ABSTRACT

This study analysed contents of articles in newspapers about milk quality and safety in Kenya to determine prevalent themes and interviewed consumers to determine whether they trust and value the information that is communicated. The newspaper articles (n=215) were published between January 2014 and June 2018 in five major national newspapers while consumers (n=368) were interviewed in four major towns. Qualitative thematic analysis subjected to Chi square test statistics determined the prevalent thematic content in the articles while conditional probability computations determined print media information on milk quality and safety being trustworthy and of educative value to consumers. Results revealed that the prevalent themes were "causes" of poor quality and unsafe milk (44%) and "innovations" for improving milk quality and safety (37%). The theme "causes" was more attributable to poor hygiene (15%) and poor quality feeds (11%) while theme "innovations" was more attributable to use of coolers and pasteurizers (18%). The probability of consumers trusting print media information was higher among those frequently reading newspapers (85.7%) compared to those rarely reading newspapers (20%). However, hardly two in ten consumers trusted the communicated information and the probability of the information being of educative value was low (14 to 29%). The findings indicate that what newspapers report about milk quality and safety is about how to improve product safety and quality. This information is more relevant to milk producers, processors and distributors but less relevant to consumers about risk exposure from consuming marketed milk. Because consumer trust of the print information increase when frequently reading newspapers, partnership between the media and the regulating authorities would bolster the role of print media in communicating risk-benefits of milk quality and safety to urban consumers in Kenya.

Keywords

Dairy industry; Food safety; Print media; Risk-benefit communication; Thematic content analysis