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UNDER WHICH CONDITIONS DOES HABIT OVERRIDE INTENTION?

THE CASE OF GOING VEGETARIAN IN VIETNAM

Master's thesis
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This research investigates the prevailing conditions under which traditional meat consumption habits supersede the intentions to adopt vegetarian diets in Vietnam. Employing qualitative focus group interviews with participants from three demographically diverse groups, the study synthesizes theoretical frameworks from the Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory, Habit Theory, and the Dual Process Theory, augmented by considerations of cultural and practical constraints. Through thematic analysis, the research identifies five principal barriers: deeply embedded cultural norms and family traditions, prevalent health misconceptions, considerable social and familial pressures, practical issues intertwined with lifestyle constraints, and a limited awareness regarding ethical and environmental consequences. The theoretical contributions of this study enhance understanding of how subjective norms and cultural loyalty shape dietary choices, particularly in resistance to adopting vegetarianism. Moreover, the research underscores a significant gap highlighted by the Dual Process Theory, where habitual behaviors often eclipse conscious decision-making in dietary selections. From a practical standpoint, the study advocates for educational and policy measures to encourage vegetarian alternatives and rectify nutritional misconceptions, thereby improving public health and advancing environmental sustainability. Ultimately, this research offers actionable strategies for promoting sustainable dietary practices in culturally diverse contexts, emphasizing the necessity of interventions that target both individual motivations and the broader socio-cultural dynamics.

Key words: habit, intention, vegetarianism, cultural norms, meat consumption, dietary intention, Vietnam.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The The surge in vegetarianism is more than a dietary trend; it represents a critical intersection of ethical, environmental, and health-conscious choices defining the modern consumer ethos. Yet, while 2018 may be seen as a pivotal year for mainstream acceptance of plant-based lifestyles, the factors driving this shift are multifaceted and extend beyond the year itself (Baum & Whiteman 2023). Millennials, often credited as harbingers of this movement, are indeed influential, but the reasons encompass wider demographic and psychosocial dimensions (Minassian 2022).

Despite high-profile endorsements and environmental campaigns championing plant-based dietary choices, there's an observed discrepancy between intentions and sustained behaviors (Williams et al. 2023, 1). Several authors have unpacked the barriers - health misconceptions, effort requirements, and societal acceptance - that inhibit a transition to and maintenance of a vegetarian diet (Bryant 2019, 3; Hielkema & Lund 2021, 1; Williams et al. 2023, 6). Furthermore, taste preferences, convenience, and cost are frequently cited obstacles to dietary change (Bryant 2019, 3; Hielkema & Lund 2021, 2-3). This suggests a complex interplay of forces at work in individual decision-making processes.

Recommendations have emerged regarding the customization of advocacy strategies to address varying consumer profiles – namely delineating approaches for those not yet considering meat reduction from those already intending to do so. However, the emphasis on health and environment as central persuasive themes may not be harnessing the full spectrum of motivators behind dietary choices (Bryant 2019, 3; Souza et al. 2020, 6; Hielkema & Lund 2021, 1, 8).

It's crucial to re-examine the efficacy of these campaigns and question why, despite increased awareness, few have translated awareness into action (Sanchez-Sabate & Sabaté 2019, 3-5). Deep-seated motives such as animal empathy and rights could be more potent than environmental concerns (Fox & Ward 2008, 427). This prompts a potential re-evaluation of the narrative utilized in vegetarian advocacy.

Habit and willpower are substantial hurdles on the path to vegetarianism (Bryant et al. 2022, 1). Meanwhile the correlation between social positioning and the rigidity of habits

suggests that socioeconomic status can influence one's openness to behavior change (Lindbladh & Lyttkens 2002, 451). This insight reveals social and psychological dimensions to the resistance encountered when altering dietary habits.

In light of the ample research on barriers to vegetarianism, what remains underexplored are the specific conditions under which entrenched meat consumption habits persist over the intent to embrace a plant-based lifestyle - even when consumers are consciously aware of the meat industry's detrimental environmental impacts. This represents a critical gap in the literature which my research aims to address, providing a deeper understanding of habit formation and resilience in the face of growing inclinations towards vegetarianism in the context of Vietnam.

1.2 The background of vegetarian adoption in Southeast Asia and Vietnam

1.2.1 Habit-Intention Relationship in the Adoption of Vegetarian Diets within Southeast Asia

The literature on the factors influencing dietary habits and intentions, particularly in the context of adopting vegetarianism, is notably sparse in Southeast Asia, including countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore. This is especially intriguing given the potential differences between Asian and Western dietary trends, influenced by a complex array of cultural, religious, economic, social, and environmental forces.

In Southeast Asia, the presence of Buddhist ideals - which often advocate for a non-violent, plant-based diet - varies widely among countries and influences dietary choices to various degrees (Chan 2021). Despite this, meat and fish remain staples in many regional cuisines, exhibiting a nuanced relationship between traditional culinary practices and religious beliefs (Roman & Russell 2009, 3). Economic considerations additionally play a role; for some individuals, adopting a vegetarian lifestyle is driven more by food affordability than by ethical or health concerns (Viroli, Kalmpourtzidou & Cena 2023, 5; Seidman 2024).

Urbanization and economic development have contributed to evolving perceptions of meat - as cities grow, meat is increasingly seen as a symbol of affluence (Drury 2009, 264, 268; Hansen 2018, 66; Hansen & Jakobsen 2020, 21; Koe 2022). The historical legacy also affects contemporary meat consumption patterns and generational memories

of scarcity may cause a cultural attachment to meat as a prized commodity (Hansen 2018, 66).

Social dynamics play a significant role in dietary habits with meat often featuring centrally in communal dining and family gatherings (Putra, Putra & Novianti 2023, 6, 11) and prevailing beliefs in its symbolic value persist, even as global trends shift toward plant-based diets for health benefits (Ong 2024). While urban environments offer a broader selection of vegetarian options, rural areas might have limited choices, reinforcing traditional eating practices (EXO 2024).

Awareness and education about the environmental and health effects of diet are crucial. Public health campaigns and educational initiatives should address the full spectrum of benefits associated with vegetarian diets — from health to ethical and environmental factors — to effectively change perceptions and encourage wider adoption of these diets in the community (Nguyen et al. 2020, 16). Collectively, these aspects - cultural and religious influences, economic factors, historical legacies, societal norms, accessibility of dietary choices, and environmental consciousness - create a distinct landscape for the evolution of vegetarianism in Southeast Asia. They highlight the need for culturally tailored strategies in dietary change initiatives and the promotion of vegetarian diets (Putra, Putra & Novianti 2023; Ong 2024).

Furthermore, existing research across various contexts has identified multiple motivations behind the shift to vegetarian diets. While numerous factors drive this decision, concern for the environment is seldom the primary motivation (Lea, Crawford & Worsley 2006b, 833; Ruby 2012, 142-143; The Vegan Society n.d). This observation raises questions about the persistent appeal of meat consumption and the challenges in transitioning to plant-based dietary intentions.

To sum up, the multifaceted sociocultural and economic aspects across Southeast Asia significantly impact the adoption of vegetarian diets, revealing the complexity of shifting toward plant-based eating in the region. Despite the influence of Buddhism and the rise of health and environmental consciousness, traditional meat consumption remains ingrained due to cultural norms and economic factors. Given the sparse literature on the transition to vegetarianism in Southeast Asia, there is a critical need for comprehensive research and the establishment of informed policy frameworks. Such efforts should be aimed at understanding and facilitating the complex shift toward vegetarian diets, taking

into account the region's diverse sociocultural and economic backgrounds. Only with a deepened empirical understanding can policies be precisely tailored to effectively support and accelerate this dietary evolution in a region where traditional eating habits are deeply embedded yet are facing the winds of change.

1.2.2 The adoption of a vegetarian diet in Vietnam

Vietnam is an exemplary example of a vegetarian-friendly country due to its strong ties to Buddhism. In the country's developed areas, it is easy to find vegetarian dishes at eateries, stalls, and restaurants. Each region has its own flavor profile when it comes to vegetarian cuisine. For instance, southern Vietnam has a sweeter taste, while Central Vietnam is saltier and spicier in their preferences. People in the North often have a balanced flavor, combining herbal and medical elements (Tran 2023). Adopting and maintaining vegetarian dietary habits in Vietnam exhibit regional disparities, particularly when comparing urban areas to the more rural northern regions (Chan 2022). The challenge of obtaining vegetarian food is notably pronounced for individuals traveling outside of major urban centers (Chan 2022). There is a clear geographical divide in the prevalence of vegetarianism within the country (Tran 2023). The Southern and South-Central regions of Vietnam, from Hue down to Ca Mau, boast higher rates of vegetarian diet adoption (Tran 2023). This may be attributed to the fact that it is easy to find a variety of delicious plant-based dishes available in upscale restaurants, family eateries, local eateries, and even street food stalls (Nguyen et al. 2020, 2). This abundance is facilitated by the favorable weather conditions during both rainy and sunny seasons, which support the growth of a wide range of vegetables, fruits, and plants, making plant-based foods popular in the region (Nguyen et al. 2020, 2). In contrast, Northern regions lag behind in this trend, potentially due to differences in traditional culinary practices and less exposure to vegetarianism as a lifestyle choice (Bach Lien, 2016). From my perspective, such regional variations underscore the need for tailored strategies that address specific barriers to vegetarian food accessibility and promote nutritional education, particularly in the less accommodating areas of the North.

Originating in Buddhism, some individuals adopt a fully vegetarian diet as a way of showing mercy to other species (Bui 2019, 64). Nevertheless, the majority of people in Vietnam follow a partially vegetarian diet, where they only consume vegetarian food on the full moon and new moon days (these can be found online in a lunar calendar) (Chan

2022). Therefore, during these times, many vendors who would usually produce non-vegetarian dishes exclusively offer vegetarian options. This means that adopting a vegetarian diet in Vietnam seems to be seasonal based on their religious beliefs instead of the vegetarian lifestyle in the long run (Chan 2022).

In the past decade, the emergence of social media and the knowledge age has made it easier for people to recognize the many benefits of a plant-based diet. Documentaries such as Cowspiracy, Seaspiracy, and The Game Changers, as well as high-resolution footage of factory farming practices, have contributed to the growth of vegetarianism among the Vietnamese community for secular reasons (Chan 2022). Many now see vegetarianism as a healthier and more sustainable option. Nevertheless, the common belief for vegetarianism among the Vietnamese population is spiritual and religious in nature (Chan 2022; Le 2024). Furthermore, the number of people adopting a vegetarian diet remains limited (Raneri et al. 2019, 22). The vegetarian lifestyle remains a minority choice, and those who choose it can be subject to peer pressure, particularly in male-dominated social contexts (Chan 2022). Price, accessibility and taste are also identified as the main barriers to vegetarianism in Vietnam (Markoni et al. 2023, 16), especially for those who are lacking in the knowledge to create nutritious and delicious meals (Nguyen et al. 2020, 16). As such, there are remaining misunderstandings and confusions in the knowledge about plant-based diets. For instance, the majority of the Vietnamese population may not have sufficient knowledge to distinguish different concepts related to "plant-based diet" such as "vegetarian", "vegan" or "omnivore" diets. Chan (2022) shared that: "They [Vietnamese people] might have different definitions but surely many believe it's a meat- and fish-free diet. They may often think unfertilized chicken eggs and milk are fine. Once in Hoi An, we asked for a "thuan chay" pizza and mentioned this meant "no cheese" and no animal products but were served a pizza made with cheese and were assured it was "chay".

[1] Hoi An, located in Vietnam's Quang Nam Province and home to a population of approximately 120,000, is a renowned tourist destination. Since its recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, it has become increasingly popular among visitors from around the world.
[1] "thuan chay" (Vietnamese) means vegan
[1] "chay" (Vietnamese) means vegetarian

While the existing literature contributes valuable insights into various factors affecting the interplay between habit and intention in diet adoption, the current research corpus does not sufficiently address why established dietary habits, particularly those related to meat consumption, seem to prevail over the intentions to switch to a vegetarian diet, considering the powerful social, cultural, and economic influences at play. Thus, there is a need for Vietnam-specific studies that can provide a detailed understanding of this phenomenon and inform the development of interventions that take into account the interplay of these multiple factors.

Acknowledging the aforementioned gap, this research seeks to look deeper at the habit-intention relation in Vietnam as well as explore the conditions that tend to preserve meat consumption habits over the intention to adopt vegetarian diets within this context.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is necessary to explore the relationship between habits and intentions towards vegetarianism, in the context of the exacerbating environmental situation and the trend towards vegetarianism.

This research seeks to answer one main research question: **What are the facilitating conditions in which habit (meat intake) overrides intention (to go vegetarian)?**

This basis enables me to formulate two sub research questions:

Sub question 1: How do meat consumption habit and intention of going vegetarian interact?

The first question is aimed at exploring the relationship between habit and intention, and identifying the types of interactions between habit and intention. To answer this question, a comprehensive review of existing literature on habit, intention, and their relationship is conducted, covering various topics such as eating, drinking, physical activity, travel, information technology usage, and environmental behaviors. The findings from these different fields are varied. This study delves into the topic of vegetarianism which is seen through the lens of deeply ingrained habits like dietary practices and routines of daily life. The focus of sub question 1 is to deepen our understanding of the interplay between established habits and the intention to adopt a vegetarian diet. It underscores the significance of discerning why entrenched routines often supplant the resolve to transition to vegetarianism.

Sub question 2: In which conditions do meat consumption habit dominate over intention of going vegetarian in Vietnam?

The second question seeks to explore the facilitating conditions in which the intention to transition to a vegetarian diet can be overridden by the habit of eating meat. The answer for the sub-question 2 seeks to look deeper at the habit-intention relation in Vietnam as well as explore the conditions that tend to preserve meat consumption habits over the intention to adopt vegetarian diets within this context.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This part reviews the relevant existing literature for the current studies. The current related debate revolves around two main themes corresponding to two sections. Section 2.1 focuses on the relationship between habit and intention. Section 2.2 reviews the studies or archive materials that identify the barriers preventing people from going vegetarian. This is followed by section 2.3 with an intensive review of the literature that explores the determining motivations that make people switch to a vegetarian diet. Then section 2.4 clarifies the habit-intention relation in adopting vegetarianism in Vietnam. Throughout, the researcher offers an overall assessment of the gap after reviewing the literature. Finally, this part finishes with an introduction of the theoretical framework in section 2.5.

2.1.1 Behavior

Behavior, in the broadest sense, "is what an organism is doing – or more accurately what it is observed by another organism to be doing....behavior is that part of the functioning of an organism which is engaged in acting upon or having commerce with the outside world" (Skinner 1938, 6). The prevalent view in psychological and behavioral sciences is that *behavior* is a consequence of both conscious and unconscious processes, wherein the former is often articulated as intentions and the latter may manifest as habits (Wood & Rünger 2016, 291).

Intention-driven behaviors are conceived as actions that are performed with forethought and planning (Ajzen 1991, 184). The formation of these intentions is considered a cognitive process, where an individual decides on a course of action by weighing various factors such as personal attitudes, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control, as outlined in Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen 1991, 184).

Habits, by contrast, are automatic behaviors that are activated by the contextual and developed through the repeated performance of an action (Wood & Neal 2007, 843). Habits are formed when actions become associated with specific contexts, leading to the behaviors being performed with reduced conscious awareness or intention (Wood & Neal 2007, 844). This habitual process is less about decision-making and more about the efficiency of action selection (Wood & Neal 2007, 845).

The relationship between habit and intention is complicated by the fact that habitual behaviors can sometimes occur in direct conflict with one's stated intentions (Neal, Wood, Wu, & Kurlander 2011, 1428). This can be due to the fact that, once a habit is formed, the behavior can be elicited with minimal cognitive effort, and it can bypass the intention (Neal, Wood, Wu, & Kurlander 2011, 1435). In understanding human behavior from a habit-intention standpoint, it is crucial to consider not only the processes that mediate the transition from repetitive action to automaticity but also the mechanisms that allow for the congruence or discordance between intention and habit (Wood & Rünger 2016, 294).

In applying the concept of behavior to the habit-intention relation, the intrinsic challenge lies in discerning the point at which behavior is either a function of deliberate intent or a result of the automaticity of habit (Aarts, Verplanken & van Knippenberg 1998, 1357). The nuances of this transition are at the heart of many behavior change interventions, which often aim to disrupt existing habits or form new ones altogether (Gardner 2015, 288-289).

Understanding this conceptual framework is paramount for tailoring interventions in an era where habits significantly impact individual health outcomes, and where breaking from established patterns requires more than a mere intent to change.

2.1.2 Habit

Habit is frequently characterized as automatic and relatively unconscious behaviors triggered by particular contextual cues (Orbell et al. 2001, 34; Gardner 2015, 277-278). Frequently performed behaviors within consistent settings encourage the development of these habits, resulting in future actions being repeated almost reflexively (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 54-55; Lally et al. 2010, 998; Gardner 2015, 287). The concept of context-dependent repetition describes this phenomenon; an action becomes more strongly associated with a specific setting through repetition, making alternative actions less salient (Lally et al. 2010, 1008). Consequently, these behaviors solidify as the default response in the relevant context, occurring without deliberate intention or conscious awareness (Wood & Neal 2009, 581).

In the domain of psychology, habits are often conceptualized as consisting of a tripartite structure comprising a cue, routine, and reward (Duhigg 2012, 4). The cue is an environmental trigger that precipitates the habitual action, the routine is the automatic

behavior itself, and the reward refers to the positive reinforcement received upon completing the behavior, perpetuating the habit loop (Duhigg 2012, 4). Habits manifest on a spectrum from beneficial, such as regular exercise, to detrimental, like smoking, with their persistence reinforced by the outcomes they produce. Once established, the automatic nature of habits and their reinforcing feedback loops make modification challenging (Wood & Neal 2007, 854).

Comprehension of habit formation and its sustaining mechanisms is imperative for elucidating a diverse array of human behaviors. Adequate understanding enables the development of effective interventions aimed at breaking undesired habits and the promotion of beneficial practices, culminating in enhanced well-being (Lally & Gardner 2013, 151-152; Neal, Wood, Wu, & Kurlander 2011, 1436).

When examining the specific case of meat consumption, the individual's food-choice decisions are influenced not only by personal health considerations and environmental concerns but also by a multifaceted array of elements that interact to form the backdrop in which eating habits evolve (Cheah et al. 2020, 4). These elements include physiological aspects like appetite and taste preferences; psychological drivers such as personal values, beliefs, and personality; mood aspects like stress or guilt; physical considerations involving culinary skills, accessibility, and time constraints; cognitive factors which include nutritional knowledge and understanding of food labeling; economic issues related to affordability; religious beliefs; peer pressure and the influence of social norms; marketing influences that shape social images; and cultural traditions that influence meal-related habits (Pollard, Steptoe & Wardle 1998, 166; Perrea et al. 2014, 306-307; Meijer et al. 2021, 50). Consequently, habitual food intake functions along an impulsive pathway where environmental cues spark automatic, associative responses that occur without conscious reflection.

Moreover, individual consumption patterns do not exist in a vacuum but are embedded within a broader social context. Food choices are also an expression of group influences, social norms, communal identities, and collective cognitions and feelings (Higgs 2015, 39; Bryant et al. 2022, 7-8). In essence, food consumption extends beyond personal choice; it conveys social messages that contribute to forming social identities and lifestyles (Higgs 2015, 41-42).

2.1.3 Intention

The concept of intention in behavioral psychology is often delineated as a mental antecedent to a specific action or series of actions in the future (Triandis 1977, vii, 6). It hinges on conscious planning and is recognized as a precursor to behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 39). Key characteristics that define intention include deliberation, whereby the individual engages in thoughtful consideration of the forthcoming action; directionality, where the intention is focused on achieving a particular goal or outcome; motivation, the driving force behind the intention; and volition, which demonstrates the use of willpower to affect personal conduct (Ajzen 1991, 181-182).

These components are integral to models like the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Reasoned Action, which assert that the likelihood of behavior execution is proportional to the strength of the individual's intention, provided that the behavior is within their control (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 57; Ajzen 1991, 181-182). Intentions are subject to influence by attitudes towards the behavior, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control, which encompasses beliefs about the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior (Ajzen 1991, 183-184, 206).

Despite the strong link between intention and action, it is important to note that intentions do not always materialize into behavior (Ajzen 2011, 1115). Factors like environmental limitations, unforeseen events, or the emergence of conflicting intentions can disrupt this process (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 57).

The exploration of the concept of intention in behavioral psychology continues to evolve, with recent academic studies building upon the foundational work of Fishbein & Ajzen. Recent research has sought to deepen the understanding of the nuances involved in intention formation and the transition to action. For example, Sniehotta, Presseau & Araújo-Soares (2014, 4) examined the complex interplay between intention, action planning, and the conscientious deployment of coping strategies to overcome barriers, suggesting a need for more intricate models that include these additional factors.

Further interrogation of intentions has revealed the predictive validity of intentions to behavior can vary significantly depending on the temporal stability in intention, the stability of the intention, and the stability of the environment in which the behavior is to be enacted (Sheeran & Webb 2016, 505-506). More recent studies have also emphasized

the importance of habit strength, highlighting that in the interplay between automaticity and intention, strong habits can override even well-specified intentions (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 5). Moreover, intentions can either have incompatible or compatible relationships with implicit processes such as automaticity and habitual responses (Hofmann, Friese & Wiers 2008, 117).

