

MARCH 2020

PEAS PLEASE

Reviewing the evidence: what can retailers do to increase sales of fruit and veg?



PRICE AND PROMOTION



With evidence that using cartoon characters to promote foods leads to children requesting the (often not particularly healthy) product in question (3), **Sainsbury's flipped this marketing technique on its head, using family friendly price promotions to boost healthier food purchases.** Sainsbury's offered Disney branded collectable cards when families bought healthier foods on price promotion, with those stores running the offer selling **a weekly average of 387% more packs of fruit as a result** (4).

Tesco price promoted fresh fruit and veg as part of a scheme called *Fresh 3*, leading to **sales of fresh fruit and veg increasing by 13%** during the six month trial period in 2019. Every two weeks, three different packs of fruit or vegetables could be purchased on special offer, with Tesco also offering further promotions on in-season fruit that might otherwise have gone to waste (4).

WHAT WE DID

We summarised insights from individual studies in the academic and grey literature. We excluded any studies looking at hypothetical consumer behaviour, limiting our search to studies carried out in retail settings. The body of recent evidence for the UK is small, and so where relevant, we have also included findings from other high-income countries with similar demographics.

WHY?

Just 33% of adults and 12% of 11-18 year olds in the UK are currently getting their 5-a-day (1). Yet 66% of people are thinking about, or already changing their diets to be more sustainable and healthier, and they want help from industry to do this (2).



The SHELf trial in Australia found that **women who received a 20% discount on all fruit and veg when bought from one particular supermarket chain, purchased 35% more fruit and veg than they usually did as a result.** Those in the price reduction arm of the trial bought more fruit and veg than those receiving only educational information and recipes promoting fruit and veg (5).

PLACE AND SPACE

Sales of fruit and veg increased by 15% in one grocery store in Warwick during a 40 week trial after they were moved from the back of the store, furthest away from the entrance, to the aisle closest to the entrance (6).

Swapping out less healthy foods for more nutritious alternatives doesn't mean that people simply buy less food. When Tesco swapped end of aisle Easter confectionary displays for healthier items such as nuts and pulses in a Lambeth & Southwark trial, sales of Easter confectionary dropped by 24%, but overall sales only dropped by -0.6%, suggesting that most people simply swapped one for the other (4).

Promotion and marketing

Visibility matters. When posters were placed in display spaces for vegetables and at all checkout counters for 60 days, one Japanese supermarket chain saw an 18.7% increase in sales across all vegetable categories compared to a control store (7).

In the USA, **an experiential Healthy Kids campaign used a point-of-purchase kiosk featuring fruits, vegetables, and healthy snacks** as well as a sampling pod comprised of food items from the kiosk to promote healthier foods to families. The intervention led to an increase in sales for a quarter of the items featured, with sales of vegetables benefitting most from the intervention. 58% of families said it had encouraged them to buy something new for their children (8).

THE MORE THE MERRIER?

Combining a 20% price reduction on fruit and veg with increasing shelf space in high traffic areas led to a 15% increase in sales of fruit and veg (with a 22% increase for fresh veg) in a large Danish discounter. Notably, the space intervention on its own did not have the same impact on sales (9).

Similarly, a Department of Health and Change4Life trial back in 2010 found that convenience stores offering a package of interventions designed to better promote fruit and veg in deprived areas (including rebranding chiller cabinets, introducing new stands for impulse purchases of fruit and veg, boosting available shelf space, and comprehensive marketing plans) led to an average sales increase of 143% (10).

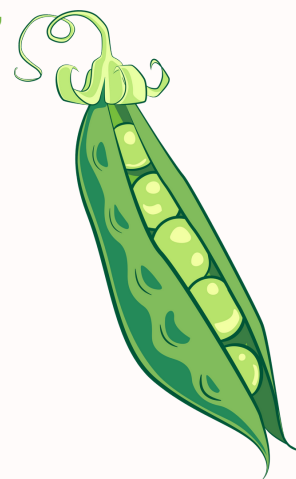


What may be less effective?

A recent trial by Tesco in 16 Express stores found that **using 'social norming' to incentivise fruit and veg purchases had no significant impact on sales.**

The trial placed messages on the shelves of chosen items, emphasizing how many people typically buy these foods, to try and influence shoppers by making them more aware of other people's behaviour (4).

Meal bundling: a large supermarket in America found that bundling ingredients together that could be used to make low-cost healthful meals had little impact on sales of promoted items (11). Interestingly, this finding differs from online choice experiments, where evidence suggests that displaying and promoting bundles of healthy food is popular with consumers and may increase purchases of fruit and veg (2,12).



Some closing thoughts and the road ahead

- ➔ **Access to healthier food matters.** Several systematic reviews have found that community intake of fruit and veg is positively affected by proximity to food retailers (13–16).
- ➔ **Most studies find that targeted store interventions, regardless of type, are for the most part effective in increasing purchases of healthier foods.** However, more studies look at information and marketing interventions than do price promotions and discounts (17).
- ➔ There is little published evidence from UK retail settings on the outcome of interventions specifically targeting sales of fruit and veg. **This is an area ripe for innovative pilots and trials,** that could be included as part of Peas Please pledges.



