

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

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ABSTRACT

Globally the food consumption habits are changing because of health and environmental issues leading to increase in demand for organically produced food throughout the world. Also the demand for organic products in India has been growing significantly. In this regard this 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 major reasons for not buying organic food products were like don't know where to buy from, lack of knowledge, high prices and possibility of fraud etc. 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 for organizing intensive informative promotion campaigns by both government organizations and private players to educate the consumers and increase their knowledge of organic food products which could lead 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. 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.

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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. Krishna kumare and Niranjana (2016) 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 H. 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 L., Pawar S. and Zankar G. (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. 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 summarized 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

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

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 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

The **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

6.0 Knowledge of Organic Produce

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 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

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

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

Table 8 shows that around 55per 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

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

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

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.

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. About 31 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 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 (48)	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

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

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

The 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

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

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

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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