

Consistency or Balancing? Category Spill-over Effects of Purchasing Food with Nutrition Claims

Gökhan Sürmeli

Istanbul Technical University

Ossama Elshiewy

University of Goettingen

Burc Ulengin

Istanbul Technical University

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Abstract

Previous studies have shown that choosing food with nutrition claims can lead to overconsumption or license subsequent unhealthful choices. However, research focusing on systematic cross-category effects in real-life settings is missing. To address this gap, we analyze longitudinal household purchase data and explore how the choice of food with nutrition claims can influence the healthfulness of the entire shopping basket. Results show that choosing a higher share of items featuring nutrition claims within hedonic categories leads to more healthful shopping baskets (consistent behavior). This finding suggests that a self-control mechanism remains active due to the high goal-conflict between health and pleasure. On the other hand, choosing a higher share of items with nutrition claims within utilitarian categories leads to less healthful shopping baskets (inconsistent behavior or balancing). This behavior can be explained by a lower perceived goal-conflict between short-term pleasure and long-term health for utilitarian products with nutrition claims.

Keywords: *Food choice; Nutrition claims; Cross-category effects*

Track: Consumer Behaviour