



IRAQI CONSUMER OPINION OF THE QUALITY AND SAFETY OF LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to indicate the opinion of the Iraqi consumer about the quality and safety of local food products, the questionnaire was included 19 questions for product quality, price, distribution and promotion as a tool to survey the opinions of 128 consumers in Baghdad, the data was analyzed by using percentage, weighted mean, and weight percent, the results obtained showed that the Iraqi consumer prefer local food products for their high quality and appropriate price, however they need attention to packaging, promotion and distribution.

Keywords: Consumer, quality, food safety, local food products.

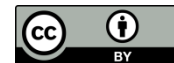


رأي المستهلك العراقي في جودة وسلامة منتجات الأغذية المحلية

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الخلاصة

هدف هذا البحث إلى بيان رأي المستهلك العراقي حول جودة وسلامة المنتجات الغذائية المحلية، وشمل الاستبيان المعد لهذا الغرض 19 سؤالا لجودة المنتج وسعره وتوزيعه والترويج له كأداة لاستطلاع آراء 128 مستهلك في مدينة بغداد، وجرى تحليل البيانات باستخدام النسب المئوية والوسط الحسابي المرجح والوزن المنوي، وأظهرت النتائج المستحصل عليها أن المستهلك العراقي يفضل المنتجات الغذائية المحلية لجودتها العالية وسعرها المناسب، إلا أنها تحتاج إلى الاهتمام بالتغليف والترويج والتوزيع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المستهلك، الجودة، سلامة الغذاء، منتجات الأغذية المحلية.

INTRODUCTION

The food industry in all countries around the world represents one of the most important sources of income and the most important of economic and productive activities on which the economy is based, given what it represents as a fundamental necessity in providing the continuing needs of the consumer and its ability for achieve self-sufficiency and food security as well as its importance in moving various economic sectors such as Agriculture, industry, trade, and providing job opportunities for the available human energies. This industry generally aims to change the form of raw materials from one state to another in order to provide the needs and wish of the consumer, as in the manufacture of milk, meat, flour, sugar, dates, etc., as well as the role of this industry in extending the shelf life of food products through packaging that aim to preserve the product for the longest possible period as well as the ease of delivery to the consumer in sizes that suit his daily needs, and in all cases, this industry must preserve of food quality in accordance with the standards adopted in this field. The quality is considered as the essential criterion of success of food industry, and the consumer represents the most important link in this industry due he is the ultimate beneficiary and his opinion represents the decisive factor that determines of acceptability of these products, so, this article came to know the opinion of the Iraqi consumer about the quality and safety of local food products Through four topics, including research methodology, theoretical framing, analysis and discussion of research results, conclusions and recommendations.

FIRST TOPIC: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

First: Research problem

As a result of the opening of the Iraqi markets and their flooding with imported food products, in contrast to a significant decrease in local products, the research problem is embodied in the following questions:

1. What is the Iraqi consumer opinion of local food products in terms of quality, safety, price, distribution and advertising?
2. Is there a refusal to consume local food products?
3. Does the Iraqi consumer prefer imported food commodities over their local counterparts?

Second: Importance research

The concern of local food manufacturers with the quality and safety of their products that are marketed through the local markets, as the approved standards in quality and safety have become the basic requirements for any company in this field, which is confirmed by the

standard specifications and good manufacturing practices, which will provide the high ability of these products in competition with The importer product and obtaining the satisfaction of the Iraqi consumer, which will reflect positively on the growth and development of the Iraqi industry and economy in this field, Therefore, the importance of the research is as follows:

1. Knowledge addition in field of quality and safety of local food products due they play an important role in moving the economy sectors and providing consumer needs in preparation for achieving self-sufficiency, diversifying sources of income and reducing unemployment rates.
2. Providing a new horizon for researchers to delve into further studies and research in the field of local food products.
3. The importance of the added value that will be achieved in the event of the development of the local food products sector.

Third: Objectives research

1. Knowing the opinion of the Iraqi consumer regarding the quality and safety of local food products.
2. Determine the reasons that lead to reluctance of Iraqi consumer to consume local products.
3. Developing appropriate proposals and recommendations for the development of the local food industries, achieving its capacity in market competition and achieving consumer satisfaction.

