

Was esse ich da eigentlich? Wahrnehmung und Verständnis der Sicherheit von Lebensmitteln

Angela Bearth, Marie-Eve Cousin, Michael Siegrist

Institute for Environmental Decisions (IED), Consumer Behavior, ETH Zurich, CH-8092 Zürich

Key words

Risk perception, risk communication, Campylobacter, food additives, food hazards

Aim of the study

Two topical food subjects were investigated: (1) the bacterium Campylobacter and domestic food safety and (2) food additives and the informed consumer. Comprehensive goal was to investigate how Swiss consumers perceive those two (potential) food risks and to evaluate evidence-based communication material.

Material and methods

The Mental Models Approach was chosen as framework. In five research steps, considering the perceptions of experts and consumers, essential communication content for these two (potential) food risks were elicited.

Results and significance

What Swiss consumers know about pathogenic agents in raw poultry was investigated, as well as how they behave and whether information provision via brochure results in safer behaviour when preparing poultry. Research suggests that future communication should focus on the lack of risk awareness, potential cross-contamination pathways and special occasions, such as barbecues or Fondue Chinoise. The developed brochure proved successful as communication form and improved novice cooks' knowledge and behaviour. It was examined how Swiss consumers perceive selected food additives and how well informed they are about their safety assessment and regulation. Results showed that consumers had little knowledge and would like to be better informed about food additives. Within a literature-based model, it was shown that the acceptance of food additives is related to risk and benefit perceptions, trust in regulators and preferences for natural foods. The subsequently developed information video was well received by the consumers, increased knowledge and positive thoughts and feelings and decreased consumers' risk perception.

It is apparent that experts and consumers perceive those two (potential) food risks differently. Therefore, it is important to develop information material carefully and based on the perception of experts and consumers to ensure the outcome of an informed consumer.

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