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Health warning labels and alcohol selection study

Submission date
11/12/2019

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
21/01/2020

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
19/04/2021

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[X] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[ ] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Many people exceed the current recommended guidelines for alcohol consumption in the UK. As well as immediate health effects, drinking too much alcohol has been linked to long term illnesses such as liver diseases (e.g. cirrhosis) and cancers (including breast cancer and bowel cancer). We know that warning labels on cigarettes can increase awareness of the health hazards of smoking, increase beliefs about the risks associated with smoking, decrease cigarette consumption and motivate quit attempts. Therefore, warning labels on alcoholic drinks could also help reduce alcohol consumption and improve the health of the general population but we need to test this before any decisions to use such labels are made. The aim of this study is to estimate the impact on selection of alcoholic drinks displaying image-and-text and text-only HWLs describing adverse health consequences of excessive alcohol consumption.

Who can participate?
Adults over the age of 18, who drink beer or wine at least weekly and shop in a physical supermarket for food and drink regularly (at least monthly).

What does the study involve?
Participants from the research agency's (Blue Yonder Research Ltd) panel of participants will first be contacted by email and invited to complete the initial screening questionnaire and given information on the study. The study is described broadly as an experiment on 'shopping habits and behaviour' to disguise the true aim. If eligible, participants will be randomised to a specific group (image-and-text HWL, text-only HWL or no label) and an appropriate time will be arranged. Participants will be invited to attend a study session and are given information on the study again before providing consent to take part.

Participants will then complete a shopping task in a room set up to look like a real supermarket, with shelves displaying a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and snacks. Participants are asked to do their weekly shop (for drinks and snacks) and are given a shopping trolley to put the selected items in. Depending on their allocated condition the alcoholic drinks will display an image-and-text HWL, text-only HWL or have no labels. Participants leave behind the items they have selected and these items are recorded and returned to the shelves. After the shopping task participants rate both an image-and-text and a text-only HWL presented on a beer or wine

bottle on negative emotional arousal to the HWL and acceptability of the HWL. Finally, demographic measures are taken. The study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Following completion of the study, participants are asked questions on what they thought the aim of the study was and how 'typical' the shop felt before being debriefed, which includes giving information about the study and the health consequences of consuming excess alcohol.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants will be paid standard market research panel rates for participating in this study. There are no known risks of participating in the study.

Where is the study run from?
Behaviour and Health Research Unit, University of Cambridge (UK) and Blue Yonder Research Limited, Leeds (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
August 2019 to February 2020
Data collection will take place over a two week period in February 2020

Who is funding the study?
Wellcome Trust (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Natasha Clarke
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Health warning labels and alcohol selection: an experiment in a semi-naturalistic shopping laboratory

Study objectives
Image-and-text and text-only health warning labels (HWLs) placed on bottles and cans of beer and wine will reduce their selection

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 27/08/19, Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee (School of the Biological Sciences, University of Cambridge, 17 Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RX; +44 (0)1223 766894; Cheryl.Torbett@admin.cam.ac.uk), ref: PRE.2019.058

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Between-subjects randomised experimental study

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Excess alcohol consumption

Interventions
Participants from the research agency's (Blue Yonder Research Ltd) panel of participants will first be contacted by email and invited to complete the initial screening questionnaire and given information on the study. The study is described broadly as an experiment on 'shopping habits and behaviour' to disguise the true aim. If eligible, participants will be randomised to a specific group (image-and-text HWL, text-only HWL or no label) and an appropriate time will be arranged. Participants will be invited to attend a study session and are given information on the study again before providing consent to take part.

Participants will then complete a shopping task in a room set up to look like a real supermarket, with shelves displaying a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks and snacks. Participants are asked to do their weekly shop (for drinks and snacks) and are given a shopping trolley to put the selected items in.

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of three groups and requested to select drinks from a range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, varying in the labels on the alcoholic drinks: Group 1: image-and-text HWL; Group 2: text-only HWL; Group 3: no label (control).

Participants leave behind the items they have selected and these items are recorded and returned to the shelves. After the shopping task participants rate both an image-and-text and a text-only HWL presented on a beer or wine bottle on negative emotional arousal to the HWL and acceptability of the HWL. Finally, demographic measures are taken. The study will take

approximately 20 minutes to complete. Following completion of the study, participants are asked questions on what they thought the aim of the study was and how 'typical' the shop felt before being debriefed, which includes giving information about the study and the health consequences of consuming excess alcohol.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Proportion of total drinks selected that are alcoholic in the pseudo-purchasing task

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Pseudo-purchasing indices:
1.1. Total spend on alcoholic drinks
1.2. Spend on alcoholic drinks as a proportion of total spend
1.3. Number of alcohol units selected: the total number of alcohol units will be calculated from the selected alcohol.
2. Post intervention:
2.1. Negative emotional arousal generated by health warning labels, assessed using a four-item measure, previously used to assess the impact of warning labels on cigarette packages
2.2. Acceptability of health warning labels, assessed using one item, adapted from previous research assessing the impact of sugar tax

Completion date
16/02/2020

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
-1. 18+ years old
-2. Able to read and write in English
-3. Regular drinkers (i.e. consume beer or wine at least once a week)
-4. Purchases supermarket products (food and drink) for household at least monthly
-5. Shops regularly (at least monthly) in a physical supermarket store
-6. Available to attend at least one time slot for each of the study arms (one each for Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 session). This means that when participants are randomised to one of the arms, it is certain that they will be able to attend at least one time slot for that session.

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
399

Key exclusion criteria
Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment
01/02/2020

Date of final enrolment
16/02/2020

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Blue Yonder Research Ltd
4325 Park Approach
Leeds
United Kingdom
LS15 8GB

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Cambridge

ROR
https://ror.org/013meh722

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Wellcome Trust

Alternative Name(s)

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
International organizations

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The data sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

IPD sharing plan summary
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		01/04/2021	19/04/2021	Yes	No
Preprint results	non-peer-reviewed results in preprint	18/09/2020	12/02/2021	No	No