Despite advancements, the unpredictability of human behavior remains, and the realization of intentions into action can still be thwarted by various factors. Consequently, scholars in the field continue to refine their understanding of how intentions predict behavior and to advance methodologies that capture more precisely the dynamic between intention, planning, and actual behavioral outcomes (Sheeran, Gollwitzer & Bargh 2013, 468).

2.1.4 Habit – Intention interaction

The specific concept under examination is the interaction between habit and intention, particularly how these elements interplay to influence behavior across various situations. Currently, there is a heightened scholarly interest in the moderating role that habit may exert on the intention-behavior relationship (Venkatesh 2023, 9-10). This trend dates back to classical theories put forth by James (1890) and Tolman (1932) and persists in contemporary research, such as the work of Gardner, Lally & Rebar (2020). What is posited is the notion that habit, when fully established, is a potent force that can support the maintenance of behavioral change initiated by deliberate intentions (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 2; Venkatesh et al. 2023, 9). This line of inquiry investigates the extent to which ingrained habits can either facilitate or impede the enactment of behaviors that align with one's intentions, thus playing a decisive role in the success or failure of intentional behavior change (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 1-2).

As mentioned previously, habit is characterized in the opposite to reasoned, deliberative concepts such as conscious intentions (Ajzen 1991, 203). According to dual process models, there are two mechanisms to explain a human behavior when encountering situational cues (Strack & Deutsch 2004, 220; Borland 2013, 98). The reflective system entails thoughtful deliberation on the usefulness of different behavioral options, leading to the formation of an intention to act (Strack & Deutsh 2004, 229). On the other hand, habit operates on a seperate, instinctive route but alongside with reflective pathway that

is impulsive system, where recognition of cues elicits automatic, associative reactions at minor level and without conscious realization (Garder 2015, 278). The reflective system requires cognitive effort to generate behavior whereas the impulsive pathway guides behavior swiftly and with little exertion (Strack & Deutsch 2004, 223).

Moreover, habits are formed through the repeated performance of an intended action (Tobias 2009, 432; Lally et al. 2010, 998). When the decision setting is stable, habits and intentions are found to be robustly corresponded (Gardner 2009, 75). Individuals who already established strong intentions over a specific choice of action, would likely choose and act that option very frequently to the point that the action is developed into habit (Gardner 2009, 73). Moreover, habits also play a moderating role in the motivation-behavior relationship, preventing intentions from influencing behavior significantly when habits are strong (Gardner 2009, 73).

Nevertheless, habit alone may not be adequate to maintain the change in behavior for long term, additional resources and support may be required to keep motivation high and ensure that the new behavior is sustained, and that any kind of habit-intention interplay may be influenced by additional variables (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 18). Many studies in dietary and physical activity fields reveal that habits actually strengthen the relationship between intention and behavior (de Bruijn et al. 2012, 513; Gardner et al. 2012, 565). Yet another study found no interaction effect at all, instead, the behavior is controlled by both intention and habit independently (Murtagh et al. 2012, 7-8). Meanwhile, other studies indicate that habits may override intentions in determining behavior, with the influence from additional components such as goal, contextual triggers (Neal, Wood, Labrecque & Lally 2012, 497), self-control (Neal, Wood & Quinn 2006, 201) or when there is the absence of motivation to deliberate about behavioral options (Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 116). In studies focused on healthy dietary habits, the relationship between habit and intention remains diminished when the habits get stronger regardless of the roles of motivation to change (Gardner et al. 2011, 174). Although motivation may be necessary for adopting new behaviors, it may not be adequate to effectively alter unhealthy eating habits (Gardner et al. 2011, 185).

Commentators have debated that establishing a healthy behavior as a habit reduces its vulnerability to disruptions stemming from a decline in motivation (Verplanken & Wood 2006, 96). Behavior change interventions should aim to promote healthy habits in order

to protect the new behavior from losing motivation, which could lead to a long-term reversal of short-term gains (Rothman et al. 2009, 14).

Even though extensive research suggests that established behaviors can persist without ongoing conscious motivation (Tolman 1932, 271; James 1890), Triandis' Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, introduced in 1977, was among the earliest models to systematically examine the interplay between habit and conscious motivation. In Triandis' framework, habit is characterized as the accumulation of past instances in which the behavior has occurred, reflecting the automated aspect of action (1977, vii). On the other hand, intention is the mental precursor to an act (Triandis 1977, 5), or is described as the aggregate of conscious motivational influences that deliberately guide decision-making (Ajzen 1991, 181). According to Triandis, conflict between potent habits and current intentions can lead to the automatic activation of the habitual response, often pre-empting the conscious, deliberate process that would produce a behavior aligned with the current intention (1977, 205). It follows that the presence of a strong habit may moderate the impact of intention on behavior, thus rendering intentions a less reliable predictor of action when habits are well established (Triandis 1977, 205).

Many studies further examine the interplay between habit and intention in guiding behavior with the use of Triandis's (1977) Theory Interpersonal Behavior as the theoretical underpinning (see Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020; Vu & Nielsen 2022). Accordingly, habit and intention can have a complex interplay, in which either can overpower the other depending on the conditions (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 17).

Self-control has been identified as a facilitating condition for the interaction between habit and intention with evidence suggesting that diminished self-control will prevent this (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 17). It serves as a significant factor in shaping the relationship between our habits and intentions, influencing outcomes in notable ways (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 18)

In cases where self-control is weak, habits are likely to prevail thanks to the automatic qualities, often overpowering their conscious intentions (Neal, Wood & Quinn 2006, 201). Such dominance of habits represents a fundamental challenge when one's purposive goals differ from their ingrained routines (Wood & Neal 2007, 853-854).

In contrast, strong self-control presents two different scenarios depending on the alignment between intentions and habits (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 18). When concordant intentions and habits align, even if the intentions have lost some of their initial influence, self-control strengthens the likelihood of acting in accordance with habit (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 14, 18). Consequently, people are able to use their existing habits as a vehicle for accomplishing beneficial outcomes if their habitual behaviors support their intentions. On the other hand, if a person's intentions are at odds with their habits, a sufficient amount of self-control allows them to overcome the pull of ingrained behaviors and act according to their new resolutions (Hofmann, Friese & Wiers 2008, 118).

Broadly speaking, the dynamic between habits and intentions manifests in three principal ways: intentions that are congruent with habitual behaviors, intentions that challenge existing habits, and situations where both habits and intentions coalesce to drive action. The next subsection gains in-depth understanding of each principle of habit-intention interaction.

2.1.4.1 Intentions interact in correspondence with habits

Intentions are fundamentally interconnected with habitual actions, and this relationship is often reflected in how people articulate their plans for future actions, whether in informal discussions or structured psychological assessments. Typically, individuals express an intention to act that aligns with their past behaviors, particularly when there is no overt intention to alter or discontinue a habit. This typical alignment arises from a natural tendency to create favorable intentions around actions that they have frequently performed, reinforcing a cycle of consistency between past actions and future plans. (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56).

When unimpeded by external constraints, individuals often presume that their current intentions will mirror their historical behaviors. This presumption is bolstered by a desire for cognitive consistency and is further supported by self-perception theory, which posits that self-concepts - including intentions - are shaped by observations of one's past behavior. (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56, 59). As a result, the act of formulating conscious intentions is inherently influenced by previous behaviors, shaping not just the intentions themselves but also affecting related determinants, such as attitudes and perceived behavioral control. For example, the frequent occurrence of an activity can lead to a

positive attitude towards it, and this attitude can subsequently inform future intent. Similarly, the regularity of an action can shape perceptions of control over that action; as such, routinely executed actions are often deemed more manageable, and this perception significantly impacts future intentions. (Ajzen 2005, 111).

The tendency to devise intentions that are consistent with repetitive past actions is particularly pronounced when there are no external obstacles (Ajzen 1991, 203; Ouellette & Wood 1998, 55). Such consistency is a reflection of a broader human inclination for cognitive harmony, motivating individuals toward behaviors they are accustomed to performing. Additionally, the repetition of certain behaviors can lead to the development of favorable attitudes towards those actions. These positive attitudes, which are reinforced through continuous practice, play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing one's intentions to persist in those behaviors. (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 59).

The correspondence between intentions and habitual behaviors is facilitated by several conditions: strong self-control, which supports the actualization of intentions, particularly when they conflict with entrenched desires (Quinn et al. 2010, 508); the formation of positive intentions related to frequently executed past behaviors (Ajzen 1991, 203; Ouellette & Wood 1998, 59); and the stability of the behavioral context, which contributes to the predictability and thus the reinforcement of the intention to continue with established patterns (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 58). In the absence of discord between intentions and habits, reinforced by the enabling conditions mentioned, the habit-intention dynamic operates smoothly, fostering enduring behavior patterns.

2.1.4.2 Intentions conflict with habits

On the other hand, intentions can sometimes conflict with habits, especially when people are trying to break bad habits (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56; Quinn et al. 2010, 499). Bad habits are unproductive and undesirable behaviors that have been well-practiced and occur automatically with little effort or guidance (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56; Quinn et al. 2010, 499). They can emerge from actions that once yielded valued outcomes but no longer do, or through behaviors that yield short-term rewards that are not consistent with long-term goals (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56). In other words, unhealthy behaviors form when competing urges are consistently prioritized in favor of immediate desires rather than long-term objectives (Duckworth & Gross 2020, 41). For instance, someone may

intend to enjoy a bag of potato chips slowly throughout a movie, only to find themselves unable to control their consumption, ultimately finishing the entire bag before the movie ends. The immediate pleasure such behavior brings is more influential than the benefit of the counterpart behavior and can lead to unhealthy consequences in the long term. (Hofmann, Friese & Wiers 2008, 111).

Additionally, bad habits may develop as side effects of intended activities, or through behaviors that are not particularly valued (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56). To break these habits, an alteration in the perceived outcomes of action, or in one's assessment of such outcomes, may be necessary in order to encourage people to shape new intentions (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56). Making a cup of coffee from the vending machine can be an instance. These actions were adopted due to their simplicity, effectiveness and favorable over investing time and energy into forming aternatives that are considered more highly valued (for example, healthier). Collectively, the most successful strategies for change are the ones that hinder the execution of current behaviors while also promoting the development of new habits (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56).

Nevertheless, the development of strong habits can lead to an intense craving that causes the brain to function on autopilot, even in the presence of significant disincentives such as the risk of losing employment, compromising health, damaging reputation, disrupting family dynamics, or jeopardizing housing (Abhishek 2020). When habits become tempting, they offer immediate pleasure, creating challenges to inhibit them (Wood & Neal 2007, 859). Only focusing on the desire to change, or having new motivation to change would not be sufficient to successfully inhibit habit or temptation, even when one believes in the effectiveness of alternative responses (Quinn et al. 2010, 509). Similarly, people often face difficulties in resisting bad habits such as drinking alcohol, smoking, and eating unhealthy despite being fully aware of the negative impacts on their lives Lindbladh & Lyttkens 2002, 455).

One way of this is changing the environment, which can cause someone to veer away from their existing habits and steer them towards healthier lifestyles (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56; Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 2). Furthermore, these strategies should ensure that instant and positive outcomes come from the new behavior, and ensure that it can be repeated in a stable and encouraging environment (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56). There is a conflict between habits and intentions when people perceive bad habits and strive to

break them (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 2). Shifting one's evaluation of the consequences of these bad habits can help people form new intentions and adopt healthier lifestyles. Furthermore, to ensure that new behaviors become habitual and are repeated, it is essential to maintain a stable and supportive environment (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 70-71; Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 4).

To sum up, in attempts to break bad habits, the individual's level of self-control is a critical determinant in whether they will succeed or falter. Those with weak self-control often find that their habits dictate their actions, overshadowing their intentions no matter how strong or directed they might be (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 70). Conversely, individuals with strong self-control have a greater capacity for their intentions to usurp habitual behaviors, allowing for successful habit change (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 16-17).

The process of breaking bad habits typically requires a deliberate reassessment and alteration in the perception of the associated negative outcomes. Recognizing the detrimental effects of these habits is a necessary step for fostering a willingness to engage in healthier behaviors (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 2, 16). Additionally, the creation of a new environment, which supports and promotes positive behavior patterns, can be paramount in ensuring lasting change and preventing relapse into old habits (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 70-71; Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 16).

Fundamental to this process are the conditions that facilitate the transition: strong self-control and a supportive, stable environment that aligns with the new, desired behaviors. Both of these conditions can significantly enhance the likelihood of breaking away from bad habits and establishing new, more beneficial ones (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 70-71; Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 18).

2.1.4.3 Combination of habits and intentions in predicting future behavior

Habits and intentions work in conjunction to forecast human behavior, with the interplay between these elements, it is critical for understanding how actions originate and persist. The habitual behavior encouraged by the regularity and familiarity found in stable environments frequently trips a metaphorical switch, allowing these behaviors to occur automatically (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 56-57). It's in the domain of regular, repeated actions that habit formation finds fertile ground: a specific context repeatedly experienced begins to trigger habitual responses without the need for active decision-making

(Ouellette & Wood 1998, 57). However, when intentions and habits are at odds, particularly when new, desired behaviors are introduced, intentions must carry a substantially greater motivational force to overturn the entrenched habit (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 57; Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 125-126). This battle between old habits and new intentions is not merely about choice but about cognitive resilience as well, channeling a mindfulness that can maintain the conscious effort to sustain new behaviors despite the pull of old routines (Ouellette & Wood 1998, 57; Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 125, 127).

In unpredictable, shifting scenarios where habits have not yet taken root or contexts are inherently unstable, the conscious mind takes the reins (Gardner 2009, 75). This is where the benefits of intentionality shine: an individual must evaluate the situation, consider various responses, and deliberately choose a course of action - a process that shines in moments of disruption, like when the vending machine lacks its usual variety, compelling one to make a healthier breakfast choice (Wegner & Bargh 1998, 446-450). Research in this area emphasizes a nuanced understanding of behavior change. It suggests that modifying environmental cues, which typically serve as signposts for habits, disrupts the automatic cycle and strengthens the effectiveness of intentional efforts to induce new patterns of behavior (Neal, Wood, Labrecque & Lally 2012, 497). Furthermore, prompt rewards tied to these new behaviors and the consistent repetition within a structured environment are instrumental in ensuring these new actions solidify into habits (Lally & Gardner 2013, 152).

Moreover, an individual's behavior appears to be bound to the context's stability and the frequency of their past actions (Ji & Wood 2007, 262). This interdependence can be able to indicate habit strength (Ji & Wood 2007, 262). When habits are new and fragile, intentions may inform the behavior, while when the behavior is well-practiced or over-learned, habitual behavior often overshadows intentional action (Triandis 1977, 205).

Recent research further elaborates on the mechanisms that reinforce the habit-intention feedback loop. Self-control serves as a linchpin that allows individuals to align their habits with their intentional strategies, providing a counterbalance to the natural gravitation toward established patterns (Gardner, Lally & Rebar 2020, 18). Concurrently, the frequency of past behavior not only impacts future behavior but also can be able to strengthen the connectivity between habit and intention (Ji & Wood 2007, 274; Neal,

Wood, Wu & Kurlander 2011, 1435). This evidence underscores the potent role that repeated engagement in an activity, alongside self-regulatory mechanisms, plays in the entrenchment and longevity of habits (Neal, Wood & Quinn 2006, 201). Through strategic interruptions of habitual cycles and the reconfiguration of environments, novel contexts offer the prospect of habit disruption and the establishment of new, adaptive behavior patterns (Neal, Wood, Wu & Kurlander 2011, 1436). By altering cues that invoke automatic reactions, individuals can create fertile conditions for change and nurture the growth of desired behaviors (Wood & Neal 2007, 860; Neal, Wood, Labrecque & Lally 2012, 497). Taken together, these insights illustrate the complexity behind habit change, proposing environment and intention-focussed approaches to effectively guide the evolution of human behavior.

2.2 Barriers preventing people from going vegetarian

The adoption of vegetarian diets is recommended for a plethora of reasons encompassing health - where it's linked with decreased risks of various chronic diseases (Craig & Mangels 2009, 1266); environmental sustainability - considering the substantial effects of animal agriculture on greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and water use (Rueda & Scherer 2023, 7); and ethical considerations surrounding animal welfare, with a focus on minimizing animal suffering and upholding their rights (North et al. 2021, 6). Despite the clear advantages, transitioning to a vegetarian raises several challenges, as discussed in the literature (Bryant 2019, 3; Souza et al. 2020, 11; Hielkema & Lund 2021, 1). A deeper understanding of the obstacles that prevent individuals from transitioning to a vegetarian diet is imperative, as such knowledge is foundational to creating effective strategies and interventions. Recognizing and addressing these challenges can foster long-term adherence to plant-based eating practices, ultimately beneficial for individual and public health outcomes (Nguyen et al. 2020, 15).

One of the most significant barriers is personal taste preferences. Many people express a strong preference for the taste and sensory experience of meat over plant-based alternatives, indicating how dietary choices are rooted in deeply held habits and culinary traditions (Souza et al. 2020, 11). These preferences are not easily swayed and can represent a formidable impediment to changing individual's diet. Additionally, practical concerns, such as the availability and convenience of plant-based foods, pose significant challenges (Souza et al. 2020, 13). Prospective vegetarians often find accessing high-

quality vegetarian products difficult, and issues such as the time required for vegetarian meal preparation can dissuade even the most well-intentioned individuals (Bryant 2019, 12-13; Souza et al. 2020, 12).

Social and cultural barriers also play a crucial role, as individuals considering plant-based diet face societal challenges that range from stereotypes to overt antagonism (Souza et al. 2020, 3). Navigating a social landscape that is largely oriented towards omnivorous consumption patterns can make adopting a plant-based diet seem particularly isolating and challenging (Souza et al. 2020, 12-13). Moreover, resistance to vegetarianism reveals similar sentiment regarding the struggle to change established food norms. Even with awareness of the health advantages and ethical principles associated with vegetarianism, people can be hesitant to transition away from omnivorous habits that are culturally entrenched and exist across demographic lines (Lea & Worsley 2003, 505). This resistance showcases how habitual dietary patterns, reinforced by personal and cultural norms, can persist irrespective of enhanced knowledge about alternate diets.

Furthermore, the interplay of habit and willpower is significant in considering dietary changes. Socioeconomic status influences dietary choices, with individuals in lower economic strata often sticking to familiar eating patterns despite the potential benefits of alternative diets (Lindbladh & Lyttkens 2002, 459).

In response to these barriers, researchers have proposed various solutions. Bryant (2019, 12-13) emphasizes the need for higher quality and more affordable meat alternatives, making them readily accessible to a wider audience, potentially easing some practical barriers for current meat-eaters in the UK. Hielkema & Lund (2021, 8) suggest that different advocacy approaches may be required to resonate with diverse populations. While environmental arguments might influence those with little to no interest in reducing meat intake, those already contemplating such reductions might be more swayed by campaigns emphasizing health benefits.

In summary, the literature is rich in discussing the impediments to adopting vegetarian diets. Persistent challenges such as entrenched taste preferences for meat, habitual eating practices, and the lack of appealing, convenient vegetarian options stand in the way of widespread dietary change (Lea & Worsley 2003, 508-509; Bryant 2019, 12-13; Souza et al. 2020, 11; Hielkema & Lund 2021, 1-3). These findings underscore the necessity of

multi-layered strategies that address the complex web of cultural, social, and personal factors to facilitate the shift toward vegetarian diets. Upon reviewing the provided details about the studies, we can categorize the common barriers identified into three distinct thematic groups: personal barriers, practical barriers, and social/cultural barriers.

2.3 Motivations for people to switch to a vegetarian diet

When dissecting the motivations that lead individuals to switch to a vegetarian diet, it becomes clear that this decision is influenced by a coalition of ethical, health-related, and environmental considerations, as well as practical and sociocultural dimensions (Lindbladh & Lyttkens 2002, 451; Sanchez-Sabate & Sabaté 2019, 4-5).

Ethical considerations, particularly those related to animal welfare and rights, are among key motivators for individuals adopting a vegetarian diet (North et al. 2021, 7). This sentiment resonates within the community where ethical treatment of animals is a strong determinant, compelling individuals to avoid animal products (Fox & Ward 2008, 425). The philosophy of animal rights suggests that animals possess intrinsic value and rights similar to humans, including the fundamental right not to be used as a commodity by humans (Regan 2013, 179, 185). Furthermore, the ethical arguments advocating for compassion towards animals, suggest that causing suffering and exploitation for human food consumption is morally wrong and there should be animal welfare activism that greatly considers animal rights as well as more adoption of plant-based diets (North et al. 2021, 6). Similarly, moral significance of animals' interests is further elaborated and a very broad basis for a moral vegetarianism (DeGrazia 2009, 146). In many senses, ethical vegetarians consider this diet not simply a food choice but rather a lifestyle and express how they feel related to the world and environment (Fox & Ward 2008, 425).

