

# Evaluation of Determinant Awareness Factors for the Purchase Decision of Food Items in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study

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## Abstract

Eating nutritious food is an indispensable part of leading healthy life. Knowledgeability and easy access to information network make today's consumers more conscious about nutrition. Diet conscious consumers now pay more attention to purchase nutritious food. But how far the marketers are ready? The awareness level would play a catalytic role here to make marketers rethink and reshape marketing strategies. This study tried to find out the factors that determine consumer awareness. This intends to judge the awareness level of the consumers in having food items. Five awareness factors out of 12 variables have been summarized by applying factor analysis technique. The subtracted factors are (1) checking nutritional facts and paying more for nutritious food, (2) familiarity with dietary requirement, checking adulteration, checking food label, (3) checking expiry date, checking mpr, (4) measuring importance of nutrition, looking for nutritional information, (5) rationale for buying a new product. These factors explain 60.52% of the variability of the covariance matrix. Consumers familiar with these awareness aspects may be considered 'moderately conscious'.

**Keywords:** Food items, nutrition, consumer awareness, factors, factor analysis

## 1. Introduction

Consumer awareness means the understanding by an individual of his/her rights as a consumer concerning available products and services and other marketing mixes being marketed. The concept involves basically three categories including safety (the right to expect the product to be safe), choice (the right not to buy a product) and performance (the right to expect the product as claimed). But to make wise decisions consumers need to know more information. Therefore some consumer advocates call for more rights to guard consumers against harmful practices of marketing. These are information (the right to be well informed about important aspects of the product), protection (the right to be protected against questionable products and marketing practices), quality (the right to influence products and marketing practices in ways that will improve the "quality of life") and sustainability (the right to consume in a way that will preserve the world) (Kotler, 2011). Consumer awareness recognizes two R's. Rights and responsibilities. The first declaration of consumer rights was established in the US in 1962. Consumer activist Ralph Nader is referred to as the father of the consumer movement.

Despite of many safeguards, consumers have been being deprived of quality foods, labelled foods and foods of value. The reasons are basically ignorance of rights, intention to purchase low-priced food, unavailability of quality food items etc. (Daily Star, 2012). On the other hand, the sole business motive guides the marketers to maximize profits by deceiving consumers even.

But, today's consumers are more conscious than before. Till about three decades ago, the primary role of women in the subcontinent was to look after the house (Kotler, 2011). Very few women would think of going out of the home. Very few would study beyond high school and complete their graduation. But now in every activity in this society women work shoulder to shoulder with men. This radical change in our society signals positively. Women are home makers and they are taking part effectively in every decision making of the family affairs as well. Education makes them aware and behave responsibly. The initiatives and the promotional campaign from both public and private sources are working also to mobilize people effectively not to have poor quality food items. Today's homemakers are very much conscious about nutritional requirement, labeling, retail price tag, dietary requirements. (Daily Star, 2012). They read magazines, articles and newspaper features to get ideas on these issues. Awareness has an impact on the purchasing behavior. It can be thought rationally that, aware persons would consume quality food. The malpractices of companies and their consequent sufferings make consumers think and purchase products cautiously. Day by day people are coming under the information cobweb. Research suggests that there is a segment of conscious consumers who marketers to pay attention to. Nielsen (2012) defines the "conscious consumer" as those who say they would be willing to pay the extra for better product. In this study, we are concerned to find out the underlying variables on which to group customers and to identify the homogenous group of buyer that characterizes awareness aspect of consumers and segment the market which may shed light to reset marketing strategy that comes up with superior market offer.

## 2. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the variables that determine consumer awareness
- To categorize consumers on the basis of the identified factors
- To examine the buying behavior of each group

To survive on these objectives, 5 factors have been identified here. These factors talk about the characteristics of the aware consumers. The identified factors may play a remarkable role to shape up marketing strategies. Because consumers' characteristics and behavioral aspects have a very significant impact on marketing practices.

## 3. Sources of Awareness

An aware consumer is basically a knowledgeable consumer. This knowledgeable ability is shaped up by education, experience, information and surroundings. It is found that educated consumers are aware in purchasing products and services. On the other hand it is also a reality that uneducated people can also become conscious and alert in buying market offers. There are many signs that reveal awareness of consumers of food items.

