

**Le comportement d'achat envers les marques de distributeur dans un pays émergent:  
Application au Vietnam**

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**Résumé :(100 mots au maximum)**

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Malgré la présence croissante des distributeurs en Asie, les travaux existants ne permettent pas encore de comprendre le comportement du consommateur asiatique envers les marques de distributeur (MDD). Cette recherche propose et teste empiriquement un modèle de recherche des facteurs explicatifs du comportement d'achat envers les MDD au Vietnam en utilisant les modèles d'équations structurelles (N=272). Les résultats indiquent que l'image-prix des MDD et la valeur perçue des MDD influencent significativement le comportement d'achat envers la MDD, devant l'image du point de vente et l'attitude générale envers les MDD. Ces résultats montrent la spécificité du consommateur vietnamien dans le contexte des pays émergents et présentent plusieurs implications théoriques et managériales.

**Mots-clés :** Marque de distributeur, Perception de l'image, Valeur perçue de la MDD, Attitude envers la MDD, Vietnam

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**Consumer behaviour towards store brands in an emerging market:  
Evidence from Vietnam**

**Abstract :**

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Despite the growing presence of mass retailers in Asia, existing studies do not yet allow to understand Asian consumer behaviour towards store brands (SBs). This research proposes and empirically tests a research model of factors explaining consumer behaviour towards SBs in Vietnam using structural equations modeling (N= 272). Results indicate that SB price-image and SB perceived value significantly influence consumer behaviour towards SBs, before store image perceptions and general attitude towards SBs. These results highlight the specificity of the Vietnamese consumer in the context of emerging markets and have several theoretical and managerial implications.

**Key-words:** Store brand, Image perceptions, SB attitude, SB perceived value, Vietnam

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## **Résumé managérial**

Les distributeurs sont davantage présents en Asie, y proposent des produits divers et participent fortement à la modernisation du secteur de la distribution asiatique. Cependant, les travaux existants se focalisent surtout sur la Chine. Or, la compréhension des comportements de consommation des divers pays asiatiques est nécessaire pour adapter les modèles d'affaires aux divers contextes culturels. Dans cette perspective, cette recherche s'intéresse aux facteurs explicatifs du comportement d'achat envers les MDD au Vietnam. Le marché vietnamien est intéressant pour deux principales raisons. D'une part, l'attractivité de la distribution vietnamienne a subi des sorts différents ces dernières années. Classé premier en 2008 par ATKearney, le pays est sorti du dernier classement 2012 de ce cabinet. D'autre part, les consommateurs vietnamiens vivent une transition cruciale qui implique des choix difficiles : l'acceptation de la modernité tout en gardant les valeurs traditionnelles ancrées notamment dans le confucianisme.

En se basant sur une étude empirique (avec 272 répondants) effectuée auprès des consommateurs de deux enseignes de distribution moderne (Big C et Fivimart) à Hanoi, cette recherche montre que l'image-prix de la MDD et la valeur perçue de la MDD influencent le plus fortement le comportement d'achat envers les MDD. Elles sont suivies par l'attitude générale envers les MDD et la perception de l'image du point de vente. Ces résultats tranchent avec les travaux antérieurs dans les pays émergents qui montrent une influence plus importante de l'image du point de vente dans le comportement d'achat envers les produits MDD. De plus, les variables socio-démographiques comme l'âge, le sexe et le revenu influencent le comportement d'achat envers les MDD dans le contexte vietnamien, indiquant ainsi des opportunités de segmentation des consommateurs vietnamiens tenant compte de l'offre MDD.

Ces résultats indiquent la spécificité du marché vietnamien et suggèrent aux distributeurs de développer différentes stratégies MDD en fonction du positionnement de l'enseigne. Ainsi, l'enseigne Big C aurait intérêt à améliorer l'attitude des consommateurs envers ses MDD en s'appuyant davantage sur les valeurs traditionnelles vietnamiennes (respect de l'autre, le statut social, etc.). Par contre, l'enseigne Fivimart doit améliorer l'image-prix de ses MDD par l'intermédiaire d'actions promotionnelles, mais aussi en favorisant une meilleure expérience des consommateurs avec ses MDD.

