

# Analysing the Choice Behavior for Food Products: A Case Study of District Ambala (Haryana)

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## Abstract

*The present study aims to investigate the important factors responsible for the consumer behavior of food items of Ambala District in Haryana state which is based on the consumption value theory. As per the data collection methodology used in it, it is a field study and the questionnaire validity and reliability has been measured by Cronbach's alpha and KMO test. It is descriptive study and the sample size chosen was 515 respondents. A multi variable regression i.e hypothesis testing was employed on the collected data in SPSS 19.0. The results prove that function, epistemic, and emotional values of consumers effects the selection of food products; on the other hand, the social and conditional values does not have any effect on the choice behaviour. Finally, based on the results, solutions have been provided.*

**Key Words:** Food product, epistemic value, social value, functional value, conditional value, emotional value.

## INTRODUCTION

For every household, consumption is considered to be an important activity. The amount of personal income which we obtain, from our sources, is spent either on consumption or is saved. Therefore, that part of personal disposable income which is not saved is considered to be consumed. Today's consumption is exacerbating inequalities. If the trend continues without change - not redistributing from high level income to low level income consumers, not shifting priority from consumption for conspicuous display in meeting basic needs - today's problems of consumption and human development will be more worse.

The main factors that have influenced the consumer demand and needs are globalization, the increase in the number and kinds of goods and services in the market, the rapid development of ICT.

## Conceptual Framework

Consumption may be represented different to different people and in different places in the world (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006; Miller, 1995). Campbell (1995: 102) has defined consumption as "the selection, purchase, utility, maintenance, repair, and disposal of any commodity". Consumption has been established as a focus and playground for individual or one kind freedom, making the future of capitalism more secure (Bauman, 1992). Consumption may be described as "the reasons why anything gets produced" (Heiskanen and Pantzar, 1997). In the United States during the prosperous years of the 1920s, the meanings of consumption expanded to include pleasure, enjoyment, and freedom (Lasch, 1991). Consumption, as an act of free choice, is intrinsically linked to capitalism and opposed to sociality, since it is premised on a concern for goods and services (which replaces a previous concern for people) and materialism as an unreasonable

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desire for products, and contrasts with production by being intrinsically more superficial (Miller, 1995). Consumption could be treated primarily as the consumption of signs rather than as the consumption of only use-values, a material utility (Featherstone, 1991). Therefore, “consumption is not just a matter of satisfying material greed. It is a question of manipulating symbols for all sorts of purposes” (Bauman, 1992: 223). Consumption is “not just a means of fulfilling needs, but permeates our social relations, perceptions, and images” (Gabriel and Lang, 1995: 1).

### The Theory of Consumption Values

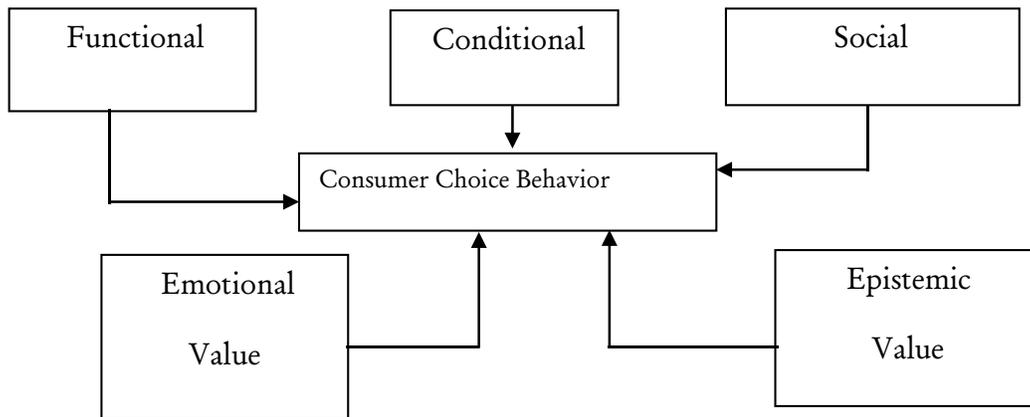
In 1991 Sheth and Newman and Goss was the first one

who came up with the theory of consumption value which was known as SNG theory.

