



EXTENT OF IRAQI CONSUMER INTERESTED IN CHOOSING OF FOOD PRODUCTS BEARING QUALITY AND SAFETY CERTIFICATE

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Abstract

The good brand of food products and Quality and Safety Certificate (Q&SC) plays a big role in choosing consumers to food products offered in the local market while purchasing. Due to that, this study become to research consumer's attitudes towards choosing food products bearing quality and safety certificates (Q&SC). The study depended on the questionnaire as a tool research, delivered to 300 Iraqi consumers in Baghdad city. The respondents asked to answer from 1 to 5 about questions included in the questionnaire, where 1 strongly disagreed and 5 strongly agreed. The study demonstrated that about 72% of respondents awareness about Q&SC and 28% of them not heard about that and maybe not has any effect of their decision in shopping. Also the result demonstrated that only 32% of respondents looking for the Q&SC logo while purchasing food products from the market, while the majority of the sample selected 68% not care about that while purchasing food products.

Keywords: Iraqi consumer, quality, safety certificate, food products.

Introduction

The food industry is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world. Recently, the local demand in Iraq for processed food products has increased for several reasons, most notably, changing the consumption habits of Iraqi citizens (Planning, 2015). And with expectations increasing of consumers' number in next years, their safety and well-being should be an important aspect to the food company, that without food safety management systems, it will be difficult or impossible for the food company to gain the satisfaction and trust of consumers or even serve them efficiently (Alkhafaji *et al.*, 2019).

After expanding happened in the international trade in the import and export of food commodities, the food chain has become global, and the food safety problem has become more complex than ever (Hamzaoy & Abdulaziz, 2007). Therefore, food companies worked in food chain need to intensify food safety activities by implementing one of food safety management systems like ISO 22000, BRC, IFS, or HACCP to ensure food safety and compliance with international requirements, legislations and specifications to satisfy the consumer and gain his confidence (Jasim, 2007).

Quality and safety certificates (Q & SC) for food products have become an essential concern to selective in purchasing food products to many consumers around the world (CSQC, 2011). Trading of food products in many countries requires that a food product sells in its market bears Q&SC logos, like ISO 22000, BRC, IFS or HACCP. Most of big and small food companies in the world are seeking strategies to ensure the quality and safety of their food products by implementing one of the indicated standards. The World Health Organization (WHO), and the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that food is considered safe if there is reasonable certainty that no harm will result from its consumption under expected conditions of use. Food safety can be explained as the scientific disciplines describing the handling, preparation, and storage of food in order to prevent foodborne illness. It is also a matter of public health priority because every year millions of people fall ill and die as a result of unsafe food consumption (Nawi *et al.*, 2014).

Materials & Methods

The objective of the research required the knowledge and consumer opinion toward food quality and safety certificates, therefore the tool used was the survey/questionnaire. The questionnaire has been created as illustrated in (Table 1) and distributed to Iraqi consumers in Baghdad city during the period of April to June 2019.

Collected samples

To evaluate Iraqi consumer opinion for selecting food products bearing quality and safety certificates, a total of 300 questionnaires distributed to consumers. The respondents asked to answer from 1 to 5, where 1 strongly disagreed and 5 strongly agreed.

Data analysis

In this study, descriptive analysis statistics were used to analyze demographic information and the answers received from consumers in choosing food products bearing Q&SC. Factor analysis was also employed in this study to identify the correlations between the criteria used by respondents in their decision to purchase food products based on Q&SC. The purpose of factor analysis was to reduce the number of variables to a more manageable level so that the basic structure underlying the set of variables could be established. This type of procedure grouped the variables into

independent factors wherein each factor represented a scale measure of some underlying dimension (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Demographic information

A total of 300 persons participated in this study. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic information of respondents who participated in this study, were divided into 45% male and 55% female. The ages participated were between 22 to more than 65 years old, 33,3% of respondents belonged to ages between 45 to 54, 31,6% belonged to ages between 35

to 44, 21% of respondents belonged to ages between 25 to 34, 11,6% of respondents belonged to ages between 55 to 64 and 1,6% belonged to ages more than 65 years old. About the marital status of respondents, 81, 6% were married and 15% were single. About educational qualification, 38, 3% were holders of higher degrees (Ph.D. & M.Sc.) and 51, 6% Bachelor's degree. Regarding the income of respondents 51, 6% were between 1000.000 to 1500.000 IRD per month and 36,6% were between 600.000 to 1000.000 IRD per month. About job 80% of respondents working in the governmental sector.

Table 1: Demographic information of Respondents

n = 300.

Demographic info.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	135	45
Female	165	55
Age		
18–24 years	0	0
25–34 years	65	21.6
35–44 years	95	31.6
45–54 years	100	33.3
55–64 years	35	11.6
65 years and above	5	1.6
Marital Status		
Married	245	81.6
Single	45	15
Divorced	10	3.3
Education Level		
Secondary School	20	6.6
Bachelor's	155	51.6
Master's/PhD	115	38.3
Others	10	3.3
Income		
Less than 300.000 ID	30	10
300.000-600.000 ID	5	1.6
600.000-1000.000 ID	110	36.6
1000.000-1500.000 ID	155	51.6
More than 1500.000 ID	0	0
Occupation		
Government sector	240	80
Private sector	25	8.3
Student	0	0
Self-employed	0	0
Others	35	11.6

Certificate Awareness

To have a previous idea about respondents' awareness toward Q&SC of food products, a question was asked whether they have heard about it before or no. About 72% of respondents answered that they have heard about Q&SC of food products before and 28% of them answered that they did not heard about that (Figure 1).

