

**THE EFFECT OF CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT AND
ATTITUDE ON PURCHASING INTENTION FOR ORGANIC
FOOD PRODUCTS – A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN SELECTED
CITIES OF GUJARAT”**

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Summary, Major Findings, Limitations and Directions for Future Research

1. Introduction

Organic production is an overall system of farm management and food production that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preference of certain consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes. The organic production method thus plays a dual societal role, where, it on the one hand provides for a specific market responding to a consumer demand for organic products, and on the other hand delivers goods contributing to the protection of the environment and animal welfare, as well as to rural development.

Organic food production is based, at its heart, upon modern, sustainable farming systems which maintain the long-term fertility of the soil, use less of the Earth's limited resources to produce our food and which put animal welfare at the heart of farming practice.

This philosophy extends into the production of food and other items using organically farmed ingredients, usually referred to as organic processing. Organic techniques have been developed from an understanding of, and research into, soil science, crop breeding, animal husbandry and ecology. The maintenance of soil fertility relies principally on the use of legumes, crop rotations, the application of composted animal manures, green manures and ground rock minerals. Weeds are controlled by mechanical methods while pests and diseases tend not to be a problem due to the inherent biodiversity in the system. Artificial fertilizers, herbicides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives are prohibited in organic farming.

India is blessed with abundant natural resources. A vast majority of its population is dependent on agriculture for their sustenance. Being such a vast country and having varied climate, different crops are cultivated in different regions of the country.

As per the available statistics, India's rank in terms of World's Organic Agricultural land was 15 as per 2013 data (Source FIBL and IFOAM Year Book 2015). The total area under organic certification is 5.71 million Hectare (2015-16). This includes 26% cultivable area with 1.49 million Hectare and rest 74% (4.22 million Hectare) forest and wild area for collection of minor forest produces.

After the green revolution in the 1960s, the use of fertilizers has increased in agriculture in India. This has led to surplus growth in the production of food grains, fruits and vegetables as also increased productivity in animals with respect to dairy items. However, the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers in agriculture and allied fields has led to some serious health issues. This has led to a number of people looking for a healthier option. The solution was Organic Food Products.

Organic products are grown under a system of agriculture without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides with an environmentally and socially responsible approach. This is a method of farming that works at grass root level preserving the reproductive and regenerative capacity of the soil, good plant nutrition, and sound soil management, produces nutritious food rich which is rich in vitality which and has resistance to diseases (APEDA).

Looking at the growing importance of organic food products globally including India, it was thought fit to undertake research to study and analyse consumer involvement, consumer attitude and purchasing intention for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.

1.1 Consumer Involvement

The concept of involvement has been introduced in psychology in 1947 by Sherif and Cantril and was used in the beginning to explain the receptivity of individuals on communications. The definition of involvement used in the present study is: “a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests” (Zaichkowsky, 1985)¹. The term “low and high involvement products” can be misleading in the sense that involvement is not a property of a product (Salmon, 1986). Involvement is recognized as the interaction between the product and the individual. “Although involvement tends to be defined as the relevance of a product rather than the interest of an individual in a product, involvement can be interpreted to be more on the side of the stimulus than on the side of the viewer” (Salmon, 1986). “If involvement can be defined according to the stimulus, then products can be organized into different product involvement categories and ideally, markets can be segmented on the basis of product involvement” (Grunig, 1989; Taylor & Joseph, 1984). One of the ways of identifying whether product involvement is high or low is to find out the perceived risk and return from the purchase. In case of high involvement products, consumer perceives high risk

¹ Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the involvement construct. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12 (December), 341-352.

and also high levels of satisfactions are achieved if the purchase is as per his perceived benefits. On the other hand, if a wrong purchasing decision is made, it involves huge number of risks in terms of costs, time and satisfaction. Hence, for high involvement products, consumer spends lot of time gathering information about the product. He enquires about its price and compares it with its features in detail. He also asks for feedbacks and experiences of others who have used the same or a similar kind of product.

The literature suggests that a person can be involved with advertisements (Krugman 1962, 1965, 1967, 1977), with products (Howard and Sheth 1969; Hupfer and Gardner 1971) or with purchase decisions (Clarke and Belk 1978). Involvement with these different objects leads to different responses. For example, involvement with ads leads one to give more counterarguments to the ad (Wright 1974). Involvement with products has been hypothesized to lead to greater perception of attribute differences, perception of greater product importance, and greater commitment to brand choice (Howard and Sheth 1969). Involvement with purchases leads one to search for more information and spend more time searching for the right selection (Clarke and Belk 1978). Therefore, each area might have its own idiosyncratic result of the state of being involved with the object (Zaichkowsky, 1985)².

