

ENHANCING FOOD SAFETY PERCEPTIONS: THE ROLE OF ORGANIC LABELS ON PRIVATE BRAND FOODS**Keshava Reddy Depa and David Nguyen**

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Email: dkeshava@amazon.com**ABSTRACT**

The organic food industry has been growing significantly, and the labels act as a tool for produced differentiation. This research aims to understand consumer response to organic labeling for global, local, and private brands. The research identifies four primary motivations for purchasing organic food in the U.S. through detailed interviews and two experiments: health, recreation, ecology, and food. Concerning the motives of consumers, the experiments examine how organic labels develop perceptions regarding brands, mostly regarding different types of brands. This study establishes that organic labels positively influence the food products' perceived healthiness, taste, sustainability, and safety, with private brands exploiting the value added by the organic stamp more than the global and local brands. This work also finds out that while organic labeling enhances the consumers' purchase intentions; it does so with the ability to make them pay a premium price. These effects are much more apparent for private brands that usually suffer from the perception issue against already established international and domestic giants. According to the study, organic certification is a highly effective tool to differentiate brands and private labels; thus, the findings for marketers interested in using organic labels to increase consumer trust and, consequently, sales are very pertinent. This research contributes to understanding the variable of organic labeling across various types of brands. It provides a comprehensive insight into the consumer behavior of this category of foods, providing insight into future marketing for the OFM industry.

Keywords; *Organic labeling, Food safety, Private brand foods, Consumer perceptions, Purchase intention, Organic certification, Brand differentiation, Global brands, Local brands, Premium price willingness*

1. INTRODUCTION

In particular, the production and consumption of organic foods have become very popular in the last decade and have moved from the periphery to the mass consumer market. Despite the fact the food market has not increased in size and has only remained in constant demand, the sales of organic food products have skyrocketed, featuring annual growth rates in sundry countries at around 30%. In the first stage, organics were labeled products, viewed as a niche market, associated with a specific lifestyle or green consumer segment. Still, the increasing trend in the consumption of healthy, green products has enabled the elongation of the market and made organic products a common sight in all the food group categories. This sort of rapid growth has not only revolutionized the way consumers make purchasing decisions but has also made the market much more saturated. Brands often look for the next best way to stand out. One of the tools used in this effort is the label of organic production, an important way of standing out. It is thus a fair certification undertaken by independent accreditation organizations. It is understood to mean compliance with certain quality standards, avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and compliance with environmentally friendly agriculture. Health consciousness, eco-preservation, safety in food consumption, and constant quality have made organic labels a significant part of branding in the field of foods. The strength of these labels is not only a sign of a product's quality but also an influence on the view consumers have about the product. Organic labels help shape consumers' perceptions of the health benefits, environmental impact, taste, and safety of the food products they purchase and their intentions to pay a premium price.

Even though there is increased emphasis on using organic labeling in marketing, a literature review of its impact on brand differentiation, especially across brand categories, is still scarce. A large part of the literature has therefore been devoted to 'defining' or 'profiling' 'organic consumers', and studying their behaviors, more often than not using 'organic foods' as a most diverse unified commodity. These sorts of studies normally involve investigating specific factors that influence the choice, for instance, concern over health, environmental issues, or food hygiene, but do not examine the effect of brand types on consumer attitudes to organics. Specifically, few studies are exploring how the concept of organic labels impacts the perception of global, local, and private brands.

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These brands may have different meanings for customers when they are being labeled. This gap in the literature leaves important questions unanswered: Could brand nuances impact how a consumer interprets organic? To what extent can private brands capitalize on the organic certification as global or local brands? This study aims to answer these questions by examining how organic labels impact consumer evaluations and buying intentions toward distinct forms of food brand images. It specifically examines how global, local, and private brands are perceived when labeled as organic, focusing on four primary consumer motivations: Health, pleasure, environmental preservation, and food hygiene. This study will also establish whether organic labeling is a viable way of creating brand differentiation among these brands. Following organic certifications as the primary source of information, the research seeks to identify specific alterations in the Perceived Brand Image and buyer characteristics arising from Organic labels while distinguishing between different brand categories.

The literature on this subject has been developed rather inadequately to highlight organic labeling and its connection with brand differentiation, which is important to private labels. Private brands still need consumer confidence to convince them that their brand trusts and buys their products, let alone have the prestige and credibility of most international or domestic brands. However, introducing organic labels could make it even more ground where private brands can improve their look and sell to consumers. Conversely, global brands may face challenges of increased perceived environmental costs associated with the logistics that affect the strategic positioning of brands in the organic foods market. Local brands, which are closely connected with the values of community and sustainable production, can profit from utilizing the organic labeling scheme to continue the set values. Therefore, by exploring how organic labels generate perceptual differences across these brands, this research broadly synthesizes how organic certification affects customers. How the organic label will influence perceived health benefits, taste, environment friendliness, and safety of foods globally, locally, and for private brands shall be examined, giving key insights to marketers on the impact of using organic labeling as a marketing differentiation tool. Also, the research will investigate whether the use of organic labels intensifies customer purchase intents and the extent of their willingness to pay a premium price for current, especially private brands, which could benefit most from certification. In conclusion, this study affords a vital complement to the debate over the role of organic labeling in creating brand distinctiveness in the food industry. It aims to explore how this icon operates not only as a sign of quality but also as a purposeful resource for manipulating the consumer's healing and buying decisions. Therefore, brands need to stay completely updated on how to get the most out of organic labeling, primarily for further market consolidation and to ensure the maximization of organic branding.

2. STUDY 1: VERIFYING THE MAIN PURCHASING MOTIVES FOR ORGANIC FOOD IN USA

The drivers of organic food consumption have been examined in numerous countries across the globe, yet few of those studies concentrate on the United States market. In the current global environment, it is vital for marketers and policymakers who target the organic foods market in the USA to appreciate why consumers in this country purchase organic products in the first instance. This research aims to corroborate and enhance previous findings by presenting the characteristics of the organic food market as well as the key factors affecting purchasing in the United States (Aaker, 1996). Previous studies provide a broad cross-section of factors that affect the decision to consume organic foods (Lockie et al 2002). Some of these reasons include the need to improve one's health due to some underlying diseases, the need to enhance environmental conservation, the need for food safety, and social reasons, which include the need to support the local farmers and government policy in matters of farming, among others. However, these factors may not be at par in all the markets, given that the export market is diverse (Nyati, 2018). Due to the fact that consumers in the US may have different motivations towards organic products, based on the cultural and economic differences from a non-Western context, this study identifies which of the following motivations are highly important for American consumers to fill the gap in cross-cultural organic consumption literature.

