Università di Scienze
Gastronomiche di Pollenzo
University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo



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Food Psychology

Riccardo Migliavada, PhD

Pollenzo

07-11-2026

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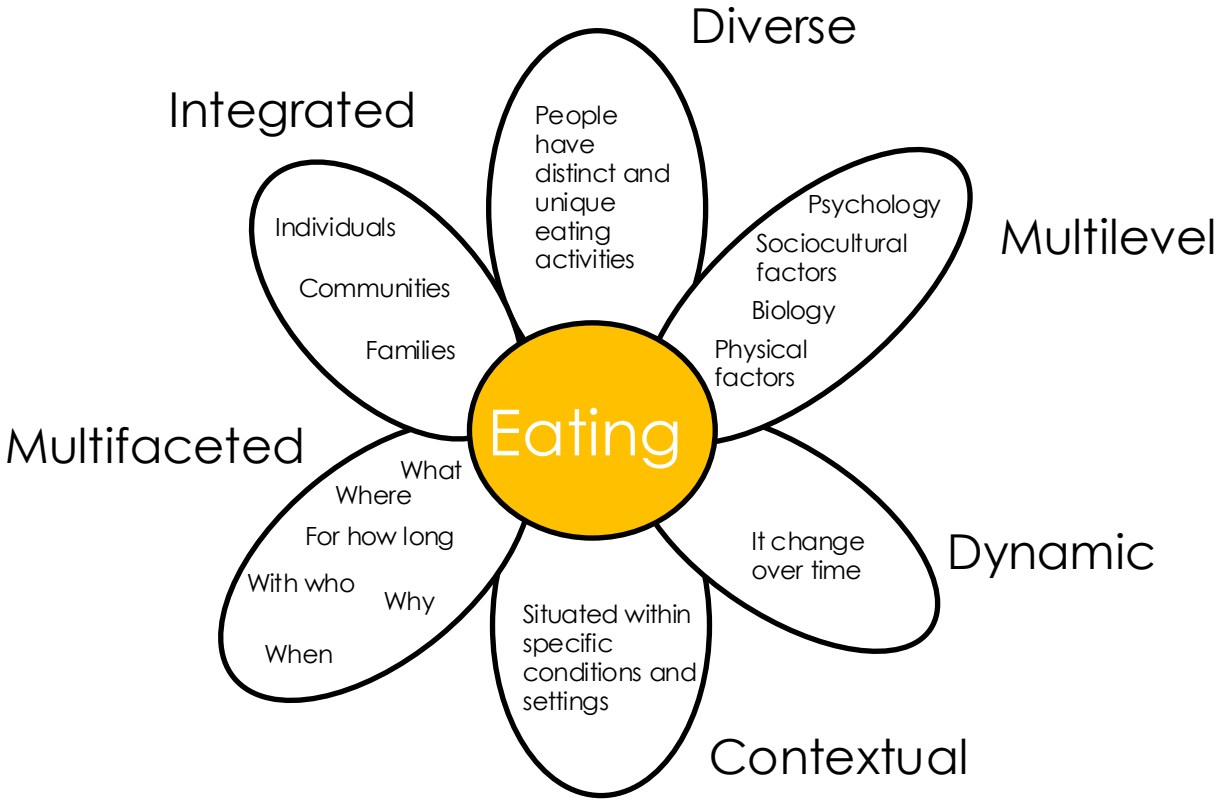
Eating is a complex and multidimensional activity



Sobal, J., Bisogni, C. A., & Jastran, M. (2014). Food Choice Is Multifaceted, Contextual, Dynamic, Multilevel, Integrated, and Diverse. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, *8*(1),

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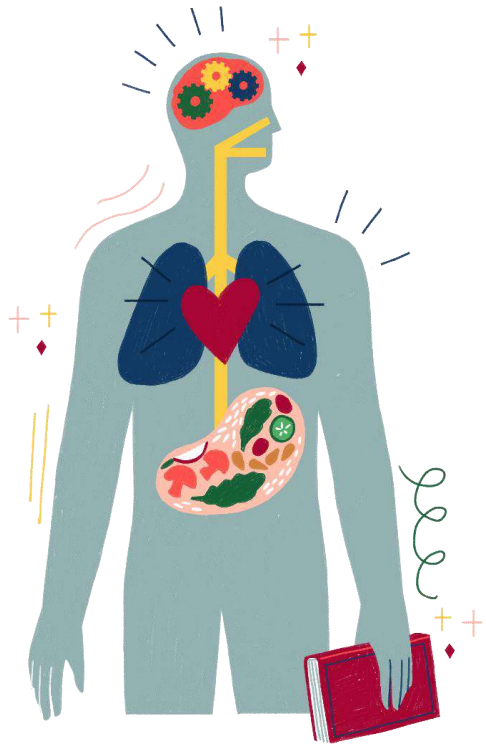

