



Comfortably numb: Choose, eat, waste.

Four experimental essays on consumers' acceptance of sub-optimal food

Laura Andreea Bolos

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Opponent: Professor Jutta Roosen, Technical University of Munich, Lehrstuhl für Marketing und Konsumforschung, Germany.

Betygsnämnd:

Professor Jessica Ascherman-Witzel, School of Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University, Department of Management, Aarhus, Denmark

Professor Bodo Steiner, University of Helsinki, Department of Economics and Management, Helsinki, Finland

Dr. Fredrik Fernqvist, Institutionen för arbetsvetenskap, ekonomi och miljöpsykologi, SLU, Alnarp, Sweden

Reserv: Docent Pia Nilsson, Department of Economics, SLU, Uppsala, Sweden

Handledare: Professor Carl-Johan Lagerkvist, Institutionen för Ekonomi, SLU, Box 7013, 750 07 Uppsala. E-post: Carl-Johan.Lagerkvist@slu.se

Biträdande handledare:

Dr. Micaela Maria Kulesz, Prisma Retail AI, and University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. E-post: Micaela.Kulesz@gmail.com

Dr. Anna Kristina Edenbrandt, Institutionen för Ekonomi, SLU, Box 7013, 750 07 Uppsala. E-post: Anna.Edenbrandt@slu.se

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Abstract

A vast amount of food is being wasted across the globe and the entire supply chain. There are multiple reasons for this, but when it comes to our part as consumers, the amount of food wasted is mostly due to our unwillingness to accept food that deviates from the norm, which is called sub-optimal food.

This thesis is a compilation of four papers that study consumer attitudes and choices related to sub-optimal food. The data used in this thesis is primary data, collected through both online (Paper I, III and IV) and laboratory studies (Paper II) conducted in Sweden (Paper I and II) and the US (Paper III and IV). As a whole, the four papers depict a multi-dimensional approach to food choices, offer practical insights for reducing consumer food waste and provide detailed guidance on the use of approaches and methodologies applied. In Paper I, we apply a dual-process model to study consumer food choices. We measure attitudes towards sub-optimal food using implicit and explicit methods, and we investigate the predictive validity of these two measures. In Paper II, we apply a serial mediation model to study the relationship between the visual characteristics of apples and expected liking and to investigate the role of attitudes and emotions as mediators of this relationship. Finally, in Papers III and IV we study the role of information framing in increasing consumers' acceptance of sub-optimal food choices increased acceptability of sub-optimal food on consumer choices. We also study the implications of consumers' values (Paper III) and goal-setting for purchasing sub-optimal food (Paper IV). We use personal values and goals to identify sub-groups of consumers with similar preferences for sub-optimal within each group.

Keywords: Food choice, attitudes, purchase decisions, visual characteristics, implicit and explicit measures, emotions, expected and actual liking, moderation, choice experiment, food waste, Schwartz personal values, goals, willingness to pay.

Author's address: Laura Andreea Bolos, SLU, Department of Economics,
P.O. Box 7013, SE-750 07 Uppsala, Sweden.

E-mail: laura.andreea.bolos@slu.se, andreeabolos@gmail.com