The technique used to explore these motivations was semi-structured interviews based on the laddering interview technique. Similar to the method used in many aspects of market research, it allows the researcher to delve beneath a 'yes' or a 'no.' The interviews took place with 12 participants, which were chosen to reflect the different key demographic characteristics of the US consumers. The participants were selected from various places, such as

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large cities, food shops, and shops selling organic foods, hence having a cross-section of the population. The sample was slightly skewed towards females, with 50% female samples, and their mean age was 39.5 years. Among the seven participants of the study, five were ex-regular consumers of organic foods, while seven had consumed organic food only on selected occasions. All respondents had a minimum understanding of organic food, especially concerning pesticide-free farming practices. In addition, the participants were asked to nominate the major attributes of organic foods and rate them in terms of relevance. Such attributes comprised nutritional quality, impacts on the environment, flavor, and food safety (Babin et al. 1994). The laddering technique made the participants expound on why they considered each factor important, thus helping to better understand their drivers. The results revealed four consistent and significant motivations for purchasing organic foods across all participants: the safety of the high nutrient density, farming without chemicals and pesticides, chemical residues on conventional food, and the good flavor of organic foods. However, regarding these factors, the following motives were ranked for consideration as significant: Motiv. 2, Motiv. 1, Motiv. 3, and Motiv. 4. In all the cases, these four motives appeared to be most essential.

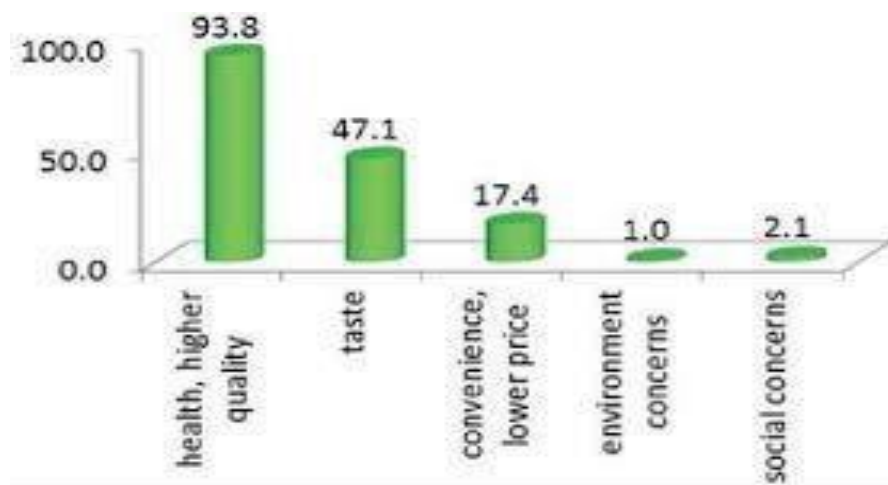


Figure 1: purchasing motives for organic food in USA

Superiority of Nutrient Density

Health factors whereby consumers wanted to build their healthier diets were the main determinants in their decision to purchase organic foods. Some participants, the majority of them, saw organic foods as being much healthier than inorganic foods (Baker et al 2004). 'Organic food' was defined in relation to the subject and linked to greater nutritional density, inclusive of vitamin, mineral, and antioxidant value. Some of the participants' perceived health benefits of organic food were associated with their beliefs that organic farming respects the authenticity of the soil and the food it produces. Some were apprehensive about any findings that sought to downplay the benefits of eating organic foods, but most of the readers seemed to gain healthier and safer products from organic foods (De Pelsmacker et al 2005). For instance, experienced organic consumers or habitual buyers of organic foods were more likely to perceive organic products as their anticipatory approach to improved health.

Sustainable Agricultural Management Techniques

Secondly, recurring concerns of environmental impacts became apparent as the rationale for action. A large number of participants expressed the perceived positive effects of organic farming on the natural environment, excluding synthetical pesticides and fertilizers (Verhoog et al 2003). Conventional farming was perceived, on the other hand, as a more sustainable way of managing the farm since it improved the physical quality of the soil and water and enhanced the issues of Biodiversity (Brunk, 2010). Certain participants pointed out that they preferred to buy organic food products because they thought that it is safer for agriculture (Hjelmar 2011). This concern was particularly high among consumers with a perception of climate change and environmental degradation in the world. Participants who deemed themselves as environmentally friendly looked at organic foods as an individual reflection of society but also as a tool to forward the cause of environmental conservation.

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Pesticide Residue Concerns

Another reason that consumers bought products labeled with organic certification was food safety, especially pesticides. Most of the respondents assumed that organic food was safer compared to inorganic food due to the lack of toxic chemical sprays. This notion of safety was the key factor in their decision to go for this particular segment—organic rather than nonorganic segment—though the function and features of both segments were similar (Canayari et al 2002). People associated the aspects of not using pesticides with such wider health-related issues as the unknown long-term impacts of chemical use on people and the earth. Some consumers went organic to guard themselves and their families against future dangers from pesticides in food items. When it came to labeling organic foods as chemical-free, the consumers who reacted most positively were those who have children or who were worried about long-term health effects.

Better Taste

Last but not least, the perceived taste was mentioned by several participants as influencing their organic food consumption. Some participants thought that organic foods were fresher in taste, and they preferred the taste of such food products over that of foods that were not organic. This belief was expressed especially in categories like fruits and vegetables, as well as dairy products. Although in some of the interviews, participants did not rate taste as the key determiner, the use of taste emerged as a factor that played a key role in reinforcing reasons participants had for consuming organic foods (Chrysochoidis, 2000). The superior quality of organic products was explained through the practices that employed traditional agriculture techniques, lack of inclusion of preservatives, and slow growth of crops as compared to modern farming techniques. This factor also affects the consumers' quality of seeking or experiencing more romantic, traditional artisan-quality food. The four motives given above- nutritional value, environmental friendliness, safety, and taste- were the most influential motives for buying organic foods in the US. Still, there were some more secondary motives as well (De Pelsmacker et al 2005). Several participants said they may have bought foods to support local farms or decided against products linked with extensive factory farming systems. Some others observed that there is a tendency to ratchet up the organic choice for moral purposes, including animal and farm owner treatment and patronizing of small family companies. Although these motivations were not quite coherent across participants, they also influenced consumer behavior.

This research validates that American customers care about the health benefits, environmental conservation, quality, and safety of the produce they consume, specifically the organic products. These results are in line with the literature, though they stress the phenomenon considering the specificity of the US market, focusing on increased health and ecological literacy among consumers. By discovering these attributes, this study helps the marketers who intend to attract US consumers and the policymakers who are interested in targeting people's consumption of organic foods more effectively (Diamantopoulos et al 2003). The study also indicates that it is relevant to highlight the health and environmental diets that come with organic food in the marketing techniques used. Therefore, the three segments that give consumers incentives to purchase organic foods are health, environment, and safety, and sensory appeal segments were considered significant in consumers from the United States. These motivations embody consumers' overarching need for green products, food hygiene, and quality, which present relevant insights for future marketing and merchandising communication and product designs in the organic food market.

