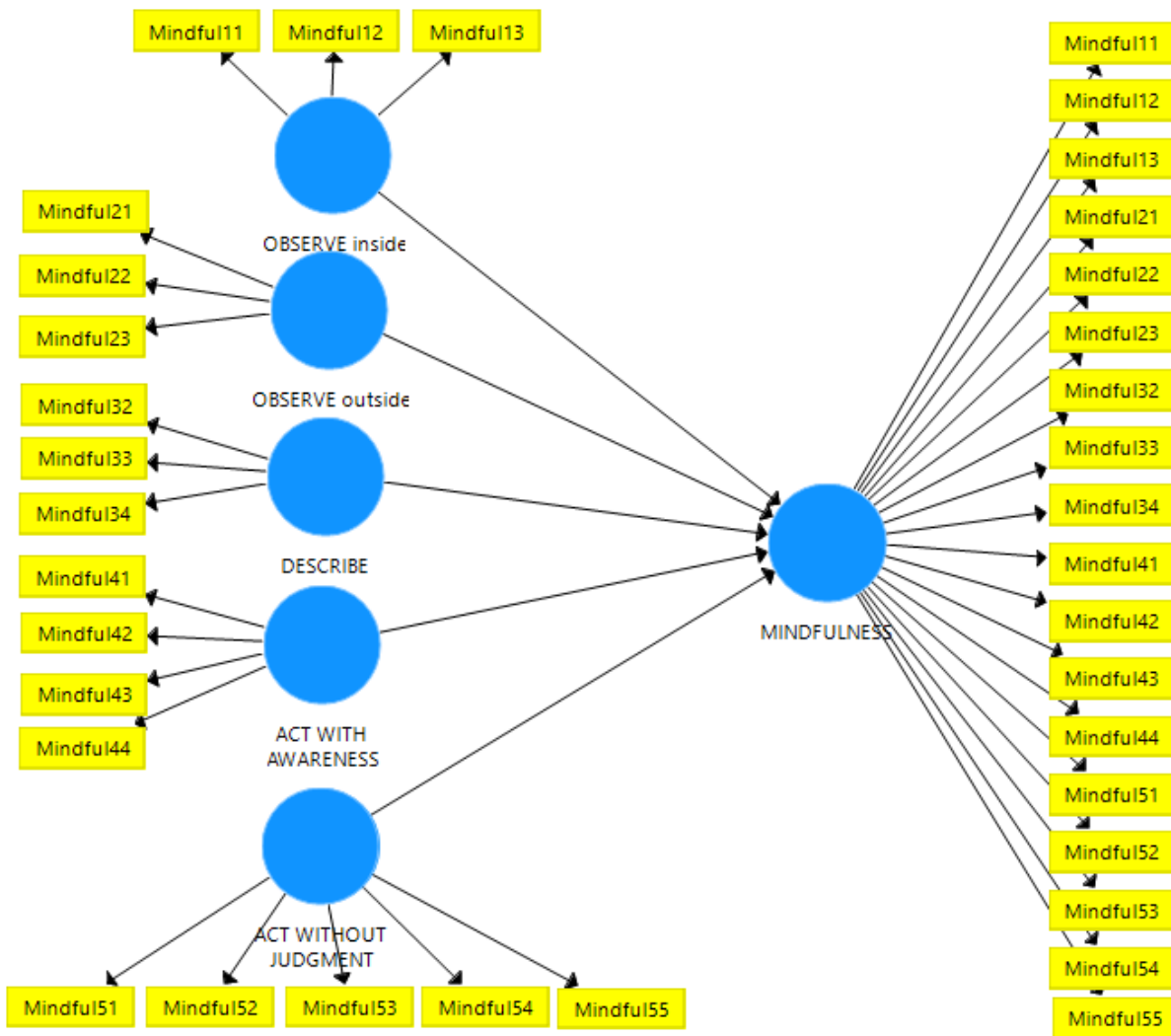
Overall, we considered that the hierarchical component model of death fear is valid and reliable for the next structural analysis.

➤ **Mindfulness: reflective-formative hierarchical component model**

Mindfulness measurement model is specified with two layers: *reflective low-order component model* and *formative high-order component model*.

The **low-order reflective model** of Mindfulness consisted five reflective latent variables: *observe inside*, *observe outside*, *describe*, *act with awareness*, and *act without judgment*, specified as the figure below.

Figure 7.28. Reflective-formative hierarchical component model of Mindfulness



Initially, Mindfulness construct is measured with 20 indicators. After back-and-forth modifications to achieve the most optimized model, we removed 2 among 5 indicators of observe inside, resulting totally 18 indicators forming mindfulness construct.

Table 7.41 above reveals that the Cronbach’s alpha for each construct ranges from .703 to .811, higher than the threshold value of .70. Also, the composite reliability is higher than the threshold value of .70 (ranging from .844 to .888), indicating a good internal consistency for these reflective latent variables.

Concerning *convergent validity*, the loadings of all indicators are higher than .70 except that the last indicator’s loading value of .662, slightly lower than threshold, which is acceptable.

The models yield the AVE value (ranging from .566 to .726), which is higher than threshold of .50, indicating well convergent validity among indicators.

For *discriminant validity*, we assessed the HTMT ratio for the pair of latent variables as well as Fornell-Larcker criterion (see the tables below). All the HTMT ratios are uniformly lower than the threshold .85. Besides, the Fornell-Larcker criterion results show that the value of  $\sqrt{AVE}$  of each construct (on the diagonal of the table) is higher than its highest correlation with any other constructs. This suggests that the five dimensions of Mindfulness are unique and distinct from each other.

Table 7.42. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of mindfulness's components

HTMT ratio	1	2	3	4	5
1. Mindfulness - Act with awareness					
2. Mindfulness - Act without judgment	0.424				
3. Mindfulness - Describe	0.387	0.504			
4. Mindfulness - Observe inside	0.402	0.423	0.443		
5. Mindfulness - Observe outside	0.334	0.382	0.287	0.684	

Table 7.43. Fornell-Larcker criterion of mindfulness's components

Fornell-Larcker criterion	1	2	3	4	5
1. Act with awareness	<b>.774</b>				
2. Act without judgment	-.335	<b>.752</b>			
3. Describe	-.308	.409	<b>.852</b>		
4. Observe inside	.302	-.324	-.341	<b>.802</b>	
5. Observe outside	.248	-.290	-.218	.486	<b>.792</b>

For *high-order formative model*, five dimensions play the role as the indicators to explain Mindfulness. In this step, we also created a new path model for the redundancy analysis. The results yield a path coefficient of .516 ( $R^2 = .266$ ) which is lower than the recommended threshold. However, the VIF values are all lower than value of 5, which is a good sign indicating that there is no potential risk for collinearity among the dimensions.

