

BUILDING A BETTER BUNDLE: NUDGING FAST FOOD CONSUMERS TO A HEALTHIER COMBO MEAL

Will consumers in fast food restaurants make healthier choices with different combination meals? New insight from Purdue University finds better built fast food combo meals with low calorie sides and drinks nudge consumers to healthier choices

It's the classic combination, staple of fast-food restaurant menu boards for decades: hamburger, fries and a soft drink. But this delicious trio isn't the healthiest choice consumers can make. With obesity, diabetes and other rising health issues, how do you "Build a Better Bundle" to nudge fast food restaurant consumers into healthier choices?

Purdue researchers just might have an answer.

The research, published in the *Journal of The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, was conducted by researchers from Purdue University's White Lodging_J.W. Marriott, Jr. School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, including former PhD student, Dr. Monica Diaz-Beltran and current faculty Dr. Karen Byrd, Dr. Carl Behnke, Dr. Douglas Nelson and professor emerita, Dr. Barbara Almanza.

Researchers created six different menu scenarios in a fast-food drive-through simulation. Half the menu boards included meal photos for a Create-Your-Own combo, Traditional Combo with typical high-calorie default items or Optimal Combo with low-calorie default items. The remaining three boards were identical without photos.

Anticipated pleasure, that mouth-watering expectation, was lower in choosing Optimal Combos compared to other choices. Menu board photos changed order intention for Optimal Combos but varied by consumer's health concern level. While order intention generally was lower for the Optimal Combo, researchers found adding photos increased enticement of this combo for health-conscious consumers. Importantly for restaurateurs, consumers had the same anticipated pleasure with and without combo meal photos.

The research team believes that building these better bundles aided by visual cues should be considered in menu design to nudge consumers into healthier choices.

Dr. Byrd said "This study along with another related fast-food study conducted by our research team provide practical considerations that can help improve the health of consumers while providing valuable insights for the restaurant industry." That's a win for everyone.

MAJOR TAKEAWAYS:

- Building a better bundle, based on classic three-part fast-food combo meal, hamburgers, fries and soft-drink, is key to helping reduce obesity, diabetes and other rising health issues
- In parallel with marketing, healthier choices are possible when taking anticipated pleasure and order intention into consideration
- Visual cues through photos of combinations on menu boards can aid selection of healthier choices by some fast-food consumers

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW:

- Restaurants
- Fast food restaurants
- Dietitian
- Menu planners
- Consumers
- Franchisees

CONTACT US:

- Dr. Karen Byrd
- ksbyrd@purdue.edu
- Building a Better Bundle: Nudging Consumers to A Healthier Combo Meal.