

# A Study on Consumer Skepticism Towards Health-Related Claims on Packaged Food Products

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**Abstract:** *The rapid growth of packaged food consumption has led to an increase in the use of health-related claims such as “low fat,” “high fibre,” “sugar-free,” and “heart healthy.” While these claims aim to inform consumers and promote healthier choices, they have also generated skepticism regarding their authenticity and scientific validity. This study examines the level of consumer skepticism toward health-related claims on packaged food products and analyzes the factors influencing such skepticism. Using a quantitative research design, primary data were collected from 51 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as Percentage Analysis, Chi-Square Test, and ANOVA were used for analysis. The findings reveal that although many consumers show positive attitudes toward health claims, a significant proportion rely on personal judgment and exhibit skepticism. The study concludes that transparent communication and stronger regulatory frameworks are essential to enhance consumer trust.*

**Keywords:** Consumer skepticism, health claims, packaged foods, consumer perception, food labeling, trust, Chi-Square, ANOVA

## I. INTRODUCTION

The packaged food industry has expanded significantly due to urbanization, changing lifestyles, and increasing demand for convenience foods. Alongside this growth, manufacturers increasingly use health-related claims to attract health-conscious consumers. These claims include nutritional statements, functional benefits, and disease-risk reduction messages. However, the overuse and occasional misuse of such claims have raised concerns about credibility. Consumer skepticism arises when individuals question the truthfulness or reliability of marketing claims. While skepticism can protect consumers from misleading information, excessive doubt may reduce trust in legitimate health communication. Understanding consumer skepticism is therefore essential for marketers, policymakers, and public health authorities.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite regulatory measures, consumers continue to encounter unclear or potentially misleading health-related claims. This has created confusion and reduced trust in packaged food products. There is limited empirical research examining the relationship between demographic variables and skepticism toward health claims. Furthermore, the connection between skepticism, trust, and purchase intention remains underexplored. This study seeks to address these research gaps.



**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To examine consumer trust in food labels and brands.
- To analyze the impact of health claims on purchase decisions.
- To identify challenges consumers face in interpreting health claims.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study uses a descriptive research design based on both primary and secondary data. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 50 respondents using convenience sampling. Tools such as Percentage Analysis, Chi-square Test and ANOVA were used for analysis.

**II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Vikram.J ,clarke (2008)<sup>1</sup>:** In this study, consumers’ responses to functional foods with nutrition, health, and illness risk reduction claims were examined. In this study, cross-sectional data from 341 Belgian customers was used to analyze three product categories: calcium-enhanced fruit juice, omega-3 enriched spread, and fiber-enriched cereals. Product believability, perceived persuasiveness of claims, purchase intention, and attractiveness were all examined in the study. The results showed that while statements about lowering illness risk were given the lowest ratings, health claims were usually seen as more persuasive than nutrition claims. This study reveals that consumers favored cereals with added fiber over other product categories, however skepticism and a sense of powerlessness over one’s own health diminished the attraction of the products. According to the study’s findings, the way that claim type and product category interact greatly influences consumer reactions.

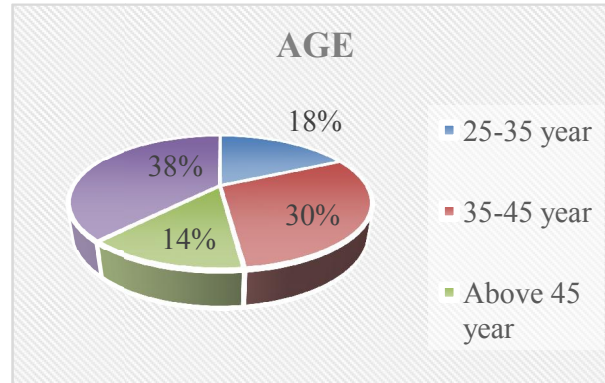
**Grunert, G , J & Rogeaux (2011)<sup>2</sup>:** This study examined the factors that influence consumers’ comprehension of health claims in light of the recently implemented EU nutrition and health claims regulation. 720 German category users were used in the study to investigate how consumers interpreted a health claim on a yoghurt product. Open-ended responses were used to assess understanding of the claim. Based on scientific review, the responses were content-analyzed and categorized as safe, dangerous, or other. Subjective knowledge of food and health, interest in healthy eating, and attitudes toward functional foods were also investigated. This study demonstrates that positive attitudes do not always translate into accurate comprehension. When interpreting claims, it is crucial. The study comes to the conclusion that evaluating customer comprehension is crucial to successful claim control.

**III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**TABLE 1.1: AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Age	No.of respondent	Percentage
25-35 year	9	18
35-45 year	15	30
Above 45 year	7	14
Below 25 year	19	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>





**TABLE 1.1: AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

**INTERPRETATION:**

The table represents the age distribution of 50 respondents in the study. The majority of respondents (38%) belong to the below 25 years age group, indicating that young individuals form the largest segment of the sample. The 35–45 years age group accounts for 30%, showing a considerable participation from middle-aged respondents. Meanwhile, 18% of the respondents fall under the 25–35 years category. The least representation (14%) is from respondents above 45 years, indicating comparatively lower participation from older individuals.

**Majority (38%) of the respondents are below 25 years of age.**

**CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS**

**TABLE 1.2**

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.684 <sup>a</sup>	4	.154
Likelihood Ratio	6.934	4	.139
N of Valid Cases	50		
a. 7 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.08.			

**INTERPRETATION**

The Chi-Square test was conducted to examine whether there is a relationship between the two selected categorical variables. The Pearson Chi-Square value obtained is **6.684** with **4 degrees of freedom** and a **p-value of 0.154**. Since the p-value (0.154) is greater than the significance level of 0.05, it indicates that the difference observed between the variables is not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, and it is concluded that there is no significant association between the two variables used in the analysis. However, it is observed that 70% of the cells have expected counts less than 5.

**ANOVA ANALYSIS**

**TABLE 1.3: Table showing Age and skepticism score**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.833	3	.944	.582	.630
Within Groups	74.688	46	1.624		
Total	77.520	49			



#### **INTERPRETATION:**

The ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether skepticism scores differ significantly across age groups. The obtained p-value is **0.630**, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is accepted and the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is rejected. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in skepticism scores among different age groups. In other words, age does not significantly influence skepticism levels in this study.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The study reveals that while many consumers show a favorable attitude toward health-related claims, skepticism remains present. Demographic variables such as age, gender, and education do not show significant associations with skepticism levels. Consumers often rely on personal judgment, and many accept claims without verification. To strengthen consumer trust, food manufacturers should ensure transparent and scientifically supported claims. Policymakers must enforce stricter regulations and improve public awareness regarding nutritional labeling. Future research with larger and more diverse samples would provide deeper insights into consumer skepticism patterns

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