

Food labeling and portion size

O.184 The unit size bias of food: two experimental studies on its impact on social consumption norms of impulsiveness and portion size appropriateness

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PURPOSE: In deciding how much to eat, people are influenced by environmental cues. The unit size bias is the phenomenon that smaller units of food reduce consumption as people believe that a unit of food is the optimal amount to consume. As such, it has been used as a key explanation of the 'portion size effect'; the increase in consumption when larger portions are served. Less is known about underlying processes explaining this bias and its effect on food intake. Hence, the purpose of two between-subjects experiments was to examine whether altering the unit size of chocolate while keeping portion sizes equal impacts normative judgements of eating behaviour.

METHOD: In study 1, females (n=118) watched a movie displaying a woman eating 50 grams of chocolates either in small or large unit size (i.e. 5 small versus 1 large chocolate). In study 2, participants (n=124) ate a similar amount of chocolate in either small or large unit size during a supposed taste test. Subsequent ratings of perceived (study 1) and own (study 2) consumption included measures of portion appropriateness, (perceived) impulsivity and excessive consumption.

RESULT(S): Despite consuming similar amounts of chocolate, both studies show that consumption of small chocolates is seen as more impulsive, excessive and less appropriate than consuming large chocolates.

CONCLUSION(S): Both studies indicate biased perceptions making eating smaller units appear more irresponsible and impulsive. This suggest an additional factor explaining consumption effects in earlier studies. As such, the results underscore the importance of unit size in developing effective interventions influencing food intake.

O.185 Adult consumers display poor recall of front-of-package nutrition labels following product selection

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PURPOSE: To assess consumers' memory of Front-of-Package (FOP) nutrition label presence and type following a grocery selection task.

METHOD: 64 parent/child pairs from Minneapolis/St. Paul , Minnesota, U.S. participated in a food-selection task. Pairs were randomly assigned to one of three FOP label conditions: 1) Multiple Traffic Light (MTL) labels, which indicated numerically and with color-coding the amounts of saturated fat, sodium, and sugar each product contained; 2) monochromatic