About EUFIC

Communicating science-based food information to health and nutrition professionals, educators, and journalists in a way that promotes consumer understanding

Funding from agri-food chain and European Commission (project basis)

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Agenda

- Consumer insights at EUFIC
  - What information do consumers look for on food?
  - EUFIC review on consumer research in health claims

- EU-funded project CLYMBOL - Role of health-related claims and symbols in consumer behaviour
  - Analysing health claims and symbols in Europe: Scope of research

- EU-funded project NU-AGE - New dietary strategies addressing the specific needs of the elderly population for healthy ageing in Europe
  - Understanding of health and nutrition claims among elderly consumers
EUFIC asks consumers...

“Thinking about the last 6 months, how often have you looked for the following information on food and drink packages?”

In 2011, almost all respondents claimed to have looked for price and use by date of products ‘always’ or ‘often’ and one fourth looked for nutrition or health claims.

Base size  n=2,186 per country
N = 13,117 (6 countries: France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and UK)
“When buying food and drink products, how often do you look for the following information on the packaging?”

In 2012, price and use-by date are still most important to consumers. Health symbols are less looked for (one quarter), health claims are looked for by a third and almost half of respondents claim to look for nutrition claims ‘always’ or ‘often’.

**Base size**  \( n \geq 600 \) per country

\( N = 4,159 \) (6 countries: France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden and UK)
EUFIC review on health claims


The literature review included 32 original research studies, of which:

- 9 were cross-country studies
- 23 studies were undertaken in one country
- 7 papers were literature reviews and
- studies were 3 commissioned reports

The analysis focussed on two main areas:

- *Product / health claim attributes* (type of carrier product, type of health claim and other product attributes (e.g. brand, taste etc.))
- *Personal characteristics* (familiarity and previous experience, personal beliefs, personal relevance and nutritional knowledge)
Findings on the type of carrier product

Health claims tend to be perceived more positively on products with overall positive health image

Examples:
- bread vs. biscuits  
  \[(\text{Dean et al. 2007})\]
- yoghurt vs. chocolate or soup  
  \[(\text{Siegrist et al. 2008})\]
- bread or yoghurt vs. cake  
  \[(\text{Saba et al. 2010})\]
- bread or yoghurt vs. pork products  
  \[(\text{Lähteenmäki et al. 2010})\]
- brown bread and yoghurt  
  \[(\text{Williams et al. 2008})\]

Relationship between type of benefit claimed (adding fibre, \textit{lowering cholesterol}) and perceived benefit depends on type of carrier product.
Findings on different types of health claims

- Functional ingredients: claims with the familiar “omega-3” ingredient preferred over less known “bioactive peptides”

- Components of health claims: two (equal) classes of consumers can be distinguished:
  - those who prefer short messages (health benefit only)
  - those who prefer more detailed information on health claims (all 3 components: ingredient + function + health benefit)

- Type of benefit claimed & framing:
  - For dementia and weight management, positively framed claims are preferred, e.g. “increases the likelihood of good memory” vs. “reduces the risk of dementia”
  - For cardiovascular disease, the opposite, e.g. “contains omega-3 which reduces risk of cardiovascular disease” preferred

- Use of qualifiers: claims without “may” preferred over claims with this qualifier

NORDIC STUDY, 4612 respondents (Grunert et al. 2009)
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Findings on other product attributes

Other factors might have a greater influence on consumer behaviour

- **Brand**
  Brand is the most important factor (for those interested in their health) and health claims are the least important one (Ares et al., 2010)

- **Taste**
  Consumers are hardly willing to compromise on taste for health benefit (Sabbe et al., 2010; Vidigal et al., 2011; Verbeke et al., 2006)
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Personal characteristics: familiarity and previous experience

Familiarity increases a positive attitude

Products with better known functional ingredient “omega-3” perceived as more healthful than products containing unfamiliar “bioactive peptides” (Lähteenmäki et al., 2010)

Perceived healthfulness of products with different claims types

- ingredient
- ingredient + function
- ingredient + function + health outcome
Personal characteristics: personal beliefs and relevance

- Consumers’ reactions to claims on products linked to their own views about that product category
  - E.g. consumers with positive perceptions about dairy products in general were more willing to try products enriched with the milk ingredient “conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)” (Peng et al., 2006)

- More positive attitude and increased acceptance of food products with health claims when
  - directly or indirectly affected by related condition
  - needing to pay attention to own health (Dean et al., 2007)

**Example:** Both males and females who had to pay attention to their health perceived the cholesterol-lowering bread more positively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to pay attention</th>
<th>males</th>
<th>females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high need</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
EUFIC review on health claims

Personal characteristics: impact of nutrition knowledge

- Lack of nutrition knowledge can limit consumers’ ability to understand or evaluate health claims, leading to lower perceived benefit or credibility (Ares et al., 2008)

- However, higher levels of nutrition knowledge also linked to less trust in health claims (Lalor et al., 2009)
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Conclusions

- Different types of health claims may have different effects depending on whether
  - they are relevant to the individual
  - familiar in terms of ingredient and/or benefit claimed
  - credibility of carrier food
  - consumers prefer either simple wording or detailed explanations

- Overall, health claims seem to play only a minor role in food choices when contrasted with other factors such as taste and brand
CLYMBOLE - role of health-related claims and symbols

CLYMBOLE - the Role of health-related claims and symbols in consumer behaviour

Partly funded by the European Commission
Duration: 4 years (kick-off: Sept 2012)
Principal coordinator: Dr Sophie Hieke (EUFIC)
Consortium: 14 partners from across Europe, including top ranked research universities and communication specialists

How to contact us:
Facebook/clymbol
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www.clymbol.eu
NU-AGE - developing new dietary strategies addressing the specific needs of the elderly population for a healthy ageing in Europe

Partly funded by the European Commission
Duration: 5 years (kick-off: May 2011)
Principal coordinator: Prof Claudio Franceschi (Bologna)
Consortium: 30 partners from 17 EU countries

How to contact NU-AGE:

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Thank you!

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Communicating about today’s food