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A SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD LABELS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO THEIR PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR.

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Mini-dissertation submitted in the School for Consumer Sciences at the North-West University, Potchefstroom, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Consumer Sciences (Foods).

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DEDICATION

To Father and Mother for your undoubtedly trust, motivation, encouragement and
prayer.
I appreciate all the opportunities you gave me and...
I love you very much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

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All the glory to my Heavenly Father for the opportunity, knowledge and perseverance to complete this study.

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AFRIKAANSE TITEL

'N SUID-AFRIKAANSE STUDIE OOR VERBRUIKERS SE PERSEPSIES AANGAANDE VOEDSEL ETIKETTE EN DIE RELEVANSIE DAARVAN IN HULLE AANKOOPGEDRAG.

OPSOMMING

AGTERGROND EN MOTIVERING

Hierdie studie is gemotiveer deur die tekort aan beskikbare data ten opsigte van Suid-Afrikaanse verbruikers se persepsie van voedseletikette en die relevansie daarvan ten opsigte van hul aankoopgedrag. Ten einde inligting in te samel is dit belangrik om verbruikers en hulle aankoopgedrag te verstaan, sodat dit in voedseletiket eienskappe verwoord kan word om verbruikersgeoriënteerde etiket-ontwikkeling te implementeer (Sijtsema *et al.,* 2002:565). Verbruikers se aankoopgedrag word beïnvloed deur die manier waarop hulle voedseletikette waarneem, aangesien die indruk wat verbruikers van 'n produk het, van hulle persepsie daarvan afgelei kan word (Foxall *et al.,* 1998:53).

METODOLOGIE

'n Fenomenologiese benaderingswyse is gebruik om te verseker dat die navorser die deelnemer se interne, persoonlike wêreld so diep as moontlik ondersoek (Hayes, 2000:188). 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingstrategie is in die huidige studie gebruik, aangesien dit beskou word as 'n wetenskaplike, betroubare metode om verbruikers se opinies en persepsies te ondersoek (Ratcliff, 2003). Nege fokusgroep sessies, met 'n totaal van 55 etiket-lesende deelnemers, is in Potchefstroom, Noordwes Provinsie uitgevoer. Volgens Struwig en Stead (2001:98) is fokusgroepe die beste manier om inligting oor verbruikers se persepsies in te samel (deur middel van indiepte bespreking). Die data is vasgelê deur notas en die transkribering van bandopnames van die fokusgroepsessies. Inhoudontleding was uitgevoer deur die data te kategoriseer en op te som in temas en konsepte om die beskrywing en vertolking van die bevindings te vergemaklik.

RESULTATE EN BESPREKING

Om die resultate van hierdie studie te begryp was 'n voedselpersepsie-model aangepas en op voedseletikette toegepas. Dit was bevind dat bepaalde items op die lys van bestanddele en voedselinligting, insluitende persoonlike faktore, bydra tot die algemene persepsie van voedseletikette. Dus illustreer hierdie aangepaste model verbruikers se persepsies van voedseletikette en die invloed daarvan op hulle aankoopgedrag. Verbruikers se aankoopgedrag ten opsigte van voedselprodukte word tot verskillende mates deur hulle persepsies van voedseletikette beïnvloed.

GEVOLGTREKKING

Vanuit hierdie studie is dit duidelik dat verbruikers voedseletikette om verskillende redes lees. Alhoewel verbruikers nie noodwendig al die inligting op die etiket lees of gebruik nie, beskou sommige van hulle dit as van belang vir ander gesinslede. 'n Klein aantal verbruikers was skepties oor sommige gesondheidsverwante aansprake op voedselprodukte, omdat hulle die wetenskaplike geloofwaardigheid en geldigheid daarvan betwyfel. Om hierdie redes kan die aanbeveling gemaak word dat verbruikers ten opsigte van die lees en vertolking van voedseletikette in die algemeen opgevoed moet word.

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

This study had been motivated by the lack of existing data on South African consumers' perceptions of food labels and its relevance to purchasing behaviour. In order to gather this information it is important to understand consumers and their purchasing behaviour so that these could be translated into food label characteristics to implement consumer-oriented label development (Sijtsema *et al.,* 2002:565). Consumers' purchasing behaviour is influenced by the way they perceive food labels as the image consumers have of a product is derived from their perception thereof. These perceptions may subsequently influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers (Foxall *et al.,* 1998:53).

METHODOLOGY

A phenomenological approach was used to ensure that the researcher penetrated as deeply as possible into the research participant's internal, personal world (Hayes, 2000:188). To follow through with this approach, a qualitative research strategy was used in the present study as it is considered a scientific, reliable method to investigate consumers' opinions and perceptions (Ratcliff, 2003). Nine focus group sessions, with a total of 55 label reading participants, were conducted in Potchefstroom, North-West Province. According to Struwig and Stead (2001:98) the focus group is the best method to gather information on consumer perceptions by means of in depth discussions. The data were documented by taking notes and transcriptions of tape recordings of the focus group sessions. Content analysis was performed by categorizing and summarizing data in themes and concepts to facilitate the description and interpretation of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To comprehend results of this study, a food perception model was adapted and applied on food labels. It was found that specific items on the ingredient list and nutrition information as well as personal factors contributed to the general perception of food products as well as perceptions of food labels. This adapted model thus illustrates consumers' perceptions of food labels and its influence on purchasing

behaviour. Consumers' purchasing behaviour of food products was found to be influenced to different extents by their perceptions of food labels.

CONCLUSION

From this study it is evident that there are various reasons why consumers read food labels. Although consumers do not read nor necessarily use all the information on the label, some of them consider it of importance for members of their families. A few consumers were sceptical about some health related claims on food products because they doubt its scientific truth and validity. Therefore, it would be advised to educate consumers regarding label reading and interpretation food labels in general.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

This study was motivated by the lack of existing data on South African consumers' perceptions, opinions and knowledge of food labels. Consequently, to gather this information it is important to understand consumers and their purchasing behaviour so that they can be translated into food label characteristics to implement consumer-oriented label development (Sijtsema *et al.,* 2002:565).

To understand the purchasing behaviour of consumers it is necessary to know the meaning of *consume*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1995:107) the meaning of *consume* is to use up. Sciffman and Kanuk (2004:9) point out that every person, all of us, are consumers because we consume (use up) food, clothing, shelter, transportation, education, equipment, necessities, luxuries, services and ideas, on a regular basis.

The term consumer behaviour as defined by Schiffman and Kanuk (2004:8) is the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs. For consumers' needs to be satisfied, their needs have to be translated into product characteristics to implement consumer-oriented label information (Sijtsema, *et al.,* 2002:565). Furthermore, in the context of food choice, a food product has specific characteristics that fall in the food pattern or diet of a consumer. Consumers take different characteristics of food in consideration when perceiving, choosing, or consuming, in relation to the different functions of food. Not only the attributes that are recognized by the consumer have to be taken into consideration; also technological characteristics that are related to the production process of the product are relevant. Intrinsic and extrinsic signals are noticed just before the buying decision and these influence the choice process (Sijtsema, *et al.,* 2002:572). According to Van Trijp and Steenkamp (1998:48), the intrinsic factors, like colour and texture, are part of the

physical product. Extrinsic factors are related to the product, but are physically not part of it, like price, brand name, country of origin and store name. Therefore, food perception is discussed from a consumers' perspective with the focus on the relevance for product and label developers in the food industry. The image consumers have of a brand, in other words, is often derived from their perception of the brand formed from relatively minor stimulus cues. These images, however, may form the basis of brand choice, brand loyalty, or new product trail (Foxall *et al.,* 1998:53). Harrel (as quoted by Foxall *et al.,* 1998:52) understands perception to mean 'the process of recognizing, selecting, organizing, and interpreting stimuli in order to make sense of the world around us'. Perception of goods and services depends in part on the stimuli to which consumers are exposed and in part on why these stimuli are given meaning by consumers. Perceptions of reality differ from individual to individual as each person interprets physical and social stimuli so that they are harmoniously accommodated within his or her overall world-view. This is accomplished by the individuals reconstructing their perceptions so that these do not conflict with their basic attitudes, personality, motives or aspiration, or perhaps by modifying these slightly to allow the overall impression to be harmonious. Therefore, perception about food is very important, not only to understand consumers, but to develop new products and labels successfully to ensure a satisfied consumer (Sijtsema, *et al.,* 2002:566).

In a climate where consumers are constantly being exhorted by health promoters to eat healthier, the importance of being able to choose healthy food has never been more important (Higginson *et al.,* 2002(a):145). Steinman (1992:59) states that with the rapid urbanization and the swing towards a western lifestyle in South Africa, the necessity to eat a more healthy diet and the choice of making better informed food choices will be important for the South African consumer. The use of nutrition labelling of food products, intends to enable consumers to stimulate the consumption and production of healthful products (Baltas, 2001:708). Neall (2003:23), however, reports that consumers are generally unwilling to make compromises for health benefits. They want to eat healthy, they feel they do eat healthy, but they won't go

out of their way to make major changes for health reasons. In contrast, the study of Blaylock *et al.* (1996:24) reflects that poor diets are responsible for 300,000 deaths a year and 35 percent of cancer deaths in the United States. The recognition that healthy eating habits can reduce the risk of chronic diseases and improved health has generated considerable interest in nutrition labelling of food products (Baltas, 2001:708; Higginson, 2002(b):93). Hasler (2004:24) further points out that consumers are taking control of their diets, more than ever before. One way in which to do so is through reading and/or using nutrition labels.

Nutrition labels are seen as offering the potential to educate consumers about healthy eating and to encourage and enable them to make healthy food choices. Food packages carry labels describing their contents to consumers in varying degrees of detail. In general, the amount of information provided is increasing: in addition to statutory requirements such as w eight, product n ame, and ingredients, it is now possible to find, amongst other items, logos to indicate gluten free, nut free and vegetarian, indications of suitability for home freezing, nutrition claims and healthy eating endorsements. One part of the food label which has been singled out for its perceived potential to educate consumers about healthy eating and to encourage and enable them to make healthy food choices is the nutrition label (Higginson *et al.*, 2002:92). It has been argued that such information has an important role to play in nutrition education and to achieve the dietary targets (Byrd-Bredbenner *et al.*, 2000:319).

In spite of the growing consumer interest in nutrition, the use of nutrition information to make food choices is thought to be difficult, even for well-informed, highly-educated consumers (Hargrove *et al.,* 2002:1667). According to Van de Venter (1998:44) one third of South Africa's consumers are illiterate, which emphasizes the need to focus on the understanding of health messages. Furthermore, the level of complexity of food labels has also increased because of new developments such as products which claim to be organic, genetically modified and other functional claims (Anon, 2002:80). There is an increasing amount of scientific evidence proving that foods can be beneficial to consumers' health for reasons that go beyond basic nutrition. Some

foods or food ingredients may help to reduce the risk of certain diseases if they are eaten regularly as part of a generally healthful diet. Such foods are often referred to as "functional foods" (Whitney & Rolfes, 2002:458). There is also good scientific evidence that certain functional foods or food ingredients can play a role in disease prevention and health promotion (Meister, 2002:5). The best established and scientifically sound approach to labelling and marketing a functional food is through the use of Food and Drug Administration-approved (FDA) health claims delineated by law under the Nutrition Labelling and Education Act (NLEAA) of 1990 (Anon, 1999:1280). For consumers to benefit from these health messages, the first step must begin by increasing public awareness of diet-health interactions by educating consumers about health claims and how to interpret and use the claims (Hargrove *et al.*, 2002:1665).

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 Aim

To assess consumers' perceptions of food labels in relation to the nutrition information, ingredient list and health related claims and how these influence consumers' purchasing behaviour.

1.2.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to determine:

- For what reasons do consumers read the nutrition information on food labels.
- For what reasons do consumers read the ingredient list on food labels.
- How the nutrition information ingredient list and/or health related claims on food labels influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour.
- Other factors regarding food products and labels which influence consumers' purchasing behaviour.
- Consumers' general opinions and perceptions of South African food labels.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE MINI-DISSERTATION

This mini-dissertation is presented in article format. As reflected in this chapter, there is a need in South Africa to determine consumers' perceptions, ideas and opinions regarding labels on food products. Following this introductory chapter is Chapter 2, which gives an overview of the literature that will be needed as background for the interpretation and understanding of the data used in this mini-dissertation. Chapter 3 explains the research method, the data gathering process and indicates through triangulation that this study is valid and reliable. In Chapter 4 the results are given and discussed. In Chapter 5, this study is presented as a submitted manuscript to the *Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences*. The references used in this mini-dissertation are provided according to the mandatory style stipulated by the North-West University, while the specific authors' instructions regarding style are followed for the manuscript in Chapter 5.

1.4 AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The study reported in this mini-dissertation was planned and executed by a team of researchers. The contribution of each researcher is given in the following table:

Name	Role in the study
R. Klein	Author, gathering data, interpretation of data, descriptive analysis, literature research and preparation of this mini-dissertation.
Dr. S.C. Scholtz	Study leader and co-author of article. Supervised descriptive analyses and interpretation of the data. Supervised the writing of this mini-dissertation.
Prof. M.J.C. Bosman	Co-study leader and co-author of article. Supervised descriptive

	analyses and interpretation of the data. Supervised the writing of this mini-dissertation.
Dr. E. Kempen	Conceived the idea. Organised sponsorships and funds to facilitate the study. Consulted during project.

The following is a statement from the co-authors confirming their individual role in the study and giving their permission that the article may form part of this min-dissertation.

I declare that I have approved the above-mentioned article, that my role in the study, as indicated above, is representative of my actual contribution and that I hereby give my consent that it may be published as part of the Masters' mini-dissertation of Miss R Klein.

Riana Klein

Dr. S.C. Scholtz

Prof. M.J.C. Bosman

Dr. E. Kempen

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CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to put in context all relevant literature which the author thought necessary for interpreting the data.

As consumers entered the new millennium accentuating technology, fitness and health, the use of the label emerged. Not only did labelling regulation change in 1994 in the USA and is currently changing in SA, but also did the consumers' perception, viewing, knowledge and choice concerning food products because consumers of the new millennium is characterized by their increased need for information (Badham, 2003:25). By studying the consumers' "new" behaviour towards labelling, knowledge, such as nutrient and content information, is formed about that specific product. It leads to a surprising manner of how consumers perceive food products and food labels. Food perception is discussed from the consumers' perspective which indicates how perception influences the way consumers behave when purchasing food products. Perception is therefore discussed through a perception model (see fig 2.1) and consumer behaviour through the Consumer Decision Making Model (see fig. 2.3). In this literature study, the following are also discussed: consumer behaviour and labelling and how consumers' behaviour is influenced by labels. Furthermore, today's consumers are not only challenged by understanding label information but also by the concept of functional foods and health related claims which are thus also discussed in this chapter. To the knowledge of the author, most research on consumer behaviour, food labels, functional foods and health related claims do not consider the South African consumers' viewpoint on and behaviour of these three subjects. To better understand and interpret the research methodology used in this study, qualitative research is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Through qualitative research South African consumers can be researched and their perceptions towards food labelling can be understood and met.

2.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumers behave in different ways for different reasons, such as a difference in culture, norms, values, taste, and habits. This behaviour became important for marketers to understand consumers, as proven in the period before 19 50 w here t he Ve netian t raders undertook s urveys o n c onsumer preferences around the Mediterranean Sea (Du Plessis and Rousseau, 1999:4). After these early years the exploratory period (1950s) followed and led to the growth years of 1960s. During and after the 1970s it took on a mature period in which the behaviour of consumers became even more important, to such an extend that different definitions exist today. For the purpose of this review, consumer behaviour can be defined as:

The behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products, services and ideas which they expect will satisfy their needs (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1987:6).

This definition clearly states that consumer behaviour is more than a single event and that it is an ongoing process, which is involved in the consumers' minds and actions. Foxall *et al.* (2002:51) point out that one of these events is perception because after consumers have become aware of brands, their buying decisions are guided by their perceptions or impressions of brands formed from the information they get about brand and other characteristics of that specific brand.

2.2.1 Perception

According to Solomon (2004:49) perception is the process by which the stimuli (light, colour, sound, odour and texture) are selected, organized and interpreted so that meaning could be added to these raw sensations. Sijtsema *et al.* (2002:568) further point out that aspects such as experience, atmosphere, product methods and environment-friendly breeding also influence perception. Thus, the study of perception depends largely on the unconscious process through which information in the external environment is attended to, transformed into beliefs, stored in memory and acted upon by consumers (Foxall *e t a l.*, 20 02:51). T his em phasizes t hat p erception is a

complex process of the senses and that the brain is influenced by many variables that are hard to disentangle which in turn indicate that perceptions are based on how consumers interpret reality (Antonides & Van Raaij, 1998:235). Foxall *et al.* (2002:51) are of the opinion that the basic principles of perception are that consumers pay attention to stimuli relevant to their existing needs, wants, beliefs and attitudes causing consumers to purchase food products based on how the product looks, smells, feels and tastes. This emphasizes that food perception is not only complex but also highly variable. Therefore, Sijtsema *et al.* (2002:573) developed a food perception model for determinants influencing food perception, based on the determinants and variables influencing food perception (see fig 2.1). Such a model can be considered useful as a guide to give insight into the complex area of food perception to support consumer-oriented product development (Sijtsema *et al.*, 2002:580).