Finally, we assessed the significance and relevance of outer weight. Three out of five dimensions have the outer weights significant with p-values under .001. With two dimensions (Describe and Act without judgment), their outer weights are not significant at .005. Following the protocol of retaining or removing a formative indicator (or dimensions, in this circumstance) (Hair Jr et al. 2017), we then assessed the outer loadings of these two



dimensions and decided that they could be retained in the model (all outer loadings are significant at  $p = .000$ ).

With all the analysis results presented above, we consider that the hierarchical component model of mindfulness is valid and reliable enough for the next section of structural model assessment.

#### 7.2.4. Assessment of structural model

With valid and reliable measurement constructs used in the study, we then carried out the assessment of structural model through six steps: (1) Collinearity assessment; (2) Structural model path coefficients; (3) Coefficient of determination  $R^2$ ; (4) Effect size  $f^2$ ; (5) Blindfolding and predictive relevance  $Q^2$ ; and (6) Effect size  $q^2$ .

##### ➤ *Collinearity assessment*

To examine the collinearity of the structural model, we first examined the VIF values of all combinations of endogenous constructs (by the columns) and the exogenous constructs (by the rows). As shown in the table below, all inner VIF are clearly lower than 5, which is a good sign, suggesting that collinearity issues are not critical in the structural model.

Table 7.44. Collinearity assessment of structural model

Inner VIF	Green values	Mindfulness	Connectedness to nature	Voluntary simplicity
Fear of death		1.000		1.050
Mindfulness	1.603		1.000	
Connectedness to nature	1.613			1.050
Voluntary simplicity	1.841			
Internal locus of control	1.423			

Inner VIF	Perceived product quality	Attitude toward the firm	Purchase intention	Recommendation intention
Perceived firm green engagement	1.168			
Green values	1.197			
Perceived product quality		1.000	1.000	1.000

➤ **Structural model path coefficients and Coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup>**

The table below shows the analysis results of the structural model. As can be seen, all path coefficients are significant (all  $p < .005$ ).

Examining the predictive power of the model, the three constructs reaching the highest coefficient of determination are Attitude toward firm ( $R^2 = 71,5\%$ ), Green values of consumer ( $R^2 = 53,6\%$ ), and Purchase intention ( $R^2 = 47,4\%$ ). The construct with lowest coefficient of determination is Mindfulness ( $R^2 = 9,5\%$ ). Other constructs yield moderate predictive power.

Table 7.45. Assessment of path models and predictive power

	Mindfulness		Voluntary simplicity		Connectedness to nature		Green values	
	Path coeff.	$p$	path coeff.	$p$	path coeff.	$p$	path coeff.	$p$
Fear of death	.309	.000	.122	.001				
Mindfulness					.499	.000	.167	.000
Voluntary simplicity							.186	.000
Connectedness to nature			.541	.000			.385	.000
Internal locus of control							.175	.000
	R <sup>2</sup> = 9.5%		R <sup>2</sup> = 33.6%		R <sup>2</sup> = 24.9%		R <sup>2</sup> = 53.6%	

	Perceived product quality		Attitude toward firm		Purchase intention		Recommend intention	
	path coeff.	$p$	path coeff.	$p$	path coeff.	$p$	path coeff.	$p$
Perceived firm green engagement	.638	.000						
Green values	.105	.004						
Moderating effect (of green values)	.131	.001						
Perceived product quality			.846	.000	.689	.000	.663	.000
	R <sup>2</sup> = 49.4%		R <sup>2</sup> = 71.5%		R <sup>2</sup> = 47.4%		R <sup>2</sup> = 43.9%	

➤ **Effect size  $f^2$**

The analysis results in the table below show the  $f^2$  values of all combinations of endogenous constructs (by the columns) and the exogenous constructs (by the rows). Three level of the effect size of predictive power are reported. For example, Mindfulness has a large effect size of .321 on Connectedness to nature. Besides, Fear of death has a medium effect size of .104 on Mindfulness as well.

Table 7.46. The effect size of predictive power

Effect size $f^2$	Mindfulness		Voluntary simplicity		Connectedness to nature		Green values	
	$f^2$	size	$f^2$	size	$f^2$	size	$f^2$	size
Fear of death	.104	medium	.019	small				
Mindfulness					.321	large		
Voluntary simplicity							.038	small
Connectedness to nature			.428	large			.203	large
Internal locus of control							.038	small

Effect size $f^2$	Perceived product quality		Attitude toward firm		Purchase intention		Recommendation intention	
	$f^2$	size	$f^2$	size	$f^2$	size	$f^2$	size
Perceived firm green engagement	.669	large						
Green values	.015	small						
Moderating effect (of green values)	.038	small						
Perceived product quality			2.514	large	.900	large	.791	large

➤ **Blindfolding and predictive relevance  $Q^2$**

To obtain the predictive relevance  $Q^2$  of the path model, we conducted the blindfolding procedure. With 467 observations, we used the omission distance of  $D = 7$ . The blindfolding results displayed in the table below show that all  $Q^2$  are higher than zero, indicating that the path model reached a good predictive relevance.

Table 7.47. Predictive relevance

Predicted constructs	$Q^2$
Mindfulness	0.048
Connectedness to nature	0.154
Voluntary Simplicity	0.119
Green Values	0.304
Perceived product quality	0.417
Attitude toward firm	0.657
Purchase Intention	0.402
Recommend Intention	0.410

➤ **Effect size  $q^2$**

Due to the fact that the SmartPLS software does not automatically provide the results of effect size  $q^2$ , we manually calculated  $q^2$  through predictive relevance of each construct when it is included and excluded out of the whole model. Specifically, we created new path models where in each model, a construct is removed successively. Each time of removing a construct, we ran again the blindfolding procedure to obtain the predictive relevance  $Q^2$  with  $d^{\text{th}}$  data point of 7.

Overall, the results reported below reveal that among the obtained predictive relevance, the largest effect size is obtained at the path of connectedness to nature and green values ( $q^2 = .79$ ). Other effect size is revealed to be medium, small or no considerable effect as shown in the following table.

