

THE ROLES OF FAMILY CONFLICT AND IDENTITY IN THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

This study extends the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) so that it incorporates family conflict and identity, in order to explain Vietnamese families' fish consumption behaviour. A sample of 487 Vietnamese consumers participated in this study. Structural equation modeling was applied in order to test the relationship between the constructs, and to evaluate their reliability and the validity. As expected, the findings highlight the importance of incorporating the roles of family conflict and identity within the traditional TPB variables. Thus, this study provides a better understanding of the roles of social variables in explaining food consumption behaviour.

Keywords: Fish consumption, preference conflict, identity

Introduction

For many years, researchers have used the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) in order to suggest that human behaviour is greatly influenced by people's preferences and attitudes, social norms, perceived behavioural control and intentions to act (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage and Conner, 2001) [1], [2]. Over the last 20 years, this theory has been extended in order to include additional variables such as social conflict (Olsen, 2004) [19], social norms, social group and social identity (Terry, Hong and White, 1999) [26]. In the area of food consumption behaviour, social variables seem to be of significant importance in terms of the consumption of meals in the home (Olsen, 2001) [17], and some social variables (social norms and descriptive norms) appear to have a consistent influence across different cultures (Tuu et al., 2008) [27]. However, most research that uses TPB in order to explain food consumption behaviour was conducted in developed countries and Western cultures (Armitage and Conner, 2001) [2]. This study has been designed in order to provide an insightful understanding of the roles of family interactions (norms, conflict and identity) in explaining Vietnamese families' fish consumption behaviour.

Theoretical model and hypotheses

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the TPB. Perceived behavioural control is excluded for patrimonial reasons. See Figure 1 for an overview of the constructs and hypothetical relationships of this model.

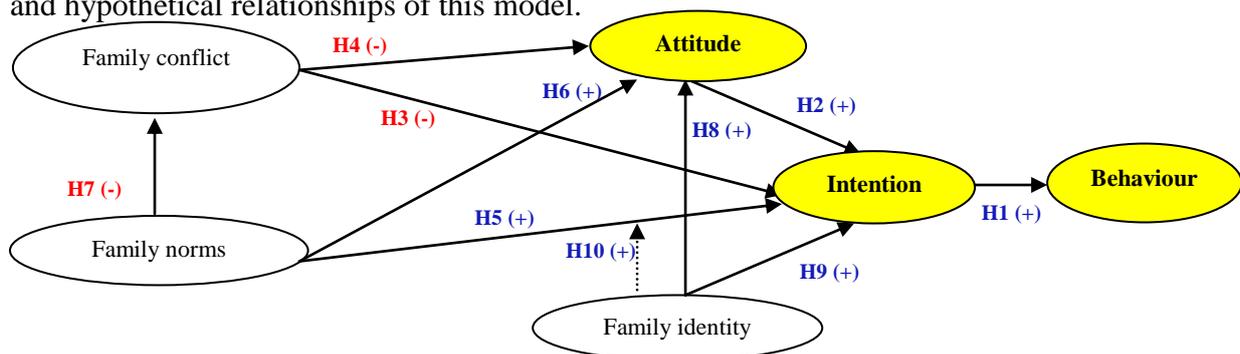


Figure 1. The proposed model

Intention and attitudes

Consumption behaviour is defined as the frequency of an individual's (fish) consumption within a family over a period of time. Meanwhile, intention is the motivation of individuals to eat fish. Some authors have found that intention positively correlates with the frequency of fish consumption (Tuu et al., 2008; Verbeke and Vackier, 2005) [27], [28]. Thus:

H1: Intention is positively related to consumption behaviour.

This research defines attitude as an association within the memory between a given object (fish) and a given summary evaluation of the object (Fazio, 1995) [7]. The attitude-intention relationship has also been well documented in the contexts of food (Armitage and Conner, 2001) [2] and fish (Olsen, 2001; Verbeke and Vackier, 2005) [17], [28]. Thus:

H2: Attitude is positively related to intention to consume.

Preference conflict

This study defines conflict as disagreements regarding preference between family members (Hall, 1987) [9]. Some studies have shown that housewives mostly try to resolve the conflicts between family members (Bourdeaudhij et al., 2002) [3]. Thus, conflict may cause some kind of frustration in relation to intention, and will therefore have a negative impact on an individual's intended actions. Furthermore, if family members have a shared attitude towards eating a meal like fish, the conflict level should be low (Olsen, 2005 in press) [20]. Thus, we propose that:

H3: Family conflict in terms of preference is negatively related to intention.

