

Barriers To the Adoption of Organic Food Products: A Consumer Perspective

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Abstract: The growing concern for health, food safety and environmental sustainability has increased consumer interest in organic food products. However, despite increasing awareness of organic food and its benefits, the actual adoption and regular purchase of organic products remain limited. The present study, entitled “Barriers to the Adoption of Organic Food Products: A Consumer Perspective,” aims to assess the level of consumer awareness regarding organic food products and identify the major barriers influencing their adoption. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 100 respondents, while secondary data were collected from journals, websites, magazines and other relevant sources. The collected data were analysed. The findings reveal that consumers have a high level of awareness, with an overall mean score of 3.77. Awareness of health benefits recorded the highest mean score of 4.12. The Friedman test revealed a significant difference among the barriers, with a Chi-square value of 68.542 and a p-value of 0.000. Price-related barriers ranked first with a mean rank of 4.82, followed by availability and accessibility barriers (4.35) and awareness and knowledge barriers (3.91). The study concludes that price, availability and consumer knowledge are the major obstacles to the adoption of organic food products. Therefore, competitive pricing, improved availability, consumer awareness programmes and reliable certification and labelling are essential to encourage wider adoption of organic food products.

Keywords: Organic Food Products, Consumer Awareness, Adoption, Price Barriers, Availability, Consumer Knowledge, Organic Certification.

Introduction

The growing concern of the health, environmental sustainability and food safety resulted in remarkable growth for the organic food products. Consumers are becoming more conscious about the harmful effects present in the food which has shift towards the adoption of natural harvested foods. Despite the growing awareness, the adoption of organic food products relatively low in many markets, particularly in developing countries. The gap between the awareness and actual purchase behaviour highlights the various barriers that prevent consumers from purchasing organic food products.

Van Doorn, J., & Verhoef, P. C. (Van Doorn, 2015) stated that particular categories with a low promotional intensity. Egoism and price consciousness act as barriers to organic purchases. LABIAD, S., & MARSO, S. (LABIAD, 2024) inferred that depicted high product prices, product scarcity, information, asymmetry, skepticism over product image and eco-labels, and marketing imperfections among other factors as the major hindrances to consumer purchase and or consumption of organic food products. Aschemann-Witzel, J., & Zielke, S. (Aschemann-Witzel, 2017) find that price is the major perceived barrier to purchase. Income is only a partial explanatory factor and is superseded by psychographic variables. Several studies indicate that factors such as high price, limited availability, and lack of trust in certification, low awareness, and insufficient promotional activities restrict consumers’ willingness to purchase organic foods. These barriers create significant challenges for the manufacturer, marketers and policy makers. Understanding these barriers from the consumer’s perspective is crucial for developing effective strategies to increase organic food adoption.

Statement Of the Problem

Organic food products have gained increasing importance among consumers because of their perceived health, nutritional and environmental benefits. However, despite growing awareness about organic food, the actual adoption and regular purchase of organic products remain limited. Consumers may have favourable attitudes towards organic food but may not always translate these attitudes into actual purchasing behaviour. High price is one of the major barriers that may discourage consumers from purchasing organic food products. In addition, limited availability and accessibility may make organic products less convenient to purchase. Lack of adequate awareness and reliable information can create uncertainty regarding the benefits and characteristics of organic food. Consumers may also have concerns about the authenticity of organic products and the credibility of organic certification and labelling. Product quality, freshness, taste and limited variety may further influence consumers' willingness to purchase organic food. Lack of trust in producers, retailers and certification systems can also reduce consumer confidence. Differences in income, education, age and other socio-economic characteristics may influence the extent to which consumers adopt organic food products. Therefore, there is a need to understand the major barriers that prevent consumers from converting their awareness and positive attitudes into actual adoption. In this context, the present study entitled "Barriers to the Adoption of Organic Food Products: A Consumer Perspective" focuses on identifying the major barriers faced by consumers and provides insights that can help producers, retailers and policymakers develop suitable measures to encourage the wider adoption of organic food products.

Review Of Literature

Hughner et al. (2007) reviewed research on consumer perceptions and attitudes towards organic food and observed that consumers associate organic products with health, environmental protection, food safety and better quality. However, the study also identified high prices, limited availability and lack of information as important barriers to organic food consumption.