Table 7.48. The effect size  $q^2$  of predictive relevance

Endogenous constructs	Voluntary simplicity	Mindfulness	Connectedness to nature	Green values	Perceived product quality
Predictor constructs					
Connectedness to nature				.079 (large)	.000 (no effect)
Fear of death	.007 (small)	.050 (small)	-.005 (small)	.001 (small)	.000 (no effect)
Mindfulness			.182 (medium)	.019 (small)	.000 (no effect)
Voluntary simplicity			.021 (small)	.003 (small)	-.024 (small)
Internal locus of control			.000 (no effect)	.014 (small)	.000 (no effect)
Moderating effect (of green values)				.000 (no effect)	-.022 (small)

**7.3. DISCUSSION**

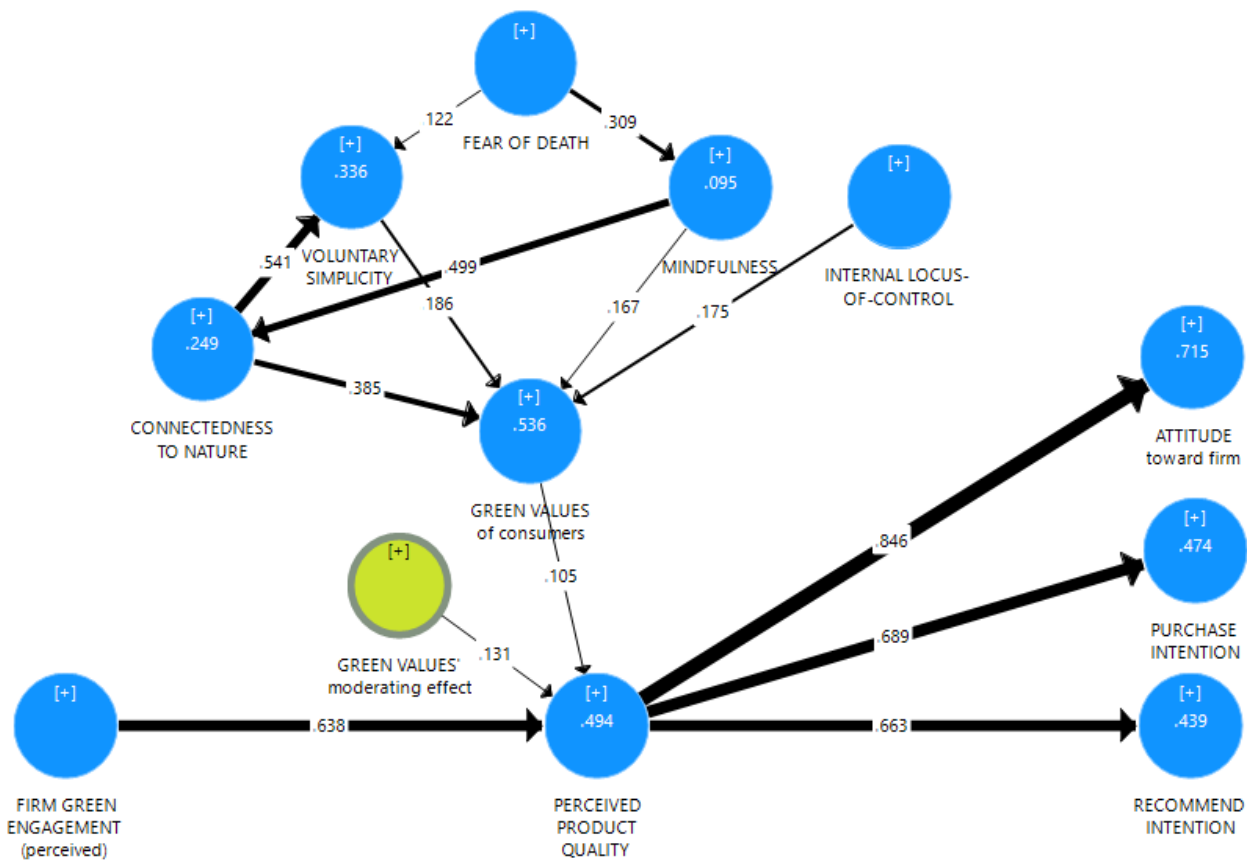
Based on the results presented above, we now present the final model in which perceived product quality plays the role as a prominent mediator of the relationship between firm engagement in responsible activities and consumer responses. Next, we discuss the role of six constructs that helps to explain the mechanisms of consumer responses (fear of death, mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus-of-control, and green values).

### 7.3.1. The final structural equation model with Perceived product quality as mediator

The whole structural model in the study yields the substantive predictive power of three outcome constructs including attitude toward the firm, purchase intention and recommendation intention with corresponding R<sup>2</sup> value of 71,5%; 47,4%, and 43,9% respectively (the number inside the round shape represents R<sup>2</sup> value). All corresponding path coefficients are high and statistically significant.

The figure below visualizes the final structural equation model in which the thickness of the arrow represents the largeness of the structural model path coefficients, and the number on the path represents the size of path coefficients. To be noticeable, all paths appearing in this final model are statistically significant, and some of the path coefficients have larger sizes (thicker arrows), implying large effects on targeted constructs.

Figure 7.29. Final structural equation model



Notably, this final structural model is different from the hypothesized structural model in some points.

Through this empirical study, we found that even when provided with green involvement of firms and without any information about manufacturing procedure or quality control, consumers still form their own evaluations of product quality.

It is apparent that perceived product quality is the most essential mediator between firm engagement in CSR and consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions, with the large effect sizes of predictive power (*see table 7.46 above*). Besides, the paths (perceived firm green engagement → perceived product quality; perceived product quality → attitude toward the firm; perceived product quality → purchase intention; perceived product quality → recommendation intention) have significantly large coefficients: .638, .846, .474, .439 respectively. The results in this study were consistent with previous studies (Bou-Llusar et al. 2001, Gatti et al. 2012), suggesting that the higher extent a firm involves in CSR, the better product quality consumers might perceive. Then in turn, this perceived quality is translated into a more favorable attitude toward the firm and more positive behavioral intentions.

### **7.3.2. Explaining consumer responses with green values and its antecedents**

As seen in the figure of final structural model above, six constructs (fear of death, mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus of control, and green values) help to crack the black box of why and how consumers associate their perceptions of CSR in their decision-making process toward socially responsible firms, specifically the environmental aspect of CSR.

In our model, fear of death, mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature and internal locus of control together explain 53,6% the variance of green values construct. Besides, four paths (fear of death → mindfulness, mindfulness → connectedness to nature, connectedness to nature → voluntary simplicity, and connectedness to nature → green values) have considerable path coefficients which are .309, .499, .541, and .385, respectively. And all are statistically significant (*see the figure above*).

In this study, we found that green values moderated the relationships of firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality with the coefficient of moderating effect is .131 ( $p = .001$ ). Together with the main effect of green values on perceived product quality (coeff. = .105,  $p = .004$ ) (*see the table 7.45 above*), suggesting that those having higher level of green values anchored in their minds will have higher evaluations of product quality. Our finding helps to

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understand why some consumers would appreciate responsible (green) products more than others. Afterwards, they transfer their positive evaluations of product quality into further positive attitude and intentions. Our findings therefore support the previous studies which proposed the potential impacts of green values on forming consumer evaluations of products and further responsible behaviors (Haws et al. 2014, Barbaro and Pickett 2016, Fischer et al. 2017, Geiger et al. 2018, Geiger et al. 2019, Geiger et al. 2019).

### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7

The chapter gave answers for a part of **research question n<sup>o</sup>2** (*What are the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR on perceived product quality and the consequences on consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions?*) and **research question n<sup>o</sup>3** (*Which factors that can explain the mechanisms behind consumers' perceptions and their responses to CSR?*).

Employed PLS-SEM, our study formed a structural equation model bridging two components: firm green involvement and consumer responses in which **perceive product quality** played the essential role of a mediator. Notably, consumers still form their own evaluations of product quality even though no cue of quality control is given but only the information of how the firm engages in green activities.

