

Traffic Light Labeling Helps Consumers With Low Self Control

CHICAGO (PRNewswire) -- [Consumers with low self-control to resist food temptations, but not those with high self-control](#) [1], make healthier in-store food choices in response to traffic light color-coded front-of-pack nutrition information.

Researchers from Technische Universität München and Saarland University (Germany) manipulated the packaging of several pasta meals and cereal bars so that the labels either showed traffic light-colored nutrition information on the front of the package or the same labeling without traffic light colors. The color-coded labels used the colors green, amber, and red to signal that a food contains low, medium, or high amounts of negative nutrients (here: sugar, fat, saturated fat, and salt), and may therefore be consumed regularly (green), most of the time (amber) or only occasionally (red). In two studies, 336 consumers who did their grocery shopping were randomly assigned to one of the experimental groups and were asked to buy one product of their choice. The studies took place in a real supermarket, and participants did not know about the purpose of the study until they finished their shopping trip.

[The analysis appears](#) [2] in the spring issue of the American Marketing [Association's Journal of Public Policy and Marketing](#) [3]. The variable of main interest to the researchers was the healthfulness of the food choices, as indicated by both nutritional counselors and objective nutrient value ratings. The researchers observed consumers' food choices and found that consumers with low self-control to resist food temptations (as assessed via questionnaire) made healthier food choices in response to the color-coded labeling. The behavior is congruent with their long-term goals of controlling their food choices and can be observed when traffic light colors vary between both nutrients and products (Study 1) and when traffic light colors vary between nutrients but not products (Study 2). High self-control consumers did not respond to the color codes.

"Public policymakers may therefore favor a traffic light color-coded system; it leads to healthier in-store food choices in consumers who feel that they are struggling to resist unhealthy food. The labels themselves can be easily implemented on the product packaging and do not depend on separate media to remind consumers of the goal to control their eating behavior," write authors Koenigstorfer, Groeppel-Klein, and Kamm.

Thus, front-of-pack nutrition labeling using traffic lights may be considered one potential tool to prevent self-control failure and combat the increasing prevalence of obesity.

About the AMA

The American Marketing Association (AMA) is the professional association for individuals and organizations who are leading the practice, teaching, and development of marketing worldwide. Learn more at ama.org [4].

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[1] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/5fHCNESyNtB55VNB4TsSztBYQsIFLI8CQrILCzBBdZVYSztAsCYYqekNNJ6X1EVd7bzar1EVdBtzbFaAfyh1mE6txfifG-xbundWwpS4Z8-HW4JVsSUCNWeILZvC4n3hOCzvHTbECzBBPxOrX1EVpvVqWdAkRrzCul3PWApMU6CQjoUTvAm4TDNOB2pEVdTdw0Q0_AaOU03yd-hvKqes4IBBuhjWVEVhdHdQ9yJfypBrW0Fqcfckciz_bCNP339I4NRRSlzh0v8yjCq8blfH6xEw9-ulq83WC3h1jPTiZGMD6FVEwJm56RvzgQgaWlYQg4_Q-penNd43JqE6y2NelHvgSZsS50I81I7

[2] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/2DRPoQrhoKOyyYUOyrKrhKO-qemkTS4jqdSnPhOOC-Y-rhKOejuud7aoUSztwQsCzBNBdwQsCOKNBQBi7N8wHk3eMDF7RvgBLbCZgcX2uAvlZ2mYKrsjoZ7mn-LP2bxEVjhLRXBQjhOOVMVdZwQsILYJt6OaqJNPfaxVZicHs3jqplsrLOb2rPUV5xcQsCXCM0q0vO5ps01N6_8LTd7e2aOOL8FZsQsECRCW4NmDNcOJZ0k67Ca69h_BPovxxAS2oWWXaNEwfAh9Pd45GDRzgQg4_fmd41Zj1EwFVXFuRojzkYQgmH2zqLNEq85ta-q82vWvcDbUCy1Sjk3h1oDmlERuKrLi00

[3] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/5fHCN0SyNtB55VNB4TsSztBYQsIFLI8CQrILCzBBdZVYSztAsCYYqekNNJ6X1EVd7bzar1EVdBtzbFaAfyh1mE6txfifG-xbundWwpS4Z8-HW4JVsSUCNWeILZvC4n3hOCzvHTbECzBBPxOrX1EVpvVqWdAkRrzCul3PWApMU6CSjoUTvAm4TDNOB2pEVdTdAVPmEBC5eRnu00UISgfBrpOH2C0hIKcdf33Emr87OI5GD0Im4883uNa_ek2e1rifQOPso_2pulado_Mf3PqPt2oHjUCpm-wamz3P534E_OVIsMMOr1ctttBoQg7O8AVCy2RjWNEq82vDH6y0-FwQgkYZQLqI9NGuq8blxhJnUQd42KBvd41fZfCjBYjh0XmG1EwljHaTQdLnd-09o

[4] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/avndy0Acz8wrhoKOyyYUOyrKrhKO-qemkTS4jqdSnPhOOC-Y-rhKOejuud7aoUSztwQsCzBNBdwQsCOKNBQBi7N8wHk3eMDF7RvgBLbCZgcX2uAvlZ2mYKrsjoZ7mn-LP2bxEVjhLRXBQjhOOVMVdZwQsILYJt6OaqJNPfaxVZicHs3jrVlsrLOb2rPUV5xcQsCXCM0mGXM073qPt2oHjUCpm-wamz3P534E_OVIsMMOr1ctttBoQg7O8AVCy2RjWNEq82vDH6y0-FwQgkYZQLqI9NGuq8blxhJnUQd42KBvd41fZfCjBYjh0XmG1EwljHaTQdLndCYCG5x0V