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### Linking label messages to labelling effectiveness

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#### ABSTRACT

Labelling can perform many different functions, like the identification, description or promotion of food products (Teague and Anderson, 1995; Bernues et al., 2003), however based on reasearch the main purpose of food labelling is to inform consumers on the content and the nutrienst of the food. All food labels need to have minimum amount of mandatory or legally set information, but a producer may add any voluntary but correct information should they feel that the information stated would be off an advantage and that would lead a consumer to purchase the product. Food producers also would at times, use terms which would only be understood by experts and non experts would be left guessing and interpreting the terms themselves. Consumers also consider food labelling to be very important component of their lifestyle and regard nutrition as a positive attribute to the products. With that, this study attempts to see the correlation between Label Messages and Label Effectiveness. These findings will provide a view on what is the relationship between the label messages and its effectiveness. This would also assist manufaturers to identify on what information or messages which would have an impact before consumers makes their buying decisions.

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#### Introduction

Today many items are purchased in some form of packages. This has somehow or another increase the usage of labels which contains messages and information which are place at the packages itself. This is very much true when the item purchase is food.

Labelling can perform many different functions, like the identification, description or promotion of food products (Teague and Anderson, 1995; Bernues et al., 2003), however based on reasearch the main purpose of food labelling is to inform consumers on the content and the nutrients of the food. All food labels need to have minimum amount of mandatory or legally set information, but a producer may add any voluntary but correct information should they feel that the information stated would be off an advantage and that would lead a consumer to purchase the product.

Food producers also would at times, use terms which would only be understood by experts and non experts or layman's would be left guessing and interprets the terms themselves.

Consumers also consider food labelling to be very important component of their lifestyle and regard nutrition as a positive attribute to the products.

Therefore, food labelling has to be informative and attractive in order to grab's consumer's attention.

As such, labels are part of the information set used by consumers in making product-purchasing decisions.

The important issue arise is "What is the correlation between label messages and its effectiveness?"

In order to answer the issue arise, the following model are constructed based on the variables found to be prominent in linking label messages to label effectiveness.

#### Usage of Labels

In a few studies done it have reported that rates of label use are higher among women than men, higher among those under 55 years of age, and higher among those with more than 12 years of education (Kreuter *et al.*, 1997; Levy and Fein, 1998; Marietta *et al.*, 1999; Neuhouser *et al.*, 1999).

It was also noted that Label use appears to be higher for first time purchases (Marietta *et al.*, 1999; Morreale and Schwartz, 1995) and label readers are more likely to look for information about calories, fat and cholesterol than they are for other information included on the label (Kreuter *et al.*, 1997; Marietta *et al.*, 1999; Michel *et al.*, 1994; Morreale and Schwartz, 1995).

#### Importance of Label Messages

In the food industry, the health claim messages on the label can become the value-added point of product differentiation. Therefore, access to a health claim for use on the product label is an important marketing variable.

Health claims may also play a role in public health education as it informs the consumer of a food's health advantage. To the degree the health claim influences purchase decisions it helps the consumer conform to public policy goals by assisting in the selection of healthier food choices. (Childs, 1998)

#### Expert Information

Research findings have suggested that consumers view nutrition in a positive light. Expert information and advice is being sought as to have better understanding on scientific or medical terms or any other additional information. Therefore, expert information can lead the customer to clearly understand the ingredients and help the consumer to make the right choice. (Abbot, 1997)

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### Consumers Attitudes towards Nutrition

Because of the changing needs and lifestyles among current consumers, couple-up with dietary guidelines and media attention, all this variables have stimulated interest in nutrition (Shine, A., O'Reilly, S., & O'Sullivan, K., 1997). Healthy living is a term frequently used, with the benefits of exercise, a healthy diet, reduction of alcohol and stress management continuously stressed by experts in the fields of nutrition and medicine. A survey carried out in UK by the Consumer Association, National Consumer Council and the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Food (1985) and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1995) found that respondents understood the meaning of terms such as calories, fat, iron, etc. Unfortunately, consumers were not familiar with technical terms such as kilocalorie, trans fatty acids and RDA – recommended daily allowance, energy and sodium. However, increased interest in nutrition has prompted consumers to evaluate their diet and lifestyle, as such consumers' interest in diet and health has led to the assessment of food products they purchase and consume, resulting in a demand for information about nutritional content of food. Increasingly, these consumers look to the food label for such information (Richardson, 1993).

### Methodology

A survey method is used in this study where 100 questionnaires which were distributed to consumers who shopped at any of the two hypermarkets in Sungai Petani. They are Tesco and Giant of Sungai Petani. A mall intercept survey is used by distributing questionnaire randomly to consumers who exit the store.

A screening question will be used to ensure that only respondents who are of the age of 18 years and above are selected for the study. Reason being is that consumers who are of 18 years of age and above would be able to demonstrate knowledge and information pertaining to the issue discussed.

More so, it would be preferable that the respondents would be those who are currently working as to ensure that the participants would be of those who have an experience in purchasing canned food, thus having a prior experience of consuming such food items. With that, we are able to get a quantified answer from the respondent.

The objective of the study is focus on:

- a) To determine whether Consumer Information (CI) have a positive and significant influence on Food Labelling Effectiveness (FLE).
- b) To determine whether Consumer Purchase Behaviour (CPB) would have a positive and significant influence on Food Labelling Effectiveness (FLE).
- c) To study the correlation between CI and FLE.
- d) To study the correlation between CPB and FLE

### Significance of the Study

These findings will provide a view on what is the relationship between the label messages and its effectiveness. This would also assist manufacturers to identify on what information or messages which would have an impact before consumers makes their buying decisions.

### Scope of the Study

This study only focuses on determining how Label Messages correlates with label Effectiveness.

Furthermore, this study attempts to present a snapshot of what is in the mind of the consumer in general view without any specific brand.

The target population are consumers 18 years of age and have previously consume any canned food item, knowledgeable about the item, and are consuming the item at present.

In terms of demographic profile of the respondents, no specific target for each particular group was being placed since the respondents are sought on probabilistic approaches.

Two stores were identified as the data collection location, they are Giant and Tesco Sungai Petani. Further study is recommended to expand the scope of study area to the whole states in Malaysia in order to further test the validity of the model posited in this paper.

As shown in Table 1 above, 5 intercorrelations were statistically significant and positively correlated. All the component of motivation loyalty were able to show a strong relationship with the predictor variable consumer information, Quality assurance and, Nutrition information. Conversely, the predictor variable media information shows no significant relationship with motivation loyalty.

To test the hypothesis, a set of regression analysis was performed. This analysis is to test the influential effect of 4 dimensions of consumer information behaviour onto motivation loyalty. The dimension of consumer information, quality assurance, nutrition information, and media information, all have positive and significant association with motivation loyalty ( $\beta = .11, p < .01, \beta = .60, p < .01, \beta = .11, p < .01, \beta = .11, p < .01$ ). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for the regression increased to .45. indicating that consumer information behaviour were able to explain an additional 45.0 percent ( $R^2 = 0.45$ ) towards the observed variation on motivation loyalty.

### Conclusions

There is a growing awareness among consumers of the concept of food labelling as there are increased interest in nutrition among consumers. Previous studies have found that food labelling used will affect consumers purchasing behaviours as it influences valuation and perception of the food product. Through offering a quality guarantee by a label, consumer reassurance can be established and the buying decision can favourably be influenced (Caswell, 1992). In this way, quality labelling can differentiate products by enlarging product attractiveness or assuring the consumer of a certain level of quality (Bernues et al., 2003; Caswell & Mojduszka, 1996).

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