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# Consumers' Knowledge and Attitude towards Organic Food Products in Surat City

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**ABSTRACT**

*The present study aims to find the consumers' knowledge and attitude towards organic food products in Surat city. The primary data were collected by survey method with a pre- designed structured questionnaire. The sample size of this study was 150 consumers selected through convenience sampling method from Surat city of South Gujarat. The analytical tools employed include tabular analysis and relevancy rating used to rank the factors. The finding of the study reveals that majority of the consumers lacked knowledge about organic foods products and very few were buying organic food products in the study area. The attitude of surveyed consumers was found positive towards organic food products and majority of the consumers showed their willingness to be informed about organic food products in future. So from the study it could be concluded that there is an urgent need to educate the consumers to increase the demand for organic food products benefitting both the farmers and processing firms.*

**Keywords:** *Organic food products; Consumption; Knowledge; Attitude.*

## 1.0 Introduction

Food consumption patterns are changing as a result of health and environmental issues. Organic agriculture has evolved as a movement in India over the last few years. The Indian organic business is poised to be valued at United States Dollar (USD) 1.5 billion by the year 2020, and the market for organic food in India is anticipated to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of over 25 per cent during 2015-20.

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At present organic cultivation and organic business is witnessing major shift because of growing awareness of farmers and consumers about environmental protection and sustainable agricultural practices, and the adverse impact of chemical inputs on the soil, environment and human health. Also the organic food products offer profitable business opportunities as they fetch higher returns than conventional food products in the domestic as well as export markets.

In order to boost trade in Indian agricultural products and capture significant share in global market, it is an imperative that India focuses on organic products which give it competitive edge in global market, namely organic cotton, spices, essential oils, medicinal and aromatic plants and fresh fruits and vegetables. Organic farming in irrigated and intensive farming areas holds another kind of promise, a source of sustainable and value added commercial farming.

The main objectives of this study were to assess consumers' knowledge and attitude towards organic food products in Surat City. To achieve these initial objectives, the study has been divided into several secondary objectives:

- To study the socio-economic profile of consumers
- To examine the food shopping habits of potential consumers
- To determine the level of knowledge about organic food products
- To study the attitude of consumers towards organic food products.

## 2.0 Literature Review

Aarthi and Balusamy (2018) concluded that the attitude and preference to purchase organic food products was found to be satisfactory, however, based on the interference of the policy makers and initiative by the government will help to achieve good health situation by the consumers and prospering business by the producers and retailers promoting organic food products. Consumer behaviour plays a major role in Organic food products segment. Krishnakumare and Niranjan (2017) stated in the study that the main reason for buying organic food product was health. Though the organic food product was healthy, some respondents were refused to buy them because of high premium price and lack of trust on the originality of organic food products. The organic respondents had positive attitude towards organic food products whereas non-organic had negative attitude towards organic food products. According to Singh and Rachna (2017) the demand for the organic products in the market is increasing day by day. The concern of consumers towards health and harmful effect of chemical products is forcing them to use organic products. The quality characteristics of organic products constituted as input into raising demand for these products. They were preferred for the improved human health and overall well-being. The quality and health aspect act as major motivator for the buyer to buy organic products. Moreover, the environmental protection perspective further makes them more attractive to the consumers. Thatte *et al.* (2016) concluded that in case of Maharashtra, a large number of people are aware of superiority of organic food over conventional, but are found to be consuming less. Higher demand is found to be a function of less price and better educational background. Surprisingly the most dominant reason for low demand is neither price nor illiteracy but less supply of organic food. Grankvist and Biel (2004) pointed out that the relationship between environmentalism and consumer attitudes have strong correlation. Health conscious also play as a vital role to shape consumer attitudes and behavior (Magnusson *et al.* 2003). Ajzen (1991); Briz and Ward 2009; Gil and Soler 2006; found that more information about the organic food market, which increases consumers' organic food knowledge, is important because it positively influences consumers' attitudes towards organic food products. In this regard the present study focuses on the potential South Gujarat consumer of organic produce. The present study aims to evaluate opinion and awareness of consumers for organically grown produce in South Gujarat.