### Sheth-Newman Gross Model of Consumption Values

According to this model, there are five consumption values influencing consumer choice behavior such as functional, social, conditional, emotional, and epistemic values. Depending upon the consumer any or all of the five consumption values may influence his decision. Each consumption value in the theory is consistent with various components of models advanced by Maslow (1970), Katona (1971), Katz (1960), and Hanna (1980). Five consumption values form the core of the model:

Figure 2-6 : The five values influencing Consumer Choice Behavior



Source: Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) Pp159-170

It has been observed that consumer behaviour and expenditure pattern holds a key of interest both to social scientist and economist, particularly to the latter. The researcher has always been discussing about the fact that the consumer behaves in a particular manner.

Despite the anecdotal evidence about the impact of product price and mass customization on perceived value of apparel, few studies (Franke & Piller, 2004; Kamali & Loker, 2002) have empirically tested the effects of these two factors on perceived value and other consumer responses. Kamali and Loker (2002) studied consumers' satisfaction and perceived value (measured as willingness to pay) towards customer-designed t-shirts.

They found that consumers perceived significantly higher value for t-shirts designed by themselves than standard products. Similarly, Franke and Piller (2004) studied perceived value for customer-designed watches and found that these products significantly enhanced perceived value. Both studies operationalized perceived value as willingness to pay. This conceptualization of perceived value as money willing to be paid is insufficient because of the multi-dimensional nature of the concept of value (e.g., Babin & Darden, 1995; Holbrook & Corfman, 1985; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Mathwick et al., 2001; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Mass customization may enhance some value dimensions, but fail to enhance or even reduce other

dimensions. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the effects of mass customization on individual dimensions of perceived value.

**The First Value: Functional Value**

Sheth *et al.* (1991) has defined the functional value as under:

"Any perceived utility which is acquired from an alternative for the use of functions, utility or physical performance. An product acquires the functional value through the possession of salient features ( i.e functional, physical attributes and utilitarian). Choice attributes is used to measure the functional value"

**The Second Value: Social Value**

Sheth *et al.* (1991;161) has defined the social value as under:

"It is the perceived utility which is acquired from an alternative association with more than one specific social group. It can be with positively or negatively stereotyped demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural-ethnic groups of the alternatives. Choice imagery measures the social value."

**The Third Value: Emotional Value**

Sheth *et al.* (1991; 161) has defined the emotional value as under:

"It is those values of perceived utility acquired from an alternative's capacity which arouses feelings or affective states. A consumer has an emotional value when associated with specific feelings. It is basically measured on the feelings associated with the alternative."

**The Fourth Value: Epistemic Value**

Sheth *et al.* (1991 ;162) has defined the epistemic value as under:

"The perceived utility acquired from an alternatives capacity to arouse curiosity, provide novelty, and/or satisfy a desire for knowledge. An alternative acquires epistemic value by items referring to curiosity, novelty, and knowledge."

**The Fifth Value: Conditional Value**

Sheth *et al.* (1991;162) has defined the conditional value as under:

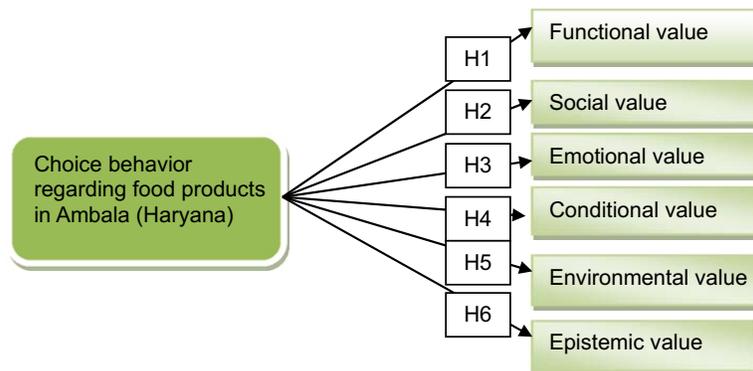
"The perceived utility acquired by an alternative is the result of the specific situation or set of circumstances facing the choice maker. An alternative acquires conditional value in the presence of antecedent physical or social contingencies that enhance its functional or social value. Conditional value is measured on a profile of choice contingencies."

**OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

The specific objectives are as under:

1. To determine the effective factors affecting the choice of food products according to the consumption value theory.
2. To provide suggestions which will help the producers or marketers of the food products.

According to the objective following hypotheses were formulated:



So base of this model this article proposes these hypotheses

1. Consumer choice behavior regarding food products in Haryana is affected by Functional value.
2. Consumer choice behavior regarding food products in Haryana is affected by social value.
3. Consumer choice behavior regarding food products in Haryana is affected by emotional value
4. Consumer choice behavior regarding food products in Haryana is affected by conditional value
5. Consumer choice behavior regarding food products in Haryana is affected by environmental value
6. Consumer choice behavior regarding food products in Haryana is affected by epistemic value

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection

For this data has been collected through primary survey and for that structured questionnaire has been designed to get the responses of consumers. Likert's five point scale was used to get the exact responses of consumers which varies from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). A sample of 515 consumers was studied to get the answer of the question.

### Sampling unit

The population of the current study includes an infinite number of 18 years or older consumers from Ambala. According to the results of Morgan Table number of the

population (participants) in the research is infinite. On the other hand, according to Cochran formula the sample consists of 515 people who received the questionnaire.

### Reliability and validity of questionnaire

A pilot study has been conducted to test the reliability and validity of questionnaire. For reliability croanbach  $\alpha$  and for adequacy KMO test were applied. The questionnaire was reliable because  $\alpha$  was more than 0.775 which means that test was reliable.

### Data sources

Primary as well as secondary source of data collection were applied for the present study. Primary data was taken from survey and secondary was taken from books and other published and unpublished journals.

## SOCIO ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE STUDY

### Age wise classification of the respondents.

In the present research study, it was found that the 32% of population lied in the age of 29 -38 years while another 27.4% of population were in the age of 18-28 years. The sample profile reveals that remaining classification above 39 years of the age and they were matured enough to respond towards their decision on food choices and their consumption.

Table 1 : Age wise classification of the respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-28	141	27.4	27.4	27.4
	29-38	165	32.0	32.0	59.4
	39-48	92	17.9	17.9	77.3
	49-58	62	12.0	12.0	89.3
	ABOVE 58	55	10.7	10.7	100.0
	Total	515	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data as per the research study

**Occupation of the sample respondents:**

The present study consist of 196 cultivators, 175 agricultural labour, 52 government employess, 39 private employees and only 53 respondents were self employed.

**Table 2 : Occupation of the sample respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CULTIVATOR/LAND LORD	196	38.1	38.1	38.1
	LABOR/AGRICULTURAL LABOUR	175	34.0	34.0	72.0
	GOVERNMENT SERVICE	52	10.1	10.1	82.1
	PRIVATE SERVICE	39	7.6	7.6	89.7
	SELF EMPLOYED	53	10.3	10.3	100.0
	Total	515	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data as per the research study

