



"DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE FOOD CHOICES"

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ABSTRACT

Since sustainable food consumption is a top policy priority for the new century on both the national and international agendas, there has been a noticeable increase in attention to this topic during the past ten years. However, there is still a lot to discover about the attitudes and shopping patterns of consumers with regard to sustainable food. Examining the factors influencing customers' views of food items with sustainable qualities is the aim of this essay. The article's initial section offers a summary of the theoretical concepts related to sustainable consumption. Finally, the results of an empirical analysis with a sample size of 275 clients are given. The purpose of the study was to identify the factors impacting customer perceptions of food products with sustainable attributes, such as fair trade, organic, and standard items. The results of this study can assist producers create marketing strategies and public organizations plan educational and informational programs that promote sustainable consumption.

Key words: *customer attitudes, factor analysis, and sustainable food.*

INTRODUCTION:

The rise of new cultures and ethics that influence consumer decisions has highlighted the necessity of assembling consumer knowledge to analyze needs, attitudes, opportunities, and behavior. In actuality, one solution to the sustainability issue should include more environmentally friendly consumption habits. As such, it's critical to evaluate and categorize the ways and degrees to which food consumers might advance a more sustainable global community. To be more precise, developing strategies for the production of sustainable food also requires a thorough understanding of the factors that affect food demand. A key element of sustainable development is increasingly becoming sustainable food consumption, especially in contemporary Western countries.

The entire force chain, from agricultural products to processing, distribution, retailing, home food medication, and garbage, contributes significantly to the climate-changing hothouse gas emigrations. It also results in other significant environmental effects, like as pollution, water birth, and biodiversity loss. Furthermore, the fact that a billion people actually suffer from hunger and obesity puts food consumption patterns at the forefront of the sustainability discussion. Due to this mindfulness, consumers in developed nations are becoming less



aware of issues like public health, quality of life, biodiversity preservation, and preservation of natural resources. This is manifesting itself in food choices, where consumers are becoming more selective and demanding. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) specifically recognized the need to encourage sustainable food consumption patterns in 2010 by holding the Scientific Symposium on Biodiversity and Sustainable Diets. Following the symposium's approval for use in Rio 20 Olympic medicine, a description of sustainable diets was distributed. Sustainable diets are those that promote food security, nutrition, and the health of future generations while having as little of an adverse environmental impact as possible. Sustainable diets maximize natural and mortal resources while being protective of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally appropriate, approachable, equitable, and reasonably priced. They also provide acceptable, safe, and healthful nourishment. To be honest, there isn't a consensus on what constitutes sustainable food consumption.

The UK Sustainable Development Commission introduced what is arguably the most comprehensive attempt, defining "sustainable food and drink" as that which is safe, healthy, and nutritious for consumers in stores, seminaries, hospitals, and so on; that can meet the needs of the less fortunate globally; that offers growers, processors, and retailers a viable livelihood, with their workers enjoying a safe and aseptic working environment; that respects the biophysical and environmental limits in its product and processing while reducing energy consumption and perfecting the wider terrain; that is compatible with the production of affordable food for all sectors of society; and that supports pastoral husbandry and the diversity of pastoral culture especially by highlighting unique items that reduce food travel. Numerous studies on sustainable food consumption covering a wide range of topics, such as the environment, fair trade, and typical products, have been published in the recent few decades. The majority of studies on choosing environmentally friendly foods focused mostly on organic food items. On the other hand, the Fair Trade study concentrated on fair prices for goods and services as well as working conditions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Many elements, such as health concerns, sociodemographic factors, marketing methods, and environmental awareness, impact consumer perceptions of sustainable food choices. In order to encourage sustainable consumption practices, it is essential to comprehend these factors.

According to **Thøgersen, J. (2011)**, choosing sustainable foods is significantly predicted by environmental concern. Eco-friendly and organic items are typically preferred by customers who are more conscious of environmental issues. Thus, educational programs that raise awareness can have a positive impact on sustainable consumption.

Health-related issues are still another important factor. **Magnusson et al. (2003)** discovered that consumers frequently select organic food because they believe it to be healthier. According to the report, people choose sustainable foods because they think that organic food is healthier.



Consumer decisions are highly impacted by socio-demographic characteristics, including gender, age, income, and education, according to research by **Wandel and Bugge (1997)**. For example, consumers who are younger and have completed more schooling tend to favor sustainable food items.

Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) investigated how moral convictions affect environmentally friendly consumption. They discovered that customers are more inclined to buy sustainable food products if they have strong ethical beliefs about fair trade and animal welfare.