Under consumers' perspectives, we found that **green values** (the system of values that guide consumers to adopt responsible products as well as to behave ecologically) have a moderating impact on consumer evaluations of product quality. This suggests that those having higher level of green values anchored in their minds will have higher evaluations of product quality. Deep down, green values are influenced by five antecedents consisting of: **(1) fear of death, (2) mindfulness, (3) voluntary simplicity, (4) connectedness to nature, and (5) internal locus-of-control**. In turn, positively perceived product quality will induce consumers to have favorable attitude and positive behavioral intentions toward the product of the responsible firm.



## CHAPTER 8 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we firstly summarize all the hypotheses introduced in the previous chapters, in which we clarify the ones that were supported and those were rejected through our empirical studies (section 8.1).

Besides, we discuss the significances of our findings related to the 5-Persona typology reflecting consumer perceptions of CSR (section 8.2) and the set of psychological constructs when put together can help to explain consumer responses to CSR (section 8.3). Furthermore, we generalize the relative impacts of firm involvement in CSR on product quality and consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (i.e., purchase and recommendation) (section 8.4), supporting the outlook of an ethical and sustainable era of consumption.

### 8.1. SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTS

In the table below, we summarize all hypotheses introduced in the previous chapters with the clarification of supported and rejected hypotheses through our studies.

*Table 8.49. Summary of hypothesis tests*

Hypotheses	Predicted effects	Results	
		Supported	Rejected
<b>Set of hypotheses 1</b>			
H1	When high (vs. low), firm involvement in CSR positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.	✓	
H2	When foreign (vs. domestic), firm origin positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.		✗
H3	When industrial (vs. artisanal), firm production process positively impacts (a) perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (b) brand attitude, (c) purchase and (d) recommendation intentions.		✗

Hypotheses	Predicted effects	Results	
		Supported	Rejected
H4	Perceived product quality plays a mediating role between firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.	✓	
H5	Habituation negatively moderates the relationship between perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.	✓ <i>partly</i>	
H6	Perceived firm CSR motives negatively moderates the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality.	✓ <i>partly</i>	
H7	CSR skepticism negatively moderates the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality.		X <i>mediator</i>
<b>Set of hypotheses 2</b>			
H8	Mindfulness has a positive effect on green values.	✓	
H9	Voluntary simplicity has a positive effect on green values.	✓	
H10	Connectedness to nature has a positive effect on green values.	✓	
H11	Internal locus-of-control has a positive effect on green values.	✓	
H12	Fear of death has positive effects on (a) voluntary simplicity, (b) mindfulness, and (c) green values.	✓ <i>partly</i>	
H13	Green values positively moderate the relationship between perceived firm green engagement and perceived product quality.	✓	
H14	Green values positively moderate the relationships between perceived product quality and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.		X
H15	Perceived product quality mediates the relationships between perceived firm green engagement and consumer responses toward the firm, namely (a) brand attitude, (b) purchase and (c) recommendation intentions.	✓	

In the table above, *H2 and H3 are rejected*, implying that there is no effect of firm country-of-origin and production process, despite all three variables (firm involvement in CSR, firm origin, and production process) were successfully manipulated. This is contradictory to previous studies indicated the **salient** impacts of country-of-origin (Bilkey and Nes 1982, Elliott and Cameron 1994, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999) and production process (Dubé et al. 2016, Rivaroli et al. 2020) on consumer evaluations of products, which in turn impacts on consumer attitudes and their behavioral intentions. In our first experiment, we did not detect any evidence for the impact of firm origin and production process on perceived product quality,

## *General discussion*

consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions, at least for the coffee product tested in the experiment.

*H5 is supported partly* with the negative moderating effect of habituation only on purchase intention.

*H6 is supported partly* with the negative moderating effect of perceived firm CSR motives (related to Stakeholder-driven, Egoistic, Strategic but not Value-driven) on perceived product quality.

We *rejected H7* and found the mediating effect of CSR skepticism instead of moderating effects as expected.

*H12 is supported partly* with the expected effects of death anxiety on mindfulness and connectedness to nature but not on green values.

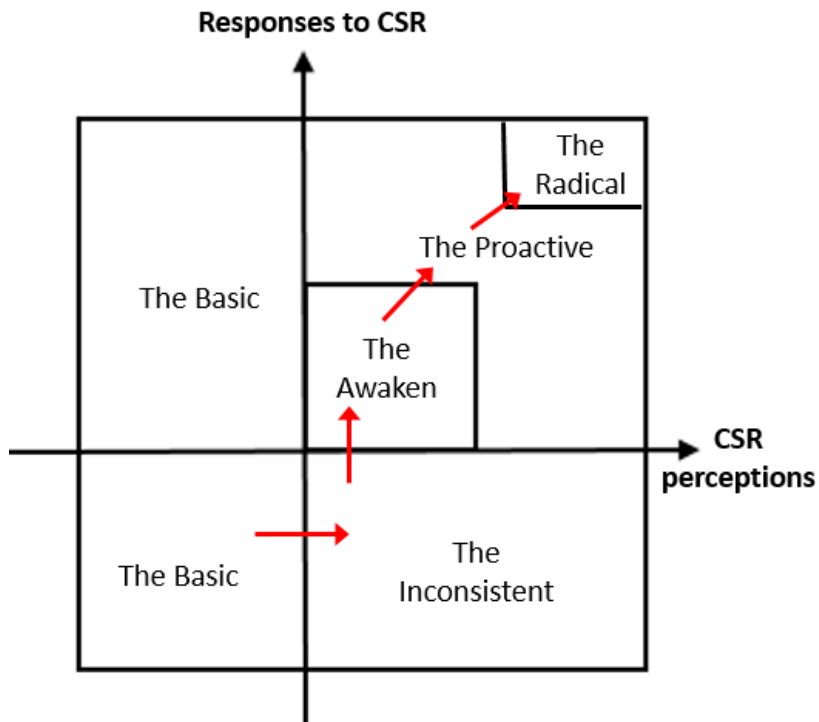
We *rejected H14* relating to the expected moderating effects of green values on the relationships between perceived product quality and three dependent variables (consumer attitudes, purchase and recommendation intentions). In fact, we only found the significant impact of green values on the relationship of perceived firm green engagement and perceived product quality (*H13 is supported*).

In the next sections, we will discuss the relationships of these constructs in details.

## **8.2. 5-PERSONA TYPOLOGY REFLECTING CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARD CSR**

Through the exploratory study corresponding to the **research question n°1** (*How is CSR perceived by consumers in Vietnam? Which are the dimensions of CSR considered important to Vietnamese consumers? Can we build a typology of consumers regarding their perceptions of CSR?*), we generalized five dimensions that are important to consumers: responsibilities to consumers, to environment, to society, to employees, and to firm itself. Moreover, we proposed a consumer typology reflecting their perceptions and past reactions toward CSR in the oriental context as the figure below.

