

Report

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Qualitative Signpost Labelling Refinement Research

Report of Findings

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1. Executive Summary

The Food Standards Agency is committed to introducing a system of front of pack signpost labelling to help people make healthier choices. This report describes the outcome of qualitative consumer research commissioned by the Agency to further investigate issues surrounding the use by consumers, and application, of the two signposting formats which came out strongest from the Agency's quantitative research, namely Multiple Traffic Lights (MTL) and Colour-coded GDA (CGDA)¹.

The consumers included in this study expressed strong support for the introduction of a single, front of pack signpost labelling scheme on pre-packed food, developed by an independent trusted organisation such as the Food Standards Agency.

Consumers considered that both MTL and CGDA formats would help them make healthier food choices, although they identified a number of strengths and weaknesses with both approaches.

MTL was viewed as simple and easy to use and understand, although consumers wanted it to be clear that the scheme was independent and based on sound criteria.

Although a number of consumers had difficulty interpreting the numerical information used in the CGDA format, the tabular layout and numerical information were liked and gave it an air of authority. Many were confused by the term 'GDA' and wanted more information on what 'per serving' meant.

When discussing the application of signpost labelling, consumers felt consistency was key, especially in terms of its design, position on the front of pack, and size. Most felt that a minimum size should be set for the signpost and that the size of the signpost should be proportionate to the size of the product package.

While consumers felt signpost labelling could be usefully applied to all foods and drinks, they felt it was of particular importance on processed convenience foods, foods that are consumed frequently or in high volumes, food that is aimed at, or consumed by, children, and foods that claim to be healthy.

¹ <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/signposting/alt>

2. Background

The Government is committed to promoting the adoption of healthier eating patterns. The White Paper: Choosing Health², reaffirms the Agency's commitment in its Action Plan on Food Promotion and Children's Diets to develop a front of pack signpost labelling scheme by 2006.

Previous qualitative consumer research³ published in November 2004 revealed strong approval and support for the idea of front of pack labelling, which consumers felt would make it easier for them to assess the nutritional content of foods, and make healthier choices.

A second piece of qualitative research⁴ published in March 2005 investigated and developed further the two Traffic Lights-based concepts and from a range of Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) based formats tested, identified two GDAs concepts; a colour-coded route and a monochrome route, to be explored further.

Following on from this work a large-scale quantitative evaluation was conducted during June 2005 to investigate consumers' use of, and preference for, the following four signposting concepts which previous research had found to appeal to consumers, compared with a 'No signposting' benchmark:

- Simple Traffic Light
- Multiple Traffic Lights (MTL)
- Colour-coded GDA (CGDA)
- Monochrome GDA

This research, which is reported separately, identified two strong concepts, MTL and CGDA.

This current report presents the findings of further qualitative research undertaken by Synovate to probe more fully general issues related to the implementation and application of signpost labelling that performed well in the quantitative research, including which foods it should be applied to. Issues associated with MTL and CGDA design were also explored.

² This work complements that being taken forward as part of the Scottish Action Plan *Eating for Health, Meeting the Challenge*, the Welsh strategy *"Food and Wellbeing"* and the proposed *Food and Nutrition Strategy for Northern Ireland*.

³ www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/alternlab.pdf

⁴ www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/signpostingnavigatorreport.pdf

3. Objectives

3.1 Research Objectives

The overall aims of this stage of qualitative research were twofold:

- To aid the development of retailer/manufacturer guidance for the application of signposting in the UK.
- To explore the scope and nature of any consumer education that might be required to accompany the introduction of a signposting scheme in the UK.

In addition, the research was designed to provide guidance relating to:

- Signpost application:
 - To investigate consumer views on executional details of the signpost in terms of size, layout, legibility and pack position.
 - To explore on which *types* of products consumers feel signposting would be most useful (including the application of the signpost on 'loose' foods).
 - To investigate how consumers would like further information on signposting to be made available. On pack/in store/website?
 - To investigate to what extent consumers want to be informed of the nutritional criteria underpinning signposting.
- Signpost use and understanding:
 - To understand how specific elements (colours/text/numbers) of the signpost are used to make purchasing decisions.
 - To identify potential barriers to interpreting the information provided in the signpost.
 - To explore how consumers use and balance the information provided by the signpost.
 - To understand how consumers would use the signposting alongside existing nutritional information on product packaging.

4. Methodology

A total of **16 focus groups** were conducted amongst consumers with main or joint responsibility for the household food shopping, aged 18+. The sample profile was designed to broadly reflect the UK population with the two key criteria for the group composition being *life stage* and *Socio-Economic Grouping (SEG)*.

The sample profile can be seen below:

Location	Lifestage	Gender	SEG	Age Group
London (North)	Pre-family	Female	BC1	25 – 34
	Younger Family	Male	C2DE	25 – 34
Sheffield	Pre-family	Male	BC1	18 – 24
	Retired	Female	C2DE	65+
Glasgow	Empty Nesters	Female	BC1	55 – 64
	Pre-family	Male	C2DE	25 – 34
London (South)	Empty Nesters	Female	C2DE	45 – 54
	Older Family	Female	C2DE	35 – 44
Birmingham	Younger Family	Female	BC1	25 – 34
	Empty Nesters	Male	BC1	45 – 54
Manchester	Older Family	Female	C2DE	35 – 44
	Empty Nesters	Male	C2DE	55 – 64
Cardiff	Younger Family	Female	C2DE	25 – 34
	Retired	Male	BC1	65+
Belfast	Older family	Male	BC1	35 – 44
	Pre-family	Female	C2DE	18 – 24

In addition to these quotas, a small number of colour-blind respondents were included in the research profile within one group of males (18 – 24, BC1) and as one depth interview (male, 18 – 24, BC1).

Respondents were recruited in street or door-to-door using a short screening questionnaire. Respondents received £35 (when groups were conducted in the interviewers home) or £45 (when groups were conducted in viewing facility) as a token of appreciation for their time.

Each group consisted of between 7 and 9 respondents and lasted for 2 hours. All groups were audio (and in certain instances video) recorded and the tapes transcribed and analysed.

The fieldwork was conducted between 12th July and 1st August 2005.

4.1 The Discussion Format

The final discussion guide used within the groups is attached at Appendix A. The main aspects covered were:

1. Introduction – Including brief discussion about respondents' attitudes towards food purchasing, food labelling, what they consider to be 'healthy eating', and what are healthy/unhealthy foods.
 - Current use of pack information – What information respondents currently use, and how much? How they use it? On what types of products? How useful is it?
2. Individual exercise to explore how consumers use signposting – Respondents were asked to 'use' the (first) signposting concept to compare nutritional content of example products. Their answers were recorded on individual response questionnaires as well as other simple questions relating to what aspects of the signposting were used.
3. Discussion of how signposting is used – Based on responses from the individual exercise, the aspects of the signposting which were used were discussed, as well as how signposting was used in conjunction with other information on the pack(s). This discussion helped identify areas of confusion, barriers to understanding etc., which were 'banked' for use later in the discussion (section 6b). Respondents discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the signposting in terms of colour, design, layout etc. and suggested areas of improvement.

Sections 2 and 3 were then repeated for the second signposting concept (with the order of concept first seen rotated across the groups).

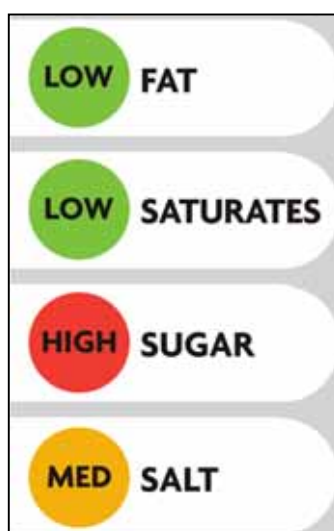
4. Optimisation of signposting concepts – Respondents identified which aspects of the concepts they had found most useful/easiest to understand, and which were the most important aspects to retain in an 'ideal' signpost. Spontaneous ideas for a 'hybrid' signpost were discussed. Respondents were then shown how a GDA panel could be colour-coded, and how monochrome signposting could be designed for use on 'value' packaging which has a limited range of colours, and responses and suggestions for improvement were gathered.
5. Positioning of signposting – This included a discussion around positioning on pack, with a variety of example pack representations used as stimulus to aid discussion and illustrate examples. Specific discussion of signposting on small and treat products e.g. potted meat and packets of sweets were covered.

6. Discussion regarding the application of the signposting –
 - a. Discussion to identify types of products where signposting is most useful, and key reasons for choices (to prompt discussions a selection of collage boards representing the range of products within main food categories were prepared. These are described in Appendix C.)
 - b. Education/guidance was discussed – referring to issues ‘banked’ in previous discussions and examples of how information could be presented.
 - c. Discussion on the nutritional criteria underpinning signposting – criteria to be described and evaluated.

4.2 The Signpost Concepts

The two signposts tested within the qualitative research were as follows:

Multiple Traffic Lights (MTL)



Colour-coded GDA (CGDA)

	Per serving GDA	
FAT	7.7g	70g
SATURATES	2.0g	20g
SUGAR	42.4g	40g
SALT	2.0g	6g
<div> ■ HIGH ■ MEDIUM ■ LOW </div>		

5. Detailed Findings

5.1 Introduction to the Findings

It should be noted that as with all qualitative research, the sample sizes are small and thus care needs to be taken when extrapolating the findings.

