

# **Food labels as source of health information: What consumers think**

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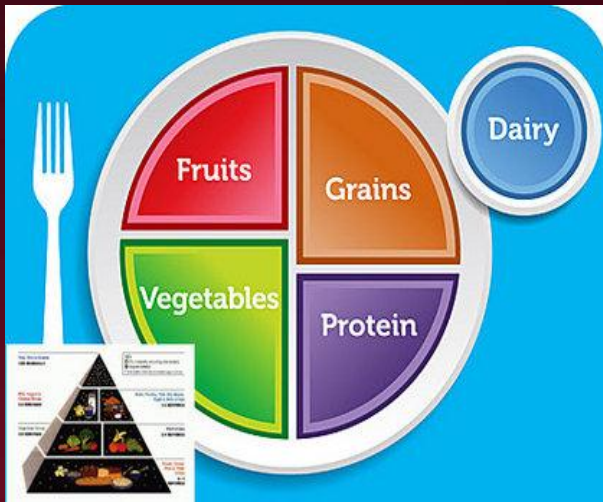
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# Background

## Link between food and health:



**Nutritious diet  
- optimum  
health = link**



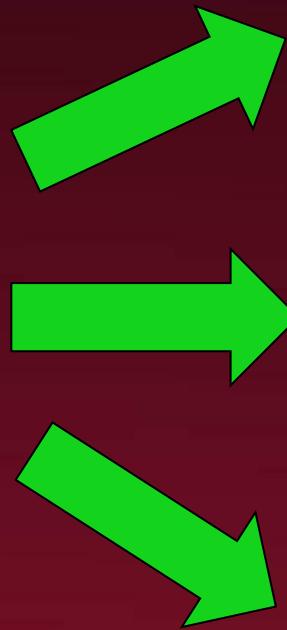
**Link → health  
conscious &  
aware of diet  
- ↓ risk CD**



**Access to food  
labels NB in  
healthy food  
choices**

# Background (2)

## Food labels:



**Communication  
channel**

**↑ interest in health  
= ↑ label use**

**≠ all consumer use  
labels – opinions -  
demographics**

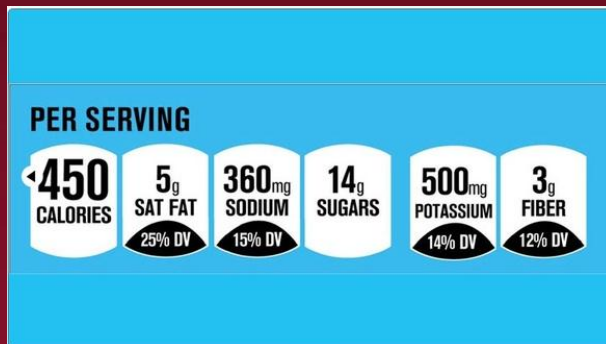
# Background (3)

## Relevance:

Limited consumer label research –  
developing country

SA research on larger scale needed  
(previously small-scale)

Consumer opinions & use of labels of  
interest due to potential contribution  
labels can make to healthy food choices



# Objectives



# views that might possibly guide consumer behaviour

## Determine SA metropolitan consumers':

- Opinions# re. the food-health link

- Opinions# & use of health info on food labels

- Differences between opinions # of consumers - different demographics

# Method

**Stratified randomized sample  
(n=1997) of metropolitan  
consumers – weighed  
(N= 10 695 000)**

**Field worker administered  
questionnaires designed by  
multidisciplinary experts**

**Statements re. consumers:**

- Opinions on the food-health link
- Opinions on & use of health information on food labels



# Method (2)

**Validity and reliability  
ensured**

**Statistics:**

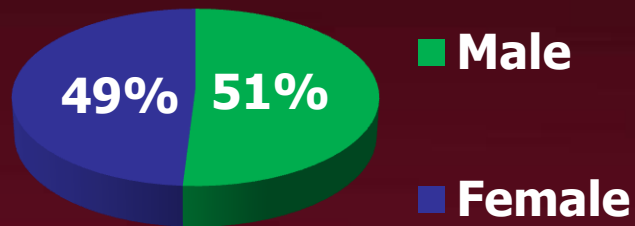
- Descriptive
- Cross tabulations
- Cohen's effect sizes