Padel and Foster (2005) examined consumer motivations and barriers associated with organic food purchasing. Their findings indicated that health, environmental concerns and product quality motivate consumers to purchase organic food, while price, availability and lack of confidence in organic claims can restrict purchasing behaviour.

Aertsens et al. (2009) reviewed consumers' motivations for organic food consumption and found that attitudes, personal values, health concerns and environmental considerations influence organic food choices. The study also highlighted that consumers' perceptions of organic products and their trust in organic production are important in determining purchasing behaviour.

Michaelidou and Hassan (2008) examined consumer attitudes towards organic food and found that health consciousness, food safety concerns and environmental considerations influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. The study suggested that consumers' perceptions of organic food benefits are important for encouraging adoption.

Grunert and Wills (2007) studied consumer understanding and use of nutrition information. Their findings indicated that consumers often face difficulties in interpreting food-related information. This suggests that clear and reliable information is important for helping consumers make informed choices regarding products with specific attributes, including organic food.

Thøgersen (2009) examined consumer decision-making regarding organic food and highlighted the importance of values, attitudes, perceived behavioural control and social influences. The study suggested that positive attitudes alone may not always result in actual purchase behaviour because consumers can face practical and situational barriers.

Aschemann-Witzel and Zielke (2017) examined the price issue associated with organic food consumption and found that price represents an important barrier for consumers, particularly when organic products have a substantial price premium compared with conventional products. The study emphasized the importance of reducing perceived price barriers to encourage wider organic food adoption.

Wier et al. (2008) investigated consumer demand for organic food and found that consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by product attributes, price and consumer characteristics. The study indicated that the development of the organic market depends not only on consumer interest but also on the accessibility and competitiveness of organic products.

Sirieix, Delanchy, Remaud, Zepeda and Gurviez (2013) examined consumer perceptions of organic products and trust-related issues. Their findings indicated that consumer trust is important because consumers cannot directly observe many characteristics associated with organic production. Certification, labelling and credible information can therefore influence consumer confidence.

Rana and Paul (2017) reviewed research on organic food consumption and identified health consciousness, environmental concerns, attitudes and perceived benefits as major factors influencing organic food purchase behaviour. At the same time, price, availability, trust and lack of awareness were identified as important constraints affecting organic food consumption.

Research Gap

Although several studies have examined organic food consumption, much of the existing literature has concentrated on consumer attitudes, motivations, purchase intentions and perceived benefits rather than examining the barriers to actual adoption in an integrated manner. Previous studies have identified individual barriers such as high price, limited availability, lack of awareness, lack of trust, certification concerns and insufficient information, but there is a need to examine how these barriers collectively influence consumers' adoption of organic food products. Further, consumers may have positive attitudes towards organic food but may still be reluctant to purchase regularly because of economic, accessibility and trust-related constraints. There is also a need for greater empirical attention to the gap between intention and actual adoption behaviour. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by examining the major barriers that prevent consumers from adopting organic food products and by identifying the relative importance of these barriers from a consumer perspective. The study is expected to provide useful insights for organic food producers, retailers, marketers and policymakers to develop appropriate strategies for reducing consumer barriers and encouraging wider adoption of organic food products. Mukhtar, S., A., C. M., & Chandra, D. (2023)

Objectives

- To assess the level of consumer awareness regarding organic food products and their benefits.
- To identify the major barriers faced by consumers in adopting organic food products.

Research Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. To carry out the Primary data collection, a structured questionnaire was prepared based on research objectives. Secondary data required for the study undertaken were collected through Websites, Magazines, Journals, and the like. The primary data were collected from 100 respondents for the study.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed with the help of the software package Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for data analysis

Scope Of the Study

The present study focuses on the barriers to the adoption of organic food products from a consumer perspective. The study covers consumers who purchase or have awareness of organic food products and examines the major factors that discourage their adoption. The scope of the study includes price-related barriers, availability and accessibility barriers, awareness and knowledge barriers, taste and quality-related barriers, social and cultural barriers, and economic barriers. It also considers consumers' perceptions regarding the higher price of organic products, limited availability, inadequate knowledge, certification, product quality, family preferences and budget constraints. The study attempts to identify and rank the major barriers influencing consumers' adoption of organic food products. The findings are expected to provide useful information to organic food producers, retailers and marketers for developing suitable strategies to reduce consumer barriers and encourage wider adoption. The study is geographically limited to the selected consumers in the study area and is specifically concerned with consumer perceptions and barriers relating to the adoption of organic food product