5.2 Food Purchasing Habits

5.2.1 *Food Purchasing Criteria*

As would be expected, food-purchasing criteria vary by age, gender and life stage. However, certain issues emerged as important across all groups:

- Value for money
- Quality
- Flavour
- Brand

Issues surrounding food, nutrition and health were also considered, but to varying degrees. 'Ingredients' were often mentioned as a key consideration and in particular the presence of additives was often considered important. Fat was the most universally mentioned 'nutrient', with most respondents describing it as something that they aim to watch, at least some of the time.

5.2.2 *Healthy Food and Healthy Eating*

Respondents were asked to describe what they considered to be 'healthy food', in terms of types of food products and ingredients.

Often, respondents described **fresh**, or '**uncontaminated**' **foods**, as being healthy and considered fresh fruits, vegetables and fresh meat (products that you 'put together yourself' to make a meal) to fall into this category.

Food that does **not include additives and flavourings** was also considered healthy. In some cases 'organic' food was also considered important.

Another indicator of whether a food was considered healthy was the number of ingredients making up the product, with **fewer ingredients** being considered healthier. A number of respondents explained that they examined ingredients lists and looked for products with 'shorter lists'.

Foods that are **rich in vitamins and minerals** were also considered healthy. Some respondents explained that they looked for foods high in protein or calcium (often when buying for children).

In some cases, respondents explained that they looked for foods that were **low in fat, salt, sugar and calories**. Watching for lower levels of fat was common amongst a wide range of respondents, with the level of salt in products described as important by older (particularly male) respondents, who were often following a strict low salt diet.

5.2.3 Current Use of Nutritional Information

Whilst respondents all reported some use of nutritional information when shopping, this varied depending on:

- **Gender:** broadly speaking, women were more likely to read information.
- **Whether they had, or purchased food for children:** a notable number of respondents explained that when products are 'aimed at children' they tend to look in more detail at ingredients.
 - Examples often included *dairy foods* (for example yoghurts and children's processed cheeses).
- **Type of food:** nutritional information was considered more important when purchasing:
 - Prepared or ready meals – due to lack of knowledge and suspicion regarding their content.
 - Products that form a major part of a main meal – because they form part of one's 'real diet' as opposed to snacks.
 - Products that claim to be healthy such as breakfast cereals and dairy foods.

A number of respondents explained that they only looked at nutritional information when choosing/selecting a new product that they had not tried before. The rationale for looking at nutritional information appears to vary by life stage. Younger respondents were generally more concerned with avoiding becoming overweight, while older respondents were more likely to mention specific health conditions and issues that lead to them monitoring their intake of certain nutrients (for example salt).

Attention given to, and importance placed on, media coverage also appeared to influence how people use nutritional information. Older female respondents (BC1) were often more interested in 'health issues' and felt comfortable using numbers and figures to determine what is or is not healthy. Those who were less aware of health 'trends' were more likely to use a 'common sense' approach to healthy eating, and avoid foods that they assumed to be fatty, or high in salt or sugar.

The precise nutrients taken into consideration tended to vary. **Fat** was the most commonly cited and identified as causing people to become overweight and unhealthy. Others however, felt that fat in itself was not unhealthy, as long as exercise is taken to burn it off.

Fat content was considered an obvious 'comparator' for many (particularly those who do not understand saturates). Some respondents set themselves specific limits: *'if it is more than 5% fat I wouldn't buy it.'*

The term **Saturated fat** was understood by a limited number of respondents. In some cases respondents spoke about 'good fats' and 'bad fats'. However, the meaning of this was not always fully understood.

Salt was also considered important, particularly amongst older respondents, but not exclusively. This appears to be driven by increasing publicity

regarding salt levels in food. A number of respondents specifically avoided salt for dietary reasons.

Sugar was not mentioned as often as fat and salt as a nutrient to avoid. However, 'added sugar' was often seen as a problem. In addition, sugar was an extremely important consideration for parents when purchasing for their children.

Calories were seen as important for many (often slightly older) women, due to a historic link with 'calorie controlled diets' and current link with 'Weight Watchers' points system. Respondents sometimes explained that the number of calories in a product would be considered in conjunction with other nutrients such as fat, salt and sugar in order to make an overall decision regarding how healthy it is.

- Those looking to lose weight obviously placed more importance on calories, and might have considered purchasing a low calorie option that was high in some other nutrients, such as salt or sugar.
- Others explained that products that were low in calories were not necessarily a healthy choice, and therefore did not place as high a level of importance on calorie information.

Low levels of **carbohydrates** (often described as 'carbs') are important to those following specific diets (often women).

Often, respondents explained that they try to follow a **balanced diet**, but do not do this by 'scientifically' calculating what they had eaten relative to GDAs. Rather, they use common sense and balance a 'bad' meal or snack with a 'good' one later on.

The use of, and attitude towards, 'headline' nutritional claims varied. Some respondents looked for products that market themselves as 'low fat' or 'healthy options'. They considered it easier to look for these claims than '*trawling through*' nutritional information on the back of pack. These respondents were often happy to trust the information given on packs.

Other respondents were more cynical, feeling that such claims were simply designed to sell more food and might be misleading. This cynicism was often driven by increased coverage in the press regarding such issues.

In addition, respondents also noted the level of complexity of current nutritional information, which meant that they did not always find it easy to ascertain exactly what is in a product and more importantly what it meant in terms of their health.

5.2.4 Confusion Regarding Nutritional Information

Certain areas of confusion were noted regarding use of current nutritional labelling and information provided on packs.

Given the sheer amount of information visible on most packaging, respondents often described difficulty knowing what information to look at. Some described a feeling of '*information overload*', with the detailed and often small print discouraging them from using any of the information at all.

Others explained that they were sometimes uncertain about what information is important on the packs, as they were not always aware of how the various nutrients (sugar, salt, fat etc.) impacted on their health.

In addition, some respondents were unfamiliar with some of the terms used on packaging regarding nutritional information. For example, some felt that 100g was an arbitrary amount that did not relate to the quantity they were eating, and others explained that 'per serving' was too subjective. In addition, a number of respondents were not sure what GDA stood for and what was meant in practice by 'guideline'. In addition, some respondents noted that salt is referred to as sodium on the back of pack nutritional panel and found this confusing.

Lastly, respondents often felt that there was too much arithmetic involved when using nutritional information on the back of pack to make purchasing decisions. This was related to a lack of understanding of what 100g of a product looks like and also a lack of awareness of what constitutes high, medium or low levels of fat, sugar or salt.

5.3 Multiple Traffic Lights (MTL) Concept

In order to gauge perceptions and understanding of the two concepts, photographs of real products (Pizza, Ready meals, Breakfast cereals, Crisps) with signposting information on them were shown to respondents (either as a single product or a pair of products). The stimulus material was taken from that used in the previous quantitative research.

Respondents were asked to either choose which of the two products they would purchase as a 'healthier choice' or decide whether they would purchase the single product as a 'healthy option'.

In addition, respondents were asked to note down what information they used in making this decision (without consulting other members of the group).

5.3.1 Overview

Overall, respondents found Multiple Traffic Lights (MTL) easy to use, often describing it as simple and straightforward.

- The use of colour-coding and a traffic light design were considered sensible and intuitive methods of communicating nutritional information and facilitating quick decision-making.

However, there would appear to be some issues with the concept in terms of the level of information provided.

- The lack of numbers or explanation of the source of the information led to a degree of confusion (as consumers were not sure what High, Medium or Low meant in terms of levels of nutrients) and suspicion over who was behind the scheme.

However, respondents felt that these issues could be overcome either by altering the execution of the signpost to indicate Government backing or providing more supporting information regarding its source and legitimacy.

Respondents frequently considered that a scheme supported by FSA/Government would be more trustworthy than one initiated by manufacturers or retailers, as they felt that this would be impartial and not designed to increase sales.

5.3.2 Usage of MTL When Making a Decision

All respondents used Multiple Traffic Lights to some extent, with most displaying a good understanding of its meaning and purpose. Many respondents then referred to the back of the pack⁵ for a variety of different reasons:

- To find out what high, medium and low meant in terms of the content of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt in the product. Respondents wanted to 'check' how the signpost information related to nutrient levels.
- To find out who says that a nutrient is high, medium and low. Respondents needed to know that the information was from a credible source.
- Some respondents also looked for further information on other nutrients or calories.

Decisions were also influenced by other information such as their own knowledge as well as pictures and product descriptions on the packaging.

"I saw high in salt and high in saturates and then when I turned over that just confirmed it, the calories." [Female, Younger Family, BC1]

Others felt that the signposting provided enough information in itself to make a quick decision. In some cases respondents indicated that without the signpost information on the front of pack, they would probably not take the time to investigate the back of pack, or may look but not fully understand it. The signpost acted as a guide and prompted them to turn over the pack and check for more information, or in some cases simply reject one option.

