



Consumer awareness about health foods, and impact of promotional activities on creating awareness.

Mr. Deval Patel

Assistant Professor, College of FPTBE, Anand Agricultural University, Anand.

Dr. R.M Rathod

Professor, GH Patel PG Institute of Business Management, Sardar Patel University.

ABSTRACT

Over the last decade consumers' health consciousness is becoming an important factor driving the agro food market. Health food products have entered the global markets with force in the past years and rapidly gained market share.

Consequently, the food industry has reacted to this trend by developing a growing variety of new products with health-related claims and images, including health foods, organic and functional foods that are selected by consumers for their health-promoting properties. Currently, the health foods products are performing well, in terms of innovation and market penetration. Different researches conclude that a better understanding of consumers' awareness of health foods and its determinants are key success factors for market orientation and development and for successfully negotiating market opportunities. The research proposes a survey of 200 Indian consumers in order to understand awareness towards health foods, with particular reference to different type of health food available in the market like natural food, organic food, whole food, probiotics, designer food, functional food, through the implementation of a data analysis. The main aim of this paper is to know awareness about health foods and different activities by companies to create awareness about health food products which is indications that may contribute to better strategic and tactical marketing decisions. The findings of this study are also important for government bodies and other food companies interested in designing public health programs and for creating new health food in the market.

KEYWORDS : health foods, promotional activities, functional foods, organic products.

Preamble:

Defining Health Food/Functional Foods

The concept of "functional food" was introduced in Japan in the 1980s. Since then various efforts have been made to define functional foods. Still there is no globally accepted definition. Functional foods are food products that contain vital nutrients that go beyond just nurturing usual growth and development of an individual (Jain, Sharma, & Khadke 2014).

In India, functional foods are defined as food that encompasses potentially healthful products, including any modified food or food ingredient that may provide a health benefit beyond that of the traditional nutrients it contains (Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2010).

The Taiwan Health Food Control Act (HFCA) (2006) refers to both functional food and NHPs as health foods. In Taiwan, health food should be in the form of food products or consumed along with food. Health food in Taiwan is defined as food that possesses special nutritious elements (bioactive components) or specific health care abilities to improve and/or reduce the risk of disease.

The State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) in China refers to functional food as health food, defining it as "food with specific health functions that are suitable for consumption by specific groups of people and that has the effect of regulating human body functions without treating diseases" (Patel et al 2008, Page 4).

Food is day to day need of every individual all over the world. In India the supply of food to the customers is done through the unorganized food sectors. The health & wellness market of India has been growing at healthy growth rates for past few years. The growing awareness for healthier lifestyle is the major reason behind the same. The health food and beverages market in India is witnessing double digit year-on-year growth for quite a few years now, as a result of changing lifestyle, improving disposable income, growing health awareness, etc. Malted food products, baby food products, and cooking oils are the top three preferred products in the health foods and beverages market of India. Other popular health food segments in the country are energy drinks, chyawanprash, fruit juices, butter alternatives, digestive biscuits, health drinks etc.

The demand for environmentally friendly products such as organic foods has significantly increased due to increasing awareness on health, food safety and environmental concerns (Loureiro et al., 2001, Nair, 2005; Briz and Ward, 2009). Awareness and knowledge has become critical factor in changing the attitude and behaviour of consumers towards organic foods, which in turn is expected to drive the growth in the organic food markets (Soler et al., 2008; Freeland-Graves and Nitzke, 2002). Several studies have investigated the knowledge, awareness, attitude and behaviour of consumers towards organic food in both developed and developing countries (Chakrabarti, 2007; Compagnoni et al., 2000; Cunningham, 2002). It has been argued that the consumer awareness & knowledge as well as consumption of organic foods are significantly higher in developed countries as compared to developing countries. In countries like India, where organic food markets are still in the early phase of its growth, comparatively have low level of awareness (Squires, 2001).

The market for health foods has expanded considerably in recent years. India has experienced phenomenal growth in production of health foods in the recent decade and primarily focusing on the export markets. Organic agricultural export market is one of the major drivers of organic agriculture in India. The country is best known as an exporter of organic tea, organic fruits, organic spices and organic rice. Over the past several years, the organic food industry in India has been experiencing an annual growth between 20-22 percent. The nation has the potential to be largest health food producer. In India, the area under organic agriculture has reached about 1.03 million hectares in the year 2007, of which 0.456 million hectares (about 44%) are fully converted and the rest is under conversion (Menon, 2009). In India, there are over 15,000 certified organic farms and the number is growing fast over the year. Apart from this, there are many small farmers growing organic food by using the organic practices. Over 70% of the 120,000 tons of organic products grown in the country are exported to the many countries worldwide each year. However, Indian domestic markets for health food products particularly metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore are witnessing significantly growth in the recent years.