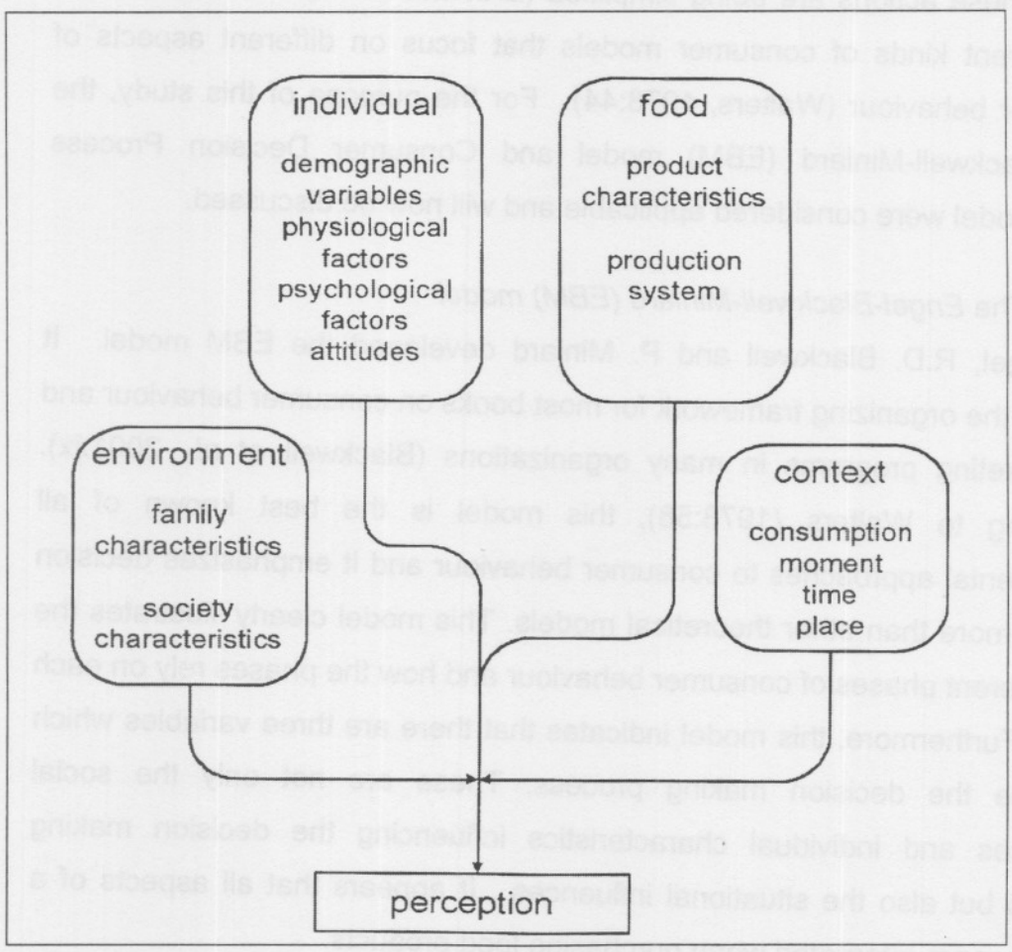

Figure 2.1: Food perception model for product development (Sijtsema *et al.*, 2002:580)

Foxall *et al.* (2002:51) point out that after consumers have become aware of brands, their buying decisions are guided by their perceptions or impressions of brands formed from the information they gather about brand characteristics. Therefore, consumer behaviour, as influenced by perceptions to a greater or lesser extent, leads to proposed actions which are integrated in consumer decision making models which will now be discussed.

2.2.2 Consumer Decision Making Models

Walters (1978:42) explains that consumer decision making models are anything used to represent all or a part of the variables of consumer behaviour. According to Erasmus *et al.* (2001:82), it is difficult to understand the buying and decision-making process because external influences exist which must be handled within an internal frame of reference and are formed through consumer socialization. With the use of consumer decision-making models these actions are being simplified (Erasmus *et al.,* 2001:82). There are different kinds of consumer models that focus on different aspects of consumer behaviour (Walters, 1978:44). For the purpose of this study, the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) model and Consumer Decision Process (CDP) model were considered applicable and will now be discussed.

2.2.2.1 The *Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) model*

J.F. Engel, R.D. Blackwell and P. Miniard developed the EBM model. It became the organizing framework for most books on consumer behaviour and for marketing programs in many organizations (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:ix). According to Walters (1978:58), this model is the best known of all experimental approaches to consumer behaviour and it emphasizes decision making more than other theoretical models. This model clearly illustrates the four different phases of consumer behaviour and how the phases rely on each other. Furthermore, this model indicates that there are three variables which influence the decision making process. These are not only the social influences and individual characteristics influencing the decision making process but also the situational influences. It appears that all aspects of a consumer are integrated when purchasing food products.

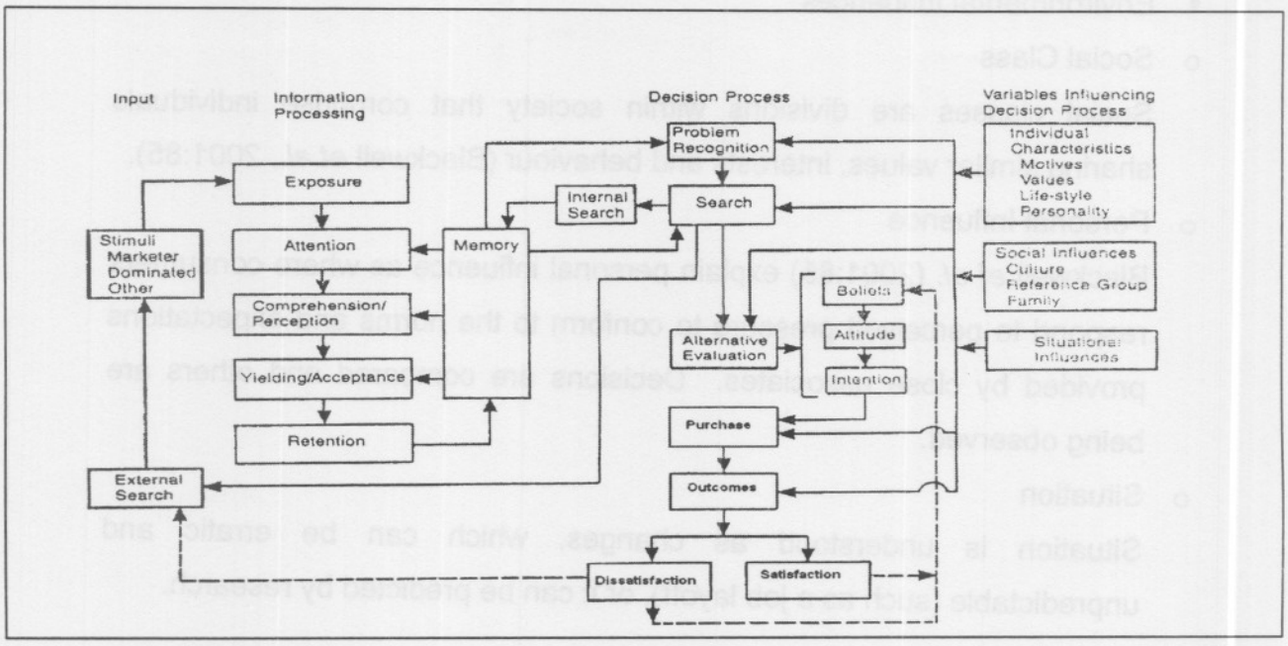

Figure 2.2: The EBM Model (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:33)

2.2.2.2 *Consumer Decision Process (CDP) model*

Despite the fact that consumer behaviour is still entrenched in its tried-and-true theoretical foundation, the authors of the EBM model aimed to anticipate where the field is going in the future and to ensure that the knowledge of consumers are understood. In 2001 they developed the Consumer Decision Process (CDP) model (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:33). According to Erasmus *et al.* (2001:85), the models (EBM and CDP) differ because the consumers' behaviour changed over the years and this affected the way they consumed products. The authors also adapted their view from how consumers buy products to analyze how they use products (compare figure 2.2 with figure 2.3). T herefore, t he CDP m odel in dicates t hat c onsumer b ehaviour is a process of actions ending in divestment when the consumer is satisfied with his or her purchasing decision.

The author of this review considers it important to clarify a few of the variables described as influencing consumer behaviour in the CDP model that may be confusing.

- Environmental Influences
  - Social Class

    Social classes are divisions within society that comprise individuals sharing similar values, interests and behaviour (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:85).
  - Personal Influence

    Blackwell *et al.* (2001:85) explain personal influence as where consumers respond to perceived pressure to conform to the norms and expectations provided by close associates. Decisions are compared and others are being observed.
  - Situation

    Situation is understood as changes, which can be erratic and unpredictable (such as a job layoff), or it can be predicted by research.

- Individual Differences
  - Consumer Resources

Time, money, information reception and processing capabilities are the primary resources that each person contributes to the decision-making situation (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:84).

- Knowledge

  Knowledge is described by Blackwell *et al.* (2001:84) as the information which is stored in the memory. It encompasses a vast array of items such as the availability and characteristics of products and services; where and when to buy; and how to use products.

  In the ninth edition of Blackwell *et al.* (2001:84) a third category exist, namely *psychological processes.* The reason why this category is not present in the CDP model is not mentioned and it is also unclear to the author of this review. It will shortly be discussed so that the overall variables that can influence consumer behaviour are identified.

Psychological Processes

- Information Processing

  It addresses ways in which information is retrieved, transformed, reduced, elaborated, stored, recovered and retrieved (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:85).

- Learning

  It is the process by which experience leads to changes in knowledge and behaviour (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:86).

- Attitude and behaviour change

  It is a n im portant m arketing o bjective t hat r eflects ba sic p sychological influences (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:86).

People study consumer behaviour for a variety of reasons. For the purpose of this review, it is necessary to understand the consumer in order to study the behaviour of consumers concerning food labels and their subsequent influence on purchasing behaviour. The use and value of labels cannot be understood without having background knowledge about consumers and their way of behaving, which will subsequently be discussed.

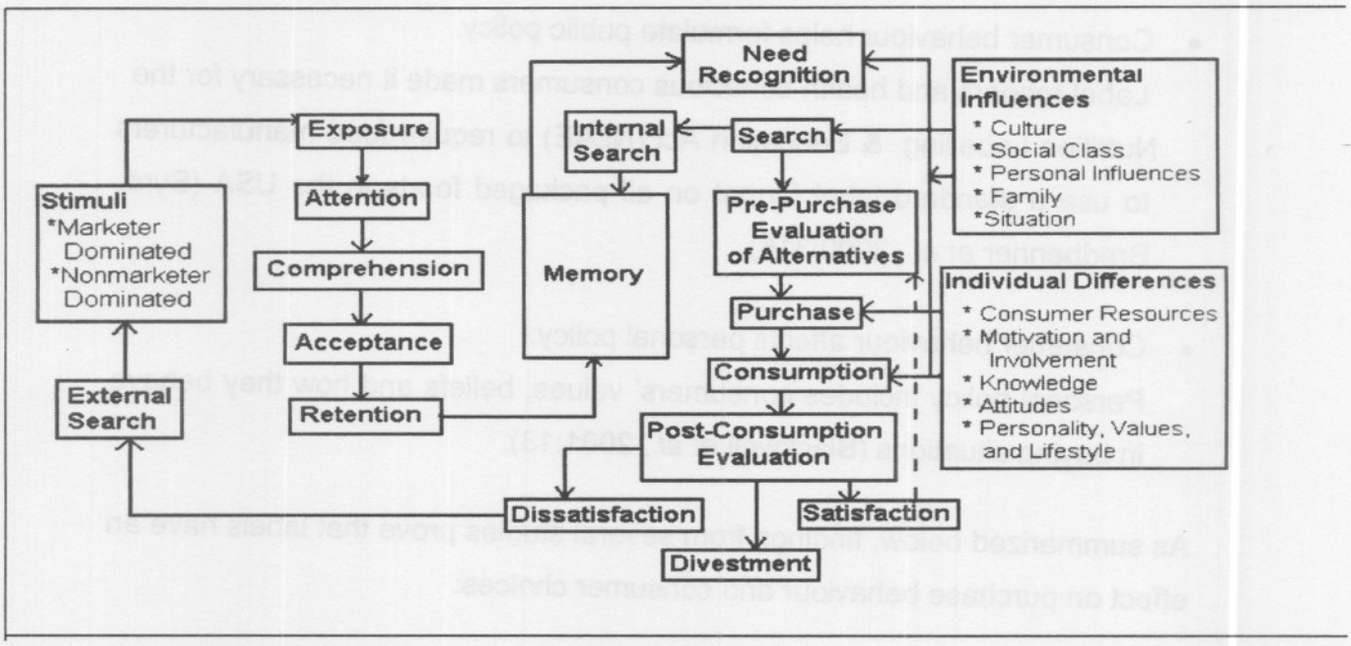

Figure 2.3: The CDP Model

2.2.3 Consumer Behaviour and labelling

Consumer behaviour influence the way labels are manufactured and used. This will now subsequently be discussed.

2.2.3.1 How consumers behaviour relates to food labels

Blackwell *et al.* (2001:9) provide the following information about consumer behaviour to elucidate the reasons that cause consumers to behave differently towards labels.

- Consumer behaviour helps analyze consumers' increasing influence:
  Consumers elect a brand, a label, a company etc. with their money and their choices. It is this behaviour that determines a product's success.
- Consumer behaviour educates and protects consumers:
  Labels serve as a source of education. Through labels, consumers can be taught how to detect deception and other abuses and are made aware of opportunity redress.

- Consumer behaviour helps formulate public policy:
  Label readers and health-conscious consumers made it necessary for the Nutrition Labelling & Education Act (NLAE) to require food manufacturers to use a standard label format on all packaged foods in the USA (Byrd-Bredbenner *et al.*, 2000:315).

- Consumer behaviour affects personal policy:
  Personal policy includes consumers' values, beliefs and how they behave in buying situations (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001:13).

As summarized below, findings from several studies prove that labels have an effect on purchase behaviour and consumer choices:

- Nutrition information on labels has a positive effect on awareness of diet-health relationships and purchase behaviour (Baltas, 2001:708).
- In the UK, more than 80 percent of surveyed individuals claim that they look at labels and that label information affects their purchase decision (Baltas, 2001:708).
- Mandatory labelling intensifies competition on nutritional quality (Baltas, 2001:708).

- Several studies find an increase in label usage and comprehension (Bone & France, 2001:467).
- Nutrition labelling is intended to enable informed consumer choice, raises the demand for healthier food products and stimulates development and production of goods with improved nutritional properties (Bone & France, 2001:467).
- As a study by Bone and France (2001:468) indicates, the nutrient-content claims did affect consumers' perceptions of the food and that consumers used the Nutrition Facts label to discern the truthfulness of the claims.
- It is proven that the majority of women report reading labels and use them to make purchasing decisions (Byrd-Bredbenner *et al.*, 2000:315).

According to the above, it is clear that labels have an effect on purchase decisions because the information given on food labels displays much desirable food products in a different light. Label information penetrates through what the eyes see and the nose smells to what the mind thinks and decides. This "inside" information has always been important to diabetics, people with high-blood pressure and high cholesterol (EHN, 2003:20). The modern tendency of health and fitness is a good indication that this information has become important to all consumers because it has been hypothesized that the use of current food labels could result in a decrease in chronic, diet-related diseases, such as coronary heart disease and some cancers (Zarkin *et al.*, 1993: 717). Furthermore, a study of Blaylock *et al.* (1996:24) reflects that poor diets are responsible for 300,000 deaths a year and 35 percent of cancer deaths in the U.S. Scientists began to identify physiologically active components in foods from plants and animals that potentially could reduce risk in a variety of chronic diseases. These events, coupled with an aging, health-conscious population, change in food regulations, numerous technological advances, and a marketplace ripe for the introduction of health-promoting products, coalesced in the 1990s to create the trend we now know as "functional foods" (Meister 2002:29) which will now be discussed.

2.3 FUNCTIONAL FOODS

Functional foods are also referred to as "nutraceutical" or "designer foods" (Anon, 1999:1279) but beside these terms, there is no universal accepted definition of functional foods (Anon, 1999:1278; Meister, 2002:5). The author of this review considers the American Dietetic Association's (ADA) definition of functional foods applicable:

Functional foods are any potentially healthful food or food ingredient that may provide a health benefit beyond the traditional nutrients it contains (Meister, 2002:8).

According to Urala *et al.* (2003:816), functional foods establish healthy nutrition and play an important role in health maintenance and the reduction of risk for chronic diseases. Along with other risk factors, habitual eating patterns have been found to play a key role in heart disease, some cancers, stroke, arteriosclerosis, and diabetes. The awareness of this relationship between diet and health within the scientific community and general public has generated interest in the use of disease-related health claims on food labels.

Although consumers strive to choose the most healthful lifestyle with the healthiest food choices, it still stays a difficult task. The reason is that food does not have to pass any test or meet any standard in order to be described as "functional". The best way to find out whether a food has any scientifically established health benefits beyond basic nutrition is to look for a special type of statement called a "health claim" on the label/packaging (Meister, 2002:5).

2.4. HEALTH CLAIMS

Anon (1999:1279) argues that the best scientifical approach to labelling and marketing a functional food is using the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approved health claims. Under the Nutrition Labelling and Education Act (NLEA) of 1990 it is described as follows:

Health claims are statements that describe a relationship between a food

substance and a disease or other health-related condition (Anon, 1999:1279).

A health claim may further also be defined as:

The relationship between a food, a nutrient or other substance in a food and the risk of a health-related disease or condition (Anon, 1999:1281).

The South African Medicines Control Council recently adopted the policy of the USA Food and Drug Administration with regard to the authorization of health claims on labels and advertising of foodstuffs. Nutrition or health claims are regulated according to the regulations governing the labelling and advertising of foodstuffs. According to the first draft of the amended regulations from the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (No. R, 1055) of South Africa, approved health claims are based on the following relationships:

- Calcium and osteoporosis;
- Sodium and hypertension;
- Dietary saturated fat and cholesterol and the risk of coronary heart disease;
- Foods containing grain products that contain fibre, particularly soluble fiber and the risk of coronary heart disease;
- Fruits, vegetables and grain products that contain fibre, particular soluble fiber, and the risk of coronary heart disease;
- Fruits and vegetables and cancer;
- Folate and neural tube defects, heart disease and cancer;
- Oats and coronary heart disease;
- Sugar alcohols and dental caries;
- Psyllium fiber and coronary heart disease;
- Whole grains and coronary heart disease and cancer;
- Soy protein and heart disease; and
- Plant sterols and plant stanol esters and coronary heart disease.

(South Africa, 2002).