"The quick reference guide on the front of the packaging made it clear to make a quicker decision, instead of having to go at the back really and think, right what has it got, it's a quick reference guide so you haven't got to spend the time scrutinising the back." [Female, Younger Family, BC1]

Some respondents explained that the Multiple Traffic Lights colour-coding allowed them to make the first stage of their purchasing decision:

- For example, if most colour coding is green or amber, the product may go onto the consumer's 'mental shortlist' to be considered

⁵A higher proportion of respondents referred to nutritional panel for MTL than for CGDA within earlier quantitative research

- further, using either existing knowledge, the on-pack nutritional information or ingredient list on the back of the pack.
- However, if the product had a lot of red coding, the product may be considered too ‘unhealthy’, and be rejected in favour of an alternative.

“I would say that that is on my list to buy because it is all medium. That’s not because it’s got two reds. But that doesn’t mean to say that it’s going in the basket, I would then turn over and say, right, how many E-numbers are in it? The stuff that they don’t tell you on the front.” [Male, Older Family, BC1]

“It’s just the red...you think, although obviously it’s trying to say it’s quite low in sugar and this, that and the other, it’s still got loads of salt in it. And just the colour red, you just think no.” [Female, Younger Family, C2DE]

5.3.3 Areas of Uncertainty with MTL

The main area of uncertainty noted was the lack of explanation of the terms HIGH, MED and LOW. Respondents were often unsure whether to believe these labels, as they were unaware of the source of the information.

There was a tendency to consider the signpost as part of the manufacturer’s marketing since it appears on the front of pack (a location strongly associated with marketing messages and communications). This appeared to be exacerbated by the ‘design’ of the MTL concept, which was often considered stylish and not very ‘official’.

Some respondents felt that the MTL concept did not provide specific enough information to allow them to make a choice of product that would help achieve a balanced diet.

“I looked at the front, but sometimes things say low fat, but they’re not low fat really. So if it said that and then said the amount of grams as well, that would be better...Sometimes things try to make out that they are better than they are. I don’t know if it’s that pack saying it or if it’s a set level for all foods.” [Female, Pre-Family, C2DE]

A minority of respondents questioned whether products such as fat spreads and oils would all be classified as high fat, even if some may be lower than others. This lack of distinction could make choosing products within these categories difficult.

Respondents find it difficult to use the signpost to assess the healthiness of a food when all nutrients were classified as medium (particularly if trying to make a comparison between two products). When confronted with four amber traffic lights, most respondents felt that they needed to look for additional information before deciding whether a product was ‘a healthier option’.

If the classification for a nutrient differed to consumers' views based on their own criteria, or was different to the conclusions that they reach when reading the nutritional panel, then some felt confused, although many felt this issue could be addressed through educational activities to help consumers use the signpost appropriately.

5.3.4 MTL: Components Used

The components of the MTL signpost used by respondents were as follows:

1. **Colour-coding** was mentioned spontaneously and first by virtually all respondents.
2. **HIGH, MED & LOW** was described as an important way of conveying the message quickly. However, terms such as 'Low Fat' are common as a marketing term and hence cause some cynicism.
3. **Fat** was most often described as the most important nutrient.
4. There was some confusion regarding exactly what '**saturates**' means.
5. **Salt** was slightly more likely to be mentioned by older respondents as a key issue.
6. **Sugar** was often described as key when considering snacks, breakfast cereals and products aimed at children.

The above components are arranged in order to reflect the general frequency of response. Points 1 and 2 were most commonly mentioned, with the remaining points noted less often.

5.3.5 MTL: Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths of Multiple Traffic Lights were identified as follows:

- ✓ It is simple and immediate, with no confusing elements such as numbers.
- ✓ Colours are intuitive given that they mimic traffic lights.
- ✓ The wording HIGH, MED and LOW has high impact.

"I think putting low, high, medium on the colour does away with the key, and I think that's why it's a lot more simple."
[Male, Empty Nesters, BC1]

- ✓ The white background helps to make the colours stand out.

"Well they're like traffic lights aren't they? With the white background behind it...it's nice and bold here." [Male, Younger Family, C2DE]

Weaknesses mentioned were:

- ✗ The absence of numbers.
 - This lack of detail leads some respondents to say they would not be able to make a fully informed decision, and provokes cynicism.
- ✗ The curved white background 'thumbnails' do not 'stand out' on the pack, so could get lost in design of pack.
- ✗ The traffic lights can look like 'part of the marketing' of the product.

5.3.6 MTL: Suggested Improvements

Respondents suggested the following improvements to Multiple Traffic Lights, listed according to their level of popularity, with the most popular appearing first.

- Addition of numbers.
- Add a black outline to both traffic lights and thumbnails.
- Add a coloured box behind the thumbnails.
- Labelling signposts as 'Government approved' or approved by another authoritative body (FSA, BMA).
- Colour the whole thumbnail.
- A small minority suggested reordering the nutrients from reds at the top to greens at the bottom.
- A small minority also suggested adding a legend.

5.4 Usage and Impressions of Colour-coded GDA (CGDA)

5.4.1 Overview

Overall, respondents perceived the Colour-coded GDA as useful, informative, and straightforward to use.

The majority of respondents welcomed the inclusion of 'per serving' amounts and GDA values. This additional information often made respondents feel that they were able to make a more informed decision, and helped to generate a more official look, which inspired confidence and trust.

Despite liking the numerical information, usage of it was often limited, with the colour-coding often described as the main source of information. This finding was supported by the quantitative research. In addition, some respondents had trouble interpreting the information, especially GDA values.

The design and layout tended to divide response:

- Some felt that the signpost stood out very well due to its bold, angular design and outlining.
- Others felt that it was slightly too detailed (diminishing its overall impact) and did not stand out very well on the pack.

5.4.2 Usage of CGDA when making a decision

All respondents used the CGDA signposting to help them make a decision regarding the 'healthiness' of the products seen in the individual exercise. It was often described as providing all, or more than all, of the necessary information to make decisions on which of a pair of products was the healthier choice.

Some respondents also referred to information on the back of the pack, especially:

- to find out more about the product
 - How much is a serving?
 - How many calories?
- to 'double-check' values, especially if values do not seem to 'match' colour-coding
- when colours seem to 'conflict' (i.e. a mixture of red and green) or are all amber
- out of habit.

"I think that's just a force of habit though isn't it, you always look on the back don't you? You'll have to get used to looking at the front." [Male, Younger Family, C2DE]

Some respondents felt that the signposting provided enough information in itself to make a decision. Most respondents felt they would only 'glance' at the back of pack information as they felt it often did not 'help' or provide any more useful information.

In fact for some, information on the back sometimes confused things further. Some respondents explained that once they had looked at the back of the pack, they looked at the front again, as it was much simpler and easier to understand.

Respondents making a comparison between products were more likely to use only the signpost and not even glance at the back of pack since the numbers could be compared quickly, even if colours were the same.

"I don't think there is any need for information on the back with this on the front." [Female, Retired, C2DE]

5.4.3 Areas of uncertainty with CGDA

In some cases, respondents felt that the signpost contained too much information and were confused as to what to look at first.

The main single area of confusion noted was the GDA column. A minority of respondents clearly read the GDA column as the amount of each nutrient within the product and this led to a great deal of confusion:

"Surely 70g of fat should be classified as high." [Male, Older Family, BC1]

Most respondents did not understand what GDA stands for. However, most (but not all) respondents assumed that it was in some way related to daily intake. The exact meaning of GDA was often not clear to respondents:

- In some cases respondents felt that 'guideline' could be interpreted as an 'average' amount to aim towards in a day.
- Very few felt (incorrectly) that it might relate to a minimum amount.
- Suggested alternative wording included 'Maximum Daily Amount' and 'Daily Allowance'

Most respondents felt that GDA should be given in full on the front of the pack, and that the meaning of the term should also be available, possibly on the back of pack

In addition, 'per serving' was also often considered ambiguous and open to interpretation. This became particularly important when considering products such as pizzas, where one person's serving may be considerably larger or smaller than another's.

In addition, respondents sometimes noticed that information was given as per 100g on back of pack, and found this lack of consistency confusing. Respondents were divided as to the best way to address this issue. Some advocated specifying what a serving is. Others felt using 'per 100g' to be more appropriate. Not all respondents were aware that food packaging usually gives a description of what 'per serving' means in relation to the specific products.

"Is a serving all of this, a half or a slice?" [Female, Older Family, BC1]

Some problems were reported in terms of using the different components of the signpost together, and in conjunction with other information on the pack. In some cases, respondents felt that marrying the colours on the signpost with those on the legend was slightly awkward and took some time to do. This supports the findings of the quantitative research, which shows that respondents take longer to decide whether a single product is a healthier option using the CGDA signpost than the MTL.

Some respondents also noted that the legend is difficult to use when all nutrient colours are the same (for example all amber), due to the lack of contrast (noted by minority of respondents, including one colour blind male). This can lead to respondents not recognising the signpost as colour-coded at all.

Some respondents felt that the colour coding did not always match their own criteria for high, medium or low levels of certain nutrients and this encouraged consumers to scrutinise information on the back of the pack.