## 3.0 Research Methodology

The nature of the present study was Descriptive. The data were gathered from both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected by conducting personal interview of consumers in the study area. The Convenience Sampling methodology was used for the selection of 150 respondents. The primary data were gathered by administering a structured questionnaire with 150 consumers of Surat city of South Gujarat. The secondary data were collected through various sources like magazines, internet, journals and other sources. The quantitative approach was used for the data analysis. Simple statistical tools and tabular analysis was done for the fulfilment of the objectives.

## 4.0 Results and Discussion

The results of Socio-economic profile of respondents were summarised in Table 1. The customers consisted of 87 male and 63 female. The 42 per cent respondents were in age group of 26-40 yrs. followed by 26 per cent between 41-50 yrs. The majority of the respondents 74 per cent were married and 73 per cent respondents had nuclear family type. The majority of the respondents 21 per cent had post-graduation and 44 percent had graduation as their educational qualification with at least 14 per cent had studied up to

HSC as their minimum qualification as their academic qualification. The 43 per cent were involved in private occupation and 37 per cent were into government sector. The monthly family income range between Rs. 20,000-40,000 with 42 per cent respondents was the highest, so they fall under the middle income group followed by 27 per cent between incomes Rs. 10,001 – Rs. 20,000.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=150)**

| **Gender** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Parameters** | **Frequency** | **Percent** |
| Male | 87 | 58 |
| Female | 63 | 42 |
| **Age of respondents** | | |
| 18-25 years old | 33 | 22 |
| 26-40years old | 63 | 42 |
| 41-50 years old | 39 | 26 |
| >50 years old | 15 | 10 |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Married | 111 | 74 |
| Unmarried | 39 | 26 |
| **Family Type** | | |
| Nuclear | 110 | 73 |
| Joint | 41 | 27 |
| **Education Qualification** | | |
| Secondary | 17 | 11 |
| High Secondary | 21 | 14 |
| Graduate | 66 | 44 |
| Post Graduate | 32 | 21 |
| Professionals | 15 | 10 |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Business | 30 | 20 |
| Government | 56 | 37 |
| Private | 65 | 43 |
| **Monthly income (Rs.)** | | |
| <10,000 | 30 | 20 |
| 10,000-20,000 | 41 | 27 |
| 20,000-40,000 | 63 | 42 |
| >40,000 | 17 | 11 |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

## 5.0 Shopping Habits of Potential Consumers

From Table 2 it could be depicted that most of the respondents i.e. 30 per cent usually prefer to purchase food items i.e. grocery and fresh produce from "Mandis", which is considered to be a wholesale traditional market for grocery and fresh produce. About 24 per cent purchase food items from kirana stores and 21 per cent purchase food items from modern supermarkets. The rest 16 per cent of the people surveyed purchase food items from mobile vendors and 9 per cent from specialized shops.

**Table 2: Preferred Place to Purchase Food Items (n=150)**

| Number of family members | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Mandis | 45 | 30 |
| Specialized shop | 14 | 9 |
| Modern Supermarket | 32 | 21 |
| Mobile vendors | 24 | 16 |
| Kirana stores | 36 | 24 |
| **Total** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

**Table 3: Factors Affecting the Consumption based on Importance (n=150)**

| Affecting factors based on importance | Not Important 1 | Slightly Important 2 | Moderately Important 3 | Important 4 | Very Important 5 | Mean | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Price** | 0(0) | 8 (16) | 35 (105) | 42 (170) | 65 (325) | **4.1** | **III** |
| **Quality and Taste** | 0(0) | 3 (6) | 30 (90) | 42 (168) | 75 (375) | **4.27** | **II** |
| **Freshness** | 0(0) | 0(0) | 8 (24) | 25 (100) | 117 (585) | **4.73** | **I** |
| **Useful features** | 15 (15) | 25 (50) | 28 (84) | 40 (160) | 42 (210) | **3.46** | IV |
| **Presentation in shop** | 42 (42) | 30 (60) | 11 (33) | 31 (124) | 36 (180) | 2.92 | V |
| **Visibility in shop** | 59 (59) | 14 (28) | 12 (36) | 31 (124) | 34 (170) | 2.77 | VI |
| **Packaging** | 62 (62) | 12 (24) | 12 (36) | 30 (120) | 34 (170) | 2.75 | VII |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

