

Original Research Article

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Awareness of Consumers towards Nutritional Labelling

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ABSTRACT

Study was conducted in Shivamogga district of Karnataka state. The study population included 200 respondents from four different professions mainly lawyers, businessman, teachers and housewives 50 in each group to obtain relevant information such as buying behaviour of consumers, consumer's awareness about nutrition information and health claims disclosed on food label. Higher percentages of teachers (90) were more concerned about MRP of a product followed by housewives (88), lawyers and businessman (84). All consumers were looking into date of manufacturing and expiry date of a product. A higher percentage of lawyers (90), housewives (96) and businessman (92) acquired information through internet. However, a higher percentage of teachers acquired information through newspaper. High percent of teachers, businessman, housewives and lawyers were reading nutrient information viz., sugar, total calories/energy and fat. A higher percent of businessman read cholesterol information on food label. Protein, vitamins and minerals, fibre and sodium content on food label was read by more number of teachers. 92 per cent of housewives were utilising nutrition information on all circumstances followed by teachers (84%), businessman (76%) and lawyers (50%). All housewives used to see nutrition information when buying a new product. More than 80 per cent of teachers, lawyers and housewives read nutrition information when buying a new version of existing product. However, only 67 per cent of businessman looked to nutrition information when buying a new version of existing product.

Keywords

Protein, Vitamins and minerals, Fibre and sodium content

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Introduction

Food label could be a cost effective method of communicating nutrition information to consumers because the information appears at the point of sale for most packaged foods (Campos, Doxey and Hammond, 2011).

According to food safety and regularity authority of India the nutrition information is necessary on food label along with name, expiry date, manufacturing date and ingredients. Food label information assists consumers to better understand the nutritional value of food and enables them to compare

nutritional value of similar products and to make healthy food choices based on the relevant nutrition information. An effective food label play multidimensional role like providing nutritional information (Mackison *et al.*, 2009), control food related allergies (Voordous *et al.*, 2009), and expiry date provide food safety (Sanlier and Karakus, 2010). Food label use could be a moderator of the association between nutrition knowledge and dietary behaviours.

A cross sectional study was conducted in Shivamogga district of Karnataka state. The study population included 200 respondents from four different professions mainly lawyers, businessman, teachers and housewives 50 in each group. They were selected by purposive random sampling technique. All respondents were interviewed through structured questionnaire personally to obtain relevant information such as buying behaviour of consumers, consumer's awareness about nutrition information and health claims disclosed on food label. The collected data was consolidated, tabulated and analysed statistically.

Materials and Methods

Awareness of consumers towards food label is given in table 1.

It is evident from the table that a higher percentage of teachers (90) were more concerned about MRP of a product followed by housewives (88), lawyers and businessman (84). It is good to know that all consumers were looking into date of manufacturing and expiry date of a product. Majority of housewives also looked into list of ingredients on the label. A higher percentage of businessmen (90) looked into weight of products followed by housewives (88), lawyers and teachers (84). It is interesting to note that more than 90 per cent of consumers

also looked into brand of the product. Results indicated that a higher percentage of consumers were more concerned about date of manufacturing and expiry. The results were statistically non significant among consumers except for date of manufacturing and expiry. Priyadarshini (2014), Subbarao *et al.*, (2014) and Kaur *et al.*, (2016) also reported similar results.

TV, Radio, Newspaper, Magazine, Internet, Family/friends were the sources for acquiring nutrition information among consumers (Table 2).

A higher percentage of lawyers (90), housewives (96) and businessman (92) acquired information through internet. However, a higher percentage of teachers acquired information through newspaper. Less than 2 per cent of consumers acquired information through radio. 40-60 per cent of consumers acquired information through magazine. However, 70-84 per cent of consumers gained nutrition information through family/friends. The results were statistically non significant among consumers.

Commonly read nutrient information on food label is given in table 3. It is clear from the table that high percent of teachers read nutrient information on food label followed by businessman, housewives and lawyers.

There was no significant difference among consumers in reading nutrient information. It is clear from the table that a high percent of teachers, businessman, housewives and lawyers were reading nutrient information viz., sugar, total calories/energy and fat. A higher percent of businessman read cholesterol information on food label. Protein, vitamins and minerals, fibre and sodium content on food label was read by more number of teachers. However, only 40-64 per cent of consumers were reading sodium

information on food label. The results were non significant among consumers. Vemula *et al.*, (2013) and Subbarao *et al.*, (2016) indicated in their study that consumers were more concerned about sugar, fat, cholesterol and salt and also read nutrient information written on food label. Usefulness of nutrition information given by consumers is given in table 4.