In spite of the growing consumer interest in nutrition, the use of nutrition information to make food choices is thought to be difficult, even for well-informed, highly-educated consumers (Hargrove *et al.,* 2002). According to Van de Venter (1998:44), one third of South Africa's consumers are illiterate, which emphasizes the need to focus on the understanding of health messages. The level of complexity has increased because of new developments such as products which claim to be organic, genetically modified and other functional claims (Anon, 2002:80). For consumers to benefit from health messages, the first step must begin by increasing public awareness of diet-health interactions by educating consumers about health claims (Hargrove *et al.,* 2002). Therefore, until early July 2003, the FDA was required by law to reject health claims on food labels that were not supported by "significant scientific agreement" (FDA, 2003:a). In July 2003 the situation changed when the FDA Task Force on Consumer Health Information for Better Nutrition announced a new process for reviewing health claims on food labels. As of September 2003, FDA-approved labels will be ranked by a "Health Claims Report Card", which grades the quality of scientific evidence supporting a label's health claims on an "A-B-C-D" scale (see figure 2.4). The grade assignment is intended to help consumers to quickly identify the level of science behind health claims made on food labels so that they can make an informed choice. Food E-News (2003:141) also reports that the FDA will review all qualified health claims before they are used on the food label. It aims to protect consumers from making uninformed or misinformed choices regarding diet and nutrition and to encourage companies to compete, based on health and nutrition consequences. Ideally, one of the outcomes will be a growing public understanding of sound nutrition, forcing food and dietary supplement producers to compete more on nutritional value and less on portion size or taste alone. According to Starling (2003:12), the FDA has granted a "B" grade qualified health claim for walnuts and heart health and for omega-3 fatty acids which may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease (FDA, 2003:b). A "C" grade qualified claim has been granted for most other nuts and heart health. The latest qualified claim that has been allowed by the FDA is for mono-unsaturated fatty acids from olive oil and reduced risk for

heart disease (FDA, 20003:d). Starling (2003:12) further points out that slimming claims and claims aimed principally at children will be prohibited.

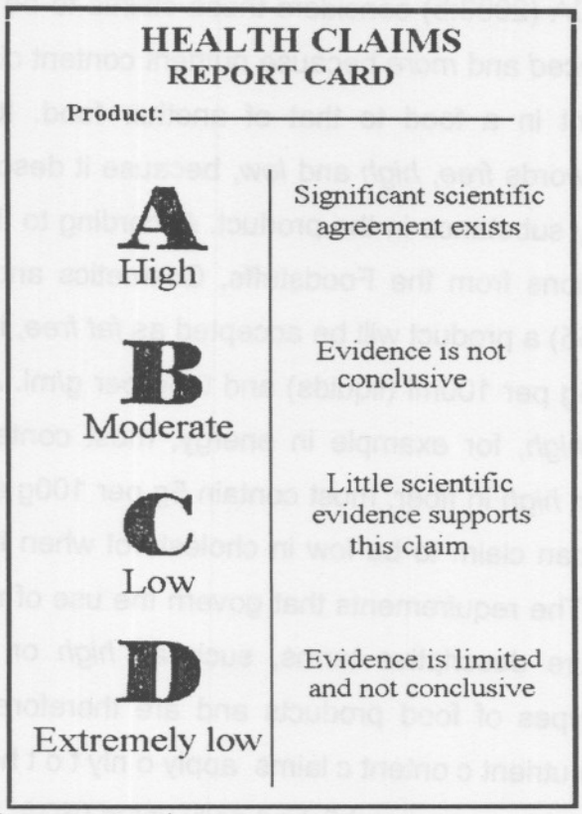

Figure 2.4: Health claims report card

Other health related claims concerning food also exist. Accentuation of the accumulation on health claims can be due to the new awareness of consumers' value of how their eating habits influence their quality of life. Further claims that can be made on food are the nutrient content claims and structure/function claims. These claims do not, however, indicate a relation to risk reduction of a disease, but merely to the level of a nutrient in a food and the role of a specific substance in maintaining normal healthy structures or functions in the body.

2.5. OTHER HEALTH RELATED CLAIMS ON FOOD PRODUCTS

2.5.1 Nutrient Content Claims

In order to contain the words enriched, fortified or nutritious, a food product must bear a label with the heading "Nutrition Information" which shows the

serving size, the energy, protein, fat, carbohydrates and dietary fiber content given per serving size and per 100 ml/g. It must also show the RDA of any nutrients that supply more than 15% of daily recommended intakes (South Africa, 2002). The FDA (2003:b) considers these claims to be characterized by the words *lite, reduced* and *more* because nutrient content claims compare the level of a nutrient in a food to that of another food. It can also be characterized by the words *free, high* and *low,* because it describes the level of a nutrient or dietary substance in the product. According to the first draft of the amended regulations from the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 1972 (No. R, 1055) a product will be accepted as *fat free,* if it contains 3g per 100g (solids), 1,5g per 100ml (liquids) and 0,5g per g/ml. A food product which claims to be *high*, for example in energy, must contain 250 kJ per 100ml and for a claim *high* in fiber, must contain 5g per 100g and 3g per 418 kJ. A food product can claim to be *low* in cholesterol when it contains 5mg per 100ml (liquids). The requirements that govern the use of nutrient content claims help to ensure descriptive terms, such as *high* or *low*, are used consistently for all types of food products and are therefore meaningful to consumers. Most nutrient content claims apply only to those nutrient or dietary substances that have an established daily value (FDA, 2003:a).

The FDA (2003:b) states another category of nutrient content claims as the *percentage claims* for dietary supplements which describe the percentage level of a dietary ingredient for which there is no established Daily Value. It includes, for example, statements such as 40% omega-3 fatty acids, 10mg per capsule, as well as *comparative percentage claims* e.g., twice the omega-3 fatty acids per capsule (80mg) as in 100mg of menhaden oil (40mg).

2.5.2 Structure/Function Claims

These claims are statements that describe how a product may affect the structure or function of the body, for example "calcium builds strong bones". These claims do not require FDA authorization (Whitney & Rolfes, 2002:348). Apart from this definition, these claims further characterize:

- the way in which a nutrient or dietary ingredient acts to maintain structure or function, for example, "fiber maintains bowel regularity";

- the general well being from consumption of a nutrient or dietary ingredient; and
- the benefit related to a nutrient deficiency disease including how widespread the disease is (like vitamin C and scurvy).

It is the manufacturer's responsibility to ensure the accuracy and truthfulness of these claims. When these claims are included in a dietary supplement label, it must state in a "disclaimer" that the FDA has not yet evaluated the claim and that the dietary supplement product is not intended to "diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease". Only a drug can legally make such a claim (FDA, 2003:c).

Although an overview of 129 studies concludes that the nutrition information on food labels do influence consumers purchasing behaviour (EHN, 2003:8), not many studies have been done on how nutrition information and health related claims influence consumers' purchasing behaviour, especially South African consumers.

In order to analyze a sample of South African consumers' perceptions and viewpoints in this regard, it was considered necessary by the author to get a better understanding of their purchasing behaviour by means of a qualitative research method of data gathering, which will subsequently be discussed in Chapter 3.

2.6 CONCLUSION

The saying that consumer behaviour is everything and everything is consumer behaviour (Blackwell *et al.,* 2001:viii) seems to be true, because of the way consumers act, think and purchase, influence businesses, economists, manufacturers and sellers in all the industries, especially in the food industry. Researchers realize the importance of consumer behaviour and invent consumer decision making models (as discussed in par. 2.2.2) to understand and predict consumer behaviour. These models are related to each other by focusing on the consumers' behaviour when they are confronted with a need or problem. These models clearly identify the different stages or steps a

consumer follows when he or she is confronted with making decisions to satisfying his/her needs or problems.

For consumers to make a decision or to enter into the process of decision making, they have to be aware of their needs or problems. Amongst others, labels provide information and help to capture the consumers' attention, which then leads consumers to recognize their n eeds or problems that can be solved with the purchasing of a specific product. Thus, by labelling foods and providing other helpful information such as health related claims, this health problem can be partially attenuated.

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CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to determine a sample of South African consumers' perceptions of food labels in relation to nutrition information, the ingredient list and health related claims and how these influence their purchasing behaviour. Previous consumer related studies on food labelling have been done, for example, on consumers of New Zealand (Victoria and Worsley, 1997:152), United Kingdom (Anon, 2000:11; Frewer *et al.,* 2003:714) and America (Wilkening, 1996:10), but very little is known about South African consumers' perception and behaviour regarding food labels. This information is vital, especially for manufacturers, because the prime function of food labels has changed from only describing the product to attracting attention (Anon, 2002:80) and to entice consumers to buy the product (Wallies, 1996:166).

Furthermore, with the new development of health related claims and the fact that one third of South African consumers are illiterate, Van de Venter (1998:44) is of the opinion that it is necessary to emphasize the need to understand how consumers perceive food labels so that manufacturers don't waste time and energy on information that is irrelevant. This indicates the need for a phenomenological approach to be used, because the researcher has to penetrate as deeply as possible into the research participants' internal, personal world, and try to understand their perception as completely as possible. That means, in order to understand people, the researcher needs to look at the meaning of the social event through the eyes of the participants - to see it as they see it (Hayes, 2000:188). Furthermore, the theory which is produced in this type of study is firmly grounded in the observation of reality and not in theory which was developed because it seemed to be logical, or because it mirrored someone's hypothesising about the likely mechanisms involved (Hayes, 2000:184). Therefore, this type of study is based on grounded theory. A

phenomenological approach and grounded theory are two forms of qualitative research, in which the theory emerges from the data and is not being imposed beforehand (Hayes, 2000:181). Qualitative research is a scientific, reliable research method which can be used to investigate consumers' opinions and perceptions on food labels (Ratcliff, 2003) for example and was thus chosen as research method for the present study, and will subsequently be discussed in more detail.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY

3.2.1 The Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Clinical scientists sometimes find it difficult to accept the qualitative research method where: the generation of hypotheses often replaces the testing thereof; explanation replaces measurement; and understanding replaces generalisability (Ratcliff, 2003). What they do not acknowledge is that qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations and perceptions for the way things are the way they are (Hancock, 2002:2). Thus, when examining and studying consumer behaviour, in an attempt to circumvent and answer above mentioned questions in the light of consumer attitudes and perceptions, it is clear that the research method most suitable and effective to accomplish this task proves to be qualitative research. In the present study qualitative questions are posed concerning consumer behaviour towards labels that should be answered to reveal how consumers perceive labels and how they react towards the label information.

The word 'qualitative' implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are rigorously examined, but not measured in terms of quantity, amount or frequency. Qualitative data provide depth and detail through direct quotation and careful description of situations, events, interactions and observed behaviours. Understanding of qualitative research is therefore more akin to the understanding gained from an art, rather than from a science. This does not mean that it is an

inferior kind of understanding, but rather a different type of comprehension, since it requires the active participation of the reader to identify with the situation and to relate the findings to his/her own situation (Labuschagne, 2003).

In order to obtain information and to observe consumers' behaviour towards labelling, which is the purpose of this project, focus group interviews were held, supporting the argument that qualitative research is the only research method suitable for gaining understanding of the behaviour consumers exhibit towards labelling. The following characteristics of qualitative research (Hancock, 2003:2) further indicate why qualitative research was considered by the author as most appropriate research method for the present study:

- Qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data.
- Qualitative research describes social phenomena as they occur naturally. No attempt is made to manipulate the situation under study.
- Understanding of a situation is gained through a holistic perspective.
- Data are used to develop concepts and theories that help to understand the social world. This is an inductive approach to the development of theory.
- Qualitative data are collected through direct encounters with individuals through one-on-one interviews or group interviews, or by observation.
- The intensive and time-consuming nature of data collection necessitates the use of small samples.
- Different sampling techniques are used which are concerned with seeking information from specific groups and subgroups in the population.

Qualitative research does have its shortcomings and weaknesses, as stated by Glazier (quoted by Labuschagne, 2003), who is of the opinion that obscurity is one characteristic that all the qualitative terms share. This doesn't mean that qualitative research is not ethic because qualitative is another method to gather data and is ethic approved by many scientist (Hancock, 2003:4). Ratcliff's (2003) table of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research further expounds the positive and negative characteristics of qualitative research:

Tabel 3.1: Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research

Strengths of Qualitative Research	Weaknesses of Qualitative Research
• Depth and detail--may not get as much depth as in a standardized questionnaire • Openness -- can generate new theories and recognize phenomena ignored by most or all previous researchers and literature • Helps people see the world view of those studies -- *their* categories, rather than imposing categories; simulates their experience of the world • Attempts to avoid pre-judgements (we always make judgements, but just don't admit it -- choice of one location or one group over another is a judgement) -- goal is to try to capture what is happening without being judgemental; present people on their own terms, try to represent them from their perspectives so reader can see their views, always imperfectly achieved -- it is a quest.	• Fewer people usually studied • Less easily generalized as a result • Difficult to aggregate data and make systematic comparisons • Dependent upon researchers' personal attributes and skills (also true with quantitative research, but not as easy to evaluate their skills in conducting research with qualitative research). • Participation in setting can always change the social situation (although not participating can always change the social situation as well).

3.2.2 Method of data gathering

According to Hancock (2002:9), qualitative approaches to data collection usually involve direct interaction with individuals on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. Data collection methods are time consuming and consequently data are

collected from smaller numbers of people. The benefits of using these approaches include richness of data and deeper insight into the phenomena under study. Raw qualitative data can not be analysed statistically. The data from qualitative studies often derive from interviews, focus groups or observation. According to Struwig and Stead (2001:98), focus groups are the best method to obtain an in-depth discussion of the topic such as the use of food labels and health related claims. Furthermore, Krueger (1994:6) is of the opinion that it is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest such as with regard to this study, the perception of food labels. Furthermore, data are gathered through the consumers in terms of their own views, words, contexts and background. These invite the researcher to assume a perspective that is open to different meanings (Padgett, 2004:4, Babbie & Mouton, 2001: xxxvi, 271).

3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY IN THE PRESENT STUDY

Qualitative research was used in this study because it is concerned with developing explanations in the world we live in, especially to determine a sample of South African consumers' perceptions of food labels in relation to the nutrition information, ingredient list and health related claims and how these influence their purchasing behaviour. This is made possible by finding answers to questions which begin with:

- for what reason?
  - For what reason do consumers read the nutrition information?
  - For what reason do consumers read the ingredient list?
  - For what reason do consumers read the health related claims on food labels?

- how? - How the nutrition ingredient list and/or health related claims on food labels influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour (see section 2.2) and

- in what way? (Hancock 2002:2).

Execution of pilot studies

Four pilot studies were conducted which served as a guide to help formulate the relevant and most applicable questions in order to achieve the objectives of the study (see section 1.2). The participants of the pilot studies were mostly students and lecturers from Consumer Sciences at the North-West University. Through the pilot studies the following categories for the recruitment of the participants were established:

Inclusion criteria of focus group participants

- The consumers had to look at food labels while they were purchasing food products. The reason was that if consumers did not read food labels they could not answer any questions related to label use and therefore were of little value to the study.

Recruitment

The recruitment of the participants for the focus groups were done in Woolworths, Spar and Pick a Pay in Potchefstroom, through convenience or purposive sampling. The researcher of this study observed consumers in these stores to see whether they picked up food items and examined the food labels on the products. If they did, the researcher introduced herself and asked them if they would participate in a focus group where they just needed to answer easy questions about food labels. If they agreed, the researcher gave them an informed consent (addendum A) which they had to read and sign in order for them to clearly understand the purpose of the study and their responsibilities as recruited consumers and participants. The researcher then confirmed whether she could phone them to establish final arrangements.

Researcher's experiences regarding recruitment

- The participants of this study were mostly Afrikaans speaking because most consumers living in Potchefstroom have Afrikaans as a home language. Furthermore, it was found that when Afrikaans speaking consumers were confronted in English, they hesitated to elaborate on questions and also cut back their spontaneous participation. According to Krueger (1994:19), choice of language is a very important aspect of focus group discussions as this is necessary for the success of a focus group.
- It was found that it was best to ask women who were alone in the shop because it seems that their husbands and children capture all their time and attention.
- The best time to recruit was from nine o'clock until eleven o'clock in the mornings and again from two o'clock until four o'clock because during these hours consumers were relaxed and willing to listen.
- It was found that most men do shopping according to a list. Therefore, most men do not read food labels and were unwilling to participate.
- Most women with babies did not have time to listen or to participate.
- It is not wise to confront consumers between eleven o'clock until two o'clock because they were either in a hurry back to work or hurried home for lunch.
- During the last hour before the shop closes the consumers were in a hurry because there was little time left for their shopping.
- Furthermore, it is not wise to recruit on long weekends and on Sundays because there were fewer consumers and those that did purchase food products were in a hurry or did not want to be disturbed.

Conducting focus group sessions

A total of nine focus groups were held outside peak hours in Maestro's Coffee Shop in Riverwalk, Potchefstroom, with a total of 55 participants. Maestro's

Coffee Shop is well known and easily accessible in Potchefstroom and ensured an informal and relaxed atmosphere. After the participants had arrived, they handed their signed consent forms to the researcher in which they gave permission to be recorded. The researcher of this study acted as facilitator during the focus groups. The focus group sessions consisted of, firstly the completion of a case study, which also served as an ice breaker (see Addendum B) and then the following questions were asked:

1. Why do you read food labels?

- This question was asked to find out what the consumers viewed as important about food labels and to establish whether they considered the nutrition information, the ingredient list and the health related claims as important.

2. How do food labels influence your purchasing behaviour?

- The purpose of this question was to determine whether consumers were buying food products because of information such as the nutrition information, ingredient list and health related claims. Furthermore, if this information did not appear on certain food products, would consumers still buy these products?

3. What is your general perception/opinion of the food labels in South Africa?

- This question was asked to define whether consumers were satisfied with South Africa's food labels and if there were any categories which they felt should be improved.

As mentioned earlier, different data gathering methods are included in this study to ensure triangulation which proves that the data are scientific. Bryman (1996:131) states that triangulation is an essential check for the researcher because scientists are likely to exhibit greater confidence in their findings when

these findings are derived from more than one method of investigation. Furthermore, researchers need to be aware of the different types of answers derived from different methods (Mays & Pope, 1997:7). Each focus group was audio taped to ensure that no information is lost. A co-moderator made notes during all focus group discussions.

3.4 Trustworthiness

3.4.1 Trustworthiness

According to Krefting (1991:217) there are different strategies to ensure trustworthiness in a study. Thus, the following strategies of trustworthiness were used in the present study:

- Credibility:
  - Prolonged engagement with the field was achieved through nine focus groups and by spending enough time spent with participants to comprehend their understanding and perceptions of food labels.
  - Triangulation was established through data collection by means of verbatim t ranscribed focus group s essions, field n otes and l iterature control.
  - Peer examination was obtained through discussions with study leaders.
- Transferability:
  - Dense description of methodology and results, including verbatim quotations ensured transferability.
  - Through purposive sampling, the sample was nominated which contributed trustworthiness.
- Dependability:
  - Dense description of methodology ensured dependability.

- Peer examination was established through the use of an independent coder and through frequent discussions with the study leaders who are experienced in the field of research.
- The researcher and independent coder analysed raw data separately and identified categories of information in consensus discussions.

- Comfirmability:

- This was achieved through the keeping of all transcriptions.

