

STRENGTHENING THE HEALTH STAR RATING SYSTEM

A man with a beard and a dark quilted jacket is looking down at a product in his hands in a grocery store aisle. He is standing next to a shopping cart filled with groceries. The background shows shelves stocked with various products.

CHOICE RESEARCH INTO
CONSUMERS' USE OF
HEALTH STARS TO MAKE
INFORMED DECISIONS

CHOICE



CHOICE RESEARCH INTO HEALTH STAR RATINGS

OUR FINDINGS

The presence of Health Star Ratings (HSRs) has a significant impact on consumers' perceptions of whether certain products are healthy or unhealthy.

Without the presence of a HSR, consumers were less likely to recognise a product as unhealthy compared to those who viewed the same products with the HSRs on packs.



Is this product healthy?

With HSR 41% said yes

Without HSR 74% said yes

Almost three out of four (74%) consumers believe Carman's Oat Slice is healthy without the presence of a Health Star Rating compared to less than half of consumers (41%) when the Health Star Rating of 1.5 is displayed on pack.

Health Star Ratings play a crucial role in helping people decide whether products are healthy or unhealthy. Unfortunately when Health Stars are not present, consumers are far less likely to accurately identify less healthy products.



Is this product healthy?

With HSR 40% said yes

Without HSR 67% said yes

Whole Kids Fruit Bars (Apricot and Manuka Honey) has a HSR of 2.5 and was rated as healthy by 40% of respondents. However, without a visible HSR, 67% believe it is a healthy product.



Is this product healthy?

With HSR 19% said yes

Without HSR 43% said yes

19% respondents who viewed Table of Plenty Milk Chocolate Snack with a visible HSR of 1 considered the product healthy. Of those that did not see the HSR, 43% considered it healthy.

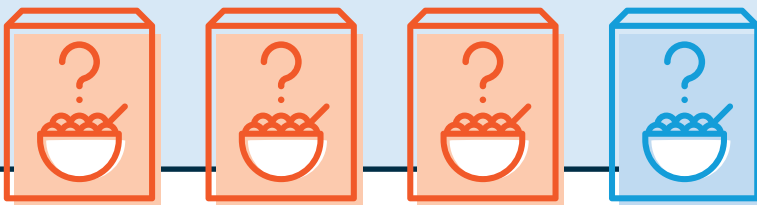
In order to help people successfully differentiate between products, Health Stars should be present on all packaged products covered by the HSR System.

People are significantly more likely to find it difficult to rate the healthiness of a product without Health Star Ratings. Without Health Star Ratings, people disproportionately rely on marketing material.

Of those that found it easy to rate the healthiness of products, the Health Star Rating was the leading factor for 65%. Around half of those who saw HSRs (52%), relied on the descriptions or images on product packaging to assess a product's healthiness. When HSRs weren't shown, this number rose to 75%.

Consumers overestimate the healthiness of a product based on their understanding of the ingredients advertised on the front of the pack.

Question background: Respondents were presented with a range of products within a category, such as breakfast cereals, and asked to select the healthiest option judging from the front of pack information displayed as it is on the shelf or online.



When choosing from four cereals, almost two thirds of people (63%) selected less healthy options, mainly based on their understanding of the ingredients. Only 37% correctly identified the healthiest cereal.

Which one is healthiest?

63%

37%

Unhealthy option selected

Healthy option selected

For those that selected the healthiest option, the HSR was significantly more likely to be an influence than for those selecting other cereals.



Health Stars make it easier to rate the healthiness of products.



When Health Star Ratings are absent, two-thirds of people rely on marketing material including product descriptions and images.

Health Star Ratings are crucial to overriding the influence of misleading marketing, and helping people correctly assess the healthiness of a product.



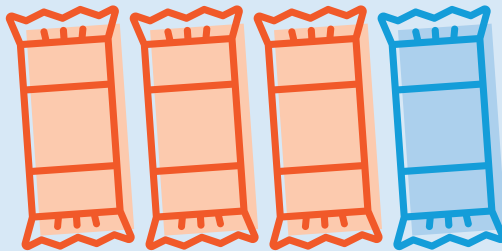
Misleading marketing has the ability to sway consumers, and CHOICE has recently submitted a complaint to the ACCC that illustrates how a number of sugary products marketed at children mislead consumers through product descriptions such as 'all natural' and 'no sneaky stuff' and appealing, colourful images.

When people see HSRs on some products but not others, they struggle to compare products effectively.



People were asked to select the healthiest product in a range of categories, with some products displaying HSRs and others not. When products were missing HSRs, people disproportionately relied on brands in order to make a decision about the healthiness of a product.

Question:
Which product do you think is the healthiest option?

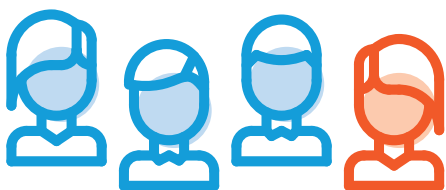


Weight Watchers snack bar does not have a HSR on the pack, but was chosen as the healthiest bar option by almost 1 in 3 over a Barley bar with a displayed Health Star Rating of 5.

Health Stars help people choose healthier products, but the system fails when ratings are displayed on some products but not others.

In order for the Health Star Rating System to succeed, Health Star Ratings must be mandatory so that consumers can compare like for like.

The HSR System is working for consumers.



Three quarters (75%) of people that have used HSRs trust the system quite a lot or a great deal.

More than 3 out of every 5 (62%) of people have used HSRs to influence their choice of food.

The Health Star Rating System is effective and very popular among consumers. It plays an important role in influencing people's food choices, and encourages them to make healthier choices.

One in four (25%) have chosen a product with a Health Star Rating displayed on the pack over a product that didn't have a HSR on the pack.