

A Study on Evaluating the Perceptions of Menu Labelling among the Individuals in Chennai

Subaratinam R¹ and Srimathy V*²

^{1,2}P. G. Department of Home Science, Food Science Nutrition and Dietetics, Shrimathi Devkunvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav College for Women, Chrompet, India

Correspondence to: Srimathy V, P. G. Department of Home Science, Food Science Nutrition and Dietetics, Shrimathi Devkunvar Nanalal Bhatt Vaishnav College for Women, Chrompet, India, Tel: +91 9619978323; E-mail: srimathy23387@gmail.com

Abstract

Menu labelling is another term for calorie labelling. Menu labelling is required in many countries, primarily to promote healthy eating and portion control awareness. People are dining out in restaurants more frequently than ever before. Restaurant foods frequently have disproportionately large portion sizes and contribute more calories and fat than the foods which are consumed at home. As a result, some claim that consuming food away from home is one of the primary causes of poor nutritional quality and weight gain. In this study, 200 subjects were chosen. Of them, 58% were women and 42% were men and of all the respondents, 66% of them frequently ate at restaurants. According to 69.5% of respondents, the menu card should contain nutritional information and when it comes to menu labelling, 59% of respondents were unaware of the FSSAI's new menu labelling rule. Around (71,70.5%) of the total respondents thought that menu labelling should be implemented and portion control is effective. Among the total respondents, 69% of them think there should be elaborative information on ingredients present in the menu cards given in restaurants. As a result, Menu labelling may be a useful policy tool for promoting appropriate calorie consumption and may play a significant role in obesity reduction and portion control.

Key words: Menu labelling, Calorie labelling, FSSAI, Portion size, Portion control

In recent years, various initiatives are required to promote healthy food options in retail settings as global eating patterns gradually moves toward increased consumption of foods cooked away from home and people are often consume their meal in restaurants. To increase transparency and encourage healthy eating, many countries have introduced or implemented nutritional labelling policies such as menu labelling, front-of-package nutrition disclosures, warning labels, nutrition related information on foods, and others. One such policy has been adopted in various nations, including the United States, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia, and compels food establishments to show the calorie content of menu items. (Joshua Petimar, 2021). The NLEA (Nutrition Labelling and Education Act) of 1990 included the notion of nutrition labelling, which aims to provide consumers with information about calories, fat (both saturated and unsaturated), cholesterol, carbohydrates, sodium, sugar, and fibre. Restaurants were not required to disclose nutritional information under the NLEA bill. However, on December 5, 2006, New York City became the first city in the US to adopt a law requiring chain restaurants to publish calorie information; it went into effect on May 5, 2008. As of January 1, 2022, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has emphasized the importance of "display of information" (menu labelling) in food service establishments (FBOs) (Fssai Govt. of India, 2022).

The term menu labelling was broadly applied to designate all calorie information, nutritional information (e.g., nutrient counts), contextual information (e.g., daily calorie recommendations), food information (eg: ingredients, alerts such as "contains gluten," and symbols or phrases to identify healthy food, such as keyhole or heart symbols), and traffic-light labelling. Specific colour indicators and symbols are used to identify the food (for example green – vegetarian foods, red – non-vegetarian foods). According to certain ingredients (such as the existence of whole grains) in the food, colours are also employed to represent the healthfulness of the food. In this instance, green would represent a high concentration of healthy chemicals, whereas red would represent a low concentration. (Fernandes *et al.*, 2016).

According to research, menu labelling alone may not be as effective at reducing calories as menu labelling that includes both calorie information and exercise equivalents. Menu labelling also shows the way that calorie information is presented which significantly affects how consumers react towards it. For instance, one study found that, when compared to kcal information or no information, the provision of physical activity information was the most effective at influencing consumers to choose lower-calorie (kcal) items. When combined with the quantity of exercise necessary to burn off those calories, the calorie information provided can be more

effective at influencing consumer behaviour. (Oliveira *et al.*, 2020). The main objectives of this study include:

- To explore their dietary habits to assess the nutritional status and their food eating pattern in the restaurants
- To assess the knowledge based on menu labelling and to evaluate the dietary insights of nutrition information to be provided in the menu cards
- To evaluate the speculation on how restaurant menu labelling affects individuals on their choices of food consumption
- To promote awareness on menu labelling introduced by FSSAI (1st January 2022. FSSAI issued directions dated 28.12.2021 under Section 16(5) of the FSS Act vide)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

The present study follows an experimental design

Study area

The present study was conducted in Chennai, Tamil Nadu India.

Study sample

A total number of 200 samples among the general public who visits restaurants at least once a month, regardless of their gender (Male, Female) were selected for this present study through a judgmental sampling technique.

Study duration

Total time period taken to collect the data is 3 months (90 Days).