Furthermore, the author of this article would like also to discuss validity and reliability to emphasize the trustworthiness of the study.

3.4.2 Validity

Silverman (2000:175) refers to 'validity' as another word for truth. He continues that sometimes one doubts the validity of an explanation because the researcher has clearly made no attempt to deal with contrary cases. Therefore, Hammersley (1992:34) defines validity as:

The extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.

In this study, the "results" are based on critical investigation and not only on well-chosen 'examples'. This is achieved through the following two methods of validity:

➢ Face Validity

According to Hayes (2000:103), face validity is whether a test seems valid on the surface, or appears so according to "common sense". The crudest method for checking a test's validity is simply to inspect the contents to see whether it does indeed measure what it is supposed to (Coolican, 1999:173). Hayes (2000:103) indicates that face validity consist basically of judging that a measurement is valid because it appears to be so, or it seems likely that it will be. In this study the

researcher applied face validity technique to the measuring instrument by evaluation whether the focus group questions related to the identified objectives. For the researcher to make such judgement, each objective of this study was closely studied in terms of whether it was measured through a particular question asked by the researcher.

➢ Content Validity

Coolican (1999:173) is of the opinion that content validity ensures that the content of the research is representative of the area which it is intended to cover. De Vos *et al*. (2002:167) point out that there are two determining questions which will indicate that content validity is obtained:

- Is the instrument really measuring the concept?
- Does the instrument provide an adequate sample of items that represent that concept?

In this study content v alidity was obtained by the relation o f data to the objectives and how they related to the content of the literature review.

According to De Vos *et al.* (2002:169*) there can be no valid results without reliability*. Therefore, reliability will subsequently be discussed.

3.4.3 Reliability

Bostwick and Kyte (as quoted by De Vos *et al*., 2002:168) define reliability as the accuracy or precision of an instrument; as the degree of consistency or agreement between two independently derived sets of scores; and as the extent to which independent administrations of the same instrument yield the same (or similar) results under comparable conditions.

According to Silverman (2000:189), for reliability to be calculated, it is necessary for the scientific investigator to document his or her procedures and to demonstrate that categories have been used consistently. That is why reliability is primarily concerned not with what is being measured but with how well it is

being measured (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:169). Synonyms for reliability are dependability, stability, consistency, endurance, accuracy, reproducibility, repeatability and generalisability. Reliability is dynamic; it changes constantly. Most of us recognize that this overlooks important continuities of the real world when taken to extremes. But it is important to realize that low reliability *could* be consistent with high validity if the social situation is constantly in flux, or people might see things differently because they are seeing different aspects, different levels, and different perspectives of the whole which is far more complex than any single perspective/person might see. Furthermore, it is important to note that high reliability may suggest a systematic bias at work in data, a bias shared by multiple researchers or across observations by the same researcher (Ratcliff, 2003). Putting two different accounts together might result in a better understanding of the whole than viewing either one separately, even though the consistency between those accounts might be rather low. Together, the two very different accounts -- reflecting low reliability -- could produce even higher validity (Ratcliff, 2003).

In this study, the researcher tried to a chieve reliability through t he following methods:

- During the pilot studies, questions were formulated and adapted to ensure that the objectives would be attainable.
- In each focus group the same questions were asked in the same order.
- The researcher continued with the focus groups until saturation point in the answers was obtained.

Furthermore, as recommended by Ratcliff (2003), multiple listening to the audio tape was also included which ensured reliability. In the present study the researcher listened several times to the conversations that were recorded during each focus group.

3.4.4 Triangulation

Triangulation is a powerful strategy for enhancing the quality of the research, particularly credibility. It is based on the idea of convergence of multiple perspectives f or m utual c onfirmation o f d ata to ensure t hat al l aspects of a phenomenon have been investigated (Krefting, 1991:219) Triangulation is obtained when different kinds of data (e.g. quantitative and qualitative) and different methods (e.g. questionnaires and focus groups) are being compared to see whether they corroborate one another (Silverman, 1995:156). Triangulation in this study was necessary to exhibit greater confidence in the findings because these findings were derived from more than one method of investigation (Bryman, 1996:131). By combining several research techniques, the validity of the conclusions is enhanced if they provide mutual confirmation (Bryman, 1996:133). It is clear that triangulation plays an important role in qualitative research because it ensures that the data obtained are seen as true and scientific. In this study triangulation of data methods were used. This type of triangulation is where data are collected by various means and are then compared (data form focus groups). Triangulation of data sources maximizes the range of data that might contribute to complete understanding of the concept. It is based on the importance of variety in time, space and person in observation and interviewing. Examples of triangulation for this study include the different groupings of people (different focus groups). Theoretical triangulation was also used in this study because the idea of perception can be tested from sociology and psychology. Member checking also occurred in this study because member checking is a technique that consists of continually testing with informants the researcher's data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions. This strategy of revealing research materials to the informants ensures that the researcher has accurately translated the informants' viewpoints into data (Krefting, 1991, 219). Therefore, this study is a study of quality because different methods of triangulation occur.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The recorded data were transcribed according to the questions asked, where questions formed the themes. The facilitator and the coder discussed the transcriptions of the focus groups to establish consensus about the themes and by studying the themes, several related topics emerged. The analysis of the data in themes and concepts will thoroughly be discussed in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

After each focus group discussion had been transcribed, each transcript was read to identify constructs (words, phrases and sentences used by respondents to articulate their thoughts and feelings). Based on these constructs, the initial three questions were extended to five questions due to probing. From these questions, concepts emerged, leading to the identification of themes through selective coding. Selective coding means that concepts are being identified in correlation with other categories to establish that similarities in the participants' answers are recognised (De Vos *et al.,* 2002:337). For example, in the first question ("*for what reasons do the consumers read the nutritional information on food labels?"*) of this study, the participants talked about looking at the fat content, sugar, fibre and vitamins. These concepts formed the different themes, which were then discussed according to literature, to ensure that no generalisation took place (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:80). Therefore, the theories are formed out of the data (De Vos *et al.,* 2002:337) which will now be discussed in broad terms.

4.2.1 Question 1. For what reasons do consumers read the nutritional information on food labels?

Theme 1: Fat content

As indicated in statements (1.1 – 1.5) in Table 1, the participants of this study associated the fat content of the nutritional information label with high cholesterol. According to the American Heart Association (2004), their view of the fat content of food products (1.1 & 1.2) is ratified because saturated fat and cholesterol in food increase the blood cholesterol level. Although saturated fat is the main culprit, cholesterol also plays a role. If a person has high blood pressure (1.3) or has a family history of cardiovascular disease, it makes sense to limit

cholesterol in the diet. Futhermore, most of the participants in this study indicated that they considered the fat content in food products important to look at when they purchase food products, especially for food products which are known for high fat content such as meat (greater extent), margarine, chocolates, mayonnaise and chips (lesser extent).

Table 1: Fat content as reason for consumers reading the nutritional information on food labels.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
High Cholesterol	1.1 " My man sukkel bietjie met hoë cholesterol so ek kyk bv. na spesifieke produkte bv. mayonnaise of Weens worsies wat mens weet 'n redelike hoë vetinhoud het."
	1.2 " Ek het kleinkinders en almal het cholesterol want hulle kom vanaf die Karoo waar hulle vetterige vleis eet."
	1.3 " Ek sit met 'n huisgesin van hoë bloedcholesterol…"
	1.4 " Ek het 'n cholesterol probleem daarom fokus ek daarop."
	1.5 " …my man het bietjie hoë cholesterol en hoë bloeddruk."

Theme 2: Sugar Content

Note: The participants referred to diabetes mellitus as, "suikersiekte", "suiker probleme" and "diabetes".

Some of the participants viewed the sugar content as an important factor because they believed that sugar influences their health (2.1 & 2.2). Especially two kinds of health problems occurred namely diabetes (2.1 & 2.3) and Syndrome-X (2.4). In the case of diabetes, sugar isn't actually the culprit because as Clark (2004) explains, diabetes "mellitus" is a disorder of the body's metabolism. It is a fallacy that sugar consumption is related to diabetes since sugar consumption is not related to the *onset* of diabetes: the diabetic person

cannot utilize carbohydrates efficiently. The dietary recommendations of the American Dietary Association (ADA) is that eating a modest amount of sugar is accepted as long as metabolic control is maintained (Clark, 2004).

Hume (2000:182) explains Syndrome-X as a condition in the human body where there is a resistance to the absorption of insulin. It causes the blood sugar levels to stay higher for longer and Reaven (2000) points out that if it is not treated it can lead to a heart attack. Whitney and Rolfes (2002:624) recommend that the best treatment for Syndrome-X is a diet that controls glucose fluctuations and participation in physical activity to help control the blood glucose. This points out that it is good for the participants to examine the nutrient facts on food products if they are diagnosed with Syndrome-X (2.4).

Concerning these two health problems, it is exciting to find that the participants considered the kilojule content on food labels important. Some of the participants indicated that they read the food labels on high sugar content food producs such as cooldrinks and sweets.

Table 2: Sugar content as reason for consumers reading of the nutritional information on food labels.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Health related	2.1 "Ja, ek het suiker probleme so ek moet kyk na die suiker gehalte…"
	2.2 "Waar jy nou van die suikerinhoud gepraat het dink ek dat dit meestal mense met diabetes is wat daarna sal kyk."
	2.3 "Ek self gebruik nie suiker nie want dit maak my siek.."
	2.4 "...ek is die laaste ruk gediagnoseer met die X-sindroom. Daarom kyk en na die suikerinhoud."

Theme 3: Vitamins and minerals

Few participants in this study indicated that another reason why they read the nutritional information label on food products is to estimate whether it contains vitamins (3.1 & 3.2). According to Larson (2004), there exists a problem because only the two key vitamins, A and C, are required to be mentioned on food labels (Mentor, 2004; Webner, 2004) although there are Recommended Dietary Allowances for 11 vitamins. Whitney and Rolfes (2002:363) point out that vitamins A and C are the key vitamins because they promote vision, support growth and reproduction, strengthen resistance to infection, provide matrix for bone growth and strengthen blood vessel walls. If other vitamins are added or when a vitamin claim is made, those vitamins must be listed on the nutrition label (Webner, 2004).

According to Table 3, the participants looked at the two minerals, magnesium and calcium, before they purchased food p roducts (3.3 & 3.4) such as milk products, yogurt and cheese. A reason for this is that they associated magnesium and calcium with osteoporosis (3.3). Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and more likely to break (NOF, 2004), especially where bone losses reach the point of causing fractures under common, everyday stress (Whitney & Rolfes,2002:417). Although calcium plays an important role in maintaining bones, it alone cannot prevent or cure osteoporosis (3.4). Women with osteoporosis have been found to be magnesium deficient (Davis 2004). This shows that there is a correlation between calcium, magnesium and osteoporosis (3.3). Whitney and Rolfes (2002:47-419) give the Recommended Daily Allowances as follows:

Calcium RDA	Adults (19-50 yr:): 1000mg/day Adults (51 and older): 1200mg/day

Magnesium RDA	Men (19-30 yr.): 400mg/day Women (19-30 yr.): 310mg/day

Table 3: Vitamins and minerals as reason for consumers reading the nutritional information on food labels.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Most Important Vitamines and Minerals	3.1 "Ek kyk ook na die vitamien inhoud om te sien waar e k die m ees voedsaamste kan inkry." 3.2 "So dan kyk ek wat ek in vitamienwaarde terug kry om te sien of dit nie beter is om 'n produk te koop wat duurder is maar wat baie voedsamer is nie." 3.3 "Ek kyk altyd vir kalsium, natuurlik vir osteoporose.." 3.4 "En verder vir my as mens is die magnesuim en kaluim en daai tipe goed, belangrik".

Theme 4: Protein and Fibre

Protein

Consumers viewed protein as important for the health of their teenagers (4.1 & 4.2). Anon (2001) states that protein is essential for the regulation of enzymes and hormones, for growth (which is necessary for teenagers 4.1), for the structure of red blood cells, for the proper functioning of antibodies resisting infection, and for the repair of body tissue (4.2). Whitney and Rolfes (2002:7) point out that protein can also be used for energy which explains the correlation the participants drew between protein and energy (4.1 & 4.4). Few of the

participants indicated that they viewed the protein content as important information on food products such as meat and to a lesser extent on tuna fish.

Fibre

Some of the participants in this study (4.5 - 4.9) showed that they were concerned about the fibre content of the food products, such as cereals, but only a few of them indicated that they considered the fiber content as important information to be on food labels. The above is in contrast with the findings of a survey by the National Dairy council which show that *most* of those participants were aware of the message to eat more fibre (Foster, 1994:18). Whitney and Rolfes (2002:257) point out the following important functions of fibre, namely, that it increases fecal weight (promotes bowel movements, 4.6), delays Glycemic Index (GI) transit (benefits digestive disorders) and lowers blood cholesterol. These seem to be additional reasons to eat more fibre which should be emphasized for South African consumers.

Table 4: Protein and fiber as reasons for consumers reading of the nutritional information on food labels.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Protein	4.1 "vir my tiener… So ek kyk of daar high proteien is en high fiber omdat hulle verskriklik moeg word in die skool moet ek produkte kry wat dit aanvul."
	4.2 "Ons kyk veral vir proteien omdat my seun 'n atleet wat vinnig moet herstel na beserings."
	4.3 "Ek kyk na vet en proteien….."
	4.4 " Ek kyk vir die basiese bv energie en proteiene."

Fiber	4.5 " Ons gesin gebruik min verwerkte produkte so daarom kyk ons

	veral vir vesel." 4.6 " Ek sal ook die een koop met die high fiber want ek het dieselfde probleem as Gwen, spastiese dikderm." 4.7 " Mens sal eerder kyk na iets met hoë vesel in…. want met vesel verloor j y t og o ok gewig meer en a s j y jou o ggend m et v esel begin is die res van jou dag eintlik beter." 4.8 " Iets waarna ons wel kyk is die vesel. " 4.9 " Hoog in vesel en laag in vet en suiker is waarna ek kyk."

Theme 5: Other factors as reasons

Glycemic Index (GI)

The consumers also looked at the Glycemic Index (GI) when they purchased food products (5.1.1 & 5.1.2). The glycemic index (GI) is a ranking of foods on a scale from 0 to 100 according to the extent to which they raise blood sugar levels after eating. Individual foods with a *high* glycemic index release glucose into the bloodstream quickly. This causes blood sugar levels to rise rapidly. Individual foods with a low glycemic index release glucose more steadily over several hours. This helps to keep blood sugar levels relatively calm (Collins, 2004). The results of a research conducted at the Harvard Medical School have shown that more weight was lost in subjects following a diet rich in low-GI carbohydrates compared to reduced-energy diets, reduced-fat diets, or high-GI carbohydrate diets. This may be a reason why the participants wanted the GI sign of food products.

RDA

Since there were very few participants in this study that viewed the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) as being important (5.2.1), it is clear that consumers do not consider the RDA as important. Foster (1994:113) proposes that increased knowledge about nutrition may have little impact on improving

people's understanding about current dietary recommendation unless specific information on all foods are available – such as would be achieved by nutrition labeling.

Curiosity

Faced with several choices, today's consumers are more discerning, and better informed and discriminatory, as they select items from the multitude of brands on the supermarket shelf (Falk, 1994:7). As a result, today's consumers are more curious about a vailable p roducts w hen purchasing f ood p roducts in o rder to choose the best product (5.3.1 – 5.3.5) according to their needs.

Table 5: Other reasons for consumers reading of the nutritional information on food labels.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
5.1 GI	5.1.1 "...ek wil baie graag die GI waarde weet …"
	5.1.2 "...ek kyk ook na die GI telling."

5.2 RDA	5.2.1 "Vir my is die RDA belangrik…"

5.3 Curious	5.3.1 "Ek is maar gewoonlik nuuskierig oor wat dit is wat ek eet so dan bestudeer ek die etiket…"
	5.3.2 "Ek lees voedseletikette omdat dit vir my lekker is en ek stel belang daarin. Ek is ook nuuskierig…"
	5.3.3 "… dit is vir my ook baie interessant maar sodat daar siekte in die huis kom en probleme met gesondheid dan skenk ek in besonder meer aandag daaraan."
	5.3.4 "Ek lees dit want ek is nuuskierig."
	5.3.5 "Ek sal wil sien wat is die inhoud van wat ek eet.

4.2.2 Question 2: For what reasons do consumers read the ingredient list on food products?

Theme 1: Health Reasons

Allergies and Intolerances

Although food additives allow our growing urban population to enjoy a variety of safe, wholesome and tasty foods year-round, Marshall (1995:207) draws difficult to formulate a lasing healthy food product (FDA, 1992). As reflected in this study (6.1.1 - 6.1.4), consumers were much concerned with what happens to their food and what is put into their food before it reaches the supermarket shelf. As indicated, most of the participants read the food labels of canned food, some read it for ready-made sauses but only a few read food labels for spreads and ready-made meals which are all products high in additives and preservatives. Reasons given by the participants for disliking additives and preservatives were because they caused an allergic effect (6.1.1 & 6.1.2), hyperactivity (6.1.3 & 6.2.3) and as Marshall (1995:9) further proposes, additives represent a 'latent' concern (6.1.4 - 6.1.6).

Although an individual could be allergic to any food, such as fruit (citrus 6.1.7 & 6.1.8), vegetables, sugar (6.1.7) and meat, these are not as common as the following eight foods which account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions: milk (6.1.7), peanuts (6.1.8), eggs (6.1.9), tree nuts (6.1.8 & 6.1.10), fish, shellfish, soy and wheat (Whitney & Rolfes, 2002:551).

At the present time, there is no cure for food allergy but avoidance is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction. That is why it is good for the participants to look at the ingredient list on food products before they purchase an item for which they or a family member are allergic to (6.1.1 – 6.1.6).

According to Whitney and Rolfes (2002:551), not all adverse reactions to foods are food allergies. Some reactions only involve symptoms but do not produce antibodies. Among the causes of such reactions are enzyme deficiencies, such

as lactose intolerance, digestive diseases, such as obstructions, and chemicals in foods, such as the natural laxative in prunes and the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate (MSG). Therefore, such reactions are food intolerance and not allergies.

Some of the consumers emphasized that it was important for them to know about the preservatives (especially colourants and flavour enhancers) in their food products (6.1.2, 6.1.3 & 6.1.5), especially the colourant tartrazine and the flavour enhancer, MSG, (6.2.5 & 6.2.6) which will now be discussed.