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table No 1 The Level of Consumer Awareness Regarding Organic Food Products and Their Benefits

Awareness Dimension	Mean	S.D.	Level	Rank
Awareness of Health Benefits	4.12	0.66	High	1
Awareness of Nutritional Benefits	3.98	0.71	High	2
Awareness of Environmental Benefits	3.84	0.75	High	3
Awareness of Chemical-Free Production	3.76	0.79	High	4
Awareness of Organic Certification	3.52	0.83	Moderate	5
Awareness of Availability of Organic Products	3.41	0.86	Moderate	6
Overall Consumer Awareness	3.77	0.77	High	—

Table No 1 shows that the overall mean score of 3.77 indicates that consumers have a high level of awareness regarding organic food products and their benefits. Among the awareness dimensions, awareness of health benefits obtained the highest mean score of 4.12, followed by nutritional benefits with a mean score of 3.98 and environmental benefits with a mean score of 3.84. Awareness regarding chemical-free production also recorded a high mean score of 3.76. However, awareness of organic certification and availability of organic products recorded comparatively lower mean scores of 3.52 and 3.41, indicating a moderate level of awareness. Therefore, consumers are generally aware of the benefits of organic food, but additional efforts are required to improve awareness regarding organic certification, identification and availability.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant difference among the barriers faced by consumers in adopting organic food products.

H₁: There is a significant difference among the barriers faced by consumers in adopting organic food products.

Barrier	Mean Rank	Chi-Square (χ^2)	p-value	Rank
Price-Related Barriers	4.82	68.542	0.000	1
Availability & Accessibility Barriers	4.35			2
Awareness & Knowledge Barriers	3.91			3
Taste & Quality-Related Barriers	3.28			4
Social & Cultural Barriers	2.71			5
Economic Barriers	1.93			6

The Friedman test shows a Chi-square value of 68.542 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference among the major barriers faced by consumers in adopting organic food products. Price-Related Barriers obtained the highest mean rank of 4.82 and ranked first, indicating that price is the most important barrier. Availability and Accessibility Barriers ranked second with a mean rank of 4.35, followed by Awareness and Knowledge Barriers with 3.91. Taste and Quality-Related Barriers ranked fourth, while Social and Cultural Barriers and Economic Barriers occupied the fifth and sixth positions respectively. Thus, the findings indicate that price, availability and consumer knowledge are the major barriers to the adoption of organic food products

Suggestions

- Organic food producers and retailers should offer competitive prices, discounts, promotional schemes and smaller package sizes to make organic products more affordable for consumers.
- Retailers should increase the availability of organic food products in supermarkets, local markets and online platforms and ensure a consistent supply to make purchasing more convenient.
- Producers, retailers and government agencies should conduct awareness programmes about the meaning of organic food, its health and environmental benefits, certification standards and methods of identifying genuine organic products.
- Organic food marketers should provide clear certification and labelling, maintain consistent product quality and communicate reliable information about production and quality standards to increase consumer confidence and encourage adoption

Conclusion

The present study concludes that the adoption of organic food products among consumers is influenced by several important barriers, including price, availability and accessibility, awareness and knowledge, taste and quality, social and cultural factors, and economic conditions. Among these barriers, price-related barriers emerge as the major concern, indicating that the higher price of organic food products can discourage consumers from purchasing them regularly. Availability and accessibility barriers also play an important role, as limited availability and inconsistent supply can reduce consumers' willingness to adopt organic products. Lack of adequate awareness and knowledge regarding organic products, certification and their benefits may further create uncertainty among consumers. Taste and quality perceptions, family preferences and budget constraints also contribute to the reluctance to choose organic food products. Reducing price-related difficulties, improving product availability, strengthening consumer awareness and providing reliable information can encourage wider adoption of organic food products. Therefore, coordinated efforts by producers, retailers, marketers and

policymakers are essential to overcome these barriers and promote sustainable consumer adoption of organic food products.

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