Table 1: Insights and Motivations Driving Organic Food Purchases in the USA

Aspect	Details
Study Title	Verifying the Main Purchasing Motives for Organic Food in the USA

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Objective	Identify and validate key motivations driving organic food purchases among American consumers.
Research Technique	Semi-structured laddering interviews with 12 participants from diverse demographics.
Sample Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mean age: 39.5 years - 50% female - Consumers with basic knowledge of organic food and pesticide-free farming practices - Participants from cities, food shops, and organic food retailers - 5 regular and 7 occasional consumers
Key Motivations Identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safety: Chemical-free, pesticide-free products ensuring food safety - Health: High nutrient density and improved diets - Environmental Concerns: Sustainable farming practices and reduced environmental impact - Taste: Perceived better and fresher taste
Ranked Motivations (Significant)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nutritional Density 2. Environmental Sustainability 3. Food Safety 4. Superior Taste
Findings on Nutritional Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organic food perceived as healthier - Linked to authenticity and soil respect in farming - Experienced consumers emphasized health benefits
Findings on Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organic farming seen as environmentally friendly - Preferred due to exclusion of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers - Linked to climate change and conservation
Findings on Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Associated with avoidance of toxic pesticide residues - Important for consumers concerned with long-term health risks and safety, especially parents
Findings on Taste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organic foods perceived to have fresher, superior taste - Taste as a secondary reinforcement factor
Secondary Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for local farmers - Opposition to factory farming - Moral reasons (animal and farm owner treatment)
Implications for Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlight health benefits, environmental conservation, and food safety in messaging - Cater to ecological and health-conscious consumers - Align product design with consumer values
Conclusion	American consumers prioritize health, environment, and safety in organic food purchases, with sensory appeal as a key factor. These insights aid marketers and policymakers in targeting organic food markets effectively.

3. STUDY 2: THE IMPACT OF ORGANIC LABELS ON BRAND PERCEPTION

Organic labels, therefore, play a vital role in changing the perception that consumers have of a product. Given the ongoing growth of the OF sector, one of the tasks facing marketers who seek to use organic certification is exploring its impacts on brand image with reference to different types of brands: global, local, and private. This study explores how organic labeling impacts key consumer perceptions: He identified the generic quality attributes as health, hedonistic (taste and texture sensations), physical conditions of the environment, and hygiene, respectively (Nyati, 2018). Through these variables, the study affirms the impact of organic labeling on Brand

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Attitude and Purchase Intention. The experiment focused on three brand types: The categories of brands that Level opened in Macau include global brands, local brands, and private brands. The idea was to determine whether or not organic labeling affects a consumer's viewpoint of each brand type (Dodds et al 19191). Data was collected through an online questionnaire, which randomly assigned 414 participants to 6 experimentation conditions by brand category with or without the organic label. Participants were verbally prompted to indicate their level of agreement with each brand along the four dimensions of healthiness, hedonic value, environmental friendliness, and food safety.

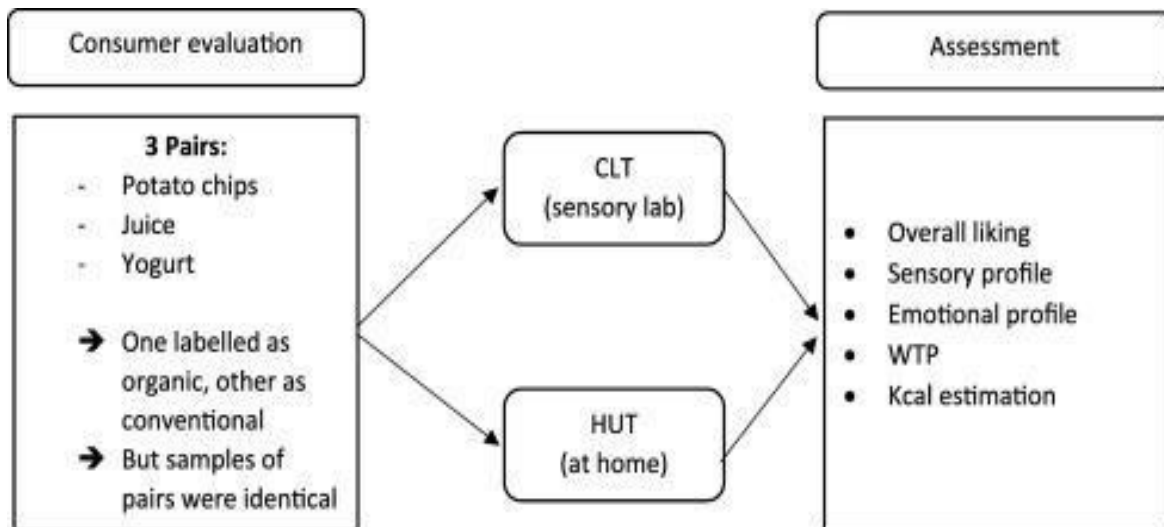


Figure 2: impact of organic labels on brand perception

3.1. Perceived Healthiness

Product attribute or perceived healthiness is the consumers' perception of the health value of a specific product. Organic foods are thus considered to be healthier than regular standard foods in the sense that they have more nutritional qualities and contain little or no chemicals. That is why the use of organic labels on products, especially food products, is considered to provide maximum and superior health benefits because they do not use pesticides and other artificial chemicals for farming. Analysis of the findings from the experiment showed that the application of organic labels improved perceived healthiness for all three brands. It was also found that consumers consider brands with organic labels to be much healthier than other brands that do not have the label. This was especially felt in the private brands, which normally experience low health perception as compared to global and local brands. The use of organic labels on private brands has made them target consumers with a healthy perception, thus transforming the private brands into the fairground with global and local brands. Controlling for this variable is consistent with prior investigations suggesting that in people's perception, organic foods are their perceived health benefits (Baker et al., 2004). The organic label further enhanced the positive health association for global and local brands. Even without the organic label, these brands retained fairly healthy perceptions, and it may well be this factor that impacts health benefits the most (Eagly & Chaiken 1998). The organic certification indeed had a reinforcing effect on the company while not being as beneficial as for private brands, which exploited the label most.