The consumers of daily food items need to be more aware than any other consumers. Because the benefits or hazards of these products are directly related to our health. Ineffective and harmful foods may cause malignant diseases. This may pose a serious threat to the future generations of the consumers as well. So, it should be ensured that the food items we are taking every day are flawless. Healthy foods can make healthy generation. So, undoubtedly it can be admitted that food item consumers need to be more conscious in taking purchase decision. Several sources can reveal somewhat the nature of awareness of the consumers. These are elaborated below:

### a. Purchasing new products only paying attention to the advertisements

A conscious consumer never attempts to buy a product only paying attention to advertisement. (Valla,2010). He searches for more information from the current users and competitors, and judge the offer to make a credible picture in his mind. Ignorance of product attributes may lead to wrong purchase decision.

### b. Understanding the importance and role of nutrition

Optimum nutrition, providing all nutrients in both kind and amount, is the cornerstone of good health and the cutting edge of prevention (Krehl, 1983).To get nutritious food, consumer should have proper knowledge on importance and role of nutrition.60.2% of the consumers in this study think that nutritious food is somewhat important for healthy life style.

### c. Familiarity with dietary requirement

Dietary requirement means the allowable level of food intake of each person. This requirement or intake level varies from person to person. This requirement should include 7 items of nutrients namely carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins, fiber, minerals and water. In this study 70% of the consumers are somewhat familiar with dietary requirement.

### d. Searching for nutritional information presented in electronic media

Conscious consumers are inquisitive of nutritional information. From different sources they can get nutritional information for example, internet (websites conveying nutritional facts, web community and online newspaper), radio ,television etc.60.0% consumers sometimes look for nutritional information of the food they intend to buy from different types of media.

### e. Paying more for quality (nutritious) food

It is another factor that reveals awareness level. In contrast to cheap food, quality food costs 2-3 times more to buy the same amount of food. Nearly 90 research studies in the past 30 years have been designed to test the general wisdom that price and quality are positively related (Zeithaml,1988).It can be assumed that conscious people should be ready to pay more. But this study shows that only 26.8% agree to pay more for quality food.

### f. Comparison

The market surrounding us is flooded with lots of products. Cheap, unhealthy as well as quality food items are there. Careful consumers compare same food item of different producers when they decide to buy. 81.3% of the consumer compare similar food of different producers before taking purchase decision.

### g. Check expiry date

Expiry date is a time bar which assures that the product would perform best if it is consumed or used before the date expires. Food item after expiry date loses its property and freshness. But it does not necessarily imply that the food is unhealthy or it becomes unsafe. Checking expiry date is very essential in case of food items. In this study 99.3% consumers check expiry date regularly.

### h. Check MRP (Maximum Retail Price)

MRP (maximum retail price) means such price at which the product shall be sold in retail and such price shall include all taxes levied on the product (legalserviceindia.com).It is an upper limit on the price of a good fixed by the manufacturer on final point-of-sale. A consumer should know at what maximum level the product is priced.

Sometimes it happens one product is charged differently for different customers. It is called price discrimination. A consumer conscious of his right must know the price he is sacrificing.

**i. Check adulteration**

Adulteration usually refers to noncompliance with health or safety standards as determined by the country (Encyclopedia). Adulteration occurs when food contains additives that may be poisonous to health. This study shows 86% of the consumers sometimes check food adulteration.

**j. Check food label**

Food labeling is important for first impression, capturing attention, information, usage, easing purchase and legal requirement. Food label may contain many attributes regarding a product like manufacturing time, net content, nutritional information, expiry date, special indication for preserving the product in an effective way, MRP etc. Consumer should know whether the product item is labeled or not because it is a consumer's right to be well informed about a product on every aspect. In this study, 45% consumers often check the existence food label.

**k. Check nutritional fact on the label**

From this study it has been explored that, 48% consumers regularly check the nutritional facts of the products they are buying. These facts are mentioned on the label. Consumers should know what essential nutrients are included in the food items they think to take. So this factor also reveal the awareness level of the consumer.

**l. Read articles, magazines to gather information about nutritional foods**

Articles, magazines related to healthy food and nutritional issues draw attention of the conscious consumers who want to know in depth about the nutritional facts and effectiveness of food items. Only 8.7% of the surveyed population tried to get ideas about healthy food from articles, magazines etc.

**4. Essentials of Consumer Awareness**

The market today is flooded with very large number as well as varieties of goods and services. We are surrounded by too much promotional programs that we get perplexed and can't choose the right product. So it has become very challenging to track down genuine producers or sellers who are offering quality products.