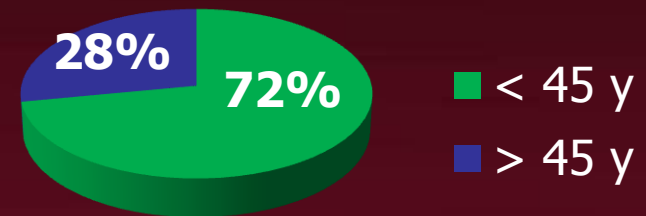
# Results

## Demographics

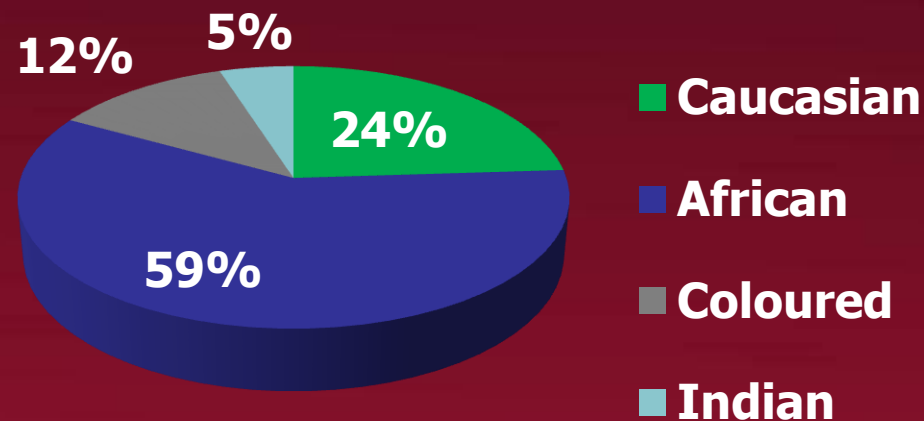
### Gender



### Age



### Ethnicity





# Results (2)

## Opinions about food-health link

Statements (N):	D %	Neither A/D%	A%	Effect size ( <i>d</i> )
Food can influence the development of diseases	18	18	64	0.92
All food play a role in healthy eating	7	9	84	1.54
Some food types can make me healthier	3	9	87	1.68
Food can prevent the development of diseases	5	12	83	1.56
I buy food that claims to contribute to my health	12	21	67	1.10
Everyone should consider how food influence their health	5	14	81	1.52
I only eat food for pleasure and not for health benefits	65	13	22	0.86

*D=disagree; A=Agree*

# Results (3)

## Opinions about food-health link

**Most aware of link between food and health/disease**

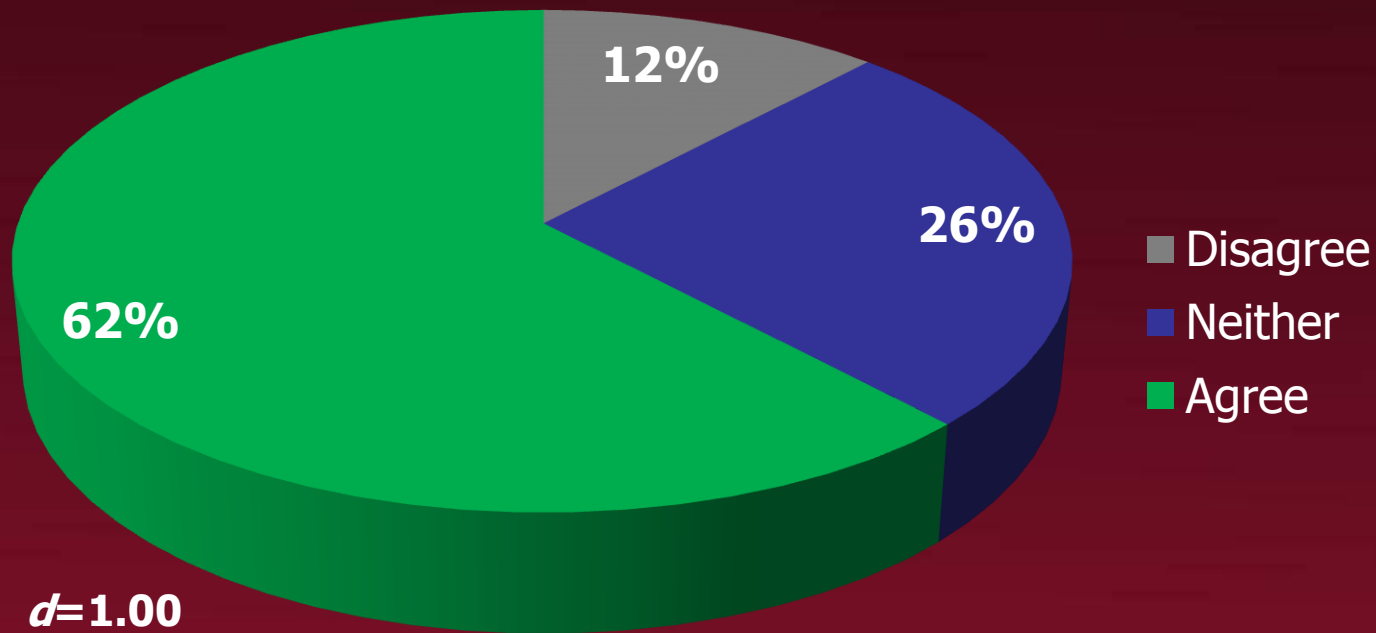
**Might guide purchase and eating behaviour**