METABOLIC HUNGER homeostasis regulation, gastric distension

HEDONIC HUNGER reward, sensory specific satiety

COGNITION perception, attention, memory

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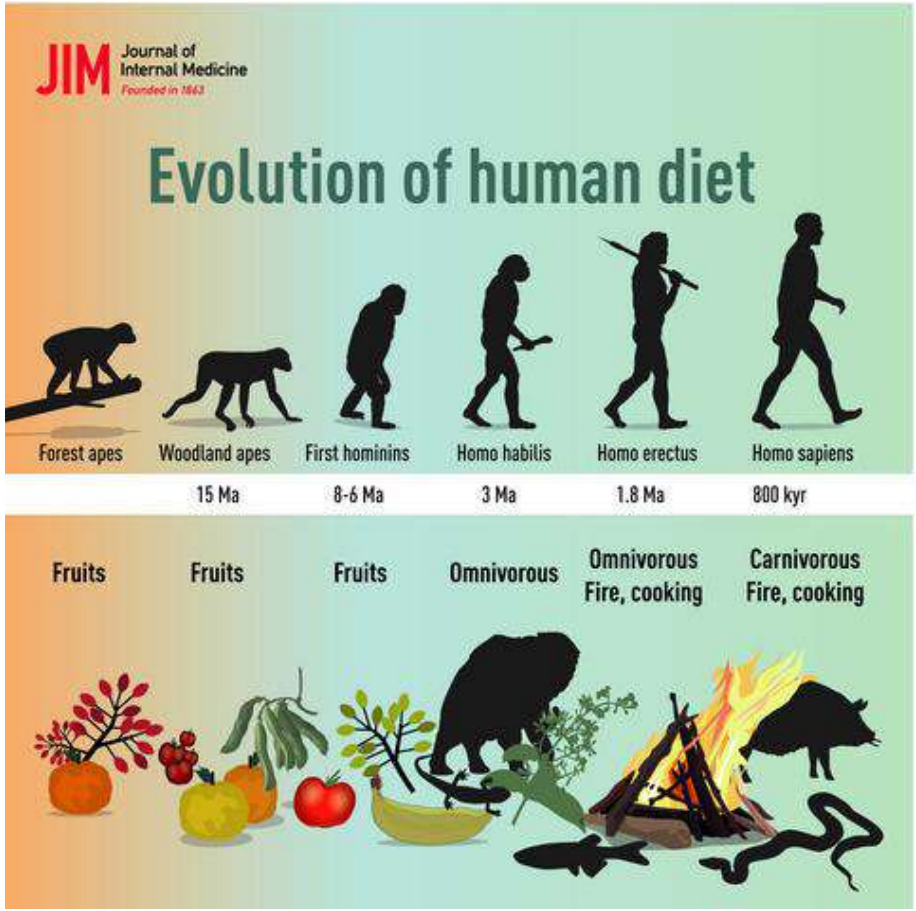

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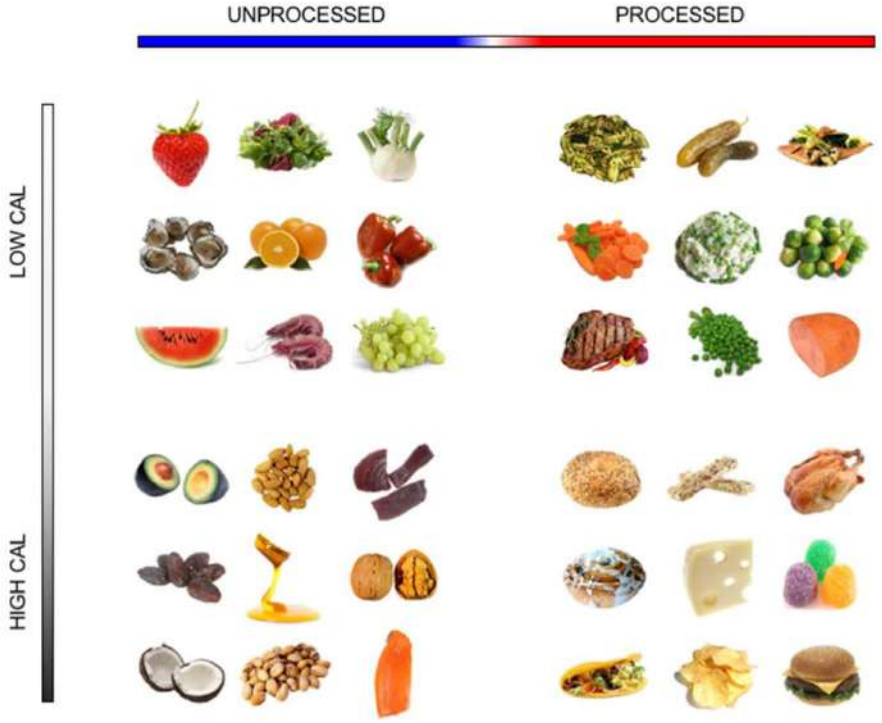
Our brain is capable of discriminating edible from inedible objects in **85ms**!

