Challenges of Consumers to Choose Products in a Grocery Store

Considered from a Weight Management Perspective
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Introduction
The following results presented are implemented via a multidisciplinary project entitled “Consumers in the weight management market” (KULUMA, 2009–2011) that analyzed consumers daily choices and experiences of food products related to weight management, and aimed to understand the factors which increase the motivation to change behavior.

The project was carried out cooperatively by six universities and research institutes in Finland and was funded by the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Tekes), universities and research institutes as well as eight Finnish food companies.
Unique cooperation between food industry and research organizations

Research organizations involved:
- Savonia University of Applied Sciences
- University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio Campus, Institute of Public Health and Clinical Nutrition and Department of Business
- University of Jyväskylä, Department of Psychology
- National Consumer Research Center, Helsinki
- University of Turku, Finland Futures Research Centre
- University of Vaasa, EPANET

Food Industry, **the eight biggest food manufacturers** in Finland
- Atria, Fazer, Hartwall, HK, Saarioinen, Sinebrychoff, Vaasan, Valio
Study aims
Study aims were ...

... to explore

• the challenges of consumers’ when choosing food products for weight management purposes and
  – papers already published – see slide 18

• their expectations about a grocery store environment as a facilitator of healthy food choices.
  – manuscript – to be submitted
Methods and study subjects
Methods and study subjects

• Recruitment
  – 1000 questionnaires delivered in Nov-Dec 2009 at the K-Citymarket Kolmisoppi, Kuopio
  – 367 respondents gave back the questionnaires → 167 consumers actively managing their weight

→ Field experiment:

• Study subjects
  – represented consumers (n=36), aged from 18 to 65, corresponding to the profile of the survey responses

• Methods
  – verbal analysis protocol combined with wireless audio-visual observation, questionnaires and interviews in the K-Citymarket in Apr-May 2010

• Subjects were given a shopping list of 11 food categories twice;
  – a product they usually buy and
  – a product they would use for weight management
Some highlights
### Energy contents of selected food products according to the observational study made in the 17 grocery stores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Energy minimum kcal/100g</th>
<th>Energy maximum kcal/100g</th>
<th>Difference of max. and min. energy values kcal / 100g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat spread, n = 94</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoghurt, n = 363</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold cuts, n = 263</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready meal, n = 459</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared salad, n = 74</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese, n = 136</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, n = 275</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookies, n = 397</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salad dressing, n = 76</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft drink, n = 109</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice, n = 238</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total, n = 2484</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saarela et al. 2012.
### Ways of Displaying Nutritional Information in the front of Food Package

Energy Statements on Food Products (n=2484) in 17 Grocery Stores in Finland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy X kcal</td>
<td>X kcal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy X kcal / 100 ml, Y %</td>
<td>X kcal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low calories X kcal / 100 g</td>
<td>Ultra light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low in calories</td>
<td>Lighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No calories</td>
<td>Light X %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X kcal / slice</td>
<td>New lighter choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X kcal / 100 g</td>
<td>Light X kcal / 100 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X kcal / portion</td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than X calories / product</td>
<td>Zero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saarela et al. 2012.
Other results derived from the papers published

Subjects had challenges while choosing food, such as:

- the time taken - maximum 225 seconds - to find a suitable product ...

- ... among all the options of a wide product category - variation of product options from 74 prepared salads to 459 ready meals per product category,

- understanding all package labels properly, for example the GDA-label in relation to the nutrition content table.
Other results derived from the papers published

Note!

According to the verbalizations:

Subjects had **practical suggestions**, such as colored labels in shelves, how **consumer-oriented marketing communication and services** should be developed and provided by retailers cooperatively with health-care actors to promote consumers’ **awareness of healthy food choices** in grocery stores.
Conclusions

The energy and nutrient content of different types of food products varies enormously.

Consumers have a challenging task to be able to easily find, identify and compare suitable products from a weight management point of view.

Innovative technological solutions should be found and piloted with consumers by manufacturers working cooperatively with retailers in the areas relating to marketing psychology and communication of nutritional information.

Successful consumer marketing will achieve desirable results for manufacturers, retailers and consumers as well as benefit the welfare of Society in the long run.

Saarela et al. 2012.
Future prospects
Challenges in nutrition communication at grocery stores

– **The layout of low energy content products** at supermarkets; e.g. shelf positioning of products, pricing, special offers, shelf markings, shelf speakers, product demonstrations

– How to **improve new ways to communicate to consumers** in relation to package labels

– **Innovative consumer services** at supermarkets, e.g. personalized self-relevant and behavior-driven nutrition information

– **Piloting innovative technological solutions** in the areas relating to marketing psychology and communication of nutritional information

– Should dieticians able to increase consumers’ awareness to select healthy food? Will we find a “**personal nutritionist**” at supermarkets when required in the foreseeable future?

– **The complete weight management strategy** in cooperation with different parties
The complete weight management strategy for supporting the welfare of individuals, public health and food business (Saarela, Keinänen, Rissanen 2012a)

**Health issues in authentic grocery stores**
- Product information
- Products selection skills
  → Tools of taking into possession the weight management process

**Health**
- Risk of cardiovascular diseases ↓
- Risk of diabetes ↓
- Risk of musculo-skeletal disorders ↓

**Welfare**
- Physical welfare
- Psychological welfare
- Economical welfare

**Good life**
- Ability to function
- Independent emergency
- Contentment
- Security management
- Trust

**Supporting consumer weight management**:
- Product communication; packages, advertising, marketing
- Innovative consumer services

**Willing to share the burden on consumer health status**
- Promoting public health
- Promoting national economy

**Added business value**
- Slumbering consumer segment
- Consumer positive imago
- Renewing competitiveness
- “win-win-win” – principal (consumer-society-company)
References - more information about the topic


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