Chapter 11
Application of Content Analysis for a Qualitative Approach:
A Comparative Study of Food Safety Regulations

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ABSTRACT

This study explains the application of content analysis to examine food safety regulations, analyzing regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms across different regions. By comparing legislative texts and enforcement practices, the study identifies key differences in regulatory focus and methods used to enforce these regulations. It conducts a detailed examination of laws, guidelines, and the roles of agencies responsible for enforcement. The analysis reveals variations in regulatory approaches, such as permissible levels of additives, inspection protocols, and penalties for non-compliance. The study offers insights into the effectiveness of different food safety systems, highlighting how jurisdictions maintain consumer confidence in their food supply chains. It aims to inform policymakers, industry

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stakeholders, and researchers about critical elements that contribute to robust food safety standards and public health protection through improved regulatory practices.

BACKGROUND

Content analysis is a systematic approach to evaluating textual data that provides insights into the structure, content, and underlying themes of regulatory documents, including laws, guidelines, and standards. According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is a research technique that objectively and quantitatively describes communication content. Kerlinger (1973) defines it as a method of systematically studying and analyzing communication objectively and quantitatively to extract meaningful variables. Weber (1990) states that content analysis involves using a set of methods to make reliable inferences from text.

Food safety is fundamental to public health and consumer well-being, with regulatory frameworks essential for safeguarding food product safety and quality. Research has also examined the "farm to fork" pathway, focusing on structural conditions (e.g., temperature, humidity control) to minimize accidental exposure to chemicals (e.g., pesticide residues), physical contaminants (e.g., bones, metals), or biological substances (e.g., Salmonella) (Connolly et al., 2016). Malaysia and Singapore, neighbouring Southeast Asian countries with vibrant food sectors and international trade ties, have implemented regulatory measures to protect their respective food supply chains. Understanding and comparing these regulatory frameworks are crucial to identifying areas of convergence, divergence, and potential improvements in food safety standards. Effective food safety regulations are vital for protecting public health and ensuring the quality of food products. Both Malaysia and Singapore have regulatory regimes governing food production, handling, labelling, and importation.

While existing research has explored various aspects of Malaysian and Singaporean food safety regulations, there remains a gap in comprehensive comparative analyses, particularly those utilizing content analysis methods. A comparative content analysis of food safety regulation in Singapore and Malaysia reveals distinct approaches. Singapore prioritizes robust food safety legislation (Riza et al., 2023) and markets itself as a global food destination with a focus on sanitary conditions (Sukereman, 2022). In contrast, Malaysia faces challenges in harmonizing ASEAN food standards and regulations, often employing technical measures that impact food imports (Evelyn, 2016). Both countries emphasize food safety, but Singapore emphasizes stringent standards and culinary marketing, while Malaysia contends with regulatory heterogeneity and the need for regional harmonization. Understanding these differences is crucial for enhancing food safety measures and commercial relations in the region.