



A STUDY ON AWARENESS ABOUT CONSUMER PROTECTION MEASURES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FOOD PRODUCTS IN THE NILGIRIS

Vishnupriya.s.

DR.S. Baby

M.Phil.

Asst Professor

Dept of Commerce, Providence College for Women

Coonoor- 643102

Abstract

Food safety is a major issue worldwide causing health issues. Diseases caused by food place a major economical and societal impact on regions and medical facilities, and are mostly caused by a lack of awareness about food security and dangerous cooking practices. Consumer behaviors about food hygiene should be carefully investigated when establishing safeguards to eliminate dangers. The main purpose of this study is to know the attitude of the consumer at the time of purchasing the food products, to study the factors influencing at the time of purchasing the food product, to know the consumer awareness level of Consumer Protection Act 1986. The study was conducted in Nilgiris district. In this study questionnaire were given to 50 respondents. Percentage analysis, ranking, ANOVA, chi-square are the statistical tools used. The findings of this study depicts that the consumers are more concerned about the MRP of the product rather than the quality and quantity of the product.

Keyword: food safety, consumer protection Act, awareness, attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Food-related analysis and legal problems have grown harder as populations have grown and agriculture and food technology have developed. Food safety is a technical subject that describes the safe utilizing, preparing, & storage of food. This covers a variety of practices that should be performed to avoid extremely life-threatening illnesses. Food protection and hygiene in food frequently overlap in order to protect customers from damage. Food may spread disease from individual to individual and act as a growing platform for germs which lead to diarrhea or vomiting. There are detailed requirements for preparing food in wealthy nations, however in less developed countries, the major difficulty is simply the availability of enough clean water, which is typically an essential component

For a variety of reasons, consumers nowadays are less aware of the more advanced characteristics of industrial food production. First and foremost, food science and even the fundamentals of eating habits and nutritional hygienic are typically undertaught in schools. In addition, most customers are unable to visit an updated food plant to observe the production process. Their recollections of home kitchens and freshly picked produce from their gardens serve as their standard reference points for evaluating the quality and safety of all food. However, customers demand a large selection of repeatedly high-quality food products

that are affordable, extremely refined, and efficient. They demand food to be considered delicious, healthy, beneficial, and fresh, but most importantly, it must be Secure. Customers must totally depend on the regulatory bodies that oversee the food industry for any direct way of verifying their expectations.

Food safety is necessary for the protection of consumers as well as the food sector, which stands to acquire customer trust. As a result, the interests of the entire people as well as the economy are eventually served by food control authorities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

E Anklam, R Battaglia (2001) "*Food analysis and consumer protection*" Concerns the food that people eats' safety and quality have always existed. Since food became a commerce item, fraud has always been a possibility, as shown by a few examples. Given their interdependence, it is challenging to distinguish between food quality and food safety Analytical techniques are changing as a result of the subject's complexity. An appropriate risk management strategy requires thorough risk assessment. In this light, the function of food chemists and analyzers is outlined. The importance of having a solid scientific and factual foundation for dietary risk management is emphasized throughout the study.

CJ Griffith "*Food safety: where from and where to?*"

The goal of this work is to explore the history of food safety and offer an approach for investigating food safe. Data is investigations and observational studies of food handling is analyzed. While germs are a key role in foodborne disease and microbiology is an essential study subject, additional research methodologies should be explored to lower the number of cases of diseases caused by food. Food worker conduct and its linkages to food safety organizational culture, as well as food safety management systems, should be included in such plans.

Pornlert Arpanutud, Suwimon Keeratipibul, Araya Charoensupaya, Eunice Taylor "Factors influencing food safety management system adoption in Thai food-manufacturing firms: Model development and testing" The goal of this research is to look at the elements that influence Thai food production enterprises' willingness to implement food safety management systems. The study includes a questionnaire that was given to a sample of Thai food production companies. The three-part questionnaire was distributed to 480 managers in charge of food safety administration. A total of 217 questionnaires were returned, yielding a 45.2 percent response rate. The findings of hypothesis testing revealed that the following factors may significantly forecast the implementation of a food safety management system: expected gain of social legitimacy; expected gain of economic competitiveness; perceived importance of external stakeholders (government, community, food safety organizations, and media); top management commitment to food safety; firm size and amount of export sales.

Yingheng Zhou, Erpeng Wang "Urban consumers' attitudes towards the safety of milk powder after the melamine scandal in 2008 and the factors influencing the attitudes" The purpose of this article is to investigate the elements that impact urban consumers' perceptions towards food safety following the chemical scare. Based on a study of urban consumers in Nanjing's perceptions regarding the safety of milk powder following the melamine controversy in 2008, this paper use the ordered logit model to determine which factors substantially impact customers' attitudes. The findings indicate that: first, there is widespread concern among consumers about the safety of milk powder following the melamine scandal; second, the concern is inversely related to the level of educational attainment, consumers' awareness of food safety incidents, and their opinion of governments' response to the incident. Furthermore, individuals who are always concerned about the safety of the alternatives

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

In developing countries like India, food safety has to be given utmost importance because it has an inextricable link with the economic development of the country. When individuals consume unhealthy, adulterated and contaminated food, they are prone to disease. This results in loss of healthy lives every year. It is the responsibility of every individual to have a check on quality of food that they are consuming and also their eating habits. The responsibility of the government is to frame rules for the producers to maintain quality in the product that they produce for which they have to pass Acts and implement it. We have the various consumer protection Acts passed and rules and regulations framed but are the people aware of these protection measures? To know the awareness of people about these measures is the problem identified for this research.