Fourth: Method research

Analytical approach descriptive for information was adopted related to the research variables by conducting an opinion poll for a specific sample and then interpreting the data obtained and drawing conclusions from it.

Fifth: Limits research

1. Time limits: The period for completing the research extended from January 1, 2020, to December 1, 2020.
2. Place limits: the questionnaire was applied in the city of Baghdad, Iraq.
3. Scientific limits: The research focused on the elements of marketing mix (**Pourdehghan 2015**) and its relationship to the quality of local food products.

Sixth: Sample Research

The study sample was 128 persons was randomly selected from city of Baghdad, they represented the opinion of the Iraqi consumer regarding the quality and safety of local food products in the markets (Table 1).

Table (1): Characteristics of the research sample.

Details	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	44.8
	Female	72	56.2
Educational	Intermediate	14	10.9
	Secondary	12	9.4
	Diploma	15	11.7
	Bachelor	65	50.8
	Master	10	7.8
	PhD	12	9.4
Age	20-29	9	7
	30-39	29	22.7
	40-49	38	29.7
	50-59	32	25
	> 60	20	15.6

Seventh: Research tool

The questionnaire was adopted as a tool to collect data related to the research variables. It consisted of 19 questions, 8 for product quality, 4 for price, 3 for distribution and 4 questions for promotion. The fifth Likert Scale was used (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) by weights (5, 4, 3, 2 and 1) respectively, the answer to the questionnaire questions was as shown in (Table 2).

Eighth: Methods of statistical Methods

Percentage, arithmetic mean, hypothetical mean and weight percent were used to interpret the results

SECOND TOPIC: THEORETICAL FRAMING

First: Products identification

The products are known according to **Kowalskaet al. (2018)** that everything that leads to the satisfaction of a need or a wish can be presented in the market to attract attention, appetite or consumption.

Second: Research Variables

The research variables included the elements of the marketing mix that include product quality, price, distribution, and promotion, as indicated by **Ali et al. (2016)**. As follows:

1. Product quality

Alshikhi& Abdullah (2018) defined quality in general as a set of physical and formal characteristics of the product, which includes functional, social and psychological benefits according to which the purchase decision for these products is determined by the consumer, the quality of the product achieved when the level of defects in it falls to the minimum found in the standard specifications (**Carrascosaet al., 2016**), as for the quality of the food product, it is a set of characteristics by which it is possible to determine the acceptability of the product to the consumer or that it awards to fulfill the consumer's utmost wishes in the food product (**Grunert&Aachmann, 2016; Yormirzoevet al., 2019**), so, food companies compete with regard to developing the best quality policy in its factories in order to maintain the quality of its products and develop them by following an appropriate quality system for them, continuous improvement of manufacturing methods, and following all procedures that would ensure the quality of their products and gain consumer satisfaction and confidence through a number of requirements including product quality, appearance, size, shelf-life and product stability during period of storage and marketing (**Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al., 2018; Panghalet al., 2018; Tutu &Anfu, 2019**) and due to the increasing wish of the Iraqi consumer to obtain local food products and not dependence on imported food products present in the local markets (**Fahed 2016; Alkhafaji, 2018**), which is maybe a low quality for various reasons, including the adoption by exporting countries of a commodity dumping policy (**Hamadet al., 2012; Lafta, 2016**). So, this studying for the Iraqi consumer's opinion on the quality of local food products is be necessity to upgrade this industry and enhance Iraqi consumer confidence in it.

2. Price

Bellemare (2015)refer that it's represents the monetary value that the consumer pays to obtain the good or service required.

3. Distribution

Kotler& Keller (2006) showed that it's means all activities and events that lead to the provision of required products in time, quantity and suitable place for the purpose of consumption.



4. Promotion

Bognanno&Melero (2015) defined it's as all activities that aimed to introducing individuals and organizations to essential information of the required products in order to encourage them to buy by using various methods such as advertising, publicity and public relations.

