

We spend more on products with detailed nutritional information

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We spend more on products with detailed nutritional information. Credit: Carrie Cizauskas/ SINC

People would be willing to pay more for products that carry detailed nutritional information than for the so-called light items. Thus it has been confirmed by researchers from the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC) and the Centre for Agro-Food Research and Technology of Aragón (CITA) in a new study on the nutritional labelling of breakfast biscuits.

Based on 400 personal interviews of individuals in Zaragoza, "We made 1,600 observations; we included multiple choice questions so that people could choose a product for its attributes", the researcher María Loureiro, from the Rudiments of Economic Analysis Department of the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences of the USC, explained to SINC.

The product chosen for analysis was the breakfast biscuit owing to its high fat content and because it is a product that is consumed frequently. The work, which has been published this year in *Food Quality and Preference*, analyses perceptions of different attributes such as price, brand, extensive nutritional labelling and the light description of the product. The researcher explains the conclusions, "The label component is very important when selecting a product, although the brand name is even more so. The light denomination is also significant but less so than the labelling".

The research took into account different variables of a socio-demographic nature such as sex, age, educational level and salary, "But only age was significant when it interacted with regard to the brand. The greater the age, the more important the brand name", Loureiro explains.

As regards health concerns, 67.4% of the interviewees said that they try to control their daily calorie intake, whereas 32.5% said that they have health problems related to food consumption. 50.2% considered that their weight is right for their age and height and another 32.8% consider that they are slightly above the recommended levels. Only 10% acknowledged that they are overweight, a figure which contrasts with the OECD 2004 report, which evidences that 48% of the Spanish population are overweight.

Brand impact

According to the study, nutritional labelling is a key factor when choosing a product, but brand impact can quell this. The European Parliament is currently debating a new directive to determine what ingredient labels must include as, at the present time, the obligation only exists to include basic nutritional information on energy value, proteins, carbohydrates and the fat in foods.

"There is a lot of discussion about European nutritional policy and the new regulations are being delayed. According to our studies, we allow ourselves to be guided by nutritional information. That is why we must consider the need to place more emphasis on the information that we give of a nutritional nature and the strategies that certain brands may implement to give the appearance of higher quality", the researcher concludes.

Source: FECYT - Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology

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