In the year 1986, Judith L. Zaichkowsky provided the conceptual explanation of the term 'involvement'. The term can be used as advertisement involvement, product class involvement and purchase involvement. Involvement is a function of person, situation and the object. In simple words, consumer involvement may be taken to mean the importance a consumer attaches to the product. It shows his or her interest in the product. The greater the interest in the product or the desire to possess it, the greater is the consumer's involvement and vice versa. According to Judith Zaichkowsky, two underlying factors were proposed to influence whether a product is considered high or low-involving³:

- Personal importance, personal ego or personal relevance. All these terms are used interchangeably in the literature, but all pertain to personal needs, values and relevance within the individual and how he/she perceives the product.
- Differentiation of alternatives (i.e., the amount of product distinction within a product class). The differentiation of alternatives causes involvement due to lack of cognitive overlap. This

² Zaichkowsky, J. L., (1985), Measuring the involvement construct, *The Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol.12(3), pp. 341-352.

³ Zaichkowsky, J. L., (1986), Conceptualising Involvement, *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 15(2), pp .4-14

means the alternatives are not perceived as substitutes, and hence the person will be motivated to compare and evaluate the differences.

Purchase involvement leads a consumer to search for more information and spend more time searching for the right selection⁴. Certain product classes may be more or less central to an individual's life, his attitudes about himself, his sense of identity and his relationship to the rest of the world⁵ (Traylor, 1981). The level of product involvement will influence the nature of consumer's decision. In this research also an attempt was made to study the impact of consumer involvement on purchasing intention.

Involvement is defined as the mental condition of an individual, which is judged by individual's cognition for things and the importance perceived. (Ming-Chuan Pan, 2007). An individual's mental state for the goal or action, reflects one's interests (Mittal, 1983). In simple words, consumer involvement may be taken to mean the importance a consumer attaches to the product. It shows his interest in the product. The greater the interest in the product or the desire to possess it, the greater is the consumer's involvement and vice versa. It is to be noted that an individual's product involvement is based on his own perception. Hence, in this sense it may be viewed as consumer involvement. Involvement can be classified as -

Situational Involvement: it is the degree of involvement evoked by a particular situation such as a purchase occasion and is influenced by product attributes (cost, complexity and similarity among choice alternatives) and situational variables (whether product will be used in the presence of others) (Houston and Rothchild, 1978). Situational involvement appears to result from perceived risk (Houston and Rothchild, 1978).

Enduring Involvement: it is the ongoing concern with a product the individual brings into the purchase situation (Bloch and Richins, 1983). It is a function of past experience with the product and the strength of values to which the product is relevant. (Houston and Rothchild, 1978).

⁴ Clarke, K. and Belk, R. (1978). The effects of product involvement and task definition on anticipated consumer effort. Hunt, H. K. (ed.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Ann Arbor: Association for Consumer Research, 5, 313-318.

⁵ Traylor, M. B. (1981). Product involvement and brand commitment. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 21 (6), 51-56.

Response Involvement: it arises from the complex cognitive and behavioural processes characterizing the overall consumer decision process.

Certain product classes may be more or less central to an individual's life, his attitudes about himself, his sense of identity and his relationship to the rest of the world (Traylor, 1981). In other words, it is the level of importance of the product for the consumer.

"Product class involvement" usually refers to an individual's predisposition to, for example, make a brand choice (in that product category) with care and deliberation, perhaps due to high levels of perceived risk and the like. Such involvement should therefore endure across time, though there could clearly be temporal differences in the intensity of such involvement (Houston and Rothschild 1977; Rothschild 1979).

1.2 Attitude

Attitude is an important part of human psychology. In the area of marketing management too, lot of research has been carried out to study how attitudes are formed and how they change over time. Based on research, some important theories of attitude formation and change have been propounded in this field. Some of these theories include-

- The Tri-component Model of Attitude Formation
- Multi-attribute Attitude Models
- Elaboration Likelihood Model
- Attribution Theory

1.3 Purchasing Intention

Purchasing intention is a psychological process of decision making. (Engel, 1990). Consumers are motivated by the fulfilment of demands to search relevant information according to personal experience and external environment. A consumer, before purchasing a product, starts to collect information about the product. This information is evaluated and comparisons are made. Based on the comparisons, the final buying decision is arrived at. This process is called the consumer decision process. According to Philip Kotler, the buying process starts with need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, buying decision and ends with post purchase behaviour. "Purchasing intention is the probability of customer's willingness to purchase." (Dodds., 1991). Higher the perceived value, more will be the purchasing intention.

