The effect of organic labelling on consumption of a high calorie snack: A laboratory study

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Background

• ‘Health halo’ effects
  - generalise one aspect of nutritional content to other nutritional indicators.

• Organic Claims
  - Participants lowered calorie estimations of organic cookies, and believed they were suitable to eat more regularly than normal cookies (Schuldt and Schwartz (2010) Judgm Decis Mak).

• Hypotheses:
  1. There will be greater consumption of a snack labelled as organic compared to an unlabelled snack.
  2. There will be reduced consumption of a snack labelled as high calorie compared to an unlabelled snack.
  3. There will be an interaction of organic and high calorie labels such that those seeing an organic label will consume less if they also see a high calorie label compared to those who do not see a high calorie label.
Methods

Design
• 2 (organic vs no organic) x 2 (high calorie vs no high calorie) between-subjects factorial design.

Participants
• 78 undergraduate students from the University of Stirling.
• Participants received course credits for taking part.

Procedure
• Participants completed a questionnaire about taste perception whilst they ate the cookies provided.
• After the questionnaire was complete the true aim of the study was revealed to the participants.
• The plate of cookies weighed before and after to assess consumption.

Analysis
• Two way between subjects ANOVA
Results

Mean Consumption of Biscuits by Presence of Organic Information

Amount of Biscuits Consumed (grams)

No Organic Information
Organic Information

Information on Label
Results

1. **Significant effect** of organic information on consumption.
   - \( F (1, 78) = 4.977, p = .029. \)
   - Effect is in opposite direction than predicted

2. **No significant effect** of high calorie information on consumption.
   - \( F (1, 78) = .350, p = .556. \)

3. **No interaction effect** between organic and high calorie information.
   - \( F (1, 78) = .001, p = .980. \)
Discussion

• We found no evidence to support the hypothesis that organic labelling is associated with greater consumption.

• The previous research in this area focused on measuring behavioural intentions:
  - Asking people about intentions is likely to trigger more thoughtful and reflective cognitive processes
  - In contrast eating behaviour is to some extent an automatic process.

• These results suggest that findings about the impact of nutritional labelling on non behavioural outcomes need to be treated with caution.
Any Questions?