

Chinese consumers' use of food nutrition label and its determinants

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Non-communicable chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases have become the major causes of death in China. Chinese consumers are increasingly aware of the relationship between diet and health. To better communicate nutrition information to Chinese consumers, the Chinese government brought the mandatory food nutrition labelling policy into force in January 2013. Usage is an important intermediate step in evaluating the effects of nutrition labels on purchase behaviour and actual consumption (Hieke & Taylor, 2012). Given that China represents quite a different socio-economical context compared to Europe or North America (Hawkes, 2008), two questions are raised. First, do Chinese consumers use food nutrition label when they are shopping? Second, what factors affect their use? Based on the theoretical framework of Grunert and Wills (2007), this study investigates the determinants of Chinese consumers' use of nutrition labels. Data were collected through a consumer survey conducted in Beijing (213 participants) and in Baoding city (447 participants) in March 2012. Six regression models were estimated with Stata/SE 12.0 software. BMI, diet status and socio-demographic characteristics were the common independent variables in the six regression models. Subjective understanding, objective understanding and use of food nutrition label served as dependent variables in the first three regression models respectively. In the last three regression models assessing food nutrition label use, subjective understanding or/and objective understanding entered and acted as independent variables. Depending on the nature of the dependent variable, a linear regression model or an ordered logistic regression model was applied. The results suggest that subjective nutrition knowledge and subjective understanding play a significant and positive role in Chinese consumers' label use. BMI, diet status and socio-demographic characteristics do not yield a significant effect on nutrition label use. Recommendations on how to promote Chinese consumers to use of food nutrition label are given.

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