This research aimed to study the purchasing intention for organic food products in three selected cities of Gujarat and further, how this purchasing intention is affected by consumer involvement and consumer attitude.

2. Rationale

Some research has been carried out in the field of consumer involvement in India and abroad. Out of this, most of the studies have concentrated on defining involvement or identifying the types of involvement. Some research has also been carried out to find the factors that determine involvement. Recently, researchers have tried to measure the level of involvement taking a variety of products. Very few researchers have actually tried to study the impact of involvement levels on buying behavior of consumers.

Lot of research has been carried out to examine consumer attitude for various products and services globally and India is no different. From the literature available, it was found that few studies have been conducted to study consumer attitude for organic food products.

This research identified overall consumer involvement and consumer attitude towards organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat and examine the impact of these two variables on purchasing intention. This research combined consumer involvement and attitude and their examined their impact on purchasing intention which, no research had analysed.

3. Objectives

3.1 Research Problem

- To study consumer involvement towards organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To study consumer attitude towards organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To study purchasing intention for organic food in selected cities of Gujarat
- To study the relationship between consumer involvement, consumer attitude and purchasing intention for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.

3.2 Major Objectives

This research established relationship between consumer involvement, consumer attitude and purchasing intention. Following were the major objectives of this research-

- To examine consumer involvement for organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To examine consumer attitude for organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To examine purchasing intention for organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To examine the effect of consumer involvement on purchasing intention for organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To examine the effect of consumer attitude on purchasing intention for organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To examine the relationship between consumer involvement and consumer attitude towards organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To examine the effect of consumer involvement and consumer attitude on purchasing intention for OFP in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To analyse reasons for preference of organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.
- To identify problems faced in consumption of organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.

3.3 Variables of the Study

Dependent Variable – purchasing intention for organic food products (OFP) in selected cities of Gujarat.

Independent Variables – consumer involvement and consumer attitude

Over and above these, demographic data of respondents was also considered as independent variable.

3.4 Hypotheses

- H₁:** There is no significant consumer involvement for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- H₂:** There is lack of favourable consumer attitude towards organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- H₃:** There is lack of significant purchasing intention for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- H₄:** There is no significant relationship between consumer involvement and consumer attitude for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- H₅:** There is no significant impact of consumer involvement on purchasing intention for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- H₆:** There is no significant impact of consumer attitude on purchasing intention for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.
- H₇:** There is no significant impact of consumer involvement and consumer attitude on purchasing intention for organic food products in selected cities of Gujarat.

4. Research Methodology

After defining the research problem and research objectives, the next step in every research is to identify research design. A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. In other words, it is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It constitutes the blue print for collection, measurement and analysis of data. This research could be categorized as descriptive research since it describes the buying behaviour of respondents towards organic food products that was examined and analysed through consumer involvement, consumer attitude and demographic profile.

The research was conducted on appropriate population from selected cities in Gujarat after taking into account the importance of the study in relevance to the final objective of modelling the purchasing intention for organic food products which was routed through consumer involvement and consumer attitude. As the study is relevant to urban areas, the population was located in cities of Gujarat. It was therefore appropriate to select those cities (i.e., Ahmedabad,

Surat and Vadodara) which were representative of the population of suitable sample size in terms of time, cost and information while taking the other academic aspects in account.

4.1 Universe of the Study

The research was conducted in three major cities of Gujarat on the basis of census 2011. As per the last census, Ahmedabad had the largest urban population of 55,77,940⁶ followed by Surat having a population of 44,66,826⁷. Vadodara ranks third in urban population which is 16,66,495⁸. Based on the data of population of cities, Ahmedabad had the highest population followed by Surat and Vadodara ranked third in urban population. For the purpose of this study, only urban areas were considered since the study focused on organic food products which is a subject of urban areas in India.

4.2 Sample Size and Sample Unit

A total of 827 valid responses were considered for this research. Out of 827 respondents 333 were from Ahmedabad, 276 were from Surat and 218 were from Vadodara. The respondents comprised professionals, businessmen, salaried class and home-makers. Other characteristics were also examined. This research comes under the definition of descriptive research. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or group. In this type of research, the researcher must be able to define clearly what he or she wants to measure and must find adequate methods for measuring it (C.R. Kothari, 2019)⁹.

