FOOD ICONS

Richard A. Williams, Ph.D.
Labeling and Health Claims, Future of Food Marketing
Food Icons

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73% of all U.S. grocery shoppers would be very or somewhat interested in seeing these (FMI)

Focus groups indicate consumer interest in icons in restaurants
NLEA - Successes and Opportunities/Challenges

Successes

• End to the “Tower of Babel”
• Still widely used and diets improved but,

Challenges/Opportunities

Use of food labels is declining (Health and Diet Survey)

Over 50% of foods have some type of claim (mostly nutrient content) and...
Consumers Use Heuristics That May be Misleading

• Front of the Package Claims (e.g., nutrient)

• Back of the Package - One, or at most two, nutrients:
  • Number of grams to signal high or low
  • Compare grams to other foods on shelf
## Use of Food Labels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage (Often or sometimes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To see how high or low the food is in things like calories, salt, vitamins or fat</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare different food items with each other</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help you in meal planning</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To plan diets</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Health and Diet Survey
Can Icons Help?

Research question –

Can icons/symbols help consumers, in addition to information now on the label, to construct healthy total daily diets?
Different Consumer Needs?

Some Consumers:

- Plan, track and purchase foods to achieve a diet while others.....
- Choose foods and meals and diet “happens”
  - Do not plan anything
  - Pay attention to some nutrients only to compare products
  - Use claims as signals
  - Want to eat healthy, but don’t want to do a lot of work to achieve it.
Approaches to Overcome Poor Heuristics

Reduced Fat

Krispy Krackers

Reduced trans fat
### Back Panel Food Label Education

#### Limit these Nutrients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>% Daily Value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Get Enough of these Nutrients

- 5% or less is Low
- 20% or more is High
Disqualifying Levels for Claims – Useful for those consumers using claims as heuristics.

Total fat, saturated fat, trans fatty acids, sodium, cholesterol
New Era of Food Icons

- Manufacturers
- Trade Groups
- Third Parties
- Supermarkets
- Restaurants
- Governments (foreign)
Icons by Manufacturers

- Kraft "Sensible Solutions"
- Pepsico "Smart Choice"
- General Mills "Goodness corner"
Icons by Trade Group

The Whole Grain Council Stamp

National Dairy Council Stamp
Icons by Third Parties

AHA “Heart Check”
Icons by Supermarkets- Hannaford Foods

Good Nutritional Value

Better Nutritional Value

Best Nutritional Value

FDA CFSAN
Icons by Restaurants

Low Fat “Olive” at Olive Garden

Weight Watchers at Applebees
Icons in Other Countries

Canada “Health Check”

Australian/New Zealand “Pick the Tick”

Sweden “Keyhole”
Nutrient Icons in the UK

- **LOW FAT**: 7.7 g per serve
- **LOW SAT FAT**: 2.0 g per serve
- **HIGH SUGAR**: 42.4 g per serve
- **MED SALT**: 2.0 g per serve
Benefits of Label Information

- Cost of obesity, heart disease, diabetes could exceed $120 billion per year.
- Benefits of NLEA estimated to be between $4 and $26 billion
- *Trans* Fatty Acids labeling benefits between $1 and $2 billion per year
Potential Costs of Multiple Symbols

- Consumer Confusion
  - Multiple symbols
  - Different definitions

- Industry costs
  - Multiple labels for different markets
  - Different formulation for different markets