There are many evidences which show that a number of well known producers deceive consumers in different ways. For example, some complaints are, food preparation in unhealthy condition, food without any nutritional content (as mentioned in the label), adulterated food, label without MRP (maximum retail price) and ED (expiry date), package without any label etc. Sometimes information is deliberately hidden in certain advertisements to mislead the consumers, since the consumer did not ask for it or notice the detail written on the product. In case of packed food products, there is an expiry date which implies that the particular food must be consumed before that date and not at all after that date. So mentioning expiry date on the product label is essential as it involves the health of the consumer. These practices spawn an adverse impact about the product and its producers. It also happens many times that a consumer buys goods and services without taking the bill or the seller does not provide the bill. This is done to avoid paying tax on the product to the government. This tax is value added tax (VAT) i.e. a type of tax that is placed on a product whenever value is added at a stage of production and at final sale. If this tax is included then price of the product will be higher because of the tax and accordingly it will be acknowledged by providing the bill. Another major issue is that the consumers in our country are not united. Producers are organized and hence powerful because there are Traders' Associations to protect their interest (DCCI, 2015). But the buyers are still weak and unorganized. Only a negligent number of complaints are placed in Consumer Association Of Bangladesh every year. As a result the buyers are duped and deceived quite often. (CAB Research Report, 2004). It is a very important message that consumers now are more alert than before. Education, knowledge sharing and state's initiatives for consumer rights, media, NGOs are in an effective attempt to improve the awareness level of the consumers (Rahman, 2009). Knowledgeable consumers can ensure better standard of living for themselves and their families. This sensible segment of consumers is creating some new challenges to the marketers. Product which was placed in the market without any nutritional content and information no longer allures consumer as before. Facing various obstacles make consumers more alert and choosy in selecting a product or service. So, it is essential to know in detail about the consumers' perception relating to quality, quality food items.

**5. Literature Review**

Demographic transformation combined with urbanization and education has resulted in drastic changes in lifestyles globally (Mohan et al, 2005). So, consumers are becoming more important because of their purchasing and bargaining power. Specially the urban consumers are moving ahead to better purchasing decisions for food items because of their knowledgeability and accessibility to information. And it is notable that marketing trends are originated from urban lifestyles. (Huda, 2009). Pambo (2014) showed that food awareness is significantly higher for urban consumers. The population of this segment is expanding day by day. In Bangladesh, urban population is 27% of total population and it is increasing at 3.5% every year. (CIA World Fact Book, 2013., Ahmed et al, 2013).

Growing concerns about issues affecting people's health are leading to changes in industry and mindset. As people pay more attention to where their food comes from and how it's grown, the US government is tackling the issue of how to help consumers make better-informed choices about the food they eat. The Food and Drug Administration is proposing several changes to the nutrition labels we see on packaged foods and beverages. This new labels would place a bigger emphasis on total calories, added sugars and certain nutrients, such as Vitamin D and potassium.(Sustainable Living Association,2014). It is also significant that, knowledge about dietary requirement is one of the major sources of consumer awareness (Krehl, 1983).According to Zugarramurdi (2003), people are increasingly concerned about nutrition, food safety at a reasonable cost. Increased awareness and knowledge was the most commonly reported factor that would promote functional food consumption (85.5%) and 63.5% of participants wanted more information about functional foods with preferred sources being newspapers/magazines/books (68.5%) and food labels (66.1%).( Meagan, N. V. et al,2014). In a survey conducted by NPD group, it was revealed that, exposure to nutrition news and information increases consumer awareness. Television and the Internet are often the first places consumers turn to for searching information on foods and food ingredients. (Corn Naturally, 2012)

Paying more for quality food is another important concern of consumer awareness. A full 88 percent of consumers say they're willing to pay a premium to some degree for foods with healthy attributes, according to Nielsen's online poll of 30,000 people in 60 countries. (Little,2015).(Sethi,2008) said, customers do not mind paying more for what they think is better quality food or service.

For a major purchase, consumers generally conduct comparison shopping and demand information about the features and benefits of the products (Penn, 2014). Price is the most important factor in the comparison process, one of the three most important factors influencing their personal decision but consumers do not necessarily choose the cheapest deal rather, they compare prices in the context of the overall deal and the information as a whole.

(McDonald & Sharp, 2000) examined the role of awareness in the consumer choice process. Koç B. and Ceylan M (2009) had a purpose to emphasize the importance of the sources and means of communications that inform consumers about food risks and identification of certain effects of communication, such as a change, if any, in consumers' purchasing habits as a result of information they obtain. Accessibility to electronic and print media makes the consumers know about nutritional facts Consumer awareness and rights are guarded legally as well in Bangladesh. The promotion and protection of consumer rights is essential for every citizen. It is considered as a 'right to life' which is a fundamental right. (Ahamudujjaman et al, 2009).Marketers should also frame their strategies considering that consumers are now more conscious about their rights. The marketing strategy, which addresses the areas of publicity, education and practical involvement, forms one part of an integrated marketing strategy (Stearn, 2007).For a major purchase, the consumer generally will conduct comparison shopping and demand information about the features and benefits of the product.

