

Role of health-related claims and symbols in consumer behaviour (CLYMBOL)

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In 2006, the European Commission has introduced a new [Regulation on nutrition and health claims made on foods](#) to harmonise the rules governing the use of nutrition and health claims throughout the EU and ensure a high level of consumer protection. Health information on food labels, present in form of health claims and health symbols, is intended to aid the consumers to identify foods that are healthier options. However, little is known about their actual impact on consumer understanding, purchase and consumption. CLYMBOL (“Role of health-related claims and symbols in consumer behaviour”), a European Commission-funded project running from 2012 to 2016, aims to investigate how consumers interpret health information on food and drink products and how this affects their purchasing and consumption behaviour.

In the first podcast, Dr Sophie Hieke, the Principal Coordinator of CLYMBOL, explains the background and objectives of the project, presents the consortium and stakeholders involved, and discusses the relevance of the project for decision-makers and consumers.

In the second podcast, Prof Dr Klaus G. Grunert , the Scientific Advisor to this project, talks about the scientific background of CLYMBOL, summarising what is currently known about the role of health claims and symbols in consumer behaviour. He further discusses the project relevance from a research perspective.

In the third podcast, Dr Igor Pravst, leader of the first work area in the CLYMBOL project, presents the research conducted so far and shares some preliminary results about the history of use and the current prevalence of health claims and symbols on the European market.

In the fourth and fifth podcast, Dr Ellen van Kleef talks about how food packaging influences our perception of a food and our satiety expectations. She is an associate professor at the Marketing and Consumer Behaviour group at Wageningen University. She researches how to help people eat healthily and self-regulate what they eat.

In the sixth podcast, Dr Erica van Herpen reveals how images on a package and health goals affect people’s choice of food products. She is an associate professor at Wageningen University. She researches the influence of e.g. store layout, social influence in the store, but also effects of on-shelf presentation or packaging of products, and how these factors affect people’s choices.

In the seventh podcast, Dr Judit Simon and Dr Ildikó Kemény talk about the effect of visual elements on a package and how it can attract attention to a food product carrying a health claim. Dr Judit Simon is a professor and Dr Ildikó Kemény is an assistant professor at Corvinus University.

About the speakers

Dr Sophie Hieke – Project Coordinator – European Food Information Council (Belgium)

Dr Sophie Hieke is Head of Consumer Insights at the European Food Information Council (EUFIC), a non-profit organisation that provides science-based information on food safety & quality and health & nutrition to the media, health and nutrition professionals and educators, in a way that promotes consumer understanding. She is also the Principal Coordinator of the EU FP7 funded project CLYMBOL – Role of health claims and symbols in consumer behaviour. Sophie studied Business Administration at Munich School of Management, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and Universidad Castilla-La Mancha, Toledo, followed by a Master of Business Research and a PhD at the Institute for Market-based Management. Her dissertation was titled "Marketing & Public Policy: The Case of Nutrition Labelling on Foodstuffs" where, among others, she dealt with empirical consumer research on perception, attitude, and comprehension of food labels. Her main areas of research include quantitative methods and experimental research on consumer behaviour in a food context. She is currently a visiting researcher at the University of Surrey as well as a standing research fellow at the Munich Centre of Health Sciences and the Center for Marketing and Public Policy Research at Villanova Business School, Philadelphia.

Sophie has published several articles, including in the Journal of Consumer Affairs, Appetite, Food Policy and Public Health Nutrition. She also serves as a reviewer for numerous high-ranked journals.

Prof Dr Klaus G. Grunert – Scientific advisor to CLYMBOL and leader of Work Package 3 – MAPP Centre for Research on Customer Relations in the Food Sector, Aarhus University (Denmark)

Klaus G. Grunert is Professor of Marketing at the Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus, and is the founder and director of the MAPP Centre for Research on Customer Relations in the Food Sector. He has done extensive research in the area of consumer behaviour, mostly with regard to food, and in making consumer insight useful in areas like new product development, market communication and public policy campaigns aimed at healthy eating or other socially desirable behaviours.

In particular, he has done research on quality perception and food choice, healthy eating, public acceptance of biotechnology and especially genetic modification, on how insight into consumer behaviour feeds into product development processes in food producing companies, and on competence development in the food industry.

As director of MAPP, he has carried out more than 80 collaborative projects with the food industry, including several pan-European studies, and has participated in or led numerous EU FP projects. He is the author of 12 books, 148 academic papers in international refereed journals and many other publications. Klaus is a past president of the European Marketing Academy and is professor of the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management.

Klaus is a German citizen who has lived in Denmark since 1987. His research and visiting appointments at other universities have taken him around the world.

Dr Igor Pravst – Leader of Work Package 1 – Department of Animal Science, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Dr Igor Pravst is Head of research group Healthy nutrition at the Nutrition Institute (NUTRIS) in Ljubljana, Slovenia. NUTRIS focusses on research into functional foods, food labeling and in particular consumers' use of nutrition and health claims.

Born in Kranj, Slovenia, Igor holds a PhD in chemistry from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and his areas of research expertise include food composition and the function of food constituents in human health. In 2012 he was appointed assistant professor in Food Chemistry, at Higher School of Applied Sciences, and in 2014 as assistant professor in nutrition, at the Biotechnical Faculty, University of Ljubljana. He has authored numerous peer-reviewed articles on nutrition-related topics in renowned journals such as Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition, Molecular Nutrition & Food Research and Food Policy. Igor is a member of the Slovenian Board for food safety.

Dr Ellen van Kleef is an associate professor at the Marketing and Consumer Behaviour group at Wageningen University. She researches healthy food consumption and self-control. Her focus lies on the role of subtle cues in the environment that cause people to overindulge and on how changes in the environment (smart interventions such as nudging) can assist in self-control. She has published her research in international journals such as Journal of Health Psychology, Food Quality and Preference, Appetite, Psychology and Health and Public Health Nutrition.

Dr Erica van Herpen is an associate professor at Wageningen University. She researches the influence of e.g. store layout, social influence in the store, but also effects of on-shelf presentation or packaging of products, and how these factors affect people's choices.

Dr Judit Simon is a professor at the Corvinus University of Budapest, the Director of the Institute of Marketing and Media, and she is responsible for the CLYMBOL project in Hungary.



Dr Ildikó Kemény is an assistant professor from Corvinus University. In most of her previous researches, she was responsible for quantitative methods and analysis.

For more information: Project website: www.clymbol.eu