Consumption Awareness of Indian Community towards Food Label in Klang, Selangor

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Article Information	Abstract
	As the third largest ethnic in Malaysia, Indian community plays an important role in the increasing economy of food products and their awareness towards food labels can be considered as important indicator too. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is utilized as a theoretical framework in explaining the Indian consumers' awareness in consuming food products with the food labels in Klang, Selangor, Malaysia. Primary data was obtained through the designated questionnaire which had been distributed to 300 respondents representing Indian consumers. The data was obtained using stratified random sampling technique. The study used descriptive analysis, chi-square test, and reliability test in order to analyze the collected data. The overall results indicate that the presence of food labels have significance relationship with the awareness of Indian consumers in buying and consuming the food products. Besides, most of the respondents concerned about religious and healthy practices. Thus, this study has become a strong indicator on how the awareness level of Indian consumers towards food label.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is known widely because of the diversity of its ethnic population. Every ethnic in Malaysia is constituted of different culture and religion. Indian community consisted of 7.3% of the overall population in Malaysia while 19.3% of the overall population of Klang areas as in 2010 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2011). The main religion for Indian community in Malaysia is Hindu. As Hindu's there are several food that are forbidden to be eaten especially beef. Therefore the existence of food labels is crucial to assist them in choosing the right food product to consume in term of their religion and health.

The increasing attention of consumers towards food labeling has made the food labels become the most important instruments in purchasing food products in the market. Food labels gives the sense of trust and confident in the cleanliness, healthiness and safeness in consuming the food products. Food labels that can be seen on food products in Malaysia are consist of brand, price, expiry date, Halal logo, nutritional value, ingredients, eco-friendly, genetically modified organism (GMO) and organic products.

In Malaysia, the previous studies on the impact of purchasing behavior of non-Muslim consumers (Abdul Latiff et al., 2013) and the impact of Halal logo as an advertisement and a signifier of third-party certification for non-Muslims consumers (Hassan & Hamdan, 2013) suggest that food label including Halal logo does effects the

non-Muslim consumers' behavior in buying food products. Thus, it shows that how aware of the non-Muslim consumers in Malaysia including towards the presence of food labels and the usefulness of food labels in choosing the food products.

However, study on the consumption awareness of food label among Indian consumers is very limited. In the context of this study, the awareness of non-Muslim consumers while choosing the food products they wish to buy will be focusing on the Indian community. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze the food label awareness among Indian consumers in Klang, Selangor by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kaur (2003), Indian community was originated from the migration of Indian labors from South India in the late 19th century and their community starts to be built when these labors decided to be settlers. Kaur (2003) added that Indian community was also diverse through its cultural, regions and religious. Despite of that, majority of the Indian community in Malaysia were Tamil in terms of culture, region and linguistic and Hindus in terms of religion. Food that was prohibited in Indian community is commonly associated with their religion and cultural practices. The most common food forbidden by their religion is the consumption of beef. Meat and alcohol is not strictly prohibited but they are considered as polluted in their nature state (Kittler, Sucher & Nelms, 2011). Hindu beliefs that cow are in a higher position in their religion as a 'holy mother' which was very sacred and humble. They also want to preserve the Hindu culture. This shows that Indian community also has their own food preferences like other ethnicities.

Thus, by assessing food labels might help the Indian consumers to choose their current needs and preferences on buying any food products. Nath *et al.* (2013) suggested that a consumer trust was related with one's religious as it affected the dietary norms of the consumer in choosing their food products. Labels of nutritional value will clearly help consumers in buying food products that close to their dietary norms or dietary habits. Nutrition label is also very important as a guideline on how healthy the food is and the suitability of the food products to be consumed by a consumer with health problems like obesity, high blood pressure or diabetes. Customers with the health concerns need a better knowledge of the food they consumed. Thus, nutritional information provided on food products was very crucial for consumers to make their buying decision (Norazlanshah *et al.,* 2013). Purchase behavior of Malaysian consumer does not depend on labeling alone, but also on their attitude toward labeling as well, their confidence in the constituent
element of the label itself (Zulariff *et al.*, 2015)

Besides, eco-friendly label is one of the most recent marketing values added into specific products. This label implies that the food was carefully processed in the most environmental way and leaves the lowest impact on the environment itself (Rahbar, 2010). Current climate change that is affecting every region worldwide might increase the awareness of consumers in choosing and buying eco-friendly products. This is supported by Nik Abdul Rashid (2009) study which clearly stated that eco-friend labels strongly helps consumers in choosing a food products as they considered about the environmental state while enhance the knowledge of unaware consumers about the existence of green products.