Figure 8.30. 5-Persona: A dynamic consumer typology based on CSR perceptions



This typology is illustrated by two main axes: *CSR perceptions* and *CSR responses* as shown in the figure above. Based on these two main properties, we suggested the categorization of consumers including *The Basic*, *The Inconsistent*, *The Awaken*, *The Proactive*, and *The Radical*. Their characteristics are described as follows.

➤ **Type 1 - The Basic**

- CSR probably is not important to his/her values;
- neither appreciates firm involvement in CSR nor has steady CSR-related values to guide his/her decisions;
- possibly has low-income;
- purchases products based on basic factors (e.g., good price, promotions, product quality, special occasions, convenient locations);
- has a naïve understanding of CSR, may never notice or think about the concept of CSR;
- mostly would not care much about environmental or social issues;
- might believe that CSR-related issues should be in charge by others and are not his/her concerns;
- barely thinks that firms should be in charge for social responsibilities.

➤ **Type 2 - The Inconsistent**

- might formed some certain extent of CSR perceptions and has his/her own definitions of how responsible a firm should be, but would not respond as if these are the values of his/her own;
- His/her behaviors are not likely straightforward as the words he/she says and clearly incompatible with their perceptions;
- supported for firms with CSR activities (e.g., promotion programs) in the past, but passively;
- prefer price over other factors in his/her decision-making;
- believes that “wise consumption” is to purchase practically and put him/herself on the top priority;
- believes that making profit should be the main role of firms.

➤ **Type 3 - The Awaken**

- begins to support for firms engaging CSR activities;
- starts to appreciate the goodwill of firms involving in CSR without judging the firms’ CSR motivations;
- believes that “doing something for society might be better than doing nothing”;
- CSR values become an important factor for his/her decision-making process;
- reviews the CSR practices of firms (e.g., whether it employed animal testing, used eco-friendly materials, or explored children labors; whether firms had community activities in the neighborhoods) before purchasing;
- begins appreciate sustainable initiatives and is conscious in terms of sustainability;
- can actively follow sustainable movements;
- might be willing to pay higher price for responsible products.

➤ **Type 4 - The Proactive - Socially responsible consumer**

- owns thorough perceptions toward CSR and the roles of firms;
- believes that doing good for society should be an important role of firms beside making profit;
- To him/her, CSR responsibilities must be written in firm strategies;

## General discussion

- might raise the issues of sustainable development and require the permanence of CSR activities;
- might lead or actively follow the sustainable movements beyond firms' CSR initiatives;
- probably has a great voice in their networks;
- uses their purchasing power as the means to express their concerns about society;
- might not hesitate to question a firm who has not fulfilled environmental and social responsibilities, generally with a harmonized fashion;
- might be willing to challenge the firms performing CSR activities with suspicious motivations (e.g., greenwash).

### ➤ **Type 5 - The Radical**

- understands about CSR very well;
- mostly has extreme behaviors corresponding to extreme perceptions toward CSR;
- not only uses the buying power as a weapon to challenge firms but also urges and even forces others to follow;
- might be more negatively sensitive to CSR-related issues without holding a balance mindset between firm's benefits and firms' social responsibilities;
- is likely to confront with irresponsible firms;
- is easy to judge the motivations of firms behind their CSR involvements (e.g., activities for marketing purpose and sale boosting).

Our typology emphasizes the dynamic nature of consumer perceptions and behaviors in which they possibly move from one category to others. The behavioral changes would depend much in the changes of consumer perceptions which are the results of precedent elements (e.g., beliefs, evaluations, motivations, attitudes, subjective norms) as explained by the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, Sheppard et al. 1988, Davis et al. 1989). Our typology therefore suggested two tendencies:

- (1) **Staying in one stage:** A part of consumers might stay permanently in their stage without changing of behaviors, corresponding to their stable perceptions of CSR. Possibly, many consumers would keep being *The Basic*, and/or in other case, many of them definitely would not go further to play the role of *The Radical*.

(2) **Following the stages:** Consumers might modify their behaviors according to their on-going changing perceptions. In this case, they might follow the stages of the evolution path from *The Basic*, *The Awaken*, *The Inconsistent* to *The Proactive* and even to *The Radical* (illustrated by the arrows in the figure above). Needless to say, these stages might not be separate but can be overlapped with each other. Notably, *The Awaken stage is salient*, marking the critical point for a consumer to move from the lower stages to the higher stages of the evolution path. When stepping up to a new stage, CSR plays a more important role in their decision-making process. When reaching *The Proactive*, consumer perceptions and behaviors would be closely to “socially responsible consumer behavior” or “ethically minded consumer behavior” (Francois-Lecompte and Roberts 2006, Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher 2016).

### 8.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS LEADS TO CONSUMER RESPONSE TO CSR

Our **research question n°3** is to find out the empirical evidence of the factors that can explain the mechanisms behind consumers’ perceptions and their responses to CSR. Through our studies, we uncovered the set of individual psychologic constructs that have the relationships with consumer intentions of performing sustainable consumption behaviors. These constructs were recognized considerably in the domain of well-beings, however, they have not been tested simultaneously in the domain of consumer behavior. From our findings, we now generalize the roles of these psychological factors that might expand our understandings of how consumer perceive and react to firm engagement in CSR.

**Habituation plays the role of a moderator** but only between the relationship of firm involvement in CSR and purchase intention (not those related to attitude toward the firm and recommendation intention). Generally, higher firm involvement in CSR would result in highly perceived CSR by consumers, and in turn, leads to more positive attitude toward that firm and behavioral intentions (i.e., purchase and recommendation). However, when the old habit takes position (e.g., the habit of consuming the current type of product), it probably reduces the impact of perceived CSR on the outcomes, but not all of them. Notably, when dealing with more engaged intention (i.e., purchase), compared to consumers with lower level of consumption habituation, those with the higher level revealed lower purchase intention for

the newly launched product, even though previously they appreciated the firm commitment in CSR.

**Perceived firm CSR motives** (related to Stakeholder-driven, Egoistic, Strategic, not Value-driven) plays the role of moderator on the relationship of firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality. As can be seen through our results, the perceived CSR motives reflecting the firm-self benefits negatively moderates the effect above, indicating that the perceived product quality would be lower when consumers perceived the motives of firm strongly related to firm-self benefits.

Contrary to our hypothesis that **CSR skepticism** plays the moderating role in the relationship between firm engagement in CSR and consumer response to it, we found that CSR skepticism mediates this effect. Though not so numerous proved in empirical studies, the mediating role of CSR skepticism was found in our findings, consistent with those in Moreno and Kang's (2020) study. This negative direction of mediating effect indicates that the higher CSR skepticism a consumer is; the lower level he/she would evaluate on the product quality.

