

THE IMPACTS OF BRAND LOYALTY ON INDIAN HOUSEWIVES PURCHASE INTENTION OF PACKAGED FOOD PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT: Indian consumers have become much more powerful due to urbanization, exposure to varieties of food products, upgraded knowledge, increased purchasing power, myriad curiosity and ready availability of processed food products. There are very few researches piloted within developing nations examining factors such as a brand name that influenced the purchasing intention of housewives and their nutritional label use during their shopping aisle. Informed food choices and meal planning could be potential tools to offset metabolic diseases and therefore encourage home meal planners to inculcate healthy dietary patterns, which had been shown to improve the health status of the family members. This study had explored the battle between brand loyalty and nutritional label use among Indian housewives. A purposive random sampling technique was employed to recruit a hundred housewives. Results suggested that brand loyalty had played a critical role in controlling the impact of nutrition knowledge on their food choices. Subjects had mentioned that they always buy 'trusted' brands and hence opined that there was hardly any need to look at all the other details mentioned on food labels. Furthermore, it can be stated that brand trust is the underlying mechanism that had decreased consumers understanding and alertness on increasing excess weight due to "not so healthy" food choices. Brand familiarity and brand trust together created a safeguard that protected the food product from being evaluated as unhealthy, even in the presence of warnings from nutritional labels. Hence, it can be recommended that education campaigns should be arranged in order to educate consumers on how to use nutritional labels as a tool to combat non-communicable diseases rather than dwindling into brand marketing gimmicks.

Key Words: Brand familiarity, food choices, marketing gimmicks.

INTRODUCTION

India constituted roughly around 17.4% of the world population. Along with the escalated population, non-communicable diseases had rapidly increased. Over the former decades, the country had experienced rapid and unpredicted urbanization, which had led to a fast-paced lifestyle, characterized by an unhealthy diet and reduced physical activity (Reddy et al., 2001). Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) will be accounting for 69% of all deaths by 2020 in developing nations (Boutayeb et al., 2005). In order to cease the growth of diseases, it is important to organize education campaigns for consumers to educate them about healthy food choices. Consumers are educated but not Nutri-educated to understand the loopholes of unhealthy food choices under branded umbrellas. The population is currently offered with an end number of food choices and brands with an increase in purchasing power and exposure to the world food markets.

Unhealthy food choice is the core reason that had affected human health. Food choices are influenced by a number of factors such as brand loyalty, brand awareness, attractive packaging, celebrity endorsement, discounts, and festive offers. Brand marketing is a priority for the triumph of any food business, from small-scale, independent farms to multinational food industrialists. Food brand marketing poured millions and took many customs into account for building a healthy relationship with consumers, planning to live out their golden years in the future with all the bells and whistles. Brand loyalty in fast moving consumer goods had resulted in poor food choices of consumers. This had placed significant pressure on public health due to biased food choices under "trustworthy brand" canopy.

When consumers face issues in the stage of purchasing a product they depend on well-known brands (Selvi and Kılıç, 2006). For this, the brand name is an intellectual clue in the decision making of consumers. When the consumers experience a brand with a good image they will have a good perception about it (Lee and Bae, 1999). On the other side, information that is printed on food labels provide an important source of nutrition information about food but are typically underutilized by consumers. Over 98% of foods have Nutrition Facts panels that are FDA-regulated, processed and packaged (Legault et al., 2004). Nutrition

labels consisted of information about calories, serving size, and daily values of several macronutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Consumers tend to ignore all the other details mentioned on labels due to their prior experience with their trusted brands and it happens after the decision making and evaluation processes (Cakirer et al., 2013). In order to correct purchasing habits, food labels could be used as a cost-effective method to communicate nutrition information to consumers and help them make informed food choices (Campos & Hammond, 2011). Prior nutrition knowledge should be there, as consumers value nutrition while deciding which foods to purchase but they end up buying “trusted brand” at the termination period (Glanz et al., 1998).