Between **100 and 200 ms** it distinguishes **caloric foods** from less caloric foods
Also between 100 and 200 ms is able to distinguish natural objects from artificial ones and animate objects from inanimate ones

In about **130ms** we are able to distinguish **processed foods** from unprocessed foods, and it has been seen that we give more value to processed foods



Coricelli C, Toepel U, Notter ML, Murray MM, Rumiati RI. Distinct brain representations of processed and unprocessed foods. Eur J Neurosci. 2019 Oct;50(8):3389-3401. doi: 10.1111/ejn.14498. Epub 2019 Jul 18. PMID: 31228866.

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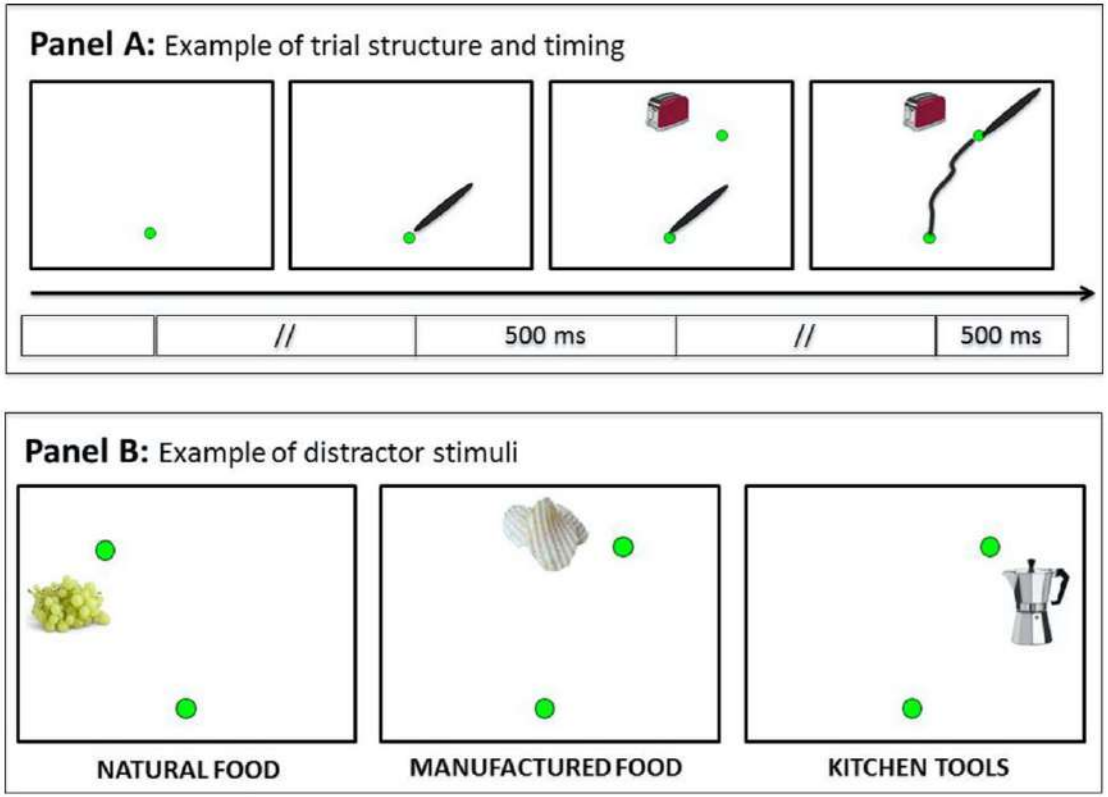
Food is so central to human life that keeping our minds off it is no easy task.



Foroni, F., Rumiati, R. I., Coricelli, C., & Ambron, E. (2016). A bait we cannot avoid: Food-induced motor distractibility. *Brain and Cognition*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandc.2015.12.003

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Cognition 274 (2026) 106605

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Cognition

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/cognit

Full Length Article

Individual differences in PROP bitterness responsiveness modulate visual awareness of food stimuli

Riccardo Migliavada [a,*,1], Tommaso Ciorli [b,1], Marina Perino [b], Myrto Dimakopoulou [b], Andrea Devecchi [a,b], Maria Piochi [a], Lorenzo Pia [b], Luisa Torri [a]

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Sweet stimuli reached awareness (bCFS) significantly faster than salty stimuli, and that individuals with **higher PROP responsiveness** showed **faster access to both categories**

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What is a decision?

- **Decision:** is the cognitive process of selecting one option from several alternatives (choices) by a decision-maker.

