

Health and Nutrition Claims Prevalence in a Sample of Beverages in Saudi Arabia Markets

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27/09/2024

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WORLD CONGRESS OF EPIDEMIOLOGY 2024



Introduction

- Saudi Arabia is the Middle East's largest beverage consumer market.
- Mandatory pre-packaged food labeling is one of many public health interventions established to address the health burdens of high beverage consumption in Saudi Arabia.
- Nutrition and health claims (NHC) are part of food labeling.
- Food labels can help consumers make informed decisions and select healthier diet choices.
- Therefore, nutritional and health claims must be precise, accurate, and reliable. This study assesses NHC's prevalence, authorization, and compliance in a sample of beverages sold in the Saudi market.

Study Aims



Describe the characteristics of beverages in the Saudi market.



Estimate the general prevalence of nutritional and health claims



Analyzing nutritional and health claims by beverage categories, authorization statutes, and compliance statutes.



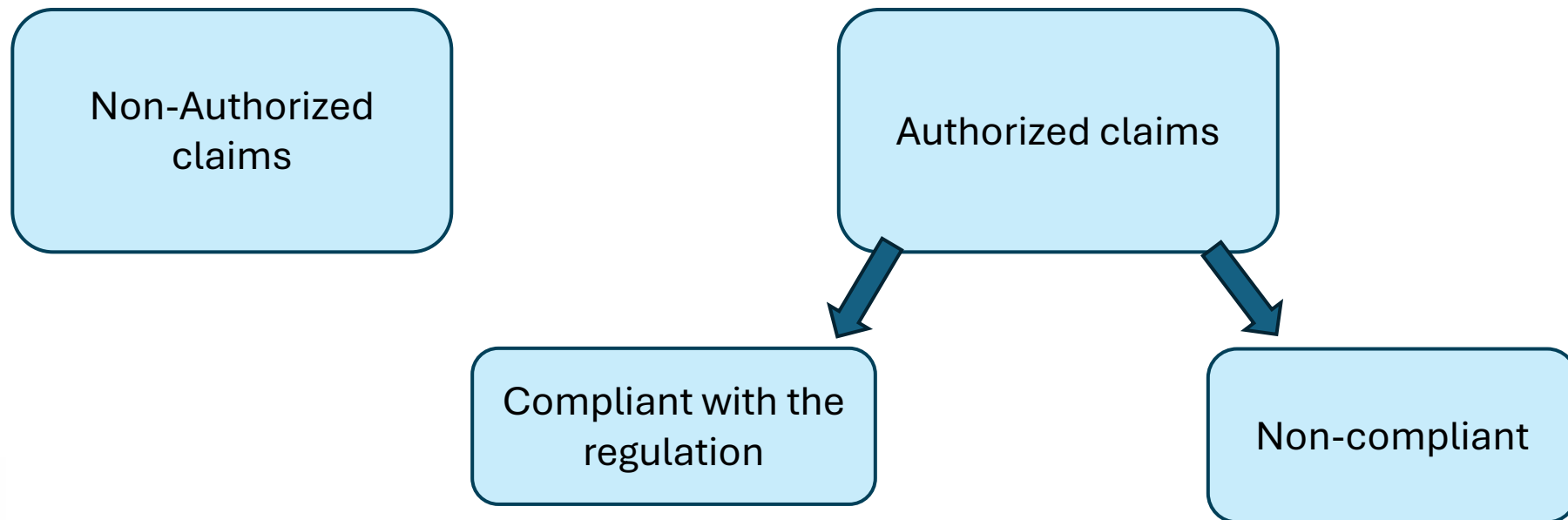
List the reasons for failing to comply with the regulation.

Methods

- Cross-sectional study, Secondary data.
- Inclusion: Beverage products with completed records, Containing at least one NHC.
- From the Saudi Branded Beverage Database (SBBD) from SFDA.

Methods: Nutrition claims classification

- According to the SFDA requirements for NHC regulation (SFDA.FD 2333/2020)
- Filtered to identify the NHC only. Then divided into:



Results

- Total of 1,748 beverages extracted from SBBD. Only **685 (39.2%)** met the inclusion criteria.
- Total number of NHC was 1,091 claims, some products have more than one claim we included up to 5 claims per product if available.
- Only 10.6% (n=116) were authorized, and **66.4%** (n= 77) **complied**.

	NHC % (n)	Authorized NHC % (n)	Complied NHC % (n)
Fruit juices	52% (356)	34.5% (40)	37.7% (29)
Milk and milk products	25.7% (176)	41.4% (48)	32.5% (25)
soft drinks	12.6% (86)	15.5% (18)	20.8% (16)

Discussion: NHC

- 39% of sampled beverages had NHC, with a median of 1 claim/product.
- The percentage of authorized claims was 10.6% (n=116), and compliance with the regulation was achieved in more than half of them 66.4% (n=77).
- The prevalence of NHC is similar to other studies conducted in Saudi Arabia (almost 30%) and other Countries
- European countries study (26%)
- Spain (36.1%)
- Canada (46%)

Discussion: compliance

- In our study over two-thirds of authorized claims complied with the regulation.
- Our result was higher than the previously reported result (38% of food and beverage products in the Saudi market).
- These differences could be explained by the fact that analysis regarding the compliance status in this study was conducted only among authorized claims in contrast the other study analyzed the total sample.

Discussion:

- Over half of the fruit juices had nutritional or health claims, followed by a quarter of milk products. Nevertheless, fruit juice was the second highest category with non-compliant claims.
- In Ireland the orders were different as yoghurt drinks had the highest proportion of nutritional and health claims (35,36). Nevertheless, in this study, only 3% of yoghurt drinks had claims.
- The differences between beverage categories with the highest number of claims between countries could be influenced by:
 1. market size of beverages
 2. Variation of labelling regulation
 3. Influence of research setting.

Strengths

- Focusing solely on NHC in beverages sold in the Saudi market with many beverage labels.
- Sample size
- Reasons for non-compliance

Drawbacks

- The current study lacks marketing data or consumption data that can allow targeting specific beverages with claims.
- Limited local studies; prevented result comparison.
- Secondary data analysis; lacking data accuracy and quality information.

Conclusion

- This study provides baseline data for policymakers and food and beverage regulators on NHC in beverages in the Saudi market.
- Among 1091 claims, authorized claims represented only a tenth of the total claims.
- Among Authorized one-third are non-compliant with the SFDA's regulations.
- More comprehensive label review measures are crucial to ensure the food industry's compliance with NHC regulations.
- Future studies are needed to understand better the role of NHC in influencing consumer behavior.

Recommendation

We assume that claims on other products in the market face the same issues, so we recommend studies on larger samples of the products.

We recommend that future studies include surveillance lab testing for compliant products.

- We recommend that SFDA develop a way of following up the market so products are either authorized or compliant.
- Non-compliant products should be banned from the market.

Acknowledgment.



The greatest PI Dr. Duaa
Al'mmari and research team.

My University KSAU-HS

WCE2024
