

Label understanding affects perception of poultry quality, researchers find

April 1 2016, by Lacey Howard

A doctoral student and her professor at the University of Arkansas have found consumer's knowledge of food labels affects the consumer's perception of product quality.

Doctoral student Shilpa Samant and professor Han-Seok Seo in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences' Department of Food Science have published, "Effects of Label Understanding on Sensory Acceptability of Chicken Products," in *Food Quality and Preference*, a journal devoted to sensory and consumer research in [food](#) and non-food products.

Their research demonstrates that the reliability of labels about sustainable and environmentally friendly factors on the perceived quality and acceptance of chicken breast meat depends on the consumer's level of understanding and the types of claims made on the labels.

In the study, 33 participants had prior knowledge of sustainability-related labels and 33 had no prior education or knowledge about the labels.

Both groups were matched in terms of demographic profiles and how often they purchased chicken-meat products.

Participants in both groups evaluated and sampled four chicken-meat products. The samples were the same, but labeled with four different claims – "USDA Organic," "No Hormones Added," "USDA Process

Verified" and no-label condition.

The high label-understanding group found various differences among the labeled products while the control group did not determine any significant differences among the different chicken items.

"For the first group, perception of chicken meat with respect to overall quality, trust in quality, freshness, overall liking and juiciness differed significantly among the four label-claim conditions. However, no significant differences in this regard were observed in the group with no knowledge of the labels," Samant's study shows.

The research reveals non-sensory factors, such as label claims and the understanding level of the claims, play a role in why consumers prefer a certain product over another.

"The chicken-meat samples were the same, the only treatment was on the label claims," said Seo. "If participants fully understand the claims, those claims affect their perception toward the samples. If they do not understand, there might be no significant effect of the label claims. To strengthen the impact of label claims, it would be suggested to educate consumers on their meaning."

Provided by University of Arkansas

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