Health considerations is another significant motivator (Fox & Ward 2008, 427). The pursuit of better health is a powerful catalyst that often precedes the shift to vegetarianism. Acknowledging the potential health benefits, from prevention of diseases to overall wellness, plays into the hands of consumers' predisposition to reduce or eliminate animal product consumption (Fox & Ward 2008, 427; Hopwood et al. 2020, 15). The positive health effects associated with vegetarian diets, such as lower risks of heart disease, high blood sugar, type 2 diabetes, and some specific forms of cancer (Craig & Mangels 2009, 1266), might be compelling reasons for individuals' dietary changes. The increased

awareness of the health benefits of a plant-based diet has been supported by a multitude of nutritional studies (for example Tuso et al. 2013; Orlich et al. 2013).

Environmental concerns, while influential, typically accompany health and ethical motivations rather than lead as the primary reason for individuals turning to vegetarian diets (Fox & Ward 2008, 427). The environmental degradation associated with meat production is known, but this awareness often supports rather than initiates the choice for more plant-based diets (Sanchez-Sabate & Sabaté 2019, 6). Environmental concerns, such as emissions of greenhouse gases, utilization of water, deforestation are becoming a more pronounced factor in consumers' dietary choices (Steinfeld et al. 2006, 3, 11; Scarborough et al. 2014, 180).

The fourth motivation is practical considerations. Quality, accessibility and affordability of vegetarian options are practical barriers that influence dietary decisions (Bryant 2019, 12). The growth of the vegetarian food market has gradually mitigated some practical barriers by increasing the availability and variety of vegetarian options, making it more convenient and accessible for individuals to maintain a vegetarian diet (Janda & Trocchia 2001, 1206). These market dynamics are intertwined with consumers' economic considerations and product perceptions (Janda & Trocchia 2001, 1206, 1236; Ruby 2012, 143-144). Ultimately, the ease with which consumers can obtain palatable and cost-effective plant-based food still significantly affects their willingness to maintain a vegetarian diet (Bryant 2019, 12-13).

Moreover, socioeconomic status has an influence on health related behavior. Individuals in lower socioeconomic positions tend to lean on habits and show less likelihood to alter their behavior because social disparities reinforce the perception that maintaining habits is beneficial. (Lindbladh & Lyttkens 2002, 452). Hence, it is rational to infer that cultural background and societal norms significantly influence food choices. Other research has also shown how social identity, peer influence, and family traditions can act as either facilitators or barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet (Ruby 2012, 143-144) . Changing social norms around vegetarianism can impact the adoption rates within social groups (Ruby 2012, 144-145).

Psychological Factors are also identified as another motivation. Elements of personality, such as openness to experience and conscientiousness, have been associated with

vegetarianism. The alignment of one's values and beliefs with their dietary habits also plays a crucial role in the adoption and maintenance of a vegetarian diet (Forestell & Nezlek 2018, 255-256; Allen et al. 2000, 419).

Table 1 ***Motivations for people to go vegetarian based on existing selected studies***

Factors	**Motivations**
Ethical considerations	• Animal rights with arguments against animal exploitation and for equal treatment of animals (North et al. 2021, 5-7; Regan 2013, 179-188) • Discussions on the moral significance of animals' interests (DeGrazia 2009, 146) • Vegetarianism as a way of life (Fox & Ward 2008, 425)
Health considerations	• Benefits of a vegetarian diet on personal health (Fox & Ward 2008, 424, 427; Tuso et al. 2013; Orlich et al. 2013; Hopwood et al. 2020, 15)
Environmental concerns	• Impact of animal production on environmental degradation (Scarborough et al. 2014, 180; Sanchez-Sabate & Sabaté 2019, 3-6; Steinfeld et al. 2006 3, 4, 11)
Practical consideration	• Accessibility and affordability of vegetarian options (Ruby 2012, 143; Janda & Trocchia 2001, 1206; Bryant 2019, 12-13)
Sociocultural factors	• Influence of socioeconomic status, cultural background, and societal norms (Rozin et al. 2006, 304; Lindbladh & Lyttkens 2002 451-459; Ruby 2012, 143-145).
Psychological factors	• Association of personality traits with vegetarianism (Forestell & Nezlek 2018, 255-256; Allen et al. 2000, 419)

In essence, the decision to adopt a vegetarian diet is multifaceted and individualized. The convergence of ethical, health, and environmental incentives, coupled with practical and sociocultural dynamics, creates a complex motivational landscape for individuals considering vegetarianism. Comprehensive strategies aimed at promoting such diets need to account for these varied and interrelated factors to be successful (Hopwood et al. 2020, 15; North et al. 2021, 1).

2.4 Overview of existing studies about habit-intention relation in adopting a vegetarian diet in Vietnam

Vietnam's dietary landscape is currently undergoing a significant transformation with a marked increase in vegetarianism. This section explores the factors influencing this shift, focusing on the interplay between traditional habits and modern intentions towards vegetarian diets through a detailed review of the literature and current studies

Vietnamese culture has historically integrated vegetarianism into its culinary practices, significantly influenced by Buddhist traditions which prescribe vegetarian eating on the 1st and 15th of the lunar calendar (Kaza 2005, 393; Vietnam News Agency 2022; O'Donnell 2023). These days, traditionally observed for spiritual cleansing and health, are now also seen as opportunities for personal and environmental health by a broader demographic. These practices have been adapted and observed for spiritual reasons, such as seeking health and peace for the family, rather than the Western rationale of health, environmentalism, or animal welfare concerns (Hanoi L&C Academy n.d). The influence of Buddhism and other religions also varies markedly across different regions, affecting not just practices but also the personal and societal intentions to embrace eating patterns (Ho Tai n.d). Modern influences, particularly in urban areas like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, have led to a proliferation of vegetarian restaurants catering to a lifestyle choice rather than solely religious practice (Maloo 2023). An increasing number of vegetarian restaurants reflect the country's growing vegan trend (Maloo 2023). There is also evidence that younger generations may be gradually shifting away from a meat-centric diet (Vietnam News Agency 2022). Religious festivals, such as specific days in the lunar month, have seen increased vegetarian consumption among young people (Avieli 2014, 145-146). While they still appreciate traditional values, their choices regarding vegetarian meals are less driven by religious beliefs and more by ecological, ethical, and health considerations (Vietnam News Agency 2022; Statista 2024). From my perspective, existing researches do not fully explore how these emerging intentions can be transformed into sustained changes in light of the dominant cultural and social norms that reinforce meat consumption.

Despite these changes, meat continues to hold a central role in social and cultural functions, and its exclusion from diets, especially during significant events like weddings, is often socially frowned upon (Markoni et al. 2023, 12). This deep-rooted cultural

significance shows the challenges of transitioning to vegetarianism in certain contexts (Markoni et al. 2023, 12). Furthermore, vegetarian food is not as inherently integrated into Vietnamese cuisine as in other Southeast Asian countries like Thailand (O'Donnell 2023). In rural areas, vegetarians might often end up eating simple meals like rice with vegetables due to the scarcity of vegetarian restaurants (O'Donnell 2023).

The health implications of meat consumption have become a critical point of discussion. Studies have shown that regular meat consumption is associated with higher cholesterol levels and increased risk of chronic diseases, influencing more Vietnamese to consider plant-based diets (Hansen 2018, 66; Nguyen et al. 2020, 3; Markoni et al. 2023, 11). Awareness is growing, especially among urban populations, where educational resources about the benefits of vegetarian diets are more accessible (Nguyen et al. 2020, 3). It is noted that despite the rising popularity of vegetarian diets, a significant portion of the population remains committed to meat consumption (Seidman 2024). This persistence suggests a strong habitual factor in dietary choices, where traditional meat consumption is deeply ingrained in daily life and culinary preferences (Seidman 2024). They expressed a strong attachment to the sensory pleasures of meat, stating that meals feel incomplete without it. This sentiment is reinforced by lifelong habits of meat consumption, making it difficult for individuals to consider eliminating meat entirely from their diet (Markoni et al. 2023, 12).

The disparity between urban and rural adoption of vegetarianism is notable. In cities like Ho Chi Minh City, there has been a rapid proliferation of vegetarian and vegan options, showcasing a swift and widespread acceptance of plant-based diets (Bach Lien 2016; O'Donnell 2023). This contrasts starkly with Hanoi, where the adoption of vegetarian diets has been more gradual and uniquely developed, reflecting different cultural and social dynamics within the city (Bach Lien 2016). In rural areas, the adoption of vegetarianism is much slower, often limited to simple vegetarian meals due to the scarcity of specialized options (O'Donnell 2023).

The market for vegetarian and vegan products is expanding rapidly, supported by social media and online platforms which help shift public perception towards viewing these diets as healthier and more sustainable (Chan 2022). A 2024 Statista survey revealed health as the predominant reason for choosing plant-based foods, followed by ethical concerns regarding animal welfare and environmental considerations (Statista 2024).

However, the transition is not without its challenges, such as societal pressure and a lack of culinary knowledge regarding vegetarian preparations, which can hinder the adoption of these diets (Chan 2022).

Economic factors play a crucial role in diet choices. The affordability and economic implications of adopting vegetarian diets are significant, especially when considering the impact on smallholder farmers and the local meat industry (Hansen 2018, 66; Nguyen et al. 2020, 13). The economic accessibility of plant-based options could significantly influence dietary habits over time (Nguyen et al. 2020, 13). There has been a rising demand for plant-based and fake meat products globally, including in Vietnam, where consumers are increasingly opting for these alternatives due to health concerns, food safety, and environmental considerations (Vietnam News Agency 2021) . The global plant-based meat market is projected to grow substantially, driven by these factors. In Vietnam, this shift is also influenced by rising living standards, leading to a greater focus on meal safety and the nutritional value of food (Vietnam News Agency 2021). Nevertheless, the price of faux meat presents an economic challenge for broader adoption. Despite the growing popularity of plant-based 'fake' meats in urban centers like Ho Chi Minh City, these products often cost significantly more than traditional meats (Vietnam News 2021). For example, vegan sausages and fish paste, though well-received, can be priced up to three times more than chicken breast, putting them out of reach for many average consumers (Vietnam News 2021).

The transition towards vegetarianism in Vietnam is a complicated process affected by a variety of cultural, habitual, and intentional factors. While the existing literature contributes valuable insights into various factors affecting the interplay between habit and intention in diet adoption, the current research corpus does not sufficiently address why established dietary habits, particularly those related to meat consumption, seem to prevail over the intentions to switch to a vegetarian diet, considering the powerful social, cultural, and economic influences at play. Thus, there is a need for Vietnam-specific studies that can provide a detailed understanding of this phenomenon and inform the development of interventions that take into account the interplay of these multiple factors. Acknowledging the aforementioned gap, this research seeks to look deeper at the habit-intention relation in Vietnam as well as explore the conditions that tend to preserve meat consumption habits over the intention to adopt vegetarian diets within this context.

2.5 Drawing a theoretical framework upon existing literature review

This research aims to explore the dynamics between habit and intention within the context of dietary choices, specifically the shift towards vegetarianism in Vietnam. Upon the above literature review, the theoretical framework is grounded in the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, Habit Theory to elucidate the conditions under which habitual behaviors may prevail over individual intentions. This framework presents a comprehensive approach by synthesizing relevant theories and literature, aiming to capture the complexity of dietary behavior change within a particular cultural and social context. It provides the scaffolding for empirical investigation and discusses the potential broader implications of the research findings.

2.5.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior, developed by Ajzen (1991, 206), presents a cognitive framework for understanding the decision-making process behind behavioral intentions and actions. The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that there are three primary determinants of behavioral intentions.

The first determinant is **attitudes toward behavior**. This component refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior in question (Ajzen 1991, 191). Within the context of vegetarianism, attitudes might include perceived benefits such as improved health outcomes, recognition of ethical implications, and consideration of environmental impacts associated with plant-based diets (Ruby 2012, 142), influencing Vietnamese individuals' inclinations toward the diet. **Subjective norms** are the second determinant. These are the perceived social tensions to act or not act the behavior (Ajzen 1991, 188). In Vietnam's tightly knit communities, subjective norms would encompass traditional views on dietary expectations, the influence of family and friends' eating habits, and the societal attitudes towards vegetarianism (Cheah et al. 2020, 4; Ruby 2012, 143). Finally, **perceived behavioral control** reflects one's perception of the simplicity or complexity of executing the behavior, which is assumed to echo historical experiences as well as expected future barriers and hurdles (Ajzen 1991, 183-184).

In applying this to dietary change in Vietnam, practical considerations such as the availability and price of vegetarian foods, as well as access to cooking facilities and time for food preparation, are relevant (Janda & Trocchia 2001, 1237; Ruby 2012, 143).

2.5.2 Habit Theory

Habit Theory delves into how patterns of behavior, when repeated in a consistent context, can become habitual, demanding minimal cognitive engagement and eventually unfolding automatically (Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 104-105). This concept of habituation suggests that behaviors can become ingrained and resistant to change, even when conflicting intentions arise (Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 113). Habit strength is often a function of the frequency of the behavior, implying that the more frequently individuals engage in a behavior in a stable context, the stronger the habit becomes (Neal, Wood, Labrecque & Lally 2012, 492). These concepts are critical when examining dietary habits in Vietnam, where traditional meals are often centered on meat and fish (Markoni et al. 2023, 12). Here, the challenge lies in understanding how the habitual consumption of certain foods may override individuals' conscious intentions to alter their diet based on ethical or health considerations.

In the case of Vietnam, it is possible to infer that the likelihood of habit overriding intention is modulated by different factors. First, **Frequency of Exposure** illustrates the routine engagement in meat consumption due to cultural practices could solidify such habits, making alternative dietary practices less intuitive (Neal, Wood & Quinn 2006, 201). Second, **Contextual Cues** indicate the presence of environmental or contextual triggers associated with traditional food practices could activate habitual behaviors unconsciously (Duhigg 2012, 4). Finally, **Behavioral Disruption** conversely, introduces new routines or changing the environment (e.g. increased availability of vegetarian options) that could potentially weaken established habits and make space for intention to guide behavior (Duhigg 2012, 5; Lally & Gardner 2013, 151-152).

Applying Habit Theory in combination with Theory of Planned Behavior allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between conscious decision-making and automatic behavior. It helps identify pinch points for intervention where the habitual behaviors can be disrupted and restructured, allowing intentions, shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, to manifest in actual behavioral

change. In the Vietnamese context, it's particularly interesting to examine how evolving social norms and economic development might alter habitual patterns around food consumption and open opportunities for dietary changes that align with individuals' ethical, health-related, or environmental intentions.

2.5.3 Triandis' Theory of Interpersonal Berhavior

Triandis (1977, 8-9) expands upon the constructs of the theory by including additional influences such as social factors, emotional responses, habitual patterns, and the presence of facilitating conditions. Triandis underscores the significance of societal and affective elements when it comes to shaping intentions (1977, 234), as supported by the findings of Issock et al. (2020, 543). Triandis further posits that actions are not just direct outcomes of intentions but are also influenced by the regularity of past actions, or habits (1977, 25). Moreover, he suggests that the interaction between intentions and habits is affected by the presence of facilitating conditions, which can either constrain or enable a particular behavior (Triandis 1977, 37-38). Therefore, according to the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, intentions, habits, and situational factors jointly contribute to behavior predictions (Triandis 1977, 25).

In the context of the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, social factors pertain to norms, social roles, and an individual's self-concept (Triandis 1977, 37). Triandis (1977, 8) defines *norms* as the expectations of others regarding appropriate behavior, which align closely with the subjective norm aspect of the Theory of Planned Behavior, as noted by Pee et al. (2008, 121). *Roles* are characterized as the expected behaviors for individuals in specific positions within a group, and *self-concept* is described as one's views regarding their values and behaviors (Triandis 1977, 14). These latter two components - *roles* and *self-concept* - are not accounted for within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework (see Ajzen 1991, 182). *Affect* within the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior captures the range of emotions, which can be pleasant or unpleasant, can affect intentions (Triandis 1977, 9), set apart from logical reasoning. This differs from *attitude* in the Theory of Planned Behavior, which is the beliefs linked to the outcomes of the behavior (Ajzen 1991, 191) and does not encompass the emotional dimension that *affect* does (Pee et al. 2008, 122). Triandis (1977, 10) also highlights the role of previous behaviors, or habits, in forecasting future behavior. Finally, 'facilitating conditions' are described as the

environmental conditions that either block or facilitate the ability to perform a specific action (Triandis 1977, 10).

Integrating Triandis' model into research on diet and behaviors in Vietnam provides a richer, more nuanced understanding of not just the cognitive deliberations that might lead to behavior change but also of the non-reflective, automatic, and socially embedded factors that influence it. As Vietnam balances traditional values with modern global influences, the interplay of affect, societal pressure, enabling conditions, and habitual consumption shapes the complex landscape within which individual dietary choices are made.

Triandis' Theory of Interpersonal Behavior thus offers a valuable lens for examining the multifaceted influences on dietary choices in the Vietnamese context. It captures the intricate dynamics between personal desires, cultural norms, social structures, and established practices, all of which combine to potentially override the personal intention to adopt vegetarianism. By adopting this comprehensive theoretical perspective, the researcher can expand the scope of their inquiry to better grasp the array of factors that effectively mediate the intention-behavior relationship, thereby enhancing the potential for impactful interventions in the realm of diet and nutrition behavior.

2.5.4 Cultural and Practical Considerations

When discussing dietary habits and interventions aimed at encouraging healthier eating patterns, cultural and practical considerations play a pivotal role (Markoni et al 2023, 15-16). Food is not merely sustenance; it is deeply embedded in the cultural fabric, often carrying symbolic meanings and being an integral part of social rituals and traditions (Markoni et al. 2023, 13-14). In many cultures, certain foods are associated with festivities, religious ceremonies, or social status, which can influence consumption habits (Fischler 1988, 275-276; Rozin 2005, 107). Moreover, practical aspects such as availability, affordability, convenience, and food preservation methods also dictate food choices (Pretorius et al. 2021, 1-2; Ziso, Chun, & Puglisi 2022, 1-4). For instance, in regions where fresh produce is not readily available year-round, dietary habits may lean towards preserved or processed foods. Socioeconomic status further complicates this, as food choices may be limited by what is financially accessible (Ziso, Chun, & Puglisi 2022, 1-4). Incorporating an understanding of these cultural and practical considerations

is crucial for designing effective nutritional interventions that are not only theoretically sound but also culturally sensitive and practically feasible. These sociocultural factors, along with practical barriers as being discussed in section 2.2, play a critical role in either supporting or dampening the intention to change dietary habits.

The sociocultural backdrop of Vietnam signifies an intricate network of beliefs, customs, and practices that define the standard dietary choices, deeply rooted in the country's history, religion, and geography (Rozin et al. 2006, 304; Ruby 2012, 141, 148). Traditional Vietnamese cuisine reflects the philosophical doctrine of balancing the five elements - metal, wood, fire, water, and earth - believing that this balance is essential for good health, which is mirrored in meal compositions consisting of multiple sensory and nutritional elements (Avieli 2011, 43). These choices are also affected by regional variations, where the North, Central, and South vary significantly in their food preferences due to historical separations, climatic differences, and varying levels of foreign influence (Bach Lien 2016; Harris et al. 2020, 1145).

Moreover, food practices in Vietnam bear the mark of significant events such as the Lunar New Year (Tết), where traditional foods are prepared and shared, reinforcing familial bonds and communal harmony. In contrast, everyday dietary choices may embody practical aspects governed by the agrarian rhythm, with rice cultivation and aquatic resources providing staple foods in the Vietnamese diet (Avieli 2005, 184). As the country has been experiencing rapid economic development, there has been a discernible shift in food consumption patterns, particularly in urban areas where Western influence and a growing middle-class lead to increased consumption of convenience foods and red meat, reflecting changing lifestyle aspirations (Pingali 2007, 281). However, despite these shifts, underlying cultural values continue to deeply influence the dietary behaviors of Vietnamese people (Markoni et al. 2023, 12; Vietnam News Agency 2023; Putra, Putra, & Novianti 2023, 6, 12), suggesting a need for nuanced understanding in interventions related to food and nutrition (Harris et al. 2020, 1141; Markoni et al. 2023, 11, 16).

Additionally, the Vietnamese culinary tradition, where meat consumption is intricately linked to cultural practices (Markoni et al. 2023, 12), can pose an additional obstacle for vegetarians. Traditional dishes predominantly feature meat, making vegetarian options less accessible and culturally out of sync with normative expectations, thereby making dietary adherence a matter of cultural conformity as much as personal choice (Harris et

al. 2020, 1145; Markoni et al. 2023, 12; Vietnam News Agency 2023; Putra, Putra, & Novianti 2023, 6, 12) Social dining experiences in Vietnam, representative of a collective cultural identity, often do not cater to vegetarian diets, thereby subjecting individuals to peer pressure to conform to the more widely accepted dietary norms to avoid feeling socially marginalized (Ruby 2012, 143; Markoni et al. 2023, 12).

In conclusion, while individual willingness to change diet is vital, the efficacy of dietary interventions advocating for vegetarianism is contingent upon overcoming the mentioned practical and cultural barriers as well (Lea, Crawford & Worsley 2006a, 349-350). Effective strategies are thus required to improve access to, and affordability and awareness of vegetarian options. Such measures, combined with efforts to foster an accommodating environment for the adoption and maintenance of vegetarian dietary patterns, could facilitate a smoother transition for those looking to follow vegetarianism in the Vietnamese context (Fox & Ward 2008, 428).

