

Australians' perceptions of nutrition claims on alcoholic beverages

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Introduction: Nutrition claims are increasingly being displayed on alcohol labels [1], however limited research has investigated how they are understood by consumers. This study sought to examine consumers' awareness and perceptions of alcohol nutrition claims and to identify characteristics that predict positive attitudes towards claims.

Methods: An online survey was completed by 2,028 Australians aged 18+ who drank alcohol at least twice a month. Participants viewed mocked-up alcohol labels showing eight different nutrition-related claims (e.g., 'low carb', 'vegan friendly'). Participants rated their awareness of each claim and the extent to which it was perceived as credible, understandable, important, and relevant. Chi-squared tests examined associations between claim perceptions and consumer attributes, and linear regression identified predictors of positive attitudes towards claims.

Results: Claims about carbohydrates (32%) and sugar (31%) were most frequently seen, and were perceived to be true, relevant, and easy to understand by approximately half of respondents. Most believed that nutrition claims are important, particularly regarding sugar (76%) and calorie (73%) content. Younger age and higher claim awareness significantly ($p < .05$) predicted more positive attitudes to all types of claims, while female sex predicted more positive attitudes towards sugar, calorie, and vegan claims. The significance of other consumer characteristics (education level, income, purchasing behaviour, risky drinking) varied by claim type.

Discussions and Conclusions: Nutrition claims on alcohol product labels are highly salient to Australian consumers and are generally perceived positively. Younger consumers and women may be particularly susceptible to the influence of nutrition claims. This is concerning given evidence that claims can be misleading and falsely imply alcohol product healthiness [2].

Implications for Practice or Policy: Policy efforts are needed to ensure that nutrition claims don't undermine public health efforts to reduce alcohol-related harms. Improved regulation regarding messages permitted on alcohol products may be warranted to minimise exposure to claims.

References

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