

Pre-Self-Commitment as a Means Towards More Sustainable Food Choices

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THEMATIC BACKGROUND

- Even if individuals generally intend to follow a balanced and healthy diet and process nutrition information, they often make unhealthy and unsustainable food choices
- In actual food choices, individuals seem to give privilege to food values that relate to an immediate reward (such as taste) over food values related to more distant rewards (such as health or sustainability)
- Potential explanations for the higher relevance of immediately rewarding food values in actual choices compared to stated relevances and general evaluations relate to present-bias and to dual-processing theory
- Different studies indicate that pre-ordering inhibits the shift of consumer preferences to more immediately rewarding food choices over more distantly rewarding food choices and hence can decrease the ordering and consumption of excess calories (van Epps et al. 2016; Stites et al. 2015; Just et al. 2008; Weijzen et al. 2008)

RESEARCH QUESTION & HYPOTHESES

Can pre-commitment in form of a stated intention to choose a specific menu improve actual food choices in a university canteen in terms of a more sustainable and balanced diet?

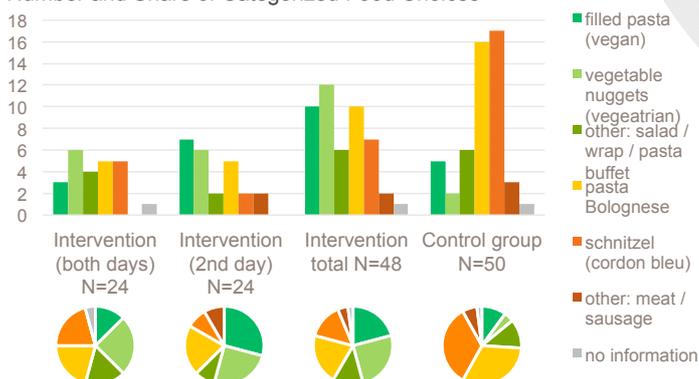
- In advance stated (intended) food choices are healthier and more sustainable than actual food choices.
- Stating an intended food choice in advance (making a pre-commitment) results in healthier and more sustainable actual food choices
- It is more likely to deviate from an intended healthy and sustainable food choice towards a less healthy and sustainable actual choice than to deviate from an intended less healthy and sustainable choice to a more healthy and sustainable actual choice.

DATA COLLECTION



INTERPERSONAL RESULTS

Number and Share of Categorized Food Choices



INTRAPERSONAL RESULTS

- Intended choices are not consistent with actual choices for paired comparisons (11 consistent vs. 13 inconsistent choices)
- Tendencies of not considering buffet dishes in intended choices
- Tendencies to make actual choices that are close to intended food choices (i.e. different vegetarian dish)

LIMITATIONS

- Low sample size for paired data inhibits quantitative analyses
- No inclusion of the relevance of specific food-values for intended and actual choices
- Higher share of male participants in the control group (80%) than in the intervention group (54%)

CONCLUSION

- In advance stated (intended) food choices are healthier and more sustainable than actual food choices.
- Stating an intended food choice in advance (making a pre-commitment) presumably results in healthier and more sustainable actual food choices.
- There is more research needed in order to evaluate quantitative effects.