



Consumer evaluation, use and health relevance of health claims in the European Union

Given the growing obesity prevalence around the world, the development of strong and comprehensive nutritional policies is urgent. Indeed, the overwhelming presence of packaged and ultra-processed foods make it difficult for consumers to know the nutritional quality of the foods they consume. Increasingly, governments are using health claims in an attempt to “have positive impacts on specific health conditions.” However, there is a scarcity of evidence with regards to whether “health claims appeal to, and are used by the target market for whom they may have specific health relevance.” Therefore, this study aimed “to provide an overview of consumers’ evaluations on familiarity, understandability and credibility for a list of 17 authorised health claims in the European Union; to profile health claim user segments; and to describe the relationship between specific health claim use and health relevance.”

The results highlight that while “the interaction between active ingredients and claimed health benefits may influence health claims’ ratings,” there was a wide-variety of claims within the 10 studied European countries. Furthermore, the study also highlighted some inconsistency across different socio-economic groups. Overall, the results emphasise the need for “better targeted communication efforts” to increase the impact of health claims and ensure that they support informed food choices across the different segments of the population.

Reference: Hung & Verbeke. Consumer evaluation, use and health relevance of health claims in the European Union. *Food Quality and Preference*. 2019;74:88–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2019.01.002>