### **Consumer responses reflecting their green values and its antecedents**

Our findings reveal that five individual factors (fear of death, mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus-of-control) together have the impacts on green values of consumers. Understanding these effects therefore contribute to uncover the unknown of why and how consumers associated their perceptions of CSR in their decision-making process toward socially responsible firms, especially the environmental aspect of CSR.

In this study, we found that **green values** moderated the relationship between perceived firm involvement in CSR and perceived product quality, suggesting that those having higher level of green values anchored in their minds might have higher evaluations of the responsible product (i.e., perceived product quality). Afterwards, they might transfer their positive evaluations of product quality into further positively attitudes and behavioral intentions. Our findings therefore support the previous studies in the sense that consumers that are highly CSR-sensitive might respond strongly than those are not (Klein and Dawar 2004, Haws et al. 2014).



We also obtained the evidences on the effects among the individual psychologic constructs. Notably, without hypothesizing previously, we found that **mindfulness** not only has the impact on green values but also on connectedness to nature. This could be explained that mindfulness practices encourage individuals to observe what is happening in the present moment, to live their lives with gratitude and to find the satisfaction in the most natural meaning (Brown and Ryan 2003, Shapiro and Carlson 2009). Drawing the intention of people out of material possession, mindfulness helps them to appreciate what they already have, and as a result, respects and fosters the connection to the natural world (Zsolnai and Ims 2006, Barbaro and Pickett 2016, Schutte and Malouff 2018, Li et al. 2021).

Besides the contributing effect on green values, **connectedness to nature** has a significant effect on voluntary simplicity. Since increasing the connectedness to nature may lead people to re-consider the behaviors in terms of favoring the earth and future generations, it also induces them to increase life satisfaction independently from materialism (Ericson et al. 2014, Geiger et al. 2018).

Furthermore, we brought the evidences on the direct impacts of **death anxiety** on consumers' voluntary simplicity and mindfulness, which have not appeared in many empirical studies of marketing domain. In fact, death anxiety might lead to the diminution of choices in one's daily life (or the simplification in consumption behaviors) was suggested in several studies (Huang and Wyer 2015, Rahimah et al. 2018). The potential relationship of death anxiety and mindfulness practice was also encouraged to examine in related literature (Hofmann et al. 2010, Bianco et al. 2019). However, up to now, there have not been any empirical studies that proved the direct effects of death anxiety on two individual constructs: voluntary simplicity and mindfulness, which in turn contributing to consumers' CSR-related values. However, though evoking the insensitive feelings that might force people to re-think their values in life, fear of death has no direct effect on green values as what we assumed previously.

Lastly, **internal locus-of-control** has a direct effect on green values, reflecting the congruency between the values of sustainability, the long-lasting prosperity, and the internal locus-of-control characteristics. It is consistent to the suggestions of recent

studies on this psychological construct (Cleveland et al. 2005, Patel et al. 2020, Toti et al. 2021).

#### **8.4. THE ETHICAL ERA HAS COME**

In two experiments in food sector and skincare & cosmetics one, we found that consumers did not reveal extreme negative attitude toward firm in low-CSR condition (when firms are described as less involving in CSR). The results support the findings in studies in the UK at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when consumers lean more toward supporting socially responsible activities of firms rather than punishing irresponsible (or low-CSR engaged) firms (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000). This is contrast with the findings by Vo et al. (2018) in the same context (Vietnam) which reported that consumers are more sensitive to irresponsible firms rather than those with responsible engagement.

##### **➤ Perceived product quality: the essential mediator**

Not only appeared as an important factor of consumer evaluations in extant research, perceived product quality plays the essential mediator that forms consumer responses to CSR (attitudes, purchase and recommendation intentions) through two experiments in food sector and cosmetics and skincare sector.

Surprisingly, during the two experiments, we did not give any information of technical quality control which usually serve as the basis for evaluating the actual quality of products. Participants were merely exposed to the scenarios related to how the firm engaged in CSR in general (experiment 1) and firm engaged in environmental activities (experiment 2). It is interesting that the cue of CSR can induce some sort of evaluations related to product quality. In turn, the positively perceived product quality results in positive intentions of purchasing and recommending the product and the firm, as well as a more favorable attitude toward the firm.

In the beginning of this century, many authors through their studies in consumers' ethical consumption and firm's responsible engagement still show the doubt of an ethical era, unhesitatingly saying that the focus of firms in CSR is not pointless but the ethical era has not yet to come (Boulstridge and Carrigan 2000, Carrigan and Attalla 2001) or stating that the CSR

### *General discussion*

has a limited role in purchase behavior (Öberseder et al. 2011). After one or two decades, empirical studies on CSR have been confirming that the two hands have applauded for the era of responsible and sustainable consumption where firms with their CSR policies have been acknowledged among their audiences (i.e., consumers). And in turn, consumers have gradually required more firm responsible actions and put their preferences for green products and green firms, at least through the possible voice: purchasing power (Young et al. 2010, Dufeu et al. 2014, Moser 2015, Dekhili and Nguyen 2021). And if this is true, just as “Birds of a feather flock together”, it might not be too optimistic to welcome the era of ethical and sustainable consumption, no matter whether it is in the occidental or oriental context.

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## **CONCLUSION | CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

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The primary purposes of our studies are to investigate the consumer perceptions and responses toward CSR with additional considerations of explaining the beneath psychological mechanisms of consumer responses to CSR.

We therefore carried out a qualitative study to explore the perceptions of Vietnamese consumers toward CSR and their past behaviors related to CSR. Next, we conducted two separate experiments in two sectors in order to examine how consumers react to firm engagements in CSR. In each experiment, consumers were given the information related to socially responsible engagement of firms. We then examined how consumers judged the quality of products as well as how they translate their perceptions into attitudes toward the firm and behavioral intentions. In both experiments, not any cue of quality control process was provided. The second experiment was integrated in a survey that aimed to explain the psychological mechanisms behind consumer perceptions and responses toward CSR. Through a structural equation model, we tested simultaneously the effects of the individual factors on outcome constructs of consumer responses.

We addressed the topic in the oriental context (Vietnam, an emerging East Asian market) to contribute to the knowledge about CSR through a more complete understanding of consumer behaviors toward CSR.