Consumer behaviour towards store brands: Evidence from Vietnam

**1. Introduction**

Over the last decade, store brand (SB) market shares have grown substantially within a fairly static retail market. Consequently, SBs have been increasingly investigated by marketing scholars and focused retail managers' interest (Breton, 2004). SBs experienced a phenomenal growth in several product categories (Baltas and Argouslidis, 2007). According to Kumar and Steenkamp (2007), SBs are growing faster than manufacturer brands which use various strategies (e.g. launching new products) to counter SB growth (Gielens, 2012). Retail companies are therefore trying to jump on the bandwagon, as they recognize the potential of standing out from the crowd by offering good SBs. A number of factors have been identified in previous research to explain SB rise, including store-related factors (Grewal et al., 1998), consumer-related factors (Binninger, 2007; Burton et al., 1998; Richardson et al., 1996), economic factors (Lamey et al., 2007), trends related-factors (Ngobo, 2011), etc. Nevertheless, consumer behaviour towards SB products is less understood in the context of emerging countries. Existing research on emerging markets are rather focused on BRICs nations (mainly on China). However, a better understanding of consumer behaviour towards modern products in other emerging markets is needed (Mai and Smith, 2012). For instance, Fastoso and Whitlook (2012) have recently called for more research in Latin America. Retailers are now present in many emerging countries and must have deep insights of SB adaptation strategies in these markets with different cultural contexts.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of image and consumer-related factors on SB purchase behaviour in an Asian country, Vietnam. The Vietnamese market is interesting in the sense that its retail sector attractiveness has shifted over the five last years (from top of the list of AT Kearney 2008 to exit from this list in 2012). Besides, Vietnamese consumers are living a challenge: making a choice between modernity and tradition (Mai and Smith, 2012). Furthermore, previous research indicated that consumers consider SBs as a group of similar brands with common demand drivers across retail chains (Ailawadi, Neslin, and Gedenk 2001). However, no evidence of this was given in emerging countries. Therefore, following Martos-Partal and González-Benito (2011), we investigated two retail chains (Fivimart and Big C) with different background (endogenous versus foreign control) and different format (supermarket versus hypermarket).

The organisation of the paper is as follows: first, we present the theoretical framework and the hypotheses. Second, we explain the research methodology employed. Third, the results are presented. Finally, we discuss the results and highlight implications from the findings.

## **2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses development**

Consumer purchase behaviour towards SBs has been less investigated in emerging countries where SBs market shares are smaller compared to industrialised countries (Diallo, 2012). In the Asian context, previous research has investigated a number of variables in relation to SB purchase behaviour (Jin and Suh, 2005; Cheng et al., 2007; Lupton, Rawlinson and Braunstein, 2010; Wu, Yeh and Hsiao, 2011). However, to our knowledge, no previous research was interested in SB consumer behaviour in the Vietnamese market. Therefore, in this research, we investigate the effect of consumer and image-related factors on SB purchase behaviour in Vietnam in order to give insights about this market in comparison to other Asian or emerging countries.

### **2.1. Effect of image factors**

#### *Store image perceptions*

Martineau (1958) defined store image as consumer perceptions of the store that help consumers to make evaluation of the store. Store image is therefore defined in the shopper's mind, partly by functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes (Collins-Dodd and Lindley, 2003). Store image develops from the objective and subjective perceptions of consumers which are learned over time (Grewal et al., 1998). Previous research has established the relationship between store image perceptions and SB consumer purchase behaviour (Grewal et al., 1998; Jara and Cliquet, 2012) and in emerging markets (Diallo, 2012; Wu et al., 2011). Therefore, we propose:

H1a: Consumers' store image perceptions will have a positive influence on SB purchase behaviour in Vietnam.

