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# Probiotics & Consumer Perception

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Extracts From Internship Report



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# 1. Background

The Gut Microbiome is an emerging area of interest among scientists. The gut hosts about 1000 species of bacteria each playing their own role in the functioning of the body. Dysbiosis refers to the imbalance of microbes in the body, which has been seen as a cause or effect of various diseases.

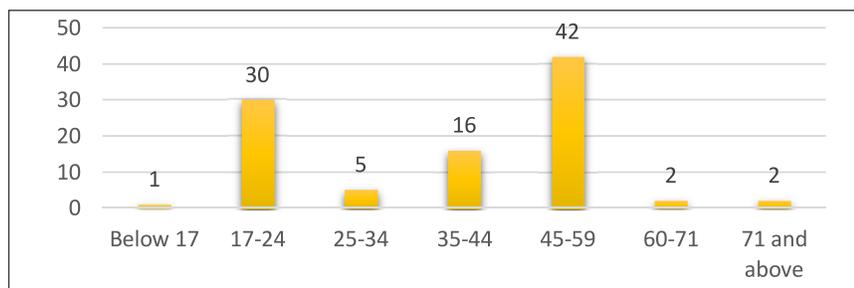
Probiotics, defined by the WHO as “live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host”<sup>1</sup>, are known as the 'friendly bacteria'. These bacteria have been found to have a positive impact to the human body. The most popular claims being better digestion and boosting immunity. Researchers have shown that the benefits of Probiotics spread much farther. From studies on Psychobiotics, neonatal health, allergies to connections to the lung microbiota, endless probiotic benefits are just waiting to be found.

A number of Probiotic products can be seen in the market these days. A survey was conducted to gain insight into consumers' perception about Probiotics in India, their knowledge and to assess the need for IEC keeping the health benefits in view.

# 2. Sample

The small survey included 100 individuals from various socio-economic groups, from different age groups, school and social media settings. None of the results were influenced by external incentives; thus, ensuring no bias. 67.3% of the participants were female.

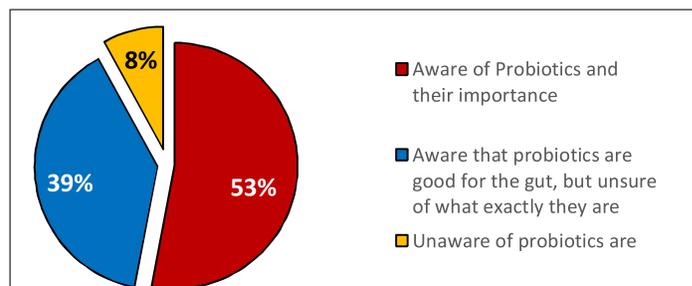
**Fig. 1: Age group of participants**



# 3. Survey Results

## 3.1 Probiotic Awareness

**Fig. 2: Probiotic awareness among consumers**



- 57% Believed Probiotics are good bacteria.
- 58% Made connections to digestion.
- 25% Made connections to fermented foods.
- 6% Made connections to general health benefits but not digestion in particular.
- 35% made connection to immunity benefits.

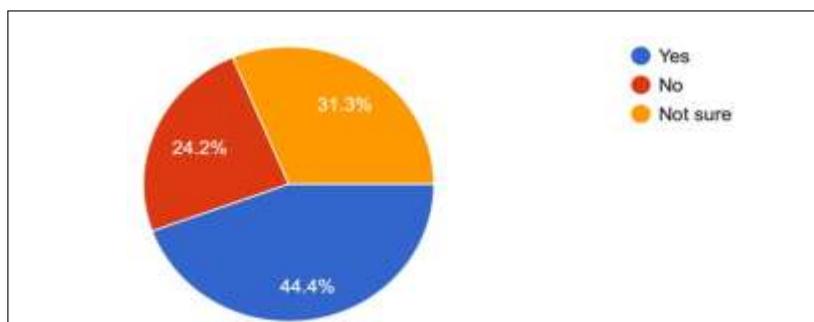
• **When asked about what they think suffice as Probiotics:**

- 63% Think of curd/yogurt (including home-made and Non-Probiotic labelled products).
- 36% specified by Company brands on curd.
- 3% Think of milk as Probiotic product.
- 7% Spoke about medications.
- 2% Said Kefir.
- 2% Said Kombucha.
- 2% Said Kimchi.
- 5% Said Supplements.
- 4% Think of Buttermilk.