## **6. Methodology of the study**

Methodology of the study is characterized into several parts.

### **6.1 Population and sample**

In this research study, our population is primarily the daily food item consumers. Packed food items are emphasized. People from different ages (who have purchasing power), income levels (low level, mid-level and upper level), locations (urban, rural, sub urban) and educational backgrounds (primary, secondary, higher secondary, graduation and post-graduation) and gender(male ,female)are considered here. Here, convenience sampling method is applied. This technique is least rigorous involving the selection of the most accessible subjects (Marshall, 1996).Primary data is considered here for analysis. Opinions from 1000 respondents have been collected.

### **6.2 The Questionnaire**

A structured questionnaire has been developed .This questionnaire has been prepared to conduct field survey and to collect primary data. The questionnaire has been developed in a way that can reveal the respondents' response related to each of the independent variable. A single statement represents a single independent variable. In this questionnaire, some demographic variables are included. These are age, gender, and location of residence, income level and education.

### **6.3 Scaling technique**

The questionnaire is framed on a 5-point Likert scales to obtain opinions. Likert scale is often used to measure respondents' attitudes. It classifies the degree of response in a symmetrical manner. In responding a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement or disagreement on an agree-disagree scale for a series of statements.

### 6.4 Data Analysis

Here factor analysis is applied. Factor analysis is a procedure that is mainly used for data reduction and summarization. It is a method of investigating whether a number of variables of interest are linearly related to smaller number of unobservable factors. Factor analysis has two major objectives such as data reduction and substantive interpretation.

We have selected the following variables for this study and these variables are notified here:

<i>Awareness variables</i>	<i>Notifications</i>
Purchasing a new product only paying attention to the advertisements.	V1
Understanding the importance and role of nutrition	V2
Familiarity with dietary requirement	V3
Searching for nutritional information presented in electronic media	V4
Paying more for quality food	V5
Comparison	V6
Check expiry date	V7
Check MRP	V8
Check adulteration	V9
Check food label	V10
Check nutritional fact on the label	V11
Read articles, magazines to gather information about nutrition and nutritional food	V12

### 7. Findings of the Study

First the variables inside are presented in a correlation matrix. Some valuable findings can be gained from this matrix. This matrix is based on my survey data (SPSS 20 Version). In this, matrix, the diagonal value is identical.

#### 7.1 Description of Sample Respondents

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 60 years with a mean of 35.42(SD=1.35) years. 86.8% of the sample aged 35-44 years and 80.01 % were male and 19.99% were female. The sample consumers are well educated, 72.16% of them did post-graduation. 87.6% lived in city area and 85% earned greater than 40,000 tk per month.

#### 7.2 KMO and Bartlett's Test

We can apply formal statistical measure to check whether factor analysis is appropriate or not. Two formal test approaches are used .i) KMO measure of sampling adequacy, ii) Bartlett's test of sphericity

KMO statistic indicates the proportion of variance in the variables that might be caused by underlying factors. High values (close to 1.0) generally indicate that a factor analysis may be useful for the data. Small values (less than .50) say that the analysis probably be not useful. Bartlett's test of sphericity tests the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that the variables are unrelated and unstructured for structure detection. Here the smallest significant value indicates that a factor analysis is useful for my data. The determinant of the matrix is converted to a chi-square.

**Table:1 KMO and Bartlett's Test**

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>	<b>.705</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	
<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	13221.898
<b>Df.</b>	78
<b>Sig.</b>	.000

The degree of common variance among the thirteen variables is "mediocre" bordering on "middling". If a factor analysis is conducted, the factors extracted will account for fair amount of variance but not a substantial amount. From table-1 it is clear that the hypothesis that "the variables determining the awareness of consumers are not correlated" is no more valid. So we can conclude that variables influencing consumer awareness are correlated and the selected samples are suitable for the study.

**Table:2 Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.882	22.166	22.166	2.882	22.166	22.166	2.565	19.728	19.728
2	1.704	13.107	35.273	1.704	13.107	35.273	1.761	13.546	33.274
3	1.189	9.146	44.419	1.189	9.146	44.419	1.419	10.916	44.189
4	1.096	8.431	52.851	1.096	8.431	52.851	1.121	8.620	52.810
5	1.017	7.824	60.675	1.017	7.824	60.675	1.022	7.865	60.675
6	.916	7.047	67.723						
7	.906	6.970	74.692						
8	.834	6.417	81.110						
9	.754	5.803	86.913						
10	.635	4.884	91.797						
11	.582	4.477	96.274						
12	.317	2.436	98.709						
13	.168	1.291	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

We use Eigen value method to determine the number of factors. In this approach, only factors with Eigen value with greater than 1.0 are retained. Other factors are not included in the model. The five factors (Eigen value greater than 1) explain 60.67% of the variability.

