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Food bundling as a health nudge: Investigating consumer fruit and vegetable selection using behavioral economics

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1 **Food Bundling as a Health Nudge:**
2 **Investigating Consumer Fruit and Vegetable Selection**
3 **Using Behavioral Economics**
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5

6 **Abstract**

7 Displaying bundles of healthy foods at the grocery store is a health nudge that simplifies
8 shopping and may have the potential for increasing fruit and vegetable (F&V) purchasing. To
9 evaluate the impact of food bundling, we conduct an artefactual field experiment with
10 community participants in a laboratory set up as a grocery store. Dual-self theory suggests that
11 food choices may differ depending on whether shoppers are under cognitive load – in our
12 experiment, we exogenously vary whether bundles are displayed (with and without a price
13 discount) and whether shoppers are under cognitive load. Our findings align with prior studies
14 that suggest unhealthy options are more likely to be selected when cognitive resources are
15 constrained. When bundles are displayed, we observe increased F&V purchasing. We also
16 observe a significant interaction between cognitive load and price discounting. We find
17 discounted bundles are more effective in the absence of cognitive load, but non-discounted
18 bundles are more effective when shoppers are under cognitive load. Although more research is
19 warranted, our findings suggest that when shopping under cognitive load, it is possible that
20 discounts impose additional cognitive strain on the shopping experience. For retailers and
21 policymakers, our results point to the potential power of bundling as a strategy for increasing
22 healthy food purchasing.

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25 **Keywords:** food choice; fruit and vegetable selection; product bundling; cognitive load; dual-self
26 theory; behavioral economics; health concerns; grocery shopping

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