PACKAGING AND SHELF LIFE OF DAIRY PRODUCTS

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Abstract
Aim: The aim is to understand the packaging and shelf - life conditions required for dairy products. **Objective**: To give an overview of the packaging systems and shelf-life period of currently available dairy products. To study consumers' choice in packaging of the everyday usage of dairy products. To understand the consumers' awareness in determining the storage and shelf-life conditions of the product. **Materials and Method**: This study was done through google forms, where questions were raised about different packaging preferences and shelf-life period. **Result and Conclusion:** This study was focused on awareness and consumer preference on the available and subsequent needs in dairy packaging systems. It revealed that 93.5% people use dairy products everyday and prefer packet forms and bottle over any other packaging methods.

Keywords: Packaging conditions, Storage conditions, Consumer, Food, Product

Received: 07.01.2022 Reviewed: 28.02.2022 Accepted: 02.03.2022

INTRODUCTION

Food packaging plays an important role in ensuring food safety, hygiene and consumer protection while also providing for a smooth food supply**.** Recently, interest has shifted towards novel applications such as smart or intelligent packaging, modified atmosphere and active packaging, and sustainability**.** Some of the recent trends in Packaging of dairy food.

Intelligent Packaging - Intelligent packaging contains a device that can monitor the condition of the product, package or packaging environment. Mostly used in dairy packaging are time-temperature indicators and indicators of ripening. Intelligent packaging features special functions resulting in safer and more nutritious or appealing products also ensuring to be environment friendly**.**

Active Packaging - These packaging techniques can extend the shelf life of food and give information on its freshness, provided it does not adversely affect its composition.**[1]**

Packaging of dairy products develops continuously along with advances in material technologies, which are in turn a response to demands of consumers. It is well known that, depending on numerous internal and external factors, the growth of microorganisms during the storage of dairy products results in their sensory changes, i.e. spoilage. Product's, package, and the environment interact in a positive way to extend shelf-life of products and/or to enhance safety or sensory properties while maintaining the quality of the foods **[2]**. This is due to the fact that under the inadequate storage conditions, nutrients in the milk products are a good medium for the growth and development of individual groups of microorganisms **[3].**

Modified atmosphere packaging (MAP), for example, can be applied to dairy products to control some of the fungi problems and extend their shelf life. MAP is being used with high carbon dioxide (CO_2) concentration as well as CO_2/N_2 gas mixes **[4].**

DURABILITY OF DAIRY PRODUCTS

The period of time each dairy product stays fresh varies significantly. For example, pasteurised milk will keep for 10-12 days if kept below 5°Celsius, while yoghurt and similar products that went through fermentation, should remain of a good quality for 35–40 days under the same storage conditions. It is important to keep an eye on the shelf life of each dairy product to avoid waste and spoilage **[5]**. Avoid temperature fluctuation at higher temperatures,

store product in constant, controlled temperatures.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

It is a prospective observational study achieved by Randomized Sampling Techniques. Google forms were used in collecting various data and opinion of the consumers. This study was conducted by sharing google forms through social media and personal contacts. The eligibility criteria were people aged 20 and above. The exclusion criteria include children, disabled people and people (who were) disinterested to participate in the study. The target sample size was 60 and achieved sample size were 62.

Existing packaging system

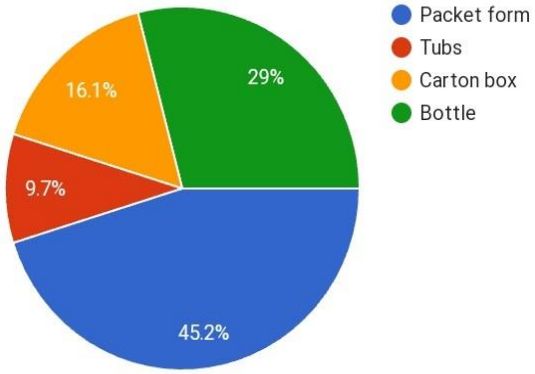


Figure1: Kind of packaging people prefer to buy (N=62)

When choosing packaging material for dairy products, various important factors need to be considered such as toxicity, compatibility with the product, impact resistance, maintenance of sanitation, odour and light protection, chemically inactivity, shape and weight requirements, marketing appeal, printability and cost **[6].** The type of packaging material for dairy products is of critical importance because of its impact on quality, safety, cost and marketing of the commodities to consumers **[7].** Among 62 responses received, 45.2% of the consumers prefer dairy products in package form, 29% of the consumers prefer bottle, 16.1% carton boxes and 9.7 % prefer tubs.

Consumers' preference

While extending the survey to packaging conditions preferred for everyday using dairy products such as milk and curd, the responses were different.

From fig.2, As for milk, 45.2% preferred packet forms, 33.9% preferred bottles and 21% preferred tetra-packs.

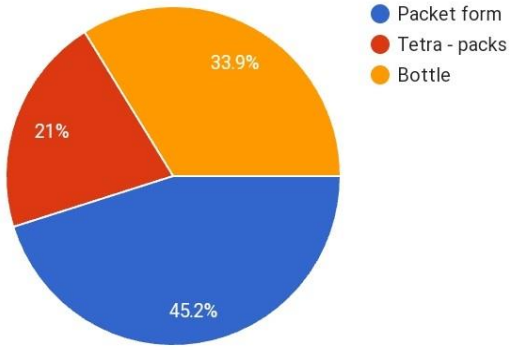


Figure 2: Milk Packaging (N=62)

Also from fig.3, for curd packaging, majority of the survey population (69.4%) preferred tubs over packet forms (27.4%). Whereas, 3.2% of the populations preferred home-made curd. The majority of the respondents suggested to improve dairy product packaging and to reduce the usage of plastic and increase recycling packages in order to entertain eco-friendliness.