The potential of brand marketing had influenced diets and lifestyle to a degree at which consumers are responsible for their own unhealthy well-being, consequently, the companies had controlled the human's psyche while purchasing. Marketing campaigns are carefully tailored to plea to specific groups. Children are frequently targeted along with the youths. People should rely on food labels for making correct food choices whereas consumers blind faith in their “trusted brands” alters their ability to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy food products. It is essential for all the consumers to have knowledge about the food they are going to consume. Labels help consumers to identify the certification marks, health claims and allergen icons and consume their tailored diets accordingly. Labels also assist in minimizing the strain of diseases rather than bestowing consumers towards their familiar brands. In the era of digitally minded consumers, brand loyalty had affected consumer's health and added excess weight on the scale.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a study by Velasco in 2019 identified the relationship between brand familiarity and traffic light nutritional labels use. They had provided mixed results about the effectiveness of traffic light nutritional labels on influencing consumers to choose healthy products. This research explored the role of consumers brand familiarity and attention level as factors that limited the effectiveness of traffic light nutritional labels use.

Labeling acted as a medium that conveyed information about the food product. (Katarzyna, et al. 2010). Labeling information and level of education of consumers had a large contribution in ensuring suitable protection against hazards that may be associated with the consumption of food. It helped consumers to make conscious choices of food with respect to their preferences, health status, and needs. It is very important for people with nutrition-related health problems and diseases such as obesity, diabetes, CVD and various types of cancers, to make informed food choices (Sigida 2012).

Few studies have been conducted in different countries on the knowledge and use of pre-packaged food labeling in decision making during the purchase of such foods. (Sunelle et al. 2010) Further, it was documented that a large proportion of consumers read food labels but they do not necessarily have an understanding of how to maximize the benefits of reading food labels.

The circumstances under which consumers purchase foods are time constraints, purchase of foods on streets or when on the journey and when they have trusted the seller of the food. Though indicated by few respondents, the low price of the food caused some respondents to purchase prepackaged food labels without consulting labeling information. More or less the same was reported by The Foundation Food Label Consumer Research Project (2006) in America and in South Africa by Sunelle et al (2010), that pre-packaged food consumers are less likely to examine food labeling information if they don't have enough time, when purchasing routine pre-packaged foods and discounted foods.

METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted among housewives residing in South Mumbai. The aim of this study was to analyze the use and understanding of food labels and the impact of brand loyalty on their purchasing decision.

Participants Selection: Through a random purposive sampling technique 100 housewives were recruited. The participants were enrolled in the study purely based on their willingness to participate and were assured about the confidentiality of their personal information and were requested to sign a consent form.

Survey Instrument: Pre-coded, close-ended questionnaire was constructed and used as a tool for data collection to assess the use of nutrition information on food labels and the impact of brand familiarity on their purchasing intention.

Statistical Analysis: Survey results were statistically analyzed by using SPSS software and qualitative test. Due to the low scores and lack of awareness nutrition education programme was designed to impart knowledge on housewives to correct their buying practices. A significant rise in their knowledge and change in buying practices were observed post 3 months of the study. The researcher was connected with the

participants for 3 months in order to give continuous NEP once a month in latter contact sessions. One time education programme won't change their habit, therefore 3-4 contact sessions were organized in order to assess the change in their buying practices.

STUDY DESIGN:

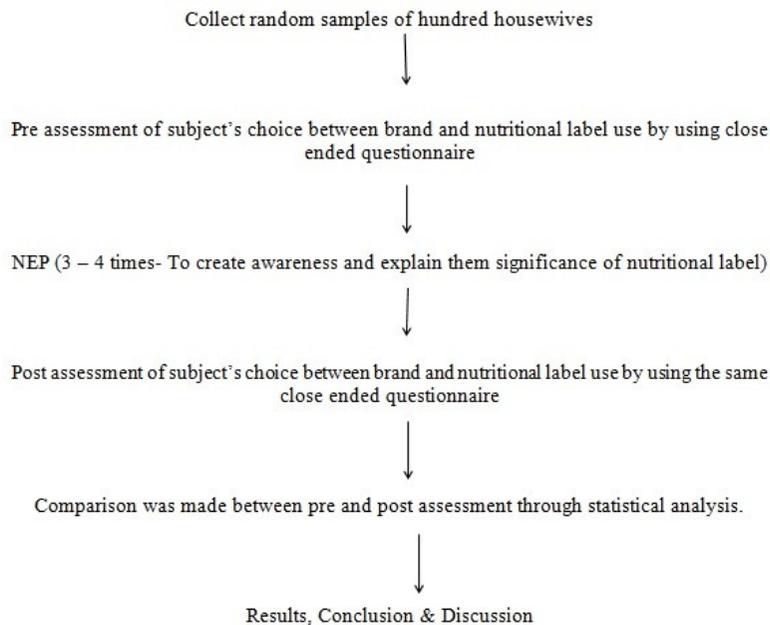


Fig 1: Packaged food purchase intention according to the brand or nutritional labels.