#### *SB price-image*

SB price-image is generally considered as a set of factors related to consumers' perceived image and price of SBs, which leads them to buy SB products. Following Martineau (1958) and Mazurky and Jacoby (1986), SB price-image can be defined as a global representation of the relative level of prices of SBs. Although previous research has not widely studied the relationship between store image perceptions and SB price-image, this link has been

established by researchers both in industrialised countries (Jara and Cliquet, 2012) and in emerging markets (Diallo, 2012). Hence, we propose:

H1b: Consumers' store image perceptions will have a positive influence on SB price-image in Vietnam

SB price-image is also reported to influence SB purchase behaviour as it can be a reference point for the consumer when purchasing a SB product. Bao, Bao and Cheng (2011) showed that SB image positively influences SB purchase behaviour. More specifically, Jara and Cliquet (2012) found that SB price-image positively influences consumer behaviour in the French market. In the context of emerging countries, Diallo (2012) showed a significant effect of SB price-image on SB purchase behaviour in Brazil. As a consequence, we derive:

H2: SB price-image will have a positive influence on SB purchase behaviour in Vietnam.

## **2.2. Effect of consumer factors**

### *SB perceived value*

Perceived value can be derived from a comparison between the expected benefits of a product and the sacrifices that a consumer will have to make in order to assure those benefits (Zeithaml, 1988). It is defined as a concern for paying low prices, subject to some quality constraints (Burton et al., 1998). Empirical research has confirmed that perceived value is positively related to SB purchase behaviour and to SB attitude (Ailawadi, Neslin and Gedenk, 2001; Garretson, Fisher and Burton, 2002). Research in emerging countries has also confirmed this relationship (e.g. Jin and Suh, 2005). Therefore, we posit:

H3a: SB perceived value will have a positive influence on SB purchase behaviour in Vietnam

### *Attitude toward SBs*

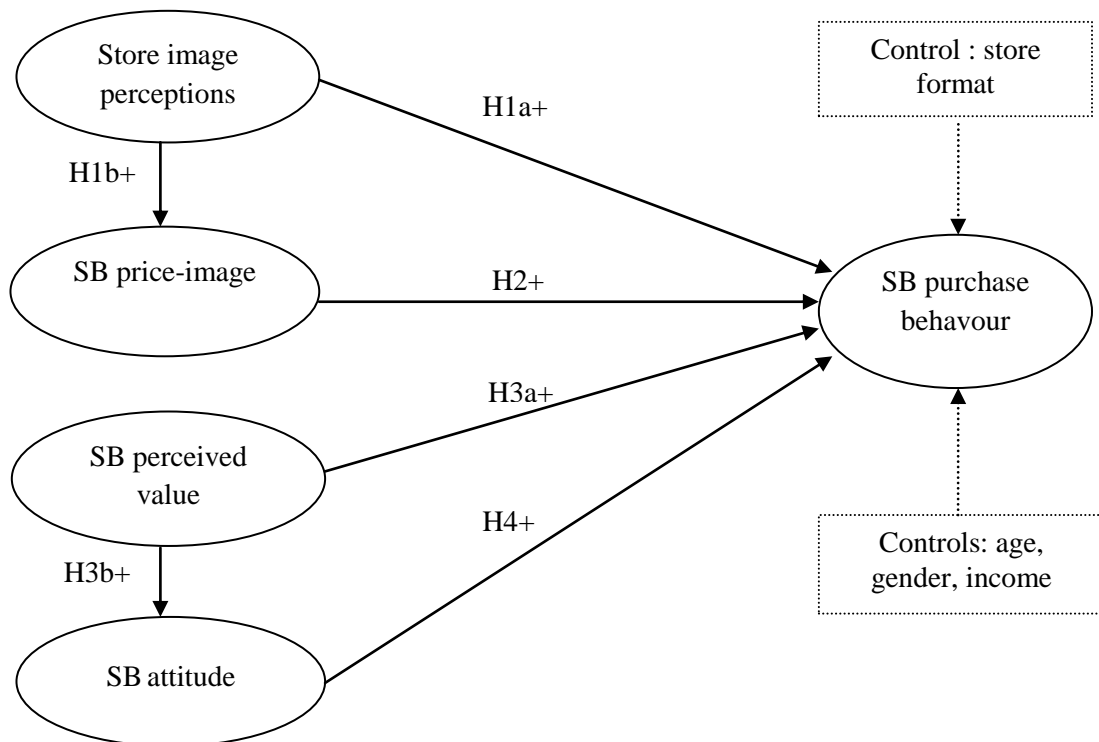
SB attitude is defined as a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to SBs due to product evaluation associated with SB grocery products (Burton et al., 1998). From negative, SB attitude is now changing as retailers launch higher value-added products appealing to a wider range of consumer values, other than simply low price (Kumar and Steenkamp, 2007). Empirical research has identified that value-related measures are positively associated to SB attitude (Burton et al., 1998). Besides, research in emerging countries has established the effect of perceived value on SB purchase behaviour. For instance, Jin and Suh (2005) demonstrated a significant and positive influence of perceived value on SB attitude in South Korea. Therefore, we propose:

