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**How Do Consumers' Beliefs About Product Price, Taste, and Health Affect Attention to Health-Differentiated Product-Sets?**

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**Objectives:** Consumers face myriad food products in supermarkets, obviating consideration of all options. Consumers are likely to direct scarce attention to products they believe will provide them the best outcome. However, consumers may hold inaccurate beliefs—particularly about health attributes which can lead them to omit items from consideration that they would have optimally considered. We examine how consumers' beliefs about the relative price, taste, and healthiness of food product sets affect the healthiness of the set of products they consider.

**Methods:** Data are generated from an experiment on 2,309 participants' choices of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals in U.S. To document the sets of cereal considered, we grouped 33 cereals into three subsets using the Guiding Stars nutritional rating system: less healthy, medium healthy and healthier subsets. Participants selected the product set (the three above, plus the full set of 33 cereals) they wished to view to

choose a box of cereal from. Participants later were asked how healthy, tasty, and costly they believed the cereals from each subset were on average. We estimate a multinomial logistic regression model using R software. The dependent variable is the consideration set selected by each participant, which could be less healthy, medium healthy, healthier, or a set that included all 33 cereals. The independent variables are the relative expected price, expected taste, and expected health for medium healthy and healthier sets relative to the less healthy set.

**Results:** Beliefs play an important role in people's choices. Individuals who perceive greater health differences between the healthier and less healthy sets of cereals are more likely to choose to view the healthy set than individuals who do not believe the sets of cereals differ much in terms of healthiness. We find similar effects in terms of beliefs about tastes and prices.

**Conclusions:** Beliefs about relative differences in nutritional quality of foods importantly influence consideration of products, potentially perpetuating misconceptions about relative healthiness of products. Finding ways to prompt individuals to challenge prior beliefs about health may promote healthier food choices.

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