RESEARCH GAP

Reviewing the research conducted by many researchers at various points over time indicates that there was never a study to determine whether people of The Nilgiris are aware about the food safety and the consumer protection measures which is formulated for them. An effort is made to learn about the consumer alertness and awareness of the people of the Nilgiris regarding the food products and consumer protection measures.

OBJECTIVE

- To study the attitude of the consumer at the time of purchasing the food products.
- To analyse the most influencing factors at the time of purchasing the food product.
- To study the consumer awareness level with regard to consumer protection Act 1986.

DATA COLLECTION

For the study to be accurate, reliable information is important. The data gathered for the investigation must come from reliable sources in order to lower the likelihood of errors and to create actual results from which acceptable conclusions and suggestions may be drawn, which is the research's key objective. A well-designed questionnaire was made available to the respondents. The researcher then collected the information directly after explaining the concept to the response consumer.

The secondary data for the study was acquired via online sources after being verified as to the validity of the source. The figures were primarily compiled from general consumers in the Nilgiris district.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

50 respondents were chosen from the general consumers of the Nilgiris as sample using the convention sampling technique. The sample was chosen from all categories of respondents based on demographics in order to ensure fair representation.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is constrained by the following restrictions.

1. There are only 50 respondents in the sample, which is limited.
2. The investigation's geographical region remains limited to the NILGIRIS District.
3. The respondents determine how accurate the data is.
4. The investigation is focused entirely on consumers of food goods and the current Consumer Protection Act of 1986.

STATISTICAL TOOLS

Statistical tools like Percentage analysis, Ranking, chi-square and ANOVA were used in this study.

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT**

The demographic profile of the respondent has been study in terms of their gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, income. The distribution of the respondent on the basis of these demographical factors has been presented in the following tables.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| GENDER | Male | 20 | 40.0 | 40.0 |
| | Female | 30 | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| AGE | 21-25 years | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 |
| | 26-30 years | 20 | 40.0 | 40.0 |
| | above 31 years | 14 | 28.0 | 28.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| MARTIALSTATUS | Married | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 |
| | unmarried | 29 | 58.0 | 58.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| EDUCATIONAL QUAFILICATION | up to SSLC | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 |
| | HSC | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| | under graduate | 14 | 28.0 | 28.0 |
| | post graduate | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| OCCUPTIONAL | Government employee | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| | Private employee | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 |
| | Businessman | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 |
| | Professionals | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 |
| | Housewife | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 |

| Total | | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
|--------|--------------------|----|-------|-------|
| INCOME | less than Rs 20000 | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| | Rs.20000-30000 | 22 | 44.0 | 44.0 |
| | Rs 30000-40000 | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| | Above Rs 40000 | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The above table depicts that data was collected from 50 respondents, 20 were male and 30 were female. Among 50 respondents 16 consumer were in the age between 21-25, 20 consumers were between 26-30 years, 14 consumer were above the age of 31, 21 were married and 29 were unmarried, the educational level of 13 consumer were SSLC, 12 consumers were HSC, 14 consumers were under graduate, 11 consumer were post graduate. The occupational status of 10 consumer were government employee, 11 consumers were private employee, 11 consumers were businessman, 8 consumers were professionals, 10 consumer were housewives. The monthly income of 15 consumers was under of Rs 20000, 22 consumers under the monthly income of Rs 20000-30000, 12 consumers under the monthly income of Rs 30000-40000, 1 consumers under the monthly income above Rs 40000.

Personal Factor and Attitude at the time of purchasing the food products.

There is no significant relationship between the personal factor and Attitude of the consumer at the time of purchasing the food products.

ANOVA

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------------|
| Gender | Between Groups | .490 | 1 | .490 | .406 | .525 |
| | Within Groups | 118.260 | 98 | 1.207 | | |
| | Total | 118.750 | 99 | | | |
| Age | Between Groups | 19.360 | 1 | 19.360 | 11.054 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 171.640 | 98 | 1.751 | | |
| | Total | 191.000 | 99 | | | |
| Marital status | Between Groups | 6.760 | 1 | 6.760 | 3.428 | .067 |
| | Within Groups | 193.240 | 98 | 1.972 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------|----|-------|-------|-------------|
| | Total | 200.000 | 99 | | | |
| Educational qualification | Between Groups | 26.100 | 4 | 6.525 | 6.691 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 92.650 | 95 | .975 | | |
| | Total | 118.750 | 99 | | | |
| Occupational | Between Groups | 9.000 | 1 | 9.000 | 5.584 | .020 |
| | Within Groups | 157.960 | 98 | 1.612 | | |
| | Total | 166.960 | 99 | | | |
| Monthly income | Between Groups | 1.210 | 1 | 1.210 | .940 | .335 |
| | Within Groups | 126.100 | 98 | 1.287 | | |
| | Total | 127.310 | 99 | | | |

In the above table, the value of ANOVA at 5% level personal factor and attitude at the time of purchasing the food products such as age, marital status, educational qualification, occupation has significant association therefore the hypothesis has been rejected. It can be interpreted that there is no significant association between gender, monthly income and attitude of the costumers at the time of buying the product and therefore the hypothesis has been accepted

Factors influencing the consumer at the time of purchasing the food product.