References

1. NDNS. NDNS: results from years 9 to 11 (2016 to 2017 and 2018 to 2019) - GOV.UK [Internet]. [cited 2021 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ndns-results-from-years-9-to-11-2016-to-2017-and-2018-to-2019>
2. IGD. Understanding how to shift consumer behaviour towards healthy and sustainable diets Appetite for Change.
3. Sustain. Pester Power or Parent Power? | Sustain [Internet]. [cited 2021 Feb 16]. Available from: https://www.sustainweb.org/publications/pester_power_or_parent_power/
4. Guy's and St Thomas' Charity. Can supermarkets help turn the tide on obesity?[Internet]. [cited 2021 Feb 16]. Available from: <https://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/wp-content/uploads/202010-chl-uk-can-supermarkets-help-turn-the-tide-on-obesity.pdf>
5. Olstad DL, Crawford DA, Abbott G, McNaughton SA, Le HND, Ni Mhurchu C, et al. The impact of financial incentives on participants' food purchasing patterns in a supermarket-based randomized controlled trial. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act* [Internet]. 2017 Aug 25 [cited 2021 Feb 16];14(1). Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28841892/>
6. Walmsley R, Jenkinson D, Saunders I, Howard T, Oyebode O. Choice architecture modifies fruit and vegetable purchasing in a university campus grocery store: Time series modelling of a natural experiment. *BMC Public Health* [Internet]. 2018 Oct 1 [cited 2021 Feb 16];18(1):1149. Available from: <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-018-6063-8>. AND https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/moving_location_of
7. Ogawa Y, Tanabe N, Honda A, Azuma T, Seki N, Suzuki T, et al. Point-of-purchase health information encourages customers to purchase vegetables: Objective analysis by using a point-of-sales system. *Environ Health Prev Med* [Internet]. 2011 Jul [cited 2021 Feb 16];16(4):239–46. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21431791/>
8. Holmes AS, Estabrooks PA, Davis GC, Serrano EL. Effect of a Grocery Store Intervention on Sales of Nutritious Foods to Youth and Their Families. *J Acad Nutr Diet* [Internet]. 2012 Jun 1 [cited 2021 Feb 16];112(6):897–901. Available from: <http://jandonline.org/article/S2212267212001244/fulltext>
9. Toft U, Winkler LL, Mikkelsen BE, Bloch P, Glümer C. Discounts on fruit and vegetables combined with a space management intervention increased sales in supermarkets. *Eur J Clin Nutr*. 2017 Apr 1;71(4):476–80.
10. Department of Health. Change4Life Convenience Stores Evaluation Report. 2010.
11. Moran AJ, Khandpur N, Polacsek M, Thorndike AN, Franckle RL, Boulos R, et al. Make It Fresh, for Less! A Supermarket Meal Bundling and Electronic Reminder Intervention to Promote Healthy Purchases Among Families With Children. *J Nutr Educ Behav* [Internet]. 2019 Apr 1 [cited 2021 Feb 16];51(4):400–8. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30765298/>
12. Carroll KA, Samek A, Zepeda L. Food bundling as a health nudge: Investigating consumer fruit and vegetable selection using behavioral economics. *Appetite* [Internet]. 2018 Feb 1 [cited 2021 Feb 16];121:237–48. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29137968/>
13. Burgoine T, Gallis JA, L. Penney T, Monsivais P, Benjamin Neelon SE. Association between distance to nearest supermarket and provision of fruits and vegetables in English nurseries. *Heal Place* [Internet]. 2017 Jul 1 [cited 2021 Feb 18];46:229–33. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28595138/>
14. Woodruff RC, Raskind IG, Harris DM, Gazmararian JA, Kramer M, Haardörfer R, et al. The dietary impact of introducing new retailers of fruits and vegetables into a community: Results from a systematic review [Internet]. Vol. 21, *Public Health Nutrition*. Cambridge University Press; 2018 [cited 2021 Feb 18]. p. 981–91. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29284549/>
15. Hollis-Hansen K, Vermont L, Zafron ML, Seidman J, Leone L. The introduction of new food retail opportunities in lower-income communities and the impact on fruit and vegetable intake: A systematic review [Internet]. Vol. 9, *Translational Behavioral Medicine*. Oxford University Press; 2019 [cited 2021 Feb 18]. p. 837–46. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31570930/>
16. Abeykoon AH, Engler-Stringer R, Muhajarine N. Health-related outcomes of new grocery store interventions: A systematic review. *Public Health Nutr* [Internet]. 2017 Aug 1 [cited 2021 Feb 18];20(12):2236–48. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28566095/>
17. Adam A, Jensen JD. What is the effectiveness of obesity related interventions at retail grocery stores and supermarkets? - a systematic review. *BMC Public Health* [Internet]. 2016 Dec 28 [cited 2021 Feb 18];16(1):1–18. Available from: <http://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-016-3985-x>