



Comprehension and use of UK nutrition signpost labelling schemes

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Project set up

Management:

- Independent Project Management Panel (PMP)

Contractors:

- BMRB Social Research
- Food, Consumer Behaviour and Health Research Centre, University of Surrey.

Input from stakeholders:

- High level stakeholder group
- Advisory Group

Funding, PMP Secretariat and technical input: FSA

Aims of the study

- To test **comprehension** of FOP labels
- To understand how consumers **use** front of pack (FOP) labels in real life contexts.
- To assess whether the **coexistence of a range of FOP label types** affect comprehension.

Most comprehensive and
robust study of FOP nutrition
labelling published to date

Project Overview

1. SCOPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Lit review➤ Qualitative work
2. USE OF LABELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Accompanied shops➤ Shopping bag audits
3. QUANT. DEVEL. WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Pilot interviews➤ Cognitive testing
4. COMPREHENSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Representative sample survey in test conditions
5. EFFECT OF MULTIPLE FOP LABELS (Comprehension & reported use)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Survey➤ Depth Interviews

Comprehension of FOP labels

- In a test situation
- Three tests
 - evaluation of single nutrient in single product
 - evaluation of overall healthiness of product
 - comparison of healthiness of two products

Comprehension of FOP labels

Levels of comprehension
generally high (58% - 71%)*

*Combined figures from tests on evaluating a single product

Top two FOP labels

Two labels achieved the highest levels of comprehension overall:

- **Text** (words high/med/low) + **traffic light** + **% GDA** (70%)
- **Text** (words high/med/low) + **traffic light** (71%)

but others factors influence which is the strongest label overall

Use of energy (calories) info.

- Used by some shoppers
- No **negative or positive** impact on comprehension

Who has difficulty with labels?

Less easily understood by people who :

- are older (65+)
- have lower levels of educational attainment
- are from social classes C2,D,E
- *(are from certain minority ethnic groups)*

Use of FOP labels

- In retail environment more than at home;
- To make comparisons between products;
- To make single product evaluations.

Preference

- Expressed preference not always a good indication of actual ability to comprehend
- e.g. 'circular TL' format one of two best liked, but performance weak in comprehension tests
(sometimes interpreted as a pie chart)

Reported use of FOP labels

- Higher than would be predicted from observation
- Suggest degree of 'over-claiming'
- Poor predictor of *actual* use

Shopping decisions are complex

- FOP labels valued by those who use them

but....

- They compete with other factors when decisions are being made

Other influences on decision

These include:

- Price
- Brand loyalty/regular purchases
- 'Treats' or staple items

Other factors influencing decisions

- Other information on the product pack
- e.g.
 - 'healthy range' information
 - 'organic'
 - look of product itself

Examples of other sorts of labels



When are FOP labels used?

- Health conscious
 - interested in healthy eating
 - trying to lose weight
 - specific health issues (e.g. heart condition)
- Shopping for children
- More likely to be used on first time purchases

Healthy eating

- *Not used* by those not interested in healthy eating
- Those interested in healthy eating are *more frequent users* but....
- Healthy eaters don't use if are confident they know what's healthy

Most frequent users of FOP labels

Observed use:

- People with specific health problems
- Those watching their weight
- Health conscious people
- People shopping for children

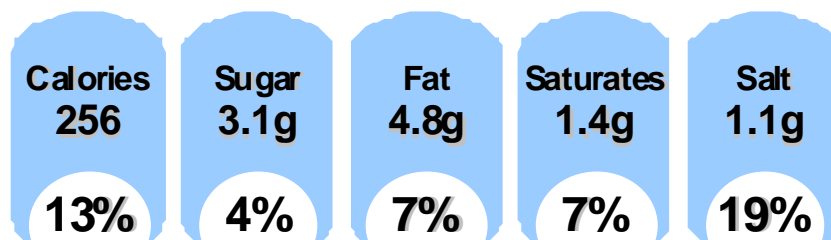
Barriers to use

- Portion size – unrealistic and variable (e.g. breakfast cereals)
- Level of nutritional knowledge
- Trust in labels
- Visibility of labels
- Complexity (products with combinations of high/low nutrients)
- Functional numeracy/literacy

The coexistence of different label types



	per 135g serving oven cooked	% of GDA
MED FAT	6.6g	9%
LOW SATURATES	0.8g	4%
LOW SUGAR	0.8g	1%
LOW SALT	0.3g	5%



Effects of existence of different label types

- Creates difficulty in comprehension
- Some shoppers say it makes things:
 - difficult
 - frustrating
 - annoying
- Some say it just takes too long

Also....

Use of colour on labelling schemes

Different use of colour on different FOP labelling schemes causes confusion...

Colour confusion

On traffic light schemes:

- some don't realise colour has meaning

Colour confusion

On %GDA monochrome & %GDA pastel (nutrient specific):

- some mistakenly assume pale/neutral colours have meaning
- Think 'cool' colours = 'good for you'

Consistency overlooked

- Shoppers missed the common element across schemes (weight of nutrients in grams)
- So were unable to use the information to choose

Key conclusions 1

- FOP labels will always **compete** with other factors in shopping decisions
- The **coexistence of a range of FOP label formats** causes difficulty for shoppers
- Comprehension levels **generally high**, so potential for widening effective use among some groups of shoppers

Key Conclusions 2

The strongest labels are those which include all of:

- Words 'High/med/low' +
- Traffic lights +
- %Guideline Daily Amount