Food labels and marketing tactics have a big impact on how consumers perceive products. **Pirog and Larson (2007)** found that product labels indicating fair trade, organic, or locally sourced goods increase consumer preference and trust in these products.

Gupta and Ogden (2009) assert that social impact is important. Customers' purchase decisions are frequently influenced by those of their friends and social circles, which may result in a rise in the use of sustainable food options.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Objectives:

- To evaluate the elements those influence the production of sustainable goods.
- To determine whether a person's demographic influences their decision to buy sustainable goods.
- To ascertain the elements influencing customers' perceptions of plastic packaging

Hypothesis:

1. Ho: There is no significant difference between use of organic ingredients in product and consumer's preference for sustainable products.
2. Ho: There is no significant difference between demographics of the consumer and preference for sustainable products
3. Ho: There is no relationship between preference towards plastic packaging on product and usage of plastic.

Technique:

A questionnaire based on earlier research was created to investigate customers' perceptions of sustainable features in food products. The final questionnaire, which included 15 questions, was split into three sections: one for the analysis of the respondents' sociodemographic profile; another for the attitude and consumption of sustainable food, such as organic, Fair Trade, and typical food; and a third for the analysis of the respondents' eating habits and way of life. A sample of 275 South Gujarati customers who are in charge of family purchasing were given the questionnaire. A straightforward random sampling technique was employed to establish the sample, and 275 specific interviews were conducted. There were in-person interviews done. This method produced data that were subjected to a descriptive analysis to obtain a general understanding of the frequency of replies. Utilizing the SPSS interpretation 15, data were analyzed.



RESULT DISCUSSION:

Regarding the characteristics influencing the survey respondents' dietary preferences, our findings indicate that accounting for the sociodemographic factors Table 1 demonstrates the pollsters' predominate presence of women (158) who are between the ages of 18 and 25 (95), married (168), reside in nuclear households (204), possess a secondary school diploma (102), and work in the private sector (95).

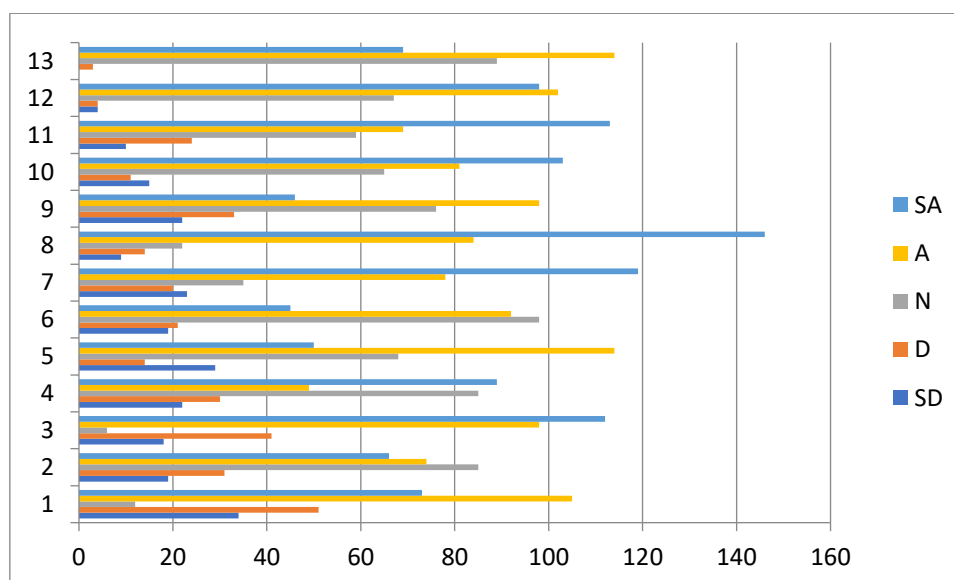
Table 1 demographic factors

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	117	42.55
	Female	158	57.45
Age	Less Than 18	20	7.27
	18-25	95	34.55
	25-35	54	19.64
	35-45	62	22.55
	45-50	26	9.45
	More Than 50	18	6.55
Marital Status	Married	168	61.09
	Unmarried	74	26.90
	Other	33	12
Family	Nuclear	204	74.18
	Joint	71	25.82
Education	Up To 10 th	13	4.72
	12 th	102	37.09
	UG	86	31.27
	PG	74	26.90
Occupation	Student	87	31.63
	Self Employed	40	14.54
	Professional	04	1.45
	Government Employee	09	3.27
	Private Employee	95	34.55
	Housewife	23	8.36
	Other	17	6.18