5.4.4 CGDA: Components Used

The components of CGDA used by respondents were:

- **Colour-coding** was often the primary source of information used to make a decision since it was felt to be quick, easy and intuitive.
- The **HIGH, MED & LOW legend** was used by some to clarify colour-coding, but not considered vital, as colours were often seen as 'obvious' except when all nutrients were the same, when the colour-coding became less intuitive without the legend.
- **Per serving values** were most likely to be used to 'back-up' colour-coding information. They were used more often to make direct comparisons between products.
- Echoing the findings of the quantitative research, there was very **limited usage of GDA** information, often due to a lack of understanding of what GDA stands for and how to use it.

The above components are arranged in order to reflect the general frequency of response.

"People aren't going to analyse this [GDA column] when they're shopping" [Female, Retired, C2DE]

"It's easier to look for what's high medium low by the colours. Like a traffic light" [Male, Pre-Family, BC1]

"I couldn't work it out, I had the same GDAs on both...I'm trying to crack the code." [Male, Empty Nesters, BC1]

"I'd just look at high/medium/low, not the numbers." [Female, Retired, C2DE]

5.4.5 CGDA: Strengths and Weaknesses

Respondents identified the following strengths of CGDA:

- ✓ CGDA provides detailed information, specifying nutrient content.
- ✓ The colour-coding is useful and immediate.
- ✓ The bold colours and design make CGDA stand out on the pack.
- ✓ The tabular format looks scientific and official / credible.

Weaknesses mentioned were:

- ✗ Displays too much information, which can lead to confusion.
- ✗ The coloured areas are quite small and therefore difficult to differentiate.
- ✗ The coloured areas and legend are sometimes difficult to 'marry up' and decipher.

- ✗ The angular shapes are less stylish / appealing than 'curved' thumbnails.
- ✗ Some respondents were unaware of what GDA means.
- ✗ Some were unsure what constitutes 'a serving'.

5.4.6 CGDA: Suggested Improvements

Respondents suggested the following improvements to the CGDA:

- Define GDA and 'per serving' by adding text at the bottom of the signpost.
- Adding HIGH, MED or LOW to the columns (not as a legend) was often considered a logical way to make the signpost easier and quicker to read.
- Replacing 'per serving' with 'per 100g' was a suggestion over which respondents' opinions were divided, depending on their current behaviour and familiarity with nutrition labelling.
- A minority suggested showing GDA as percentage value, but difficulties with understanding percentages and conveying the information logically were noted.
- A minority highlighted that they would prefer nutrients to be re-ordered (nutrients with red colour-coding at the top and with green colour-coding at the bottom) to allow easier interpretation of colour coding. Others felt this would detract from the 'consistency' of signposting, and was therefore rejected by the majority.

5.5 Signposting Usage Overall: Balancing Information

It is important to note that respondents tended to balance conflicting information (high levels of one nutrient Vs low levels of another) on the signpost in different ways according to their own attitudes and in some cases specific dietary needs.

However, some themes emerged in terms of how consumers read the different colours of the signpost. When looking at a single product, the number of 'reds' or 'greens' often influenced their decision. In some cases, the presence of any red provoked further investigation. In other cases seeing more than two reds may lead to a rejection.

When comparing products, the number of 'reds' on one product compared to another was often the method used. It would appear that respondents react more strongly to seeing 'less reds' on a product than seeing 'more greens'. This is due to the fact that reds were viewed as indicating a need for 'caution', were seen as something to avoid, whereas greens were seen as something of a 'bonus'.

"If it was all green, you wouldn't bother, you'd pick it up and throw it in your basket, but if it had red and yellow, you'd maybe look at the back and say, oh that's all right."
 [Female, Pre-Family, BC1]

It is however important to note that the product category was an important factor in respondents' decision-making process. Respondents appeared willing to accept a greater number of 'reds' on products in certain product categories, such as dairy foods, fat spreads, snacks, confectionery and desserts and ice creams.

This suggests that in certain instances the signpost information is balanced with more general knowledge about the product, and the quantity and frequency with which it is consumed.

5.6 Optimisation of Concepts

5.6.1 *The Most Important Aspects of the Concepts*

The aspects of the two concepts respondents found most helpful were:

- **Colour-coding** was always considered key and was seen as the ideal method of conveying information quickly.
- **Per-serving values** were felt by the majority of respondents to be necessary as they provided reassurance and provide 'all the information in one place'. Although further clarification was needed regarding exactly how much one serving amounts to, and therefore the actual amounts of the nutrients that will be consumed.
- **HIGH, MED & LOW** 'within' the traffic lights was often considered important when making a quick decision (it was seen as faster than a legend) and very important for people who may be colour blind.
- Although respondents frequently wanted **GDA** information, they often conceded that it was not used to make decisions.
- The **legend** was the aspect most commonly considered 'dispensable' due to the intuitive nature of the colour coding (only applies to CGDA).

When discussing which signpost respondents preferred from a design perspective, preference was split between the geometric shape of the CGDA and Multiple Traffic Light's circle-shaped colours:

- The geometric shape of CGDA helped to provide credibility and gave the information an 'official' look.
 - It is important to note that respondents often assumed that "GDA" was a Government devised term and this influenced their view of the credibility of the CGDA.
- The circle-shaped colours of MTL on white background were considered to increase the impact of colour coding and be easier to read at a glance.

5.6.2 The Need for Numbers

Reflecting the preference for CGDA recorded during quantitative testing, the majority of respondents felt that the signposting benefited from the inclusion of numbers (per serving and GDA) with this seen as helpful supporting data to back-up the colour-coding. It also instils confidence and a sense that an informed choice had been made by the consumer, increasing the authority of the signpost. If a signpost is used which does not use numbers, ways to add credibility and impartiality to the signpost would need to be developed.

When comparing products, 'per serving' values were described as useful. Colours were found to be less useful in differentiating between products with similar colour-coding. This helps to explain the higher performance and faster response times when comparing products that was recorded in the quantitative stage of research.

"[MTL] is not useful because it's not factual. Numerical details on the front regarding fat, sugar and salt would have been more useful." [Male, Younger Family, C2DE]

However, it is important to note that overall use of numbers would appear to be somewhat limited, particularly when considering a single product. Most respondents explained that colour-coding is enough to make some kind of decision, either to purchase or look on the back of the pack for more information.

In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that consumers' lack of understanding of the numbers (particularly GDA) can cause a certain amount of confusion and misinterpretation of the signpost information. If a signpost with numbers were used, consumer education would be needed to address these issues.

5.6.3 Additional Information: Calories

A minority of respondents felt that the inclusion of calories on the front of the pack would reduce their need to look on the back of the pack for further information, while others felt that this could draw attention away from the other nutritional information that could be more important.

Whilst not always considered important, some respondents (who were more likely to be female) felt that information on calories provided an overall measure of healthiness and would help them make food choices, although they already tend to look at the back of pack for this and other information.

5.6.4 Additional Information: FSA Logo or 'Stamp'

The addition of a FSA stamp or logo was suggested by a number of respondents as a way of 'authenticating' the signpost and differentiating it from existing 'marketing' information on pack. This was seen to be of greater importance on the Multiple Traffic Lights concept.

5.6.5 Considerations if MTL Route is Taken

It is likely that consumers will be able and willing to use the MTL concept to make at least the first stage of decisions quickly and easily if the credibility and level of trust in the descriptors HIGH, MED and LOW is addressed. This could be achieved by:

- Executional changes to develop a more official and authoritative design.
- The addition of numbers.
- Drawing attention to the impartiality of the signpost and the fact that it is approved by a trusted source.

5.6.6 Considerations if CGDA Route is Taken

It is likely that the CGDA concept could allow consumers to make informed decisions if certain areas of confusion are addressed:

- The meanings of ‘per serving’ and ‘GDA’ would need to be clarified.
- In addition, changes to the layout of the concept (including use of HIGH, MED or LOW within the text and not as a legend) should also be considered.

Whilst colour-coding was seen as the primary source of information on which decisions were made, if consumers were confused by the numbers on the CGDA this could lead to a sense of misinformation and discrediting of the system, and hence a lack of use.

5.6.7 Spontaneous Hybrid Ideas: Multiple Traffic Lights with Numbers

A minority of respondents felt that the MTL concept could be improved by adding numbers. Those who favoured this approach considered that it provided the advantage of simple and easy to read traffic lights, but with the reassurance of numbers for those who wish to look at them.

However such a concept would not address potential confusion surrounding ‘per serving’ and GDA.

Previous qualitative research had found that adding GDA percentages to traffic light executions also caused some confusion⁶.

		Per serving	GDA*
LOW	Fat	7.7g	70g
LOW	Saturates	2.0g	20g
HIGH	Sugar	42.4g	40g
MED	Salt	2.0g	6g

*GDA = Guideline Daily Amount

⁶ <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/signpostingnavigatorreport.pdf>

5.6.8 Spontaneous Hybrid Ideas: CGDA with 'Attached' High, Med, Low

A small number of respondents suggested incorporating the HIGH, MED and LOW aspect of MTL into the CGDA concept (with circles instead of rectangles containing HIGH, MED and LOW), which they considered to offer the following benefits:

- Preserves the 'authoritative' design provided by a table format.
- Retains the extra per-serving and GDA numerical information.
- Increases the ease of reading provided by HIGH, MED and LOW information.