2.5.5 Dual-Process Models and the interplay between Habit and Intention

The theoretical frameworks of behavior change have been dramatically refined by insights from dual-process models, which shed light on the intricate interaction between habitual processes and intentional decision-making (Strack & Deutsch 2004, 242-243). These models distinguish between two principal systems governing human behavior: the automatic system, which operates swiftly and effortlessly, and the reflective system, which is characterized by slower, more deliberate thought processes (Strack & Deutsch 2004, 222-223). Habitual behaviors emerge within the automatic system as a result of frequent repetition in stable contexts, and these behaviors can become deeply ingrained, recognized as a “nature of much human action” (Wood & Neal 2007, 843). In contrast, the reflective system is driven by conscious deliberation and the intention to engage in specific behaviors based on personal goals and values (Strack & Deutsch 2004, 222).

Such dual-process models underscore that habits can embody a powerful force, capable of maintaining a steady course of behavior that systematically overrides newly formed intentions (Strack & Deutsch 2004, 230). This can often lead to a scenario where well-meaning plans, such as the decision to choose a healthy diet, are subverted by the ease and comfort of established dietary patterns (Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 114). For example, a person might understand the benefits of a balanced diet and set a goal to adhere to

healthier eating practices but find themselves reaching for unhealthy options out of sheer habit.

Given this context, effective interventions aimed at behavior modification must take into account the dominant influence of the automatic processes. Such strategies might involve the redesign of environmental stimuli that serve as habitual triggers, or the implementation of self-regulatory practices designed to form new, beneficial habits through repetition in a consistent context (Neal, Wood, Wu & Kurlander 2011, 1436). By delving into habit formation's underlying dynamics and the significant role of conscious intentions, behavior change programs can be more strategically aligned to disrupt existing habits and foster healthier alternatives.

The transformation of well-established habits into patterns that align more closely with conscious intentions can be a challenging process, often requiring time and reinforcement (Verplanken & Aarts 1999, 126; Strack & Deutsch 2004, 230). Recognizing the complexities of the dual-process models' approach to habit and intention elucidates the necessity for multifaceted tactics in stimulating meaningful and permanent behavior change. Interventions should therefore be multifaceted, addressing both the automatic behaviors that need to be modified and the reflective motivations that drive intentional actions (Gardner 2015, 288-289).

Applying the “Dual-Process Models and the Interplay Between Habit and Intention” theory within the context of Vietnam involves understanding how the Vietnamese cultural, social, and economic conditions interact with individuals' habitual and intentional behaviors regarding dietary practices.

Eating behaviors are deeply entrenched within the fabric of society and are influenced by cultures, social norms and culinary differences (Higgs & Thomas 2016, 1). These habits are formed and maintained within the automatic system of behavior regulation, where food choices and consumption are often the result of long-standing routines and cultural norms (Harris et al. 2020, 1145). Vietnamese cuisine, with its emphasis on rice, fish sauce, fresh herbs, and communal eating (Exotic Voyages 2023; Putra, Putra, & Novianti 2023, 11), exemplifies these habitual patterns that are intrinsically linked to cultural identity and social cohesion.

When considering the reflective system, which encompasses intentional behaviors, there is an increasing awareness in Vietnam of global health trends and dietary recommendations (Nguyen et al. 2020, 1; Markoni et al. 2023, 11). This is leading individuals, particularly in urban centers, to form intentions that may conflict with traditional habits, such as reducing the intake of oil and salt to prevent chronic diseases, or adopting more plant-based diets influenced by global environmental and health movements (Hansen 2018, 66; Markoni et al. 2023, 11).

However, the practical application of these intentions can be hampered by the aforementioned “practical barriers”. For instance, while urban Vietnamese may intend to eat healthier, the availability and affordability of healthier food options, or the presence of traditional foods during festivals and family gatherings, might favor the automatic continuation of existing meat consumption habits (Markoni et al. 2023, 14, 16).

In the face of these dynamics, interventions that aim to shift dietary behaviors in Vietnam must be carefully tailored to acknowledge the strength of habitual eating practices, while also creating environments that facilitate the enactment of new intentions. This could involve public health campaigns to increase the visibility and appeal of healthy food options, education programs that promote the benefits of dietary changes, and policy initiatives that encourage food producers to offer more healthful and affordable products (Glanz et al. 2005, 1126).

Efforts to change dietary behavior in Vietnam with respect to dual-process models would also need to consider the importance of family and community as central elements of Vietnamese culture. Interventions that engage these social units and promote collective intention formation, rather than solely targeting individuals, may be more effective in the Vietnamese context (Harris et al. 2020, 1141; Markoni et al. 2023, 11, 16).

In conclusion, while the dual-process theory provides a useful framework for understanding dietary behavior change, its application in Vietnam must be contextualized taking into account the strong cultural norms and habits, along with the specific socioeconomic realities of the country.

2.5.6 Proposed Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for investigating the facilitating conditions under which the habit of meat intake overrides the intention to adopt a plant-based diet in Vietnam entails a convergence of interrelated theories: the Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, Habit Theory, considerations of Cultural and Practical Constraints, and the Dual-Process Model Systems. In the framework, The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that intention is the most proximal determinant of behavior, yet this is contingent upon attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Triandis's theory complements this by emphasizing the emotional, social, and facilitating conditions that may further complicate this relationship. Habit as a distinct construct that can shape behavior independently of conscious intent, which resonates with Habit Theory's assertion that frequent and contextually reinforced behaviors can become automatic.

Cultural and practical considerations are essential to this analysis, given Vietnam's rich culinary traditions and the communal nature of its meal practices, both of which can offer support or resistance to change, especially in relation to vegetarianism. Meanwhile, the Dual-Process Model posits that both reflective (intentional) and automatic (habitual) processes govern behavior, with habits forming in the domain of the automatic system and reflective decisions potentially being overruled by stronger habitual responses.

My theoretical framework proposes that the intention-behavior relationship in dietary choice is not unilinear but is influenced by a network of affective reactions, sociocultural pressures, habit strength, and facilitating conditions that interact in complex ways. Vietnam's economic development and urbanization may also give rise to facilitating conditions that either enable or hinder the transition to vegetarianism. This granulated approach allows for a deeper exploration into not only why individuals may form intentions to become vegetarian but also what conditions may prevent these intentions from materializing into actual behavioral change.

Below is the figure to illustrate the integrative model combining constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Interpersonal Behavior.

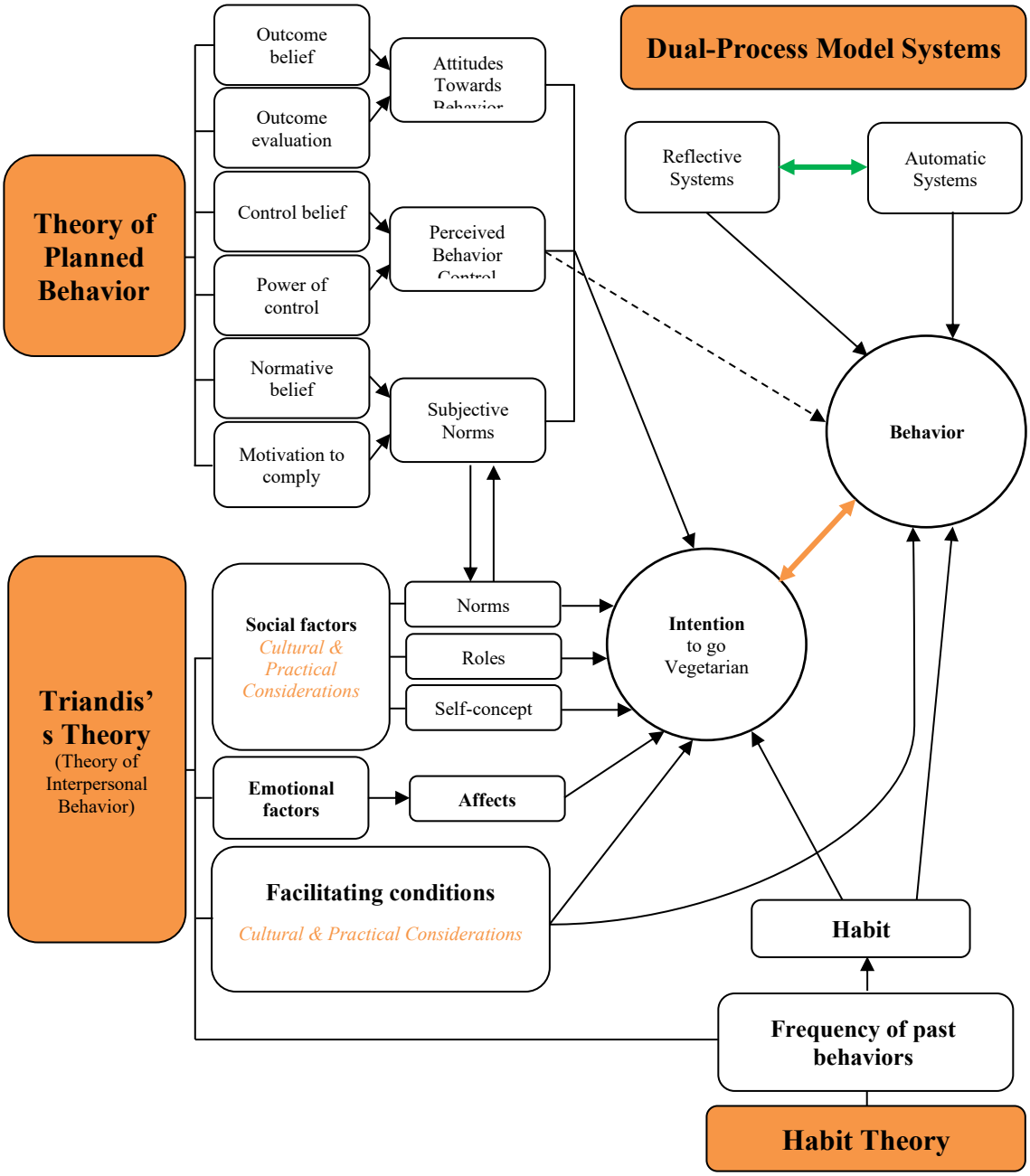


Figure 1 ***Proposed Theoretical Framework***

The above figure displays the five theory boxes (**Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory, Habit Theory, Cultural and Practical Considerations, Dual-Process Model**). Correspondingly, **black arrows** to both *Intention* and *Behavior* emphasize that the factors proposed in **Theory of Planned Behavior** (Attitude, Subjective norms, Perceived behavioral control) not only directly influence *Intention* but also impact *Behavior* via *Intention*. **Regarding Theory of Interpersonal Behavior**, black arrows show how *Affect*, *Social Factors* and *Facilitating Conditions* influence *Intention* while *Habit* connects directly to *Behavior*. **From the Dual-Process Model**

Systems, black arrows show the influence of *Reflective Systems* on *Intention* and *Automatic Systems* often lead directly to *Behavior*. Meanwhile, **the green arrow** shows the competition between the *Reflective* and *Automatic Systems*. **Cultural and Practical considerations** also feed into the *Social Factors* and *Facilitating Conditions* in Triandis's theory as well as feed into *Perceived Behavioral Control* in Theory of Planned Behavior, showing that they modify both the *Intention* and the enabling environment. Between the *Intention* and *Behavior* include an **orange bidirectional arrow** to represent the dynamic and sometimes the non-linear influence of intention on behavior and vice versa as a person's actual behavior can also affect their future intentions. Regarding Habit Theory, black arrows connect *Habit* both to *Behavior* directly and to *Intention* to indicate that strong habits can bypass intentions or even reshape them. Additionally, the dotted arrow demonstrates the direct influence of *Perceived Behavioral Control* on *Behavior*. Based on Theory of Planned Behavior, *Perceived Behavioral Control* can directly predict behavior when the behavior is not entirely volitional or when environmental constraints come into play (Ajzen 1991, 185). Under such circumstances, even with a strong intention, if a person perceives that factors outside their control inhibit the performance of the behavior, the likelihood of actually behaving in that manner diminishes (Ajzen 1991, 186). At the same time, according to the Theory of Planned Behavior, *Perceived Behavioral Control* also impacts behavior indirectly through intentions (Ajzen 1991, 183). A high level of *Perceived Behavioral Control* often strengthens an individual's intention to perform a behavior because they believe they can successfully execute the actions required (Ajzen 1991, 184).

In the qualitative exploration of dietary shifts towards vegetarianism in Vietnam, several key factors emerge from the proposed theoretical framework, each serving to deepen the understanding of the underlying dynamics influencing dietary behaviors. These factors are essential for framing the study's interview questions in relation to the broader theoretical framework. **Cultural norms and family traditions** form a fundamental factor where the shared expectations within a cultural group and the long-established customs passed down through families are examined. This factor helps explore how traditional dietary habits are entrenched within the cultural identity and familial settings, influencing individual and collective dietary choices. Positive attitudes towards vegetarianism, such as the perceived health benefits, ethical considerations, and environmental impacts, will positively influence the intention to adopt a vegetarian diet. However, the strength of

existing meat-eating habits may moderate this relationship, potentially weakening the impact of positive attitudes on such intentions. This suggests that even when individuals hold favorable views towards vegetarianism, strong habitual tendencies towards meat consumption could diminish their influence on actual dietary decisions. Secondly, **perceived health implications** is another critical construct that focuses on individuals' beliefs and attitudes regarding the health benefits and risks associated with adopting a vegetarian diet. This includes how such health perceptions directly influence dietary choices, shaping decisions on whether to embrace or resist a shift towards plant-based eating. Thirdly, **the influence of subjective norms, or perceived social pressures** to consume meat, is expected to negatively impact the intention to adopt a vegetarian diet. This impact is presumed to be more pronounced in individuals with stronger habitual meat consumption, indicating that societal and cultural expectations can reinforce existing dietary habits, making the shift to vegetarianism more challenging. Fourthly, **perceived behavioral control** relates to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of adopting and maintaining a vegetarian diet. This factor is about the role of self-efficacy and available resources in facilitating or hindering dietary changes, particularly against the backdrop of habitual meat consumption. Fifthly, **emotional responses to meat consumption** focuses on the affective reactions individuals experience in relation to meat consumption, such as guilt or ethical concerns about animal welfare. This factor is about how these emotions act as motivators or barriers to dietary change, influencing one's motivation to adopt a vegetarian lifestyle. Lastly, **facilitating conditions and cultural norms** look at the external factors that impact behavior change, such as the availability of vegetarian options, and how these interact with entrenched cultural dietary norms. This factor helps determine the interplay between enabling environments and cultural preferences, assessing their collective impact on the adoption of vegetarian diets. These factors form the scaffolding for the study, guiding the investigative process to uncover the complex interplay between individual agency, cultural influences, and societal pressures in shaping dietary behaviors in Vietnam. Through a detailed examination of these factors, the research provides insights into the conditions under which habitual meat consumption may override the intention to pursue vegetarianism.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the facilitating conditions under which the habit of meat consumption supersedes the intention to adopt vegetarianism in the Vietnam context. Utilizing an interpretivist approach, it seeks to analyze the complex relationship between habit and intention within dietary behaviors. The chapter that follows delineates a comprehensive research design structured to fulfill the study's objectives, which includes a discussion of the research philosophy, the chosen approach, and the methods employed for data collection.

3.1 Research philosophy

For this study, interpretivism was adopted as the guiding paradigm to examine the complexities of human behavior in dietary choices. Interpretivism allows for the exploration of the subjective meanings and contextual factors that influence individuals' decisions (Bryman 2012, 30). Social scientists use interpretivism to understand human “common sense thinking" and thus be able to interpret their action, their everyday social roles through the meaning humans give to them (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 116; Bryman 2012, 30). In business and management research, interpretivism facilitates an understanding of diverse perspectives of different social actors (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 116), which parallels the need to capture the variety of factors affecting individuals' adherence to vegetarianism. Therefore, this philosophy is particularly suited to investigate how and why habits may override intentions in dietary transitions.

In the context of studying the conditions under which habit overrides intention in the adoption of vegetarian diet in Vietnam, interpretivism provides a nuanced approach. This philosophical stance allows me to appreciate the intricate interplay between cultural values, personal beliefs, and social influences that drive individuals' dietary decisions. These dimensions can scarcely be captured through purely quantitative methods. In Vietnam, where traditional diets are often characterized by a reliance on fish and meat, the shift to vegetarianism can be subject to a multitude of interpretations. For instance, one might consider the influence of Buddhism - a religion that promotes vegetarianism - on these dietary choices, and how individuals reconcile their spiritual beliefs with social and cultural dietary norms (Chia 2000, 121). Qualitative research could uncover why some individuals might maintain their meat-based diet out of habit, despite a conscious

intention to go vegetarian. Stories of such personal journeys carry with them rich layers of meaning that can only be understood through the interpretivist lens.

3.2 Research approach

Employing qualitative research for a study exploring when habit overrides intention in the transition to a vegetarian diet in Vietnam is particularly advantageous due to the in-depth, contextual insights this approach provides. By embracing qualitative methods, researchers gain access to the rich tapestry of participants' personal narratives, perspectives (Creswell & Poth 2018, 41) that drive daily food choices. These narrative accounts are invaluable for discerning the subtle interplay between social issues such as cultural norms, societal pressures, and individual motivations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 514), elements that are deeply embedded in the social fabric of Vietnam.

Moreover, this study aims to respond to what and how questions, thus employing exploratory strategy suits the purpose. An exploratory study is a valuable approach for uncovering “what is happening”, discovering fresh perspectives, posing inquiries, and evaluating phenomena from a different angle (Robson 2002, 59). This method is especially beneficial when aiming to enhance understanding of a problem, particularly if the exact nature of the problem is unclear (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 138). In the pursuit of understanding what facilitating conditions people would attach stronger to their dietary habits, exploratory study excels in elucidating the reasons behind the maintenance or change of such habits - even when intentions may suggest a different course of action.

Engaging in exploratory research frequently entails utilizing focus group interviews, as this data collection technique offers a great benefit in its flexibility and adaptability to evolving circumstances, particularly when new insights may arise during the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 140). The rich and insightful from qualitative data do more than elucidate individual experiences - they provide stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners with a clear window into the lived realities of the Vietnamese people faced with dietary change. The capability of qualitative research to translate complex psychological and social processes into actionable insights is particularly salient for designing interventions aimed at assisting who intend to transition to a vegetarian lifestyle in Vietnam.

3.3 Data collection method

This study used both primary and secondary data sources. The secondary data mostly used for literature review and research background introduction was gathered from Turku library, Google Scholar, and other trustworthy electronic databases. Primary data was obtained through focus group interviews.

3.3.1 Focus group Interview

The choice of employing focus group interviews as a data collection method stemmed from the need to understand the complex interplay between habit and intention in the context of dietary behaviors. Using this method is the optimal strategy for acquiring detailed insights from interviewees, as it facilitates direct interactions between the researcher and participants (Laurie & Jensen 2017, 2). This enables the researcher to observe and capture some meanings behind the reaction or emotions of participants as they respond to questions. Through the interviews, the intricacies that explained how people think and their behaviors are gained (Laurie & Jensen 2017, 2). These dialogues enable the researcher to delve into individuals' thoughts and feelings about their habits and intentions regarding diet, offering direct insight into the personal and socio-cultural factors that influence their choices.

Furthermore, the researcher chose to utilize focus-group interviews, a format that brings together a small number of participants to discuss and reflect upon their experiences. The great benefit using focus group setting is that it can engage participants in addressing a pertinent issue with minimal intervention from the researcher (Laurie & Jensen 2017, 6). As a result, the interactive setting of a focus group yields more details into a shared topic compared to accessing through individual interviews alone. The collective nature of focus group discussions is invaluable when examining commonly shared behaviors like dietary practices, as it allows for the observation of interactions and collective narratives that emerge around habitual actions and intentions to make dietary changes.

Interviews were conducted via online platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom and a semi-structured format with open-ended questions was applied for this study. Such format allows for probing responses and enabling interviewees to elaborate on or expand upon their answers on the given theme or topic (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 324). Additionally, probing may lead the discussion into areas not previously considered but

vital for comprehension, aiding in addressing research questions and objectives (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 140).

In order to generate quality data, an ideal focus group has between six to ten for ease of management and typically lasts up to two hours (Rabiee 2004, 656). However, the topic which this study is exploring requires personal experience and perspective on ethical topics and considering the specific nature of each group, the number of participants for each group is from two to four people. There were three groups in which group 1 and 2 comprised four people each, while group 3 had only 2. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

In sum, the combination of focus group interviews and a semi-structured approach with open-ended questions embraces the quality of data collected and is articulated for answering the research questions. It captured the richness of personal narratives, supported active engagement with participants' lived realities, and surfaced the conditions under which habit may override the intention to adopt a vegetarian diet in the Vietnamese cultural context.

3.3.2 Interviewee selection

To obtain the appropriate number of study participants, I selected respondents who were easily accessible to me and further expanded my reach by requesting them to share the emails across their networks. To ensure maximum participation, the invitations for the interview were shared amongst the staff of the company I used to work for, my friends, my family members and university students in Southern Vietnam (especially Ho Chi Minh city and Kien Giang province where I work and live, respectively). Correspondingly, my research focused on the group of young people ranging from 18 to 64 years old because they were the ones who had a higher chance of gaining access to knowledge related to a vegetarian diet, understanding of both benefits and disadvantages of going vegetarian, and recognition of vegetarianism or environmental campaigns. Rest assured, all measures were taken to guarantee the authenticity and quality of the data collected for this research project.

