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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 45(45)

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Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed

Real-world convenience shapes laboratory food choices even when irrelevant

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Abstract

While people report many factors that determine their food choices, research into how and when people integrate these factors into their decision process often focus on taste and health. Other attributes, such as convenience, have yet to be considered in this value-based framework, as common laboratory food choice paradigms often render convenience irrelevant. In two studies, we found that convenience can, and should, be studied in this value-based framework. Study 1 (N=118) used a thought-listing paradigm, identifying convenience (22.7%) as a frequently-considered thought during food choice, after taste (43.7%) and health (32.8%). Importantly, in study 2 (N=94) we found that convenience ($\beta=0.06$, $p<.001$) predicted lab-based food choice, even after controlling for taste ($\beta=0.40$, $p<.001$) and health ($\beta=0.08$, $p<.001$). We demonstrate that convenience should be considered as an important attribute in value-based studies of food choice.