Considered as a universal concept, CSR was actually originated from occidental perspective, making it inadequate to be imposed globally. The CSR perceived by firms and consumers might be divergent in oriental context. Besides, whether CSR plays a requisite role in purchasing decision process is still unclear, creating the exaggeration of consumers' responses which in turn generates the overreaction of firms. Aiming to expand the understandings of consumer perceptions and their responses to CSR in oriental context, we therefore conducted our studies in Vietnam, an emerging East Asian market. We carried out a qualitative study to explore CSR insights of consumers and built a 5-Persona typology of consumers, and two scenario-based experiments in food sector and cosmetics & skincare sector to test consumer

## *Conclusion*

reactions to CSR. The second experiment was integrated in a large survey later used to form a structural equation model, explaining the psychologic mechanisms behind consumer responses to CSR. Our findings reveal that CSR has a real impact on consumer evaluations of firm and products, whereas surprisingly, country-of-origin and production process turned out to have no significant impact. Moreover, even though not any cue of quality control process was provided, consumers still form their evaluations on product quality, making it the mediator between the effect of firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses (brand attitude, purchase and recommendation intention). We found that consumption habituation and perceived firm CSR motives moderate the relationship between firm engagement in CSR and consumer responses while CSR skepticism mediates this relationship. Beneath the surface of consumer responses, some individual constructs can explain the psychologic mechanisms, among which consumer green values plays the moderating role between firm green engagement and perceived product quality. Five constructs together contribute to form green values including mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, internal locus-of-control, connectedness to nature, and death anxiety. With these studies, we hope to bring broader understandings of how consumers perceive and react toward CSR in the oriental context that might be more sophisticated than previously conceptualized.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

Through this dissertation, we bring the contributions in three aspects: theoretical, methodological, and managerial ones as presented below.

### ➤ **Theoretical contributions**

Our studies seek to provide a deeper understanding of how consumers perceive and react to CSR, contributing a mosaic of CSR insights in the oriental context to the current literature of CSR.

We suggested a 5-Persona categorization based on the consumer CSR perceptions, emphasizing the dynamic nature of behavioral change stages. We also generalized five dimensions of CSR that are important to consumers in oriental context: responsibilities to consumers, to environment, to society, to employees, and to firm itself.

## Conclusion

Besides, our research confirmed that CSR has a real impact on consumer evaluations of firm and products, whereas surprisingly, country-of-origin and production process turned out to have no significant impact. In other words, country-of-origin and production process do not always have the impacts on consumer evaluations as suggested in previous studies (Bilkey and Nes 1982, Elliott and Cameron 1994, Verlegh and Steenkamp 1999, Dubé et al. 2016, Rivaroli et al. 2020).

Re-examining the role of perceived product quality in two experiments of two different sectors, we confirmed the robustness of its mediating effect on the relationship between firm involvement in CSR and consumer responses. While extant research of the two last decades still pessimistically stated that the ethical era has not yet to come, our position probably is more optimistic, supporting and encouraging the firms to engaging more in CSR since we now have the empirical evidences on the impacts of CSR on consumers' evaluations of firms and their products.

Furthermore, we contribute to the current literature with the explanation of consumer responses to CSR through the effects of consumption habituation, perceived CSR motives, CSR skepticism. In addition, for the first time, the set of individual constructs that form green values of consumers was tested simultaneously, highlighting the significances of factors often studied in psychological and behavioral domains. In this tested conceptual model, we emphasize the roles of mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus-of-control, fear of death, and green values in the area of sustainable behavior research.

**Can this model predict consumers' evaluations, responses, intentions?**

### ➤ **Methodological contributions**

We also contribute in terms of methodology in consumer research domain through our qualitative study (semi directive interviews), the scenario-based experiments as well as a survey with partial least squares structural equation modeling.

In terms of validating the measurement scales, we considered the techniques of testing the reliability and validity of measurement scales used in our quantitative studies.

Another contribution is related to the scenario-based experiment design that has been considerably used in marketing research. Through two experiments using scenario-based between-subject factorial design, we confirmed the advantages of this method as a practical and convenient quantitative method, especially when conducting studies through online template (e.g., Microsoft Survey template that allows absolute randomization) and when collecting the large sample size is hard to achieve.

➤ **Managerial contributions**

From a managerial point of view, we hope to bring practical recommendations for firms about how consumers really perceive, evaluate CSR and transfer their perceptions into positive attitudes toward firm/brand and further behavioral intentions (purchase and recommendation intention). By conducting the experiments, we found that even when providing participants with only the information of firm engagement in CSR and without any cue of quality control process, consumers still come up with some sort of evaluations of the product quality. In other words, we would like to emphasize the role of perceived product quality in forming consumer evaluations on the firms and their products. Another important implication should be made, related to consumer perception and responses to firm engagement in CSR. This process actually is not straightforward and consumer responses might be more irrational than people usually think.

Furthermore, with empirical evidences harvested through three studies, we highlight the individual factors that induces consumers to their final responses. Three factors having negative effects (current consumption habituation, CSR skepticism, perceived CSR motives) may challenge the favorable impacts of CSR initiatives on consumer behavioral intentions, and therefore, are necessary to take into account in marketing domain. Furthermore, the other psychologic individual factors (mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus-of-control, and fear of death) also need the considerations because of their directly and indirectly effects on consumers' green values. In turn, green values form further evaluations on the firms and its products as well.



## LIMITATIONS

The limitations of our studies should be mentioned. Our studies were possibly exposed to a number of bias/errors relating to the sampling technique as well as the existing bias and error after we took into account a number of means to avoid these bias and errors. Below we present the potential bias/errors separately for the exploratory study and for the experiments and survey.

### ➤ **Bias/errors in the exploratory study**

When conducting the in-depth interviews, we considered a number of means in order to minimize the bias. Firstly, we let the respondents know that there are no right or wrong answers and only the experiences and opinions of respondents that matter. Besides, almost the interviews were face-to-face rather than through internet or phone calls which might multiply the other types of bias due to the status of local infrastructure. All the interviews were directly conducted by our own to reduce as much as possible the inaccuracy. The interview places was chosen in a way that give respondents the most comfortable and neutral feelings (Mohr et al. 2001, Öberseder et al. 2011). Some interviews took place in respondents' houses; others in quiet and pleasant coffee shops. Recruiting participants who had any close relationship to researchers was definitely avoided due to the fact that the acquaintance between interviewer and interviewee could expand the inaccuracy in the responses (Strauss and Corbin 1990, Bouma et al. 1995).

In social science investigation, the *social desirability bias* is quite common, in which respondents tend to answer in the manner that they think will satisfy the interviewer rather than express their own thoughts and opinions (Mohr et al. 2001, Öberseder et al. 2011). Besides, they also tends to response in a way that makes bold their ego rather than to follow their actual perceptions or actions (Hair Jr et al. 2017), particularly on social responsibility, which is a politically correct topic that everybody would like to adhere to.

Furthermore, during the direct interviews, we kept a neutral attitude to avoid any cue on how to respond to the raised questions as well as avoided leading questions. This helps to reduce the *unconscious misrepresentation bias* from respondents. Moreover, all the direct interviews in this study is conducted by our own to avoid any fabricated samples

## Conclusion

where the hired interviewers can make up the answers, the *cheating error* that possibly result from hiring outside interviewers (Hair Jr et al. 2017).

### ➤ **Bias/errors in the experiments and survey**

In order to reduce the bias happening during the experiments and survey, we employed a number of solutions such facilitating respondents by employing constructs and concepts that were easy to understand for the majority; using neutral photos to illustrated our concepts without introduce more supplemental bias.