As Fitchet (2004:11) declares, much of the information given on tartrazine in the media has been either inaccurate or exaggerated and consumers have, as a result, become misinformed and confused. According to this study, there are a few consumers who believe that the consumption of products containing tartrazine have harmful effects (6.2.2 – 6.2.4). Tartrazine is a yellow food colourant and it has been found to produce intolerant reactions in a few individuals. Tartrazine intolerance has been estimated to affect one in a thousand and ten thousand (between 0, 01% and 0,1%) of the population. The question of intolerance to tartrazine should be seen against a background of food intolerance, allergy and hypersensitivity in general (6.1.3). The incidence of intolerance to foods containing milk, wheat, rye and their derivatives is much higher than intolerance to foods containing tartrazine and other food additives. Tartrazine-containing products might thus be safe to more than 99, 9% of the population. Those few who are intolerant are protected by South African food regulations (S.A., 1972), which require that the tartrazine in a product must be declared by name in the list of ingredients on the label (Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 54/1972). The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives has reviewed the use of tartrazine and an acceptable daily intake of up to 7,5mg/kg of body weight has been established. As a result, it is wise for consumers to examine the tartrazine content of a food product, especially if they

are sensitive and allergic to other products. They must take note that tartrazine is not as harmful as the media made it out to be (Fitchet, 2004:11).

Furthermore, few of the participants read the ingredient list on food products specifically for the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate (MSG) (6.2.5 & 6.2.6). Studies have shown that the body uses glutamate, an amino acid, as a nerve impulse transmitter in the brain and that there are glutamate-responsive tissues in other parts of the body as well. Abnormal function of glutamate receptors has been linked with certain neurological diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease and Huntington's chorea. According to the current FDA regulations (FDA: 1995) and South African label regulations (S.A.,1972), when MSG is added to a food, it must be identified as "monosodium glutamate" on the ingredients list.

Table 6: Health reasons for reading the ingredient list on food products

Concept	Respondents' Statements
6.1 Allergieë	6.1.1 "Ek is allergies vir baie geurmiddels so ek moet mooi kyk of daar iets in is wat ek nie mag eet nie..."
	6.1.2 "Die voorkoms van 'n nuwe produk trek my aandag maar dan bestudeer e k dit e ers o m t e s ien w atse g eur- e n k leurmiddels daarin is want ons gesin kyk baie daarna."
	6.1.3 "Toe my kinders klein was het hulle voedselallergiee gehad en dan moes ek kyk na al die geursels en kleursels want dit het hulle hiperaktief gemaak of selfs hulle imuunsisteme afgebreek."
	6.1.4 "Dan is die ander produk wat nou nie op 'n special is nie baie keer beter as die special omdat dit dan minder preserveermiddels in het."
	6.1.5 "...ek wil weet watter geur-, kleur- en preserveermiddels daar in is."

	6.1.6 "Ek het maar altyd na die additiewe gekyk wat hulle op 'n lys aan ons gegee het en as ek nou een sien en ek erken dit dan sal ek dit nie koop nie."
	6.1.7 "En ook vir wanneer ek nou 'n vriendin het wat se seuntjie allergies is vir suiker, melkprodukte, en sitrusprodukte dan lees ek die voedseletikette om te sien wat ek vir hom kan koop."
	6.1.8 "Verder het ek ook baie voedsel allergieë veral vir grondboontjies en neute en vir sitrus so ek moet daarvoor oplet."
	6.1.9 "Ek kyk ook vir die bestanddele omdat my seuntjie op 'n tyd allergies was vir eierwit en toe moes ek kyk wat alles eierwit in het."
	6.1.10 "Ek het 'n neut allergie…"

6.2 Additives	6.2.1 "... of hulle ....min additiewe en tartazien inneem."
	6.2.2 "Ek kyk spesifiek na produkte wat nie daardie tartazien in het nie."
	6.2.3 "En ek werk by 'n kleuterskool ook so enige iets met tartazien is uit want dit moedig hiperaktiwiteit aan selfs by kinders wat nie hiperaktief is nie maak hulle meer aktief. En die kleure soos geel, rooi en oranje is ook uit."
	6.2.4 "Ek sal ook sê die voedselkleure en iets waarna ek ook nog kyk is die tartazien. As ek nou koffie koop sal die kafeien vry wees."
	6.2.5 "Ek kyk of daar MSG in is my twee kinders kry albei allergie van MSG."
	6.2.6 "In die eerste plek allergieë teen die smaakversterking MSG wat

	omtrent in alles voorkom."

Theme 2: Content and Quality Assurance

The consumers read the ingredient list on food products to know what the product contains (7.1 - 7.3) and to make the best choice according to the "purity" of products (7.1, 7.3 – 7.6). A report by Falk (1994:7) indicates a trend towards better quality products with minimal processing, which correlates well with the importance of pure products to participants of this study. As indicated in this study, some participants read the content information on meat and few participants read the content information of fruit juices and sausages.

Table 7: Content and quality assurance as reasons why consumers read the ingredient list on food products

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Content and quality assurance	7.1 "Meestal met vleis sal ek kyk wat presies alles daarin is. Of dit suiwer vleis is…"
	7.2 "Melkprodukte en vleisprodukte moet ek duidelik kan sien wat daarin is."
	7.3 "… soos sommige worsies het 'n hoë persentasie suiwer vleis in en minder soja en ander bestanddele…"
	7.4 "Ek sal eerder die produk koop wat 100% is as 'n produk met kleurstowwe en geurmiddels in…"
	7.5 "mens wil graag 'n goeie produk koop … die een wat suiwer is."
	7.6 "Ek kyk om te sien wat is die persentasie konsentraat, wat is die persentasie water en wat is die suiker byvoegsels."

4.2.3 Question 3: How does the nutrient information, the ingredient list and the health related claims influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers?

Theme 1: A driving influence

As seen in Table 8 (8.1 – 8.5) and pointed out by Ierullo (2004) health claims, the nutrient information and the ingredient list could have a reasonable impact on food selection. In this study it was found that few participants read food labels every time they purchase food products. According to Bhaskaran and Hardley (2002:592), the health and nutrient claims on food labels encourage information search with consumers who rely entirely on the information on the packaging. It could be contended that some consumers use the nutrient fact panel as a legitimising tool in evaluation of health claims. Based on a study on college students, Freud *et al.* (quoted by Bhaskaran & Hardley, 2002:530), conclude that health claims do not influence the processing of nutrition information but health claims increase customer expectations (8.5). The results of Kozup and Creyer (2003:49) indicate that, when favourable nutrition information or health claims are presented, consumers have more favourable attitudes toward the product, nutrition attitudes, and purchase intentions (8.1 – 8.5). Kozup and Creyer (2003:50) further point out that the nutrient content claims influence purchase behaviour by providing:

- permission to pick up a new product;
- a quick way to find the product again during repeat purchase; and/or
- a quick way to avoid the product, because it is considered to be of inferior taste or quality to the 'regular' version.

Thus, consumers view the nutrient information, the ingredient list and the health related claims as important because as Byrd-Bredbenner *et al.* (2000:315) point out, consumers have fairly well-developed label reading knowledge.

Furthermore, few participants in this study indicated that being on a diet is another driving influence for them to read food labels.

Table 8: The nutrient information, the ingredient list and/ the health related claims influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers as a driving influence.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Usage for the Shopper	8.1 "...ek sal net gaan vir die laevet melk. So dit vergemaklik my aankope."
	8.2 "...ek sal sommer net agter die aansprake aankoop en dan nie die nutrientinformation label ook lees nie omdat die aanspraak reeds vir my sê wat ek wil hê."
	8.3 "Ek sal my nie regtig laat lei deur wat buite op die produk staan nie. Ek sal eerder langs die kant kyk om te sien wat is die inhoud daarvan."
	8.4 "'n Produk soos die wat sê high proteien, high fiber sal my definitief aanspoor om die produk te koop."
	8.5 "... ek voel dat addisionele inligting veroorsaak dat die produk beter en makliker verkoop."

Theme 2: No Influence

Wansink (2003:305) is of opinion that, although the Nutrition Labelling and Education Act (NLEA) intended to make food labels more useful and informative for consumers, consumers still do not always comprehend nutrition information (9.1 - 9.4). Contributing reasons for the above statement may be that health claims on food labels often leave consumers confused or unclear (Anon, 2003:5), and many consumers are sceptical of health claims because they believe such claims are incomplete, misleading or trivial (Preston, 2002:264). Gilbert (2003:24) states that consumers are generally unwilling to make compromises for health benefits. They want to eat healthily, they feel they do eat healthily, but they won't

go out of their way to make major changes for health reasons, as is reflected in the statements given in Table 9.

Table 9: The nutrient information, the ingredient list and/ the health related claims do not influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Usage	9.1 "Sulke aansprake beïnvloed nie regtig my aankope nie. Ek sal koop wat ek nodig het vir die maand."
	9.2 "ek koop dieselfde goed elke maand."
	9.3 "Aansprake gaan nie my inkope beïnvloed nie."
	9.4 "Ek koop nie agter nutrisionele inligting aan nie want ek is nie op'n dieet nie."

Theme 3: An indirect influence

An indirect influence exists because the participants read the nutrient information, the ingredient list and/ or the health related claims but not to the extent that it influenced their purchasing behaviour (10.1). Rather the other family members who constitute another group influence the behaviour of individuals, including their buying behaviour. Families often form a Decision-Making Unit (DMU) with respect to household purchases, with each member performing a different role. For instance, the children may initiate a purchase by requesting a breakfast cereal instead of maize porridge, the male head of the household may decide whether a certain category of purchase may be made such as a more expensive type of breakfast food and the female head of the household may contribute to the decision to buy a processed breakfast food and decide which brand and from which retail outlet it is to be bought (Crawford, 2004).

Tabel 10. The nutrient information, the ingredient list and/ the health related claims influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers indirect.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Usage	10.1 "Sulke aansprake beïnvloed my inkope en ek kyk vir dit. Maar dit beïnvloed nie my inkopies so dat as dit nie op die produk voorkom ek dit nie sal koop nie."

Theme 4: Situational Influence

Consumers often go on some form of information search to help them with their purchase decision. Sources of information could be family (11.1 – 11.4), friends (11.5), neighbours (11.6), the sales people (11.5), or they read specialist magazine (Muller-Peters, 2004). According to Martínez and Polo (1999:461), the individual members who make up the family unit exercise an influence over each other's behaviour (11.1, 11.3 &11.6) and, therefore, over the activities which form part of consumer decision making. According to Nichols and Snepenger (as quoted by Martínez and Polo, 1999:463), it is they who are ultimately responsible for the most important decisions in the household (11.1 - 11.3).

Tabel 11: The nutrient information, the ingredient list and/ the health related claims influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers situational.

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Usage	11.1 "Die nutritionele informasie beïnvloed slegs my inkopies vir my kinders nie vir myself nie want vir myself pla dit nie."
	11.2 "Ek het nie 'n probleem vir myself as daar 'n produk is wat nie vir my aandui wat is die nutriënt inhoud of bestanddele nie. Maar ek het 'n wat nie alles eet nie maar vir my maak dit nie saak nie."

	11.3 "As ek vir myself koop dan kyk ek definitief na aansprake en so aan, maar as ek vir die gastehuis koop dan kyk ek na 'n bekende produk met 'n goeie prys."
	11.4 "My man hou van die volroomproduk en ek weet dit is nou nie so goed nie maar hy sê hy hou nie van die laevet nie."
	11.5 "Dit hang nou af wie van my gesinslede die dag saam inkopies doen…"
	11.6 "...ek sal nie sommer iets nuuts dadelik koop nie. Ek sal eerder ander eers vra."

4.2.4 Question 4: Personal factors that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Theme 1: Price

As seen in this study (12.1 – 12.17), an issue that affected all the consumers was the cost of food (Neal, 2003:8). Perceptions of price unfairness (12.1 - 12.3) affect consumers' perceptions of product value and, ultimately, their willingness to patronize a store or a service (Sciffman & Kanuk, 2000:186). In part from the various views, the only thing a company can do to ensure that the consumers will buy their "better, more expensive" product, and to have a food product which has a demonstrable relative advantage (12.4 - 12.8). It should also be compatible with existing social behaviour, not be overly complex, and be freely available on a trial basis (Marshall, 1995: 203). There is also a trend towards buying better quality and added value products as indicated in this study (12.8 & 12.9). Decker (2002) points out that a reason for this may be that price is viewed as an indicator of quality. This can be a reason why the consumers are willing to pay more for a product.

Table 12: Price as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Price	12.1 "Prys maak 'n verskil want ek sal nie eers na daardie voorbeeld kyk nie want ek weet dit is duur." 12. 2 "Die prys is baie belangrik…. dit is waarna ek kyk. Ek vergelyk elke liewe produk van elke liewe winkel en dan koop ek die goedkoopste elke keer." 12.3 "Maar op die ou einde vat ek die goedkoopste een." 12.4 "Ek k yk na die pryse en na die hoeveelheid van die produk in vergelyking met die prys." 12.5 "Ek is bereid om meer te betaal vir iets wat gesonder is…." 12.6 "Ek is bereid om 'n goeie produk (produk waarmee mens langer meer kan uitkom) te koop al betaal ek bietjie duurder." 12.7 "Ek kyk dan ook vir die beste prys maar mens vergelyk maar ook die produk en betaal maar daardie ekstra sent meer vir daardie bietjie meer." 12.8 "Ek wil waarde vir my geld ook hê." 12.9 "Ek kyk natuurlik na die prys ook want mens wil graag 'n goeie produk koop." 12.10 "As ek nou gaan inkopies doen dan laai ek die goedkoopste in." 12.11 "Natuurlik moet ek na my sak kyk en as ek dit kan bekostig dan kan ek die nuwe produk uit probeer." 12.12 "Ek vergelyk die gewig en die prys".

	12.13 "…my inkopies word tog nog die meeste beïnvloed deur die prys."
	12.14 "so dit gaan vir my baie oor die prys."
	12.15 "…. ek kyk na die prys ook."
	12.16 "Prys speel vir my maar die grootste rol…"
	12.17 "Ja, jy kyk net na wat jy soek en dan na die prys….."

Theme 2: Taste

Brody and Lord (2000:15) as well as Miller (2004) are of the opinion that consumers view health as important but not to the detrement of taste and flavour (13.1 & 13.2). Furthermore, Gofton (1992:239) points out those consumers will not buy cheaper foods because of poor sensory properties (13.3 & 13.4). They are even willing to overlook inconvenience and expense to indulge a craving (LaPolla, 2004). From the various views it is clear that to many consumers the taste of a food is a crucial barometer in determining its acceptability (13.2, 13.4 - 13.6). This has the effect that food manufacturers are increasingly faced with the challenges of meeting consumer demands for food products that taste good (LaPolla, 2004). Furthermore, food also helps consumers to ease into a healthier diet (13.1 & 13.4) which implies that taste is a highly motivating force influencing purchasing decisions (LaPolla, 2004).

Table 13: Taste as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Taste	13.1 "…het meer onversadigde vetsure en hy is lekkerder."
	13.2 "As dit nie vir my lekker is nie dan sal ek dit nie koop nie…"
	13.3 "….ek koop agter smaak aan en prys."

	13.4 "...ryk en vetterige produkte is glad nie lekker nie... so smaak speel ook 'n rol." 13.5 "...dit is nou maar nie lekker nie so dan s al ek die duurder produk koop." 13.6 "...dan gaan dit vir my dat kos smaaklik moet wees…"

Theme 3: Familiar or known products

Marshall (1995:332) points out that individuals are conservative in their selection of food products. This was also true for the participants in this study (14.1 – 14.15) because few indicated that they want to know the name of food products. Consumers usually have some sort of brand preference (14.1 &14.2) as they may have had a good history with a particular brand (14.3 – 14.7) (Hawkin, 2004). Layug (2004) is of the opinion that consumers shop on an 'auto-pilot' because with the vast amount of marketing information available they hold the names of thousands of brands in their heads (14.8 – 14.11) and waste little time thinking about them (14.5, 14.12 & 14.13). Instead, they evolve a simple set of rules to help them navigate through their world of brands (14.6, 14.10 & 14.11).

Table 14: Familiar or known products as personal factors that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Familiar or known products	14.1 "En dan is daar spesifieke make wat mens koop…" 14.2 "Ek bly egter by die bekende soort produkte wat ek nog altyd koop." 14.3 "…deur die jare het mens kos uitgetoets en bly jy maar by wat jy altyd koop …" 14.4 "Of mens raak gewoond d aaraan o m e lke keer m aar d ieselfde

	soort produk te koop."
	14.5 "…mens raak gewoond daaraan om die bekende goed te koop…"
	14.6 "Ek koop maar gewoonlik wat ek elke maand koop."
	14.7 "..mens ken mos nou al jou produkte en die wat volgens jou die beste werk."
	14.8 "Ek koop ook maar 'n ding wat vir my bekend is…"
	14.9 "Mens ken die wat mens koop reeds."
	14.10 "Ek hou meestal by 'n produk wat ek weet werk… by dit wat ek ken."
	14.11 "…jy leer watter produkte is dit wat jy kan koop…"
	14.12 "… ek weet al wanneer vat ek daai blikkie en wanneer vat ek die ander blikkie. Jy ken al jou brands."
	14.13 "Verder koop ons wat ons oor bekend is …"
	14.14 "Ek bly maar liefs by dit waaraan ek gewoond is."
	14.15 "Almal hou van bekende name wat ons maar graag bo ander verkies omdat mens uit ervaring weet dit is lekker."

Theme 4: Time

Senauer (2001:10) proposes that the rising value of time has driven the shift away from time-intensive purchasing and consumption, to a quick fix of purchasing (15.2, 15.4 & 15.5). To this effect Miller (2004) says that the one resource consumers can't expand on is time, which is also true for this study (15.1, 15.2 & 15.3) because some of the participants indicated that they read food labels only when they have enough time.

Table 15: Time as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Time	15.1 "Die groot ding is, ek het nie tyd nie." 15.2 "...ek lees nie alles nie want ek het eenvoudig net nie die tyd nie." 15.3 "Ek het net nie tyd om die etiketinformasie te lees nie…" 15.4 " … as ek die tyd het sal ek die etikette lees." 15.5 "Ek het nou so gesit en wonder hoekom let ek so min op na sulke aansprake en toe besef ek dat dit maar die kwessie oor tyd is."