		Per serving	GDA*
LOW	FAT	7.7g	70g
LOW	SATURATES	2.0g	20g
HIGH	SUGAR	42.4g	40g
MED	SALT	2.0g	6g

*GDA = Guideline Daily Amount

However, this approach would not address confusion surrounding 'per serving' and 'GDA'.

An alternative approach comprising the simplest and most essential information on the front of pack and colour coding the numerical nutrition and GDA information on the pack of pack was suggested by some. This was felt to address the concern identified in para 4.2.4 about how to find the key information on the back of pack nutrition panel.

5.6.9 Prompted 'Hybrid' Concepts - combining MTL with back of pack information

Respondents were asked to consider a signposting system that includes Multiple Traffic Lights on the front of the pack, with a colour-coded nutritional panel and additional GDA table on the back of the pack. This concept is attached as two formats at Appendix B.

This idea was considered by some to provide a useful compromise. It would allow the consumer to identify key information at a glance and thereby facilitate quick decisions, and would include additional numerical details on the back of pack in a way that was easier for the user to find key information.

Other positive reactions were as follows:

- Some felt that this approach 'joins the front and back together' and helped make sense of the nutritional panel.
- Inclusion of separate GDA information for male and female considered useful.
- Includes 'per serving' and per 100g – allows a choice to be made as to which approach to use.

In general this approach was found to be slightly more appealing to younger respondents (Pre and Younger family), although some felt:

- That this approach was too complicated and felt that some of the information shown in the example of the back of pack was repetitive
- That it would be too difficult to read the information (particularly the additional table) given the likely small size and already 'cramped' information on back of packets.
- That colour-coding only the four key nutrients on the back of pack, would result in other nutrients being over-looked.
- That this option would not reduce the number of steps needed to reach a decision and therefore offered little benefit.
- If a whole row was colour-coded, the panel tended to suggest that the GDA values were themselves high, medium or low.

A minority of respondents indicated that they would prefer the nutrition panel, with an additional 'GDA' column, feeling that this would negate the issue of repetition. However, others felt that such an addition would in itself be too complicated and potentially make the table too large and cumbersome. Others however felt that by losing the GDA table, the ability to provide separate male and female GDA values would be lost.

Respondents were also shown a second version of this concept, with colour bars only covering the nutrient names, and not the value columns. In general, respondents felt that this version was inferior as it was less easy to read 'at a glance'. This concept is attached at Appendix B.

However without further research it is not possible to determine if additional colour-coded back of pack information will make it any quicker or easier than the existing nutritional panel for those who felt they need or want numbers; or whether they would make use of it as quickly and as easily as they would if it were on the front of pack.

5.6.10 Monochrome Signposting

Respondents were very negative about the idea of losing colour-coding in cases where the packaging colour range was narrow e.g. 'value' brands. It was often considered the most important method of conveying information. Some felt that manufacturers should be 'forced' to include colour. However, following discussion, most respondents agreed that the concepts could work in this scenario with just numbers or the use of HIGH, MED or LOW next to each nutrient. Some respondents described this approach as a 'budget' version of the colour-coded system, but felt it would be possible to use.

Certain suggestions were made regarding how to maximise its effectiveness:

- Making the signpost larger than the size used in the stimulus material (e.g. MTL 32mm x 22mm on supermarket own brand ready meal) in order to stand out more.
- Use of different shapes as opposed to just circles to signify HIGH, MED and LOW.
- Use of arrows next to the nutrition descriptions to signify HIGH, MED and LOW.
- Different styles of hatching or dots to signify HIGH, MED or LOW

- Using a block of colour, a hatched area and no fill at all to signify HIGH, MED or LOW.

A monochrome signpost with different shades of one colour was universally considered difficult to use, and found to be particularly difficult to use by one colour-blind respondent. The different shades were not found to relate in any meaningful way to HIGH, MED and LOW, and made use of a legend very difficult.

5.7 Positioning of Signposting

Respondents felt consistency in positioning of signposting on pack was essential (i.e., it should be in the same position, of the same relative size, and of the same design on all packs). This will generate a sense of 'credibility' and 'trust' in a 'standard' approach, which consumers would become familiar with and not have to seek out.

"I think you want to have something that is marked off as official, is in a certain place, do you know what I mean, keep it as consistent as possible." [Female, Pre-family, BC1]

In terms of where the signpost should be positioned on pack, most respondents felt that bottom left was sensible. However, this was not considered a vital issue, as long as the position was consistent, although most respondents felt it should not be positioned close to other logos on the pack.

In terms of size, respondents again felt that consistency of size in relation to pack was important, but sometimes suggested a minimum size to ensure readability.

The majority of respondents felt that it was important to try to include signposting on as many types of products as possible irrespective of product size. Some respondents considered that manufacturers manage to fit bar codes and other nutritional information onto small products such as chocolate bars and packets of sweets, and should therefore be able to include a signpost on their packaging.

A minority felt that signposting becomes less important for items sold in small quantities (*'you know that things like that are not good for you'*). Others felt that a simpler signpost, possibly just one Traffic Light, could be used on smaller packets of sweets, to act as a 'warning' to children.

When considering cylindrical packaging such as yoghurt pots or cans, respondents were somewhat divided in their opinions regarding the best positioning for signposting. Some suggested that signposting should be located on the lid, as it would be near the 'best before' date and other information. Others argued that, signposting would not be visible when such products were stacked on shelves.

For multi pack products, most respondents felt that the signposting would be sufficient on the outer packaging. A minority felt that if a multi pack contains

a variety of individual products (with potentially different nutritional values), each individual item should be signposted. However, consumers felt that the most appropriate way of signposting variety packs in general would be through an 'average' signposting. Most respondents felt that variety packs often contain items of similar nutritional value that would be eaten together.

5.8 Product Areas

It is important to note that most respondents felt that in order for a signposting scheme to work well, it should be applied across all product areas. They considered that this would maximise consumers' exposure and familiarity to signposting and allow comparisons to be made between different categories of foods, as well as between products.

Some respondents felt that even on products that are commonly recognised as unhealthy, signposting would serve as a useful reminder to consumers. In addition, some respondents noted that the signpost could help encourage manufacturers to reduce sugar, salt or fat levels in their products. This was seen as a benefit.

However, the following categories of foods were most commonly mentioned spontaneously as important for signposting:

- Anything **processed** due to suspicion regarding what has been included or added to these products.
- Products that form a **regular part of a diet**, as these will be eaten frequently and probably in high volumes.
- Products that are **aimed at, or consumed, by children**, and those that 'claim' to be healthy.
 - Brightly coloured foods such as drinks and breakfast cereals.
 - Products with characters on their packaging.
 - Crisps and snacks because children tend to eat, or want to eat them, in high volumes.

5.8.1 *Reasons for Needing Signposting by Product Area*

Respondents were asked to consider each of the following 13 product areas, which were selected on the basis of the results of the quantitative research, and asked to give a view on the need for signposting. To help prompt discussion, collage boards with photographs of a range of typical products in each category were available. Further information on those products included in the boards is provided in Appendix C.

A number of respondents considered that signposting would be important for foods liked and eaten by children (whether specifically aimed at children or not) to help inform parents and children about levels of certain nutrients in different products.

Ready meals: respondents cited a lack of knowledge of the content of such products and a suspicion that they will be unhealthy and felt signposting for these products was essential.

"Because you don't know, you can't see what's in it [Ready Meals], if you buy a chicken and your carrots and what have you, you know what's going into your meal." [Female, Younger Family, BC1]

Breakfast cereals: A high degree of cynicism regarding manufacturers' claims coupled with the high volume of consumption, particularly by children, resulted in respondents feeling that signposting on these products would be welcomed.

Meal centre components (e.g., burgers, sausages etc): The high volume and frequency of consumption of products such as burgers and sausages is considered to be the key driver behind the need for signposting on these products. In addition, this category of food is often considered 'processed' and therefore likely to be 'unhealthy.'

Pizzas and sandwiches: Products that constitute a 'meal in themselves' were identified as needing signposting. Although a minority, respondents who tend not to currently purchase pre-packed sandwiches and considered them a more healthy option, felt that sandwiches were more of a snack and signposting was not so important.

Breads: Often considered to form a large part of people's diets and therefore considered to warrant signposting.

Desserts and ice creams: There were mixed views on desserts and ice creams. In some cases respondents considered deserts and ice creams to be high fat foods and since they were aware of this felt there was less of a need for signposting. Others, however, felt signposting would help them compare desserts in order to make healthier choices.

Cakes, biscuits, chocolate and confectionery: Again views were mixed. Some respondents felt that there was less of a need for chocolates and confectionery to bear signposts. However, others felt that as children eat a lot of confectionery, it would be helpful for these products to have a signpost. Consumers indicated that they would use signposting on such food to compare products and to help remind them to eat these products in moderation and not too frequently.

Some respondents felt that there was less of a need to signpost cakes and biscuits, given the fact that such products are 'treats' and are not eaten very frequently. However, others felt that signposting would enable easier differentiation between products in these categories, should a 'healthier option' be sought.

Snacks (e.g. crisps, nuts): Whilst most respondents felt that snack products are likely to be high in fat, and only eaten relatively infrequently, it was often noted that products such as crisps form a large part of children's diets, and signposting would help parents and children choose 'healthier options'.

