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How to frame swaps within an online supermarket platform to maximise acceptance rates: comparing health, social norms and cost framed messages

Submission date
30/09/2015

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
30/09/2015

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
12/05/2021

Condition category
Nutritional, Metabolic, Endocrine

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

Plain English summary of protocol
Background and study aims
Prompting people with healthier alternative foods is a simple way to shift people towards buying healthier food, and has been used in a number of healthy eating campaigns. Recent work has explored the impact of offering automatically-selected lower-calorie swaps on an experimental supermarket website. This study found no overall effects of swaps, due to participants often not accepting the swaps or accepting swaps with a smaller reduction in calories. Those people who accepted more swaps did show reductions in the calories of their purchases. The current study aims to extend this work by testing whether framing the swap without appealing to health, instead using cost or social norms, might improve swap acceptance, and the impact of combining two of these frames.

Who can participate?
People aged 18-80 who are responsible for “about half” or “all or most” of the food/grocery shopping.

What does the study involve?
All participants are asked to shop for 10 items in an online supermarket shopping situation using an experimental website. At the end of the shopping task participants are presented with swaps offering healthier food choices, which are also cheaper than the initially selected item. Participants are randomly allocated to one of three groups, with each group using one of the following three phrases to offer the swaps:
1. “Swap to save calories”
2. “Swap to save money”
3. “Swap to this product chosen by customers who buy similar groceries to you”

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants are unlikely to gain or lose anything from participating in the study.

Where is the study run from?
Behaviour and Health Research Unit, Cambridge University (UK).

When is study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
The study will run for 1 week in October 2015.

Who is funding the study?
Public Health England (UK).

Who is the main contact?
Anna Sallis
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Message framing for uptake of within-category healthy food swaps: an experimental online supermarket study across socio-economic groups

Study objectives
1. Swaps framed in terms of the cost benefit or social norms are more likely to be accepted than swaps framed in terms of health benefit
2. Swaps framed in terms of cost are more accepted by individuals in low socioeconomic status (SES) groups whereas swaps framed in terms of health are more accepted by those in high SES groups

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Cambridge Psychology Research ethics committee, 03/09/2015, PRE 2015 056

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Three-arm randomised controlled trial

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Online supermarket shopping

Interventions
The study will follow a between-subjects experimental design with three arms, assessing the impact of swap framing on swap acceptance. The effects will be compared with a simple health framing control. All participants are randomly allocated to one of three conditions. Groups will differ in the wording used at the top of the swap window.
1. Swap framed in terms of health alone (control): “Swap to save calories”
2. Swap framed in terms of cost alone: “Swap to save money”
3. Swap framed in terms of social norm alone: “Swap to this product chosen by customers who buy similar groceries to you”

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Proportion accepted swaps: number of swaps accepted, number of swaps offered

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Energy density (kJ per 100g) of the basket of goods purchased and the basket of original goods chosen, i.e. had swaps not been offered
2. Nutrient content of basket of goods purchased and of basket of original goods chosen including saturated fat, total sugar and salt
3. Acceptability of intervention – measured after completion of shopping.
4. Age
5. Gender
6. Self-reported weight
7. Self–reported height
8. SES: individual level – both highest educational qualification (UK census levels) and household income

Completion date
31/10/2015

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Participants will be recruited via a research agency and will cover a spread of socio-economic status ABC1 (53%), C2DE (47%), gender (50:50) and age (18 to 80). Screening questions will be used to ensure all participants are responsible for “about half” or “all or most” of the food /grocery shopping (UK national surveys indicate this to be the case for 73% of the population (Food Standards Agency, 2011)).

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
900

Key exclusion criteria
Participants who are not responsible for “about half” or “all or most” of the food/grocery shopping

Date of first enrolment
01/10/2015

Date of final enrolment
08/10/2015

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Public Health England
United Kingdom
SE1 6LH

Study participating centre
Behaviour and Health Research Unit, Cambridge University
United Kingdom
CB2 0SR

Sponsor information

Organisation
Public Health England (UK)

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Public Health England

Alternative Name(s)
PHE

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		17/02/2021	12/05/2021	Yes	No