

Integrating affective and behavioral nudges to promote healthy eating: Evidence from online and field experiments

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Abstract

This research examines whether combining affective and behavioral nudges can more effectively promote healthy eating than relying on single interventions. Two studies using digital self-ordering kiosks tested whether and how a vegetable-eating message (affective nudge) and top-of-menu placement of a vegetable-rich meal (behavioral nudge) influence food choice. Study 1, an online experiment ($N = 204$), found that while neither nudge produced significant main effects overall, their combination significantly increased the selection of the vegetable-rich meal among consumers low in health consciousness. Study 2, a field experiment in a university cafeteria ($N = 14,278$), replicated this synergistic interaction in real-world decisions: although the individual nudges showed opposite main effects, their combination increased healthy selections. These findings highlight limitations of isolated nudges and demonstrate the value of coordinated multi-component strategies. The results advance theory by identifying health consciousness as a key boundary condition and offer practical guidance for scalable, low-cost public health interventions.

Track: Public Sector and Non-Profit Marketing