Table 2 factors affecting consumers' choice to sustainable products



Sr. no.		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	No animals are harmed while producing a product	34	51	12	105	73
2	Packaging is environmental friendly	19	31	85	74	66
3	Production done at locally	18	41	6	98	112
4	Human rights are been protected	22	30	85	49	89
5	After seeing country of origin	29	14	68	114	50
6	if from outer country, it should approved it politically	19	21	98	92	45
7	good Tastes	23	20	35	78	119
8	Worth to pay–	9	14	22	84	146
9	Without using children for financial gain	22	33	76	98	46
10	complied with sustainable farming methods	15	11	65	81	103
11	Used of organic ingredients'	10	24	59	69	113
12	No GM components	4	4	67	102	98
13	Healthy for human body	0	3	89	114	69



Graph 1 factors affecting consumers' choice to sustainable products

Customers frequently give special attention to features like price and brand, ease of use, taste and appearance—which are regarded as quite significant in 14 out of the situations. Additionally, the provenance indicator is seen as an important feature in 25 cases. Regarding the negative aspects, the inclusion of social and environmental instruments is seen less significant, and the proposal of long-haul food delivery and



recyclable packaging are the least significant qualities. In order to analyze eating patterns, 13 statements representing various experience and credibility factors that influence customers' overall food selections were put forth. Respondents are asked to use a 5-point rating system, where 1 represents "strongly disagree," and 5 represents "strongly agree." Table 2 demonstrates that the respondents believe it is critical that the food they eat on a regular basis tastes good, contributes to their health, and is free of genetically modified ingredients. Additionally, the analysis of life was carried out by providing the respondents with a set of five specifics, about which they were requested to describe their daily routines. The examination of these variables revealed that, in the majority of cases, the respondents were particularly focused on reducing food waste (roughly 76 say they do so every day), collecting waste (roughly 76 say they do so every day), using organic ingredients in food (113 say they do it every day), and buying food from the original retailers. However, it appears that recycled accessories are still not widely used. We first assessed the pole's position regarding knowledge on organic, Fair Trade, and usual products, as well as the frequency with which they are consumed.

Regarding the first factor, graph 1 illustrates that consumers are not familiar with Fair Trade items, and respondents express a degree of trepidation about organic products (69) although claiming to be well knowledgeable about conventional and usual products (59). It is evident that the repliers' knowledge of comparable products corresponds with the frequency of their purchases. Products made using sustainable agriculture practices are the least popular; of respondents, 15 said they had never used them, and 81 said they very occasionally purchased them. In contrast, a high chance claims to purchase pay items frequently (146), followed by individuals who purchase them occasionally (22). Comparable outcomes were also documented for the conventional and typical items.

Recently, using simulated consumer markers, the familiarity of repliers with the ensigns often found on the markers of Fair Trade, organic, and usual products was examined. The findings confirm that customers consistently seek out high-quality and informative product testing (119). Additionally, they were asked to rate the level of confidence assigned to various information sources. According to the respondents, they have a great deal of faith in products that respect human rights (89) and animals (73). Regarding packaging, the majority of respondents concur that it generally improves the environment and should be as beneficial as possible for such settings (66), however some respondents don't seem to care about the packing (85).

These days, "Vocal for Local" is highly common in nations like India. As a result, the responders had to answer a few questions about the localization tool that was employed. The majority of respondents (112) express interest in purchasing locally produced goods, and they also indicate (92) that they only buy goods from nations that have received political approval, or, to put it another way, that have cordial relations with their own. wherein 19 respondents expressed complete disapproval of this approach. Regarding organic products, it turns out that (24) respondents said they buy them primarily because they don't contain substances that are harmful to their health, while (65) respondents said they eat them to get across the terrain. Eventually,



a percentage of the pollsters stated they buy these products for sybaritic reasons. Regarding the Fair Trade products, respondents who indicated that they would purchase them do so on the grounds that they uphold human rights (49) and believe that they are immorally correct (92), whereas the likelihood of those who claim to purchase without considering the value of money is only 9.

In India, child labor is illegal. Therefore, respondents were also questioned about whether or not they would buy a product that involved child exploitation. Thirty-three percent of the respondents don't give this kind of thing any thought. Whereas 98 respondents thought this item was too serious. Regarding common products, a large segment of the population asserts that they purchase them because they are more authentic, while others contend that they do so because they are superior to alternatives.

It is important to note that only 9 out of the cases have customers stated they will purchase them in order to fund the first development. Analyzing the various justifications provided by the customers, it becomes clear that sybaritic provocations predominate for organic and conventional items, while responsible provocations are particularly noticeable for those who assert to purchase Fair Trade products. More fascinating details emerge from the examination of the factors limiting the frequency of purchase of the various product orders stated. Regarding the primary justifications for not copping the products, we asked the respondents to indicate where they stood on five statements. Genetically Modified Food Components is what GM stands for. Certain foods contain genetically modified substances or are prepared with components obtained from genetically modified organisms.