H4: Family conflict in terms of preference is negatively related to attitude.

Family norms and social identity

This study defines family norms as pressure and expectations arising from the family unit (Ajzen, 1991; Olsen, 2001) [1], [17]. Tuu et al. (2008) indicated that family norm constructs had a significant positive influence on both people's attitudes and intentions towards fish consumption in Vietnam [27]. Thus:

H5: Family norms are positively related to intention.

H6: Family norms are positively related to attitude.

Furthermore, we expect that conflicts will decline or cease to exist if family members have the same attitudes (Olsen and Grunert, 2010) [22]. Thus, this study hypothesises that:

H7: Family norms are negatively related to preference conflict in families.

Family identity is defined as the extent of an individuals' sense of oneness with other family members (Epp and Price, 2008) [6]. Christensen et al. (2004) proposed that if individuals conform to a norm and evaluate their identity positively, they will persist with the same behaviours [5]. Furthermore, an individual is more likely to comply with familial attitudes if they receive normative support regarding their attitudes and behaviours from a relevant group (Johnston and White, 2003) [12]. Smith and Louis (2009) emphasised that

intentions were significantly stronger among people who identified strongly with the reference group [24]. Thus:

H8: Family identity is positively related to attitude.

H9: Family identity is positively related to intention.

We argue that if an individual agrees with the norms of a behaviourally relevant group (strong identity), family identity functions as a moderator in the family norms-behavioural intention relationship (Terry and Hogg, 1996) [26]. Thus:

H10: Family identity is a moderator in the family norms-intention relationship.

Methods

Participants

A sample of 487 respondents aged 18 and over was gathered from three cities in the south of Vietnam. The typical respondent was female (67% of the sample), married (68%) and 33.9 years of age. The average size of a household was 4.6 persons.

Measures

The multiple-items measures of *consumption behavior* (Myrland et al., 2000; Olsen, 2007) [16], [21], *intentions* (Armitage and Conner, 2001) [2], *attitude* (Myrland et al., 2000) [16], *preference conflict* (Olsen and Grunent, 2010) [22], *family norms* (Olsen, 2007; Tuu et al., 2008) [21], [26], and *family identity* (Hogg, Hains, and Mason, 1998; Madrigal, 2001) [10], [13] are adapted from previous studies.

Results

Reliability and validity of the measures

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the predictors. As shown in the table, the measures of the proposed constructs are achieved reliability and convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 1. Descriptive data (means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients and bivariate correlations)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Attitude	5.82	1.25	(.86)					
2. Family conflict	4.28	1.64	-.31	(.83)				
3. Family norms	5.59	1.37	.29	-.36	(.91)			
4. Family identity	6.21	1.16	.39	-.22	.40	(.90)		
5. Intention	4.97	1.80	.62	-.35	.27	.38	(.93)	
6. Behaviour	5.58	2.45	.43	-.28	.26	.28	.63	(.88)

All factor intercorrelations are significant at $p < .01$

Note: Cronbach's alpha are coefficients shown along the main diagonal

Structural analysis of the proposed relationships

Apart from the ($\chi^2 = 286.17$, $df = 178$, p -value = .000), the structural model (Figure 1) is accepted as a good fit as indicated by (RMSEA = .035, GFI = .95, and CFI = .98). As shown in Table 2, the data supports eight of the 10 hypotheses. Furthermore, the final model explains 43% of the variance in intention ($R^2 = .43$) and 39% of the variance in fish consumption behaviour in families ($R^2 = .39$).

Table 2. Results of the hypotheses tests and structural model

Hypothesised paths	Hypothesis	Estimate	t-value	Support/does not support
Intention → Behaviour	H1	.61	13.04***	Support
Attitude → Intention	H2	.51	10.34***	Support
Family conflict → Intention	H3	-.15	-3.22***	Support
Family conflict → Attitude	H4	-.21	-3.95***	Support
Family norms → Intention	H5	.02	.62 ns	Not support
Family norms → Attitude	H6	.10	1.90*	Support
Family norms → Family conflicts	H7	-.36	-7.13***	Support
Family identity → Attitude	H8	.31	5.97***	Support
Family identity → Intention	H9	.15	3.22***	Support

P* < .10; ** p < .01; *** p < .001; ns: non-significant; intention ($R^2 = .43$), behaviour ($R^2 = .39$)

Family identity (FI) as a moderator

The findings indicate that the relationship between family norms and intention in the free model does not indicate as good a match in significance as the constrained model. This suggests that family identity does not moderate the structure of how family norms influence intention (Table 3).

