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## A Study On Challenges Faced By Consumer While Purchasing The Organic Food Products

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### Abstract

Consumer adoption of organic food remains limited despite increasing awareness of its perceived health and environmental benefits. This study synthesizes global literature and empirical findings to identify prominent barriers. High price premiums—stemming from labor-intensive farming, lower yields, and certification costs—consistently emerge as the most significant hurdle. Limited availability and product variety, along with accessibility issues such as inconvenient store locations, poor shelf placement, and shorter shelf life, further reduce consumer uptake. Skepticism and mistrust about labeling and certification—driven by green washing, farm washing, and complex certification systems—create uncertainty about product authenticity and safety. Additional psychological and behavioral barriers include value-action and intention-behavior gaps: even with positive attitudes, consumers often refrain from purchasing due to budget constraints, habitual habits, time pressure, and limited knowledge. These findings highlight the need for policy, industry, and retailers to improve price competitiveness, expand distribution, enhance transparency, and strengthen consumer education to effectively bridge the gap between intent and behavior in organic food consumption.

**Keywords:** Green washing, farm washing, habitual habits, Time pressure.

### Introduction

Despite growing consumer awareness of the health and environmental benefits of organic food, its adoption remains constrained by multiple barriers. Prominent among these is the significantly higher cost compared to conventional products—often 50% or more—which deters price-sensitive shoppers, especially during times of economic pressure. The limited availability and accessibility of organic items in mainstream retail outlets and rural markets further restrict purchase opportunities, forcing consumers to rely on specialty stores or farmers' markets.

Another critical impediment is consumer mistrust and confusion around labeling and certification. Instances of misleading “organic” claims—such as products containing only minimal organic ingredients—have eroded confidence in the authenticity of such products . This mistrust compounds uncertainty about the true functional and safety benefits, especially when nutrient differences between organic and conventional foods are minimal.

Furthermore, a persistent value–action gap means that even consumers who express positive attitudes toward organic food often do not follow through with purchases. This disconnect is largely attributed to habit, convenience, and financial trade-offs. Complementing this is a knowledge barrier: insufficient awareness about organic’s advantages and unclear labeling hinder consumers' understanding and confidence.

Beyond consumer-focused issues, systemic factors also play a role. Small farmers face burdensome organic certification and compliance processes, while supply chain complexities—such as limited certified-input suppliers and high logistics costs—lead to erratic offerings and stock shortages . Collectively, these barriers reinforce each other, making the organic food market less mainstream and more niche than its potential suggests.

This introduction offers a structured overview of the interconnected economic, informational, trust, behavioral, and system-level challenges that restrict consumer adoption of organic food. Let me know if you'd like to emphasize any specific region or include additional data!

### Statement of Problems

1. Organic products often cost significantly more than conventional counterparts due to labor-intensive practices, certification fees, and lower yields—making them inaccessible for many, especially in emerging economies
2. Consumers frequently report difficulty finding organic food in mainstream retail channels or local markets, with limited product types available .
3. Doubts around the authenticity of organic labels, stemming from confusing certification processes, “greenwashing,” and inconsistent standards, erode consumer confidence
4. Low awareness of organic standards, health benefits, and environmental advantages leads to skepticism and reduced uptake.
5. Even with positive attitudes toward organic food, many consumers fail to purchase due to convenience, habits, or cost constraints—a classic value-action gap
6. Small-scale producers face burdensome certification costs, while fragmented supply chains limit distribution and cause inconsistent product quality .

### Objectives of the Study

To address these issues, this study aims to:

1. To measure the relative impact of price, availability, trust, knowledge, and behavioral factors on organic food purchase decisions in a target market (e.g., urban Indian consumers).
2. To Examine consumer perceptions of organic certifications and identify specific sources of confusion or mistrust.
3. To Assess current levels of knowledge regarding organic benefits, and pinpoint areas—such as health, environmental impact, and certification—where educational efforts could increase purchase intent.
4. To Explore why favorable attitudes toward organic foods do not convert into purchases, and identify interventions (e.g., pricing incentives, marketing nudges) to help close this gap.
5. To Understand how producer certifications, retailer availability, and supply chain practices affect product access and market penetration.

This structured approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of both demand-side (consumer attitudes, awareness, behavior) and **supply-side** (pricing, distribution, certification) factors inhibiting mainstream organic food consumption.

### **1. High Cost**

Organic foods often come with a premium price tag due to factors such as labor-intensive farming practices, lower yields, and certification expenses. This higher cost can be a significant barrier, especially for consumers with limited financial resources. For instance, in India, the affordability of organic products is a major concern among consumers.

### **2. Limited Availability and Accessibility**

Organic products are not always readily available in all markets. In many regions, including parts of India, consumers report difficulties in finding organic foods in nearby stores, leading to inconvenience and reduced purchase frequency.

### **3. Lack of Awareness and Information**

Many consumers are unaware of the benefits of organic foods or how to identify genuine organic products. This lack of knowledge can lead to skepticism and reluctance to purchase organic items.