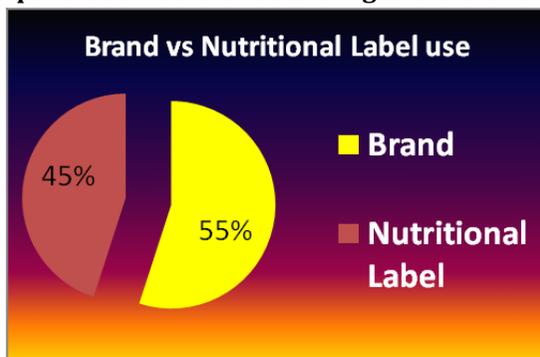


Table no: 1 Grouped sample statistics for food choices of housewives.

Food choice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Nutritional label use	45	3.7333	.68755	.10249
Brand name	55	.3273	.72148	.09728

Table no: 2 Independent Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				T-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.554	.458	23.986	98	.000	3.40606	3.12426	3.68786
Equal variances not assumed			24.103	95.702	.000	3.40606	3.12555	3.68658

Results and Discussion

Among the respondents, only 55% of them always examined food labels while purchasing food whereas the rest of them encountered barriers such as time constraints, technical content on the label, not interested and their trust on the specific brand. According to the depicted results, major reasons to observe the food labels were, to evaluate the appropriateness of the food product for vegetarians (90%), to shun diseases related to food (85%), religious reasons (85%). This finding further particularized by APO (2002), that food labels have become increasingly complex for consumers to understand while they get trapped in marketing gimmicks.

According to the results, housewives checked labels to know the expiry date (80%) followed by price. Reading Nutrition Labels might help housewives to make wise choices; however, they face a combination of factors that distracted their grocery shopping such as brand trust and brand loyalty. While shopping, housewives tend to buy according to their prior food decisions of the brand. Hence the data was collected based on the literature. According to subjects, there was no need to check the other details mentioned on the packaged food products as 55% of them purchased food according to their specific brand whereas others (45%) used food labels while buying as subjects were health conscious. In a study, it was also observed that consumers due to health consciousness examined food choices based on food label characteristics including nutrition labels and claims (Barreiro et al., 2008). In a similar study conducted by Mendula conveyed that brand name (85%) was the aspect most commonly checked by participants rather than other details mentioned on the food packages.

CONCLUSION:

The current study demonstrated overall poor nutrition knowledge and utilization among housewives. This lack of knowledge and utilization of the labels might be due to the lack of nutrition education and practices. Also, poor dietary intake among housewives might have a negative effect on their health status and may lead to diet-related chronic disease in the future. It will also affect the health status of the family members as they are dependent on housewives because mostly they are the main meal planners of the house. This study had explored how housewives evaluated lodging brand portfolios and showed the importance of brand-familiar relations that had affected their ability to evaluate unhealthy products. The findings suggest, in general, that both brand-specific loyalty and brand familiarity had affected consumers' evaluations of understanding about a packaged food product.

Unfortunately, very few studies have examined the impact of brand loyalty for not using nutrition labels on housewives. There were hardly any studies looking into the use of food labels in India, while studies elsewhere in the world had already started examining the use of nutrition information on labels by housewives for making healthy food choices. Brand loyalty and familiarity are holding housewives purchase intention back to use labels to assess all the other details as subjects had blind trust in their specific trusted brands. Hence it can be concluded that education campaigns should be arranged in order to change their habits and correct dietary and lifestyle patterns.

Ethical Approval: This study was approved by the jury members of Institutional Ethical Committee (IEC) which was established in 2012 according to the ICMR Guidelines.

Conflict of Interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

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