3.2. Perceived Hedonism

The variable of perceived hedonic value refers to the perceived fun of consuming a product. For food brands, this includes taste, flavor, and touch and feel of the food product. People associate organic products with superior taste and sensory appeal, resulting from methods used in the production process that positively impact taste. As for the experiment, conclusions drawn indicated that there was a positive correlation between the perceived hedonic value because of the proximity of the product to the organic label. Both branded and non-rational organic-labeled products received higher ratings regarding the product being more pleasurable and satisfying to consume. Yet,

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that was the case; consumers felt that organic food was of better taste, and this is the major reason why many people go for organic products. Especially private brands received the highest increase in perceived hedonic value when labeled organic. Usually, private brands struggle to create intense hedonic value messages compared to global or local brands; however, incorporating the organic label helped create a boosted hedonic value message that appealed to private brands. On the other hand, the global and local brands that were expected to deliver a good taste did not record a huge improvement in the hedonic value due to the organic certification. However, there was still a positive association between the organic label and hedonic and sensory pleasure

3.3. Perceived Environmental Friendliness

Consumers' perception of a brand as environmentally friendly is their perception of the environmental impact of a product and its related brand during various stages of the product life cycle (Essoussi, & Zahaf 2008).. There are a number of people who believe that organic farming methods keep the environment healthier because they make use of little or no chemical pesticides and control soil health in a much better way. Also, they have lesser impacts on CO₂ emissions than conventional farming techniques (Mondelaers et al 2009). This association grows more crucial as online consumers make more conscious decisions about the environment by acknowledging the organic labeling of products. The findings of this study indicate that the use of organic labels positively enhanced the perceived environmental responsibility among all brands. Organic labeled products were considered more environmentally friendly than non-organic ones, whether they belonged to global, local, or private categories. This was especially the case with regard to private-label brands that do not usually enjoy positive linkages with the environment. When it had the organic label, competitors of private brands saw the benefit of private brands being considered as more sustainable environmental products by consumers. To begin with, both global and local brands were considered mildly 'green'; the organic label helped strengthen that virtue. The second variable of interest was the interaction between organic certification and biodegradable attributes. The interaction explained the extent to which organic certification helped reinforce the environmental responsibility of these brands in the eyes of consumers.

3.4. Perceived Food Safety

Perceived food safety is also another considerate factor in consumer decisions, not only in consuming but specifically in food products. Organic labeling provides a guarantee of safety for the consumer and the quality of the product because it suggests that the product contains no toxic chemicals, pesticide residues, or synthetic inputs (Hansen, 2002). Given high worries about the safety of foods, customers are inclined towards organic-produced foods as being safer for consumption than foods produced through or with the aid of chemical methods. In the analysis, the researchers found out that the organic labeling of foods boosted the perceived safety of the foods for all the brands. Organic-labeled brands were considered to be less risky than those brands that were not labeled organic; the perceived risk of consuming organic foods was lower than that of consuming non-organic foods. This perception of food safety benefited private brands more than it hurt them since incorporating an organic label in the branding gave a major boost to their rating. This underlines the need to pursue organic certification as a way of creating customers' confidence, especially for private brands as compared to global or local brands. For both international and domestic organizations, it established the organics label as safe, which, in turn, helped build the consumers' confidence in their products. The certification inorganics played a significant role in signaling quality and safety, which, in return, made the consumer accept these brands more than the brands that are not certified as organic. These findings present strong proof of the overall influence that labeling has on brand images, with a special focus on organic brands. Organic labels improve consumers' perceived food healthiness, sensory appeal, the environment, and food safety, with private brands having the most to gain from the certification (Rodrigues et al.2016). In the same way, global and local brands benefited from positive impacts, but the organic label significantly assisted private brands in managing challenging health and environmental issues. Consequently, this study provides insight into the strength of organic labels as a branding element to suggest that private brands are in a position to benefit from organic certification to create a relative competitive advantage in the global as well as local markets for organic foods.

3.5. Method and Results

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3.5.1. Experimental Design and Data Collection

An online experiment was carried out to scrutinize the effect of organic labels on consumer attitudes and buying propensity. The survey participants comprised 630 respondents aged 18–75 years; 54.3% of them were female, while 45.7% were males. In this study, participants were split into six groups where: one is a global brand, one is a local brand, two are private brands, and two are private brands but with organic labels. The product category for this study was cereals, which were deemed suitable because of their popularity in the market. The research uses a 3*2 factorial design with global, local, and private brands, as well as organic and non-organic food brands. The null hypotheses were rejected as the assessments of participants by means of Mann-Whitney U-tests, MANOVA, and multivariate tests such as Wilks’ lambda showed that perceptions differed significantly depending on the brand type using the organic labeling. Successes of Organics’ perceptions were again apparent across all domains, including perceived healthiness, hedonic value, environmental friendliness, and food safety.

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	global brand	local brand	private brand
non-organic			
organic			

In a subsequent data analysis, the researchers found that organic labels enhanced perceived behavioral control and increased the overall purchase intention as well as a willingness to pay for brands bearing the organic label. These effects were felt across all brands, global, local, and private brands, showing that through organic labels, different brand types are leveled. However, being private brands, these had the highest gains in perceptions, whereas organic labeling brought them to par with global and local brands.

4. STUDY 3: THE IMPACT OF ORGANIC LABELS ON VARIABLES OF BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

The third paper in this research focuses on the effect of organic labels on consumer behavioral intentions, with emphasis on purchase intention and consumers' willingness to pay attention to the price premium (Gill, 2018). With organic foods increasing their market share, marketers need to know how consumers react to different formats of organic labels – in relation to different brands, including global, local, and private brands (Janssen & Hamm 2012). In this research, the ability of organic labeling to perform the function of a strategic tool for differentiation is explored, in addition to its impact on the discerning influences relating to the buying decision.

4.1 Purchase Intention

As a marketing construct, purchase intention is the propensity with which a consumer is likely to purchase a product in the future due to their attitudes towards the product, the brand, and its characteristics. Compared to various theories and hypotheses, the attitude-behavior hypothesis postulates that consumer attitudes tell a lot about purchase intentions (see Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). Organic labeling is a simplification device for consumer information, showing product quality, health effects, and sustainability. When consumers have a positive attitude towards the place of origin, the belief that organic labels indicate higher quality and safety standards increases the possibility of purchase. The study assumes that the extent to which the global, local, and private brands are labeled organic would lead to higher consumer purchase intentions than where the brands are not labeled to be organic. The study design applied in the research can be described as an online survey with 630 participants divided into four groups associated with global, local, and private brands, as well as organic brands and their counterparts without brands. Analyses of the outcome showed that organic labels increased purchase intentions by 112%, indicating that common brand types benefited greatly from the organic label. The actual choice consistent with the organic labeled brand had an increase of 10% when compared to the GDP crisis level; this created in all brand types global, local, and private. It also supports the perceived usefulness of organic labels in changing consumers' purchase behavior (Ma et al. 2017). In a choice situation, consumers opt to buy organic products because they are aware that organic certified products are of better quality and are safer. Also, the analysis showed that the influence of organic labeling was equivalent to the effect of global, local, and private brands on purchase intention. This means that the power of organic labels is universal to both global, local, and private brands. This is important because it means that relatively new or less established brands can effectively combat better-established large brands originating from global markets by utilizing the organic label.