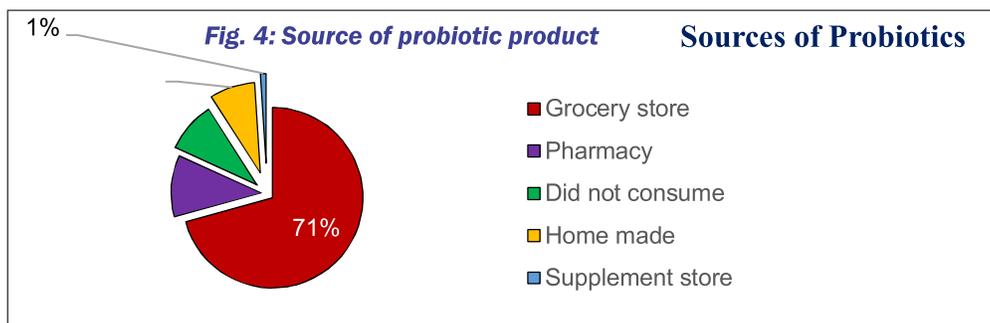
- Some of the other products that some people considered as Probiotics include: cheese, miso, dal, idli, soybean, tempeh, sauerkraut, pickles.
- Sale of most Probiotic products takes place in the grocery stores. 8% of people believe that home-made foods also qualify as Probiotics.
- The Indian traditional diet includes curd, fermented foods like idli, occasionally pickles etc. and is often thought to be a sufficient enough source of Probiotics hence, people question the requirement of an external source of Probiotics.

**Fig. 3: Do you believe that the Indian traditional diet is a sufficient natural source of probiotics?**

99 responses



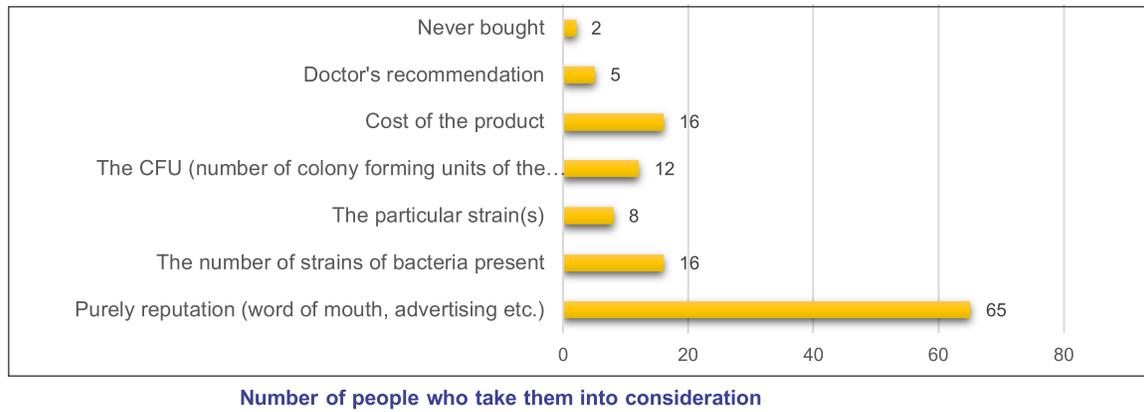
3.2



**3.3 Important Considerations for Purchasing Probiotics**

The most important factors taken into consideration, while making purchases, have been the reputation of a product either by recommendations or advertisements. Hence, the brand building of a Probiotic product would play a big role in their sales.

**Fig. 5: Factors in choosing a probiotic product**



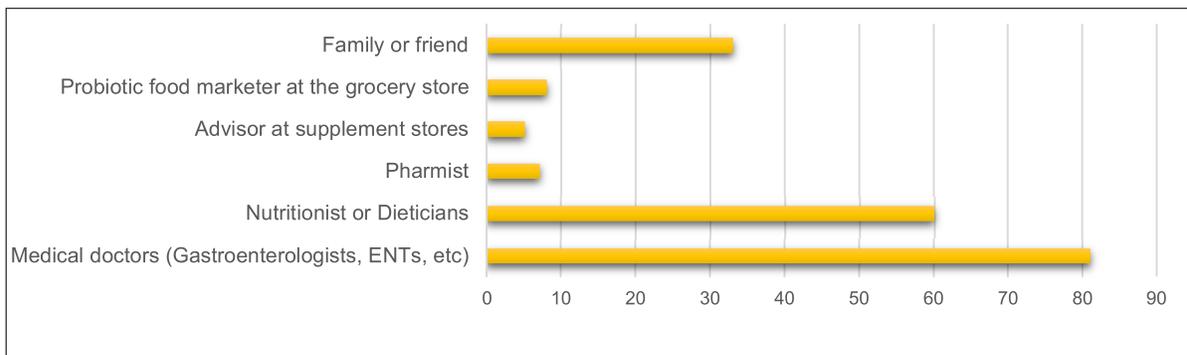
### 3.4 What do people look for in packaging? (In order of importance)

1. Expiry and manufacturing date
  2. Brand name
  3. Seals, if it is stored at ideal temperature and product tampering
  4. Benefits and labelling
  5. Authenticity of ingredients
  6. Attractiveness/ appetizing/ fresh look
  7. Recyclable and non-plastic packaging
- A few persons also indicated they do not consider packaging

### 3.5 Why Consume Probiotics?

Recommendations by medical doctors were the most convincing, nutritionist or dietician's recommendations were considered by a large number of persons as well, followed by recommendation of family or friends.