Also, we reached respondents who definitely are strangers as subjects for survey to minimize any social desirability effects on their responses due to the acquaintances to researchers. We denied any responses from friends, relatives, or family members but used snow ball method for introducing respondents for the surveys. Besides, the double-check control procedure were employed to reduce *project administration errors* relating to data processing, coding, and data entry (Hair Jr et al. 2017).

To be noticeable, some of the bias/error might appear in all of three studies such as *average error* (i.e., when participants responded to questions based on the general norm behaviors or attitudes rather their actual ones) or *faulty recall* (i.e., when participants are subject to inaccurate memory). Moreover, during our studies, although we applied as much as possible the techniques to avoid, an amount of bias and error was remained and inescapable when referring the topics of ethics, business ethics, opinions and memory.

In the ideal conditions, the probability sampling is prioritized for both qualitative and quantitative studies to get the most quality of generalization of the target population. In our empirical studies, however, the nonprobability quota sampling was employed. Therefore, the representativeness of participants for the target population is difficult to measure in comparing to probability sampling. Besides, both qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted in Vietnam with limited number of respondents. In other words, the results of this study may limit to the smaller population of Vietnam those who directly responded to the survey. The generalizations of our findings therefore should be approached with some cautions.

## **AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

We call for the empirical studies that re-examine our conceptual model of sustainable behaviors with the consideration of the effects of individual constructs (mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, connectedness to nature, internal locus-of-control, and death anxiety) on green values, among which some variables (e.g., death anxiety, mindfulness) might have complicated effects on consumer perceptions toward sustainable consumption that need more empirical evidences. [Our model is suggested to test for the prediction of consumer preferences, intentions and further behaviors.](#)

We also suggest the comparison studies, employing this conceptual model on various markets (e.g., European vs. Asia vs. American countries) to expand the understandings of psychologic mechanisms underneath consumer responses to CSR.

As a matter of fact, not all Asian countries have the same cultural traits, making it different when applying our conceptual model for each region of Asia. For instance, consumers the northeast Asian markets (e.g., Japan, Korea, China) would perceive and react to CSR differently in comparing to consumers in south Asia (e.g., India, Nepal) or in southeast Asia (e.g., Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia) (Birch and Moon 2004, May et al. 2007, Whelan 2007, Visser 2008, Kim and Moon 2015). Therefore, it would be interesting to assess the effects of the individual constructs among Asian oriental markets in order to reveal the variances in consumer responses to CSR.

Besides, empirical studies employing our findings related to the 5-Persona typology of consumers regarding their CSR insights are also suggested to make it applicable across product categories and markets. Moreover, our experiments examining how consumers evaluate and react to CSR were conducted in two specific sectors (food sector, cosmetic and skincare sector) where the products are directly impact consumer health and firm CSR practices are more carefully considered than others. Further studies on other sectors thus are recommended.

Finally, the interesting topic relating to the attitude - behavior gap of consumers is considered substantive in consumer research of CSR perceptions and responses. Further research on the investigation of this gap therefore were suggested for bridging and narrowing down this discrepancy.

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**Titre : Comprendre comment et pourquoi les consommateurs perçoivent et réagissent à la RSE dans un pays asiatique : le cas du Vietnam**

**Mots clés :** RSE, valeurs vertes, pleine conscience, simplicité volontaire, habitudes

**Résumé :** Considérée comme un concept universel, la Responsabilité sociale des entreprises (RSE) est en réalité issue d'une perspective occidentale, ce qui la rend potentiellement inadéquate à l'échelle mondiale. La RSE perçue par les consommateurs peut être différente dans le contexte oriental. Dans le but de mieux comprendre les perceptions des consommateurs et leurs réponses à la RSE dans un contexte oriental, nous avons mené nos études au Vietnam. Nous avons tout d'abord conduit une étude qualitative pour explorer les perceptions des consommateurs en matière de RSE et construire une typologie de consommateurs selon cinq profils. Puis nous avons mené deux expériences basées sur des scénarios dans le secteur alimentaire et celui des cosmétiques afin de tester les réactions des consommateurs à la RSE. La deuxième expérience a été intégrée à une plus grande collecte de données analysées grâce à un modèle d'équation structurelle, expliquant les mécanismes psychologiques derrière les réponses des consommateurs. Nos résultats révèlent que la RSE a un impact réel sur les évaluations des consommateurs de l'entreprise et des produits, alors que nous n'avons pu montrer d'effet significatif pour le pays d'origine comme pour le processus de production.

Sans indication sur la qualité des produits, les consommateurs font pourtant des inférences sur cette qualité qui s'avère être un médiateur entre la perception de la RSE de l'entreprise et les réponses des consommateurs (attitude envers l'entreprise/ses produits, intention d'achat et de recommandation). Nous avons constaté que les habitudes de consommation et les motivations RSE perçues modèrent cette relation tandis que le scepticisme vis-à-vis de la RSE est un médiateur. Par ailleurs, certaines variables individuelles peuvent expliquer les mécanismes. Ainsi, les valeurs 'vertes' des consommateurs, jouant le rôle de modérateur entre l'engagement vert de l'entreprise et la qualité perçue du produit. Ces valeurs 'vertes' ont notamment pour antécédents la pleine conscience, la simplicité volontaire, le locus de contrôle interne, la connexion à la nature et l'anxiété face à la mort. Cette recherche permet de mieux comprendre la façon dont les consommateurs perçoivent et réagissent à la RSE dans un contexte oriental, qui semble être plus complexe qu'il n'y paraît.

**Title: Understand how and why consumers perceive and react to CSR in an Asian country: the case of Vietnam**

**Keywords:** CSR, green values, mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, habituation

**Abstract:** Considered as a universal concept, CSR was actually originated from occidental perspective, making it inadequate to be imposed globally. CSR perceived by consumers might be divergent in oriental context. Aiming to understand consumer perceptions and responses to CSR in oriental context, our studies were conducted in Vietnam. We first carried out a qualitative study to explore consumer CSR perceptions and built a 5-Persona typology of consumers. Then, two scenario-based experiments in food sector and cosmetics & skincare sector allowed to test consumer reactions to CSR. The second experiment was integrated in a larger data collection to form a structural equation model, explaining the psychological mechanisms behind consumer responses. We found that CSR has a real impact on consumer evaluations of the firm and products, whereas country-of-origin and production process have no significant impact.

Given no cue of quality control, consumers still form their evaluations on product quality, which makes perceived product quality a mediator between firm engagement in CSR and consumer responses toward the firm (brand attitude, purchase and recommendation intentions). We found that consumption habituation and perceived firm CSR motives moderate this relationship while CSR skepticism is the mediator. Beneath the surface, some individual constructs can explain the mechanisms. We highlight consumer green values, playing the moderating role between firm green engagement and perceived product quality. Five constructs form green values including mindfulness, voluntary simplicity, internal locus-of-control, connectedness to nature, and death anxiety. We hope to expand the understandings of how consumers perceive and react towards CSR in oriental context that might be more sophisticated than the appearances.