Increasing Consumers' Fruit and Vegetable Selection: Can Product Bundling Serve as a Behavioral Nudge?

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To combat obesity, we test a health nudge designed to increase fruit and vegetable (F&V) selection. We examine the effect of cognitive load and healthy food bundles (with and without a price discount) on food choice. Following dual-self theory, choices made under cognitive load should be less healthy when bundles are absent, but healthier when bundles are present. Displays of healthy bundles should lead to healthier choices overall. We conduct an experiment with community participants to test these predictions. When product bundles are displayed, we observe greater selection of F&V items. We also observe a significant interaction between cognitive load and discounted bundles. In the absence of cognitive load, discounted bundles led to healthier food choices. Yet under cognitive load, displaying non-discounted bundles results in healthier food choices. We argue that when shopping under load, discounted bundles can impose additional cognitive strain. To appeal to mentally strained shoppers, retailers should display non-discounted bundles to increase F&V selection.

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