A question on whether people would rather purchase foods containing genetically modified ingredients was posed. While some respondents (67) were indifferent to the statement, many respondents (102) agreed not to purchase the product. Nowadays, individuals are highly aware of their health supplements because they believe that "health is wealth." Additionally, they favor eating healthier cuisine. They were questioned about whether or not they thought the food was beneficial for the human body. The response we receive is that there are no responders (0) who prioritize their health over eating. This is very recommendable for the youth. 114 respondents were stood with their health consciousness habit.

Reliability Test:

The questionnaire contained four Likert scale items, and the Cronbach's alpha test was used to evaluate the reliability of each item. Cronbach's alpha scores in the range of .6 to .7 suggest that although the data is questionable, it is still suitable for additional processing.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.363	13



Ho 1: There is no significant difference between use of organic ingredients in product and consumer's preference for sustainable products.

To test this hypothesis, the consumer's desire for sustainable food was a dependent component, while the respondent's knowledge of the use of organic components in products was an independent factor. The independent t-test was performed to determine whether the usage of organic components in the meal preparation affected customer preferences for sustainable food.

Group statistics					
	Used of organic ingredients'	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Purchase decision on sustainable product	Yes	90	2.47	.614	0.045
	No	185	3.81	.842	0.048

Independent Sample Test										
	Levene's test For Equality of variance		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	sig.	t	df	Significance	Mean Difference	Std. error Diff.		95% confidence interval	
					One side	Two sided			lower	upper
Equal Variances assumed	3.015	.14	-2.19	273	.005	0.02	-0.242	.15	-.0485	-0.0062
Equal Variances not assumed			-2.45	199.65	0.007	0.009	-0.241	.12	-0.415	-0.0014

Since the Levene's test p-value is greater than 0.05, we are unable to reject the null hypothesis and come to the conclusion that choosing to buy a sustainable product does not differ significantly from choosing to prepare food with organic ingredients.

We draw the following conclusions in light of the result:

- Using or not using organic ingredients in food items did not significantly affect consumers' decisions to purchase sustainable products ($p > .005$).



- The decision to purchase a sustainable product using organic components took 0.24 longer than the decision to not utilize organic ingredients.

Final Interpretation: The null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no discernible difference between choosing to buy sustainable products and using organic components to prepare meals.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between demographics of the consumer and preference for sustainable products

To assess this hypothesis, two factors were considered: the independent component, demographics (age, gender, occupation, and education), and the dependent element, customer desire for sustainable products. To ascertain the relative contribution of each demographic on the customers' desire for sustainable products, multiple regression analyses were conducted.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R square	Adj. R Square	Std. error
1	0.087 ^a	0.01	-0.015	0.675
a. Predictors: Constant				

Coefficients ^a							
Model	UN-Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig.	95% level of confidence	
	B	Std. error	Beta			Lower	Upper
(Constant)	3.145	0.412		18.012	0.000	2.417	4.515
Gender	-.012	0.081	-0.012	-0.325	0.521	-0.18	0.141
Age	-.012	0.112	-0.014	-0.125	0.485	-0.154	0.210
Occupation	-.124	0.041	-0.019	-1.025	0.221	-0.412	0.017
Education	.016	0.096	0.12	0.352	0.741	-0.146	0.214
a. Dependent Variable							

It is determined that there is no statistically significant relationship between the response variable and the term since the p-value is higher than the significance level. It is proved that no demographic factors affect the choice of sustainable food product.

Final Interpretation: The null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no discernible difference between consumer choice for sustainable product and demography.

Ho 3: There is no relationship between preference towards plastic packaging on product and usage of plastic.



This hypothesis will be tested using preference for plastic packaging as an independent factor and the use of plastic as a dependent factor. Multiple regression analysis was performed to ascertain the relative influence of each demographic on consumers' selection of sustainable food products.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R square	Adj. R Square	Std. error
1	0.07 ^a	0.00	-0.05	0.465
a. Predictors: Constant				

Coefficients ^a						
Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig.	95% level of confidence	
B	Std. error	Beta			Lower	Upper
2.115	0.214		21.012	0.000	2.517	4.515
-.005	0.023	-0.04	-0.125	0.820	-0.095	0.101

Given that the p-value exceeds the level of significance, it is determined that the response variable and the term do not have a statistically significant relationship.

Final Interpretation: The null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, if one checks the sustainability preference, there is no correlation between the desire for plastic packaging and the actual use of plastic.