**Table 3:Component Matrix**

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
V1	.198	-.125	.196	.102	.763
V2	.151	.009	.199	.739	.103
V3	-.042	.340	-.269	.576	.040
V4	.886	.084	.162	-.136	.064
V5	-.710	.454	-.098	.046	.023
V6	.876	.109	.181	-.101	-.001
V7	.330	.643	-.171	.028	-.036
V8	-.425	.192	-.012	-.090	.469
V9	-.187	.233	-.330	-.386	.339
V10	-.262	.377	.649	-.103	-.109
V11	-.240	.543	.534	-.065	-.033
V12	.510	.459	-.193	-.055	.156

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. (Five components extracted)

In table 3, component matrix in presented. From this matrix ( table-3), we see that factor 1 is somewhat correlated with two of the thirteen variables(where absolute value of the factor loading greater than .50).In such a complex matrix, it is difficult to interpret the factors.

**Table:4 Rotated Component Matrix**

	1	2	3	4	5
Comparison buying	.211	-.116	-.048	.145	<b>.778</b>
Understanding the importance and role of nutrition	.077	-.006	.021	<b>.774</b>	.121
Searching for nutritional information presented in electronic media	-.299	.397	-.104	<b>.515</b>	.019
Check nutritional fact on the product label	<b>.853</b>	.317	-.016	-.007	.115
Pay more for nutritious food	<b>.844</b>	.327	.018	.032	.053
Familiarity with dietary requirement	.102	<b>.724</b>	.132	.043	-.014
Check expiry date	-.057	-.076	<b>.803</b>	-.005	-.029
Check mrp(maximum retail price)	-.123	.120	<b>.781</b>	.016	.041
Check adulteration	.295	<b>.646</b>	-.033	-.028	.172
Checking food label	.016	<b>.575</b>	-.028	-.018	-.213

Therefore through rotation the matrix is transformed into a simpler one which is easier to interpret. In the table 4 above (Rotated component matrix), by comparing the varimax rotated factor matrix with the unrotated matrix, we can see how rotation simplifies interpretability. By conducting factor analysis, 12 variables have been reduced to five factors. These five factors explain 60.75% of the covariance among the variables.

As the study has identified 5 factors, marketers can easily segment our total market based on these factors. The characteristics and probable behavior of the consumers relating to the identified factors are presented below in table-5

**Table-5 Aware consumers' characteristics and probable purchase behavior**

Factors	Characteristics of Consumers	Probable Behavior of the consumers
<b>Factor-1 Checking nutritional facts on the label and paying more for quality (nutritious) food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affluent consumers</li> <li>• Little knowledge about nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ready to pay for high quality food</li> </ul>
<b>Factor-2 Familiarity with dietary requirement, checking adulteration, checking food label</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledgeable</li> <li>• Fastidious.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This segment expects quality food items from the marketers.</li> <li>• Long-term users</li> </ul>
<b>Factor-3 Checking expiry date and maximum retail price</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little knowledge about nutrition and quality</li> <li>• Little curiosity about quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price sensitive</li> </ul>
<b>Factor-4 Importance of nutrition, looking for nutritional information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately knowledgeable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible consumers</li> </ul>
<b>Factor-5 Comparison buying</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Least knowledgeable</li> <li>• Compare same products of different producers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible consumers</li> </ul>

These five factors can be characterized as five segments. Marketers need to place their products to satisfy the respective expectations of the consumers.

### Conclusion

The segmentation on the basis of awareness may throw new challenges to the marketers. The main characteristics of this segment are consciousness and responsiveness. In this study, five factors have been identified for tracking the attitudes relating to consumer awareness. The food items should be of superior quality and value to be well-positioned in the market. Marketers surrounded by conscious consumers need to materialize their thoughts with a revisioned strategic effort. And the marketers should also be careful about the strategic moves of the competitors. These five factors focus on five different awareness aspects. Every aspect adds a new dimension which induces marketers to step forward with augmented offers. Classified awareness level plays a catalytic role to modify marketing offer. And consequently a marketer can segment the market according to the consumers' awareness level.

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