In this study, the participants were carefully segmented into three distinct groups to illuminate the varying dynamics associated with their stance on vegetarianism.

Table 2 and 3 display the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2 Age and Gender of the respondents

Age	**Group 1**	**Group 2**	**Group 3**
From 18 to 25	0	1 male	0
From 26 to 35	1 male, 1 female	1 male	0
From 36 to 45	1 female	1 female	0
From 46 to 55	0	0	0
From 50 to 64	1 female	1 male	2 females
Total	4	4	2

Table 3 Occupation, level of education, religion and coding

Group 1	**Lower 2nd education**	**Upper 2nd education**	**Higher education**
Female		- 1 retired, housewife, Buddhist): code **G13**	- 1 manager, no religion: code **G14** - 1 English teacher, no religion: code **G11**
Male		1 freelance photographer, no religion: code **G12**	
Group 2	**Lower 2nd education**	**Upper 2nd education**	**Higher education**
Female			1 Marketing manager, no religion: code **G24**
Male		- 1 Musician, no religion: code **G21** - 1 University student, also a Private Math Tutor, no religion: code **G22**	1 Accounting manager, no religion: code **G23**
Group 3	**Lower 2nd education**	**Upper 2nd education**	**Higher education**
Female		- 1 housewife and also a Buddhist: code **G31** - 1 housewife and also a Buddhist: code **G32**	
Male			

Group 1 is reflective of individuals on the cusp of a dietary transition, consisting of one male and three females, consists of three females with two in the upper secondary education tier - a manager and an English teacher, both of whom do not follow a religion, and another with lower second education, a retired housewife who practices Buddhism. Their male counterparts include a freelance photographer with lower second education, who also does not adhere to any religion.

Group 2 represents those without an inclination to transition, encapsulating educational diversity with one female with higher education serving as a marketing manager, and two

males, one as a musician with lower second education, and the other as a private math tutor who is also a university student; these three do not practice a religion. There is also an account manager who is not religious. The actual selection for this group lacked representation of Buddhists, contrary to the planned demographic composition.

Meanwhile, **Group 3** is exclusively composed of females with lower second education, who had once embraced, but subsequently renounced, a vegetarian diet, marking a noteworthy departure from the intended inclusion of male perspectives within this subset. This carefully curated cohort, though it diverges somewhat from the original recruitment blueprint, provides a rich tapestry of insights into the multifarious factors that inform dietary ideologies and behaviors.

3.4 Interview Guide

The interview process is guided in the Appendix 1. The general structure of the interview are Introduction, Themes and their questions and Closing. To start the interview, I started to introduce myself, my research and its purpose and briefly give the participants in the group the overall expectations of how the interview would go. Since the interview delves into sensitive topics regarding personal choices and ethical considerations, the introduction may begin with some icebreaker techniques, such as encouraging participants to introduce themselves and engaging in a few short social conversations. This approach is particularly relevant as most of the participants have had a direct or indirect connection with me and might have connections with each other as well. The interview will follow the predetermined order of themes. However, certain questions outside of the designated question table may be asked to further elaborate or clarify understanding regarding specific themes. This approach ensures that the purpose of exploring insights for each theme is maintained while also minimizing the risk of misunderstanding. As earlier mentioned, the further elaboration of participants' response on open questions may lead the discussion into new information (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 140), yet it would potentially steer the discussion away from the right direction. In order to maintain the focus, my intervention at the appropriate time is necessary by first a *thank you* and then repeating the original questions to remind the participants about the ongoing topic. To guide the discussion in the interview and to ensure relevant context, questions were tailored specifically for each group. These questions encompass a variety of themes:

Theme 1 focuses on discovering dietary habits and patterns by asking participants to describe their current diet, including details on meat consumption frequency and the balance of plant-based versus animal-based foods in their meals.

Theme 2 aims to explore the habit strength by understanding the main challenges faced by Groups 1 and 2 in reducing their current meat intake and transitioning to a vegetarian diet, as well as the factors that led Group 3 participants to revert back to meat consumption. This theme includes inquiries about family influence, food shopping and meal planning, health perceptions, and environmental and ethical considerations.

Theme 3 delves into participants' self-control and willingness to adopt a vegetarian diet. It explores behavioral and psychological factors related to meat consumption or resistance towards vegetarianism, perceptions of plant-based diets, barriers to dietary change, and considerations for the future of vegetarianism.

Table 4 The operationalization table for interview questions

Main question: What are the facilitating conditions in which habit (meat intake) overrides intention (to go vegetarian)?	**Sub-question 2:** In which conditions do meat consumption habit dominate over intention of going vegetarian in Vietnam?	**Theme 3:** Self-control and willingness to change to a vegetarian diet	**Group 1 & 2:** - What are your overall opinions about vegetarianism? - Why do you have intentions of going vegetarian? - What are you preparing for the transition to a vegetarian diet in the future? **Group 3:** - Have you ever considered going vegetarian again?
		Theme 2: Habit strength	**Group 1 & 2:** - Do you cook yourself, cook for your family or does anyone cook for you? If you do, do you have any pressure or dietary requirements from your family members? - Why is it hard to reduce or remove meat/fish from your daily meal of your family or yourself? - How do you shop for food? (hints: instantly buy from the available choices from the market, or plan a time ahead) - In your opinion, what are possible consequences of your meat-consumption habit? Could you assess whether or not your current diet is healthy? - What has prevented you from switching into a vegetarian diet? - Among your aforementioned reasons, which one do you think has the greatest influence on your meat-consumption habits? - Do you think self-control plays an important role in motivating you to break meat-consumption habits and change to a healthier vegetarian diet? **Group 3:** - I understand you used to be vegetarian. How long were you a vegetarian? - Could you share your overall opinions about vegetarianism? - Could you share the experiences related to your previous vegetarian diet? (Negative or Positive) - Could you share the reasons why you decided to stop your vegetarian diet and switched back to your current meat-consumption habit? - Among your aforementioned reasons, which one do you think has the greatest influence on your decision to switch back to the current meat-consumption habit? - After experiencing a period of life as a vegetarian, do you think self-control plays an important role in maintaining a healthier diet?
		Theme 1: Assessment of their current meat-consumption habit	**Group 1 & 2:** - What do you think about your current dietary pattern associated with meat-consumption habits? - How would you describe your meat-consumption habit? How often do you have meat/fish in your meal per week? **Group 3:** - Do you cook yourself, cook for your family or does anyone cook for you? If you do, do you have any pressure or dietary requirements from your family members? - Why is it hard to reduce or remove meat/fish from your daily meal of your family or yourself? - How do you shop for food? (hints: instantly buy from the available choices from the market, or plan a time ahead) - In your opinion, what are possible consequences of your meat-consumption habit? Could you assess whether or not your current diet is healthy?

The sub question 1 “How do meat consumption habit and intention of going vegetarian interact?” is answered by the literature review. The insights gained from the interview were mainly responsible for answering the sub question 2. An operationalization table was created to illustrate how the interview questions are linked with the purpose of answering research questions.

3.5 Data analysis

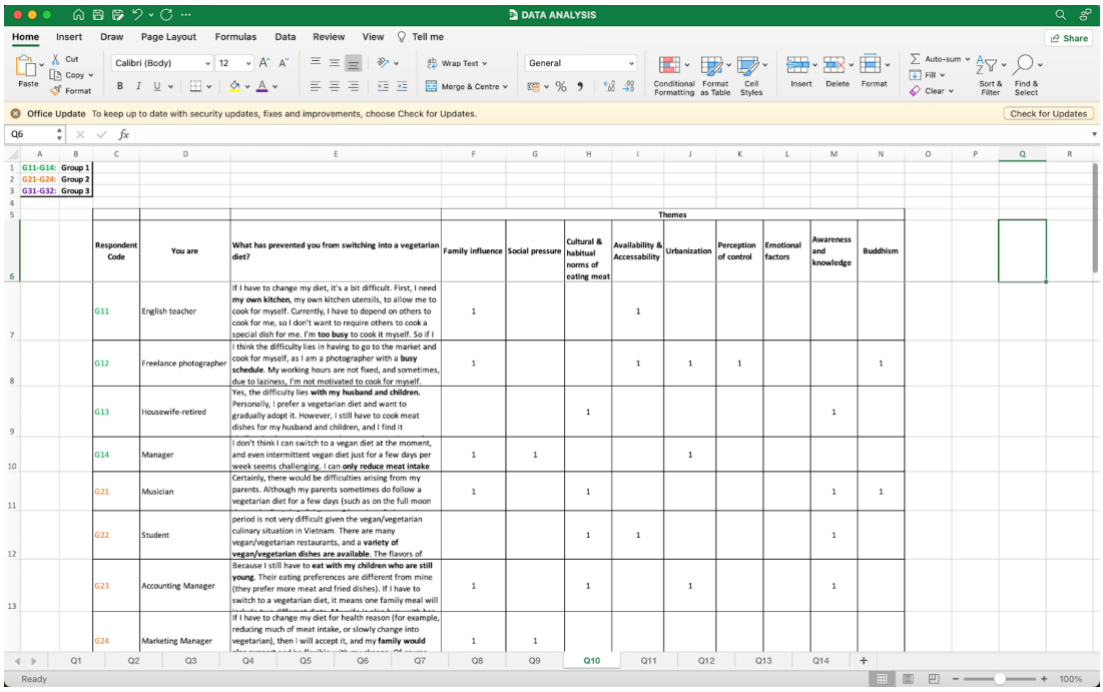
Due to the diverse nature of qualitative data, there seems not to have any “standardized procedure” for analyzing qualitative data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 490), the researcher will mainly **clean the data** through transcribing process, **categorize**, **unitize**

data and **connect the dots** to draw the conclusion (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 491-493).

Upon completion of the interviews, the recorded sessions were transcribed verbatim. As at the moment, there was no software that could translate Vietnamese audio into English text with accurate and correct manner. The transcriptions thus were formed manually from the raw data for subsequent analysis. To ensure accuracy, the transcriptions were reviewed alongside the recordings. Any non-verbal cues or relevant contextual factors observed during the interviews were annotated to supplement the verbal data. Each transcribed interview was put in a separate Excel sheet. Further, to maintain anonymity, all participants' names were transferred into codes (as described in Table 3).

Next, categorizing data means grouping the meanings. During the interview, new themes or insight arose, therefore categorizing the final data helped develop the current theme and able to attach the meaning to “chunks of data”. By engaging in this process, connections between insights were revealed, enabling the researcher to further grasp the answer for the research's objective. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 492).

Then, utilizing data is to divide data into smaller units for ease of management and analysis. During the unitizing process, I also highlighted terms that emerged from the data. Terms can be keywords, a few sentences that are commonly mentioned in the literature or related to the key meanings of the themes, for example, self-control, habit, health. Below is an example of how the data is divided and attached to the themes.



DATA ANALYSIS

Respondent Code	You are	What has prevented you from switching into a vegetarian diet?	Themes: Family influence	Social pressure	Cultural & habitual norms of eating meat	Availability & Accessability	Urbanization	Perception of control	Emotional factors	Awareness and knowledge	Buddhism
G11	English teacher	If I have to change my diet, it's a bit difficult. First, I need **my own kitchen**, my own kitchen utensils, to allow me to cook for myself. Currently, I have to depend on others to cook for me, so I don't want to require others to cook a special dish for me. I'm **too busy** to cook it myself. So if I	1			1					
G12	Freelance photographer	I think the difficulty lies in having to go to the market and cook for myself, as I am a photographer with a **busy schedule**. My working hours are not fixed, and sometimes, due to laziness, I'm not motivated to cook for myself.	1			1	1	1			1
G13	Housewife-retired	Yes, the difficulty lies **with my husband and children.** Personally, I prefer a vegetarian diet and want to gradually adopt it. However, I still have to cook meat dishes for my husband and children, and I find it			1					1	
G14	Manager	I don't think I can switch to a vegan diet at the moment, and even intermittent vegan diet just for a few days per week seems challenging. I can **only reduce meat intake**	1	1			1				
G21	Musician	Certainly, there would be difficulties arising from my parents. Although my parents sometimes do follow a vegetarian diet for a few days (such as on the full moon	1		1					1	1
G22	Student	period is not very difficult given the vegan/vegetarian culinary situation in Vietnam. There are many vegan/vegetarian restaurants, and a **variety of vegan/vegetarian dishes are available**. The flavors of			1	1				1	
G23	Accounting Manager	Because I still have to **eat with my children who are still young**. Their eating preferences are different from mine (they prefer more meat and fried dishes). If I have to switch to a vegetarian diet, it means one family meal will	1		1		1			1	
G24	Marketing Manager	If I have to change my diet for health reason (for example, reducing much of meat intake, or slowly change into vegetarian), then I will accept it, and my **family would**	1	1							

Figure 2 Example of Data Analysis

Finally, to make sense of all relationships among collected insights, a **connect-the-dots** report was compiled, offering a detailed analysis of each theme supported by direct quotes from the participants. The narrative was constructed in a way to tell the story of the data, elucidating the underlying reasons, motivations, and social dynamics at play in the decision-making process regarding diet. Then this report was further developed and illustrated into key findings.

Throughout the analysis, reflexivity was maintained by the researcher to acknowledge their potential biases and the influence of their background on the interpretation of the data. Moreover, to enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, measures such as peer debriefing and member checks were incorporated. Feedback was obtained from colleagues and, where possible, participants, to validate the researcher's interpretation of the data.

The analysis culminated in the identification of key themes that provided insights into the complex interplay of factors that influence the transition to vegetarian dietary practices in Vietnam, within the context of habit and intention. The resulting themes offer a comprehensive picture of the phenomena under study and serve as the basis for discussion and conclusions drawn in the subsequent sections of the research.

3.6 Evaluation of Study

This section discussed what criteria should be used to ensure the good quality of a qualitative study. Key criteria are the reliability of data collection and analysis, validity and ethical issues (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 156-158).

Reliability refers to the design of data collection methods and ways to analyze data that will generate sufficient and consistent findings (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 156). This issue can be assessed by posing a few self-check questions, for example: will the same data collection method yield similar results in other circumstances given the similar conditions? Do the data collected support the findings by offering sufficient and persuasive proof for the findings? Do the researcher avoid false assumptions and bias interpretation during the data collection and analysis? (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 156; Merriam & Grenier 2019, 24). Asking these questions makes sure the measures in data collection and analysis are reliable and the results should be adequate and stable under different settings. This is very important in qualitative research because the data collection is challenged by various factors such as context, different participant, time, and researcher's stance.

The validity of the findings relates to the extent to which the research findings are “really about what they appear to be about” (Saunder, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 157) or can also be referred to as internal validity (Merriam & Grenier 2019, 25). This means whether the research’s conclusions really reflect the phenomenon which the research claims to investigate. For example, this study aims to explore the interaction between the habit of meat consumption and intention of going vegetarian. Then its internal validity should entail ensuring that the methods used to gain the data about both habit and intention are reliable and precisely capture the study objective. If the findings illustrate a specific relationship between habit and intention, the validity of the findings would depend on whether this relationship does exist in real life and is not produced by a measurement error or bias. The researcher should ask some questions to assess the validity such as: Are the described data collection methods appropriate and aligned with the issues under investigation and the qualitative design being employed? Do the findings respond to the study problem? Is there enough transparentility when interpreting the raw data? (Merriam & Grenier 2019, 31). To confirm the emerging findings, the researcher can cross check with other data sources such as literature during the findings analysis, and take the

reconfirmation from interview participants about some tentative findings (Merriam & Grenier 2019, 26). The design of interview questions, interview guide and data analysis techniques also plays an important role in ensuring the empirical data closely follows the phenomenon under investigation and the transparency remains during the data interpretation. Moreover, chapter 3 of this study extensively discussed how the methodology is appropriate to support the achievement of the study objective.

The external validity or generalizability is concerned with whether the study's findings can be applied or transferable to other research settings. This issue often arises from the perception that a small, random sample of the population is insufficient to produce results that accurately represent the answer for a problem. However, the sample for qualitative research is often purposefully and precisely chosen for the aim of the research. The qualitative researcher seeks to understand in-depth and particular insights rather than a general truth of the crowd. The generalizability of this study can be reached by careful and appropriate interviewee selections and by providing rich information and description related to the research's topic and context so that the readers can compare how closely their situations match and how much the findings can be transferable. (Merriam & Grenier 2019, 28-29).

Finally, in keeping with ethical research standards, the process was conducted in full accordance with the University of Turku Research Ethics Policy and Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research. Ethical considerations were paramount, potential participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary, and informed consent was sent and confirmed before the commencement of the interviews.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Thematic analysis of influencing factors on dietary decisions

Through the interviews, several main themes have been identified that characterize the factors influencing the decision-making processes of individuals in Vietnam when considering transitioning to a vegetarian diet.

The role of **culture and family practices** in dietary routines emerged as a significant theme among the interviewees, particularly regarding the habitual inclusion of meat in the Vietnamese diet. In the words of G21, meat consumption is no longer just a habit; it has become a favorite, signifying a deeper cultural appreciation. Many participants, including G12, pointed to their upbringing by elders as the foundation for their meat-eating habits, highlighting the significant role that cultural heritage plays in shaping their dietary preferences from childhood. This is further echoed by G11, who asserts, *"I eat meat every day, almost 5 to 6 days out of 7 days per week there is meat and fish"*. Despite a desire to transition to alternative diets, familial practices and shared meals continue to reinforce meat consumption. G13 emphasizes the difficulty of changing her diet due to cooking responsibilities for family members who prefer meat, stating, *"Yes, the difficulty lies with my husband and children... Additionally, my husband does not support my decision to follow a vegetarian diet"*. The intergenerational transfer of dietary patterns is a powerful force, as G14 reports, *"The older generation believes that to have enough nutrients for body and brain development, children must consume an adequate amount of protein from meat"*. Such perceptions are corroborated by other interviewees, like G22 and G24, who acknowledge the challenges of deviating from norms set since childhood. However, religious beliefs, on occasion, introduce periods of vegetarianism, as noted by G23, *"my wife often follows a vegetarian diet on full moon days and the 1st day of each month"*, suggesting a selective rather than comprehensive shift towards vegetarianism. G31's experience as a former full-time Buddhist nun exposes the complex interplay of religion and dietary practices but also shows the malleability of dietary habits under familial and health concerns. The resumption of meat consumption by G31 emphasizes the significant influence family opinions can have on individual dietary choices. These testimonials reflect a tapestry of cultural norms, family practices, and individual preferences that create a stable ground for meat-centric diets, making the adoption of

vegetarianism a complex commitment that challenges not only personal habits but also deeply rooted familial and societal values.

Health-related apprehensions and misconceptions about nutrition repeatedly surfaced during the interviews as pivotal factors influencing the decision to consume meat. G11 voices a common concern, observing, *"Eating a lot of animal meat is bad for your health, especially if the origin is unclear and contains many chemicals"*. This awareness, however, contrasts with a pervasive anxiety about nutrient insufficiencies associated with a vegetarian diet. G11 further elaborates, *"Even though I know that being a vegetarian is good for my health, I'm not ready or knowledgeable enough, so starting to do it right away will be counterproductive"*. Similarly, G12's narrative reflects a journey towards reducing meat intake faced with concerns about nutritional balance, stating, *"In the past, I used to think that a vegetarian diet could lead to nutrient deficiencies"*. His words underscore the perceived risks of a plant-based diet and the cognitive dissonance between scientific evidence and cultural dietary habits. Similarly, G21, a musician, reflects societal concerns influenced by familial views, stating, *"My parents are quite against vegetarian diets because they believe that it may not provide sufficient nutrients"*. G22 expresses a fear that echoes through many interviews, *"I fear that without meat for an extended period, I may not get enough nutrients to function properly"* which captures the internal conflict many feel when contemplating a dietary shift. This thematic investigation also uncovers a generational thread, where younger, higher-educated individuals like G24 admittedly lack necessary knowledge about vegetarianism, admitting, *"I do not have enough knowledge and cooking skills to prepare nutritious vegetarian dishes"*. G31 contrasts this by sharing a positive experience with vegetarianism, only to return to meat consumption due to family pressure and a purportedly deficient vegetarian diet. Despite acknowledging the benefits, G32 admits to struggling to continue a vegetarian lifestyle, citing fears of nutrient deficiency and age-related health complications. Participants grappled with the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian diets and the potential health consequences of continued meat consumption. Their narratives reveal a spectrum of beliefs and apprehensions, influenced by cultural norms and the depth of their nutritional knowledge - or the lack thereof. It becomes apparent that while some recognize the potential health benefits of vegetarianism, the strength of conventional dietary norms and the fear of not meeting nutritional needs make the intention to transition to vegetarianism an arduous endeavor.