Ranking

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Rank Order |
|---------------------------------------|----|------|----------------|------------|
| Price of the product is more than MRP | 50 | 2.05 | 1.218 | 1 |
| Verify the expiry date | 50 | 2.20 | 1.137 | 2 |
| Consulting with family and friends | 50 | 2.25 | 1.167 | 3 |
| Consulting with retailers | 50 | 2.27 | .983 | 4 |
| consider ad before purchase | 50 | 2.28 | 1.006 | 5 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|----|--|--|--|
| Valid N (listwise) | 50 | | | |
|--------------------|----|--|--|--|

From the above table the factors influencing the consumer at the time of purchasing the food product, the first factor that affects the consumer more is price of the product is more than MRP, second factor is expiry date, third factor consulting family and friend, fourth factor that influencing the consumer is consulting retailers and last one is the advertisement of the product before purchase

Awareness level of consumers about the consumer protection Act 1986.

There is no significant association between personal factor and awareness level about the consumer protection Act 1986.

Chi-square

| personal factor | consumer rights | Sig |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Gender | right to safety | 0.017 |
| | right to be informed | 0 |
| | right to choose | 0.145 |
| | right to be heard | 0.003 |
| | right to seek redressal | 0 |
| | right to consumer education | 0 |
| Age | right to safety | 0.184 |
| | right to be informed | 0 |
| | right to choose | 0.034 |
| | right to be heard | 0.567 |
| | right to seek redressal | 0.078 |
| | right to consumer education | 0.004 |
| Marital status | right to safety | 0.897 |
| | right to be informed | 0.056 |
| | right to choose | 0.456 |
| | right to be heard | 0.003 |
| | right to seek redressal | 0.245 |
| | right to consumer education | 0 |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| educational qualification, | right to safety | 0 |
| | right to be informed | 0.234 |
| | right to choose | 0.005 |
| | right to be heard | 0.872 |
| | right to seek redressal | 0.034 |
| | right to consumer education | 0.897 |
| Occupational | right to safety | 0.872 |
| | right to be informed | 0.034 |
| | right to choose | 0.078 |
| | right to be heard | 0.003 |
| | right to seek redressal | 0.897 |
| | right to consumer education | 0.056 |

The above table shows that the chi square value is significant at 5% level for personal factor(Gender) has a significant association with factors of awareness about consumer protection Act 1986 like right to safety, right to be informed, right to be heard, right to seek redressal, right to consumer education. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. It can be interpreted that gender has no significant association with right to choose the product therefore hypothesis is accepted. Second personal factor age has significant associated with consumer protection Act 1986 like right to safety, right to be informed, right to choose, right to consumer education hence the hypothesis is rejected. It can be interpreted that age has no significant association with right to be heard, right to seek redressal therefore hypothesis is accepted. Third personal factor is marital status, it has significant associated with consumer protection Act 1986 like right to be informed, right to be heard hence the hypothesis is rejected. It can be interpreted that marital status has no significant association with right to safety, right to consumer education, right to seek redressal, right to choose therefore hypothesis is accepted. Fourth personal factor occupational has significant associated with consumer protection Act 1986 like right to be informed, right to be heard, right to consumer education, right to choose hence the hypothesis is rejected. It can be interpreted that occupational status of the consumer has no significant association with right to safety, right to seek redressal, therefore hypothesis is accepted.

Finding

Personal factors like marital status, age and gender has significant association with attitude of the customers while purchasing the product and other personal factors education qualification, occupation status and monthly income has not significant association with attitude of the customer at the time of purchasing the product.

Checking the price of the product to confirm whether it is above the MRP rate is the first ranked factor while purchasing a product followed verifying the expiry date, consulting family and friends, consulting retails and considering advertisement before purchasing the product.

Personal factor like gender had significant association with right to be heard and right to be informed and right to safety but gender has not significant association with right to choose and right to seek redressal seal and right to consumer education.

Personal factor like age has significant association with right to safety, right to choose and right to seek redressal.

Personal factor like marital status has significant association with right to consumer education, right to be informed and right to choose.

Conclusion:

Majority of the consumers of the Nilgiris district are not aware about the Consumer Protection Act 1986. The consumers bother more on the price of the product rather than quality and quantity at the time of purchasing the product. Even though the government has passed Regulatory Acts, formulated rules and regulation and formed implementing bodies for the benefit of the people, the people do not make any effort to get the awareness about these measures and they bother only about the cost aspect.

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