

Menu labeling in traditional restaurants: opportunities, barriers and needs

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Background and Objectives:

About 30% of the energy intake in the Netherlands is consumed in the 'out-of-home' sector. Although commonly used in supermarkets and catering part of the 'out-of-home sector', health communication such as labeling or logo's are hardly used in traditional restaurants.

This study investigates the opportunities, barriers and needs to apply menu labeling in restaurants as a tool to facilitate a healthy choice.



Methods:

Study 1:

4 restaurants: the manager, chef and serving personnel were interviewed, a questionnaire was developed based on Rogers' 'Diffusions of Innovations Theory' (Rogers, 1985)

Study 2:

90 potential guests filled out a questionnaire, which was developed based on 'Theory of Planned Behavior' (Fishbein & Azjen, 1988)

Opportunities, barriers & needs



Figure 1. Opportunities, barriers and needs summarized

Results:

In Figure 1 opportunities, barriers and needs are summarized resulting from the qualitative interviews with managers, chefs and serving personnel from 4 restaurants. Some results from study 2 (potential guests) are given.

Figure 2 shows that eating out 'to enjoy' is much less a reason when eating in a business setting as compared to an informal setting (study 2).

Figure 3 shows that in the informal dinner setting, there is less need to be able to choose healthier options (study 2).

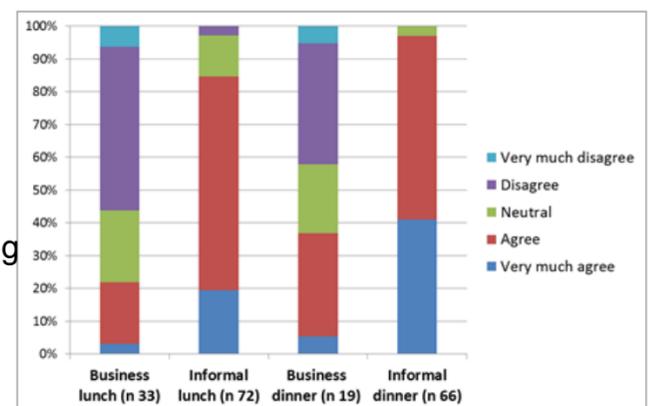


Figure 2. Reason for me to eat in a restaurant is 'to enjoy'

Conclusions:

This study shows opportunities for menu labeling as a way to facilitate a healthy choice for consumers. Opportunities for restaurants have been identified such as 'competitiveness' and 'creative challenge'. The barriers are challenges such as: 'complexity' and 'indulgence as reason to eat out'. Potential guests would like to be able to choose the healthier option, this might however depend on their reason for eating out.

In a follow up study we looked into more detail in the type of labeling and evaluated the process of recipe calculation (results not presented here).

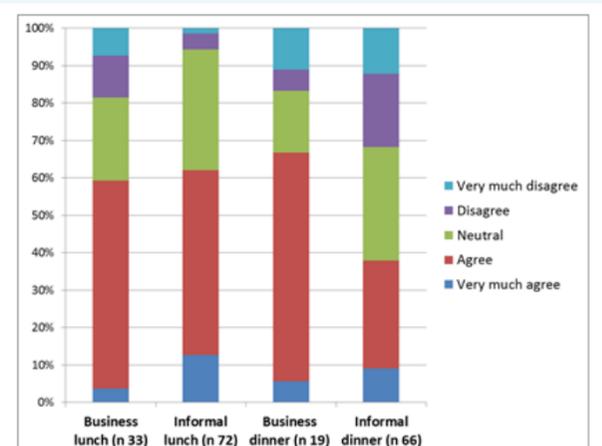


Figure 3. I would like to be able to choose a healthier option

Keywords:

menu labeling, health communication, out-of-home, restaurants