Respondents were asked also if they are looking for Q&SC logos while purchasing food products. About 68% of them answered that they not looking for Q&SC logos, while only 32% answered that they are looking to logos (Figure 2).

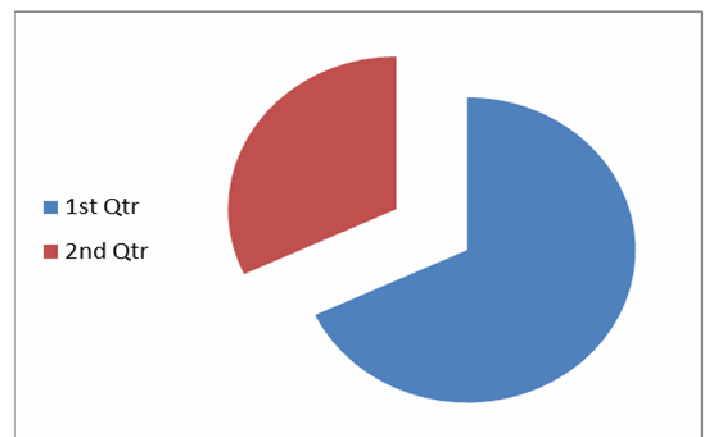


Fig. 1: Consumer awareness

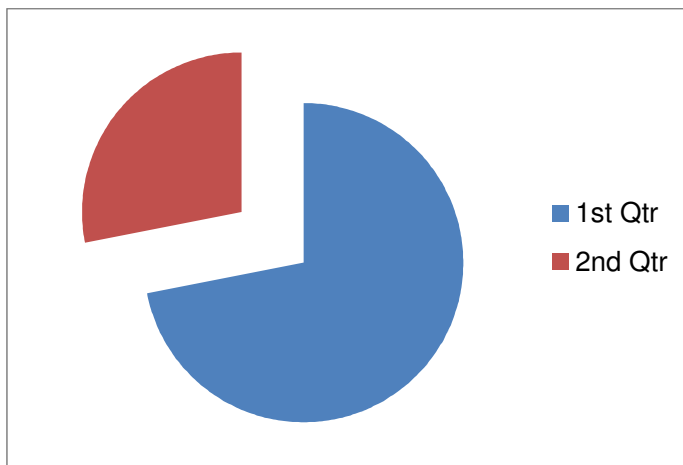


Fig. 2: Consumers looking for Q&SC logos.

Table 2, shows the results of specified consumer perception of the importance of Q&SC. About half of the respondents (51.6%) perceived that Q&SC ensures the safety and cleanliness of the food products they purchase. 58.3% of respondents think that Q&SC reflex of good manufacturing, 51.6% believe that Q&SC means manufacturing in accordance with international standard, 53.3% of respondents have more confidence when purchasing food products bearing Q&SC, only 26.6% of them think that Q&SC refers to keeping under good conditions, 41.6% believe that food products with Q&SC did not contain any not allowed ingredients and 33.3% of them think that these products are not fraud, while 38.3% think that food products labeled correctly. With the overall mean score of 3.8, the observations on consumer perceptions toward the use of Q&SC on food products are significant in relation to their purchasing decisions.

Table 2: Consumers' Perceptions toward Food Quality and Safety Certificate (Q&SC)

Statements	n/%	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	Mean
Selecting food products bearing Q&SC ensures safe and cleanliness	Frequency	25	10	65	45	155	3.9
	Percentage	8.3	3.3	21.6	15	51.6	
Selecting food products bearing Q&SC reflex of good manufacturing	Frequency	20	25	40	40	175	4
	Percentage	6.6	8.3	13.3	13.3	58.3	
Selecting food products bearing Q&SC means manufacturing in accordance international standards	Frequency	10	35	40	60	155	4
	Percentage	3.3	11.6	13.3	20	51.6	
Q&SC give me more confidence for purchasing	Frequency	10	35	30	65	160	4.1
	Percentage	3.3	11.6	10	21.6	53.3	
Q&SC refers that food products kept in good conditions	Frequency	50	65	40	65	80	3.2
	Percentage	16.6	21.6	13.3	21.6	26.6	
Q&SC refers that food products not contain any not allowed ingredients	Frequency	5	45	65	60	125	3.8
	Percentage	1.6	15	21.6	20	41.6	
Q&SC refers that food products not fraud	Frequency	35	50	50	65	100	3.4
	Percentage	11.6	16.6	16.6	21.6	33.3	
Food products that have Q&SC are labeled correctly	Frequency	30	35	60	60	115	3.6
Overall Mean	Percentage	10	11.6	20	20	38.3	3.8

Note. *1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly Agree.

Conclusion

Quality and safety certificate Q & SC of food products given more confidence to consumers while taken the decision of purchasing (Zhou *et al.*, 2011). The subject of quality and safety of food products in Iraq has been taken more importance in last years, due to more reason, specifically the competence with imported food products.

Although, there are only some food establishments in Iraq which are implemented quality and safety systems like ISO 22000, BRC, IFA, and HACCP, but yet the culture of quality is not common among Iraqi consumers (Industry, 2015).

Q & SC not only ensures consumer trust in food safety but also helps producers in operation streamlining and quality management (Sanchez, 2005). Thus, this study could assist food manufacturers in developing better marketing strategies to fulfill the modern consumer's needs and wants while purchasing food products.

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