# Results (4)

## Opinions & use of label health info

'Health messages can be backed up by scientific research'



# Results (5)

## Differences in opinions of demographic groups

No PS differences between age, gender and ethnicity for any statements

Positive opinions on food-health link by all ethnic groups  
( $\bar{X}$  = 3.5-4.5)



Respondents' health consciousness

Respondents' awareness of the food-health link



# Results (6)

## Differences in opinions of demographic groups

Mostly neutral opinions on using health info on labels by all ethnic groups

( $\bar{X}$  = 2.5-3.4)



Stronger opinions re. food-health link than actual use of health info

(+)opinions re. food-health link  $\neq$  precipitate into strong opinions & regular use of label health info – intention behaviour gap

## However....

Positive opinion on *'label health messages backed up by scientific research'*

( $\bar{X}$  = 3.6-4.0)

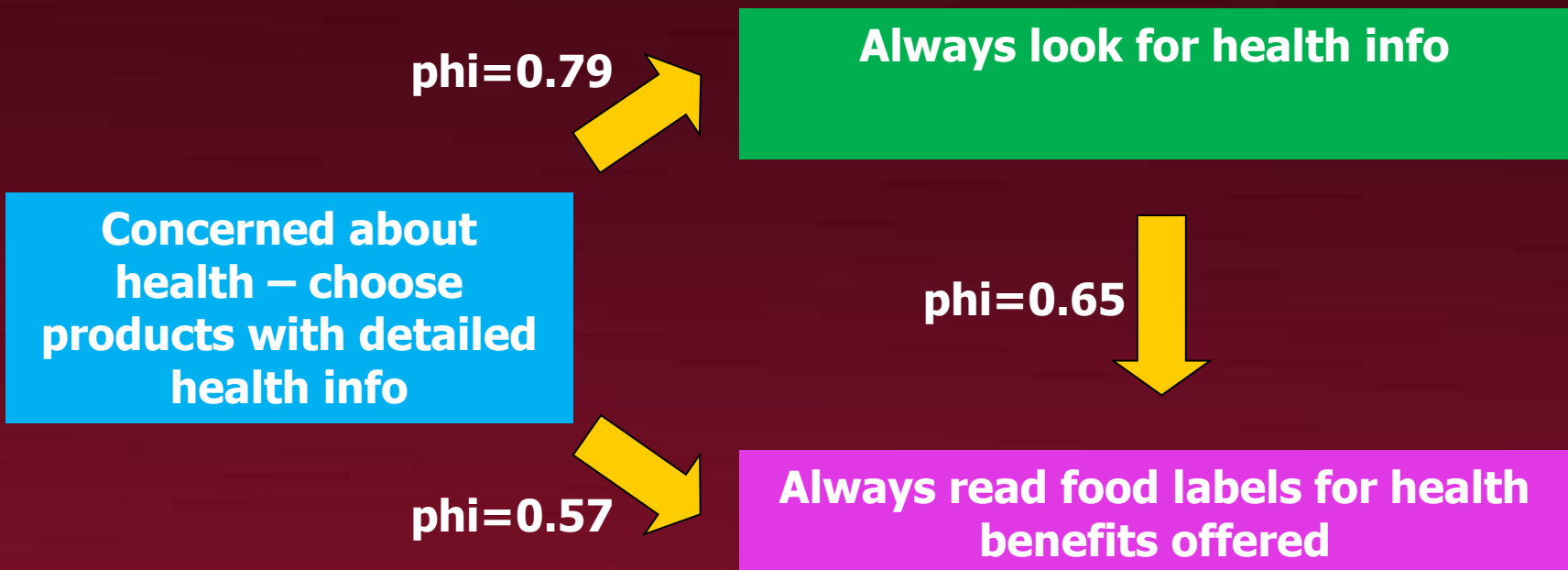


