HAFL Master's Thesis Abstract

Year	**2020**
Student's Name	**Stefan Siegenthaler**
Title	**The impact of Nutri-Score on the purchasing behaviour of consumers in Switzerland compared with other front-of-pack nutrition labelling systems**

Summary

Background: Non-communicable diseases are widespread worldwide. Unhealthy nutritional patterns promote the development of diet-related non-communicable diseases like overweight and diabetes. The World Health Organization recommends that countries use easy-to-understand front-of-pack nutritional labelling (FoPL) as a strategy to address the growing global concern about unhealthy dietary patterns. Since 2018 the introduction of Nutri-Score has been discussed in Switzerland. The question has arisen as to what impact the Nutri-Score has on the purchasing behaviour of consumers in comparison with other FoPL conditions already used in Switzerland.

Methods: As part of an online survey, a choice-based conjoint experiment was used to test the impact of two product attributes on the choice of mixed salads: The nutritional quality with three attribute levels (high, medium and low) and the FoPL condition with four attribute levels (Nutri-Score, two variants of the Reference Intake label and no FoPL). The participants had to choose from a set of two mixed salads the one they would buy using a conditional multiple logistic regression, the impact of product attributes on the food choice was analysed.

Afterwards, the objective understanding of the nutritional quality of three mixed salads was examined in a ranking task. Each mixed salad had a different nutritional quality and a different FoPL. The Chi-squared test was used to investigate the impact of the two product attributes on the correct ranking of the mixed salads according to their nutritional quality.

The experiments are supplemented by questions on personal experience and preference with the investigated FoPL and their nutritional and purchasing behaviour. In addition to socio-demographic data, the self-assessment of diet quality, nutritional knowledge and the health status were also recorded.

Results: A total of 373 participants could be included in the data analysis. Of the two product attributes tested, the FoPL has a much greater impact on the food choice than the nutritional quality. Overall, mixed salads carrying the Reference Intake label were chosen most frequently. However, the Nutri-Score promotes the choice of the healthier salad and best prevents the choice of the unhealthier salad of all the FoPL conditions studied.

This effect of the Nutri-Score is also shown by the fact that it enables participants to correctly assess the nutritional quality of mixed salads overall most often. The Nutri-Score helps above all to correctly identify the mixed salad with the lowest nutritional quality most often.

The participants considered that that the Reference Intake label was the most helpful in ranking the nutritional quality of mixed salads. Accordingly, most participants preferred the Reference Intake label, followed by Nutri-Score. Most participants would support a mandatory, uniform front-of-pack nutritional label.

Conclusion: A FoPL should not only lead to food being chosen as often as possible. The Nutri-Score helps best compared to other tested FoPL conditions to make a conscious food choice that support a healthier dietary pattern. The great desire for a mandatory, uniform FoPL was in contradiction to the fact that nutritional information in general and FoPL in particular is rarely considered when grocery shopping. Moreover, nutritional information is often not understood at all.

For Switzerland, it can therefore be recommended that the path taken towards voluntary implementation of the Nutri-Score be continued. To promote the correct understanding and application of the Nutri-Score, uniform communication and information about its use and application are crucial.