Further, majority of such researches were carried out in developed countries, and hence the consumer awareness and preferences for health food in developing world is mostly unknown. Therefore,

there is an urgent need to investigate the demand status of health food particularly in developing countries such as India. As consumer knowledge and awareness is an important drive to growth in the health food market, therefore an investigation of consumers' awareness towards health food may help both consumers of health interest and marketers of health food. It may also help government to design strategies for consumer education on the benefits of going health. The present study aims at consumer awareness about Health Foods, and impact of promotional activities on creating awareness, using a structured survey of 200 respondents in Anand city of Gujarat. As awareness and knowledge on various attributes of health foods is fundamental for creating market demand for health food grown products, this study explores the level of understand among the consumers on different aspects of health foods. Further, the study also identifies the most likely socio-demographic, food safety and consumer information factors affecting awareness level of health food.

Literature Review

Table 1: Type and example of functional foods (Shamal& Mohan, 2015; Siro et al., 2008).

Type of functional foods	Definition	Example
Fortified products	A food with extra nutrients added	Fruit juices fortified with vitamin C, milk fortified with vitamin D, calcium-fortified orange juice, mineral fortified breakfast cereals
Enriched products	A food added with nutrients in order to replace vitamins or minerals that have been lost during the manufacturing process.	Refining wheat to make white flour removes several B-complex vitamins and iron that are contained in the part of the grain that's removed.
Altered products	A food from which a deleterious component has been removed, reduced or replaced with another substance with beneficial effects	Fibers as fat releasers in meat or ice cream products
Enhanced commodities	A food in which one of the components has been naturally enhanced through special growing conditions, new feed composition, genetic manipulation, or otherwise	Eggs with increased omega-3 content achieved by altered chicken feed

According to International Life Sciences Institute - ILSI (2002) "a food can be regarded as functional if it has been satisfactorily demonstrated to affect beneficially one or more target functions in the body beyond adequate nutritional effects in a way that is relevant to either an improved state of health and well-being and/or a reduction of risk of disease". Other than that, Diplock et al. (1999) point out that functional food "is not a pill or a capsule, but part of the normal food pattern". In this study, we use the above-mentioned definitions of functional foods. Functional foods take the form of ordinary foods but they are capable of promoting health and physiological status. There are four main types of functional foods including fortified products, enriched products, altered products, and enhanced commodities (Shamal& Mohan, 2015; Siro et al., 2008).

Objectives:

- To study the consumer awareness about a few selected Health Foods.
- To study different promotional activities being carried out for selected Health Food.
- To study impact of promotional activities on creating consumer

awareness.

Methodology:

Collection of data

To study the objectives, required data will be collected from primary as well as secondary sources.

Primary data:

The data required for the study will be collected from the respondents by personal interview method with the help of pre-structured questionnaire. The respondents will be interviewed at retail outlets, departmental stores, bakeries and even at the homes.

Secondary data:

The secondary data will be collected from books, journals, magazines, internet and other relevant sources.

Table 2: Sample Design

Particulars		Consumer Survey
Population	1. Respondents at retail outlets 2. Respondents at departmental stores 3. Respondents at bakeries 4. Respondents at home	
Sampling Unit		Individual
Sample Size	200 Respondents	200 Respondents
Sampling Method	1. Non -probability Convenience Sampling	

Results in detail:

Age of the respondents

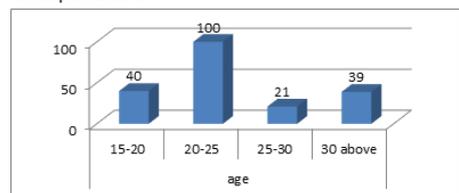


Figure -1 Age of the respondents

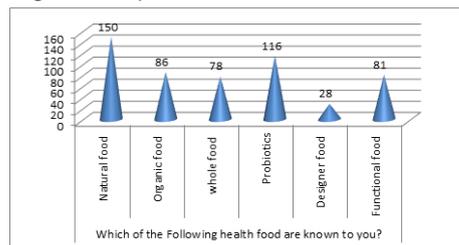


Figure-2 Extent of awareness about the health food

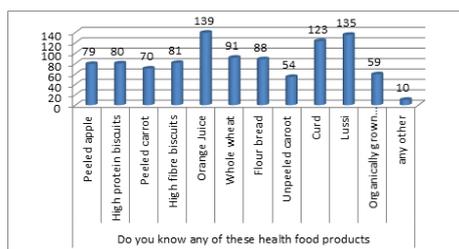


Figure-3 Extent of awareness about the health food products

Table 3: Factors looked while purchasing the health food Products

Factors	No of Respondents
Quality	156
Ingredients	98
vitamins & minerals	100
price	89
taste	102
Availability	35
other	8