H3b: SB perceived value will have a positive influence on SB attitude in Vietnam.

Also, Burton et al. (1998) and Garretson, Fisher and Burton (2002) demonstrated the positive influence of SB attitude on SB purchase behaviour. Similarly, studies in emerging countries have empirically established the positive influence of SB attitude on SB purchase behaviour (Jin and Suh, 2005). Thus, we anticipate that:

H4: SB attitude will have a positive influence on SB purchase behaviour in Vietnam.

Figure 1 presents our conceptual model and summarizes the research hypotheses. The model includes covariates as previous research showed that these variables can influence SB purchase behaviour (see Burton et al., 1998) and should therefore be controlled for.



**Figure 1. Conceptual model and hypotheses**

### 3. Methodology

This research is based on a survey undertaken in the Vietnamese market. Despite the 2012 AT Kearney not ranking of Vietnam, retail businesses have assessed that the Vietnamese market still has a huge potential because Vietnamese consumers' demands have not been fully satisfied. SBs are not yet well developed in Vietnam and no official figure is available about SB market shares in this country. However, retailers are trying to market the product lines with their own brands and believe that in the next years, there will be one product with their

own brand out of four products<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2011 Nielsen Shopper Trends, SBs are 15-30% lower compared to manufacturer brands in Vietnam<sup>2</sup>.

### **3.1. Data collection**

Data were collected using a questionnaire administered by investigators (enrolled in management classes) specially trained for the survey. Respondents were intercepted during their shopping trips in Big C (hypermarket) and in Fivimart (Supermarket) in Hanoi. 272 usable questionnaires were obtained for our analyses. Respondents were well distributed across age, gender, household income and socio-professional categories.

### **3.2. Measurement of variables**

The items were adapted from previous research and were rated on a 7 point-Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree”. Store image perceptions were measured with nine items from Smeijn et al. (2004). SB price-image was measured using six items adapted from previous research (e.g. Zeithaml, 1988; Zielke, 2010). SB perceived value was measured by four items adapted from Burton et al. (1998). SB attitude was measured through four items from Garretson, Fisher and Burton (2002). SB purchase behaviour (operationalised as SB usage) was measured with three items adapted from Ailawadi, Neslin and Gedenk (2001).

## **4. Analyses and results**

### **4.1. Measurement model assessment**

The measurement model was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis following Gerbing and Anderson (1988). The overall measurement model’s fit indices indicated satisfactory model fit. Reliability values (Jöreskog  $\rho$ ) were above the recommended cut-off criteria (0.7). Convergent and discriminant validity are satisfactory based on the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981). See the appendix for more details about measurement items.