Theme 5: New products

Innovative new packaging attracts the consumer's attention (16.1 – 16.4), creating excitement and sparking new sales (Neall, 2004:14). According to Neal (2003:8), international food manufactures and retailers appeal to customers with an abundance of new products to win a market share, thereby increasing consumer choice as pointed out by most of the participants of this study (16.1 – 16.10). New products also lead consumers to read food labels because most of the participants in this study indicated that they read food labels of new products to help understand why terms like "new" and "improved" dominate the food sector (16.5). Schröder (2003:1) explains that these terms are designed t o prompt consumers (as seen in 16.1 – 16.3, 16.6 & 16.7) and current users in particular to reset their 'expected utility barometer' for the product being advertised (16.2, 16.8 & 16.9). As in any highly competitive market, food producers need to offer products that consumers will not only like but for which they are also motivated to modify current purchasing behaviours (16.7 & 16.9).

Table 16: New products as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
New products	16.1 "Sien ek 'n nuwe iets en dit interesseer my dan koop ek dit en ek probeer dit."
	16.2 "…as daar nou staan *new* of as dit geadverteer word as nuut, dan sal ek dit uit probeer."
	16.3 "As daar 'n new op 'n etiket is sal ek daarna kyk maar dit nie noodwendig koop net omdat dit new is nie."
	16.4 "…as daar 'n nuwe produk is dan sê ek: 'yes, kom ons vat dit."
	16.5 "Iets wat ook die nutrientinformasie oorheers is hierdie 'new'. Alles is altyd 'new' …."
	16.6 "Ek bestudeer nuwe produkte haarfyn en ek sal hulle uittoets ook."
	16.7 "'n Nuwe produk trek definitief my aandag maar dan sal ek dit eers vergelyk met wat ek eers gekoop het…"
	16.8 "… ek is nie so opgetrek met nuwe produkte nie want hy moet homself eers bewys al lyk dit nou beter as die bestaande produk."
	16.9 "… as ek iets nuuts sien dan wil ek weet wat is dit… en dan sal ek miskien dit vat en probeer om te sien of ek tevrede is daarmee of nie."
	16.10 "…ek sal nie sommer iets nuuts dadelik koop nie. Ek sal eerder ander eers vrae."

Theme 6: Appearance

Muller-Peters (2004) states that a product's appearance is an extremely effective determinant in purchasing patterns (17.1 – 17.7) and it eases the consumer's efforts to navigate (17.1 – 17.4) food choices. Furthermore, how the consumer perceives the product leads to the expectation the consumer forms about the specific product (Gofton, 1992:243). The expectation contributes to improving or degrading the perception of the product, which can be clearly seen in this study where two participants showed their disbelief about the effect the appearance of a product has on the perception of other consumers (17.8 & 17.9). Therefore, based on this study, it can be concluded that appearance definitely has an effect on consumer's purchasing behaviour.

Table 17: Appearance as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Appearance	17.1 "As 'n boksie vir my mooi is dan koop ek dit."
	17.2 "Voorkoms is vir my baie belangrik… as sy verpakking mooier is en duurder sal ek steeds die mooier een koop al is dit duurder."
	17.3 "Ek kyk ook na 'n mooi etiket… as dit mooi is dan trek dit my.."
	17.4 " 'n Oulike etiket trek my aandag."
	17.5 "Hoe mooier die boks en hoe kleruvoller dit is hoe makliker vang dit mens se oog. Ja, dit moet maar mooi lyk."
	17.6 "Die voorkoms van 'n nuwe produk trek my aandag…"
	17.7 "Ek hou ook maar van 'n mooierige ou houertjie."
	17.8 "Ek wil net sê dat die mooiheid van 'n etiket nie my aankope beïnvloed nie."

	17.9 "Dit is vir my erg dat so baie mense produkte koop omdat die etiket mooi lyk…."

Theme 7: Convenience

Technology brings forth a growth in convenience of packaging because the days when a cap served only to seal a container is long gone. Today closures and caps are very much part of product design (18.1) (Fitchet, 2004:81). In the medium to long-term, South African consumers can expect all canned food to have easy-opening ends (Loubser, 2004:24). Research in Europe shows that 65% of consumers are prepared to pay a little more for the privilege of convenience on food products, like preparing instructions (18.2), recipes, eating occasions etc.

Table 18: Convenience as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Convenience	18.1 " Ek hou van die melk met die dekseltjie…so die bruikbaarheid van die produk beïnvloed ook my inkopies."
	18.2 "'n Etiket is vir my belangrik omdat mens gewoonlik die aanwysings op die etiket volg…"

Theme 8: Expiry date

By recent market research in South Africa it was revealed that only 20% of food shoppers look at the "best before" and "use by" dates even before they check the price (Chidgey, 2004:21). The participants in this study also read the expiry date on food labels (19.1 – 19.7). Thus, code integrity and quality are of the utmost importance. According to Chidgey (2004:21), the following are reasons why it is not easy to meet the standards of code integrity and quality:

- Brand products need coders that can keep pace with the latest high-speed wrapping equipment.
- Moisture forms a barrier between the ink and the surface, resulting in smudged or incomplete codes.
- Human mistakes can be made because hot foil systems require a manual set up.
- Packaging materials also affect the consumers' choice.

Therefore, although it is not an easy task to ensure a clear expiry date, the manufacturers must try to indicate it to win loyal customers.

Table 19: Expiry date as a personal factor that influence the consumers' purchasing behaviour

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Expiry date	19.1 "Vervaldatums is vir my baie belangrik want baie keer dan koop mens 'n produk net om te proe die ding is oud."
	19.2 "Ek kyk ook veral na vervaldatums."
	19.3 "Ek kyk graag na die vervaldatum …"
	19.4 "…maar al waarna ek oplet is joghurt se vervaldatum."
	19.5 "… ek kyk nogal na die vervaldatums…"
	19.6 "… ek kyk ook maar na die vervaldatum anders is dit nie baie lekker nie."
	19.7 "…basies kyk ek na die vervaldatum…"

4.2.5 Question 5 Consumers' general opinions and perceptions of South African food labels

Theme 1: Positive opinions and perceptions

According to Table 20, some participants of this study were excited and impressed with today's food labels (20.1 & 20.2) because they found that the labels were clear and easy to understand (20.3 – 20.5) and that they contained the n ecessary information (20.5 - 20.8) which w as e asy to understand. The participants were further even more impressed by the labels because they indicated the price (20.9) and showed the possibility of containing allergens such as peanuts (20.10) because, as indicated by Whitney and Rolfes (2002:551), peanuts are one of the most common food products that consumers are allergic to. Although these comments (20.1 – 20.10) reveal that South African consumers were interested in and proud of the food labels, there were still some aspects that led to negative opinions. These will be discussedsubsequently.

Table 20: Positive opinions and perceptions of South African food labels

Concept	Respondents' Statements
General	20.1 "Ek voel dat Suid Afrikaanse etikette baie positief is want 'n paar jaar terug was daar nie iets soos etikette nie...."
	20.2 "Ek dink die voedseletikette in Suid-Afrika is baie beter as wat dit was."
	20.3 "Ek vind dit is alles positief want hulle dui duidelik aan wat die produk is..."
	20.4 "...die produkte is baie oop jy kan ten minste lees wat daar in is...nee, ek dink dit is baie goed."
	20.5 "Ek voel dat dit netjies uiteengesit is en dat dit meeste van die tyd verstaanbaar is..."

	20.6 "Ek verstaan die terme en ek voel dat dit definitief nodig is om alle inligting aan te bring." 20.7 ".... dit is volledig en verskaf baie inligting." 20.8 "Die inligting wat ek soek kry ek gewoontlik daarop." 20.9 "Ek hou daarvan dat hulle die koopprys aandui." 20.10 "...Ek dink dit is 'n baie positiewe punt dat hulle die moontlikheid dat peanuts wel in die produk kan voorkom, op etikette aandui..."

Theme 2: Negative opinions and perceptions

As indicated in Table 21, South African consumers don't understand all the terms and abbreviations used on food labels (21.1 – 21.5) to the extent that they won't purchase a specific product if they don't understand the terms (21.1). This emphasizes the need to improve labeling with plain-English terminology as well as the need to educate consumers about reading labels (Tidwell, 2004). The participants further indicated that the content script is too small to read (21.6 – 21.11). Although it seems an easy task to enlarge the information on food labels and to put them into Afrikaans, consumers need to remember that the information on food labels is regulated by the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act. This implies that there is some information that must be on all labels (Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 54/1972). When the information script is enlarged some of the necessary information will have to be left out.

Furthermore, the participants indicated that they wanted the information to be in Afrikaans (21.12 - 21.14). South Africa has eleven official languages which can not all appear on the label. Figure 4.1 indicates that Afrikaans is the third most popular langue in South Africa (Oliver, 2004) after isiZulu and isiXhosa. This might indicate that the information on food products must be labelled in isiZulu and isiXhosa before being labelled in Afrikaans. Although English is the fifth

most popular language in South Africa, it is used on labels because it is an international language and understood by more than just South Africans, as is not the case with isiZulu and isiXhosa (Oliver, 2004).

LANGUAGE	2001 (c)
isiZulu	10 677 305
isiXhosa	7 907 153
Afrikaans	5 983 426
Sepedi	4 208 980
English	3 673 203
Setswana	3 677 016
Sesotho	3 555 186
Xitsonga	1 992 207
siSwati	1 194 430
Tshivenda	1 021 757
isiNdebele	711 821
Other	217 293
Unspecified	n/a
TOTAL:	44 819 778

Figure 4.1 : Number of speakers per language in South Africa (Oliver, 2004).

The participants of this study indicated that they considered the expiry date as very important to look at when purchasing food products (21.15), but some participants were critical as expiry dates are not always available on some products (21.16 – 21.18). If the manufactures were to follow the advice given by the participants of this study (21.19 & 21.20) they would ensure satisfied consumers. A study conducted in the United Kingdom confirmed this as it was found that 92% of shoppers consider an expiry date as essential (Anon, 2000:11). Furthermore, the participants wanted more information on vitamins (21.21) and they wanted to see health related claims (21.22), GI (21.23 & 21.24) and MSG (21.25) on more food products.

According to Hasler (2004:24), there is no doubt that consumers are, more than ever before, taking control of their health. This statement is reflected in the

demands the participants made for the signs they wanted on food labels (21.26 – 21.32). From the insistance on signs that indicate if the product is high in cholesterol (21.26 & 21.27) and if the product can cause an allergic reaction (21.28) it is evident that consumers are more health concerned. Therefore, it is important that product information and customer service are kept at pace (Sloan, 2003:26).

These participants also expressed the need to have a symbol on food products, showing that they had been checked by an institution, and thus indicating that the participants had experienced low quality (21.29) and unsafe (21.30) food products in the past. These "fears" relate to the findings of Sloan (2003:31) which show that the confidence shoppers have in the quality and safety of food products declined over the past few years. The reason for this is that recent world events made consumers aware that food safety problems do not only occur in the manufacturing plants, but at all points in the distribution chain. This increased seriousness about food safety and food quality puts more responsibility on the government to ensure safe and quality food products (Sloan, 2003:31). This can be done by labeling food products according to standard (21.31) and quality (21.32).

Table 21: Negative opinions and perceptions of South African food labels

Concept	Respondents' Statements
Terms and Abbreviation	21.1 "Wat vir my nogal frustrerend is, is dat daar nogal baie terme is wat mens nie verstaan nie..... dit beteken dan eintlik niks vir my nie dan bly ek maar daarvan af weg."
	21.2 ".....ek verstaan nie al die terme nie...."
	21.3 "... baie woorde wat die gewone publiek nie weet wat dit beteken nie".
	21.4 "... kan werk aan die afkortings wat ons nie verstaan nie..."

Content written to small	21.5 "... daar is sulke afkortings... wat is dit?" --- 21.6 "Die inhoud is te klein, mens kan nie altyd lees wat daarop staan nie." 21.7 "... as mens nie jou leesbril op het nie kan mens nie sien wat daarop staan nie." 21.8 "... die skrif van die inhoud want dit is te klein..." 21.9 "Ja, dit sal help dat die nodige inligting duidelik sal wees dan hoef mens nie die produk so te bestudeer nie." 21.10 "...dan is daai skrif te klein." 21.11 "Ons kan nie lees wat op al die etikette staan nie."
Language use	--- 21.12 "My algemene indruk is dat hulle nie my taal wil gebruik nie." 21.13 "As dit net daar staan in afrikaans is ek dood tevrede." 21.14 "... 'n goeie idee sal wees as mens meer afrikaans op die produkte kan kry."
Expiry Date	--- 21.15 "Ek vind egter wel dat in sekere produkte wel die vervaldatums nie altyd aangebring nie en ek voel dat dit uiters belangrik is." 21.16 "Hulle moet dit duideliker stel want partykeer soek mens jou morsdood na vervaldatums." 21.17 "Hulle kan ook die vervaldatums duideliker aanbring en merk....." 21.18 "... vir my is dit redelik bevredigend behalwe waar die vervaldatum nie duidelik is nie."

Missing Information	vervaldatum nie duidelik is nie..." 21.19 "Die vervaldatums kan definitief aan verbeter word." 21.20 "Ek dink hulle moet meer aandag skenk aan vervaldatums". --- 21.21 "... daar kort inligting oor vitamines...." 21.22 "Dit is vir my sleg dat hulle sekere aansprake nie op alles het nie..." 21.23 "Sal help as die GI teken op meer produkte verskyn." 21.24 ".... ek dink dat dit regtig baie meer kan verbeter op grond van dat die GI waarde op elke produk kan voorkom asook die persentasie suiker...."
Lack of symbols	21.25 "Hulle moet MSG aandui..." --- 21.26 ".....Hulle kan die tekens gebruik vir dinge soos cholesterol vry of hulle kan dalk verskillende kleure maak vir die verskillende vet inhoud." 21.27 "Hulle kan bietjie daaraan werk om tekens aan te bring vir produkte wat hoog is in cholesterol en so aan..." 21.28 "Ek dink hulle kan wel bietjie meer spesialiseer op die produkte waarvoor die mense allergies voor is, bv hulle kan dit bietjie meer uitlig of beklemtoon." 21.29 "Ek sal daarvan hou as daar 'n buite instansie kan wees wat 'n tipe toekenning kan gee van gehalte." 21.30 "Hulle kan vir voedselprodukte ook spesifieke tekens, standaard tekens aanbring..... wat vir mens onmiddellik kan sê of daar 'n raad is wat dit goedgekeur en getoets het sodat

	mens presies kan weet wat in die produk is."
	21.31 "... as iets bietjie onder die standaard is dan moet hulle dit aandui soos bv. deur benaminge soos: low standard, medium standard en substandard."
	21.32 "So ek voel dat hulle definitief dit op ons etikette kan aandui... hoë kwaliteit, medium en lae kwaliteit ..."

4.3 CONCLUSION

To comprehend these results, the author adapted the food perception model of Sijtsema *et al.* (2002:580) was given in chapter 2, figure 2.1. This adapted model (as shown in figure 4.1) illustrates consumers' perception of food labels and its influence on purchasing behaviour in the present study.

The original food perception model for product development indicates that environment (family characteristics, society characteristics), the individual preferences (demographic variables, physiological factors, psychological factors, attitudes), food (product characteristics, production system) and context (moment, time and place) are all factors that influence consumers' perception in the food product development process. In the present study, food product characteristics and personal factors were examined to clarify their importance on the perception of food labels. The consumers indicated that they read the ingredient list on food labels because of health concerns and for the content and quality of the product. The results also showed that consumers read the nutritional information mainly for the fat and sugar content and to a lesser extent for vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber content. Only a few read it for GI and RDA information. Personal factors as reasons for reading food labels, included price, taste familiarity, new products, appearance, convenience, expiry date, consumption intent and time available. The results thus indicate that food product characteristics and personal factors contribute towards consumers'

general perception of food products as well as to their perception of food labels. Consumers' purchasing behaviour of food products was found to be influenced, to different extents, by their perception of food labels (as shown in figure 4.1). Subsequently, a correlation can be drawn that consumers whose purchasing behaviour is always influenced by food labels are concerned about their health; those who are sometimes influenced, reacted as a result of situational factors; while consumers whose purchasing behaviour is not influenced by food labels at all, only read them out of curiosity.

From this study it is evident that consumers read food labels for different reasons and most considered them important. Although they do not read or necessarily use all the information on the label, some of them consider it of importance to members of their families. A few consumers were sceptical about health related claims because they doubted their scientific truth and validity. Therefore, it would be advisable to educate consumers regarding the reading and interpretation of food labels in general.

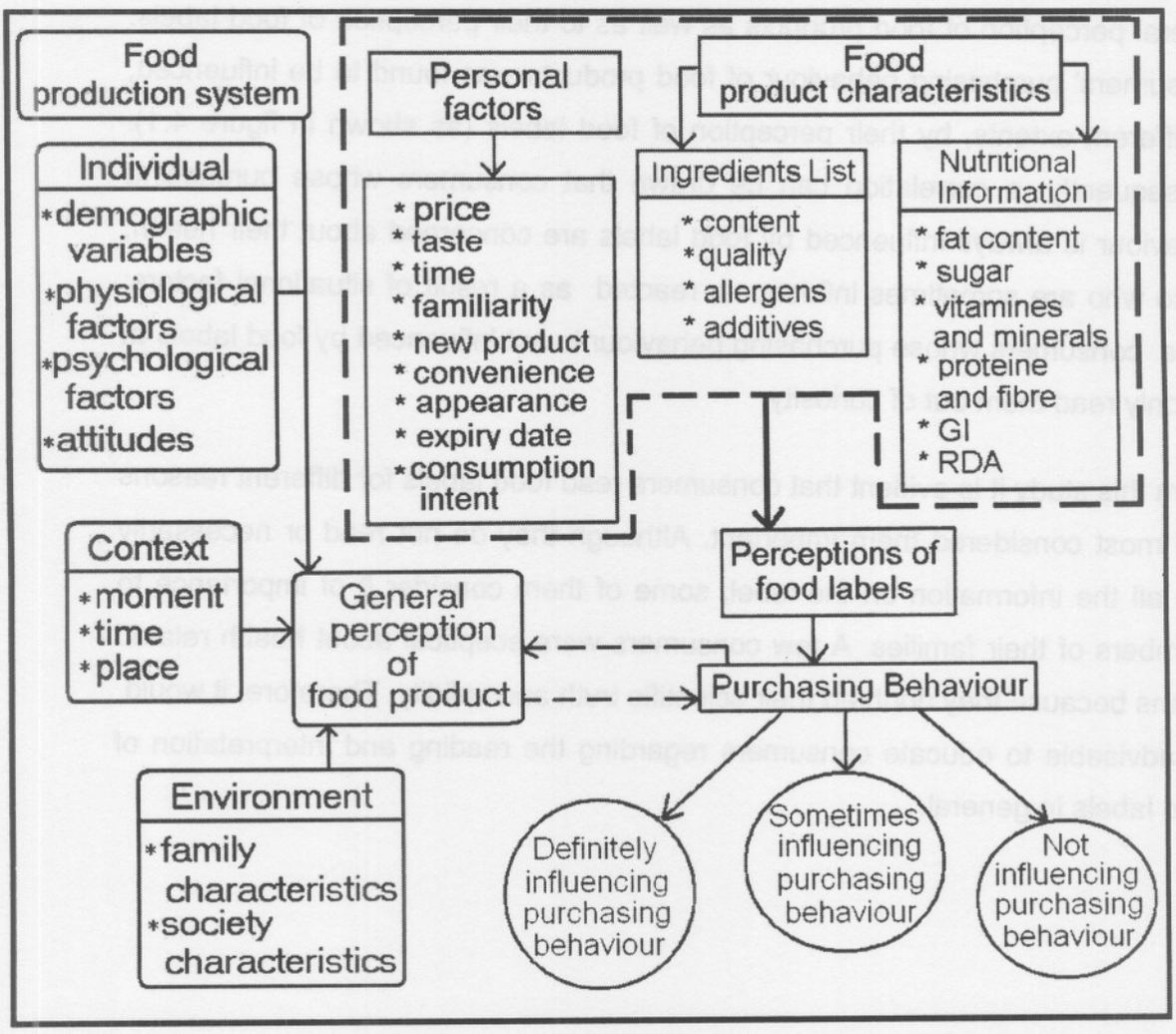

Figure 4.1 : Food perception model applied on food labels, influencing purchasing behaviour (Adapted from Sijtsema *et al.*, 2002:580).

