

CONSUMER CONCERNS, PERCEPTIONS AND AWARENESS OF THE USE OF ADDITIVES IN PROCESSED FOODS

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This study was undertaken to determine the level of awareness, perceptions and concerns of respondents about the use of additives in processed foods and how it affects how they behave when purchasing processed foods containing additives. Fifty respondents from the Medway area of Kent participated in the face to face interview which comprised 20 questions. The results revealed a general lack of knowledge among the respondents about the functions of the commonly used additives in processed foods. Additionally, most concerns regarding the use of additives in processed foods were related to certain long term health effects even though only a small percentage of the respondents review the list of additives on food labels and everyone reported buying processed foods containing additives. The results also highlight the low level of trust that some people have regarding the ability of competent authorities to ensure that additives are only approved for use at levels that will not affect their health. Governments are expected to play the role of strengthening of legislation on the use of additive and provide consumers with information and education as a way of safeguarding their health from the potentially negative effects of food additives. Respondents were willing to pay more for foods with a reduced level of additives and would buy foods with reduced levels of additives even if this resulted in a shorter shelf-life. Provision of balanced and science based information through sources trusted by consumers could reduce negative perceptions and concerns about the use of food additives.

Keywords: Food additives, respondents, processed foods

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