

ISSUES IN JAPANESE FOOD PRODUCTS PACKAGE LABELING

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Abstract

Imports of Japanese food products into Malaysia are projected to increase. In the Malaysian market, most of the Japanese food products' packaging is labelled in the Japanese language. This has resulted in potential problems in understanding the contents and other related instructions before purchasing the products. Even though some of the Japanese food companies include translations for the ingredients used in their food products into the English language, important information such as storage, usage instructions and allergy-causing products are not. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the food package labeling of various Japanese food products in one of the Japanese retail outlets. The findings revealed that the translated version of Japanese food products package labeling still uses Japanese words such as 'sake' and 'mirin' and also the flavour ingredients used for these food products were not clearly stated. Malaysian consumers' lack of knowledge in the Japanese language may result in a unintentional purchase of alcohol-based products or products with hazardous ingredients or allergy-causing products. This study provides insights to

practitioners and policy makers on the importance of educating consumers on product knowledge. The policy on consumer packaging and labeling regulations for imported products and its enforcement for importers need to be implemented.

Keywords: Japanese language, labeling, food products.

Introduction

Using appropriate language for product labels and packages is necessary in ensuring the right information is communicated to the customers. The translation of promotional materials and information into local language can be helpful to the customers in making the right purchasing decision. Since Malaysia is an attractive import destination for food, cosmetics and furniture products among Japanese importers (Yu, 2010), proper labeling is of concern to the customers especially for food products. Only few Malaysians can understand Japanese writings and with the scarcity of research that examines the labeling issues for Japanese food related products from the language perspective, it is imperative for this study to examine the current practices