**Fig. 6: On whose recommendation would one consume probiotics**

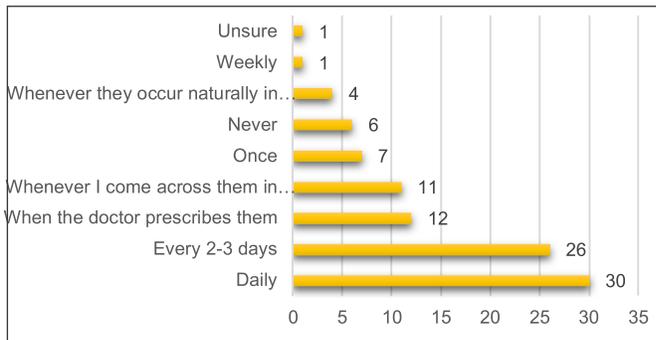


### 3.6 Frequency of Consumption

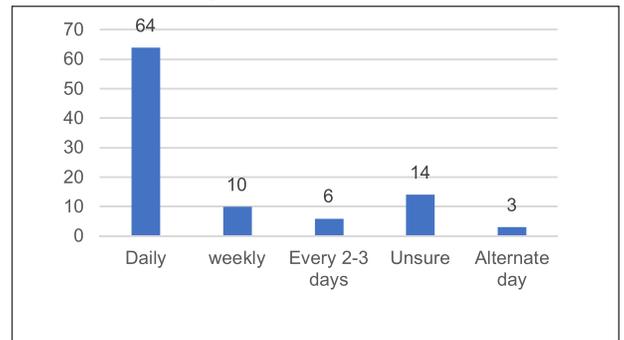
The following graphs show how often people think they consume probiotics vs how often they believe they should consume them. However, it must be noted that the products being consumed might not fit the exact definition of Probiotics as they could include home-made curd as well as other food substances not scientifically proven to be probiotics.

Some people believe that Probiotics must be taken daily but only in its natural form, some believe they should be taken on alternate days to prevent excess intake and some believe they should be taken as supplements after antibiotic usage.

**Fig. 7: How often are probiotics consumed**

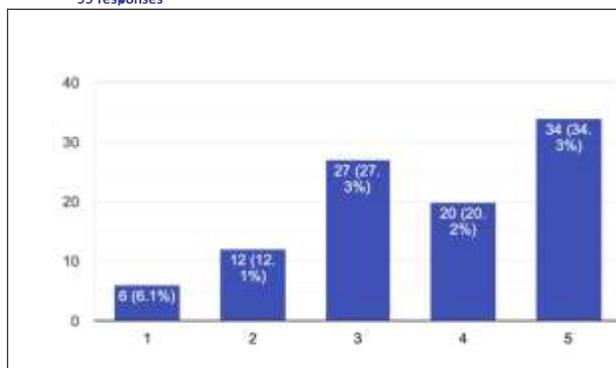


**Fig. 8: How often do people think they should be consumed**

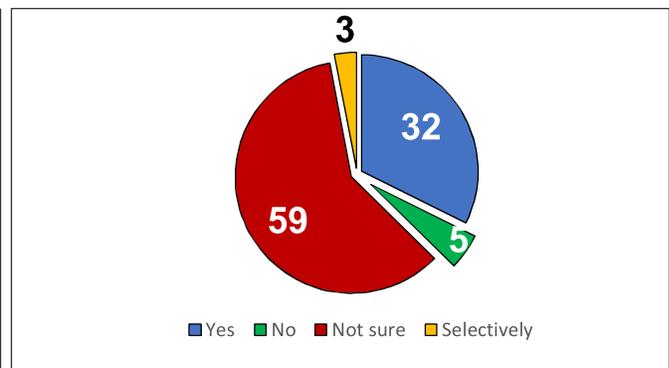


**Fig. 9: How likely are you to recommend the use of probiotics?**

99 responses



**Fig. 10: Belief in claims of probiotics**



### 3.7 Reasons for not consuming from most common to least:

1. Belief that natural sources (my diet) is sufficient.
2. Not prescribed by doctor.
3. Not aware if I need to consume them.
4. Not aware of supplements.
5. Laziness.

- 52% claimed they were not aware of the storage conditions while the rest gave a general answer of cold storage and a few mentioned humidity as an important factor as well.
- The above graphs prove that more work needs to be done in India to educate and convince the public of the broad-spectrum benefits of Probiotics.