The consumers were asked to rate the importance of the factors affecting the food items consumption. A Likert-type scale from 1 to 5 was used, (1 being not very important and 5 – very Important). From Table 3 it could be observed that consumers in the study area give much importance to the factors like freshness, quality and taste, price and useful features. This is a definitely positive result. According to consumers visibility in the shop and packaging were not considered important factors affecting the consumption of food items.

Table 4 depicts that 42 per cent consumer's major source of information about food items were word of mouth. About 28 per cent consumers used to get information by visibility in shop and rest 24 per cent and 6 per cent consumers come to know about food items through advertisement and other sources respectively.

**Table 4: Source of Information about Food Items (n=150)**

| Parameters | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Advertisement** | 36 | 24 |
| **Word of mouth** | 63 | 42 |
| **Visibility in shop** | 42 | 28 |
| **Other sources** | 9 | 6 |
| **Total** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

## 6.0 Knowledge of Organic Produce

**Table 5: Knowledge about Concept of Organic Produce (n=150)**

| Organic food are | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Natural foods | 14 | 9 |
| Produced without chemical fertilizers | 53 | 35 |
| Ecologically clean foods | 11 | 7 |
| Healthier foods | 27 | 18 |
| Produced using organic methods | 23 | 15 |
| Don't know | 24 | 16 |
| Total Responses | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

With regard to the concept the consumers surveyed have about organic produce, Table 5 indicates, that there is a predominant trend to identify these foods as chemical free products. From Table 5 it could be concluded that the 35 per cent consumers identified organic products as produced without chemical fertilizers; around 18 per cent identify these products as healthier food and 9 per cent as natural foods. Almost 16 per cent of the consumer surveyed didn't know the meaning of organic produce.

Table 6 shows attitude of consumers towards advantages of organic produce. Around 37 per cent consumers considered that healthiness is the main advantage of organic produce. Another 26 per cent indicated safety and 13 per cent considered nutrition as an important advantage. About 12 per cent of the consumer surveyed didn't know any advantage of organic food.

**Table 6: Advantages of Organic Produce (n=150)**

| Organic food are | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **It's tasty** | 12 | 8 |
| **It's healthy** | 56 | 37 |
| **It's safe** | 39 | 26 |
| **It's nutritional** | 20 | 13 |
| **Better smell** | 6 | 4 |
| **Don't know** | 18 | 12 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

Table 7 shows that the vast majority of the consumer surveyed 52 per cent didn't know any organic brand selling organic produce. Around 12 per cent of the respondents were aware about 24 Mantra and 11 per cent were aware about Organic India brand. And rests of the consumers were less aware about organic brands available in market.

**Table 7: Awareness of Any Organic Food Brands (n=150)**

| Brands | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **24 Mantra** | 5 | 12 |
| **Down to earth** | 18 | 3 |
| **Orgavita** | 15 | 10 |
| **Fab India** | 11 | 7 |
| **Green Fiesta** | 8 | 5 |
| **Organic India** | 17 | 11 |
| **Don't know** | 78 | 52 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

Table 8 shows that around 55 per cent of the consumers were not aware about the availability of organic produce in the study area.

**Table 8: Awareness about Availability of Organic Produce (n=150)**

| Awareness | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Yes** | 68 | 45 |
| **No** | 83 | 55 |
| Total Responses | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

Table 9 depicts that 71 per cent of the consumers have not ever tried the organic products.

