



The types and aspects of front-of-pack food labelling schemes preferred by adults and children



Simone Pettigrew^{a, *}, Zenobia Talati^a, Caroline Miller^{b, c}, Helen Dixon^d, Bridget Kelly^e, Kylie Ball^f

^a School of Psychology and Speech Pathology, Curtin University, Kent St, Bentley, WA 6102, Australia

^b South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, North Terrace, Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia

^c University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia

^d Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Cancer Council Victoria, 615 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, VIC 3004, Australia

^e Early Start Research Institute, School of Health and Society, University of Wollongong, Northfields Avenue, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia

^f Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Deakin University Australia, Locked Bag 20000, Geelong, VIC 3220, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 July 2016

Received in revised form

22 November 2016

Accepted 23 November 2016

Available online 25 November 2016

Keywords:

Food labels

Socioeconomic status

Adults

Children

ABSTRACT

There is strong interest in front-of-pack labels (FoPLs) as a potential mechanism for improving diets, and therefore health, at the population level. The present study examined Australian consumers' preferences for different types and attributes of FoPLs to provide additional insights into optimal methods of presenting nutrition information on the front of food packets. Much research to date has focused on two main types of FoPLs – those expressing daily intake values for specific nutrients and those utilising 'traffic light' colour coding. This study extends this work by: (i) including the new Health Star Rating system recently introduced in Australia and New Zealand; (ii) allowing a large sample of consumers to self-nominate the evaluation criteria they consider to be most important in choosing between FoPLs; (iii) oversampling consumers of lower socioeconomic status; and (iv) including children, who consume and purchase food in their own right and also influence their parents' food purchase decisions. A cross-sectional online survey of 2058 Australian consumers (1558 adults and 500 children) assessed preferences between a daily intake FoPL, a traffic light FoPL, and the Health Star Rating FoPL. Across the whole sample and among all respondent subgroups (males vs females; adults vs children; lower socioeconomic status vs medium-high socioeconomic status; normal weight vs overweight/obese), the Health Star Rating was the most preferred FoPL (44%) and the daily intake guide was the least preferred (20%). The reasons most commonly provided by respondents to explain their preference related to ease of use, interpretive content, and salience. The findings suggest that a simple to use, interpretive, star-based food label represents a population-based nutrition promotion strategy that is considered helpful by a broad range of consumers.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

There is increasing interest in food labelling as a mechanism to improve people's diets at the population level to address high and growing levels of obesity and nutrition-related diseases (Cecchini & Warin, 2016; Gregori et al., 2014, 2015). In particular, simplified

nutrition labelling located on the front of packs has the potential to effectively inform consumers of the healthiness of food products and assist them in making more informed food choices (Van Kleef & Dagevos, 2015). The rapid rate of growth in this field of research is evident in the increasing number of major reviews being conducted on the topic over time (Campos, Doxey, & Hammond, 2011; Cecchini & Warin, 2016; Cowburn & Stockley, 2005; Grunert & Wills, 2007; Hawley et al., 2013; Hersey, Wohlgenant, Arsenault, Kosa, & Muth, 2013; Van Kleef & Dagevos, 2015; Volkova & Mhurchu, 2015).

Currently there are various types of front-of-pack labels (FoPLs) in use around the world, most of which are part of voluntary food

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: simone.pettigrew@curtin.edu.au (S. Pettigrew), zenobia.talati@curtin.edu.au (Z. Talati), Caroline.Miller@sahmri.com (C. Miller), helen.dixon@cancervic.org.au (H. Dixon), bkelly@uow.edu.au (B. Kelly), kylie.ball@deakin.edu.au (K. Ball).

labelling systems (Van Der Bend et al., 2014). Over the past decade, the European Union has adopted the Guideline Daily Amount system (GDA), the UK has endorsed the multiple traffic light (MTL) system, and the US has introduced the Guiding Star shelf labelling system that allocates foods a rating from zero to three stars (Crosetto, Muller, & Ruffieux, 2016; Fischer et al., 2011; Muller & Prevost, 2016).

In Australia, the context of the present study, the Daily Intake Guide (DIG) (similar to the GDA) was first introduced in 2006, but is currently being superseded by the Health Star Rating (HSR) system that was launched in December 2014 (Australian Department of Health, 2015a). Various other kinds of food labels have featured on Australian foods in recent years, such as the Heart Foundation's Tick (recently withdrawn) and icons relating to fair trade, animal welfare, organic status, and gluten content.

Of note is that an expert review panel commissioned by a combination of federal and state governments recommended the introduction of the MTL system in Australia (Blewett, Goddard, Pettigrew, Reynolds, & Yeatman, 2011), but this recommendation was rejected on the basis of anticipated resistance from the food industry (Australian Government, 2011). Instead, efforts were made to develop an alternative food labelling system that was acceptable to all major stakeholders, resulting in the introduction of the HSR system to the Australian marketplace in mid-2014. While the DIG was an industry initiative, the HSR was developed via a tripartite planning and development process involving representatives from government, public health, and industry (Australian Department of Health, 2015b). The HSR system allocates foods a star rating from half a star to five stars and provides information specific to energy and key nutrients (see Fig. 1). More recently, the HSR system has also been introduced in New Zealand as a voluntary FoPL system endorsed by the New Zealand Government.