Figure 3: Types of customer Purchase Intention

4.2 Perceived willingness to pay a higher price

Consumers also consider price an important attribute, as they are willing to make that extra dollar by cooperating on the same message of perceived value. Organic foods, which are usually expensive compared to other conventional foods, are considered to be of high quality in aspects such as their quality of health, safety, and impact on the environment. In this study, a sample of consumers accepted to pay a higher price for organic products, particularly for food items, marked by previous research that pointed out that consumers would pay up to a 50% higher price for organic food as compared to non-organic food (Fotopoulos and Krystallis, 2001). Nevertheless, these real-life price premiums are not so high but rather at an average of about 20%. This study hypothesized that Global, Local, and Private brands labeled organic would attract a higher willingness to pay a premium price than those brands labeled non-organic. This was done by evaluating participants' willingness to pay more for organic-labeled products when choosing between different brand-labeled products. The findings

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further affirmed that consumers were willing to pay an extra amount for products that were labeled organic (Van Doorn & Verhoef 2011). However, depending on the brand type, the consumers were willing to pay a premium, which differed across different product categories.

The price consumers were willing to pay for organic versions of global, local, and private brands was higher, but the price difference for the private brands was comparatively higher. This implies that organic labeling has a very influential position on the subject of price premiums on private brands. Those consumers who used to think that private brands offered lower quality or were less trustworthy than global or local brands felt that the decision to label such products 'organic' must be a sign of better quality, thereby willing to pay a premium price. However, this study did not reveal a clear distinction between the GLB and local brands as far as consumer's willingness to pay a premium for certified organically labeled food is concerned. This may mean that for organic food, consumers regard organic labels as a powerful signal, thus lowering the focal attribute of brand origin as a global or local brand. The premium price was not a function of either the global or local image of the particular brand but the mere fact that it bore the organic label.

4.3 Statistics and Findings

The raw data obtained from the experiment underwent several statistical tests; one of them is MANOVA, which, in its full form, is a Multivariate Analysis of Variance; this is used to test the effect of more than independent variables on more than a dependent variable. For this study, the independent variable was the use of organic labels, while purchase intention and willingness to pay a high price were the dependent variables. The hypothesized MANOVA tests yielded significance in favor of the study's hypothesis. More importantly, organic labels positively and significantly affected the purchase intention and premium price across brand types. Subsequently, the purchase intention and willingness to pay a price premium for organic-label brands confirmed that their mean value was significantly higher than that of non-organic brands. These results support the idea of organic labels as a credible signal of product quality and sustainability that is meaningful to consumers on at least two of the identified bases. Subsequent segmentation analysis also confirmed that consumers' perceived value regarding the willingness to pay more for private brands with an organic label was higher in comparison to the other two brands. This suggests that organic certification may be particularly valuable for private brands, which can benefit from gaining parity of esteem when competing with dominant global and local brands. What is more, for private brands that are still not considered prestigious or high-quality products, the additional value of organic labels will be very beneficial.

4.4 Implications for Marketers

From a marketers' perspective, these results offer a clear understanding of how organic labels might be employed as a distinctiveness factor. The findings also suggest that the use of organic labels can affect purchase behavior by enhancing the willingness to pay a premium on products and the purchase intention for both branded and non-branded products. This implies that marketers, especially those of private brands, should consider the use of organic certifications to enhance the perception of the brands and consumers' awareness.

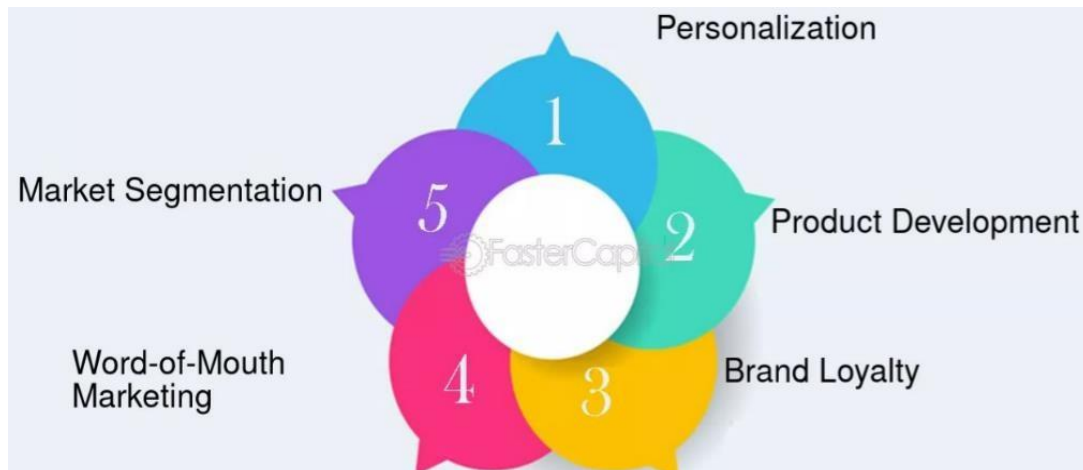


Figure 4: Implications for Marketers

Further, flexibility in pricing organically labeled products more expensively also greatly increases opportunities for marketers to establish higher margins for key players such as private brands. Since consumers are willing to pay more for the ease and convenience of organic products, they can also use the same avenue to successfully challenge bigger brands of organic food products. Hence, the views presented in the paper have identified organic labels as an efficient signal affecting its communicated goal, namely, purchase intentions as well as price premiums. In their implications, global, local, and private brands can improve their positioning strategy related to health safety and sustainability in anticipation of the organic food clientele (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998).

Table 2: Non-organic brand types in comparison regarding perception variables

Factors	Mean values						F	p
	Non-organic global	Non-organic local	Non-organic global	Non-organic private	Non-organic local	Non-organic private		
Perceived healthiness	4.024 (p>.1)	4.495	4.024 (p≤.01)	3.158	4.495 (p≤.01)	3.158	34.20	≤.001
Perceived hedonism	3.073 (p>.9)	3.192	3.073 (p≤.05)	2.458	3.192 (p≤.01)	2.458	15.85	≤.001
Perceived environmental friendliness	3.064 (p>.7)	3.397	3.064 (p≤.02)	2.370	3.397 (p≤.01)	2.370	20.51	≤.001
Perceived food safety	3.859 (p>.8)	4.136	3.859 (p≤.05)	3.226	4.136 (p≤.01)	3.226	19.26	≤.001

4.3. Method and Results

The behavioral intention variables were measured using adopted scales from the studies of Dodds et al. (1991) and Netemeyer et al. (2004). A survey was conducted on identical groups of participants, which was used in the previous study. Experimental design was done using 3X2 design to compare purchase intention and premium price for global brands, local brands, private brands, and brands with and without organic labels. To examine the hypotheses, MANOVA tests were performed, indicating the significance of the differences of the experimental groups on marketing-related perceptual measures.