Navigating the currents of **social pressure and familial expectations** proves to be a complex task for individuals in Vietnam contemplating a transition to vegetarianism. For many, the family setting imposes significant barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet, primarily when other family members prefer to continue eating meat. G11, an English teacher by profession, illustrates this complexity by articulating the tension between personal dietary preferences and familial obligations, *"If I have to change my diet... it is not feasible, because I still have to eat with the family and depend on the main cook for the family".* G11 discussed the practical challenges of altering her diet while living with family members who eat meat: *"If I have to change my diet, it's a bit difficult. First, I need my own kitchen, my own kitchen utensils, to allow me to cook for myself".* This quote illustrates the logistical hurdles involved in preparing separate meals for herself while sharing a living space with others who do not follow the same diet. The resistance faced within the family unit presents itself as a formidable challenge, with G13, a retired housewife, affirming *"the difficulty lies with my husband and children... My husband does not support my decision to follow a vegetarian diet".* Such narratives showcase the pull of social attachment and filial duty, which often take precedence over individual preferences.

In contrast, as a freelance photographer, G12's account offers a ray of hope, indicating that compatibility between personal vegetarian inclinations and family acceptance is attainable, *"As for my family, they wouldn't pose any difficulties if I transition to a vegetarian diet because my family follows Buddhism"*. Yet, even with familial acceptance, he mentions personal battles such as overcoming inertia and adjusting to new routines. G12 describes the broader social challenge: *"If I adopted vegetarian for good, I would expect myself to prepare meals on my own, rather than bothering my mom to do it"*. This statement reflects the social pressure to conform to family eating habits and the reluctance to impose his dietary choices on others.

The same situation is applied for G21 as a musician who discusses the societal challenges associated with dietary changes: *"Although my parents sometimes do follow a vegetarian diet for a few days, and my father enjoys eating a lot of vegetables, when it comes to completely adopting a vegetarian lifestyle, they would oppose it".* His opinion highlights the societal resistance to fully embracing vegetarianism, even among those who are otherwise inclined to reduce meat consumption. For G21, the thought of

transitioning to a vegetarian diet brings about speculative contemplations from his family, highlighting their collective worries about adequate nutrition, *"My parents... often complain out of concern that my wife might not get enough nutrients"*. This signals deep-seated beliefs about nutrition that are held not only individually but also communally. As mentioned above, G22 similarly notes the social dimension of eating, particularly how it intersects with cultural practices: *"My job involves a lot of physical activity, so I need a lot of energy. A long-term vegetarian diet might be more suitable for those who work in office"*, which reflects his perception of social and professional expectations regarding diet.

The participants' insights reveal the pivotal role that family plays in dietary decisions, echoing across generations and households. Despite varying degrees of adherence to vegetarianism, the interviews reflect a unifying theme - the difficulty of reconciling personal dietary desires with the expectations and practices of one's family and society. It becomes evident through narratives like that of G31, a housewife and former full-time Buddhist, who resonates with a desire for vegetarian living but succumbs to the demands of familial harmony and health concerns, *"The pressure comes from the family and also due to illness"*. G31 provides insight into the emotional and social challenges of aligning her dietary choices with her family's expectations: *"Living together with them [her children], I also do not want to disrupt the harmony, so I have to comply with their wishes"*. This illustrates the logistical difficulties and emotional tensions involved in cooking separate meals that cater to different dietary preferences within the same household. G32 also shared the same experience of the conflict between personal dietary choices and family responsibilities, *"Being afraid of my children's complaints and argument against my vegetarian diet"*. This reflects social pressures within the family that influence her ability to maintain a vegetarian diet. As G24, a marketing manager, points out the challenges extended beyond personal beliefs or preferences – it is about negotiating one's place within the family and society: *"If I have to change my diet for health reason...my family would also support and be flexible with my change"*. The complex interweaving of social cues, familial roles, and individual agency paint a rich picture of the intricate social fabric that shapes dietary habits and intentions in Vietnam.

Furthermore, G14, a manager, adds the social isolation felt during professional engagements, saying, *"Due to my frequent business trips and dining with colleagues, I*

find it difficult to request a different type of food. I feel isolated and separated from the group". Her experience underscores how professional settings can further complicate personal dietary choices. These insights vividly illustrate the tension between individual dietary intentions and the social and familial pressures that often override these intentions.

In conclusion, the investigation of social pressure and familial dynamics highlights a multifaceted and deeply rooted structure within Vietnamese society that presents both obstacles and supports in the pursuit of adopting a vegetarian diet. These dynamics are crucial for understanding the barriers to adopting vegetarianism in Vietnam, aligning with theories that emphasize the impact of social context on behavior.

Within the context of shifting towards vegetarianism, a conspicuous **gap emerges in the knowledge and understanding** of a vegetarian diet's nutritional adequacy and environmental impact. Many interviewees expressed a significant gap in knowledge regarding how to properly balance a vegetarian diet, which poses a substantial barrier to making the transition. This includes concerns about preparing nutritious vegetarian meals that are appealing and satisfying. In the words of G11, an English teacher, there lies an admission of limited research on the subject: *"I don't research much of how animal nutrition relates to the human body"*. This lack of information extends to the consequences of meat consumption on both health – *"Eating a lot of animal meat is bad for your health"* - and the environment, where there is an acknowledgment of the meat industry contributing to pollution but a lack of in-depth understanding. She also adds that G11 shares her reservations about the nutritional completeness of vegetarian diets, *"I think vegetarianism is very scientific, but it requires a lot of knowledge, and how to listen to your body"*. Her statement reflects a broader concern among potential vegetarians about the complexity and scientific understanding required to maintain a healthy diet devoid of meat.

The hesitancy to change dietary habits due to limited knowledge is also echoed by G11 who recognizes the scientific potential of veganism but points to a fundamental lack of personal knowledge as a barrier: *"If you suddenly ask me to become a vegetarian right away, I won't be able to do it, because I don't know anything about how to follow a vegetarian diet scientifically"*. There is an awareness that inaccurate or incomplete knowledge can result in health risks, which underlines the necessity for proper education on the topic. In discussing old habits and societal norms, she also opines, *"I think people*

keep consuming meat because of old habits, from their parents and grandparents... While adopting a vegetarian diet is a new thing, people are cautious and consider a lot of reasons". This perspective highlights the intergenerational transmission of meat-heavy dietary patterns and the resistance faced when attempting to adapt to new nutritional paradigms.

Participants also elaborated on their personal attitudes towards making dietary changes. G14, a manager, describes her personal penchant for local cuisine as a stumbling block in adopting vegetarianism: *"I love traveling... Every time I travel, I want to explore the culture of the destination through exposure to local foods".* Here, the cultural and experiential ties to eating meat are profound and serve as a significant impediment to changing her diet.

Furthermore, some participants display a genuine effort to understand and adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, as demonstrated by the devout Buddhist G31, who maintains *"practicing vegetarianism is very good... it nurtures a compassionate heart"*. Yet, she was forced to revert to meat consumption due to familial pressures and health concerns, signifying the complex interplay between knowledge, personal attitudes, and socio-cultural forces. Importantly, the theme illustrates not just a lack in knowledge but also the effect of personal experiences and societal influences on dietary choices. G32, who once embraced vegetarianism for three years due to spiritual reasons, poignantly remarks on the personal conviction needed to maintain such a diet: *"Self-discipline is crucial... Some people I know may interrupt their vegetarian diet if they have to attend a wedding".*

As these individuals navigate their food journey, it becomes clear that greater access to accurate information about vegetarian diets and support in adopting these changes could greatly influence their decisions. This narrative speaks to the broader complexity of accommodating both scientific knowledge and personal values within the realm of dietary habits, posing significant implications for the intention-behavior gap in the practice of vegetarianism in Vietnam.

The decision to adopt a vegetarian diet in Vietnam is significantly affected by **practical considerations that intertwine with individuals' daily lifestyles** and their ability to independently prepare meals. For many Vietnamese, the convenience of meat-based diets, deeply embedded in culinary traditions and daily routines, presents a significant

barrier to transitioning to vegetarianism. This challenge is compounded by personal and professional demands that dictate dietary choices. For instance, G12 discusses his professional constraints: *"My working hours are not fixed, and sometimes, due to laziness, I'm not motivated to cook for myself"*. This statement highlights how lifestyle factors can impede the adoption of a vegetarian diet. Similarly, G24 notes the practical difficulties related to her busy schedule: *"Because of the busy life in the city centre and as of an office working 8 hours per day, my family will shop for food 1 week in advance. But my family does not strictly or carefully plan the shopping list"*. This lack of time and planning makes it challenging to incorporate a vegetarian diet into a hectic lifestyle. Furthermore, G21 captures this sentiment by noting, *"Every meal in my family includes meat. Meat cannot be separated from my daily meals because eating meat is my favorite"*. This preference highlights how entrenched meat consumption is in his daily life, making the transition to vegetarianism less feasible. As mentioned earlier, G14 discusses the difficulties faced when trying to accommodate dietary changes during professional engagements: *"Due to my frequent business trips and dining with colleagues, I find it difficult to request a different type of food. I feel isolated and separated from the group"*. Her experiences reflect how professional and social environments can significantly impact dietary choices. Similarly, G32 shares her approach to meal preparation, *"For the days when I follow a vegetarian diet, I just buy what looks delicious and appealing at the moment without planning. On the days when I eat non-vegetarian, my daughter goes to the market and cooks, and I eat whatever she prepares"*. This flexibility and independence in meal preparation help her maintain a semi-vegetarian diet despite family preferences.

These detailed insights demonstrate the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals in Vietnam when considering a vegetarian diet. The quotes reveal how deeply ingrained meat consumption is within daily routines and cultural practices, and how personal and professional demands, alongside the logistics of meal preparation, can influence dietary choices. This exploration highlights the crucial role of practical considerations in determining whether habits can override the intention to adopt vegetarianism, aligning with theoretical frameworks that emphasize the influence of behavioral controls and social norms on dietary decisions.

A predominant theme emerging in the interview data is how **limited ethical considerations and environmental concerns** impact dietary choices, particularly in the transition from meat-based diets to vegetarianism. In Vietnam, the shift towards vegetarianism is often influenced by ethical considerations related to animal welfare and growing awareness of the environmental impacts of meat production. However, these ethical and environmental concerns are frequently overshadowed by more immediate **health and social factors**. A big ethical dilemma regarding meat consumption emerges among some interviewees who are concerned about animal welfare. G11 articulates a moral conflict, stating, *"When animals are enjoying life but then are killed to serve our meals, I feel selfish. If we eat too much, then we encourage too much farming and slaughter to happen, that is not good"*. This reflection indicates a deep concern for the ethics of meat production and the moral implications of consuming meat. Additionally, G12 voices a similar concern, *"I think if I only see a plate of meat in front of me without witnessing the slaughter process, I can accept eating it without thinking too much about what's behind it. However, if I see the process of slaughter or witness mistreatment of animals, it can be terrifying and evoke a sense of compassion, making it difficult for me to consume that plate of meat".* Several interviewees grapple with the moral implications of meat consumption. G31 discusses her Buddhist beliefs and their impact on her views towards animal welfare, stating, *"I believe in the law of karma. Eating meat has consequences that go against compassion for animals"*. This illustrates a deep ethical conflict that influences her dietary choices. Additionally, G32 shares a similar sentiment, *"Animals also have a life just like us; killing them for food is similar to a bigger entity harming a smaller one"*. These quotes highlight a shared ethical dilemma where compassion towards animals plays a crucial role in their views on vegetarianism. The ethical and environmental concerns related to meat consumption present significant but often conflicting influences on dietary habits among Vietnamese individuals. While some express awareness and concern, habitual eating patterns and cultural norms often prevail.

Environmental impacts of meat production are acknowledged but not always prioritized in decision-making. G24 articulates a recognition of the environmental issues associated with meat consumption, *"I know this information, and I think it's correct too. But still, it does not affect my current thoughts about my diet"*. This indicates an awareness of the ecological consequences but also reflects a barrier to translating this knowledge into practical dietary changes. In contrast, G11 notes the broader environmental implications,

"The meat industry and meat-based fast food are one of the factors causing environmental pollution". Yet, despite this understanding, the immediate benefits and conveniences of meat consumption often overshadow the environmental considerations.

These reflections from the interviewees reveal the complex layers of ethical and environmental awareness that influence dietary choices. While many recognize the moral and ecological implications of their eating habits, the strength of cultural and habitual preferences frequently undermines these concerns, maintaining the status quo in dietary practices. This complexity underscores the challenge of aligning ethical and environmental awareness with actual dietary changes in the context of Vietnamese culture.

4.2 Discuss the findings of barriers to vegetarianism in Vietnam

In exploring the transition to vegetarianism within the Vietnamese context, the thematic analysis reveals several formidable barriers that often cause habitual dietary behaviors to override well-intentioned plans to adopt a vegetarian diet. These barriers are intricately linked to cultural, social, health-related, and practical considerations, each providing a complex layer of influence that affects dietary change.

The first barrier is **Cultural Norms and Familial Influence**. Vietnam's rich culinary traditions are steeped in practices that valorize meat consumption, not only as a source of nutrition but also as a symbol of hospitality and prosperity. Meat is integral to Vietnamese festivals, family gatherings, and daily meals, making it a central pillar of social life. For instance, an interviewee noted, "Meat dishes are considered essential for celebrating significant events." This cultural entrenchment is echoed in Triandis's Theory, which emphasizes that individual behavior is often a reflection of broader social patterns and cultural norms. Families play a crucial role in perpetuating these dietary norms, where deviations such as adopting a vegetarian diet might be viewed as breaking from tradition, potentially leading to familial discord or disapproval. The strength of these cultural and familial expectations significantly impedes the intention to adopt vegetarianism, illustrating how deeply ingrained habits can override personal dietary choices.

The second barrier is **Health Misconceptions**. Health concerns significantly influence dietary decisions, with many Vietnamese holding misconceptions about vegetarian diets, particularly the belief that these diets are nutritionally deficient. Such misconceptions are

prevalent, as highlighted by an interviewee who expressed concerns about not getting enough protein from a vegetarian diet. This perspective is indicative of a broader misunderstanding about the nutritional sufficiency of plant-based foods, which can deter individuals from considering vegetarianism. The Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that perceived behavioral control — an individual's confidence in their ability to perform a behavior — is diminished when they believe that the behavior might lead to negative outcomes, such as poor health. This lack of confidence, fueled by health misconceptions, makes the habit of eating meat appear safer and more beneficial, thus overpowering the intention to change.

The third barrier is **Social and Familial Pressures**. The influence of social circles and immediate family cannot be underestimated. In Vietnam, eating together is a communal activity, and meals are often shared among family members or within social groups. Participants expressed concerns about "sticking out" or being perceived as inconvenient when they choose vegetarian options, which could disrupt the social harmony at meals. According to Triandis's Theory, social behaviors are reinforced by the expectations and practices of the group, making individual choices heavily dependent on collective norms. This dynamic is particularly potent in a collectivist culture like Vietnam, where community values are paramount. Thus, the pressure to conform to social dietary norms makes it challenging for individuals to transition to vegetarianism, reinforcing habitual meat consumption.

The fourth barrier is **Practical Considerations**. Practical issues such as the availability of vegetarian options and the ease of meal preparation also present significant barriers. Many urban areas in Vietnam now offer vegetarian restaurants and markets, but these are not always accessible or affordable for everyone. Interviewees like G24 and G12 discussed the challenges of finding appealing vegetarian food that fits into their busy lifestyles, where convenience often dictates dietary choices. The Habit Theory explains this preference for convenience as a byproduct of existing routines that require minimal cognitive effort to maintain. Changing these habits necessitates not only a shift in individual behavior but also a transformation in the surrounding environment to support new dietary practices.

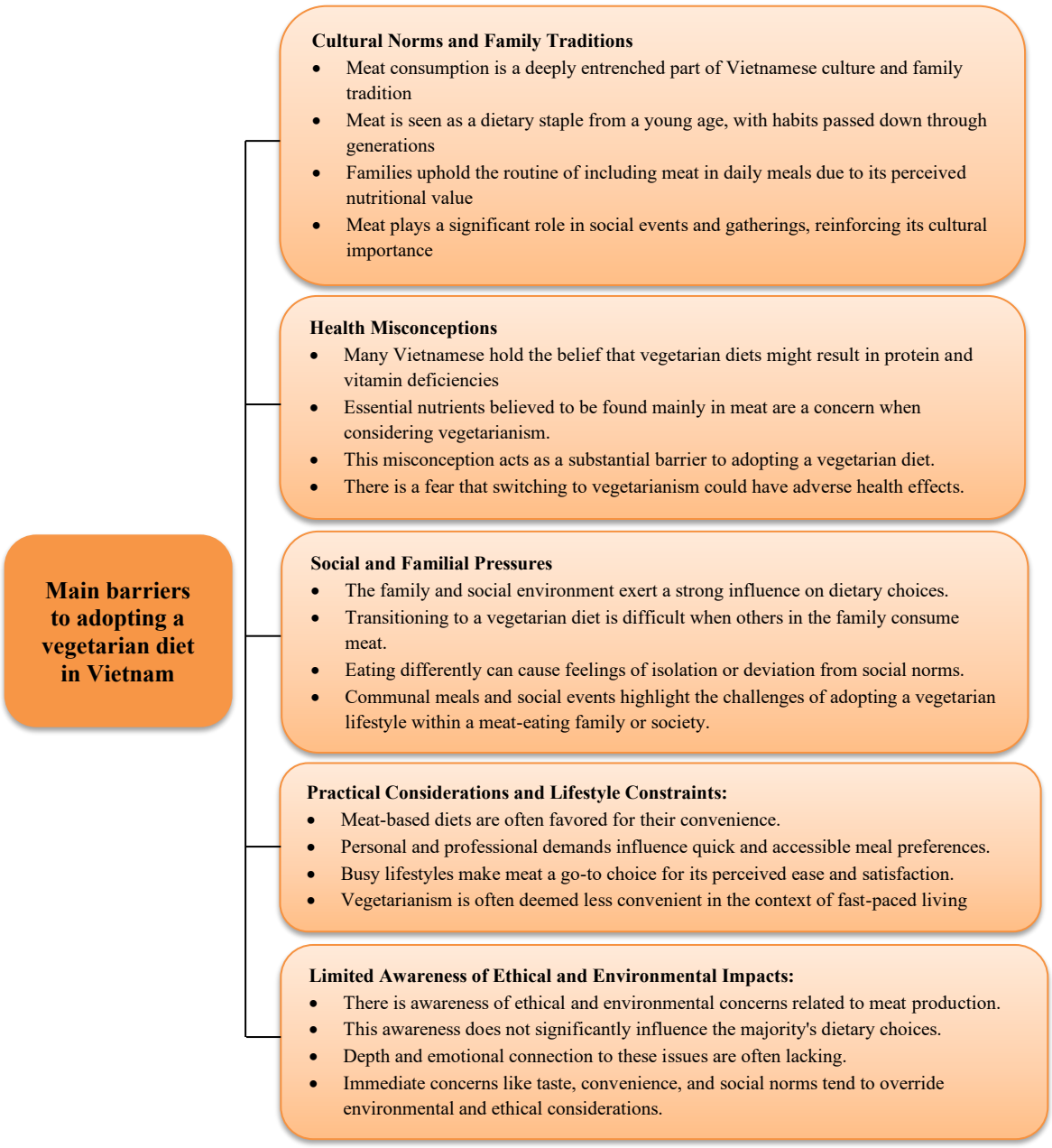


Figure 2 ***Summary of main barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet in Vietnam***

The final barrier is **Limited Awareness of Ethical and Environmental Impacts**. Despite growing global awareness of the environmental and ethical implications of meat consumption, such concerns are often secondary to more immediate dietary considerations among Vietnamese consumers. Participants acknowledged the environmental damage caused by meat production but felt that these issues were too remote to influence their daily food choices. The Dual-Process Model, which describes the interaction between automatic, habitual actions and deliberate, reflective thinking,

helps explain why immediate habits (like eating meat) continue despite knowledge of their long-term consequences. This gap between knowledge and action is critical, as it highlights the difficulty of translating awareness into behavioral change, especially when existing habits are deeply embedded within the cultural and practical fabric of everyday life.

In summary, the transition to vegetarianism in Vietnam is hindered by a combination of deeply ingrained cultural habits, health misconceptions, social pressures, practical difficulties, and limited environmental awareness. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that considers both the individual's intentions and the broader socio-cultural context.

From the thematic analysis above, the main barriers to adopting a vegetarian diet in Vietnam, as identified through the interview data, reflect a complex interplay of cultural, social, and personal factors.

4.3 Answering the research questions

4.3.1 How do meat consumption habit and intention of going vegetarian interact?

The increasing global shift towards vegetarian diets reflects a significant change influenced by health concerns, ethical considerations regarding animal welfare, and the imperatives of environmental sustainability. This literature review explores the interplay between entrenched meat consumption habits and the growing intention among individuals to adopt vegetarian diets, examining how personal, social, and cultural factors collectively influence dietary choices.

This literature review in Section 2 not only identifies key dynamics between existing meat consumption habits and the burgeoning intentions to adopt vegetarian diets but also maps these findings against established behavioral theories to provide a nuanced understanding of the influences shaping dietary choices in a Vietnamese context.

Meat has been integral to dietary practices across many cultures, symbolizing not only nutritional value but also social prestige and cultural identity (Markoni et al. 2023, 12-13). Yet, recent shifts indicate a growing public consciousness about the detrimental effects of excessive meat consumption on both health and the environment, prompting a

reconsideration of traditional dietary norms (for example Godfray et al. 2018, 6). These shifts are reflective of the Theory of Planned Behavior, where subjective norms and perceived behavioral control play crucial roles in influencing dietary intentions and actions.