"Perhaps kids would think twice if snacks had red traffic lights on it" [Female, Older Family, C2DE]

Soft drinks: The key issue with drinks (particularly fruit juice drinks and flavoured waters) appears to be concerns about sugar levels and the difficulty in comparing the nutritional information for the product. Signposting was considered to help consumers quickly and easily compare drinks in terms of their sugar level. A number of respondents felt that the signpost labelling would be important for drinks that are diluted and those that are ready to drink especially because soft drinks are often consumed in high volumes (particularly by children).

"Kids, most kids drink that kind of thing and they don't realise how much sugar's in there, it rots their teeth and their teeth are essential." [Male, Younger Family, C2DE]

Dairy products: Respondents identified dairy products as an important category for signposting. This was due to a certain amount of uncertainty regarding the 'healthiness' of certain dairy products such as yoghurts and 'children's' processed cheeses which were often expected to be high in fat but which were promoted as containing beneficial nutrients such as calcium.

"Especially when they're marketing themselves, when they say low fat, low cholesterol, low this, low that, what are they putting in to produce that? There's a low-fat butter, isn't there? There are things that taste like butter and there's things that's nearly butter. What is it?" [Male, Empty Nester, BC1]

Meat, fish and poultry: The key consumer issue in relation to meat, fish and poultry is whether it is fresh or processed. It was assumed that pre-packaged foods would contain added ingredients (salt or sugar). Some respondents also felt that labelling the amount of fat within fresh cuts of meat would prove problematic. In general consumers felt that there was less of a need for signposting of fresh meat, fish and poultry, although it was useful on processed products.

"Normally if you go and buy meat from the butchers you wouldn't have salt and sugar added to it." [Female, Older Family, C2DE]

Fruit and vegetables: In general, respondents expressed less of a need for signposting for loose or un-packed fruit and vegetables; due to the fact that they are in a 'natural state' and also that the logistics of signposting would be difficult.

Any form of packaging (including products such as sliced fruits or prepared fruit salads) appears to increase the need for signposting, due to consumers' perceptions that the produce is likely to contain added ingredients.

Condiments, jams, pickles, spreads and meal accompaniments: Respondents were somewhat divided in their views. Some felt that for products consumed in relatively low volumes (e.g. tomato sauce, mayonnaise, salad dressing etc) signposting was less necessary. In contrast others felt that since the amount of sauce used was variable and it can be

consumed very frequently, amounting to a high volume over a relatively short period of time, signposting would be useful.

"Usage depends on my mood. It's [mayonnaise] not especially unhealthy in moderation but sometimes I eat to excess." [Male, Pre-family, BC1]

"I've seen some horrible programmes on TV where people just go like that with sauces, so that's not everybody that just uses a small amount, some people use a huge amount of sauce." [Female, Pre-family, BC1]

5.9 Information and Education

Overall respondents felt that the launch of any signposting scheme should be accompanied by education and information activities which would outline the purpose of the scheme as well as details of the body responsible for its development and for ensuring the credibility of the scheme. The key message consumers felt needed to be communicated, was that the signposting criteria had been developed by a credible and impartial source (such as the Food Standards Agency).

In general consumers did not feel they needed to know the precise nutritional criteria on which the colour-coding had been based provided they had been assured of the credibility of the scheme. However, certain respondents (often older, or with specific dietary needs) were more likely to feel that the criteria underpinning the signposting scheme should be available.

Respondents who wanted to know the criteria would like such details to be available in-store on request, or on the FSA website (given that this is well advertised). However, there was little evidence to suggest that consumers would seek out the relevant website.

In addition, it was evident from discussion in some of the focus groups that the launch of any signpost system would benefit from consumer education around the use of GDA and 'per serving' information, as well as around fats, and in particular the term 'saturated' fat.

In terms of how information should be disseminated, all respondents mentioned the need for a media campaign (preferably television or radio). In-store promotions were also seen as a useful method of educating the public and raising awareness, with the following specific channels mentioned:

- Leaflets in aisles or next to products and at checkouts.
- Posters around the store.
- Hanging boards around stores.
- Promotions on till receipts.

A minority of respondents felt that a leaflet posted through the door of all UK households would be a useful method of conveying the details of the scheme.

The majority of respondents felt that the signpost was relatively easy to understand and apply and that once the public became familiar with it and were exposed to signposting on pack, understanding of the scheme would increase. As such respondents did not expect there to be a need for 'on-going' communication regarding signposting.

6. Conclusions

Many consumers find the current nutritional information on pack complex and difficult to use, and would welcome the introduction of a standardised front of pack labelling system, based on sound criteria and developed by an independent and credible body such as the Food Standards Agency.

As noted in earlier quantitative research, both MTL and CGDA are recognised by consumers as strong signposting concepts that could potentially help them make healthier food choices.

6.1 Strengths and weaknesses

Both MTL and CGDA have certain strengths and weaknesses in terms of their usability and appeal.

In its current format, MTL is often considered simple and easy to understand and use, enabling faster choices and decisions. CGDA is often considered more comprehensive and credible due to the inclusion of numbers, which help consumers feel that they have made an informed decision.

The executions of both concepts could be enhanced by addressing the following issues:

- MTL could be made more authoritative by indicating that it is a Food Standards Agency scheme, or by adding 'per serving' information.
- CGDA could benefit from adjustments to its execution in order to make quick decisions easier, and by addressing issues surrounding 'per serving' and 'GDA' components of the signpost which are currently causing confusion.

Whilst both MTL and CGDA would benefit from certain adjustments, it would appear that the changes needed to optimise the MTL route are more straightforward than those associated with the CGDA.

6.2 Relationship between signposting and back of pack information

The research suggests that there would also appear to be some merit in combining MTL on the front of pack signpost, with the GDA information provided by the CGDA format on the back of pack. However such ideas would benefit from further exploration in terms of execution and use by consumers.

6.3 Application of signposting on-pack

The key issue surrounding positioning on pack appears to be consistency. Ensuring that the signpost appears in the same position and that it has a consistent size in relation to product pack size was felt to generate a sense of 'credibility' and 'trust' in a standard approach, which consumers would become familiar with and not have to seek out.

Consumers felt generally that it would be helpful if signposting could be applied to all food categories, although they felt it was more important for certain foods than others. Key categories for the introduction of signposting were: pre-prepared convenience foods, food that is consumed in high volume or frequently, foods that claim to be healthy and food that is aimed at or consumed regularly (or in large volumes) by children. Fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh meat and fish along with (in some cases) 'treats' were considered to be less important.

6.4 Consumer education and information

In terms of education and information, consumers considered that introduction of a signposting scheme should be accompanied by a certain amount of information regarding its source, purpose and credentials.

Appendix A

FSA Signpost Labelling Refinement Research – JN: 95-1968

Discussion Guide (FINAL)

Introduction (0, 5)

Synovate introduction

- *Aims of the research*
 - *To explore your preferences regarding some new ways of presenting nutritional information on food packaging*
 - *To investigate how easy these are to understand and use*
 - *To explore how you use them and what types of food you would most like to see them used*
 - *To understand how, if at all they could be improved*
 - *To understand what further information you might require should the system be introduced*
 - *Explain that this research is part of a bigger study into different ways of presenting this information. Work has already been done to find what most people find useful. This research will be about refining those ideas, as opposed to thinking up new ones!*
- *Confidentiality/Independence/No sales*
- *Permission to tape*
- *Duration – up to 2 hours*

Respondent Introduction

- *Name*
- *Job/ hobbies/ interests*

SECTION 1: Background – Food Purchasing Habits (5, 5)

- *Where do they normally shop for food?*
- *What is important to them when buying food?*
 - *Cost*
 - *Quality*
 - *Ingredients*
 - *Levels of fat/ sugar/ salt etc (not to be asked directly)*
 - *Healthiness*
 - *Taste*
 - *Variety*
- *What do they consider to be 'healthy' food?*
 - *Spontaneous*

- *Probe on...*
 - Types of food – examples
 - Inclusion of types of ingredients – examples
 - Manufacturing process
 - Calories
 - *Rationale*
- How much do they read labels/ nutritional information panels?
- *Description*
 - Under what circumstances?
 - On what types of food?
 - How does this vary?
 - *How do they use it?*
 - What specific information do they look for/ use?
 - Probe for fat, salt and sugar etc
 - Do they compare with other products?
 - Do they compare different specific pieces of information on one product?
 - Which ones?
 - Rationale

SECTION 2: Use of Signposting Concept (A) – Individual Exercise

HAND OUT INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE 1 AND STIMULUS A –
RESPONDENTS ARE TOLD THE FOLLOWING...

HERE IS A / ARE PHOTO(S) OF A/ TWO XXXX (**1st PRODUCT CATEGORY TO BE
INSERTED – ROTATED ACROSS GROUPS**) PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO LOOK AT
IT/ THEM (**MODERATOR TO POINT OUT BOTH FRONT AND BACK OF BOARD(S)**).
THIS / THESE PACK(S) HAVE INFORMATION ON IT/ THEM TO HELP YOU DECIDE
WHETHER TO CHOOSE THIS/ THESE PRODUCT(S). PLEASE ANSWER THE
QUESTIONS ON YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE WITHOUT CONSULTING ANYONE ELSE IN
THE GROUP.