While there is general agreement that FoPLs have the potential to improve diets at the population level (Mozaffarian et al., 2012), research to date on the relative effects of different FoPLs has been hampered by the limitations associated with data collected via hypothetical food choice situations (Cecchini & Warin, 2016; Volkova & Mhurchu, 2015). In the absence of real-world scenarios where individuals are exposed to multiple FoPLs in decision-making environments, researchers interested in how consumers compare and evaluate FoPLs have been largely limited to gauging consumers' reactions to various FoPLs in artificial conditions. These studies have focused on assessing consumers' ability to correctly interpret the information being presented (e.g. Maubach, Hoek, & Mather, 2014; van Herpen, Hieke, & van Trijp, 2014; Watson et al., 2014) and their self-reported behavioural intentions (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2013; Newman, Howlett, & Burton, 2014; Savoie, Barlow, Harvey, Binnie, & Pasut, 2013; van Herpen & van Trijp, 2011). Analysis is also complicated by difficulties associated with combining familiar and unfamiliar FoPLs, which makes it difficult to account for the effects of novelty and inexperience when interpreting results. Similarly, by the nature of the methodological design, these studies have typically included a small number of product categories, limiting their generalisability (Volkova & Mhurchu, 2015). Further work is needed that overcomes these limitations, such as by investigating consumer preferences among populations that have had exposure to multiple FoPLs across a range of product categories in the 'real world'.

A growing body of evidence indicates that the MTL generally outperforms the DIG across multiple criteria, such as encouraging the selection of healthier food options and reducing energy intake (Cecchini & Warin, 2016). The more recent development of star rating systems in some countries indicates the need for further research that includes this form of FoPL as an additional comparison point. Some work has been conducted on the Guiding Star

system (Cawley et al., 2015; Rahkovsky, Lin, Lin, & Lee, 2013; Sutherland, Kaley, & Fischer, 2010) and other notional star rating systems developed for testing purposes (Hamlin & McNeill, 2016; Maubach et al., 2014). However, due to the recency of its introduction, the HSR has received little comparative analysis to date. Initial exploratory work indicates it is likely to be considered attractive and useful by consumers and to perform well relative to the DIG and MTL systems in terms of facilitating healthy product choices (Talati et al., 2016a, 2016b).

Australia provides a useful test site for comparative FoPL research given the population's experience with multiple forms of nutrition labelling. Along with the implementation of the DIG and HSR systems as noted above, a traffic light labelling system is used by state and federal governments to classify products sold in school canteens, hospitals, and other food supply services (Bell et al., 2013; Pettigrew, Pescud, & Donovan, 2011). As a result, many Australians have some degree of familiarity with all three types of food labelling systems. This is an unusual situation that potentially permits more robust comparisons of consumers' attitudes to these FoPL systems. Accordingly, the aim of the present study was to investigate Australian consumers' preferences between these three FoPLs and the criteria used determine these preferences. The study participants were permitted to nominate their own reasons for preferring a particular FoPL, which represents an alternative approach to previous large-scale studies that have asked individuals to respond to questions relating to specific FoPL attributes (e.g., Emrich et al., 2013; Méjean et al., 2014; Siegrist, Leins-Hess, & Keller, 2015). By exposing consumers to multiple forms of existing FoPLs and asking them to report which they prefer and why, the present study provides insight into which evaluation criteria are considered most important to consumers and the relative importance placed on these criteria. This information is important because FoPL preferences are likely to be related to consumers' motivation to use different forms of nutrition labelling (Van Kleef, Van Trijp, Paepe, & Fernandez-Celemin, 2008). The results can be of use to governments and health agencies in countries where stakeholders are considering the most appropriate FoPL to implement to meet consumers' information needs.

2. Method

As part of a larger food labelling study investigating consumers' reactions to differing FoPLs, adults and children residing across Australia were invited to participate in a national online survey on the topic of health and nutrition. The inclusion of children in the study reflects their critical importance as both consumers and purchasers of food products, as well as powerful influencers on their parents' food purchase decisions (Quester et al., 2013). It also reflects the situation where children are often the target of unhealthy food promotion (Hawkes, 2010), despite having weaker cognitive processing abilities which makes them especially vulnerable to marketing activities (John, 1999; Rozendaal, Lapierre, van Reijmersdal, & Buijzen, 2011). Further, children have been nominated as a group in particular need of dietary improvement due to high levels of obesity and resulting susceptibility to a range of nutrition-related illnesses (Campos et al., 2011; Dehghan, Akhtar-Danesh, & Merchant, 2005). Children as well as adults need accessible and comprehensible nutrition information to assist them in making healthy food choices (World Health Organization, 2016), making it important to include both groups in FoPL research.

A web panel provider (PureProfile) undertook respondent recruitment for the study. Members of the PureProfile panel are recruited via a diverse range of strategies including radio and internet advertising, publicity, and referrals. Panel members receive small financial incentives for participating in surveys and IP

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5044368>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5044368>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)