

CONSUMER AWARENESS AND USE OF NUTRITION INFORMATION ON FOOD LABELS FOR THREE RETAIL STORES XTRA FOODS , SUPER QUALITY AND JEWAN SUPERMARKET

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Background: A label is a printed, written or graphic material on all of the packages or containers of a product. It is an essential part of packaging in which manufacturers must comply to. Labels can range from elaborately designed graphic to a simple tag which is placed on the containers or packages of the product. A label might carry only the brand name or a great deal of information (Kotler, 2001).

Objective: This study examined: **(1)** awareness and use of nutrition information on food labels by consumers from three retail stores Xtra foods supermarket, Super Quality and Jewan supermarket **(2)** To assess the consumer's knowledge about nutrition information and the importance of reading it on the food labels in assisting them to take right decisions when buying packaged foods **(3)** To assess consumer's behavior based on nutritional label use.

Design: Questionnaires were administered by hand to 323 respondents using simple random and systematic random sampling techniques and analyzed using S.P.S.S, where 6 questionnaires were not considered completed to be used in this study was discarded by method of elimination.

Results: The study showed that there was a high level of awareness by the participants what a food label is , however they did not use it in purchasing food items especially for those of differing education background and in different age groups. As education level increased nutrition information became more important especially to tertiary education level. Time constraints were the main reason for participants not using nutrition information when purchasing prepackaged foods.

Conclusion: It is therefore recommended that government agencies better educate consumers on the use of food label information and food companies find better ways to promote health benefits obtained from reading food labels.