

Handout 2 – Role of the retailers' environment in consumers' choice

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1. What evidence is there to inform promoting behavioural change in food and drink consumption and production?

It is relatively clear what type of diets consumers should follow; however, the main problem remains how to influence the consumers to choose “wisely” as often they do not, despite the fact that many have the adequate information. One of the reasons is the influence of the retail environment. There is plenty of evidence that retailers do influence consumers' purchases through a number of ways such as: selection of the assortment that is available, promotions, advertising campaigns within the shops. Probably the most comprehensive evidence about their role is presented in Chandon and Wansink (2012). As regards the effectiveness of retailers' promotions on driving the sales of sugary products in Scotland see also Revoredo-Giha and Akaichi (2014).

2. What might be the best approaches?

Choice editing might be the best approach if consumers cannot be trusted. However, it creates plenty of questions such as who the choice “editor” is going to be (e.g., retailers, manufacturers, the Government); is choice editing affecting consumers' rights?; are retailers or manufacturers willing to edit choices if that affects their businesses?; what is the impact of choice editing on economic growth? (note that both economic growth and healthier eating are goals pursued by the Scottish Government under “Becoming a Good Food Nation”).

The other approach is simpler and clearer labelling, that takes into account the fact that consumers make their decisions in a complex retailing environment (e.g., consumer is bombarded with advertising and decisions need to be taken in a short period of time). Most of the available evidence does not take into consideration the importance of the retail environment and the number of decisions that consumers face when purchasing food.

3. Are there gaps in knowledge – how can these be filled?

It is not clear to what extent retailers, manufacturers, the Government have the capacity/interest to edit consumers' choice. Note that it is not just about affecting businesses' performance but also economic growth goals. As one may think of trade-offs between health and growth, one should analyse the impact of choice editing on economic growth (and related factors such as employment) of particular sectors and on Scottish health indicators.

As mentioned, much of the available evidence as regards consumers does not take into consideration the importance of the retail environment (e.g., within a supermarket). Results are based on opinion surveys (e.g., evidence based on stated preferences) and do not consider the number of decisions

that consumers face when purchasing food (many decisions are based on habit and many consumers do not have the time or inclination to read detailed product descriptions). How to overcome these influences and make consumers more aware of their choices is something for which more evidence is needed.

4. What are the target groups?

The groups to target are retailers, manufacturers and consumers. All of them need to be targeted as one would like a consistent approach.

5. How can measures be delivered?

The measures adopted need to be based on evidence and strong participation of the Scottish Government.

References

Chandon, P., and Wansink, B. (2012). Does food marketing need to make us fat? A review and solutions. *Nutrition reviews*, 70(10), 571-593.

Revoredo-Giha, C., and Akaichi, F. (2014). Retailers' promotions and the demand for sugary products in Scotland. Poster paper prepared for presentation at the EAAE 2014 Congress 'Agri-Food and Rural Innovations for Healthier Societies' August 26 to 29. Ljubljana, Slovenia.