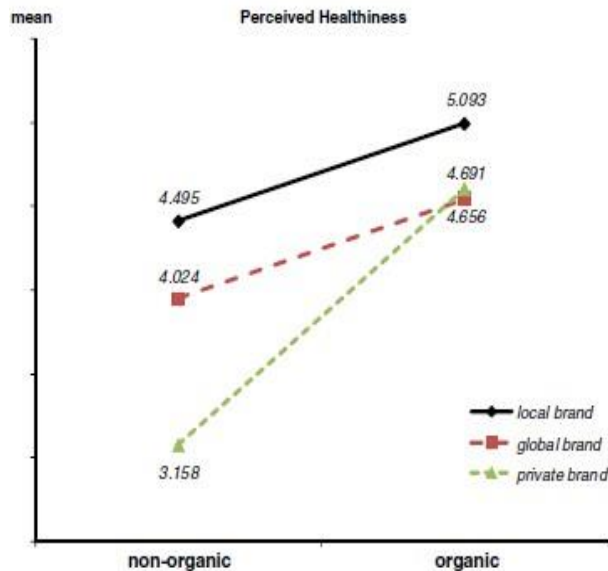


Fig. 2. Mean values of perceived healthiness.

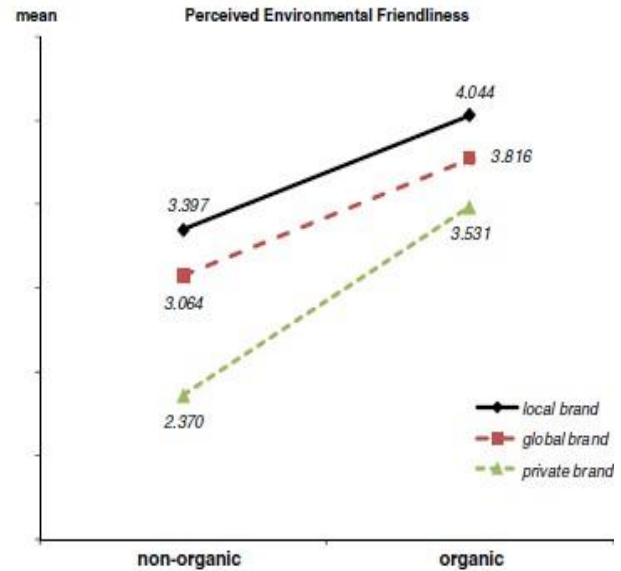


Fig. 4. Mean values of perceived environmental friendliness.

The implications of the study revealed that the P ES of the brands carrying an organic label was significantly favorable towards the brands without the organic label in regard to consumer perceptions and purchase intention. Global, local, and private brands labeled as organic received similar purchase intentions, suggesting that organic labeling does not give any competitive advantage to those types of brands. However, when it comes to PBP, it is clearly a different picture altogether, where non-organic private brands received significantly lower purchase intentions and willingness to pay for a premium price than both global and local non-organic brands. This implies that organic labels are liable to contribute effectively to the improvement of the perceived value of private brands and bring them to par with their global and local counterparts. Thus, these studies reveal how crucial the role of the organic label is for consumers and how private brands can successfully compete in the market.

5. DISCUSSION

Organic labels have emerged as an important mechanism for developing competitive food brand value propositions. Organic certifications are even more beneficial as consumer interest in organic products is still increasing, and owners can differentiate products significantly, which can improve the brand appeal and consumer allegiance. The role of organic labels and their ability to effectively provide differentiation across global, local, and private brand categories will also be examined to reveal their strategic benefits here. This paper establishes that information conveyed through organic labeling is very central in influencing consumers’ perception regarding the health benefits, safety, and environmental impacts of the food produced. In tests where the brand was placed across global, local, and private brands, the organic label always enhanced the perception consumers had towards the product. This effect was most observed among private brands, which have typically had lower perceived value than global and local brands. However, an extension of an organic label did make private brands reach the same platform as the global/local brands regarding health, environment, and safety. Organic labels also helped avoid the drawbacks inherent in global operations, whereby transportation comes with an expensive toll on the environment, which consumers have had to endure. The last aspect reveals skeptical attitudes towards so-called c2c international brands; however, getting an organic label sends a strong signal about the brand’s environmental friendliness. This comes at the right time, inching the brand closer to the hearts of consumers who are increasingly becoming conscious of the environment.

Local brands, however, fully compensate for this by using an organic label that takes advantage of the increasing focus on Hodler local, especially in terms of sustainability. Buyers tend to associate local products with their

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values of local food production, contribution to green initiatives, etc. If local brands also display organic certification, they boost their image as being not only environmentally conscious but also morally correct. Organic labels help, thus, sustain and strengthen the identity by means of local production and consumption of food, which in turn stimulates people to continue with the production of eco-friendly food. Privilege brands, which are normally associated with cheaper imitations of manufacturers or global brands, have the most to gain from the use of organic labeling. The studies show that the organic certification standard enables private labels to dispel the premium image associated with the traditional private brand perception. Thus, by obtaining a credible and reputable organic certification, private brands promote appeal among potential consumers who do not consider them as genuine competitors to the global or local brands they are used to. The nature of this dynamic was precisely why organic labels had provided both private brand issuers and investors the capability to level the playing field in their bids to challenge the big and firmly entrenched brands witnessed today (Clark 2007). In addition, the Organic certification has a positive effect on consumer behavior more than perception. It directly influences the hook and the propensity to make a purchase, together with a willingness to pay a premium. Consumer research reveals that consumers attach premiums to organic-labeled foods and are willing to buy them. This effect was observed regardless of the type of brand: private brands witnessed the highest gains in purchase intention and willingness to pay more if the brand was labeled 'organic.' In this context, the organic label functions as a quality cue and value-added differentiation that is being used to provide a rationale for an increased price.