Figure-4 Factors looked while purchasing the health food Products

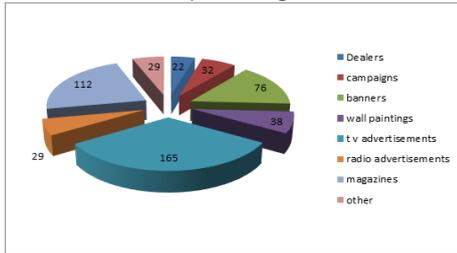


Figure-5 Sources of Information about health food products

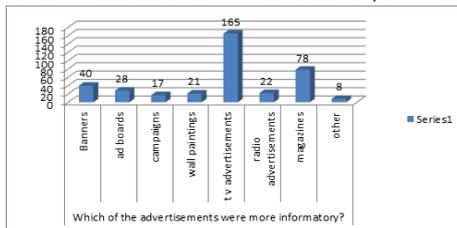


Figure-6 Efficiency of media vehicles used

Table 4: Information got from health food products in Awareness Campaigns

Information from awareness campaigns	No of respondents
Freshness of the product	20
Hygeinity in production	25
Reliability of the brand	13
Quality of the product	48
Other	2

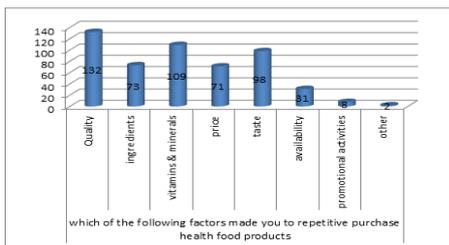


Figure-7 Factors influencing for repetitive purchase of Health food Products

Interpretation

- 100% respondents are aware of Health Food.
- Natural Food carries highest of 75% of awareness, the next is Probiotics which carries the 58% of awareness. Organic food, Functional food and whole food are also in the queue with around 40% of awareness and the Designer food is showing very poor awareness with only 14%.
- Orange Juice, Lussi, and Curd are having the greater awareness i.e.69%, 67% and 61% of awareness respectively. Whole wheat, Flour bread, high fiber biscuits, High protein biscuits, peeled apple and peeled carrot carry little less awareness as compared to the first 3 products with a response of 45%,44%, 40%, 40%, 39% and 35%. Among all products organically grown and unpeeled carrot are the 2 products with very less response of 29% and 27%.
- Quality was given more importance with 78%, the next importance are given for taste, vitamins and minerals with

around 51% responses. Ingredients and price comes next with 49% and 44% whereas the availability carries very less importance with only 17% looking while purchasing Health food products.

- The learning about the products is happened to the great extent by Television 82% and magazine 56%. The banners also contributed in learning process by 38%. people came to know about the products through radio ads and wall printings is only 19% and 14% respectively only 11% of respondents learn about the products through dealers.
- 98 % of the respondents have observed the advertisements of health food products.
- Among 196 respondents who have observed the advertisements, 189 respondents (94%) feel that the advertisements were informative.
- Among 189 respondents who felt the advertisements were informative 87% felt television, 41% says magazine, 21% Banners were more informative. Radio ads, ad boards, and campaigns were felt less informative to about 11%, 14% and 8% respectively.
- Only 59 persons out of 200 around 29% have attended awareness campaigns
- Out of 59 customers who attended the campaigns, Quality of the product was learnt by 48 people around 81%, hygiene in production 42%, Freshness of the product 33% reliability of the health food was learnt by 22% respondents.
- Out of 200 respondents 94% purchase health food products.
- Out of 188 respondents who purchase health food products 70% feels quality is great it is the main factor which influence them for repetitive purchase. Then 57% says vitamins & minerals, 52 % says taste, around 38% says ingredients and price which influence them in making purchase decision. Very less importance was given by the customers to availability (16%) and promotional activities (4%)
- Out of 12 respondents who do not purchase health food products price was said as the major factor with 75% response which influence their purchase decision.

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