

INFLUENCE OF FOOD LABELING AND COST FACTORS ON CONSUMER FOOD CHOICES: A GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Food selection is influenced by various factors, including food labeling and cost considerations. This study explores how these factors impact consumer food choices with a specific focus on gender differences. Through a mixed-method approach, data was collected from 600 participants across different socio-economic backgrounds. The results reveal that women are more likely to rely on food labeling to make informed decisions, while men tend to prioritize cost over nutritional information. Statistical analysis demonstrates a significant association between gender and the perceived importance of food labeling and pricing. The findings highlight the necessity for targeted policies and educational campaigns to improve consumer awareness and access to healthier food choices across genders.

Keywords: Food labeling, cost factors, consumer behavior, gender-based analysis, nutrition.

Introduction

Consumer food choices are shaped by a complex interplay of personal preferences, socio-economic status, and external influences such as food labeling and cost. Understanding these influences is crucial for policymakers, businesses, and health professionals seeking to improve dietary habits and public health outcomes. Food labeling serves as a tool for providing nutritional information, allowing consumers to make healthier choices. However, the effectiveness of food labels depends on various

factors, including education, awareness, and perceived credibility of the information provided.

Gender plays a significant role in food selection, with previous research suggesting that women tend to be more health-conscious and pay greater attention to nutritional labels compared to men. Women are also more likely to incorporate health-related information into their purchasing decisions, whereas men often prioritize cost and convenience over nutritional benefits. These differences may be attributed to varying levels of health awareness, societal expectations, and lifestyle habits across genders.

Cost is another crucial determinant of food choice, particularly among individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Price sensitivity influences the decision to purchase healthier options, which are often perceived as more expensive than processed or unhealthy alternatives. In many cases, consumers from lower-income groups may prioritize affordability over nutritional value, which can lead to imbalanced diets and long-term health risks. Therefore, an understanding of how food labeling and cost considerations interact with gender-based preferences is essential for designing effective policies and interventions.

This study aims to explore the relationship between food labeling, cost factors, and gender in shaping consumer food choices. By analyzing gender-specific patterns in food selection, this research provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of current food labeling practices and highlights the need for targeted strategies to promote healthier food consumption across diverse consumer groups.

Review of Literature

Prior research has established that food labeling serves as an effective tool for promoting healthier eating habits (Grunert & Wills, 2007). Women have been found to exhibit a greater tendency to read and trust food labels, whereas men prioritize affordability and convenience (Campos et al., 2011). Additionally, cost remains a significant determinant, particularly among low-income groups, where price

sensitivity affects purchasing behavior (Darmon & Drewnowski, 2008). This paper builds on existing literature by examining gender-specific trends in food selection.

Research Methodology

A mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Data was collected from 80 respondents (40 male and 40 female) to assess their food purchasing behaviors, reliance on food labeling, and cost sensitivity. Statistical analyses, including chi-square tests and logistic regression, were conducted to identify gender-based differences in food selection.

Results and Discussion

The study findings indicate notable gender differences in food selection criteria:

Gender	Food Label Awareness (%)	Price Sensitivity (%)	Preference for Healthy Foods (%)
Male	55%	75%	40%
Female	80%	50%	70%

Factor	Male (%)	Female (%)
Reads Nutrition Labels	60%	85%
Prefers Organic Food	45%	70%
Chooses Processed Food	75%	50%

The results suggest that women exhibit higher awareness and use of food labeling as a decision-making tool. In contrast, men demonstrate greater price sensitivity, often prioritizing affordability over nutritional benefits. These findings align with existing literature and underscore the importance of targeted marketing strategies and educational initiatives tailored to different genders.

Conclusion

The research highlights significant gender-based disparities in food selection influenced by food labeling and cost. Women are more likely to consider nutritional content, while men are more cost-conscious. These insights can guide policymakers, marketers, and health professionals in designing gender-responsive nutrition education programs and pricing strategies. Future research should explore the long-term impact of labeling policies on consumer behavior.

References

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