Impact of Real-Time Incentives on Fruit and Vegetable Purchases and Diet

Karen Glanz, PhD, MPH
University of Pennsylvania

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1. Project Details
Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Dates: February 15, 2019 – November 30, 2022
Project Team:
• Karen Glanz, PhD, MPH *
• Amanda Fultz, PhD, RDN
• Yolande Goncalves, MPH
• Pui Kwong, MPH
• Christina Roberto, PhD * Principal Investigator

2. Research Question
Evaluate the effectiveness of financial incentives delivered in real-time at the point of purchase, on low-income consumers' purchase of fruits and vegetables (FV), FV consumption among adults and their children, diet quality, and weight/BMI. The study tested real-time incentives compared to a no-incentive control condition.

3. Background
• Many low-income families find it difficult to purchase enough healthy food to meet their nutritional needs.
• Advocates and policymakers have recommended financial incentives to promote the purchase and consumption of healthy foods, including FV.

4. Specific Aims
Primary outcomes:
1) Self-reported FV purchase data.
2) Self-reported intake of FV per day.
Secondary outcomes:
1) FV expenditures and incentives earned.
2) Overall diet assessment.

5. Eligible Participants
• Adult main household shoppers that received or were eligible to receive SNAP/Food Stamps and one child in the household.
• Shopped mainly at a participating ACME.

6. Research Methods
• 2 weeks run-in period, 6 months intervention, 1 month follow-up.
• Random assignment to the incentive or control groups.
• Eligible Products: Fresh, frozen, and canned FV.
• Incentives: Savings of 50% off for up to $10 a week.

7. Measures and Sources of Data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline, 6 months, and End of Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Food Environment Surveys</td>
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<td>• Dietary Screener Questionnaires</td>
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<td>• Participant Satisfaction Surveys</td>
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<td>• Participant Satisfaction Interviews</td>
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<td>• Supermarket Stakeholders Satisfaction Surveys</td>
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<td>• Transaction data (purchases, expenditures, and incentives earned)</td>
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8. Findings
The analysis included 220 participants (who completed all three study surveys)

Participant Characteristics at Baseline:
• 39 years-Adult median age
• 94% Female
• 52% Black/African American
• 76% SNAP Recipients
• 39% Annual household income less than $20,000
• 59% Adults with obesity
• 40% Children with obesity (Child BMI Percentile Category > 95%)

FV Expenditures:
• Intervention group participants who swiped their cards (74%) spent an average of $129.10 on FV, while control group participants (65%) spent an average of $67.14 on FV. Expenditures in the intervention group were almost 2x controls.

FV Purchases:
• After 6 months, there was a statistically significant difference (p=0.02) between the intervention and control group when purchasing fresh vegetables.

FV Intake:
• There were no significant changes in intake of FV between the incentive and control groups.

Participant Satisfaction:
• The majority of participants loved being part of the study and found it very useful for healthy eating (60%) and saving money on FV (51%).