Data collection, tools and techniques

A well-structured interview method was chosen because of its suitability to collect qualitative and quantitative data from the general public people who are in the age group of 18- 60 years regardless any gender. (Vijayanchali, 2009). The primary data collected from these selected official sources like questionnaires and interviews.

A set of structured questionnaires was created on closed-ended questions based on the objectives of the study in a sequential and logical manner and was collected through interview methods from both genders from the age group 18-60 years old. The questionnaire consisted about the information on Socio-Demographic Background, Nutritional Status, Dietary Habits, Eating Pattern in Restaurants, Knowledge-Based on

Menu Labelling, and Speculations on Menu Card Given in restaurants. The research tools used for this study were pilot study and an interview schedule. After respondents filled out the questionnaire everyone was given a small booklet which consist of information in detail about menu labelling. It was easy for them to understand better of this concept.

Data analysis

The collected data were statistically analyzed using Microsoft excel (2019). It was displayed as frequency and percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic trend

In contrast to the food manufacturing industry, the restaurant industry faces some unique operational challenges that may require attention if menu labelling is to be implemented widely and successfully. In this present study, 200 subjects were chosen. The evaluation of demographic data revealed that (Fig 1) most participants were of the age group 18-30 years. A study done in the United States also reported the same results that the majority of participants were 18-23 years of age (Mary G Roseman 1, 2016). According to (Vivica Kraak, 1998) adults who belong to the age group of 18-30 years are the ones who tend to visit restaurants more often. It is due to sociocultural factors, curiosity to eat outside or demographic factors which have a major influence on the economic power, control and independence exerted by teen adults and adults, this directly influences on their eating patterns and dietary habits.

