

The challenges and opportunities of nudges and taxation in influencing food consumption behaviour

Neev Trehan, Muhammad Bilal Afzal, Hasan Ahmed and Mohammed Haris Javed-Akhtar

Imperial College Business School, UK

Introduction

Unhealthy eating is a prominent issue faced by all modern societies. Health nudges and taxation are instrumental as policy tools to influence healthier purchasing behaviours, with the aim of reducing the burden of the associated health outcomes.

Aim

To identify and assess effective methods of nudge and taxation in influencing consumer choices and to compare existing traffic light labelling with Front of Package (FoP) warning labels, which are not currently implemented in the UK.

Methods

A thorough literature review, an experiment, and semi-structured interviews with public health professionals were carried out to generate suggestions on improving the efficacy of nudge and taxation policy in the UK. The online experiment involved university students around the UK, predominantly those at Imperial College London. Semi-structured interviews with public health professionals of different backgrounds provided varied viewpoints on the efficacy of nudges and taxations.

Results

The online experiment found that the presence of interpretive labels helps guide better decisions, and that warning labels possess certain advantages over traffic light labelling. This was corroborated by the fact that a uniquely designed warning label which incorporated familiar characteristics, rather than those used internationally, was identified as the most effective label. There was no statistically significant difference between warning labels and traffic light labels in decision making. However, warning labels were shown to provide better guidance for consumers compared to traffic light labels. Thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews presented four main themes: influencing food choices, nudges, taxes and policy implementation. These viewpoints helped influence the suggestions we made.

Conclusion

Evaluative FoP labelling should be made mandatory. Our findings around warning labels emphasise the need for further research into their use in the UK. This study supports widening the use of taxes, use of interlinking and synergised portfolios of interventions and implementation of more challenging goals for the food industry.

Biography

Neev Trehan is a 5th year medical student at Imperial College School of Medicine. I have recently completed a BSc in Management from Imperial College Business School and have an interest in research and health policy.

6th World Congress on [Health Economics, Health Policy and Healthcare Management](#); Webinar- October 7-8, 2020.

Abstract Citation:

Neev Trehan, To identify and assess effective methods of nudge and taxation in influencing consumer choices and to compare existing traffic light labelling with Front of Package (FoP) warning labels, which are not currently implemented in the UK., Health Economics 2020, 6th World Congress on [Health Economics, Health Policy and Healthcare Management](#); Webinar- October 7-8, 2020.

<https://healtheconomics.healthconferences.org/speaker/2020/neev-trehan-imperial-college-school-of-medicine-uk>