

Food Working Group Speaker Series Session #1

February 26th, 2014 @3:00pm

Speaker: Gavan Fitzsimons, Fuqua – Marketing and Psychology

Topic: “Food: We love and hate it”

Economists like to think that we are making calm, deliberate decisions 100% of the time, but that is not the way the world works

Endless soup example [see slide]. People continue eating beyond the point of hunger satiety. We look for cues beyond hunger satiety to see when to stop.

How are we impacted outside of consciousness?

Childhood Obesity data recently reported a decline in obesity for ages 2-5, finally, but overall this is obviously still a problem. Advocates argued for healthy options in locations that didn't have them (vending machines, fast food outlets).

Study #1: High school setting (outside cafeteria). Students had three unhealthy options, or the same options plus a side salad.

“congealed fat delivery mechanisms” – French fries possibly the worst for you.

In most audiences, Gavan says 50% choose the side salad. But in the study, no one actually gets the side salad—the highest percent has always been in the single digits.

Does the presence of the side salad influence what the rest of us do?

10% chose what is worst for them with only three options, but with the side salad, the same group chose the side salad 33.3% of the time.

Q from Ronnie Chatterji: How did you differentiate societal pressure from internal motivation/psychology?

The setting was largely private so that there was low social pressure (maybe someone to order from, or in the case of the vending machine, no one)

There is nothing that is not environmentally determined.

In all cultural settings (where perception of the worst choice changes), people always choose the worst choice in every setting the most (when the healthy choice is introduced)

Comment from Charlotte Clark: people now go to McDonalds who would not have gone before (capture a larger market). However, those individuals still choose the unhealthy options.

Gavan: McDonalds did not expect that their sales of their other items would go up, while the salad sales would stagnant and remain with low sales.

Why? Occurring outside conscious awareness [see slides for possible explanations].

Ryan Asher Q: How did you get in touch with McDonalds to talk about this?

Gavan: I'm a B-school, branding, marketing guy and they see me as a safe contact. I also believe in partnering with those companies if it is for a shared goal. Gavan shares findings with other researchers and have been finding results that have caused people to actually choose the salad. McDonalds is now testing this in stores, and so they are happy to have this dialogue with researchers. Creating win-win situations: make McDonalds more profitable and make people more healthy.

"Vice bundling" – get individuals to pick a plate with $\frac{3}{4}$ fries and $\frac{1}{4}$ salad—offer that as a whole option

Why will they work with us? Higher profits, and they can get more ppl in the door that wouldn't otherwise come in. There is an emerging demand for healthy options in a healthy setting.

Q from Charlotte Clark: introducing pasture-raised burger in addition to a veggie burger- can bundling be used here?

Gavan: as soon as it's not a SINGLE healthy option, we notice this effect disappear. Offering multiple healthy options and people are more likely to eat it. Entities that were heavily criticized (schools, fast food), added only ONE option, which then increased this effect.

We have realized that putting a label on something that says healthy will not encourage anyone to eat it. Now a school district has changed their pizza to have a whole grain crust and low-fat cheese—they are substituting healthy foods without kids realizing it (did taste trials so that it tastes similar). They are doing this because the parents and school boards are demanding it. Then the company with the healthy recipe wins. We need market wins/companies.

School boards are dysfunctional—nothing has happened there. But with COMPASS, a study promoting fruit and vegetables to school children had positive results. They are now rolling it out to millions of children.

Back to study: By seeing the healthy option (only one), it results in vicarious health fulfilment. Those who have a self-control goal fall prey to this.

Measured self-control- those with low self-control are supposed to choose the worse option. But with the introduction of the unhealthy food option, the pattern reverses.

Q: How do you measure self-control?

Gavan has a measure from the study?

Q: Do people care about the nutritional value? Even if the nutrition facts are there?

Gavan's opinion from his studies and from others is that it does nothing. A high-self control person may use it, but she is already using it. A low-control person who is obese will pay no attention. But people respond well to red, yellow, green-type label systems.

Australian Park Foundation. CPG companies submit their info and an independent org rates what the 50% healthiest get the Healthy Heart tick on their box. But more of a selection based on the back-end consumer/business side. McDonald's didn't make the list the first time, but they wanted to make it, so they changed the oil they used, made the healthy check. Their choice actually made the oil cheaper because of volume, then other companies were able to make the switch. Then, McDonalds had to make another healthy choice decision to stay ahead of the market.

Q: Only relying on peoples' perception of what is healthy?

Gavan: Yes. Or unless you can do green, yellow, red-type rating system.

Google or Amazon switched to a green, yellow, red system in their cafeteria. They made green, yellow, red LINES to indicated what is good for you and what is not.

Q: Why can't you have something from the green/red lines?

Gavan: that's the bundling option! But people will then want to be the cool kids in the green line.

Q (student): What if you drop the healthy option?

Gavan: it goes to the bad-end of the food spectrum again?

Q: [How do claims like low-fat, natural affect food choice?] – Q may not have been heard properly.

Gavan: "Irrelevant attributes" –claims that mean nothing. Actually shift consumer choice quite a bit. Vacuous info that sounds good will sell well. "Down" comforter, vs an "Alpine Down" comforter. People loved the alpine one and it sold like crazy?