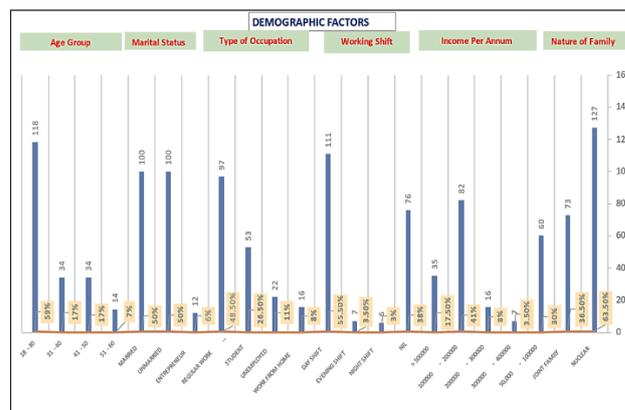


Fig 1 Demographic Profile Status

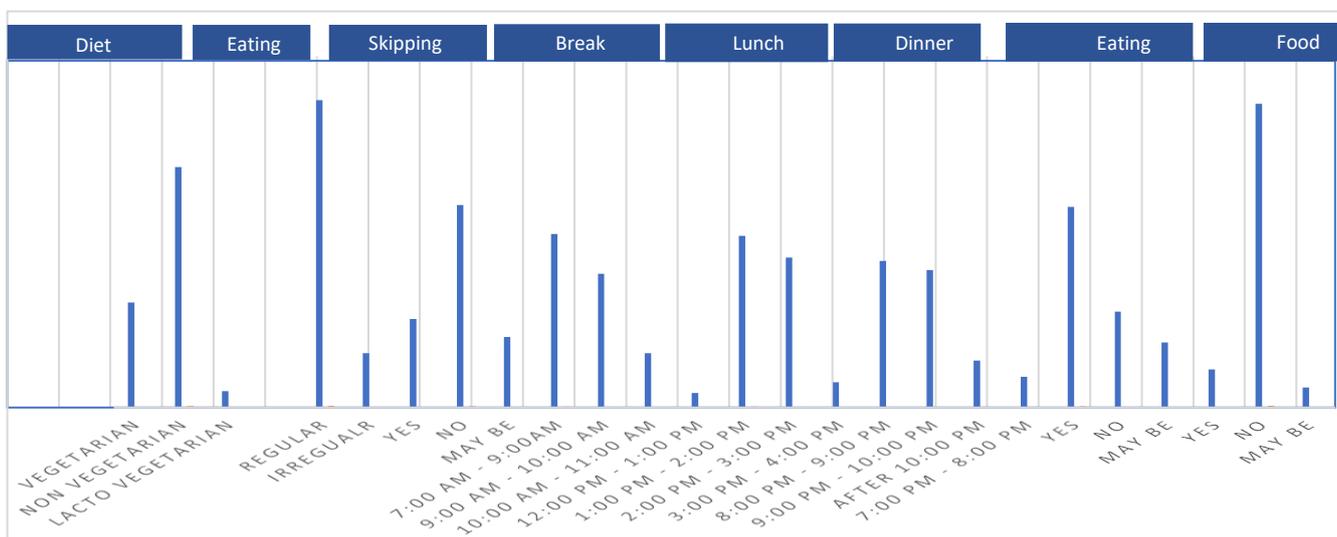


Fig 2 Dietary Habits

From (Fig 1) it can be seen that 58% were female. A study done in Texas Christian university also stated the same results out of 300 subjects 55.7 % were female participants who analysed the effect and impacts of menu labelling (James, 2015). According to ((Wu *et al.*, 2022) the frequency of eating out among females were higher than that among males. The main primary reasons of eating out were having an opportunity to meet friends and improving their diet patterns. Hence the number of female respondents were higher compared to male. In this present study among 200 respondent's majority were regular work employees, A study done in India stated that the regular work employment rates have been increased in order to reduce the poverty levels and it has been recognized by International Labour Organization (Rajendra P Mangan, 2017). Data regarding working shift revealed that around 55.5% are based on day working shift. According to (Malavika Desai, 2011) In the last two decades, India has witnessed a rapid economic growth. Yet the Indian society still views the working shift timings differently than compared to western counterparts. Hence comparing to Indian households, majority of the respondents feel comfortable in working day shift than choosing the night shift of their organization.

According to (Hu *et al.*, 2015) assessing dietary habits are the primary factors to determine the nutritional status of the consumers. Fig 2 data shows that 66.5% of respondents were not vegetarians. The majority of respondents in a survey conducted in the USA were from the non-vegetarian category, which contributes to obesity and cardiovascular problems. Non-vegetarians might utilise menu labelling as a helpful tool to eat sensibly in accordance with their calorie counts. According to (Jacobs and Orlich, 2014) the data in (Fig 2), almost 85% of people have regular eating habits and don't frequently skip meals.

Data inserted in (Table 1) shows that around 48% of all respondents prefer to eat out more frequently. 37% of respondents claimed to eat out at least once a week. Also, they provided a list of justifications for dining out, including the inability to prepare meals at home and birthday celebrations or get-togethers with friends. Almost 34.5% of all respondents typically eat one meal in a restaurant on daily basis. Also, the majority of them (78.5%) believed that they eat healthier meals at home than at restaurants. A study done in Oslo revealed that eating out has become a preferred leisure activity for an increasing number of people, which is consistent with the findings in worldwide studies (Warde and Martens, 2000). Over 84 percent of respondents reported eating out at least once per month; in other words, residing in Oslo or another major city and being young, well-educated, and wealthy may be the primary factors to visit the restaurants. Hence all the factors indulges consumers to visit and eat in restaurants more often (Naidoo *et al.*, 2017).

Knowledge based on menu labelling and dietary insights to be provided in the menu cards

Data depicted in (Table 2) reveals that the majority of participants thought that nutritional information and food portion sizes should be given. According to a survey conducted in the United States, the majority of college students felt that menu labelling had a positive impact on their ability to make informed food decisions and encouraged them to lead healthier lifestyles (Mary G Roseman 1, 2016). 59% of the respondents overall don't know about the new FSSAI Menu Labeling Rule. According to a study conducted in Arizona, respondents are favourable about menu labelling and believe that it can influence the foods they chose to consume. (Jessie Green, 2014) Also, the majority of adults agree that menu labelling will be

useful and should be put into practice. Prior research found that menu labelling can be efficient in lowering obesity rates (Jodie Anne Littlewood, 2016).

Table 1 Food eating pattern in restaurants

Food eating pattern in restaurants	Frequency	Percentage
How often do you eat in restaurant		
Daily	9	4.50%
Monthly	36	18%
Occasionally	68	34%
Weekly once	74	37%
Weekly Thrice	13	6.50%
How many meals do you eat daily in restaurants?		
1	69	34.50%
2	28	14%
3	10	5%
Nil	93	46.50%
Do you think you eat healthy in restaurant or home?		
Both A & B	41	20.50%
Home	157	78.50%
None of these	1	0.50%
Restaurant	1	0.50%
Do you know what is balanced diet?		
No	67	33.50%
Yes	133	66.50%
How do you select a restaurant on what basis?		
Budget Friendly	52	26%
Healthy meals providing restaurants	58	29%
on random basis	36	18%
trending restaurants	9	4.50%
All the Above	45	22.50%
Which meal you consider to be your main meal of the day?		
Breakfast	63	31.50%
Dinner	44	22%
Lunch	93	46.50%
Where will you consume your main meal of the day?		
Canteen	18	9%
Home	174	87%
Restaurants	8	4%
What do you most often choose as a snack between meals?		
Fried Junk Foods	48	24%
Fruits	92	46%
Juices / Milk Shakes	34	17%
Salads Prepared at home	26	13%
In what circumstances do you eat in restaurants?		
Birthday parties / functions	40	20%
Family or friends gathering	29	14.50%
Unable to cook at home	34	17%
With colleagues or friends	28	14%
All the Above	69	35%
How many servings of vegetables portion you consume while you eat in restaurants?		
1	84	42%
2	62	31%
3	17	8.50%
Nil	37	18.50%