THIRD TOPIC: ANALYZE AND DISCUSS RESEARCH RESULTS

Percentage, arithmetic mean, hypothetical mean and weight percent Analysis of Research Variables

The results (Table 2) refer to:

1. Quality

The average of this element showed that the arithmetic mean and weight percent (%) was 3.3 and 66.5%, respectively, that ensured samples agree (>3) with paragraphs of quality.

The degree of samples response was strongly agreed (>3) with the quality of the local product is influence the consumer's purchasing decision (Question No. 6), the degree of samples response was agreeing (>3) with preferring of Iraqi consumer to consume local products over imported products (Question No. 1), the local product has good quality and specifications (Question No. 2) and The producing companies seek to pay attention to the quality of the product according to the standard specifications (Question No. 7), while they are Neutral (=3) with is found a clear informational label at local product containing all nutritional and warning information (Question No. 3), similarly, neutral (≥ 3) with available of local products in various sizes that cover consumer demand (Question No. 5) and it was (≤ 3) for work of the producing companies to make continuous improvement to the products provided to maintain their quality (Question No. 8). On the other hand, the degree of samples response was don't agree (<3) with the packaging of local product was attracts the consumer (Question No. 4).

Table (2): Analysis of research variables.

Research variables	Question No.	Question	Degree of response					Arithmetic mean	Arithmetic mean relation with		Weight percent (%)
			Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Don't agree	Strongly don't agree		Degree of response	hypothetical mean	
			5	4	3	2	1				
Quality	1	In general, Iraqi consumers prefer to consume local products over imported products	35	45	23	22	3	3.7	Agree	>3	74
	2	The local product has good quality and specifications	12	61	29	25	1	3.5	Agree	>3	70
	3	The local product has a clear informational label containing all nutritional and warning information	6	37	38	43	4	3.0	Neutral	=3	60
	4	The local product has packaging that attracts the consumer	2	25	41	53	7	2.7	Don't agree	<3	54
	5	The local product is available in various sizes that cover consumer demand	8	43	38	37	2	3.1	Neutral	≥ 3	62
	6	The quality of the local product influences the consumer's purchasing decision	64	53	7	3	1	4.4	Strongly agree	>3	88
	7	The producing companies seek to pay attention to the quality of the product according to the standard specifications	10	45	41	31	1	3.3	Agree	>3	66
	8	The producing companies work to make continuous improvement to the products provided to maintain their quality	10	48	43	23	4	2.9	Neutral	≤ 3	58
		Average						3.3	Agree	>3	66.5
Price	9	The prices of local products are appropriate to the consumer	24	66	28	10	0	3.8	Agree	>3	76
	10	Government agencies monitor the prices of local products to be uniform in all markets	6	18	20	56	28	2.4	Don't agree	<3	48
	11	Governmental agencies enforce laws to protect local products and a consumer protection law to prevent price hikes	7	11	25	58	27	2.3	Don't agree	<3	46
	12	The producing companies offer different purchasing offers to encourage the consumer to acquire their products	10	31	40	41	6	3.0	Neutral	=3	60
		Average						2.9	Neutral	≤ 3	57.5
Distribution	13	Local product is available in quantities that meet consumer need	7	33	23	60	5	2.8	Neutral	≤ 3	56
	14	The producing companies use multiple methods to distribute and deliver the product to the consumer across different regions	8	42	38	36	4	3.1	Neutral	≥ 3	62
	15	The availability of direct and effective distribution outlets contributes to increasing the proportions of distribution to different places	35	60	17	15	1	3.9	Agree	>3	78
		Average						3.3	Agree	>3	65
Promotion	16	Advertising has a prominent role in promoting local products	65	48	6	8	1	4.3	Strongly agree	>3	86
	17	Advertising campaigns for local products greatly affect the consumer's purchasing decision	48	60	12	6	2	4.1	Agree	>3	82
	18	Local companies advertise their products through various advertising media	16	36	39	33	4	3.2	Neutral	≥ 3	64
	19	Advertising styles of local products influence consumer behavior towards buying	34	76	10	7	1	4.1	Agree	>3	82
		Average						3.9	Agree	>3	78.5
Category length $4 \leq 0.8$			4.20-5	3.40-4.19	2.60-3.39	1.80-2.59	1-1.79				
hypothetical mean = 3											

