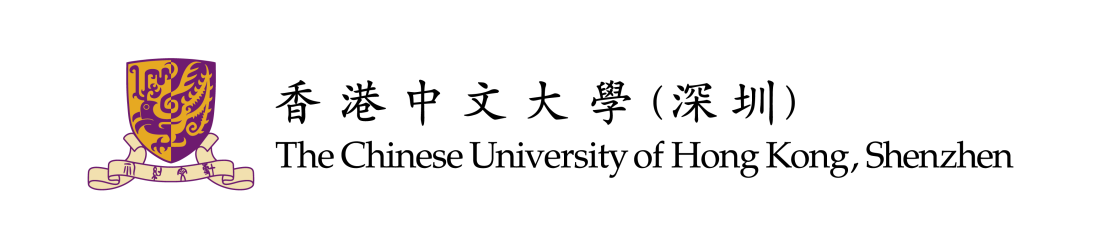
**The Impact of Label Information on Students’ Food Choices**

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**The Impact of Label Information on Students’ Food Choices**

**Introduction & Literature Review**

With a vast array of food options, contemporary consumers demonstrate an increasing consideration of more factors that surpass flavor, such as nutritional value, when purchasing food (Wandel, 1997). To showcase their distinctive features, food producers incorporate labels on their products (Chalupová et al., 2020). While most labels provide effective and comprehensive information, different consumers allocate varying degrees of attention to each label. By studying how consumers interpret and utilize label information, more effective strategies can be summarized to guide consumers toward healthier and more informed food choices. In addition, it helps companies to develop targeted marketing strategies and product innovations (Chalupová et al., 2020). Moreover, potential knowledge gaps between consumers and food producers can be identified, which helps shape labeling regulations. Therefore, studying consumers’ perceptions and use of food labels is crucial for promoting a better strategy for both purchasing and producing food.

Previous research has presented that the impact of food labels can vary across consumers’ countries and food categories, even among labels of the same type. Gracia and De-Magistris (2016) suggest that consumers in Europe prioritize organic-labeled food despite possibly worse flavor through face-to-face interviews, while other researchers show consumers in South Africa prefer to use personal experiences, such as freshness, instead of labels (Grunert & Aachmann, 2016; Van Der Merwe et al., 2010). Besides, Mhurchu et al. (2018) discover that consumers are more likely to check nutrition labels on convenience and snack foods rather than fresh foods, according to questionnaire results.

Studies also suggest that the design of labels has a significant impact on consumers’ choices. By analyzing yogurt labels and purchasing data, fancy aesthetic and graphic designs are found to be prior to functionality in attracting consumers (Ares, 2011). Also, Roberto and Khandpur (2014) apply eye-tracking technology and reveal that labels with fewer than five lines are typically viewed by more consumers.

Furthermore, the mere provision of quantitative information on nutrition labels is not found to be particularly efficacious (Cecchini & Warin, 2016; Dumoitier, 2019). Indeed, Wills et al. (2009) argue that most U.S. consumers may have a limited understanding or misinterpretation of certain food labels, indicating that the effectiveness of food labeling may have been overestimated.

Nevertheless, certain influential factors, such as the age of the consumer and the method of purchasing food (online or offline), are scarcely addressed in any of the conducted studies, making it difficult to differentiate the consumption characteristics specific to students. In addition, previous research has conducted relatively few studies on Chinese consumers. Consequently, the results of previous works may not be applicable to Chinese college students.

This research aims to study the impact of labels on the food choices of college students in Chinese mainland, seeking to address the current research gap in the specific context of Chinese students, where limited surveys have been conducted.

**Research Questions**

1. What types of food labels exert greater impacts on the choices of Chinese college student consumers?
2. What are the potential factors that can influence the impact of food labels on the choices of Chinese college student consumers?

**Methods**

Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected among college students from different provinces in Chinese mainland to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how food labels influence students’ choices, and a predominant focus will be placed on the quantitative data for statistical analysis.

Electronic questionnaires (powered by Wenjuanxing) will serve as the main data collection method for their convenience in the distribution, collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires will include Likert-type scales and ranking questions for quantitative research, and short answer questions for qualitative research. Furthermore, the questions will gather information regarding students’ knowledge and attitudes related to food labels, where independent variables, including food category, purchasing frequency, and purchasing method, will be considered.

Based on the collected data, statistical techniques, such as the mean analysis and the correlation analysis, will be employed to examine the relationships between food labels and participants’ food choices. The statistical results will be presented in charts or tables to help summarize the conclusions. For example, bar-chart results of mean analyses may provide evidence about what food labels exert greater impact, and correlation matrices can showcase the factors that influence the impact of food labels.

**Timeline**

This research is scheduled to be completed by Dec. 14th, 2023. The details of each task are listed below.

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| **Stage** | **Task** | **Timeline for completion (Date)** |
| **1** | Searching for Topics and Backgrounds | Sep. 20th, 2023 ~ Sep. 28th, 2023 |
| **2** | Searching for Materials and Drafting Research Proposal | Sep. 28th, 2023 ~ Oct. 10th, 2023 |
| **3** | Proposal Submission | Oct. 10th, 2023 |
| **4** | Designing Questionnaires | Oct. 10th, 2023 ~ Oct. 15th, 2023 |
| **5** | Distributing Questionnaires and Collecting Data | Oct. 16th, 2023 ~ Nov. 19th, 2023 |
| **6** | Organizing and Analyzing Data | Nov. 19th, 2023 ~ Nov. 26th, 2023 |
| **7** | Summarizing Primary Conclusions | Nov. 26th, 2023 ~ Nov. 30th, 2023 |
| **8** | Writing Research Paper | Nov. 26th, 2023 ~ Dec. 3rd, 2023 |
| **9** | Reviewing and Revision | Dec. 3rd, 2023 ~ Dec. 14th, 2023 |
| **10** | Paper Submission | Dec. 14th, 2023 |

**Significance**

As few surveys have been conducted in China, this research is valuable in validating whether the results of previous studies are applicable to Chinese consumers. Besides, this research concentrates on college students and introduces additional factors such as the food purchasing method. These approaches may reduce errors by selecting more relevant independent variables. Finally, the result can contribute to evidence-based suggestions to guide students in utilizing food labels properly. Therefore, the study holds significant importance.

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