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ASK (FOR SINGLE PRODUCT)...

- 1) Would you choose to buy this product if you wanted to make a healthy/ healthier choice (assuming that you like the flavour etc of the product)?
- 2) What information did you use to make this decision?
- 3) Were any aspects of the information confusing?
- 4) How could the information available have been improved/ enhanced?

THIS EXERCISE TO BE CONDUCTED ONCE, WITH HALF THE GROUP USING SINGLE PRODUCT AND HALF USING TWO

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ASK (FOR TWO PRODUCTS)...

- 1) Which of the two products would you choose if you wanted to make a healthy/ healthier choice (assuming that you like the flavour etc of each equally)?
- 2) What information did you use to make this choice?
- 3) Were any aspects of the information confusing?
- 4) How could the information available have been improved/ enhanced?

SECTION 3: Use of Signposting Concept (A) – Group Discussion

- Overview of using the signposting/ making a choice
 - General impressions of the experience
 - Initial feedback on what information was used
- Descriptions of how choices were made
 - Spontaneous
 - Rationale
 - Prompt with...
 - Use of the signposting itself
 - Use of the nutritional panel
 - Use of the ingredients list
 - General knowledge/ common sense
 - How were these different sources of information used together, if at all?
 - Which elements of the different sources were used?
 - How?
 - Description
 - Rationale
 - Did any of the information conflict with other information/ cause confusion?
 - If so, in what way?
 - How could this be overcome/ changed?
 - Size of signposting?
 - Position of signposting on the pack?
 - Other?

RESPONDENTS WILL SWAP STIMULUS BOARDS IN ORDER TO ENSURE ALL HAVE SEEN ALL THREE BOARDS

- How could the information be used/ balanced (if wasn't used)?
 - Description, Rationale

INTRODUCTION OF 'STAND ALONE' REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SIGNPOSTING IN
ADDITION TO OTHER STIMULUS

- More detailed exploration of how the signpost itself was used
 - Which elements of the signpost were used/ useful?
 - Spontaneous description
 - Rationale
 - Prompt with...
 - Colours
 - Numbers
 - Text
 - Legend with the key for colour coding of High, Medium and Low on Colour-coded GDA concept
 - Others?
 - Explore the relative importance of each of these
 - Which is most useful?
 - Why?
 - Does this vary according to product?
 - How?
 - How (if at all) do the different elements complement each other?
 - How (if at all) do the different elements contradict/ conflict with each other?
 - How do they 'balance' the colours in the signpost against each other?
 - Do they consider any nutrients more important than other?
 - Which ones/ why?
 - How do they deal with 'conflicting' colours (e.g. red for sugar/ green for fat etc)?
 - Rationale
- Potential areas of confusion to be explored
 - Was any of the information on the signpost confusing?
 - Spontaneous description
 - Rationale
 - Prompt with...
 - Text/ colours/ numbers
 - Size of signpost
 - Positioning on pack
 - Check level of understanding of GDA (if relevant)
 - Do they understand what it stands for?
 - How do they interpret guideline amount?

MODERATOR NOTE: GDA (GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNT) IS AN UPPER LIMIT. NOTE ANY SPONTANEOUS CONFUSION WITH RDA (RECOMMENDED DAILY AMOUNT) WHICH IS A MINIMUM RECOMMENDATION AND REFERS TO OTHER NUTRIENTS SUCH AS VITAMINS & MINERALS

- How would they use this information?
- Would they require an explanation/ description?
 - Where should this be?
 - On pack?
 - In store?
 - Other
 - Rationale

AREAS OF CONFUSION/ BARRIERS TO UNDERSTANDING TO BE NOTED ON FLIP CHART FOR USE IN LATER SECTIONS

- Overall impressions of the signpost
 - Spontaneous impressions
 - Strengths and weaknesses
 - Rationale

- Impressions in terms of...
 - Design and layout
 - Colours/ size/ shapes
 - Level of information
 - Text/ numbers
 - Visibility on product packaging
 - How well does the concept stand out on packaging?
 - Description
 - Rationale
 - What makes it stand out?
 - What stops it from standing out more?
 - What would make it stand out more?

- How could the signpost be improved/ enhanced to make usage and understanding easier? – *NOTE: PLEASE INVESTIGATE MINOR DETAILS OF IMPROVEMENT AS OPPOSED TO MAJOR ALTERATIONS/ RECONSTRUCTION*
 - Spontaneous description
 - Prompt on...
 - Colours used
 - Typeface used
 - Type and size
 - Layout
 - Size
 - Position on pack
 - Rationale

REPEAT SECTIONS 2 AND 3 FOR CONCEPT B

SECTION 4: Optimisation of Signposting Concepts

Looking at the two concepts together...

- What individual aspects of these concepts are most useful/ easiest to understand?
 - Spontaneous description
 - Explore...
 - Colours
 - Text
 - Numbers
 - Shapes of coloured sections
 - Size of coloured sections
 - Any other aspects raised spontaneously
- What are the most important aspects to retain/ keep on the ideal signpost?
 - Spontaneous descriptions
 - Balloon exercise – if you have to ‘give up’ some aspects or features, which ones are expendable?
 - Rationale
- If a ‘hybrid’ signpost could be developed, what elements should be included?
 - Description
 - Rationale
- If not already discussed, explore the idea of no GDA information on signpost, but colour-coded GDA panel on back of pack.

<u>2 EXAMPLES</u> OF HOW GDA PANEL COULD BE COLOUR-CODED TO BE SHOWN.
--

- Responses to these ideas
 - Would this be a useful compromise?
 - Would they read the information on back of pack?
- Impressions of the panels
 - Level of understanding
 - Position of information (two tables)
 - Adding GDA column to top table?
 - Coverage of colours (across all columns/ only across words columns)?
- Suggestions for improvement

- How could this information best be presented on the back of the pack
 - Spontaneous ideas to be explored
- If it were not possible to have different colours on the signpost, [for example for economy reasons on a value pack], would one single colour work?
 - Spontaneous reaction
 - Rationale

SHOW EXAMPLE OF MONOCHROME SIGNPOSTING ON A VALUE PACK

- Responses to idea
 - Probe for positives / advantages and negatives / disadvantages
 - Suggestions for improvement
 - What, if any, additional information would be required to make such a signpost useable?
 - Description
 - Text?
 - Numbers?
 - Rationale
- ...or would it work to have different shades of a single colour?
- Repeat above questions for different shades.

SECTION 5: Positioning of Signposting

- Where do they feel that the signpost should be positioned?
 - Spontaneous impressions – what is important to respondents?
 - Rationale
 - Impressions of the positioning of the concept on the packs shown previously
 - Which positions work best?
 - Which do not work?
 - Rationale
 - Where should the signpost be? NOTE: THE SIGNPOST MUST APPEAR ON THE FRONT OF PACK (OR WITHIN THE EYE LINE OF THE PRODUCT NAME ON CIRCULAR PRODUCTS)
 - Bottom Vs top/ Left Vs right
 - Rationale
 - Where would they be most likely to look for it?
- If not mentioned above, investigate...
 - Should the signpost always be in the same position?
 - Why?

- Is that important? Why so / not?
- If so, where?
 - Top/ bottom/ left/ right?
 - Next to other product information?
 - Rationale
- Should the signpost always be a specific size in relation to the package?
 - If so, what size?
 - Rationale
- On smaller items, do they still think that signposting would be useful?
- If so...where would they like the signpost to be positioned?
 - Spontaneous description
 - Rationale
 - Prompt with...
 - On the product itself
 - On an 'outer box'
 - On a label on the shelf
 - Others

MODERATOR NOTE: EXAMPLES OF
'SMALL FOODS' TO BE SHOWN

SECTION 6: Application of the Signpost

- What categories of product is it most important for signposting to be on?
 - Spontaneous description (to be captured on flip chart)
 - Rationale

RESPONDENTS TO BE SHOWN 'GROUPS' OF FOOD CATEGORY BOARDS IN TURN, GROUPS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Processed Foods:
 - Meal centres
 - Cereals
 - Pizza/ Sandwiches
 - Ready Meals
- Treats:
 - Snacks
 - Bakery
 - Confectionary
 - Deserts and Ice creams
- Large volume:
 - Drinks
- Low volume:
 - Condiments, jams and pickles
- Others:
 - Dairy foods and other spreads
 - Fruit and vegetables
 - Meat and Fish

- For each ‘group’ of categories...
- Which product categories are considered most important:
 - What product categories should signposting be used on?
 - Rationale for choices
 - Prompt with...
 - Level of confidence regarding what is/ isn't healthy
 - Frequency with which they purchase a product or products
 - Scepticism regarding claims by manufacturers
 - Existing knowledge about different types of foods
 - What types of products provoke most confusion regarding their level of ‘healthiness’
 - Description
 - Rationale
 - Do any of the specific products differ from others in their category in terms of the importance of having signposting? Any that do not ‘fit’?
 - Description of differences
 - Explore rationale for differing importance of signposting by specific products
- Importance of knowing the nutrient criteria/ basis underpinning Signposting
 - Do they want/ need to know this type of information?
 - Rationale
 - If so, how would they like this information to be made available to them?
 - On pack?
 - In leaflets?
 - In store?
 - Website?
 - Rationale
- Yoghurt pack definitions:

SHOW EXAMPLES OF YOGHURT PACKS

- Where would you say is the front of these packs?
- How should the signpost be positioned on these products?
 - Description
 - Rationale

- Signposting for multi-packs:

SHOW EXAMPLES OF SNACK VARIETY PACKS

- Discussion around the issue of sign-posting variety packs where individual foods contained have differing nutritional values
 - Suggestions for how this could be clearly signposted
 - Prompt with...
 - Which of the contents should the signpost refer to?
 - Rationale

SUBJECT AREAS IN ITALICS ONLY TO BE COVERED IF TIME ALLOWS...