DISCUSSION:

Food consumption is an important political issue in the area of sustainable consumption and goods because of its implications on the environment, public and individual health, social cohesion, and frugal living. In recent years, this awareness has aided in the growth of a vast body of literature addressing the problems associated with sustainable consumption. These studies cover a wide range of topics, including environmental sustainability and organic food items in particular. Long food travel, the carbon footprint, the water footprint, recyclable packaging, and social sustainability—with a focus on Fair Trade goods, the preservation of human rights, the beast weal, and the original food to help original growers—are all mentioned. These surveys consistently show that Gujarati consumers claim to be especially concerned about sustainability when making purchases, but the transition from factual responsible food consumption to consumption is more nuanced.

The main conclusions of our research also show that, even though consumers are genuinely interested in the different aspects that affect the environmental and social sustainability of food products, they still prioritize brand and price over other considerations, as well as the safety and wholesomeness of the products they buy. There is a correlation between three factors that affect consumers' attitudes toward sustainable food. the particular values, the informational confidence, and the perceived barriers when purchasing food. The study



found a correlation between three factors—perceived walls, information confidence, and specific food buying values—and the consumer's attitude toward sustainable food. The variables included in the first factor reflect the respondent's lifestyle and specific values when it comes to food choices. These include things like their interest in the effects of food on the environment and society or their daily routines. They also reflect more ethical and ecological conditioning, such as avoiding food waste or organizing waste collection, which is crucial in determining whether a person has a greater or lesser propensity to eat sustainably, as evidenced by other studies pertaining to organic or original foods. The term "alternative factor" refers to a variety of factors, such as cost, availability, and time constraints, that restrict consumers' ability to make sustainable food choices. A few of these barriers to making sustainable food choices have previously been highlighted in prior research projects conducted in various other nations. Numerous more studies on organic and Fair Trade items also revealed similar results. Numerous studies have also demonstrated that the perception of vacuity plays a role in the purchase of sustainable food products. Limited availability of these products is often associated with their sporadic availability in supermarkets or their low visibility within the store, but it is also related to the limited availability of the original food stores, which complies with producers' wishes. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight a recent development in South Gujarat specifically: the "Solidarity Purchasing Group," which is a truly fascinating and essential food chain that helps to encourage the consumption of sustainable goods like organic, Fair Trade, and unique foods.

Regarding the third aspect, information confidence, it is important to highlight that food's ethical, environmental, and social qualities are credence traits, meaning that consumers cannot estimate them. Nevertheless, consumers usually receive little information about the advantages of responsibly produced goods, rendering them unable of making knowledgeable purchasing decisions. Our analysis validates findings from other investigations that previously shown a lack of confidence in the government's regulatory framework or the instrument body. Customers who lack confidence in ensigns, markers, or the purported quality of a product are unlikely to translate their favorable station into a behavioral intention. Actually, in this context, a major barrier to the widespread adoption of sustainable food consumption practices is informational deficiency.

It's crucial to note that, as multiple studies have demonstrated, there is also a lack of understanding and misunderstanding about the notion of sustainable food choices and the associated signage and labeling. As a whole, the study's findings demonstrate that, in spite of consumers' favorable attitudes toward goods with sustainable features, a number of reasons continue to impede this station's transformation into actual purchasing behavior. Our empirical findings indicate that businesses and policy makers should increase consumer involvement, educate consumers about product availability, more successfully promote the potential benefits of sustainable food products, and exert more social pressure to encourage more sustainable cultures in order to encourage the abandonment of sustainable food consumption models. Increased efforts are needed



to increase the awareness of and demand for these products. One way to do this might be to support and encourage the development of essential food networks, which have the dual functions of distributing sustainable products—like organic and unique foods—and promoting environmental and social cohesion. In actuality, the native check extension might serve as a constraint on the interpretation of the findings. Further investigations is necessary in this area in order to broaden the sample's territorial character, make it nationally representative, and highlight the role that territorial origin plays in influencing attitudes toward sustainable food.

CONCLUSION:

The study produced intriguing results on consumer attitudes and the viewpoints of consumers of other companies that sell sustainable products. Customers demonstrated a strong desire to protect the environment by eating the right foods, and they were judged to be responsible in this regard. Folks, but this was untrue in practice. The cost of eating sustainably produced food and the lack of better options (such fewer plastic-contained containers) in the market were the main factors behind this change. Other than that, it was shown that the decision to eat food produced sustainably was not significantly influenced by flavor, convenience, or aesthetic appeal. However, the primary cause of this has been determined to be the health advantages of eating organic food.

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