Belief in scientific credibility of label info might contribute more regular use

# Results (7)

## Associations agreement re. statements

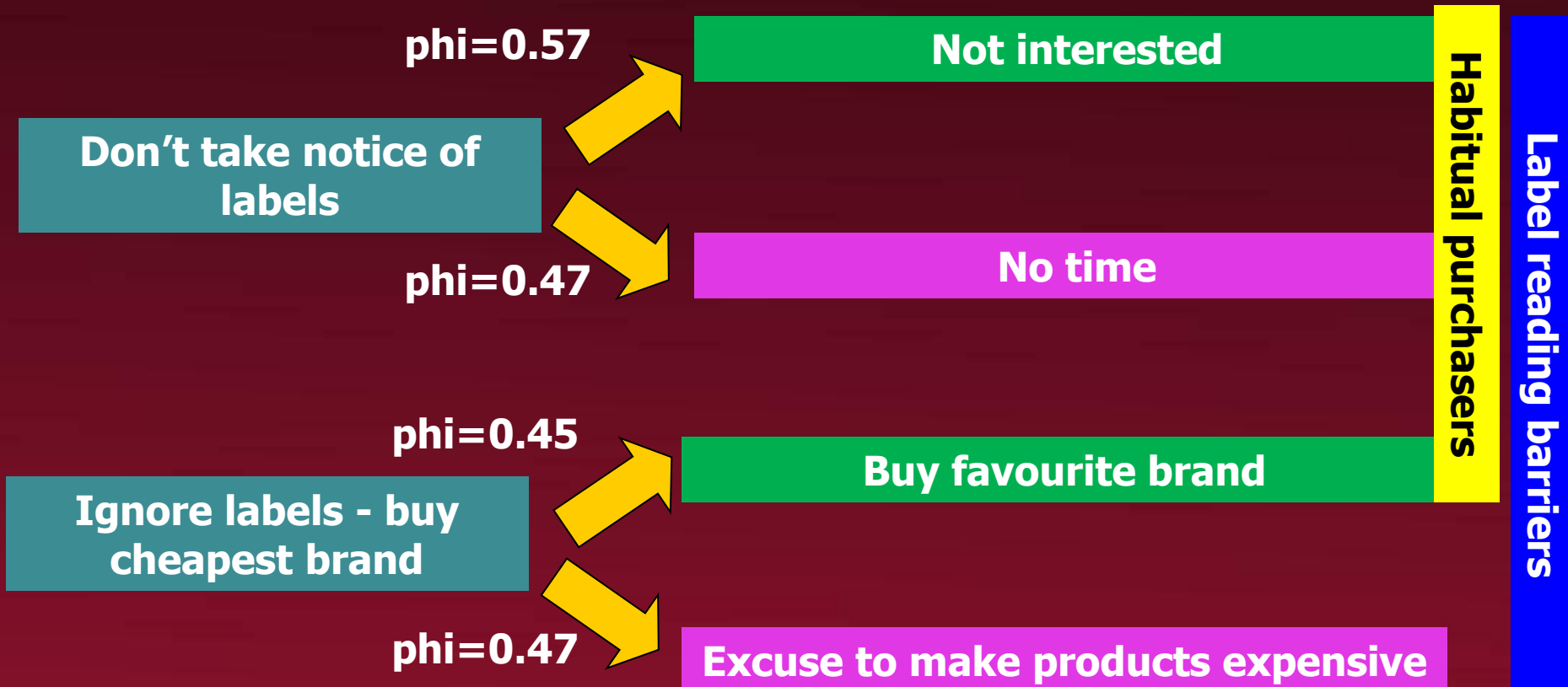
### PS associations between several statements



# Results (8)

## Associations agreement re. statements

### PS associations between several statements



# Conclusion

- **Results confirm global opinions re. food-health link**
- **Consult food labels - believe labels are trustworthy**
- **(+) opinions & use BUT to a lesser extent**
- **NB – developing country burdened by obesity & poor health**
- **Barriers – time, interest, price, habitual**
- **Consumer education – address barriers & motivate label reading**

*Thank you*



# Reference

**BOSMAN, M.J.C., VAN DER MERWE, D., ELLIS, S.E., JERLING, J.C. & BADHAM, J. 2013. South African adult metropolitan consumers' opinions and use of health information on food labels. *British Food Journal*, in press (online).**