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Is this why we eat all the wrong things?

Our brain has a tendency to remember where to find high-calorie foods better than where to find low-calorie foods. This is what Rachelle de Vries proves in her dissertation entitled *Foraging minds in modern food environments*.

This preference (in scientific terms: bias) goes back to when humans were hunter/gatherers. A good memory for the location of energy-rich food provided an advantage in the struggle for survival. This is probably why the brain developed in that direction, according to De Vries.

De Vries conducted experiments both in the lab and 'in real life' at Lowlands Science 2018 to prove the bias is still present. Subjects recall the location of energy-rich foods more readily. Fruits and vegetables lose against chips and fries. This bias is universal and persistent, even when corrected for personal preferences or familiarity with certain products.

Buying behaviour

How the bias influences our buying behaviour is a complicated matter. Subjects with a strong bias expected to be able to locate high-energy foods faster, De Vries explains. 'Perception

is key, and their perception is aligned with the degree to which the bias is present.' This perception then manifests itself in a tendency to buy calorie-rich foods and frequent fast-food restaurants.

'There is therefore a correlation between the

'We are not all doomed to get fat'

the bias and the frequency of buying snacks', De Vries

explains. 'And

this, in turn, is reflected in the BMI.' However, this does not mean we are all doomed to get fat as a result of our memory. De Vries: 'The bias remains, but we can still choose a healthy diet by keeping the bias in check. We are not slaves to this urge.'

The bias can be curbed through training. De Vries: 'My experiments showed that people with more control are better protected from the unhealthy effects of the bias.' RK