Speculation on menu cards given in the restaurants which also has an effect on individual choices

In (Table 3), while evaluating the dietary insights to be provided in the menu cards, most of the consumers did not felt satisfied with the menu cards given in the restaurants. Around 69% thought there should been elaborative menu card with all the nutritional information in it. Due to lack of elaborative menu cards, it had been identified that there was no awareness on

what was portion size of the foods. Due to this, the consumers were opting for higher portion size which was served in restaurants and it was leading them to had an unhealthy lifestyle indulging in obesity. A study done in United States reveled that the presence of an elaborative nutrition labels in menu cards had a positive relationship with all the factors like the consumers opting for healthy lifestyle and consuming the right amount of portion size (Diana M Lowe, 2014).

Table 3 Speculation on menu cards given in the restaurants which also has an effect on individual choices

The speculation on how restaurant menu labelling affects individuals on their choices	Yes	No	May be	Total sample size
1. Do you feel satisfied with the menu cards given to you while visiting the restaurants?	123	77	0	200
2. Do you think there should be elaborative menu card mentioning detailed information on foods available in the restaurants	138	41	21	200
3. Have you ever seen a menu card mentioning portion size of their foods	47	139	14	200
4. Do you think menu card must have the description of rare ingredients used while preparing the food	129	41	30	200
5. Have you ever seen the ingredients description of other country or state speciality food in your local restaurant menu card?	50	118	32	200
6. Do you feel that menu card must mention the description of allergic ingredients (eg: Contains Gluten, Soy, Peanut, Milk)?	141	37	22	200
7. Whether the menu card served at restaurants in your locality is offered in your local language? (Example: If your locality is Chennai, then is the menu card given is in Tamil?)	93	73	34	200
8. Do you prefer mentioning the category of food it belongs to? (eg: High Protein food, High Fat, Low GI food)	141	31	28	200

Education program

According to Kohnstamm and Gunning (1995) Education is a combination of growth and human development with social legacy. Education is the formation of conscience. Education is a process of self-formation and self-determination ethically, conformed conscience (Stella van Petten Henderson.) Economic growth is more closely related to skill development in both developed and emerging nations to increase labour productivity and average living standards. The emphasis on and

significance of education and training in the competitive process have increased as a result of the twin forces of global integration and technological progress. The system of education and training is playing a more and bigger part in this process (Ashton, 1996). To inform the 200 respondents about the awareness of menu labelling, a brochure (booklet) was created and provided in exchange. They received a detailed explanation of the menu labelling. The brochure included a summary of menu labelling guidelines and information that should be included in menu cards.

Table 2 Knowledge based on menu labelling and dietary insights to be provided in the menu cards

To elicit information on knowledge about menu labelling	Yes	No	May be	Total sample size
1. Do you feel Nutritional information on menu card should be given?	139	24	37	200
2. Do you think we need to mention portion size of the foods in the menu card?	139	32	29	200
3. Do you think portion control is effective?	141	28	31	200
4. Do you think calorie information on the menu card should be given?	137	35	28	200
5. Do you think we need to mention the ingredients of the dishes present in the menu card?	137	31	32	200
6. Do you know about menu labelling or calorie labelling?	79	91	30	200
7. Are you aware of FSSAI Menu Labelling rule notified on 21 st August 2021?	58	118	24	200
8. Do you know about calorie count per serving?	65	106	29	200
9. Do you think we should implement menu labelling in restaurants for the better come of healthy living?	142	22	36	200
10. Have you ever calorie counted of the foods you eat?	66	101	33	200

CONCLUSION

As the population and trends constantly moving and changing, we should not forget to look after what we eat. Nutrition is still an important factor in everyone’s life. Menu labelling strategy plays a huge role in contributing to good nutrition. Utilizing calorie restrictions on menu items was associated to binge eating in women and to higher weight-related worries, dieting, and poor weight-control behaviors in both men and women. The results of this study concluded that

the most of the respondents thought it will be useful and effective if the menu card contain nutritional information. When it comes to menu labelling, most of the respondents were unaware of the FSSAI’s (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) new menu labelling rule. So, the awareness on menu labelling should be implemented to be effective. Menu labelling is primarily important and beneficial for healthy eating. Menu labelling may be a useful policy tool for promoting appropriate calorie consumption and may play a significant role in obesity reduction and portion control.

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