### **4.2. Hypotheses testing**

The results (obtained through structural equation modeling with Amos 18) indicated that the predictors explained substantial amounts of variance in the dependant constructs: SB purchase behaviour:  $R^2 = 0.61$ . Table 1 shows the structural coefficients of estimating our model. We can see that all our hypotheses are supported. However, we found differences (on H1a and

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<sup>1</sup> Source : VietNamNet, <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/en/business/7859/sbv-to-keep-close-eyes-on-lenders--investments.html>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Nielsen : <http://fr.slideshare.net/nielsenvietnam/vietnam-grocery-report-2011>



H2) between the retail chains when estimating the model in sub-samples. The inclusion of the covariates in the model showed that they did not influence our substantive findings which remain significantly stable. Furthermore, age ( $\gamma=0.31$ ), sexe (M-F) ( $\gamma=-0.34$ ) and household income ( $\gamma=-0.15$ ) affect significantly SB purchase behaviour in Vietnam.

<b>Fit indices</b>	<b>Total total</b> : Chi-2 ( $\chi^2$ ) = 449.86, df =288, $p<0.00$ ; RMSEA= 0.046 ; CFI = 0.96 ; TLI = 0.95 ; CAIC = 866.02 et $\chi^2/df=1.56$ .		
	<b>Big C sample</b> : Chi-2 ( $\chi^2$ ) = 401.99, df =288, $p<0.00$ ; RMSEA= 0.055 ; CFI = 0.94 ; TLI = 0.93 ; CAIC = 771.64 et $\chi^2/df=1.39$ .		
	<b>Fivimart sample</b> : Chi-2 ( $\chi^2$ ) = 429.28, df =288, $p<0.00$ ; RMSEA= 0.059 ; CFI =0.93 ; TLI =0.92 ; CAIC = 804.23 et $\chi^2/df=1.49$ .		
<b>Hypotheses</b>	<b>Standardized coefficients</b> <sup>(1)</sup>		
	<b>Total</b> (N=272)	<b>'Big C'</b> (N <sub>a</sub> =130)	<b>'Fivimart'</b> (N <sub>b</sub> =142)
<b>H1a+</b> : Store image perceptions → SB purchase behaviour	0.20**	0.13 n.s.	0.24*
<b>H1b+</b> : Store image perceptions → SB price-price	0.60**	0.57**	0.58**
<b>H2+</b> : SB price-image → SB purchase behaviour	0.39**	0.54**	0.20 n.s.
<b>H3a+</b> : SB perceived value → SB purchase behaviour	0.35**	0.29**.	0.43**
<b>H3b+</b> : SB perceived value → Attitude towards SB	0.49**	0.42**	0.55**
<b>H4+</b> : Attitude towards SB → SB purchase behaviour	0.31**	0.27**	0.34**

**Notes:** n.s.= Not significant ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . <sup>(1)</sup> Following Cheung and Lau (2008), we used bootstrapping in Amos (1000 replications, CI=95%) to assess the effect of sample size and found stable results.

Table 1 : Hypotheses testing

## 5. Discussion and managerial implications

This research demonstrates that several factors predict SB purchase behaviour in the Vietnamese market. The results indicate that SB price-image and SB perceived value have the strongest effect on SB purchase behaviour. However, store image perceptions (i.e. layout, merchandise, service) did not seem to be a leading factor on SB purchase behaviour. Compared to previous research in emerging markets (e.g. Jin and Suh, 2005), SB perceived value carries a higher importance for Vietnamese consumers. In line with previous findings in industrialised countries (e.g. Jara and Cliquet, 2012), store image perceptions (i.e. layout, merchandise, service) have a less important effect on SB purchase behaviour. Nevertheless, this result contrasts with previous research in other emerging countries where store image affects more strongly SB purchase behaviour (Diallo, 2012; Wu, Yeh and Hsiao, 2011). Therefore, Vietnamese consumers seem to have different SB consumption patterns in

comparison to either industrialized countries or other emerging markets. These departures may be explained by different cultural values. This means that existing business models should be used with caution in Vietnam.

The results allow us to derive several managerial implications. First, the stronger effect of SB price-image and SB perceived indicate that Vietnamese consumers seem to give a priority to price-related constructs in their purchase of SB products. Therefore, retailers should focus further their SB communication on these dimensions. However, as we think that price does not carry brand attachment, nor store loyalty on the long run, we rather recommend to focus on SB perceived value and on other variables such as brand attitude to bring store loyalty in Vietnam. This recommendation is especially true for 'Big C' where SB price-image affects SB purchase behaviour. Reversely, Fivimart, where SB price-image does not affect SB purchase behaviour, should focus on price to attract more consumers through promotion. This retailer, although a local one, is seen to be expensive. It should therefore focus on SB ranges positioned on price in order to reach less wealthy consumers and to improve store traffic.