Originally, halal label was the most important labels for Muslim in choosing food products. Halal logo will ensure that the food that will be consumed contains no forbidden ingredient that was prohibited by Islam religion. However, the increasing awareness of non-Muslims on the important of halal logo makes the label even important no-Muslim consumers. This is because halal label is not only to prevent any prohibited ingredients but also represent cleanliness, safeness and the quality of the food products (Matthew *et al.*, 2013). Recently, the previous studies also had stated that the halal label had affected the non-Muslim consumers' buying behavior for food products. (Abdul Latiff *et al.,* 2013; Hassan & Hamdan, 2013; Matthew *et al.*, 2013).

Therefore, in Malaysia, consumers are generally exposed with the important of variety of food labels including the Indian community. Nevertheless, the impact and the knowledge of Indian consumers towards food labels on Indian consumers are yet to be assessed. Hence, this study will evaluate the awareness of the Indian consumers towards the food labels. This will helps researchers to understand the either the Indian consumers are well-informed, concern and aware on the advantage of food labels in deciding which food products should be bought.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical framework
Theory of planned behavior is one of the methods used in this study. It is a theory proposed by Icek Ajzen that shows a relationship between beliefs and behavior. It has been applied to studies of the relations among beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions and behaviors in various fields. According to this theory, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, together shape an individual's behavioral intentions and behaviors. Thus in this study, theory of planned behavior is used to determine how beliefs, attitude, norms, intention and perceived behavior of Indian consumers can affect their awareness towards food labels. TPB is considered as relevant in studying consumer preferences in buying food products as it had been successfully applied by many researchers in their previous studies (Alam & Sayuti, 2011; Rezai *et al.*, 2012). Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a useful model in predicting the consumer purchasing behavior (Zulariff, 2014) .

Sampling method and procedure
Two types of data collection can be used which are primary data collection and secondary data collection. Primary data collection was used in this study that is through questionnaires. A set of questionnaires had been constructed based on the topic of the journal and population of Indian community in Klang Valley, Selangor. The questionnaires then distributed to 300 Indian respondents and the sampling was done using stratified random sampling technique which divides the population into smaller groups known as strata. The strata are formed based on same attributes or characteristics and then random sample from each stratum is taken. From the sample taken, demographic information was identified. The consumers' awareness, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavior control and purchasing intention were also identified using Likert scale in providing a quantitative measure for the constructed questions. Seven Likert-type items were used which are Strongly Disagree (1), Somewhat Disagree (2), Disagree (3), Neutral (4), Agree (5), Somewhat Agree (6), and Strongly Agree (7).

Analysis Method
SPSS software was used in this study to analyze all the data. The analyses of the study consisted of descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, factor analysis and chi square. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the demographic information of this study which includes residential area, age, gender, marital status, education, occupation, and lifestyle. In addition, reliability analysis was used to determine the consistency of the data. These data were further analyzed with factor analysis to analyze the awareness, attitude towards food label, subjective norms, perceived behavior control and intention of all the respondents. As for, chi square it was also used to determine the awareness of the consumers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic information
The study focused on Klang Valley, Selangor where 300 Indian consumers that consists of 212 female and 82 male were involved. Majority of them lived in urban area (72.7%) while others live in suburban area (27.3%). Among the respondent 72.0% of them are married and 28.0% are single. They are also group into five age group categories which are 20's, 30', 40's, 50's and 60's. The highest age group categories are 30's (55.0%) followed by 20's (25.33%), 40's (14.0%) and 50's (5.33%) respectively. The lowest are 60's age group categories which is 0.33%. Although they are all Indian consumers but they have different beliefs as they have different religion. Hindu remains as their main religion (73.3%) and the second largest is Christian (18.7%). Only 5.7% and 2.35 are Muslims and Buddhist respectively. All the respondents also came from various education backgrounds. Most of them study until degree level which is 53.0% out of 300 respondents. On the other hand, only 2% of them study until secondary level. While the remaining are those who study until diploma level and postgraduate level. As for the respondents occupation they came from various sectors such as public sector (40.3%), private sector (55.3%) and self-employed (3.7%). In addition, 0.7% was unemployed. Different respondents undergo different lifestyle. Most of the respondents are health consciousness (41.3%). In contradict only 10.0% are environmental activist. (17.0%). Other lifestyle focused on physical activity and religious awareness. Thus, it is crucial to understand the socio-demographic information to determine the Indian consumer awareness towards the food labels.