It is interesting to note that 92 per cent of housewives were utilising nutrition information on all circumstances followed by teachers (84%), businessman (76%) and lawyers (50%). All housewives used to see nutrition information when buying a new product. More than 80 per cent of teachers, lawyers and housewives read nutrition information when buying a new version of existing product. However, only 67 per cent of businessman looked to nutrition information when buying a new version of existing product. Results were statistically significant for consumers when seeing nutrition information in all circumstances and when buying a new product.

Awareness of selected consumers regarding health claims on various food products is give in table 5. It is found from the table that a high percentage of businessman (92) had awareness on food label regarding health claims such as suitable for people with diabetes mellitus, product is good for people with heart problem, guarantee that the product is not harmful to health, guarantee of quality and suitable for people with specific allergies. Less than 50 per cent of consumers opined that health claims disclosed on various food products is purely for advertising purpose. 96 per cent of teachers were keen in noticing information viz., product is good for people with heart problem and guarantee that the product is not harmful to health on food label. Results were statistically significant for health claims such as suitable for people with diabetes mellitus and cholesterol, product is recommended as part of balanced diet and guarantee that the product is not harmful to health. Jain *et al.*, (2013) reported that consumers looked to less calories, less saturated fat, low cholesterol, low sodium and high fibre while buying a product.

Table.1 Awareness of consumers towards food label

Particulars	Lawyers	Housewives	Businessman	Teachers	N=200
					X ² value
MRP	42(84)	44(88)	42(84)	45(90)	1.16
Date of manufacturing and expiry	50(100)	50(100)	50(100)	50(100)	16.5*
List of ingredients	44(88)	46(92)	42(84)	42(84)	1.95
Weight of products	42(84)	44(88)	45(90)	42(84)	1.16
Brand	48(96)	49(98)	45(90)	47(94)	3.37

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage* Significant at 5 per cent level

Table.2 Source of acquiring nutrition information written on food label by the consumers

Sources	Lawyers	Housewives	Businessman	Teachers	X ² value
T.V	41(82)	48(96)	40(80)	40(80)	6.83
Radio	05(10)	10(20)	02(04)	04(08)	7.40
Newspaper	44(88)	46(92)	46(92)	48(96)	2.17
Magazine	25(50)	32(64)	20(40)	25(50)	5.84
Internet	45(90)	48(96)	46(92)	40(80)	7.40
Family/Friends	35(70)	42(84)	36(72)	42(84)	4.90

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Table.3 Commonly used nutrient information given on food label by the consumers

N=200

Nutrients	Lawyers	Housewives	Businessman	Teachers	X ² value
Total calories/Energy	45(90)	48(96)	46(92)	46(92)	1.37
Carbohydrates	25(50)	30(60)	35(70)	32(64)	4.46
Protein	36(72)	38(76)	32(64)	42(84)	5.40
Fat	45(90)	45(90)	46(92)	48(96)	1.63
Sugar	46(92)	48(96)	48(96)	46(92)	1.42
Vitamins/Minerals	32(64)	34(68)	35(70)	42(84)	5.57
Cholesterol	44(88)	42(84)	46(92)	42(84)	1.94
Fibre	32(64)	30(60)	34(68)	35(70)	1.30
Sodium	20(40)	25(50)	26(52)	32(64)	5.82

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Table.4 Use of nutrition information provided by the consumers

N=200

Particulars	Lawyers	Housewives	Businessman	Teachers	X ² value
All circumstances	25(50)	46(92)	38(76)	42(84)	26.9*
When buying a new product	42(84)	50(100)	42(84)	46(92)	9.78*
When buying a new version of existing product	42(84)	46(82)	38(67)	42(84)	4.76

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage*Significant at 5 per cent level

Higher percentages of teachers were more concerned about MRP of a product followed by housewives, lawyers and businessman. All consumers were looking into date of manufacturing and expiry date of a product. T.V, Radio, Newspaper, Magazine, Internet,

family/friends were the sources for acquiring nutrition information among consumers. Internet was the most common source for acquiring nutrition information. High percentage of teachers read nutrient information on food label followed by

businessman, housewives and lawyers. Results were significant for consumers when seeing nutrition information in all circumstances and when buying a new product. High percentage of businessman had awareness on food label regarding health claims such as suitable for people with diabetes mellitus, product is good for people with heart problem and guarantee of quality and suitable for people with specific allergies.

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