Table 3. Structural parameter estimates for FI as a moderator model for low and high FI groups

Hypothesized path	Low FI (n = 240)		High FI (n = 247)		χ^2 difference ($\Delta df = 1$)
	Estimate	t-value	Estimate	t-value	
Family norms → Intention (H10)	.11	1.56 (ns)	.19	4.11***	($\Delta\chi^2 = 2.138$, p = .14)
R ² Intention	.013		.036		

+ $\Delta\chi^2$ for a gamma set equal the high and low FI subgroup ($\Delta df = 1$): 2.138, p = .14

+ ns = non significant; ***p < .000

Theoretical discussion and implications

This study confirms that there is a positive and significant relationship between intended fish consumption and attitudes towards eating fish in Vietnamese families. These results are similar to the findings of Western studies (Olsen, 2001; Verbeke and Vackier, 2005) [17], [28].

The results indicating that preference conflict in the family is a significant predictor of attitude, and intention. This result may be explained by a sample bias (67% of respondents were female and 68% were married). Specifically, the role of mothers in resolving this type of family conflict in an effort to preserve harmony. Thus, mothers may be the first to compromise their conflicting preferences in terms of fish consumption by shifting their attitude, and intentions, which in turn leads to behavioural changes.

Additional results of this study demonstrate that family norms and family conflict are not independent. This supports the aforementioned explanation, by suggesting that parents prefer to eat fish more often than their children (Olsen, 2001; Verbeke and Vackier, 2005) [17], [28]. The results of this study did not confirm the predicted positive relationship between family norms and intentions. However, these findings are consistent with some previous studies which found that family norms failed to predict intention (Tuu et al., 2008). This can be explained by family practicalities. For example, parents expect/want/encourage their children to eat more fish for their main meals, but children still reject eating fish. In this situation, parents may make concessions in order to accommodate different tastes and preferences.

Furthermore, although our hypothesize has been confirmed by the correlation between family norms and attitudes, the relationship has a low level of significance. This is consistent with the assumption that heterogeneous expectations determine increased variance in fish consumption satisfaction in the family (more conflict).

As predicted, family identity has a strong positive correlation with attitude and intention. In addition, by demonstrating further support for the role of family identity in the prediction of behaviour, the results indicate that the relationship between the two constructs is indirect. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has predominantly shown that social identity influences intentions but has no relationship with behaviour (Terry, Hogg, and White, 1999) [25].

The findings regarding the role of family identity as a moderator in terms of the family norms-intention relationship are not consistent with the results reported by Terry and Hogg (1996). In addition, these results fail to agree with the family identity perspective. This inconsistency can be explained by the profiles of the respondents. The respondents in this study were living in families, compared to Terry and Hogg's (1996) participants who were members of a different, relatively homogeneous reference group (university students). Second, the familial generation gap is more likely to cause conflicts among members regarding their preferences and attitudes towards fish consumption [25].

Overall, the results highlight the need to simultaneously incorporate the role of conflict and family identity into an extended TPB.

Managerial implications

Practically, these research findings provide insights as to how to make the most of opportunities in the market. Most Vietnamese consumers have long been embedded in a collective culture, in which family traditions and the nuclear family (consisting of a mother and father and their children) prevails. Parents feel an obligation to educate their families about healthy living practices. As a result, the fish industry should be proactive in educating parents about the positive aspects of their products (e.g. safety, health, quality, stability and so on) (Olsen and Ruiz, 2008) [23]. Furthermore, the advertising message should be customised for the target market segments. For instance, fish advertisers, women's magazines and cookbooks should all adopt a message that suggests that providing fish as a regular meal is key to a successful life at home (see Moisiso et al. (2004) for a review) [15].

This study focused on fish consumption intentions and behaviours and confirmed that social variables seem to be of vital importance in the consumption of meals at home (Olsen, 2001; Olsen and Ruiz, 2008) [17], [23]. In accordance with this perspective, marketers and industry managers should understand the importance of the family as a unit of consumers, as well as how family norms, family conflicts, and family identity interact in explaining intention, consumption and purchase decisions.

Limitations and future research

First, this research is related to interpersonal conflict regarding preference. Future research should investigate different assessments of sociological ambivalence in order to find aspects of family life where interpersonal conflict is not present. Second, the results presented here were based on cross-sectional data, and thus causal effects can only be inferred. Future research should manipulate one or several of the antecedent's constructs in order to verify the causal relationship between the variables.

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