Second, retailers in the Vietnamese market should concentrate on measures that improve attitude towards SBs. The effect of this construct on SB purchase behaviour is rather weak and is comparable to Jin and Suh's 2005 findings in South Korea. Therefore, Asian consumers do not seem to have a strong positive attitude toward SBs in general. Consequently, retailers should stress further SB attitude in Asian markets. Strengthening customer experience with SBs, through in-store gustative tests, can help to improve SB perceived quality compared to products offered in informal channels where a large majority of Vietnamese consumers still go shopping. More importantly, leveraging on Vietnamese cultural values (Confucianism, social status, people's respect) would be an important option for modern retailers. In fact, Vietnamese consumers are trying to reconcile modern influences with traditional values, i.e., traditional self versus modern self (Mai and Smith, 2012).

Third, our findings show that age, gender and household income affect SB purchase behaviour. We recommend that more consideration is given to these variables. Specifically, we draw retailers' attention to the influence of age as younger consumers (18-34 years) seem to purchase fewer SBs, but they constitute a major demographic segment in Vietnam (about 30% of the population). Offering SBs ranges based on household income may be also an appropriate strategy as the SB offer is still reserved to consumers with a relative high level of income. Such a democratisation of the retail offer would lead to increased sales in SBs.

**Appendix: Psychometric quality of measurement scales**

Constructs	Dimensions and measurement items <sup>(1)</sup>	Stand. loading <sup>(2)</sup>	$r^2$ <sup>(3)</sup>	AVE
<b>Store image perceptions</b> $\rho = .76$ AVE=.52	<b>Layout:</b> $\rho = .87$	.71	.31	.69
	Physical facilities are visually appealing	.87		
	Store layout is clear	.79		
	Easy to find articles on promotion	.84		
	<b>Merchandise:</b> $\rho = .89$	.80	.31	.74
	Merchandise is available when needed	.85		
	Store offers high quality merchandise	.82		
	Store offers a broad assortment	.91	.29	.72
	<b>Service:</b> $\rho = .88$	.65		
	Employees are knowledgeable	.87		
	Employees are courteous	.80		
Employees are willing to find customer solutions	.88			
<b>SB price-image</b> $\rho = .80$ AVE=.67	<b>SB perceived relative price :</b> $\rho = .84$	.84	.44	.64
	I found low priced SB product ranges in this store compared to other stores	.81		
	All SB products in this store seem to be cheaper than those in other stores	.77		
	I think that the SBs in this store are low priced compared to other stores	.83	.44	.67
	<b>SB perceived benefit:</b> $\rho = .86$	.80		
	I have bought more SB products than I planned to buy in this store	.83		
	I was tempted to buy more SB products in this store than I really needed	.82		
I bought some SB products not on my list in this store	.81			
<b>SB perceived value</b> $\rho = .87$	I am very concerned about SB prices, but I am equally concerned about SB product quality	.88	.46	.63
	When grocery shopping, I compare the prices of different SBs to be sure I get the best value for money	.74		
	When purchasing a product, I always try to maximise the SB quality for the money I spend	.74		
	When I buy SB products, I like to be sure that I am getting my money's worth	.83		
<b>SB attitude</b> $\rho = .86$	For most product categories, the best buy is usually the SBs	.81	.47	.60
	I love it when SBs are available in the product categories I purchase	.75		
	When I buy a SB, I always feel that I am getting a good deal	.74		
	In general, SBs are good quality products	.82		
<b>SB purchase behaviour</b> $\rho = .85$	I buy SBs when I go shopping	.79	.60	.65
	I look for SBs when I go shopping.	.77		
	My shopping cart always contains several SBs products.	.87		

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