It is noted through the results of the quality element that sample strongly agreed that the quality of the product is the main factor in determining the consumer's purchase decision, thus the producing companies must pay attention to the quality of the products, the sample also agreed that the Iraqi consumer prefers to consume local products over imported products due to the good quality and specifications of these products, therefore this represents an added strength for the local product that helps producers develop their local products by applying standard specifications to ensure successful marketing to the consumer, while the sample was neutral with regard to the presence of a clear informational label that containing all nutritional and warning information on the local product and availability of these products in different sizes that meet the consumer demand as well as the work of the companies for quality improvement, thus the consumer has expressed his desire to provide local products in different sizes that meet the consumer's need and that these products contain a clear informational label and a procedure continuous improvement of the product, and with regard to packaging the local product, the sample showed its disagreement, so its needs a wide range of attention to ensure that local products are widely promoted.

2. Price

The average of arithmetic mean, weight percent (%) and degree of response was 2.9, 57.5% and neutral (≤ 3), respectively for Price element.

The degree of samples response was agreed (>3) for appropriate of price for local products to the consumer (Question No. 9), and they are Neutral ($=3$) for different purchasing offers which offer by producing companies to encourage the consumer to acquire their products (Question No. 12), while they are not agreed (<3) for the role of government agencies through monitor the prices of local products in the markets (Question No. 10) and enforce laws to protect local products and a consumer protection law to prevent price hikes (Question No. 11).

The results showed that the sample agreed that the prices of local products available in the local markets were appropriate for the consumer, while it was neutral for the role of companies that providing different purchasing offers to encourage the consumer to obtain of their products, and this indicates the need for producers to maintain the level of prices and not increase them, as well as to provide offers and advantages for encourages the consumer to buy, on the other hand, the sample showed disagreement of the role of government agencies in controlling of prices and implementing laws that related to the protection of national products and consumer, this matter requires that the authorities implement the legislation effectively.

3. Distribution

The degree of samples response was agreed (>3) with the contribution of direct distribution outlets to increasing the marketing proportions (Question No. 15), While, they are Neutral (≤ 3) for availability of local product with a quantity that consumer need (Question No. 13), also they are Neutral (≥ 3) for methods of products distribute by companies (Question No. 14).

It is observed from the results that the sample agreed that the presence of direct marketing outlets to the consumer will contribute to increasing the distribution ratios, which is the thing that companies must do to achieve this and provide their products to the consumer, and in return, the sample was neutral in its assertion of the availability of local products in enough quantities, and using companies multiple methods to distribute and deliver to the consumer, so, to achieve this, companies must work to increase production by increasing working hours and using different methods to deliver their products to the consumer through

traditional marketing outlets or electronic marketing which has become a common occurrence recent in order to increase the percentage of sales and profits.

4. Promotion

The average of this element showed that the arithmetic mean and weight percent (%) and degree of response was 3.9, 78.5% and agree (>3), respectively.

The degree of samples response was strongly agreed (>3) Advertising role for promoting local products (Question No. 16), the degree of samples response was agreeing (>3) for effect of Advertising campaigns (Question No. 17) and styles (Question No. 19) at the consumer's purchasing local products decision, while they are neutral (≥ 3) for using various media by companies for advertise of their products (Question No. 18).

The results showed the strongly agreed of sample that advertising has a prominent role in promoting local products, and they are agreed that advertising campaigns for the local product greatly effect at consumer's purchasing decision, and the methods of advertising for local products have a significant effect on consumer behavior towards buying, while the sample was neutral for local companies advertise their products through various advertising media, and from this, the importance of advertising is in promoting local products and the importance of companies intensive advertising campaigns for display their products and marketing them to the consumer and follow various advertising methods and invest social media in reaching the largest target group of consumers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Iraqi consumer prefers to consume local products that available with appropriate price and good quality, while, local product need to attention of packaging and availability of these products in different sizes from producers and providing different purchasing offers to encourage the consumer to obtain of their products through presence of direct marketing outlets to the consumer and attention to advertising and promoting for local products to contributed of increase of sales, also, local product need to role government authorities controlling of prices and implementing laws that related to the protection of national products and consumer.

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