Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact of different food label formats on healthiness evaluation and food choice of consumers: A randomized-controlled study

Version: 2 Date: 14 February 2009

Reviewer: Eva Grammatikaki

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

Introduction
1) It would be better if the authors clarified in the text what is meant by the big 4 (energy, protein, carbohydrate and fat) or big 8 (big 4+ sugars, saturated fat, fibre and sodium).

2) It should be mentioned that the GDAs usually provide information on a basis of a 2000kcal diet.

3) Please rephrase the last sentence in page 4, paragraph 3 (EUFIC research undertaken…) with better English to better express what you mean.

4) Page 5, paragraph 2, lines 4-5: Please rephrase the sentence “They understand the common signposting formats in the way that they believe that they understand them” to better capture the meaning of what you want to say… At this point it is not very clear what you mean exactly.

Methods
5) Page 6, ‘Food Labels Format’
   a. The “tick” label format as you present it, already provided a ‘combined’ evaluation of the foods’ nutrient content. This should be mentioned in this part.
   b. Another question arising from reading this part of the manuscript is whether the participants were informed or educated in the beginning of the study regarding the different food labels formats. This information should be mentioned in the methodology part.

6) Please add the details for the statistical package used.

7) Please add if any corrections were made for the post-hoc analyses.

8) Was the knowledge of consumers on nutrition assessed prior to the study? If yes, then some information should be added in the methodology part. If not, then please add this to the limitations of the study.

Results
9) It would be good if the authors included the actual needs of the participants or at least the results of NVS II for the specific age group under study. Energy needs tend to differ from age to age. NVS II had a broader age range (14-80yrs)
while this study has an age range of 22-50yrs (36±14yrs).

10) Page 11, Lines 12-13: “showed that for sodium intakes there was an increase in educational level in the traffic light and colored GDA format” Please rephrase this with better English to better express what you mean.

Discussion

11) The authors mention in the discussion part that the use of food labeling may have no major impact on individual food choice rather than the production of healthier products. However, they support this argument by describing how the sales of healthier products have gone up (and sales of less healthy products decreased) after some major supermarkets introduced the signposting system. This could truly lead to the production of more healthful products (increased demand leading to increased production). But doesn’t this also mean that people actually made more healthy choices after signposting was introduced?

12) Authors should also include in the limitation part that in real shopping situations, promotion activities and offers can also majorly affect consumer choices.

13) In Table 2, you mention that milk chocolate is healthier than dark chocolate... However as the percentages of correct answers show, participants probably based their answer not only on the food labels shown but also on the fact that dark chocolate is widely accepted as healthier than milk chocolate (due to antioxidants’ content etc). Although I understand that in terms of the “big 4” dark chocolate may have slightly higher caloric value and fat value (source: USDA food database), participants might have been confused by its higher nutritional value for health. I would suggest that you either remove it from the analyses of your results or at least discuss why participants were unable to identify the ‘correct option’ in terms of body weight.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) Page 3, paragraph 1, line 7: please change to “…and more than 100% increase…”

2) Page 4, paragraph 5, line 4: change “lead” to “led”

3) Page 13, paragraph 1, line 4: …household size have an effect…

4) Figure legends: d) each portion…

5) In Table 2, no percentages are marked in bold.

6) In Table 2, please change “preserve” to “jam” to be consistent with the text.

7) Table 1: in females please correct spelling of ‘middle’ educational level

8) Please check the style of the citation in text. In some points it has not been done in the proper way.

a. Page 3, paragraph 1, line 4: …(KiGGS) [3,4] has…


c. Page 6, paragraph 4, line 1: …fat, saturated fat, sugar and sodium…
d. Page 8, paragraph 2, line 4: ...nutritionists...

e. Page 12, paragraph 3, line 4: ...range" [32,41].

f. Page 14, paragraph 2, line 1: ...Grunert’s and Wills’ review [32]:…

9) Please also check the format of the references in the reference section.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.