Consumer Awareness towards Food Labels

Table 1. Indian Consumer Awareness while purchasing food labels

Statement	Frequency		(%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
While purchasing food products do you look for food labels?	216	84	72	28

Table 2. Indian consumer awareness towards the food label

No	Statement	Likert Score (%)							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
11	As a layman I understand the importance of food labeling	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.3	5.7	5.5	6.29
12	Food labeling consists of a package of food which contains a variety of information about the value of the food item (i.e ingredient, nutritional, health, halal)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.7	52.7	32.7	6.18
13	Normally I check the food label before purchasing	0.0	0.0	2.7	2.7	26.7	33.0	35.0	5.95
14	Currently the food label has benefitted me a lot	0.0	0.7	2.7	5.3	17.0	35.0	39.3	6.01
15	The label of the product has given me a new knowledge.	1.3	0.0	3.0	4.3	14.0	35.7	41.7	6.03
16	I will purchase food products with nutrition label even though I do not understand the scientific terms	4.3	10.7	10.3	16.0	16.0	21.3	21.3	4.78
17	When it comes to purchasing food products, labels information should fulfill my needs	0.0	1.0	2.0	7.7	25.7	43.7	20.7	5.70
18	I prefer products that have a label rather than those without a label	0.0	1.0	0.3	3.0	21.7	30.7	43.3	6.11
19	I look at health claim labels to make sure products is safe	0.0	0.7	1.7	7.3	13.7	47.3	29.3	5.93
20	I always check Halal label before purchasing food products	20.7	20.0	7.7	15.0	11.0	10.0	15.7	3.68
21	The recent purchasing trend leads me to be aware of food labels	0.0	1.0	3.0	22.3	22.0	29.3	22.3	5.43
22	Food products with nutritional label are more expensive	13.0	12.7	8.7	12.0	18.3	28.7	6.7	4.23

1=Strongly Disagree; 7=Strongly Agree

Based on the analysis above can be conclude that the majority (72%) of Indian consumers are not aware of food labels and only 28% of them are aware of the food labels. Table 2 shows the mean scores and the percentage of components included in the questionnaire using seven-point scale (1 to 7). The result shows that most of them are aware of the importance of understanding food labels. It also shows that only small numbers of Indian consumers check the Halal label before purchasing food products. This is relevant with the number of Indian consumers that are Muslims in this study.

Chi-square analysis

A chi-squared test or also known as χ^2 test is a statistical hypothesis test. In this study chi-squared was used to test whether social demographic brings significant impacts towards India consumer awareness in food labels. Based on the test analysis there is a significant interaction between several demographic variable which are demographical area, religion, education level, occupation and lifestyle towards Indian consumer awareness in food labels. In term of, demographical area Indian consumers in the urban area were more aware about the food labels compared to consumers in suburban area (χ^2=5.275, p <0.o5). By mean of religion those Indian

consumers that are Hindu and Muslim were more aware towards food labels than those Indian who are Christians and Buddha (χ^2=68.200, p <o.o5). In addition, Indian consumer with higher education level such as bachelor degree and postgraduate were more aware towards food labels compared to those who are secondary level and diploma level (χ^2=27.590, p <o.o5). As for the occupation those consumers who work in public and private sector were more aware towards food labels than the consumers who are self-employed and unemployed (χ^2=18.140, p <o.o5).

Table 3. Chi-square value and Indian consumers awareness towards food labels

Socio-demographic Variables	χ^2	p-value
Area	5.275[a]	0.022
Gender	0.010[b]	0.9190
Marital Status	0.022[a]	0.882
Religion	68.200[b]	0.000
Education Level	27.590[b]	0.000
Occupation	18.140[a]	0.000
Lifestyle	11.791[a]	0.008

Reliability test

In this study a questionnaire designed to measure awareness. Many items involved collectively to measure the awareness. To have high confidence in the measurement, reliability test is needed. Thus reliability test together with Cronbach's alpha is a tool to determine internal consistency that show how closely related a set of items are as a group. A "high" value of alpha is often used along with substantive arguments and possibly other statistical measures as evidence that the items measure an underlying or latent construct. However, a high alpha does not imply that the measure is one-dimensional. Cronbach's Alpha is not a statistical test but it is a coefficient of reliability or consistency (Bruin, 2006). The result of Cronbach's Alpha for this study shows a strong and positive consistency on the data collected. The value estimated was 0.914 which was higher than the index of reliability test that is 0.6. This shows that there is consistency among the Theory of Planned Behavioral items used in the study and it can conclude that the model is suitable for this study.

Table 4.Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.914	.921	57

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The main objective of this study is to determine the Indian community awareness towards food labels in Klang, Selangor. The reliability test conducted shows that there are consistency in each factor thus indicate that TPB model is recommended on studying the relationship of the Indian consumers awareness towards food labels. However, this study concluded that most of the Indian community is less aware about the importance of food labels. This might be due to lack of knowledge and exposure on the benefits of using food labels as an indicator in buying food products. But, the minority of Indian consumers that concerns about food labels seems to have a strong belief in their religion and health consciousness.

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