4.3 Scope of Study

- Only those respondents who showed awareness or had used or were likely to use OFP were considered for data collection.
- Population from urban areas was considered since they were the ones who were likely to use OFP.
- OFPs includes all kinds of fruits, vegetables, pulses, cereals, package foods, juices, poultry products. For the purpose of this research, organic food products were defined to include

⁶ https://ahmedabadcity.gov.in/portal/jsp/Static_pages/introduction_of_amdavad.jsp

⁷ <https://suratmunicipal.gov.in/TheCity/Introduction>

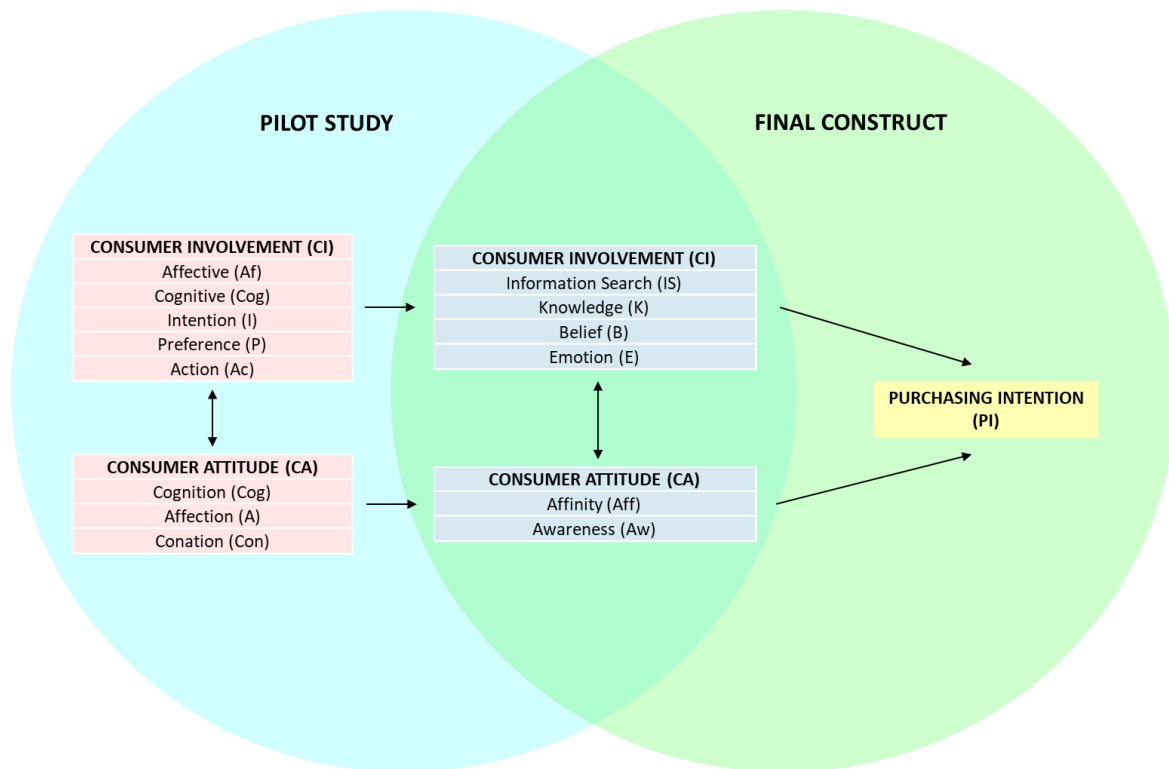
⁸ <https://vmc.gov.in/CityGlance.aspx>

⁹ Kothari C R, Garg G, (2019), Research Methodology Methods and Techniques, Fourth Edition, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi.

all the food products defined in the definition given by Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).¹⁰

- Non-food items of organic nature as defined by Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) were not covered in this research.

4.4 Research Construct



4.5 Data Reliability

6.1 Factor-wise and City-wise Reliability Statistics

Variable	Ahmedabad		Surat		Vadodara		Overall	
	N	Alpha	N	Alpha	N	Alpha	N	Alpha
Information Search	333	0.812	276	0.813	218	0.845	827	0.825
Knowledge	333	0.836	276	0.604	218	0.705	827	0.836
Belief	333	0.787	276	0.716	218	0.743	827	0.787
Emotion	333	0.886	276	0.656	218	0.837	827	0.797

¹⁰ https://apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/apeda_products/product_catalog_HSCODE_List_final.pdf

Consumer Involvement	333	0.931	276	0.886	218	0.916	827	0.912
Affinity	333	0.867	276	0.771	218	0.814	827	0.825
Awareness	333	0.889	276	0.75	218	0.881	827	0.848
Consumer Attitude	333	0.938	276	0.874	218	0.914	827	0.914
Purchasing Intention	333	0.874	276	0.826	218	0.876	827	0.856

The data was highly reliable as all the alpha values were in excess of 0.60.