- *Thinking about 'loose foods' (e.g. fruit and veg, deli foods, bakery bread etc)...*
 - *Would they find signposting useful on these types of foods?*
 - *If so, which ones?*
 - *Rationale*
 - *How should the signpost be positioned on these 'loose foods'?*
 - *Spontaneous description*
 - *Rationale*
 - *Prompt with...*
 - *Labels on the shelf*
 - *Stickers on the products*
 - *Others*
- *Requirements for information/ education accompanying signposting*
 - *If signposting such as this/ these were introduced, what type of information/ education would they want to be available?*
 - *Spontaneous description*
 - *Rationale*
 - *Prompt with areas of confusion identified previously*
 - *How would this information vary for different types of food products/ different types of packaging/ presentation?*
 - *Description*
 - *Rationale*
 - *How should this information be made available?*
 - *Spontaneous description*
 - *In terms of...*
 - *Location of information*
 - *On pack*
 - *On shelf*
 - *Other locations in store*
 - *Websites*
 - *Press*
 - *Literature*

EXAMPLES OF EXISTING COMMUNICATIONS POSSIBLY TO BE SHOWN – IF TIME
--

- *Responses to each*
 - *Strengths/ weaknesses*
 - *Improvements*
 - *Rationale*
- *How appropriate would they be as a way of communicating information about signposting?*
- *Rationale*

FOR GROUPS 2&4 ONLY...IF NOT MENTIONED DURING GROUP...

- Check whether any respondents are colourblind...If so...
 - Do they know what type of colourblind they are (red/ green, blue/ yellow etc)?
 - Do they feel that this has had an impact on their ability to use the signposting?
 - In what ways?
 - How could the signposting be changed to make it easier for them to use?
 - Description
 - Rationale

Round Up

- Overall impressions of the signposting concept(s)
- Overall suggestions for improvement
- What type of product is it most important for signposting to be used on?
- What is the most important additional information to be provided?
- Anything else to add

- Thank you for taking part

Appendix B

Example 1. Hybrid concept – back of pack colour-coded nutrition panel and GDA table

Nutritional Information		
Typical values	Per 350g serving	Per 100g
Energy	1588kJ 376kcal	454kJ 107kcal
Protein	31.2g	8.9g
Carbohydrate	45.5g	13.0g
of which sugars	42.4g	12.1g
Fat	7.7g	2.2g
of which saturates	2.0g	0.6g
of which mono-unsaturates	3.0g	0.9g
of which poly-unsaturates	2.3g	0.7g
Fibre	2.8g	0.8g
Salt	2.0g	0.6g

The suggested level of calories, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt that an average adult can have each day is shown as the Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) value in the table below.			
	Per 350g pack	GDA Woman	GDA Man
Calories	1589	2000	2500
Fat	7.7g	70g	95g
Saturated fat	2.0g	20g	30g
Sugar	42.4g	90g	115g
Salt	2.0g	5g	7g
<div> <div></div> HIGH <div></div> MEDIUM <div></div> LOW </div>			

Example 2. Hybrid concept – back of pack colour-coded nutrition panel and GDA table

Nutritional Information		
Typical values	Per 350g serving	Per 100g
Energy	1588kJ 376kcal	454kJ 107kcal
Protein	31.2g	8.9g
Carbohydrate	45.5g	13.0g
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of which mono-unsaturates	3.0g	0.9g
of which poly-unsaturates	2.3g	0.7g
Fibre	2.8g	0.8g
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Sugar	42.4g	90g	115g
Salt	2.0g	5g	7g

■ HIGH
 ■ MEDIUM
 ■ LOW

Appendix C

13 A3 boards were prepared, and showed a selection of photographs of real products from each of the following categories.

Category	Example products
Fresh or frozen meat, poultry or fish	Organic Minced Beef Hot Smoked Scottish Mackerel Fillets Cod Fillet Portions Scottish Smoked Salmon Cooked and Peeled Prawns Tuna Chunks in Brine Unsmoked Back Bacon Pork Chops Skinned and Boned Breast Fillet Portions Lean Diced Turkey Thigh
Ready meals (ethnic and pasta ready meals)	Chicken and Black Bean Sauce with Rice Chicken Pasanda and Pilau Rice Chicken and Cashew with Egg Fried Rice Tuna and Sweetcorn Pasta (value range) Lasagne Sausage, Mash and Onion Gravy (value range) Tuna and Tomato Pasta Bake (children's range)
Meal Centres (sausages, burgers)	Premium Pork Sausages Thick Pork Sausages Healthy Eating Range Extra Lean Pork Sausages Beef Burgers 100% Beef Quarter Pounders Battered Fish Fillet Dippers Minted Lamb Burgers
Pizza and Sandwiches	Pepperoni Snack Pizza Premium Italian Ham, Mushroom and Mascarpone Cheese Pizza Healthy Eating Margherita Pizza Ham and Pineapple Thin and Crispy Pizza Chicken and Bacon Sandwich Cheese and Onion Sandwich Egg and Cress Salad Roll
Dairy foods; milk, cream, yogurt, butter/fat spreads, cheese	Whole Milk Single Cream Light Greek Style Natural Yoghurt Polyunsaturated Margarine Butter Natural Cottage Cheese Mild English Cheddar Light Cream Cheese Strong Farmhouse Cheddar Crème Fraiche Processed Cheese Triangles Processed Cheese Strings for Peeling

Category	Example products
Breakfast cereals and cereal bars	Honey Flavoured Corn Puffs Chocolate Flavoured Corn Puffs Chocolate Flavoured Wheat Ring Cereal Wheat Biscuit Cereal Specifically for Weight Loss Luxury Fruit Muesli Swiss Style Muesli Apple and Pear Cereal Bar Fair Trade Raisin and Apricot Cereal Bar
Cakes, biscuits, chocolate, confectionery	Milk Chocolate Fruit and Nut Bar Chocolate Drops Chocolate Covered Fudge Sticks Individual Chocolate Coated Wafer Biscuits Individual Sticky Toffee Buns Packet Chocolate Coated Caramel Biscuits Packet Plain Chocolate Coated Digestive Biscuits
Snacks; crisps, dried fruit, nuts, tortilla chips	Variety Crisps (Chicken, Bacon, Prawn Cocktail and Beef Flavour) Cheese Flavour Potato Snack Low Fat Variety Crisps (Salt, Salt and Vinegar and Cheese and Onion Flavour) Thick Potato Ridged Crisp – Salt and Vinegar Flavour Exotic Fruit Mix Salted Peanuts Tortilla Chips
Soft drinks, milk drinks, fruit juices, fruit juice drinks and diluting juice drinks	Carbonated Orange Soda Cola 100% Pure Squeezed Orange Juice Fresh Thick Strawberry Flavour Milkshake Banana Milk Drink Blackcurrant Squash Apple Squash Lemon and Lime Flavour Water Orange and Peach Flavour Water Drinking Chocolate
Desserts, ice-cream	Double Chocolate Gateau Raspberry Cheesecake Vanilla Flavour Soft Scoop Ice Cream Strawberry Flavoured Dessert Whip Tinned rice pudding Strawberry Trifle Toffee Pavlova Toffee Flavoured Light Yoghurt Low Fat Strawberry Mouse

Category	Example products
Bakery products; bread rolls, scones, pancakes, croissants, fruit loaf, muffins/cakes,	Brown Medium Sliced Bread Medium White Bread Wholemeal Rolls Mini Pitta Bread Naan Bread Sultana Scones Syrup Pancakes Sweet Pancakes Croissants Fruit Malt Loaf Assorted American Muffins Chocolate Cupcakes
Fruits and vegetables – fresh, frozen and processed	Pear Apple Sliced Melon Classic Fruit Salad Premium Tomato on the Vine Mixed Peppers Strawberries Fruit Cocktail in Light Syrup Mixed Vegetables in Salted Water Sliced Pineapple on Own Juice Frozen Cauliflower, Peas and Carrots Tomato Puree Dried Pitted Dates
Condiments, jams, pickles, spreads and meal accompaniments	Tomato Ketchup Mayonnaise Raspberry Jam Healthy Eating Range Caesar Salad Dressing Walnut Oil Mint Sauce Hot Pepper Sauce Yeast Extract Honey Peanut Butter Milk Chocolate Spread

Synovate is ISO9001 and BS 7911 certified and in accordance with quality procedures, this report has been constructed to comply with procedure QCP3, set out in the quality manual.

JN: 05-1968 – Written Report

Signed: Paul Rieger Dated: 06/10/2005.....

Signed: Katie Pepper Dated: 06/10/2005.....

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