

Less Clutter, More Clarity: Designing Alcohol Calorie Labels Together

Background

We carried out a study to see if putting calorie labels on alcohol changes what people buy. We used a mock online supermarket. Participants shopped for food and drinks as they normally would. In the mock online supermarket, some people saw alcoholic drinks with calorie labels. Others saw alcoholic drinks without any calorie labels. We looked at what people bought when they saw the labels and what they bought when they had not seen any labels.

What we did

It was important that the calorie labels were easy to see, read, and understand.

We created several designs. These designs used assorted colours, shapes, and font sizes. They also gave different information.

We shared these designs with our Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) Panel (Preventing Multiple Morbidities Theme Population Arm). Our panel members helped us decide how to make the best labels. They suggested:

- Which of the designs they liked the most
- What information should be included and what should be left out
- Ways to improve the labels

Here are some specific changes that they suggested:

1. Use the smallest amount of text as possible
2. Make the font larger so it is easier to read
3. Show portions in an uncomplicated way, such as “1 medium glass” instead of “100ml”

What difference did it make?

We used their help to make a new set of labels to use in the study. The final labels were simple. They included only two things:

- The number of calories
- The portion that contains those calories

The portions were clear and familiar. They included: a bottle, a can, a medium glass, or a shot.

About 60% of participants said they remembered seeing the calorie labels during the study. This is a high level of recall for this type of research.