From a health perspective, the motivation to adopt vegetarian diets is strongly linked to the benefits such diets offer in reducing risks of chronic diseases (Fox & Ward 2008, 424; Le & Sabaté 2014, 2142). Environmental concerns also motivate a shift as the environmental impact of meat production becomes increasingly untenable (Steinfeld et al. 2006, 4, 11). These factors collectively enhance the attitude towards vegetarian diets and influence the intention to change as outlined in the Theory of Planned Behavior.

The social and psychological dimensions of this transition are complex and deeply embedded within cultural contexts, aligning with Triandis's Theory which emphasizes the impact of cultural patterns on behavior. Cognitive dissonance can drive dietary change, internal conflicts between current habits and new ethical or health understandings might catalyze significant behavioral shifts (Graça, Oliveira & Calheiros 2015, 88). Furthermore, social influences, including peer behaviors and cultural norms, critically shape dietary intentions, underscoring the Dual-Process Model's distinction between habitual and intentional decision-making (Rosenfeld & Burrow 2017, 458-460).

Despite the strong intentions to shift towards vegetarian diets, several practical barriers remain. The cultural and familial preference for meat, deeply ingrained and often celebrated in social gatherings, poses a significant challenge. This is where Triandis's insights into the persistence of cultural norms and the Theory of Planned Behavior's emphasis on subjective norms are particularly salient. Practical barriers such as the availability of vegetarian options and the effort required to prepare different meals (Markoni et al. 2023, 13; Nguyen et al. 2020, 14) also highlight the challenges faced, emphasizing the need for strategies that address both the psychological willingness and the practical feasibility of adopting new dietary behaviors.

In sum, the transition towards vegetarianism in Vietnam, as examined through this comprehensive review, reflects a complex interaction of personal intentions, cultural norms, and practical realities. Aligning these findings with the theoretical framework not only deepens the understanding of dietary behavior change but also enhances the strategic

approaches needed to support such transitions, emphasizing the necessity of multifaceted interventions that consider both individual motivations and broader socio-cultural dynamics.

4.3.2 In which conditions do meat consumption habit dominate over intention of going vegetarian in Vietnam?

Integrating the thematic analysis with the theoretical framework provided, the findings highlight several barriers to adopting vegetarianism in Vietnam. These barriers encompass cultural, social, health-related, and practical factors, each intersecting with aspects of the Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory, Habit Theory, Cultural and Practical Considerations, and the Dual-Process Model.

Regarding the first barrier, the strong influence of **cultural norms and family traditions** on dietary habits in Vietnam emerges as a significant theme from the interviews, illustrating the profound role these elements play in shaping individual behaviors. This theme aligns closely with both **Triandis's Theory**, which emphasizes the impact of cultural patterns on behavior, and the **Theory of Planned Behavior**, which highlights the role of subjective norms in influencing behavioral intentions. In Vietnam, cultural norms traditionally emphasize meat as a staple in the diet, deeply integrating it not only for its perceived nutritional value but also as a centerpiece in social and family gatherings.

Interviewees such as G11, who mentioned eating meat almost 5 to 6 days out of 7 days per week, illustrate how these dietary practices are introduced from an early age and become habitual. This habitual eating pattern is heavily supported by family practices where meals are typically shared, making it challenging for individuals to make dietary changes that deviate from these ingrained preferences. For instance, G13 highlighted the difficulty of changing her diet due to the need to prepare separate meals that diverge from family preferences, reflecting how social pressures can significantly influence dietary choices.

Moreover, the cultural embedding of meat in the Vietnamese culinary tradition not only makes vegetarianism seem unconventional but also impractical. This resistance to vegetarianism can be seen as a manifestation of broader cultural adherence to traditional dietary practices, supported by the **Cultural and Practical Considerations aspect of the**

theoretical framework. These deeply ingrained cultural practices significantly dictate dietary choices, showcasing how cultural norms and familial traditions form a substantial barrier to adopting vegetarian diets in Vietnam. This complex interplay of cultural fidelity, family dynamics, and social expectations underscores the challenges of shifting toward vegetarianism in a context where traditional practices are deeply rooted and widely upheld.

In terms of the second barrier, **Health concerns and misconceptions** about the nutritional adequacy of vegetarian diets significantly hinder the adoption of vegetarianism in Vietnam. Many locals harbor beliefs that vegetarian diets are deficient in crucial nutrients like proteins and vitamins, a concern echoed by participants like G12 and G22. These individuals express considerable apprehension about the potential nutritional inadequacies of a vegetarian diet, fearing that it may not sufficiently support their health. This prevalent misconception directly impacts their dietary choices, aligning closely with the **Theory of Planned Behavior**, which posits that behavioral beliefs profoundly influence attitudes towards specific behaviors. In this instance, the erroneous belief that vegetarian diets are nutritionally deficient not only shapes negative attitudes towards adopting such diets but also diminishes perceived behavioral control. This perceived lack of control reinforces the notion that maintaining health on a vegetarian diet is unfeasible, further entrenching resistance to dietary change. These health-related misconceptions underscore a critical need for targeted health education that can effectively address and dispel these myths, thereby fostering a more accurate understanding of the health implications of vegetarian diets and potentially encouraging a shift towards vegetarianism.

Moving to the third barrier, the influence of **social circles and familial expectations** plays a pivotal role in shaping dietary behaviors in Vietnam, where communal dining is deeply entrenched in the cultural fabric. The pressure to conform to social and familial dietary norms poses a significant barrier to adopting vegetarianism, as highlighted by participants like G13 and G31. These individuals describe the substantial social pressures and familial obligations that make dietary changes particularly challenging, where deviations from the norm can lead to conflict or social discomfort. This scenario underscores the theories of both **Triandis and the Theory of Planned Behavior**, which emphasize the role of social settings, compatriotism, and subjective norms in shaping

behaviors. In the collectivist culture of Vietnam, individual behaviors are often a response to the expectations set by their social groups, suggesting that opting for a vegetarian diet can isolate an individual both socially and emotionally within their family and broader social circles. This strong social component of dietary habits highlights the complexities of changing deeply ingrained dietary practices in a context where maintaining social harmony is paramount.

In terms of the fourth barrier, **practical barriers**, including the convenience of meat-based diets coupled with demanding **lifestyles**, significantly hinder the transition to vegetarianism in Vietnam. Participants like G21 and G24 illustrate the challenges posed by their busy urban lifestyles, which often prioritize convenience and speed in meal preparation. This preference tends to favor readily available meat-based options, highlighting how lifestyle demands make the adoption of a vegetarian diet impractical. These practical considerations are deeply entwined with the **Dual-Process Model** and **Habit Theory**, which both suggest that habits are automatic responses to familiar cues. In this context, the convenience of meat consumption responds directly to lifestyle demands, thereby becoming a persistent habit. This scenario is exacerbated in an urban setting where the effort required to change established dietary routines is significant. Existing routines, such as consuming readily available meat-based meals, are preferred due to their ease, further embedding meat consumption as a deeply ingrained habit that is challenging to alter despite intentions to adopt a healthier or more ethical diet.

Regarding the fifth barrier, while there is a growing awareness among Vietnamese consumers about the ethical and environmental impacts of meat consumption, as highlighted by interviewees like G24, G11, and G12, this knowledge often fails to deeply influence dietary decisions. This situation **underscores a notable gap** in both the **Dual-Process Model** and **Habit Theory**, where habitual behaviors, deeply rooted in cultural, social, and practical norms, consistently override conscious ethical considerations. This discrepancy between awareness and action is particularly pronounced given the immediacy of everyday concerns that tend to overshadow broader environmental impacts.

The findings reveal a complex interplay of cultural heritage, social structures, personal beliefs, and practical constraints, all of which significantly shape dietary choices in Vietnam. Despite some level of recognition of the detrimental effects of meat production on the environment and animal welfare, these ethical considerations are not compelling

enough to catalyze changes in established dietary habits. This situation highlights the need for enhanced environmental education and advocacy efforts that not only address individual misconceptions and provide better nutritional education but also aim to shift broader cultural and social norms towards more sustainable eating practices.

Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that integrates more comprehensive environmental education to influence dietary intentions and behaviors effectively. Such efforts would help bridge the gap between knowledge and practice, encouraging a broader cultural and social shift towards dietary patterns that are not only health-conscious but also ethically and environmentally informed. This shift is essential for moving towards sustainable eating practices that can significantly impact personal health, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability.

4.4 Review the proposed theoretical framework

Based on the thematic analysis provided and the theoretical framework outlined in my documents, my findings underline a dynamic interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors that influence dietary decisions in Vietnam, particularly the shift towards vegetarianism. These findings allow me to explore the modifications or extensions necessary to align with or diverge from the established theoretical models, specifically the Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory, Habit Theory, and the Dual-Process Model.

4.4.1 Alignment with the theoretical framework

The findings strongly align with Triandis's Theory, which underscores the significant influence of cultural patterns on individual behaviors. This theory is particularly relevant in explaining how deeply embedded cultural norms around meat consumption dictate dietary choices in Vietnam. These norms are not only habits but are culturally endorsed practices that are introduced from an early age, making them difficult to alter.

Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behavior is well-supported, with my findings highlighting how subjective norms - stemming from cultural and family expectations - significantly influence individual dietary behaviors. According to Theory of Planned Behavior, these norms impact both the attitudes towards behavior (in this case, attitudes

towards adopting a vegetarian diet) and the perceived behavioral control, where individuals feel they cannot change due to social pressures.

In the context of Vietnam, the deeply entrenched cultural norms and family traditions play a pivotal role in dietary behaviors, aligning closely with Triandis's Theory, which highlights the impact of cultural patterns, and the Theory of Planned Behavior, which underscores the influence of subjective norms. These norms emphasize meat as a fundamental component of the Vietnamese diet, a practice ingrained from an early age. Family practices further entrench these norms, making individual dietary changes exceedingly difficult, as evidenced by G13's challenges in preparing meals that diverge from family preferences.

Moreover, misconceptions about health associated with vegetarian diets significantly influence attitudes and perceived behavioral control, aligning with the Theory of Planned Behavior. A prevalent belief among Vietnamese is that vegetarian diets lack essential nutrients like protein, deterring many from considering such dietary adjustments. This perspective is illustrated by G12 and G22, who express concerns about nutrient deficiencies, highlighting a major barrier to vegetarianism.

Social and familial pressures also demonstrate a critical alignment with both Triandis's Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior. The communal nature of dining and strong familial expectations in Vietnam create considerable social pressures that discourage deviation from traditional meat-centric diets. G31's experience vividly shows how family opinions can dominate individual dietary choices, emphasizing the substantial influence of social norms.

Additionally, practical considerations reflect insights from Habit Theory and the Dual-Process Model, which describe how established routines are resistant to change. In urban Vietnam, the convenience of meat-based diets and the demands of modern lifestyles make the transition to vegetarianism not only impractical but also unlikely. G21 and G24 discuss the logistical challenges and lifestyle constraints that favor continuing meat consumption, underscoring the significant role of practicality in dietary choices.

Finally, while there is some awareness of the ethical and environmental impacts of meat consumption, these concerns are often insufficient to drive changes in established dietary

habits. This suggests a gap in the Dual-Process Model, where habitual behaviors overshadow conscious ethical considerations. G11 and G12 recognize the environmental impacts, yet continue with traditional eating patterns due to cultural and practical barriers.

These themes collectively highlight the challenges of transitioning towards vegetarianism in Vietnam and reflect the complex interplay between personal intentions and habitual behaviors, influenced by cultural, social, and practical factors. Addressing these challenges necessitates multifaceted strategies that account for both individual intentions and the broader socio-cultural context. This analysis underscores the need for targeted interventions that not only align with theoretical insights but also address the practical realities faced by individuals in Vietnam.

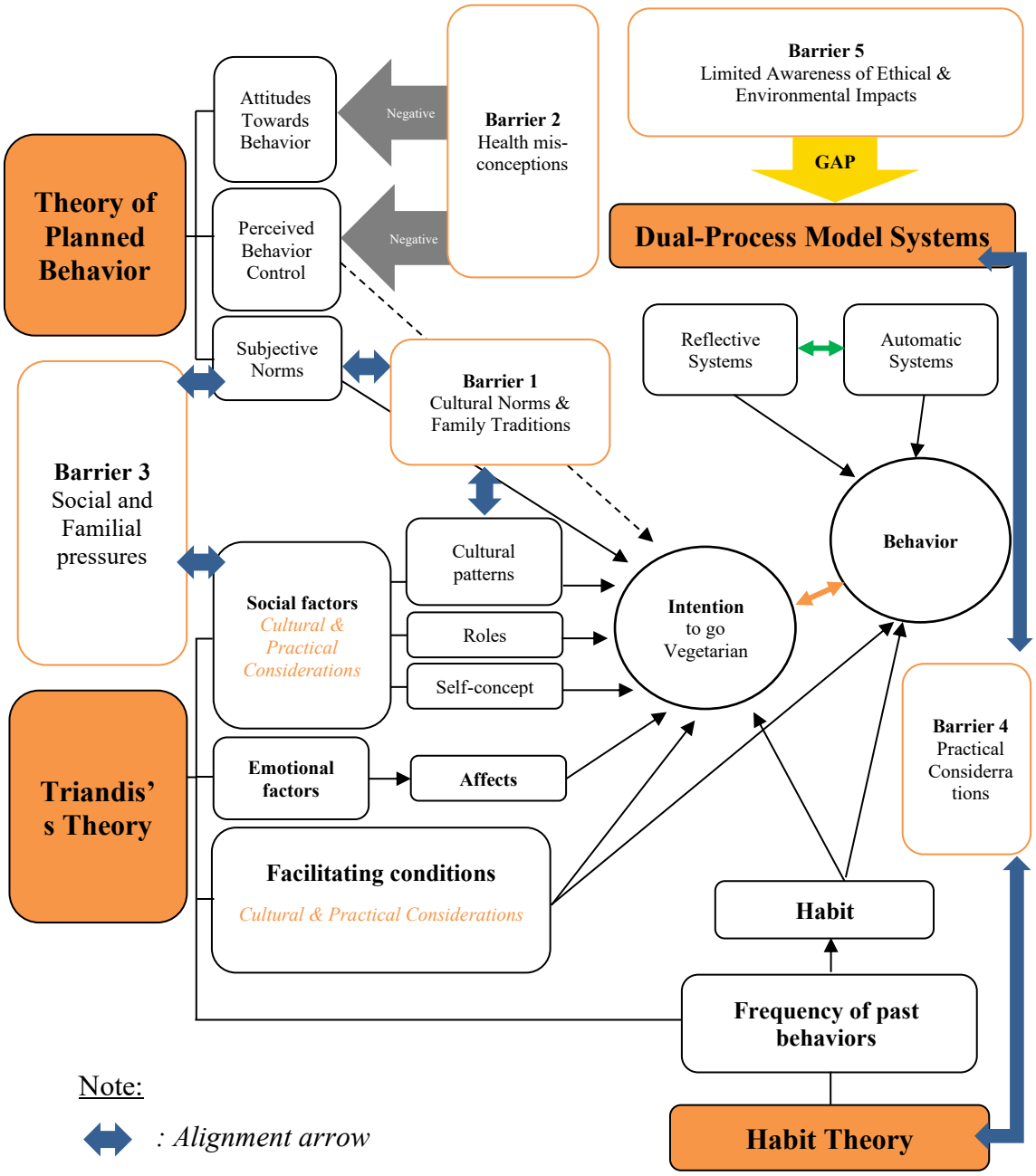


Figure 3 Revised theoretical framework

Figure 4 visually represents the theoretical underpinnings of my findings and show how my empirical findings align with established behavioral theories, providing a clear, structured understanding of the complexities in the process of dietary transitions in Vietnam.

4.4.2 Potential gaps and modifications

While my findings align well with the mentioned theories, there is an opportunity to explore potential gaps, particularly in the application and scope of these theories:

The first gap is the intensity of cultural influence: Both Triandis's Theory and Theory of Planned Behavior may underestimate the intensity and resistance of cultural norms. While these theories acknowledge the influence of cultural and social norms, my findings suggest that these norms are not merely influences but are powerful dictates that can significantly hinder behavioral change. This might indicate a need to modify the theories to account for the strength and sometimes the inflexibility of cultural norms in dietary behaviors.

Secondly, practical considerations are overlooked. Theories like Theory of Planned Behavior focus on intentions influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, but they might not fully account for the practical and logistical barriers highlighted in my findings. These include the availability of vegetarian options and the convenience of meat-based diets, which are crucial in the Vietnamese context. This suggests a gap where Theory of Planned Behavior could be expanded to include more practical elements of behavior change.

The final one is dual-process model application. My findings also touch on the automatic nature of meat consumption as a habitual behavior, which is discussed in the Dual-Process Model. However, there may be a need to further explore how conscious decision-making (reflective system) can be encouraged over automatic responses (impulsive system), specifically through targeted interventions that increase awareness and provide practical alternatives.

4.4.3 Suggesting modifications to the theoretical framework

To effectively address the identified gaps within the existing theoretical frameworks, it is essential to propose targeted modifications that better capture the complexities of dietary behavior changes in Vietnam. Firstly, there should be a stronger emphasis on cultural resistance within the framework. This modification would shift the focus from merely acknowledging the influence of cultural norms to actively considering the resistance these

norms pose against dietary changes. Such resistance is deeply ingrained and often acts as a significant barrier to adopting new dietary habits, particularly vegetarianism.

Secondly, the theoretical models need to be expanded to explicitly incorporate practical barriers. This includes acknowledging the challenges related to the availability of vegetarian options and the effort required to prepare different meals that align with a vegetarian diet. Addressing these practical barriers in the model will provide a more realistic basis for understanding why dietary changes can be so challenging and how they might be facilitated.

Furthermore, there should be an enhanced focus on promoting conscious decision-making over automatic, habitual responses. This could be achieved by integrating strategies within the theoretical framework that encourage individuals to engage in reflective thinking about their dietary choices. Potential strategies might include educational campaigns that provide accurate information about the nutritional sufficiency of vegetarian diets, community support programs that ease the transition to new eating habits, and initiatives that highlight the personal and environmental benefits of making dietary changes.

By implementing these modifications, the theoretical approach can offer deeper insights into the complexities of changing dietary behaviors in Vietnam. Such a comprehensive understanding would better reflect the interplay between cultural norms, personal intentions, and practical realities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of interventions designed to encourage healthier and more sustainable dietary practices.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Theoretical contributions of the study

As being analyzed in Section 4.4, building upon the foundational principles of my proposed theoretical framework, the findings from my thematic analysis and the detailed insights drawn from my interview data contribute profoundly to the understanding of dietary behavior in Vietnam, especially in terms of the shift from meat consumption to vegetarianism. My research not only underscores the significant influence of cultural and familial norms but also enriches existing behavioral theories by detailing the specific conditions under which meat consumption habits override the intention to adopt vegetarian diets.

The theoretical contributions of my research on the interplay between meat consumption habits and the intention to adopt vegetarian diets in Vietnam significantly enrich the academic discourse on dietary behavior changes within a culturally rich framework. This work intricately weaves together established behavioral theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory, Habit Theory, Cultural and Practical Considerations, and the Dual-Process Model, to delineate the complex forces at play in dietary choices, particularly in a Vietnamese context.

In aligning these theoretical perspectives with empirical findings from my research, several key contributions emerge. Firstly, the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior has been deepened by illustrating how subjective norms, particularly those entrenched within Vietnamese culture that emphasize meat as a dietary staple, impact attitudes towards vegetarianism and perceived behavioral control. This underscores the need for interventions that are sensitive to the cultural context, suggesting that changing dietary behaviors requires understanding and modifying the cultural narrative around meat consumption.

Furthermore, Triandis's Theory is exemplified through the substantial cultural influence on dietary habits. My findings emphasize that dietary choices in Vietnam are not merely individual decisions but are profoundly shaped by cultural and familial norms. This reinforces Triandis's assertion about the impact of cultural patterns on behavior, highlighting how deeply embedded cultural norms can act as significant barriers to dietary change.

Additionally, the integration of Habit Theory with my empirical data points to the strong habitual nature of meat consumption, which is not easily disrupted despite individuals' intentions to adopt vegetarian diets. This contribution is crucial as it illustrates the resilience of dietary habits and suggests that changing these habits requires more than just the intention to change; it requires a systematic approach that addresses the automatic nature of these behaviors.

The application of the Dual-Process Model in this context also sheds light on the cognitive struggle between habitual meat consumption and the conscious decision to adopt a vegetarian diet. My research suggests that while there is an awareness of the health and environmental benefits of vegetarian diets, the habitual behaviors influenced by cultural, social, and practical norms often overshadow these conscious considerations. This highlights a gap in the model where interventions could be designed to strengthen the reflective system to allow for more conscious decision-making in dietary habits.

The theoretical insights gleaned from my research provide a rich tapestry of interactions that dictate dietary behavior in Vietnam. They not only validate the existing theories but also suggest potential modifications to better accommodate the complexity of cultural influences and practical realities. For instance, highlighting the resistance offered by cultural norms against dietary changes could enhance the Theory of Planned Behavior, and integrating practical barriers into the theoretical models could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing dietary decisions.