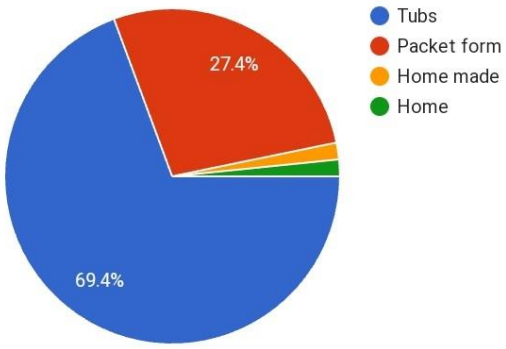
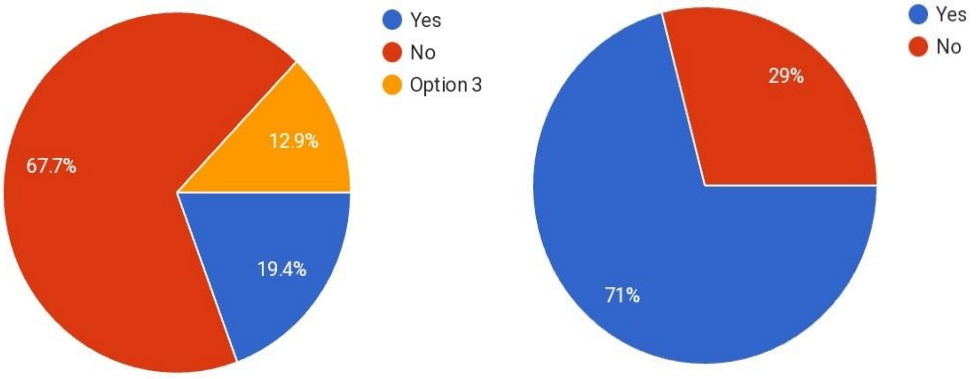


Figure 3: Curd Packaging (N=62)

Storage and shelf-life of dairy products

An important commercial goal for soft and un-ripened dairy products is to keep them fresh (i.e.,) to maintain some peculiar sensory characteristics such as a white and 'brilliant' colour, creamy visual texture and spread ability, milky aroma and flavour and low acidity **[8].** The survey was questioned on all these aspects.



[a]Microorganisms **[b] Odour**

Figure 5: Microorganisms detected and odour change during shelf-life (N=62)

From fig 5(a), As microorganisms grow once after or nearing the expiry date, only 19.4% of the consumers had noticed them on the product before the expiry date, 67.7% did not find any microorganisms and 12.9 % consumers are ambivalent.

From fig 5(b), With respect to odour change, 71% of the consumers found odour change and 29% did not find any odour change during the long shelf-life of the product.

Consumer's reliance on label

As far as for label, creating truthful and informative dairy product labels increases the chance of selling the product. Consumers are more informed about food contents nowadays and they like to know what they are consuming, so providing enough information about a product and highlighting its nutritional strengths will certainly result in more customers and more sales **[9].**

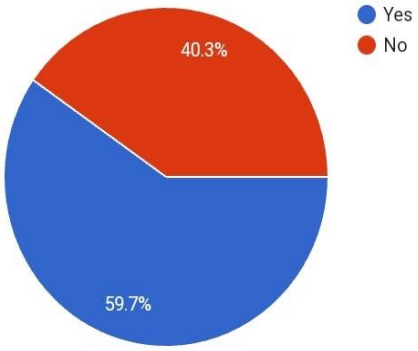


Figure 6: Consumers' trust on label (N=62)

From fig.6, According to the survey, 59.7% of the consumers trust the label is true always, while 40.3% oppose it.

From fig.7, 72.6% of the people check the label before buying the product and 67.7% of the people's buying choices are impacted by the label. And also, people suggested their opinions as shelf-life given on the label are just an approximation and not perfect date/time and have to check the appearance, odour, colour before consuming despite the date given

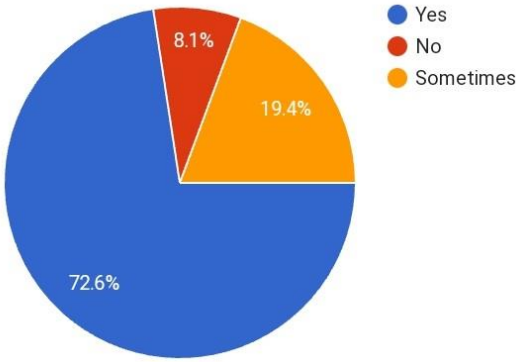


Figure 7: Shelf-life' impact on buying choices (N=62)

CONCLUSION

This study focused on awareness and consumer preference on the available and subsequent needs in dairy packaging systems. It revealed that 93.5% people use dairy products every day and prefer packet forms and bottle over any other packaging methods. The survey was also questioned on aspects such as colour change,

flavour change, microorganisms detected and odour change during the long shelf-life of the product. According to the survey, 59.7% of the consumers trust the label is true always and also, 72.6% of the people check the label before buying the product. To add on, more than half of the consumers in the market follow the label for storage and shelf-life conditions. The study also showed the various packaging forms preferred and opinions on the existing storage and shelf-life conditions as per label were evaluated.

LIMITATIONS

Since the questionnaire was majorly answered by the people below 30 years, it was difficult to gather more information from old and experienced people. Using the social media platform was challenging as many of them are not yet used to answering questions through them. Also, gathering answers and opinions from housewives was very difficult.

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