### **4. Trust Issues and Mislabeling**

Instances of mislabeling and fraudulent claims have eroded consumer trust in organic labels. Without stringent regulations and certification processes, consumers may doubt the authenticity of products labeled as "organic."

### **5. Perishability and Shelf Life**

Organic products often have a shorter shelf life due to the absence of preservatives. This can lead to concerns about spoilage and waste, deterring some consumers from purchasing organic foods.

### **6. Confusion Between "Organic" and "Local"**

Consumers sometimes conflate "organic" with "local," assuming that locally produced foods are automatically organic. This confusion can impact purchasing decisions and perceptions of product quality.

### **7. Value-Action Gap**

Even when consumers express a preference for organic products, this doesn't always translate into actual purchases. Factors such as price sensitivity, convenience, and habitual buying behaviors contribute to this discrepancy between values and actions.

### **8. Certification Challenges for Small Farmers**

Obtaining organic certification can be costly and complex, particularly for small-scale farmers. This limits the number of certified organic producers, affecting the availability and diversity of organic products in the market.

## 9. Misleading Marketing Practices

Some companies engage in "farm washing," using imagery and language that suggest products are organic or locally sourced when they are not. Such deceptive practices can mislead consumers and undermine trust in genuine organic products.

## 10. Supply Chain and Distribution Issues

The organic food supply chain can be complex, with challenges in transportation, storage, and maintaining product integrity. These issues can lead to inconsistent product quality and availability, affecting consumer satisfaction.

### SUGGESTIONS;

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from policymakers, industry stakeholders, and consumer advocacy groups to enhance transparency, education, and infrastructure in the organic food sector.

- **Subsidies & Incentives:** Governments and retailers can offer subsidies or tax benefits to lower organic prices, making them more affordable.
- **Bulk & Bundle Offers:** Retailers can promote family-sized packs or bundle deals to reduce per-unit costs.
- **Clear Certification Labels:** Utilize recognized organic logos (e.g., USDA, EU) and include "Certified by \_\_\_" statements to assure authenticity.
- **Adopt Traceability Tech:** Tools like QR codes, block chain tracking, and farm profiles enable consumers to verify product origin and journey.
- **Promote Participatory Certification:** Engage consumers and local farmers in grassroots certification systems (PGS) to build regional trust networks.
- **Educational Campaigns:** Create clear, accessible materials outlining organic standards, health benefits, and environmental impacts to close knowledge gaps.
- **Partner with Trusted Voices:** Collaborate with health professionals, influencers, or NGO advocates to deliver credible information.
- **Broaden Distribution:** Ensure organic products are stocked in mainstream supermarkets and local grocery stores—not just specialty outlets.
- **In-Store Promotion:** Highlight organic sections through signage, dedicated shelf space, promotions, and informative displays.
- **Nudges & Incentives:** Implement loyalty programs, trial samples, coupons, or targeted discounts to encourage first-time or repeat organic purchases.
- **Simplify Choices:** Focus on showcasing high-impact staples (e.g., organic apples, milk) to reduce decision fatigue and build gradual adoption.
- **Stakeholder Co-creation:** Involve consumers, producers, certification bodies, retailers, and regulators in initiatives to collaboratively improve trust and transparency.
- **Community Engagement:** Run farm visits, workshops, open-farm days, and virtual tours to foster direct connections and accountability.

By integrating these strategies, stakeholders—ranging from policymakers and certification bodies to retailers and community groups—can work in tandem to reduce economic, informational, trust, behavioral, and systemic barriers, enabling broader, sustained adoption of organic food products.

## Conclusion

Consumers encounter a complex array of interrelated barriers that collectively hinder widespread adoption of organic food. The most prominent challenge remains the high price premium, often 30–50% or more, stemming from labor-intensive practices, certification fees, and lower yields—this cost paradoxically reinforces both the perceived value and the affordability constraint.

Compounding cost issues are limited availability and accessibility—organic products often occupy niche segments in specialty stores or select supermarket aisles. As studies from India, China, Greece, and other markets show, inconvenient locations and restricted variety weaken purchase frequency and interrupt habitual buying patterns.

Consumers also grapple with trust uncertainties, spurred by inconsistent certification standards, “green washing,” and doubts about genuine benefits. Historical skepticism—half of consumers in some surveys distrust the organic label as a marketing ploy—exacerbates this barrier.

Insufficient consumer knowledge further undermines confidence. Many individuals lack clear understanding of organic standards, health impacts, and environmental implications—this knowledge gap diminishes their willingness to pay premiums and reduces perceived value.

Even when consumers express pro-organic attitudes, a notable value–action gap emerges: positive intentions frequently fail to result in purchases. This discrepancy is fueled by factors like price sensitivity, convenience hurdles, and entrenched habits.

In sum, the intersection of economic constraints, logistical limitations, trust deficits, informational shortfalls, and behavioral dynamics reinforces the marginal status of organic food in mainstream markets. Overcoming these obstacles requires a holistic strategy: lowering price differentials, expanding distribution, building transparent certification systems, enhancing consumer education, and designing behaviorally informed purchase incentives. Only then can organic food move beyond niche appeal toward equitable and mainstream adoption.

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