

Consumer Awareness Towards the Labeling Aspects on Beverage Products: A Case Study on the Beverage Products at Supermarkets-Chain in Matara Urban Area

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Food labelling is a tool which provides information on products' composition, quantity of content and nutritional profile to its consumers. If the ingredients exceed the required amount to be in a beverage, it will cause health hazards. For the prevalence of food safety, laws and regulations must be enforced to control the limits of ingredients incorporated. The objective of this study was to examine the awareness of consumers on food labeling regulations and other aspects while purchasing beverages at supermarkets chain in Matara urban area. The data were collected using convenience sampling technique and 200 consumers were interviewed with a pre-tested questionnaire. Descriptive statistical analysis and chi-square test were performed using SPSS statistical software. Results of descriptive statistical analysis revealed that majority of consumers (87.50%) were aware about the regulation on colour coding of sugar level. Consumers had less knowledge regarding the nutritional factors appeared on label and results indicated that awareness on sodium (24.50%), fat (23.50%), protein (22.50%), calories (13.00%) and ascorbic acid (7.00%). The majority of consumers were aware on quality standard; SLS (97.00%) while on other standards were low; HACCP (21.00%) and GMP (9.00%). Most of the consumers preferred to have light colour beverages (66.5%). Moreover, they mainly considered the price (94.00%), expiry date (89.00%) and brand name (79.50%) when purchasing beverages. The results of chi-square analysis revealed that educational level of the consumers was significantly associated with awareness of food labeling regulations ($p < 0.05$). However, gender, age, income level and occupation were not significantly associated with food labeling regulations ($p > 0.05$). In conclusion a compatible choice for beverages can be taken by paying attention to the food labeling regulations and other important aspects on the label.

Keywords: Quality standards, Beverage, Food labelling, Regulations, HACCP