**RESULTS**

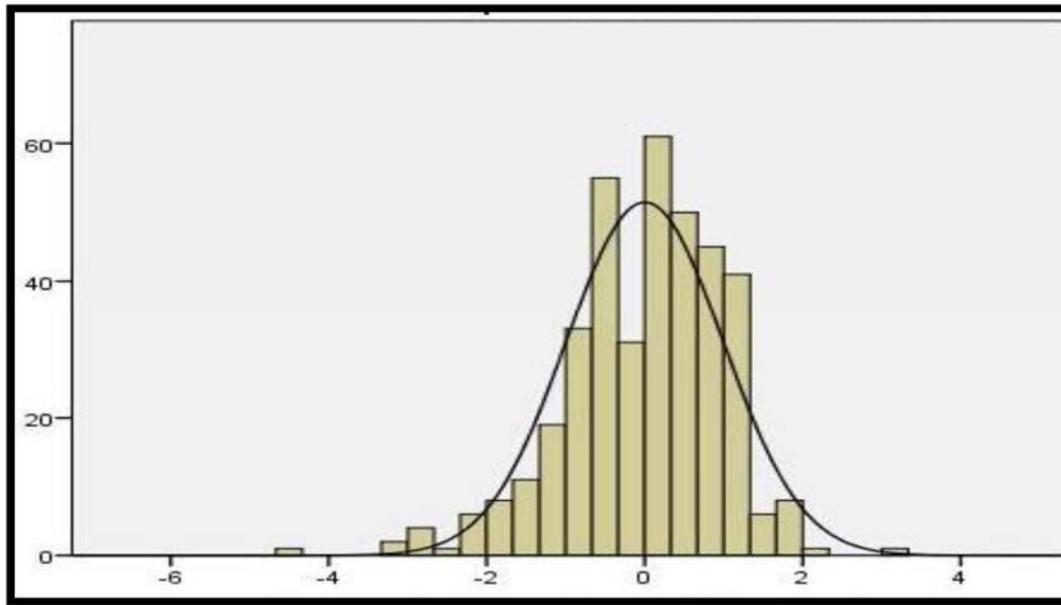
In the present study, descriptive statistics methods from SPSS 19.0 have been used to analyze the data.

**Table 3 : The result of multiple linear regression analysis**

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardize d coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
<b>Constant</b>	2.184	0.197	-	11.06	0.000
<b>Functional</b>	-0.007	0.048	-0.008	-0.153	0.879
<b>Social</b>	-0.086	0.039	-0.113	-2.223	0.027
<b>Emotional</b>	0.175	0.033	0.257	5.251	0.000
<b>Conditional</b>	0.034	0.031	0.048	1.033	0.302
<b>Epistemic</b>	0.191	0.041	0.233	4.683	0.000
<b>Environment</b>	0.226	0.033	0.380	6.760	0.000

In the present study to analyze the data, descriptive and inferential statistics methods (regression analysis) have been used. Also it is depicted in Fig 2., the Skewedness & Kurtosis levels are between (-2, +2), so the data is considered to be normally distributed. It was also observed that the error frequency of the curve was normal and regression analysis can be deployed on it.

Figure 2 : Graph of Standardized residual



In table 4, the result of hypothesis testing has been generated. The following hypothesis has been accepted for the research study ie H1, H3, H5 and H6 has been accepted while H2 and H4 have been rejected for the consumer choice behavior of food products in Haryana.

Table 4 : Final result of Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	f	Sig.	Result
H1	-0.153	0.000	Accepted
H2	-2.223	0.89	Rejected
H3	5.251	0.027	Accepted
H4	1.033	0.302	Rejected
H5	4.683	0.000	Accepted
H6	6.760	0.000	Accepted

The results prove that function, epistemic, and emotional values of consumers effects the selection of food products; on the other hand, the social and conditional values does not have any effect on the choice behavior.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study depicts the following results. Functional, emotional, epistemic and environmental values do have their effect on food products such as cereal, pulses etc were clearly visible but social and conditional values does not affect the purchasing or choice behavior of food products.

1. As the consumers are more focus on the functional values of the products, therefore, the producers should look into producing a better quality product and also consumer demands a quality product at a relatively low price. The producer should not enhance the prices as it may decrease the quantity of the product which the consumer will be demanding at higher prices.
2. As per the research social values was one of the consumption values which was being rejected. The consumer never buys the food product for social values but yes it is recommended that the social

interest of such products should be broadcasted through advertisement and marketing sections.

3. Also the producers should provide more and more information of product as the consumer are more aware these days and becoming more conscious on what they are eating, buying and consuming.

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