**Table 9: Have You Ever Tried Organic Products (n=150)**

| Ever tried organic produce | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 44 | 29 |
| No | 107 | 71 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

From the Table 10 it could be concluded that 55 per cent consumers were not using organic products as according to them they don't know where to buy from, another 28 per cent said that the reason of not buying was the lack of knowledge. And for about 13 per cent of the consumers' high prices and for rest 4 per cent of consumers there might be a possibility of fraud the other reason for not using organic products.

**Table 10: Reasons for not Using Organic Products (n=107)**

| Reasons for not using | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Don't know where to buy | 59 | 55 |
| Possibility of fraud | 4 | 4 |
| Lack of knowledge | 30 | 28 |
| High prices | 14 | 13 |
| **Total Responses** | **107** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

The respondents were asked to evaluate the different aspects related to organic products. To assess these attributes, a Likert-type scale has been used, assessing sentences from 1-5 according to their meaning: 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). From the Table 11 it could be concluded that the highly valued aspects were: the fact that they are more natural, relationship with health, high quality and better taste, the fact that they contain less toxic and dangerous waste. The vast majority of the people surveyed disagree that organic foods are a fraud or like a fashion. This is a positive result. The respondents also don't think that organic foods are worse than conventional ones.

**Table 11: Respondents' Attitude towards Organic Products (n=150)**

| Statements | Strongly Disagree 1 | Disagree 2 | Undecided 3 | Agree 4 | Strongly Agree 5 | Mean | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Organic foods are healthy** | 0(0) | 0(0) | 9 (27) | 55 (220) | 86 (430) | **4.51** | **II** |
| **Organic foods are more natural** | 2 (2) | 2 (4) | 11 (33) | 52 (208) | 83 (415) | **4.41** | **III** |
| **Organic foods are of higher quality and better taste** | 0(0) | 0(0) | 7 (21) | 56 (224) | 87 (435) | **4.53** | **I** |
| **Organic foods are more environment friendly** | 0(0) | 7 (14) | 11 (33) | 50 (200) | 82 (410) | | V |
| **Organic foods are of better smell/flavour** | 15 (15) | 17 (34) | 16 (48) | 41 (164) | 61 (305) | 3.77 | VIII |
| **Organic foods produce less toxic and dangerous waste** | 11 (11) | 9 (18) | 16 (480 | 46 (184) | 69 (345) | 4.02 | VI |
| **Organic foods are of higher level of guarantee and control** | 20 (20) | 23 (46) | 12 (36) | 40 (160) | 55 (275) | 3.58 | IX |
| **Organic foods are more expensive** | 12 (12) | 10 (20) | 11 (33) | 49 (196) | 68 (340) | 4.01 | VII |
| **Organic foods don't last long** | 26 (26) | 30 (60) | 12 (36) | 34 (136) | 47 (235) | 3.29 | X |
| **Organic foods don't look as good** | 35 (35) | 35 (70) | 11 (33) | 27 (108) | 42 (210) | 3.03 | XI |
| **Organic foods are fraud** | 41 (41) | 32 (54) | 26 (78) | 23 (92) | 28 (140) | 2.75 | XII |
| **Organic foods are like fashion** | 54 (54) | 55 (110) | 14 (42) | 13 (52) | 14 (70) | 2.17 | XIII |
| **Organic foods are worse than conventional ones** | 65 (65) | 60 (120) | 14 (42) | 5 (20) | 5 (25) | 1.82 | XIV |
| **Organic foods produce are difficult to find** | 0(0) | 3 (6) | 5 (15) | 61 (244) | 81 (405) | 4.46 | IV |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

The consumers were also asked how they would make sure that the product is organic. In this regard Table 12 depicts that 37 per cent of consumers said they will find out through difference in taste. About31 per cent of the consumers surveyed gave importance to certification as a way to be assured that the product is organic. However, only 5 per cent of consumers gave importance to trust make. Only 6 per cent said that they get assurance through "special packaging" that the product is organic.