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CHAPTER 5

A SOUTH AFRICAN STUDY OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD LABELS AND THE RELEVANCE THEREOF TO THEIR PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR.[1]

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OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie is gemotiveer deur die tekort aan beskikbare data ten opsigte van Suid-Afrikaanse verbruikers se persepsie van voedseletikette en die relevansie daarvan ten opsigte van hul aankoopgedrag. Ten einde inligting in te samel is dit belangrik om verbruikers en hulle aankoopgedrag te verstaan, sodat dit in voedseletiket eienskappe verwoord kan word om verbruikersgeoriënteerde etiket-ontwikkeling te implementeer (Sijtsema et al, 2002:565). Verbruikers se aankoopgedrag word beinvloed deur die manier waarop hulle voedseletikette waarneem, aangesien die indruk wat verbruikers van 'n produk het, van hulle persepsie daarvan afgelei kan word (Foxall et al, 2002:53).

'n F enomenologiese benad eringswyse is gebruik om te verseker d at d ie navorser die deelnemer se interne, persoonlike wêreld so diep as moontlik ontgin (Hayes, 2000:188). 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingstrategie is in die huidige studie gebruik, aangesien dit beskou word as 'n wetenskaplike, betroubare metode om verbruikers se opinies en persepsies te ondersoek (Ratcliff, 2003). Nege fokusgroep sessies, met 'n totaal van 55 etiket-lesende deelnemers, is in Potchefstroom, Noordwes Provinsie, uitgevoer. Volgens Struwig en Stead (2001:98) is fokusgroepe die beste manier om inligting oor verbruikers se persepsies in te samel (deur middel van indiepte bespreking). Die data is vasgelê deur die neem van notas en die transkribering van bandopnames van die fokusgroep sessies. Inhoud ontleding is uitgevoer deur die data te kategoriseer en op te som in konsepte en temas om die beskrywing en vertolking van die bevindings te vergemaklik.

Om die resultate van hierdie studie te begryp is 'n voedselpersepsie-model aangepas en op voedseletikette toegepas. Dit is bevind dat bepaalde items op die lys van bestanddele en voedingsinligting, insluitende persoonlike faktore, bydra tot die algemene persepsie van voedseletikette. Dus illustreer

hierdie aangepaste model verbruikers se persepsies van voedseletikette en die invloed daarvan op hulle aankoopgedrag. Verbruikers se aankoopgedrag ten opsigte van voedselprodukte word tot verskillende mates deur hulle persepsies van voedseletikette beïnvloed. Vanuit hierdie studie is dit duidelik dat verbruikers voedseletikette om verskillende redes lees.

Alhoewel verbruikers nie noodwendig al die inligting op die etiket lees of gebruik nie, beskou sommige van hulle dit as van belang vir ander gesinslede. 'n Klein aantal verbruikers was skepties oor sommige gesondheidsverwante aansprake op voedselprodukte, omdat hulle die wetenskaplike geloofwaardigheid en geldigheid daarvan betwyfel. Om hierdie redes kan die aanbeveling gemaak word dat verbruikers ten opsigte van die lees en interpretasie van voedseletikette in die algemeen opgevoed moet word.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Voedseletikette, nutriëntinformasie, bestanddele lys, verbruikersgedrag, persepsies, aankoopgedrag

ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the lack of available data on South African consumers' perceptions of food labels and the relevance thereof to their purchasing behaviour. A phenomenological approach was used to ensure that the researcher penetrated as deeply a s possible into the research participant's internal, personal world. To follow through with this approach, a qualitative research strategy was used, as it is considered a scientific, reliable method to investigate consumers' opinions and perceptions. Through focus groups it became evident that consumers read food labels for various reasons, especially the nutrient information and ingredient list. It was found that consumers' purchasing behaviour of food products were influenced, to different extents, by their perceptions of food labels. To comprehend results of this study, a food perception model was adapted and applied to food labels to illustrate consumers' perceptions of food labels and the influence thereof on their purchasing behaviour. It is therefore recommended that consumers be educated about reading and interpreting food labels in general.

KEYWORDS: Food labels, nutrient information, ingredient list, consumer behaviour, perceptions, purchasing behaviour

INTRODUCTION

In a climate where consumers are constantly being encouraged by health promoters to eat healthier, the importance of being able to choose healthy food has never been more important (Higginson et al, 2002:145). The use of nutrition labelling of food products, intends to enable consumers to stimulate t he consumption an d p roduction of healthful p roducts (Baltas, 2001:708). Steinman (1992:59) states that with the rapid urbanization and the swing towards a western lifestyle in South Africa, the necessity to eat a more healthy diet and the advantage of making better informed food choices will be important for the South African consumer. Therefore, it is important to understand consumers and their purchasing behaviour so that it can be translated into food label characteristics to implement consumer-oriented label development. Consumers take different characteristics of food in consideration when perceiving, choosing, or consuming, in relation to the different functions of food (Sijtsema et al, 2002:572). The image consumers have of a brand is often derived from their perception of the brand formed from relatively minor stimulus cues. Therefore, food perception is discussed from a consumers' perspective with the focus on the relevance for product and label developers in the food industry.

The objectives of this study were to determine the reasons why consumers read the nutrition information and the ingredient list on food labels and how this information and/or health related claims, influence consumers' purchasing behaviour. Furthermore, other factors which influence consumers' purchasing behaviour and general opinions and perceptions of South African food labels, were determined.

METHODOLOGY

A phenomenological approach and grounded theory are two forms of

qualitative research, in which the theory emerges from the data and is not being imposed beforehand (Hayes, 2000:181). The researcher in the present study identified the need to penetrate as deeply as possible into the research participants' internal, personal world, to try to understand their experience as completely as possible. The researcher needed to look at the meaning of the social event through the eyes of the participants - to see it as they see it (Hayes, 2000:188). A qualitative approach using the focus group technique was chosen to complement the nature of the research design. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (Project number 04K11).

Focus groups

Struwig and Stead (2001:98) are of opinion that focus groups are the best method to obtain an in-depth discussion of a topic. Krueger (1994:6) furthermore points out that focus groups are the best method to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest such as the perception of food labels. Group participation further favoured data gathering through consumers in terms of their own views, words, contexts and background (Padgett, 2004:4)

Pretesting of the focus group method Four pilot studies were held which guided the formulation of the relevant and most applicable questions in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The participants of the pilot studies were mostly students and lecturers from Consumer Sciences at the North-West University. Subsequently three questions emerged from the pilot discussions.

Recruiting of participants The participants were consumers who read food labels while purchasing food products. This inclusion criterion was important because if consumers did not read food labels they could not

answer any questions related to label use and would therefore be of little value to the study. Furthermore, participants included in the study should have to earn a salary and/or purchase food products for a household because these consumers were more likely to read food labels. Recruitment was done in Woolworths, Spar and Pick 'n Pay in Potchefstroom, through convenience/availability sampling. A letter of informed consent (in Afrikaans) was signed by each consumer who agreed to participate.

The participants of this study were mostly Afrikaans speaking because most consumers living in Potchefstroom are Afrikaans speaking. Furthermore, it was found that when Afrikaans speaking consumers were confronted to speak English, they hesitated to elaborate on questions and also cut back on their spontaneous participation. According to Krueger (1994:19), choice of language is a very important aspect of focus group discussions as this is necessary for the success of a focus group. Therefore, the focus group sessions were held in Afrikaans, but for the purpose of this article the consumers' statements / quotes were translated to English for uniformity with the rest of the text. Translations were carefully done to ensure that the meaning thereof does not differ from that of the initial statements.

Other observations made and limitations found by the researcher during the recruitment, were that it was best to ask women who were alone in the shop because it seemed that their husbands and children captured all their time and attention. The best time to recruit was from nine o'clock until eleven o'clock in the mornings and again from two o'clock until four o'clock in the afternoon because during these hours consumers were relaxed and willing to participate. It was found that most men do shopping according to a list. Therefore, most men did not read food labels and were unwilling to participate. Most women with babies did not have time to listen or to participate. It is not wise to confront consumers between eleven o'clock and

two o'clock because they were either in a hurry back to work or hurried home for lunch. During the last hour before the shop closes, consumers were in a hurry because there was little time left for their shopping. Furthermore, it is not wise to recruit on long weekends and on Sundays because there were fewer consumers and those that did purchase food products were in a hurry or did not want to be disturbed.

Conducting the focus group Nine focus groups were held with a total of 55 participants.

The procedure entailed:

- gathering and seating the group around a table,
- making introductions between the researcher and the participants,
- an explanation of new nutrition, value of opinions, and voluntary participation,
- establishing the ground rules, e.g. talking one at a time, to speak loudly and clearly, and stressing the importance of spontaneous answers,
- indicating that refreshments would be served on completion of the focus group session,
- completion of a case study on consumers' perceptions of food labels, which also served as an ice breaker and
- answering the following questions:

Why do you read food labels?

This question was asked to find out what the consumers viewed as important about food labels and to establish whether they viewed the nutrition information, the ingredient list and the health related claims as important.

How do food labels influence your purchasing behaviour?

The purpose of this question was to determine whether consumers were buying food products because of information such as the nutrition information, ingredient list and health related claims. Furthermore, if this information did not appear on certain food products, would consumers still buy these products?

What is your general perception/opinion of the food labels in South Africa?

This question was asked to dissert whether consumers were satisfied with South Africa food labels and if there were any categories which they felt should be improved on.

If the group did not respond suitably to a question, the researcher probed questions to encourage further discussion. Visual aids (e.g. samples of food labels) were used to stimulate discussion when required. A monetary incentive was handed out once the focus group sessions had been completed.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The first step in any kind of qualitative analysis is the complete transcription of all the interviews. These transcriptions should then be supplemented with the notes from the researcher, as well as a summary of the events as the researcher observed them (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990:103-104). The focus group discussions were recorded on tape. A transcription of the interview was done immediately after each focus group session had been completed. This ensured that all the valuable information was recorded (Morgan, 1988:63). Each transcript was read to identify constructs (words, phrases and sentences used by respondents to articulate their thoughts and

feelings). Based on these constructs, the initial three questions were extented to five questions due to probing. From these questions, concepts emerged, leading to the identification of themes through selective coding. Selective coding is where concepts are identified in correlation with other categories to establish that similarities in the participants' answers are recognised (De Vos *et al,* 2002:337). Different data gathering methods (case study/ questionnaire with open-ended and closed questions and focus group discussions and literature research) were included in this study to ensure triangulation, and thus external validity or transferability (De Vos *et al,* 2002:352). Bryman (1996:131) states that triangulation is an essential check for the researcher, because scientists are likely to exhibit greater confidence in their findings when these findings are derived from more than one method of investigation.

Trustworthiness

According to Krefting (1991:217) there are different strategies to ensure trustworthiness in a study. Thus, the following strategies of trustworthiness were used in the present study:

- Credibility:

  - Prolonged engagement with the field was achieved through nine focus groups and by spending enough time with participants to comprehend their understanding and perceptions of food labels..
  - Triangulation was established through d ata collection b y means o f verbatim transcribed focus group sessions, field notes and literature control.
  - Peer examination was achieved through discussions with study leaders

- Transferability:

- Dense description of methodology and results, including verbatim quotations, ensured transferability.
- Through purposive sampling, the sample was nominated which contributed trustworthiness.

- D ependability:

- Dense description of methodology ensured dependability.
- Peer examination was achieved through the use of an independent coder and through frequent discussions with the study leaders who are experienced in the field of research.
- The researcher and independent coder analysed raw data separately and identified categories of information in consensus discussions.

- C omfirmability:

- This was achieved through the keeping of all transcriptions.

Furthermore, the author of this mini-dissertation would also like to discuss validity and reliability to emphasize the trustworthiness of the study.

Issues of validity and reliability of data are important considerations during the focus group discussions. Therefore, two main methods of validity were used in this study to prove that this study was true (Silverman, 2000:175) and which will subsequently be discussed:

Face validity was achieved by evaluating whether the focus group questions related to the identified o bjectives. For t he researcher to m ake s uch a judgement, each objective of this study was closely studied in terms of whether it was measured through a particular question asked by the researcher.

Content validity was obtained by the objectives and how they related to the content of the literature review, because content validity is concerned with the adequacy of the content of an instrument (De Vos et al, 2002:167).

According to De Vos et al. (2002:169) there can be no valid results without *reliability.* Therefore, reliability is primarily concerned not with what is being measured but with how well it is being measured (De Vos et al, 2002:169).

In this study, the researcher tried to achieve reliability through the following methods:

- During the pilot studies, questions were formulated and adapted to ensure that the objectives would be attainable.
- In each focus group the same questions were asked in the same order.
- The researcher continued with the focus groups until saturation point in the answers was obtained.

Furthermore, as recommended by Ratcliff (2003), multiple listening of the audio tape was also included to ensure reliability. In the present study the researcher listened several times to the conversations that were recorded during each focus group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questions that emerged from the pilot focus groups, as well as the related themes from the analysed results were:

Why do consumers read the nutritional information and ingredient list on food labels?

Themes that emerged from reading the *nutritional information* included fat content, sugar content, vitamins and minerals, protein and fibre and other

factors like Glycemic Index (GI), Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) and the participants' curiosity.

Themes that emerged from reading the *ingredient list* were health reasons, as well as content and quality assurance.

How the nutrient information, the ingredient list and/or the health related claims influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers?

Identified themes were a 'driving influence', 'no influence', an 'indirect influence' or a 'situational influence'. Furthermore, the theme 'personal factors' emerged, which included price, taste, time, familiar or known products, new products, appearance, convenience and the expiry date.

What are consumers' general opinions and perceptions of South African food labels? The participants expressed general positive opinions and perceptions. The negative opinions and perceptions were specifically about terms and abbreviations, ingredients which are written in too small script, language use, missing information and the use of symbols.

The two most important themes concerning each question will be discussed below, and the relevant perceptions expressed will be italicised for the benefit of the reader.

Reasons why consumers read the nutritional information on food labels

Fat Content As indicated (*"I have a cholesterol problem that is why I look at the fat content"*[1]), the participants of this study associated the fat content of the nutritional information label with high cholesterol. According to the American Heart Association (2004), their view of the fat content of food is justified because saturated fat and cholesterol in food increase blood

[1] *Ek het 'n cholesterol probleem daarom kyk ek na die vetinhoud.*

cholesterol level. Although saturated fat is the main culprit, cholesterol also plays a role. If a person has high blood pressure or has a family history of cardiovascular disease, it makes sense to limit cholesterol in the diet: *"All my grandchildren h ave a c holesterol problem, because t hey live i n the Karoo where they eat fatty meat."* Furthermore, most of the participants in this study indicated that they considered the fat content in food products important to look at when they purchase food products, especially food products which are known for high fat content such as meat products (to a greater extent), margarine, chocolates, mayonnaise and chips (to a lesser extent). *"My husband struggles a bit with high cholestrol so I specifically check products like mayonnaise or Vienna sausages because one knows it has a relatively high fat content."*

Sugar Content Some of the participants viewed the sugar content as an important factor because they believed that sugar influences their health. Especially two kinds of health problems occurred namely diabetes (*" Yes, I have diabetes that is why I must look at the sugar content")* and Syndrome-X, *("I have recently been diagnosed with Syndrome X. Therefore I note the sugar content").* In the case of diabetes, sugar isn't actually the culprit because as Clark (2004) explains, "diabetes mellitus" is a disorder of the body's metabolism. It is a fallacy that sugar consumption is related to diabetes since sugar consumption is not related to the *onset* of diabetes: the diabetic person cannot utilize carbohydrates efficiently. The dietary recommendations of the American Dietary Association (ADA) are that eating a modest amount of sugar is acceptable as long as metabolic control is maintained (Clark, 2004). Hume (2000:182) explains Syndrome-X as a condition in the human body where there is a resistance to the absorption of insulin. It causes the blood sugar levels to stay higher for longer and Reaven (2000) points out that if this condition is not treated, it can lead to a heart attack. Whitney and Rolfes (2002:624) recommend that the best treatment for Syndrome-X is a diet that controls glucose fluctuations and

participation in physical activity to help control the blood glucose. This emphasises the importance of examining the nutrient facts on food products if someone has been diagnosed with Syndrome-X. Concerning these two health problems, it is enlighting to find that the participants considered the sugar and kilojule content on food labels important. Some of the participants indicated that they read the food labels on high sugar content food producs such as cooldrinks and sweets.

