

# To assess the Knowledge Regarding Food Labelling among Youth of Indore City

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## Abstract

A survey was conducted among the younger population residing in the Bhanwar kuan zone of Indore city region, aimed to assess their level of awareness and comprehension regarding food labelling, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of different components of food labelling. The current research focuses on evaluating the behavior, consciousness, and understanding of young individuals when it comes to food labeling. This is crucial because young people represent the future consumer base. The main objective of this study is to gain insights into how well people, especially the youth, comprehend the information provided on nutritional labels and whether they consider it when making purchasing decisions.

Additionally, the study aims to educate participants on the importance of interpreting nutritional information from labels effectively.

**Keyword:** Consumer awareness; Food label; Food label knowledge; Food labelling effect.

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## INTRODUCTION

Food labeling is a practice that provides consumers with vital information about a food product, empowering them to make informed choices. It includes details about ingredients, nutrition facts, allergens, and other relevant product information. Labels serve as a source of essential information such as product name, expiration date, maximum retail price, manufacturing date, ingredients, and nutritional content. The purpose of including nutritional information on labels is to protect consumer health and maintain dietary standards.<sup>1</sup> By understanding nutrition, consumers

can effectively manage their intake and avoid both under nutrition and over nutrition.

Health conscious individuals benefit from labels by improving the quality of their diet and reducing the consumption of energy, fats, sugars, sodium, and cholesterol. The primary goal of food labeling is to provide consumers with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about the food they consume.<sup>4</sup> Governments regulate labels to ensure accuracy, and labels can also incorporate marketing claims like "low fat" to appeal to health conscious consumers. Labels serve multiple functions, including conveying information, promoting brands, aiding advertising, managing galleries, and ensuring food safety.<sup>8</sup> They enable consumers to make well informed choices by presenting information through packaging or labels. Nutrition labels can utilize numeric or graphical formats to effectively communicate with consumers. Health claims on labels establish a connection between food and disease prevention, providing additional nutritional information and enhancing consumer awareness. Overall, food labels play a crucial role in instilling trust, maintaining health standards, and promoting informed decision making among consumers.<sup>7</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

A research project was carried out between January–May 2023 at the Bhanwar kuan area of Indore city, Madhya Pradesh, involving a group of 50 consumers aged between 18 and 25. The participants were selected using a purposive random sampling method, ensuring a diverse representation. Data collection was accomplished through the utilization of a self-structured and pre-tested questionnaire, which underwent modifications to align with the objectives of the study. A preliminary study was conducted on a small sample of 20 individuals to identify the patterns of the experimental variables and to assess the knowledge and attitudes of young people towards food labeling. To achieve this, a questionnaire was designed, consisting of specific questions related to food labeling, which participants were requested to complete and provide responses. The findings from this pilot study served as a guiding framework for further investigation and analysis of the research problem, and also indicated that there were minimal changes in the trends concerning food labeling.

## RESULTS

There is limited attention among consumers in developing countries regarding their awareness of the information provided on food labels. To address this gap, the present study aimed to analyze the knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and practices of young individuals concerning food labeling. The study involved a sample size of 50 participants, with the majority being females, accounting for 64% of the sample, while males accounted for 36% within the same age range. They demonstrated a certain level of competence in interpreting the information provided on food labels, enabling them to make informed choices based on their individual requirements. A significant proportion of participants, 88% in total, reported checking food labeling. Among the aspects they focused on, price was prioritized by 84%, quantity by 70%, and nutritional information by 78%.

Specifically, participants tended to check the protein content first (46%), followed by total fat (26%), sodium content (1%), carbohydrates (20%), and overall fat, as indicated in the nutritional label section of food packaging. In addition, the study included questions related to images to assess participants' awareness of specific symbols such as QR codes, barcodes, food declaration symbols (green/brown color tags), and garbage can signs. The results showed that approximately 60% of the participants demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding these symbols. Furthermore, participants exhibited a positive response towards checking the maximum retail price (MRP) of food products (84%), indicating a consistent practice of price verification before making purchases. Additionally, 70% of participants cross checked the weight of prepackaged food, with 58% relying on the quantity mentioned on the food label. The study also revealed a strong belief among respondents in the accuracy of food product labeling, including information related to quantity, nutritional facts, and product guarantees. The majority of participants (98%) consistently checked the expiry date, recognizing its importance in avoiding potential health hazards. However, a small percentage (2%) reported neglecting this aspect. It is crucial for all participants to be aware of and check the expiry date to ensure food safety.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study findings indicated that

consumers in the Indore region place significant importance on food labels and depend on them when purchasing food. They find the information provided on the labels to be valuable and comprehensive, which empowers them to make informed choices. The study concluded that both the cost of the product and the information on the label play a role in influencing consumer decisions. Notably, the younger generation demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding food labeling, suggesting a positive outlook for future generations.<sup>2</sup> These findings emphasize the crucial role of food labeling in shaping the future of consumer choices. This research focused on examining the awareness of food labeling among young consumers. The results indicated that a significant majority of respondents consistently read food labels.

Interestingly, the findings revealed that the respondents' level of education was not correlated with their knowledge about food labels. Moreover, consumers exhibited a satisfactory level of understanding when it came to interpreting the information presented on food labels. The frequency of reading food labels among the youth was dependent on the specific contents mentioned on the labels.<sup>3</sup> As a result, they were able to interpret the food labels to some extent and make informed choices in selecting food products that aligned with their individual needs.

The small print used for nutritional labeling on food packaging creates a barrier for consumers, hindering their comprehension.<sup>4</sup> To overcome this, it would be beneficial to include only essential information on labels, rather than overwhelming consumers with excessive data. Furthermore, presenting this information in a legible font size that can be easily read would greatly assist consumers.<sup>9</sup> The abundance of information on food labels poses a challenge, as it consumes a lot of time for consumers to read and analyze the details of each packaged food product they purchase, especially considering their busy schedules. Therefore, implementing Front-of-Pack (FOP) labeling, which displays key nutritional information in a clear and easily understandable manner, would greatly help consumers, including those with limited education, in making healthier choices.<sup>5</sup> This approach would significantly reduce the time required by consumers, as they would only need to glance at the front of the package to assess the nutritional value and determine if it aligns with their health goals. Additionally, it is important to plan and implement a comprehensive awareness and educational program focused on

food labels to enhance consumer understanding. The use of technical jargon on food labels has been shown to create a barrier for consumers.<sup>6</sup> Instead, using simple or straight forward language on the labels can help mitigate this issue. Educational institutions have a crucial role to play in raising awareness among the wider community about the importance of environmental protection.<sup>3</sup> They can educate individuals about the significance of Eco-labels and how they can impact consumer purchasing decisions. By providing information and promoting understanding of Eco-labels, educational institutions can encourage consumers to make more environmentally conscious choices when buying products.

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