**Table 12: Assurance Factors that the Produce is Organic. (n=150)**

| Assurance factors | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Difference in taste** | 40 | 37 |
| **Difference in appearance** | 13 | 12 |
| **Difference in price** | 3 | 3 |
| **I trust** | 5 | 5 |
| **Certified** | 33 | 31 |
| **Special packaging** | 6 | 6 |
| **Labelled duly** | 2 | 2 |
| **Other** | 4 | 4 |
| **Total Responses** | **107** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

From Table 13 it could be concluded that 44 per cent of the respondents preferred to acquire organically grown produce from specialized shops. Approximately 23per cent and 19 per cent of the people surveyed were willing to acquire organic food from supermarkets and conventional market respectively. It was surprising to see that only 8 per cent consumers preferred the organic produce to be delivered at home/office.

**Table 13: Preferred Method to Acquire Organic Food (n=150)**

| Preferred method | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Delivered at home/office | 12 | 8 |
| Specialized shops | 66 | 44 |
| Supermarkets | 35 | 23 |
| Conventional markets | 29 | 19 |
| Other | 9 | 6 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

Table 14 depicts that about 78 per cent of the respondents surveyed were willing to regularly be informed how to get organic product. This is a clearly positive result. They chiefly provided their personal e-mail addresses and some provided telephone numbers.

**Table 14: Willingness to be Informed about How to Acquire Organic Product (n=150)**

| Willingness to be informed | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 117 | 78 |
| No | 33 | 22 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

The respondents were asked to identify their preferred media to get information about organic product. Table 15 shows that 35 per cent of the consumers preferred to get information through special TV Programs, another 24 per cent prefers TV advertisement. Newspaper is also an important information source for around 17 per cent of the people surveyed.

**Table 15: Preferred Media to get Information about Organic Produce (n=150)**

| Preferred media | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Special TV programs | 53 | 35 |
| TV advertisement | 36 | 24 |
| E-mail | 21 | 14 |
| Radio | 5 | 3 |
| Newspapers | 26 | 17 |
| Word of mouth | 11 | 7 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

The respondents were asked whether or not they are willing-to-pay a price premium for organically grown produce. Table 16 depicts that only 14 per cent of the consumers were not willing to pay any premium. The rest of the people were ready to pay some price premiums. Around 37 per cent of the consumer surveyed mentioned about their willingness to pay a price premium between 10 and 20 per cent. Approximately 19 per cent and 14 per cent of the respondents showed readiness to pay

20-30per cent and 30 50per cent price premiums respectively. All in all, it can be said that about 60per cent of the sample is willing-to-pay a price premium between 10 and 30 percent.

**Table 16: Willingness-to-Pay a Price Premium for Organically Grown Produce (n=150)**

| Willingness-to-Pay | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| NO | 21 | 14 |
| Yes< 10per cent | 12 | 8 |
| Yes 10-20per cent | 56 | 37 |
| Yes 20-30per cent | 29 | 19 |
| Yes 30-50per cent | 26 | 17 |
| Yes 50-75per cent | 5 | 3 |
| Yes 75-100per cent | 3 | 2 |
| **Total Responses** | **150** | **100** |

*Source: Primary survey, 2019*

### 7.0 Conclusions and Suggestions

The finding of the study suggests that lack of knowledge and information is one of the important factors playing important role in consumption of the organic produce. In this regard, intensive promotion and information campaign should be implemented, so that consumers can get to know the exact meaning of organic produce, their advantages and the regulation procedures that guarantee their quality to avoid the possibility of fraud. Also the most effective way to resolve the information asymmetry problem is certification. It is possible to alleviate the information asymmetry through certification, in order to improve consumers willing to pay a price premium for certified organic produce. Also health and physical fitness issues should be placed with organic produce to increase the demand of organic products. In order to attract new consumers; the organic produce range should be enlarged and should be made available at consumer desired locations. And together with expansion of organic product market, consumers' knowledge and attitude could be changed leading to the growth of organic food industry. There is need for Innovation in certification, packaging and labelling to increase consumption of organic product. Also, some dedicated speciality retail store need to create awareness as well as promote sale of organic products.

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