Reasons why consumers read the ingredient list on food products

Health Reasons (Allergies and Intolerances) Although food additives allow our growing urban population to enjoy a variety of safe, wholesome and tasty foods year-round, Marshall (1995:207) draws attention to the fact that many consumers want fewer or no additives ("*I specifically look at products that do not contain tartrazine*"), making it difficult to formulate a lasting healthy food product (FDA, 1992). As reflected in this study *("I want to know which flavourings, colourants and preservatives are in the food product"),* consumers were concerned with what happens to their food and what is p ut into t heir f ood be fore it reaches the supermarket s helf. As indicated, most of the participants read the food labels of canned food, some read it for ready-made sauces but only a few read food labels for spreads and ready-made meals which are all products high in additives and preservatives. Reasons given by the participants for disliking additives and preservatives were that they cause an allergic effect (*"I am allergic to many flavourings and therefore I look carefully to see if it contains something I can not eat"),* hyperactivity (*"When my children were small they had food allergies and that made me look at all the flavourings and colourants because it made them hyperactive and it even weakened their immune systems")* and as Marshall (1995:9) further proposes, additives represent a 'latent' concern. Whitney and Rolfes (2002:551) point out that an individual could be allergic to any food, such as fruit, vegetables, sugar and meat,

although these are not as common as the following eight foods which account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy and wheat. Not all adverse reactions to foods are food allergies. Some reactions only involve symptoms but do not produce antibodies. Among the causes of such reactions are enzyme deficiencies, such as lactose intolerance, digestive diseases, such as obstructions, and chemicals in foods, such as the natural laxative in prunes and the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate (MSG). Therefore, such reactions are food intolerance and not allergies. At the present time, there is no cure for food allergy but avoidance is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction. (Whitney & Rolfes, 2002:551). This is a good motivation for consumers to study the ingredient list on food products before they purchase an item which they or a family member are allergic or intolerant to.

Content and quality Consumers read the ingredient list on food products to know what the product contains (*"Usually for meat, because I want to know exactly what is put into it. If it is pure meat..."*) and to make the best choice according to the "purity" of products (*"gladly you want to buy a good product ... one which is 100% pure"*). A report by Falk (1994:7) indicates a trend towards better quality products with minimal processing, which correlates well with the importance of pure products to participants of this study. As indicated in this study, some participants read the content information on meat products and few participants read the content information on fruit juices and sausages.

The influence of the nutrient information, ingredient list and/or the health related claims on purchasing behaviour of consumers.

A driving influence The statements *"I shall at a glance buy according to the claims and then not read the nutrient information label, because the claims already tell me what I want to know"* and *"...actually, I would only be influenced by what is written on the side of the product"*, indicate that the

nutrient information, ingredient list and/or the health related claims influence consumers' purchasing behaviour. According to Bhaskaran and Hardley (2002:592), the health and nutrient claims on food labels encourage information search with consumers who rely entirely on the information on the packaging as confirmed by the statement *"Products which say high protein, high fiber will definitely urge me to buy the product".* The results of Kozup and Creyer (2003:49) indicate that, when favourable nutrition information or health claims are presented, consumers have more favourable attitudes toward the product, nutrition attitudes, and purchase intentions. This was also found in the present study: *"I feel that additional information causes easier and better purchasing of the product".*

No influence Wansink (2003:305) is of the opinion that, although the Nutrition Labelling and Education Act (NLEA) intended to make food labels more useful and informative for consumers, consumers still do not always comprehend nutrition information as also confirmed in the present study by the statement, *"every month I purchase the same products"* and *"claims are not going to influence my purchases".* Contributing reasons for the above statements may be that health claims on food labels often leave consumers confused or unclear (Health claims confuse consumers, 2003:5), and many consumers are sceptical of health claims because they believe such claims are incomplete, misleading or trivial (Preston, 2002:264). Gilbert (2003:24) states that consumers are generally unwilling to make compromises for health benefits. They want to eat healthily, they feel they do eat healthily, but they won't go out of their way to make major changes for health reasons, as illustrated by the statement *"I do not buy products for the nutrient information, because I am not on a diet".* Through this study it became evident that some consumers read the nutrient information, ingredient list and/or the health related claims but not to the extent that it influences their purchasing behaviour.

Personal factors influencing consumers' purchasing behaviour

According to the results, the following factors were identified as being unique to consumers, especially in the way they influence their purchasing behaviour.

Price As also seen in the present study, "*...my shopping is mostly influenced by the price",* an important issue that affects consumers is the cost of food (Neal, 2003:8). Perceptions of price unfairness (*"I compare every single product form every single shop and then I buy the cheapest product every time")* affects consumers' perceptions of product value and, ultimately, their willingness to patronize a store or a service (Sciffman & Kanuk, 2000:186). Part from the various views, the only thing a company can do to ensure that the consumers will buy their "better, more expensive" product, is to have a food product which has a demonstrable relative advantage. Furthermore, it should also be compatible with existing social behaviour, not be overly complex, and be freely available on a trial basis (Marshall,1995:203). There is also a trend towards buying better quality and added value products as illustrated by the following statements: *"I am willing to pay more for something which is healthier"* and *"I am willing to buy a better product (a product that can be used for longer) even if I have to pay more".* Decker (2002) points out that a reason for this may be that price is viewed as an indicator of quality. This can be a reason why the consumers are willing to pay more for such a product.

Taste *"...it is not nice so I will buy the more expensive product"* points out that consumers are not prepared to buy cheaper foods if there are poor sensory properties (Gofton, 1992:239). Many consumers of this study indicated that the taste of food is a crucial barometer in determining its acceptability: *"If it's not nice, I will not buy it."* Therefore, food manufacturers are increasingly faced with the challenges of meeting consumer demands for food products that taste good (LaPolla, 2004). Furthermore, food also

helps consumers to ease into a healthier diet *"...rich and fatty products are not nice at all. So taste does play a role"*, which implies that taste is a highly motivating force influencing purchasing decisions (LaPolla, 2004).

General opinions and perceptions consumers have of South African food labels.

Some participants of this study were excited and impressed with today's food labels because they contained the necessary information which was easy to understand. *"I find everything positive because they clearly indicates everything in the product"* and *".... they are complete and provide much information"*. Although these comments revealed that the South African consumers were interested in and proud of the food labels, there were still some aspects that led to negative opinions such as:

Terms and Abbreviations South African consumers don't understand all the terms and abbreviations used on food labels to the extent that they won't purchase a specific product if they don't understand the terms: *"What frustrates me are the many terms which we don't understand... actually, it means nothing to me, so I stay away from it."* This emphasizes the need to improve l abelling with plain-English terminology as well as the need t o educate consumers about reading labels (Tidwell, 2004).

Content written too small The participants further indicated that the content script is too small to read as illustrated by the statements *"...then there is the writing which is too small"* and *" when you don't wear your glasses you can't see what is written on the product."* Although it seems an easy task to enlarge the information on food labels, consumers need to remember that the information on food labels is regulated by the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act. This implies that there is some information that should be on all labels (Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, 54/1972) and that space is limited.

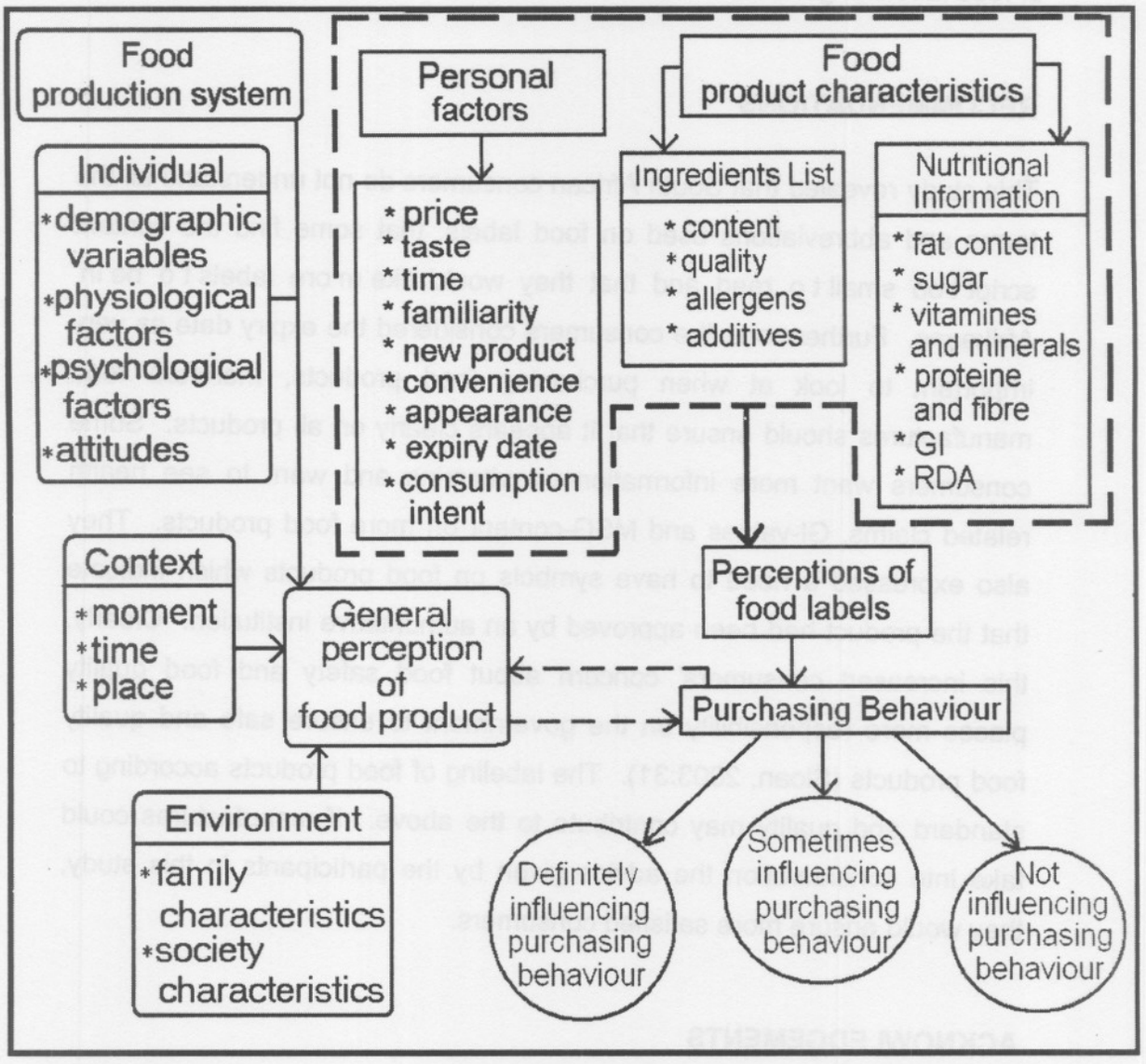
CONCLUSION

To comprehend these results, the author adapted the food perception model of Sijtsema et al, (2002:580). This adapted model (as shown in Figure 1) illustrates consumers' perception of food labels and its influence on purchasing behaviour in the present study.

The original food perception model for product development indicates that the environment (family characteristics, society characteristics), the individual (demographic variables, physiological factors, psychological factors, a ttitudes), food (product characteristics, production system) and context (consumption, moment, time and place) are all factors that influence consumers' perception in the food product development process.

In the present study, food product characteristics and personal factors were examined to clarify the importance thereof on the perception of food labels. The results indicated that food product characteristics and personal factors contribute towards consumers' general perception of food products as well as to their perception of food labels. Consumers' purchasing behaviour of food products was found to be influenced to different extents by their perception of food labels (as shown in figure 1). Subsequently, a correlation can be drawn: consumers whose purchasing behaviour is always influenced by food labels are concerned about their health; those who are sometimes influenced, reacted as a result of situational factors; while consumers whose purchasing behaviour is no t influenced b y food l abels at all, o nly read them o ut o f curiosity.

From this study it is evident that consumers read food labels for different reasons and mostly consider it important.



IGURE 1: FOOD PERCEPTION MODEL APPLIED ON FOOD LABELS INFLUENCING PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR (Adapted from Sijtsema et al, 2002:580)

Although they did not read nor necessarily used all the information on the label, some of them considered it of importance to members of their families. A few consumers were sceptical about health related claims because they doubted their scientific truth and validity. Therefore, it would

be advisable to educate consumers regarding the reading and interpretation of food labels in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that South African consumers do not understand all the terms and abbreviations used on food labels, that some find the content script too small to read and that they would like more labels to be in Afrikaans. Furthermore, the consumers considered the expiry date as very important to look at when purchasing food products, therefore food manufactures should ensure that it appears clearly on all products. Some consumers want more information on vitamins and want to see health related claims, GI-values and MSG-content on more food products. They also expressed a need to have symbols on food products which indicate that the product had been approved by an authoritative institution. Clearly, this increased consumers' concern about food safety and food quality places more responsibility on the government to ensure safe and quality food products (Sloan, 2003:31). The labeling of food products according to standard and quality may contribute to the above. If manufactures could take into consideration the advice given by the participants in this study, they would ensure more satisfied consumers.

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YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
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TITEL VAN NOVORSINGSPROJEK:

Suid-Afrikaanse verbruikers se persepsie aangaand voedseletikettering

GeagteMnr/Mev/Mej Datum.../.../2004

DOEL EN AARD VAN DIE STUDIE

Die doel an hierdie navorsingsprojek is om verbruikers se begrip van, asook idees en opinies oor geêtiketeerde voedsel te ondersoek. Die studie maak gebruik van gespreksgroepe om hierdie inligting van verbruikers wat voedseletikette lees, in te win. Aangesien wetgewing aangaande etikettering van voedsel tans ondersoek word, is dit daarom belangrik om die verbruikder se idee oor etikettering aan t hoor omdat die tipe inligting sowel a s d it wat vir die verbruikder b elangrik is, ondersoek m oet word om sinvolle aanbevelings oor voedseletikette te kan maak.

PROSEDURE VIR DIE NAVORSING

1. Die studie vereis dat u aan 'n gespreksgroep (fokusgroep) oor voedselprodute deelneem.
2. Die gespreksgroep word gelei deur 'n fasiliteerder.
3. Die gespreksgroep is 'n geleentheid waar u, u eie meing kan lig oor voedseletikettering.
4. Daar is geen regte of verkeerde antwoorde nie.
5. U hoef niks voor te berei vir die gespreksgroep nie.
6. Almal in die gespreksgroep sal 'n geleentheid gegun word om hul meing te lig, ander gespreksgroepslede se opinies te beaam of teen te gaan. Die groep mag menings en opinies van ander gespreksgroepslede debatteer.

VERWITTIG VAN BANDOPNAME

U word bewus gemaak van die feit dat die gespreksgroep op band opgeneem sal word om te verseker dat waardevolle inliging wat deur die gespreksgroep gelewer word nie verlore gaan nie en die konteks van die inliting deeglik nagegaan kan word. Na afloop van die gesprkesgroep sal die kassette getranskribeer word. U is einge tyd geregtig daarop om die teks van u gespreksgroep deur te gaan.

VERKLARING t.o.v. KONFIDENSIALITEIT

Die gespreksgroep se menigs word as streng vertroulik beskou en slegs lede van dei navorsingspan sal toegang tot die inligting hê. Geen data wat in skripsies en joernale gepubliseer sal word sal enige inliging bevat wat die gespreksgroepslid sal identifiseer nie. U anonimiteit word dus verseker.

ONTTREKKINGSKLOUSULE

Ek verstaan dat ek ter enige tyd aan die gespreksgroep mag onttrek. Ek neem dus vrywillig deel totdat ek anders versoek.

MOONTLIKE VOORDELE VAN DIE STUDIE

Deur verbruikders se menings en opinies aangaande voedseletikettering in te win, sal meer doeltreffende aanbevelings gemaak kan word wat die etikettering van voedselproduct sodanig kan beïnvloed dat die verbruiker daaruit voordeel sal trek. Dit sal verbruikders dus in staat stel om op grond van nutriëninligting, ingeligte en beter besluite aangaande die aankoop van voedselprodukte te neem. Hierdie studie kan ook verder lei tot verbruikderopvoedingsprogramme waarin die verbruikder se behoeftes ten opsigte van voedseletikettering aangespreek kan word. Deelnemers sal na afloop van gespreksgroepe geldelik vir hulle insette beloon word.

INLIGTING

Indien ek enige vrae oor die betrokke studie het, mag ek die projekleier, Dr Elizabeth Kempen (Tel: 018 299 2478) kontak.

VERKLARING VAN TOESTEMMING VERLEEN

Ek, die ondergetekende _____ (volle name)
het die vorafgaande gegewens in verband mt die projek gelees en ook die mondelinge weergawe daarvan aangehoor en ek verklaar dat ek dit verstaan. Ek was die geleentheid gegun om tersaaklike aspekte van die projek met die projekleier te bespreek en ek verklaar hiermee dat ek vrywillig aan die projek deelneem. Ek gee hiermee my toestemming om as deelnemer in bogenoemde projek op te tree.

Ek vrywaar hiermee die Universiteit asook enige werknemer of student van die Universiteit, teen enige aanspreeklikheid wat teenoor my, in die loop van die projek mag ontstaan.

Ek onderneem verder om geen eise teen die Universiteit in te stel weens skade of persoonlikheidsnadeel wat ek weens die projek/proef of die toedoen van ander proefpersone mag ly nie, tensy dit aan die nalatigheid van die Universiteit, sy werknemers of studente te wyte is.

Ek het 'n getekende kopie van hierdie toestemmingsooreenkoms ontvang.

Handtekening van deelnemer: _____

Onderteken te _____ op _____

GETUIES

1. _____

2. _____

1. **Hoe assosieer u uself met die volgende situasie?**

   Verbeel u uself is Thelma.....

   Thelma doen inkopies by haar gunsteling winkel. Sy tel elke produk op waarin sy belangstel om te koop, draai dit in die rondte en soek na die etiket met die nutriënt informasie. Sy lees dit en vergelyk die kilojoule, vet en koolhidraat inhoud met dieselfde soort produkte. Sy besluit dan om die produk wat die minste vet bevat.

2. **Maak 'n kruisie by die standpunt waarmee u uself die meeste assosieer.**

   2.1 In watter van die volgende gevalle lees u gewoonlik die voedseletiket.

   a. elke keer wanneer u aankope doen
   b. wanneer u tyd het
   c. slegs wanneer u op 'n dieet is
   d. wanneer dit 'n nuwe produk is
   e. ander, spesifiseer:

   _____

   _____

   2.2 Van watter voedselprodukte lees u die etikette van?

   _____

   _____

   2.3 Watter voedselinligting op die etiket is vir u belangrik?

   _____

   _____