5. Major Findings / Discussion

With regards to the demographic feature gender, parity was observed in representation. 45.83% of the total responses were from females and this trend was found in all the three cities too. Like gender, there was even distribution of respondents with respect to marital status. 52.48% respondents were married. In Ahmedabad, number of married respondents was highest as compared to the other two cities. The highest number of respondents were from the age-group of 21 to 30 years. 30.35% respondents were from service sector, 25.03% were business persons, 22.85% were professionals and 21.77% were home-makers. It was found that Surat had the highest number of business persons. While, relatively speaking, Vadodara had the highest number of home-makers in comparison to Ahmedabad and Surat. With respect to income, 31% respondents earned less than Rs. 2.00 lakhs per annum. Approximately 24% respondents earned between Rs. 2.00 lakhs to Rs. 4.00 lakhs per annum. Similarly, 23% respondents were earning between Rs. 4.00 lakhs to Rs. 6.00 lakhs per annum. It was found that majority of the respondents were post-graduates (40.02%). On the other side, least number of respondents were professionals (3.63%). In Ahmedabad, majority of the respondents were graduates (41.74%) while in Surat, most respondents were post-graduates (42.03%) and in Vadodara majority were doctorates (41.28%).

Majority of the families were nuclear (64.33%) since data was collected from urban areas. As majority of the families were nuclear, respondents had a small family size (63.36%).

It was found that, there was high consumer involvement for organic food products (Mean = 3.97). Consumer involvement was dependent on four antecedents i.e., Information Search (IS), Knowledge (K), Belief (B) and Emotion (E). Mean values for all these antecedents were between 3.40 and 4.21. It was found that Knowledge (K) had the highest mean of 4.16, while Information Search (IS) had the lowest mean value of 3.65. All the t-values were highly significant; therefore, null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

It was found that there was favourable consumer attitude towards organic food products (Mean = 4.03). Consumer attitude was affected by its two factors i.e., Affinity (Aff) and Awareness (Aw) whose mean values were 4.02 and 4.03 respectively. All the mean values were highly significant when t-test was applied. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

It was found that there was positive purchasing intention for organic food products (Mean = 4.04). One notable finding was that smaller the city, higher was the purchasing intention. All the t-values were highly significant; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

It was found that there was strong positive correlation between consumer involvement and consumer attitude. There was also strong positive correlation between antecedents of involvement and factors affecting consumer attitude. All r-values were between 0.544 and 0.971. Highest correlation was found between Emotion (E) and Awareness (Aw) ($r = 0.787$, $p = 0.000$). Similarly, the correlation between consumer involvement and consumer attitude was also found to be positive ($r = 0.864$, $p = 0.000$). Since, all the coefficients were highly significant, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

There was existence of positive correlation between consumer involvement and purchasing intention ($r = 0.776$, $p = 0.000$). It was further found that there was positive correlation between antecedents of consumer involvement and purchasing intention. The highest value of correlation was found between Knowledge (K) and Purchasing Intention (PI) ($r = 0.778$, $p = 0.000$). Based on the significant correlation values, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

The regression analysis confirmed the existence of a direct relationship between consumer involvement and purchasing intention as the t-value was highly significant. Through regression modelling, it was established that consumer involvement had a direct impact on the purchasing intention for organic food products.

It was found that, there was a positive correlation between consumer attitude and purchasing intention ($r = 0.810$, $p = 0.000$). There was positive relation between both the factors and purchasing intention. The correlation coefficient was found to be between 0.780 and 0.789 for

the two factors respectively. Since, the values were highly significant null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Regression analysis showed that, consumer attitude had a direct impact on the purchasing intention.

Through regression analysis, it was found that both consumer involvement and consumer attitude had a direct and positive impact on purchasing intention. The β -values for the independent variables showed that consumer attitude had a larger impact on purchasing intention as compared to consumer involvement. Since, the regression equation was found to be highly significant, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted.

6. Conclusion

There was presence of moderately high involvement, favourable attitude and positive purchasing intention. It was also found that there was direct relationship between these variables. Finally, it was confirmed that both Consumer Involvement and Consumer Attitude had a positive impact on Purchasing Involvement for OFPs in the selected cities of Gujarat.

7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

7.1 Limitations

Only three cities were considered for the research. Urban population belonging to the three selected cities was considered as the population for the research. In the definition of organic food products, only food products were considered. Other organic items were not a part of the research. Sample size was restricted to 827 valid responses.

7.2 Directions for future research

Research can be conducted in other cities, as well as other states. A comparative study can be undertaken between organic food products and conventional food products. This research covered only organic food products. Non-food items were not covered. Further research can include such other non-food items.

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