Can we show a direct social influence on eating behavior?

If they are low-weight or obese, will this make a difference.

Study participants were supposed to watch a movie, and to make it realistic, they had to pick up a snack like at the movie theater. 7 bowls of mini-candies, etc. When you walked in, someone was in front of you choosing their snack—actor pretending to be a participant. The actor took either 2 or 30 scoops of the snacks. The studied also varied how large the actor was—had a costume studio create a body prosthetic to take the actor from size zero to 16. Even her friends who saw her thought that she had gained a ton of weight-very realistic.

Finding: If there is no one in front of you- the average was 8 and a half scoops. [see slide for results] Control = 8.5 on average. The norm being set by a confederate/actor, clearly influenced participant choice. If a thin person in front of you chose a lot, you were more likely to choose more.

If you are trying to lose weight, then you don't want to go eat with the skinny friend who eats a lot (NOT the obese one—they don't influence your behavior as much bc you somehow correct for it internally).

Moderation eating vs. self-control:

Some people employ moderation eating, some employ avoidance for self-control. We've found that avoidance strategies don't tend to vary for good self-controllers or low self-control.

But people who are not good at self-control and attempt moderation will fail.

Shopping on an empty stomach:

[see slides] More hungry- you chose more higher-calorie foods. Same results from shopping 4-7pm vs earlier.

Partnership with COMPASS foods: Hypothesis that if we got parents involved in efforts in the school it would work better than just doing something in the school. Every time a kid got a fruit or veggie they got a sticker to bring back to class, and if their class won they got a prize.

Results: If you just did the school challenge for items consumed at school- there was an 11% increase in consumption during that week. But when done at home and at school, it increased quite a bit, and continued into the next week.

[BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS]

[DISCUSSION]

Gavan and Sarah Z: What do you all want out of a Food Working Group on campus? What role do you want it to serve for you?

Nic School Student Katie Anderson: How can we incorporate research like Gavan's into Duke Dining. Likely to be very receptive about health.

Emily McGinty (Duke Farm): Expanding the network of people involved in interdisciplinary work. There is no synthesized food research hub and students come to the Farm for ALL food items. The farm then provides a scramble to find someone at the university who can serve their need. We need to show students where they can plug in their various research interests. There is no food major, how do I get an internship in food? No one know what everyone else is doing.

Gavan: We have a BASS Connections team working on you could either have a beef or vegetarian option and what is the easiest way to represent that visually for consumers? This came out of a guy running marketing for "Beyond Meat". They make a meat-substitute strip. "We do great with vegans, not with meat eaters". BASS team will run blind taste test. Another BASS project will look at how to set up cafeterias for people with eating disorders. All-you-can eat can be problematic for individuals with eating disorders.

BASS Connections: Large donation from Bass family to expose undergrads to graduate research. All BASS teams have a mix of people from different parts of the university and connects undergrad, graduate, faculty. It is an applied learning experience with applied research. There are four thematic themes the projects can fit under.

Julia – Runs Bull City Fit- Community-Based Wellness Program. 100 kids come per week. Works with Sarah Armstrong. Largest childhood obesity program in the country. Always trying to get more research off the ground. Would love to work into one BASS study.

Christine T- so busy with clinical tasks, and want to show that our program is effective. Insurance companies won't reimburse often (doctor/nutritionist visits), but most of the program is not reimbursed (Lodging, courses, meals, etc). But in order to get this we need proof it is effective. Looking for partnerships. Christine can get a group together to come in and talk about this.

Gavan: We should do Field Visits to Tour Facilities or to host talks.

Kristen Cooksey (PhD student): it's so much more effective to really get out in the field and see it first-hand. We need to address the applied research work for students. There is a lot of faculty in contact with orgs that need help. Need more client-based projects.

Gavan: Where would this be housed if we don't have extra funding. Posting research opportunities on a blog.

McGinty: the academic community is starved for sunshine- I think a field trip or two per semester would be great. Could take everyone to SEEDS. Short-term solution to do more than just share information.

Shaw-chin (Fuqua student) : I was sold on Duke as being on the fore-front of business school anti-obesity campaigns. Couldn't find it when I got here. How was I supposed to find it? We need to make this info available to new students.

Cooksey: Need for something more short-term than a large Institute. Need to show interest first. I've noticed that some faculty are setting up client-student projects, but it doesn't need to be a large Institute first.

Gavan: One of the challenges from the faculty side, there is zero probability that Gavan would be allowed to teach an interdisciplinary class. Need to buy-out someone to teach the class. Thus, interdisciplinary classes are quite difficult to host.

Cooksey: What about projects?

Gavan: If it's not research or teaching, then faculty have difficulty finding the time unless it's publishable research.

Julia- if it's not a part of a course or a requirement, then it won't count for something

Gavan: Could create a research info page. But how can people find the info? Put the link in your email signature and people will go to it. We need to find ways to get people to the website so that it doesn't sit there with no traffic.

[Session ended at 5pm]

Next Speaker Series Session on March 26th with speaker Sarah Armstrong from the Duke Healthy Lifestyles Program.