Overall, my research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the factors that govern dietary behavior changes in Vietnam, highlighting the need for multifaceted strategies that consider individual motivations, cultural norms, and practical realities. This comprehensive approach can significantly aid policymakers, health professionals, and social campaigners looking to promote healthier and more sustainable dietary practices in culturally diverse settings.

5.2 Practical contributions of the study

The investigation of this study into the current meat consumption trends versus the inclination towards vegetarian diets in Vietnam offers significant insights with practical applications for public health policy, dietary education, and environmental sustainability

initiatives. This study explores the intricate relationships among cultural norms, family influences, health misconceptions, and societal pressures, providing a nuanced understanding of the factors that deter a shift towards vegetarianism within the Vietnamese context.

The research identifies a critical need for the development of comprehensive public health strategies and refined nutritional education programs that directly confront and dismantle prevalent myths about vegetarian diets, such as the undue fear of protein deficiency. By pinpointing these widespread health misconceptions, the findings can effectively guide healthcare providers, nutritionists, and dietitians in crafting precise educational campaigns. Proposed initiatives could include the creation of culturally adapted informational materials, such as pamphlets and online resources, and the organization of interactive workshops that engage community members in meaningful discussions about dietary choices, potentially in cooperation with local health clinics and community centers.

Furthermore, my findings illuminate the strong influence of cultural and familial pressures in shaping dietary preferences, underscoring the necessity for policy interventions that not only facilitate individual dietary transitions but also address the wider social and cultural dynamics. Such interventions could involve the implementation of policies that incentivize vegetarian options in food markets and dining establishments, such as providing subsidies for vegetarian food producers, offering financial support for restaurants and street vendors who expand their vegetarian offerings, and initiating public campaigns that effectively promote vegetarianism as a desirable and culturally acceptable lifestyle choice.

Additionally, the research emphasizes the significant environmental impact of traditional meat consumption practices, as highlighted in the data collected from participant interviews. This aspect of the study supports a call for more vigorous environmental advocacy, which should be strategically aligned with dietary education campaigns. Potential initiatives could include programs aimed at raising awareness about the environmental benefits of reducing meat consumption, which could influence broader public perceptions and behaviors toward a more sustainable dietary regimen.

In sum, the comprehensive insights derived from this research are poised to inform and refine strategies aimed at promoting sustainable and health-conscious dietary practices in Vietnam. The detailed understanding of the barriers to vegetarianism elucidated in this study will assist in tailoring interventions that are not only effective but also culturally sensitive. These interventions are anticipated to resonate well with the Vietnamese populace, encouraging a shift towards more sustainable dietary habits. By facilitating a deeper engagement with these issues, the research contributes to a broader conversation about health, culture, and sustainability that is critical to the future of dietary practices in Vietnam and potentially other similar socio-cultural contexts.

5.3 Future research recommendations

To advance understanding and address the complexities of shifting dietary habits in Vietnam, future research should adopt a multifaceted approach. Longitudinal studies that examine individual and group transitions from meat-based diets to vegetarian diets could reveal crucial insights regarding the enduring nature of habitual behaviors and effective strategies to support sustained dietary change. A focus on cultural and family dynamics is paramount as well; in-depth qualitative research exploring family influences could lead to the development of family-focused educational interventions. These would aim to foster understanding and acceptance of vegetarianism, adjusting the deep-seated norms and expectations within the household setting.

Given the identified gap in knowledge, further research is necessary to probe the effectiveness of educational initiatives that provide clear and science-based information about vegetarian diets. This would be key in countering misconceptions and empowering individuals with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about their eating habits. Simultaneously, examining the role of ethical considerations in food choices could spawn novel approaches. Studies that analyze the impact of increasing ethical awareness around meat consumption on individuals' dietary habits could highlight new methodologies to catalyze change.

Additionally, investigations into the economic and logistical barriers that restrict access to vegetarian options will provide a clearer picture of the practical challenges faced by would-be vegetarians. Such research should extend to the exploration of potential policy interventions that could enhance the availability and affordability of vegetarian foods.

Complementary to this, the implementation of skill development programs focused on vegetarian cooking could be instrumental. Research assessing the outcomes of such programs could indicate the extent to which culinary education impacts the transition to plant-based eating.

Policy and social normative influences also offer a fertile ground for future studies. Evaluating the role of government policies and public campaigns in shaping dietary norms could yield actionable insights, potentially informing initiatives that create a supportive environment for vegetarian choices. Moreover, a comparative cross-cultural analysis would broaden the scope, examining the interplay of habit and intention in various cultural contexts to identify both universally applicable factors and unique cultural barriers.

Considering these research avenues has the potential to illuminate the nuanced web of factors that influence dietary choices in Vietnam. By delving into these areas, future studies can contribute to a deeper dialogue that not only contextualizes the habit-intention dynamic within the Vietnamese cultural framework but also extends its applicability to global settings, offering a richer comprehension of the shift towards vegetarian dietary practices.

6 SUMMARY

The study titled "Under which conditions do meat consumption habits dominate over the intention of going vegetarian in Vietnam?" meticulously explores the intricate interplay between deeply entrenched meat consumption habits and the growing interest in vegetarian diets, within the unique socio-cultural context of Vietnam. This investigation seeks to pinpoint the specific conditions under which long-standing meat consumption behaviors overpower the burgeoning intentions of Vietnamese individuals to adopt vegetarian diets, a topic that has garnered increasing attention due to global health, ethical, and environmental concerns.

Employing a qualitative semi-structured interview methodology, the study draws on insights from a diverse range of demographic groups within Vietnam, strategically divided into **three main categories** to capture a comprehensive view of the societal norms influencing dietary behaviors. The first group comprised adults who are actively exploring vegetarianism, including professionals like a female English teacher and a female manager, a retired housewife, and a male freelance photographer. The second group included steadfast meat-eaters, providing a contrast to the first and consisting of individuals from various professional and personal backgrounds, such as a male musician, a male university student, a male accounting manager, and a female marketing manager. These two groups showcase a mix of educational backgrounds and religious beliefs, reflecting the broad spectrum of factors that can influence dietary choices. The third group consisted of individuals who had experimented with vegetarianism but reverted back to meat consumption, including two Buddhist housewives with lower second education, highlighting the challenges and reversibility of dietary changes. This methodology and participant selection enabled an in-depth examination of the varied dietary landscapes and the factors influencing dietary decisions in Vietnam

Anchoring the study is a sophisticated theoretical framework that seamlessly integrates t**he Theory of Planned Behavior, Triandis's Theory of Interpersonal Behavior, Habit Theory, and the Dual Process Theory of Habit**. This framework is enriched with considerations of **Cultural and Practical constraints**. It postulates that while individuals may harbor strong intentions to switch to vegetarian diets, these intentions are frequently overridden by the powerful dual forces of habitual behavior and socio-cultural norms.

The Dual Process Theory of Habit, in particular, adds depth to the analysis by distinguishing between habitual behaviors that are automatic and those that involve more reflective, deliberate decision-making processes. This distinction is crucial for understanding why habitual meat consumption continues to prevail despite conscious intentions to change.

The thematic analysis identifies **six key themes** with **five main barriers** that influence the dietary choices of Vietnamese people, notably in the conditions under which meat consumption habits dominate over the intentions to go vegetarian: **cultural norms and family traditions**, **health misconceptions**, **social and familial pressures**, **practical considerations and lifestyle constraints, limited awareness of ethical and environmental impacts**. The findings delve deep into cultural, social, health-related, and practical factors, providing a comprehensive view of the challenges faced in adopting vegetarian diets. **Cultural Norms and Family Traditions** stand out as substantial barriers, where meat is deeply integrated into the Vietnamese diet from an early age, reinforced by family gatherings and societal expectations. This cultural embedment makes vegetarianism not only unconventional but also difficult to practice, especially when traditional meals are centered around meat. **Health Misconceptions** about vegetarian diets significantly hinder their adoption, with many locals believing these diets lack essential nutrients like protein. This misconception is compounded by the lack of nutritional education which could dispel these myths and encourage healthier dietary practices. **Social and Familial Pressures** to conform to meat-consuming norms pose a substantial challenge, as deviations can lead to social isolation or familial conflict, particularly in a culture where dining is a communal and culturally significant activity. **Practical Considerations and Lifestyle Constraints** also emerge as prominent barriers. The convenience of meat-based diets, coupled with the demands of modern urban lifestyles, makes the transition to vegetarianism impractical for many. This is further exacerbated by the lack of vegetarian options which makes maintaining such a diet not only inconvenient but often unfeasible. Lastly, **Limited Awareness of Ethical and Environmental Impacts** shows that while there is some knowledge of the broader consequences of meat consumption, it rarely influences dietary choices significantly. This gap highlights a critical area where increased advocacy and education could align ethical and environmental awareness with everyday dietary decisions.

In theoretical terms, key contributions include a deeper understanding of how cultural and familial norms, deeply rooted in Vietnamese society, dictate dietary behaviors and act as significant barriers to vegetarianism. These findings enrich the Theory of Planned Behavior by illustrating the profound impact of subjective norms on both attitudes toward vegetarianism and perceived behavioral control. Additionally, the integration of Triandis's Theory demonstrates the powerful influence of cultural patterns on individual behaviors, emphasizing that dietary decisions in Vietnam are heavily influenced by cultural fidelity rather than individual preference alone. The study also underscores the role of habitual meat consumption as detailed in Habit Theory and explores the cognitive conflicts outlined in the Dual-Process Model, where habitual actions often overshadow conscious dietary decisions despite awareness of vegetarian benefits. This points to a gap where targeted interventions could enhance the reflective decision-making process.

Practically, my research regarding the shift toward vegetarian diets in Vietnam delves into the interplay of cultural norms, health misconceptions, and societal pressures, revealing significant insights for public health policy and environmental sustainability. The study emphasizes the need for targeted educational programs to correct widespread myths about vegetarian diets, particularly the fear of protein deficiency. It proposes the development of culturally relevant educational materials and community workshops to encourage dietary changes, facilitated through partnerships with local health entities. Furthermore, the research highlights the strong influence of cultural and familial pressures on dietary choices and suggests policy interventions that promote vegetarian options in food markets and restaurants, supported by financial incentives. It also points to the environmental impact of meat consumption, advocating for integrated environmental and dietary education campaigns to foster a shift toward sustainable eating habits. This means that my study offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the barriers to vegetarianism in Vietnam, providing actionable strategies for health professionals, policymakers, and environmental advocates to promote healthier and more sustainable dietary practices within the Vietnamese cultural context.

In conclusion, this research provides a detailed examination of the barriers to adopting vegetarian diets in Vietnam, informed by a combination of theoretical insights and empirical findings. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between individual intentions and societal norms, offering practical

recommendations for health professionals, policymakers, and environmental advocates. By addressing the multifaceted challenges presented by cultural, social, and practical factors, this research paves the way for more effective interventions aimed at promoting sustainable and health-conscious dietary practices in culturally diverse settings.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Guide for the interviews

1. **Introduction**

- Short introduction about the researcher: name, University of Turku
- Brief introduction about the research topic and the purpose of the interview: to explore the facilitating conditions in which habits of meat consumption override intention to go vegetarian, and the purpose of the interview is to gain actual insights regarding the topic, so that the researcher can be able to answer the research question.
- Briefly clarify how the interview will proceed, about confidentiality.
- Encourage the interviewee to briefly introduce themselves. This part would cover general information about their socio-demographics.
- Combine the introduction of the interviewees, the researcher will try to do the "ice breaking" by insert easy-going social conversation surrounding their introduction, to create a more comfortable and open atmosphere before going to the main interview questions. For example: what is your favorite food?
- Introduce key themes that will be covered in the interview:
    - **Theme 1**: describe their current diet, eating patterns including details on meat consumption frequency and the balance of plant-based versus animal-based foods in their meals.
    - **Theme 2**: figure out the main challenges faced by Groups 1 and 2 in reducing their current meat intake and transitioning to a vegetarian diet, as well as the factors that led Group 3 participants to revert back to meat consumption. This theme includes inquiries about family influence, food shopping and meal planning, health perceptions, and environmental and ethical considerations.
    - **Theme 3** delves into participants' self-control and willingness to adopt a vegetarian diet.

2. Themes and their questions

Theme 1: Assessment of their current meat-consumption habit

Group 1 & 2:

- What do you think about your current dietary pattern associated with meat-consumption habits?
- How would you describe your meat-consumption habit? How often do you have meat/fish in your meal per week?

Group 3:

- Do you cook yourself, cook for your family or does anyone cook for you? If you do, do you have any pressure or dietary requirements from your family members?
- Why is it hard to reduce or remove meat/fish from your daily meal for your family or yourself?
- How do you shop for food? (hints: instantly buy from the available choices from the market, or plan a time ahead)
- In your opinion, what are possible consequences of your meat-consumption habit? Could you assess whether or not your current diet is healthy?

Theme 2: Habit strength

Group 1 & 2:

- Do you cook yourself, cook for your family or does anyone cook for you? If you do, do you have any pressure or dietary requirements from your family members?
- Why is it hard to reduce or remove meat/fish from your daily meal for your family or yourself?
- How do you shop for food? (hints: instantly buy from the available choices from the market, or plan a time ahead)
- In your opinion, what are possible consequences of your meat-consumption habit? Could you assess whether or not your current diet is healthy?

- What has prevented you from switching into a vegetarian diet?
- Among your aforementioned reasons, which one do you think has the greatest influence on your meat-consumption habits?
- Do you think self-control plays an important role in motivating you to break meat-consumption habits and change to a healthier vegetarian diet?

Group 3:

- I understand you used to be vegetarian. How long were you a vegetarian?
- Could you share your overall opinions about vegetarianism?
- Could you share the experiences related to your previous vegetarian diet? (Negative or Positive)
- Could you share the reasons why you decided to stop your vegetarian diet and switched back to your current meat-consumption habit?
- Among your aforementioned reasons, which one do you think have the greatest influence on your decision to switch back to the current meat-consumption habit?
- After experiencing life as a vegetarian, do you think self-control plays an important role in maintaining a healthier diet?

Theme 3: Self-control and willingness to change to a vegetarian diet

Group 1 & 2:

- What are your overall opinions about vegetarianism?
- Why do you have intentions of going vegetarian?
- What are you preparing for the transition to a vegetarian diet in the future?

Group 3:

- Have you ever considered going vegetarian again?

3. Closing

- Thank you for your time and valuable insights.

- Do you have any additional comments, final thoughts, or reflections?
- Confirm that the researcher can possibly have further questions or need clarification, and return the participants can also make contacts asking about the topic.

Appendix 2 Heading

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWEES

To facilitate the collection data for the topic: *"Under which facilitating conditions does Habit override Intention? The case of going vegetarian in Vietnam."* The researcher will conduct focus group interviews for this study.
Để phục vụ cho việc thu thập dữ liệu cho đề tài: "Dưới điều kiện thuận lợi nào thì Thói Quen áp đặt Ý Định? Trường hợp chuyển sang ăn chay tại Việt Nam"
Người nghiên cứu đề tài này sẽ thực hiện các cuộc phỏng vấn theo nhóm tập trung.

With this informed consent, the researcher hopes for participants' agreement to participate in the interview and consent to allow the researcher to freely use the information provided during the interview process.
Với mẫu đơn này, người nghiên cứu mong được sự đồng ý tham gia phỏng và sự đồng ý cho phép người nghiên cứu tự do sử dụng các thông tin được cung cấp trong quá trình phỏng vấn.

☐ I voluntarily agree to participate in the focus group interview. I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequences of any kind.
Tôi đồng ý tham gia phỏng vấn theo nhóm tập trung một cách tự nguyện. Tôi hiểu rằng ngay cả khi tôi đã đồng ý tham gia, tôi vẫn có quyền rời khỏi buổi phỏng vấn, hoặc từ chối trả lời mà không bị bất kì hậu quả gì.

☐ I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within one week after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted. I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có thể từ chối quyền được sử dụng dữ liệu từ cuộc phỏng vấn của tôi trong vòng 1 tuần sau thời gian phỏng vấn. Tôi đã được giải thích về mục đích và bản chất của đề tài, tôi cũng đã có cơ hội để hỏi về đề tài này.

☐ I understand that interview notes and original audio recordings may be retained until 01.07.2024. I understand that I am free to contact the researcher to seek further clarification and information.
Tôi hiểu rằng buổi phỏng vấn của tôi được ghi chú lại, được ghi âm, và có thể được lưu trữ cho đến ngày 01.07.2024. Tôi hiểu rằng tôi có thể liên hệ với người nghiên cứu để hỏi thêm về đề tài nếu muốn.

Signature & Date / *Chữ ký & ngày tháng*

(With full name written / Ghi rõ họ tên)

University of Turku
FI-20014 University of Turku, Finland
Telephone +358 29 450 5000

utu.fi/en

Appendix 3 Data Management Plan

Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPTuuli

Title: Qualitative interview: Under which conditions does habit override intention? The case of going vegetarian

Creator: Ngoc Nguyen

Data Manager: Ngoc Nguyen

Project Administrator: Ngoc Nguyen

Affiliation: University of Turku

Template: General data management plan - University of Turku

Project abstract:
Focus group interviews are conducted to explore the practical context of going vegetarian in Vietnam, further answering what are the facilitating conditions does habit of meat consumption override intention of going vegetarian.

ID: 24589

Start date: 01-09-2023

End date: 30-04-2024

Last modified: 17-04-2024

Qualitative interview: Under which conditions does habit override intention? The case of going vegetarian

1. General description of the data

1.1 What kinds of data is your research based on? What data will be collected, produced or reused? What file formats will the data be in? Additionally, give a rough estimate of the size of the data produced and collected.

Focus group interviews are conducted and audio are recorded. These data will be transcribed into text. Each interview lasts approximately an hour.

1.2 How will the consistency and quality of data be controlled?

Consistency and quality is guided by Interview Guide

2. Ethical and legal compliance

2.1 What legal issues are related to your data management? (For example, GDPR and other legislation affecting data processing.)

Question not answered.

2.2 How will you manage the rights of the data you use, produce and share?

Data is protected by a separate private notice.

3. Documentation and metadata

How will you document your data in order to make it findable, accessible, interoperable and re-usable for you and others? What kind of metadata standards, README files or other documentation will you use to help others to understand and use your data?

Data is not made accessible for any third parties

4. Storage and backup during the research project

4.1 Where will your data be stored, and how will the data be backed up?

The data is stored on the researcher's personal laptop, and a backup version is stored on private Google drive. After 01.07.2017, the data from both sources will be deleted.

4.2 Who will be responsible for controlling access to your data, and how will secured access be controlled?

Only the researcher has the access to the data. No third parties can access to any source of storage.

5. Opening, publishing and archiving the data after the research project

5.1 What part of the data can be made openly available or published? Where and when will the data, or its metadata, be made available?

Outside of the findings of the thesis, data will not be made available

5.2 Where will data with long-term value be preserved, and for how long?

Data will be stored until after the thesis is done, estimated before 01.07.2024

6. Data management responsibilities and resources

6.1 Who (for example role, position, and institution) will be responsible for data management?

Ngoc Nguyen, student, Turku School of Economics.

6.2 What resources will be required for your data management procedures to ensure that the data can be opened and preserved according to FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Re-usable)?

Data will not be stored until after the research is concluded.

Appendix 4 Private Notice

Name of the register	Under which conditions does habit override intentions? The case of going vegetarian in Vietnam
Data Controller	Ngoc Nguyen, pnnguy@utu.fi +358 414 857770
Contact information of the responsible person	Ngoc Nguyen, pnnguy@utu.fi +358 414 857770
Purpose and legal basis for the processing of personal data	The research collects views and experiences of experts of the real estate industry on ambidexterity in service firms with interviews. The legal basis for processing personal data in the Article 6 of the EU General Data Protection Regulation is: ☒Processing is necessary for scientific research (public interest, Point 1a of the Article 6) ☐Data subject has given their consent to processing personal data (consent, Point 1e of the Article 6) ☐Other, what_____
Processed personal data	The following information of the data subjects is stored in the register: Name, Contact, Age, Occupation, and views on meat consumption and going vegetarian
Recipients and recipient groups of personal data	The data will not be transferred or disclosed to parties outside the researcher or his supervisors.
Information on transferring data to third countries	Personal data will not be disclosed to parties outside the EU or the European Economic Area.
Retention period of personal data or criteria for its determination	The recorded interviews will be transcribed into text files and the recordings will be destroyed. Simultaneously, the research data will be anonymized by erasing identifiable personal data. Personal data is stored until 01.07.2024, after that the data is disposed of securely.
Rights of the data subject	The data subject has the right to access their personal data retained by the Data Controller, the right to rectification or erasure of data, and the right to restrict or object the processing of data. The right to erasure is not applied in scientific or historic research purposes in so far as the right to erasure is likely to render impossible or seriously impair the achievement of the objectives of that processing. The realization of the right to erasure is assessed on a case-by-case basis. The data subject has the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority.
Information on the source of personal data	In order to send the invitations to the interview, email addresses or the possibility of forwarding a message are used from Kappelirinne 4B 54, Espoo 02200, Finland. It will only be done after a primary contact and consent to participate has been given to the chosen participants. The other data is collected directly from those who participate in the interviews for the study.
Information on the existence of automatic decision-making, including profiling	The data will not be used for automatic decisionmaking or profiling.