Consumer Subjective Social Feelings as a Function of Snack Type


SUMMARY STATEMENT

Eating in a social setting tends to lead to imitating behaviors of those around. Ploner (2013) suggests that college students in their school’s cafeteria choose foods that their peers eat because of their social surroundings. Busick et al, found that the more frequently parents exposed their children to fruits and vegetables, the more likely the children were to try the fruit or vegetable.

Social relationships and eating occasions are associated, but the relationship between snacking and social interactions has not been studied.

Snack types may be associated with subjective social feelings. This study tested consumer subjective feelings as a function of snack type.

OBJECTIVE

Determine the relationship between consumer subjective social feelings as a function of snack type.

METHODS

A convenience sample (n=77) of students and faculty was recruited. Participants signed an informed consent and completed pre and post surveys, rating their agreement with the statement: I feel more social when I eat (___), for six major snack brands (Nacho Cheese Doritos corn chips, Lays potato chips, M&M candies, Oreo cookies, Wonderful Pistachios, or Ritz crackers) using a 4-point Likert-scale (1=strongly disagree, 4= strongly agree). Subjects then reviewed the food labels from these snacks.

At post-intervention, there was an overall difference in feeling social across snacks, F(5, 370) = 3.03, p = 0.01, n^2 = 0.04. Post-intervention corn chips, potato chips, candy, cookies, pistachios and crackers were rated: (1.87, 1.95, 2.01, 1.91, 2.26, 1.96 respectively). Pre to post-interventions participants were significantly more social eating pistachios, t(74) = 1.79, p = 0.04, but significantly less social eating the crackers, t(74) = -1.69, p = 0.05.

The significant changes in feeling social seen with nuts and crackers may be partially understood by the length of the ingredient list (2 and 8 respectively) and number of vitamins & minerals shown on the label (7 and 0, respectively).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Subjects changed their social feeling as a function of snack type after viewing the ingredient list and nutrition facts panel. Since these changes in perceptions were accompanied by differences in the actual amount of nutrients and up to 30% of daily calorie consumption comes from snacking, it seems prudent that consumers consider these factors when making personal snacking decisions. These findings may also encourage manufacturers to place more emphasis on nutrient content, ingredients, and clean label when developing new snack options.

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH & PRACTICE

Subjects changed their social feeling as a function of snack type after viewing the ingredient list and nutrition facts panel. Since these changes in perceptions were accompanied by differences in the actual amount of nutrients and up to 30% of daily calorie consumption comes from snacking, it seems prudent that consumers consider these factors when making personal snacking decisions. These findings may also encourage manufacturers to place more emphasis on nutrient content, ingredients, and clean label when developing new snack options.

REFERENCES


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