As a marketing strategy, then, being labeled organic for the myriad brands out there provides brands a chance at re-branding themselves in a congested market environment. Organic certification is a marketing approach through which brands can be associated with the continuously increasing consumers' demand for products of an organic nature due to health concerns and environmentally friendly production. Moreover, proper communication of organic status and claims helps the brands to build up their positions and respond to consumers' new, more environmental and health-oriented approach. However, to fully capitalize on the benefits of organic labeling for brands, there must be total transparency and accuracy through the procurement and accreditation process lest the whole system turns out to be a mere marketing gimmick or what some brands are infamous for, 'green-washing.' However, looking at the data, organic labels actually offer a very useful tool for differentiating brands in the food market. Not only do they signal quality and sustainability, but they are also management weapons for improving brand image, consumer loyalty, and market share. In sum, the above-brand association analysis shows that Tro has overall positive effects for all brands of life, with the private brands reaping most of the benefits of this differentiation strategy; organic certification will help private brands greatly enhance their brand image and increase the market share of consumers. It has been observed that as the organic food sector grows, using organic labels will remain a key brand differentiator for new brands that will enter the market.

5.1 Managerial Implications

The results of the present research are informative for marketers desiring to adopt organic labels as a strategic asset in brand management. Different organic labeling strategies present the ability to regulate the extent to which the perceptions, purchasing behaviors, and willingness of consumers to pay a premium for products are altered (Aschemann-Witzel & Zielke 2017). From the standpoint of managers, it is important to gain insight into how organic labels interact and connect with various brand types, namely global, local, and private brands.

Global, Local and Private Brands: Positioning Strategies

Established multinational brand image companies lose a feeling of closer proximity to the environment as they aim to expand their market globally to meet the customers' gradually rising expectations of green and environmentally friendly products. Organic labels can reduce checkers' impression of environmental irresponsibility by global brands if the brands display certifications from independent accredited organizations alongside the labels (Morris & Dunne 2004). Therefore, for developing a strategy for organic farming, the main issues of importance for the global brand are to promote organic farming on the fact that it is more environmentally friendly and safe for consumption while at the same time ensuring global presence and

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reputation. These brands should focus on advocating for the health benefits associated with the purchase of organic products, which will serve to enhance the halo effect concerning the quality of the brands.

Local brands, by contrast, are positioned nearer to consumers' values, especially in environmentally and ethically conscious cultures. Consumers tend to express a preference for local products based on assumptions about the local benefits and environmental advantages of doing so. Local brands can also build on these perceptions by positioning the organic logo alongside a message promoting local processing. Such a double position, on the one hand, organic certification, and, on the other hand, a geographical attachment to a specific region or country, can be instrumental in strengthening a brand's stake in both sustainable agriculture and regional/local community support. On the other hand, the companies that operate within a specific geographic area should essentially concentrate on the concept of differentiation based on the position that they occupy in the supply chain and sustainabilities. Out of all the potential label types for private brands, organic labeling is the most valuable since private brands typically suffer from lower perceived quality than established global and local brands. The study shows that the establishment of organic certification enables private brands to compete better with the more established brands in terms of perceived health benefits, taste, safety, and the environment. Private brands should employ affordability by stating that the cost of being certified organic does not equal a higher price point in order to provide a better value proposition to consumers. Private brands should note that by affiliating their products with organic labels, they can easily build consumer trust and increase the intention to buy the product as well as the willingness to pay more for the products (Steenkamp et al 2010). In addition, with relatively low brand equity, private brands can achieve a fast increase in brand value through organic certification, which brings a highly authoritative recognition of quality and safety.

An Assessment of Potential Benefits Among farmers Certified to Sell Their products as Organic Products

To effectively drive organic progress, marketers must guarantee that organic labels are not latent incorporation within the brand but actively integrated into brand communication. There must be clarity in the identification of the organic certification. The certification should be located in easily visible areas such as the package from which the product is labeled and in an advertising campaign (Nilsson et al 200). They also need to enlighten consumers on the meaning and value of organic certification in aspects related to food safety, environmental conservation, and health. It is thus important to offer information on how, as a brand, it is aligned with the requirement of the organic standards to strengthen the narrative that the brand deserves its credibility on this matter. The application of organic labels also requires coherence and endurance, which needs a long-term approach. This leaves brands with the need to supplement the organic labeling in the market with other value propositions that would segregate them from each other. To define, brands can emphasize sustainable farming systems, fair trade, and any other noble ecological causes that support the construction of an equally strong and more comprehensive brand narrative.

Dealing with Risk Associated with Brand Damage as a Result of Organic Labeling

Some risks and pitfalls come along with leaning too much on the organic messaging that is offered through organic labeling. In the case of strongly developed brand equity, there is a risk of focusing only on organic certification, obscuring other values that have been forming within the brand strategy, for example, innovations or premium quality. That is why it is important to keep the focus on the particular organic features in line with the overall branding strategy. Excessive focus on an aspect can make it pronounced at the detriment of other valuable selling propositions. Often, the use of organic labels brings large advantages for private brands. Yet, the existing audience can be confused with such products, so the brands should not overemphasize the organic aspect and forget about ordinary customers who buy conventional products (Zaltman & Zaltman 2008). From this understanding, the management of consumer expectations can help make the labeling of organic products help build the brand instead of compromising it. In other words, the managerial implications of this study are that both global, local, and private brands can reap great benefits by gaining the integration of organic labels in their marketing mix. However, the effectiveness of this strategy is highly contingent on how the organic label is communicated and positioned in the emerging environment of the brand and its constitution. Organic food brands need to communicate concerns for health, safety, and the environment because these attributes have a close

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relationship with the values of consumers, which improves the perceived trust, purchase intention, and willingness to pay a premium price for the brand.

Table 3: Managerial Implications and Strategic Considerations for Organic Labeling Across Brand Types

Managerial Implication	Description	Strategic Focus
Positioning Strategies for Global, Local, and Private Brands	Different brand types benefit from organic labels in unique ways. Global brands need to emphasize health and safety, local brands can leverage proximity and sustainability, and private brands can use organic certification to improve perceived quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Brands: Highlight health benefits and environmental responsibility. Focus on global presence. - Local Brands: Promote local farming practices and environmental benefits. - Private Brands: Use organic labels to overcome quality perception gaps.
Benefits of Organic Labels for Private Brands	Organic labels are particularly valuable for private brands, which typically have lower perceived quality. Certification can improve perceptions of health, safety, taste, and environmental friendliness.	Private brands should focus on affordability, emphasizing that certification doesn't necessarily lead to higher prices, while building trust and increasing purchase intention.
Integrating Organic Labels into Brand Communication	Marketers should ensure that organic labels are visible and clearly communicated, educating consumers on the value of certification.	Organic certification should be featured prominently on packaging and in advertising to enhance visibility and consumer understanding.
Maintaining Brand Narrative	Organic labeling should be aligned with the brand's overall strategy, avoiding overemphasis on the organic aspect at the cost of other values like innovation or premium quality.	Brands should balance organic messaging with other attributes to avoid overshadowing other selling points and creating consumer confusion.
Managing Risk of Brand Damage Due to Over-Emphasis on Organic Labeling	Over-emphasizing organic labeling could damage a brand's reputation if it conflicts with established brand values. This is especially risky for brands with strong equity.	Maintain a balanced brand strategy, ensuring organic certification complements but does not dominate the narrative. Manage consumer expectations for organic products.
Enhancing Consumer Trust and Willingness to Pay Premium	Organic labeling can help build consumer trust and increase willingness to pay a premium for products.	Communicate the health, safety, and environmental benefits of organic products to enhance trust and justify premium pricing.
Long-Term Approach to Organic Certification	The use of organic labels should be part of a long-term brand strategy, supported by other value propositions like sustainable farming or fair trade.	Brands should integrate organic certification into a broader sustainability and ethical marketing strategy, ensuring long-term credibility and relevance.
Handling Consumer Expectations for Conventional Products	Private brands may risk confusing their existing customer base if the organic label is overemphasized.	Ensure that communication around organic labeling does not alienate existing customers who prefer

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		conventional products. Keep messaging clear and consistent.
Cross-Cultural Considerations	The impact of organic labels may vary by market, particularly between Anglo and non-Anglo countries. Different cultures may value sustainability and health in different ways.	Conduct cross-cultural research to understand how organic labels are perceived across different markets and adjust strategies accordingly.
Further Research on Organic Labels in Other Product Categories	Explore the effectiveness of organic labels outside of the food industry, such as in cosmetics, clothing, or cleaning products.	Investigate how organic certification influences purchase decisions in non-food sectors, assessing whether consumer motivations for organic extend to other categories.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH

Appropriate future research on organic labeling could embrace several dimensions to elaborate the influence of organic labels on various market settings. First, the impact that organic labels have on other types of products different from food has to be investigated. Nevertheless, further research can be dedicated to other product categories and clarification of how organic certification affects consumers' attitudes and decisions, for instance, in cosmetics, clothing, and cleaning products. This will help uncover if the motivation that some patients have for purchasing organic food, like health concerns and environmentally friendly, translates to other products. The cross-sectional comparison could provide an understanding of the impact of culture on organizational labels. Despite these effects identified in the US and Europe, questions arise as to whether or not such effects are present in non-Anglo markets. Views towards sustainability, health, and food safety may influence consumers' perceptions of organic labels vary across countries (Naspetti, & Zanoli 2009). Comparative research could identify whether or not consumers aged up and down the value chain reacted similarly to the organic labels in emerging markets that the research presumed to lack fully-formed sustainability and organic standards.

Individual factors that need to be investigated in order to understand consumers' reactions toward organic labels are self-organized environmental consciousness, socioeconomic status, or education level. For example, knowing the attitudes and behaviors toward organic certification of various consumer segments, including millennials, high-income, and environmental consumers, might help in marketing communication. Further, this research could explore the extent to which these factors influence premium willingness to pay for organic produce and brand loyalty in the long run. Other possibilities for improving the knowledge of consumer behavior may also lie in further investigation concerning other kinds of organic certifications. Instead of the endurance of such labels as the USDA Organic seal, there are other types of labels with various levels of standards, such as the EU Organic label or the Fair Trade label. Such analyses into these various seals' effects on brand image and purchase inclination could help in understanding which markets some of these certifications are stronger or more credible. Last, there must be research that looks at the longer-run impact of organic labeling on brand equity. Though its impact on purchase intention and price premium has been confirmed, the specific manner by which organic certification affects brands' reputation, consumers' loyalty, and retention has drawn mixed findings. This could have significant consequences in the area of brand development and promotional communication activity within the organic segment.

CONCLUSION

This work has revealed the effect of organic labeling on consumers' perception and willingness to buy the relevant products concerning the three brands, namely, global, local, and private brands. From the observations made in the three studies, one, two, and three, it is clear that organic labels are significant in improving consumer attitudes to brands and products regarding aspects like healthiness, hedonic value, environment-friendliness, and

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food safety. The first study validated the identified reasons for buying organic food in the U.S., replicating the findings that the key factors that instigate consumers in the U.S. to go organic are health, environmental impact, safety, and taste. These factors align with global macro-factors but present a set of consumer values and goals relevant to the U.S. marketing environment. This study, while elucidating the purchase motives of U.S. consumers for organic foods, gave a direction for further research encompassing consumer behavior in the organic foods sector. The second study focused on the effect of organic labels on the perceived global local and private brands. Also, it was discovered that certified organic labels improved the perceived healthy, enjoyable, environmentally friendly, and safe brands; the private brands were observed to gain the most from organic certification. In this study, this conclusion reasserted the importance of organic labels as excellent tools for brand differentiation, especially amongst private brands, which are closely associated with health risks and quality issues compared to global brands and local brands. Regarding the extent of organic labeling, the findings show that the intensity of private brands is leveled to that of global and local brands.

The third study analyzed the effect of organic labels on behavioral intention, which is purchase intention and willingness to pay a premium price. These studies supported the initial hypothesis and showed that more indents on the organic labels resulted in increased purchase intentions and a higher consumer willingness to pay for a premium price, whether the brand was global, local, or private. The study results established that organic labels were a competitive edge for the private brands for which consumer perceived value had remained a challenge compared to global and local brands. The results also discussed that certified organic were an effective and strategic way of enhancing consumers' trust, henceforth improving sales. For these reasons, global, domestic, and private brands must think expeditiously to embrace an organic label as an overall brand differentiation strategy. Accreditations such as the organic certification add value for the brand as it benefits from perceptions of healthy, environment-friendly, and safe foods. At the same time, there is a constant change toward more informed and ethically motivated consumers. To private brands, organic labeling is a perfect opportunity to successfully close the perception gap between them and their international counterparts, thus opening a window of opportunity to establish themselves as new high-quality, sustainable, and safer brands.

The whole point of operating organic labels is that they entail certain benefits that could be at risk. Organic certification is highly effective as a marketing tool for brands. Still, these brands need to exercise care not to make organic certification the be-all and end-all of their brand promises to the customers while ignoring other more fundamental attributes that the retailers or consumers would look for, including but not limited to taste, price, and convenience. In addition, it is also recommended that companies ensure that there is evidence of organic claims and clean the 'green' aspects to prevent them from being contaminated by the term 'green-washing,' which is very bad in the long run. Moreover, this research has revealed that organic labeling is a strategic marketing communication tool that can pull the sting of consumer skepticism and re-direct consumers toward positive perception, purchasing intentions and brand positioning. These insights make this research useful to marketers seeking to tap into this rapidly growing market by understanding the nature of consumer responses to organic labels. Since organic food is growing in popularity with consumers' awareness, it will become critical for brands wishing to stand out from the growing competition to adopt organic labels appropriately in their branding efforts.

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