- **Choice:** is the final act of choosing between options.

The etymology of the word "**crisis**" derives from the ancient Greek *krisis*, meaning "**decision**." The term indicates a crucial moment of transition that requires a decision, a decisive phase in which it is necessary to choose between different possibilities.

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Characteristics of a Decision?

Length of the decision-making process: some decisions are **immediate**, while others require more time and involve **structuring the process** in successive stages.





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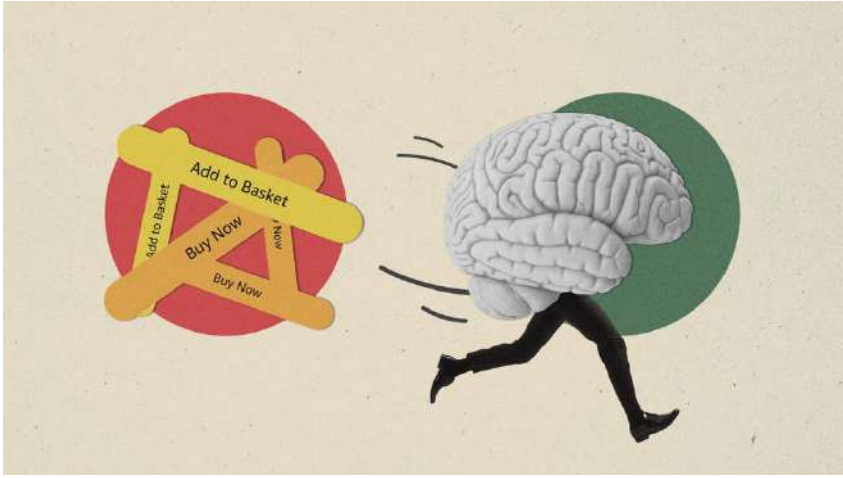
Characteristics of a Decision?

Level of consciousness: automated vs. **deliberate** decisions



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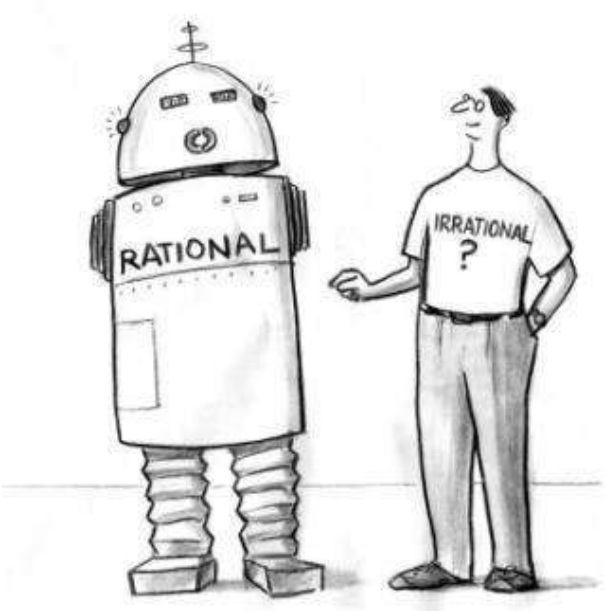
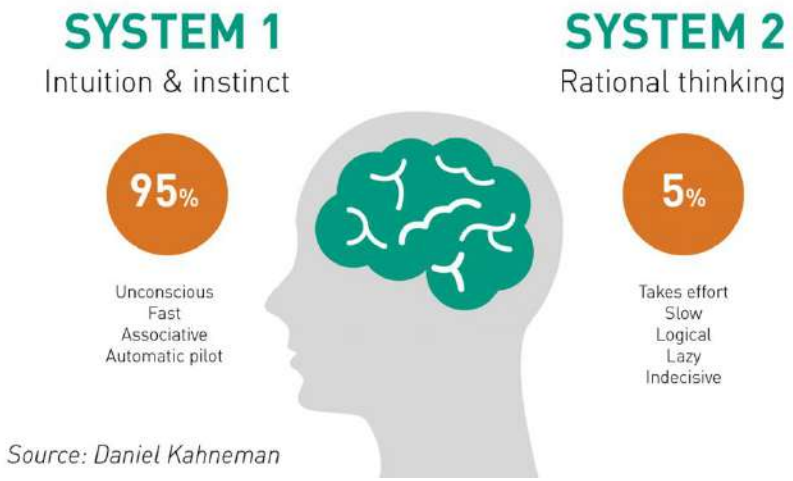


Humans have a bounded rationality (H. A. Simon)



How people make decisions given their limited resources? (Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky)

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Axioms violation

***Invariance axiom**: choice is not influenced by the way in which different options are presented.*



3/5 recommend



2/5 do not recommend

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Framing

Is a cognitive bias where people decide on options based on whether the options are presented with positive or negative connotations

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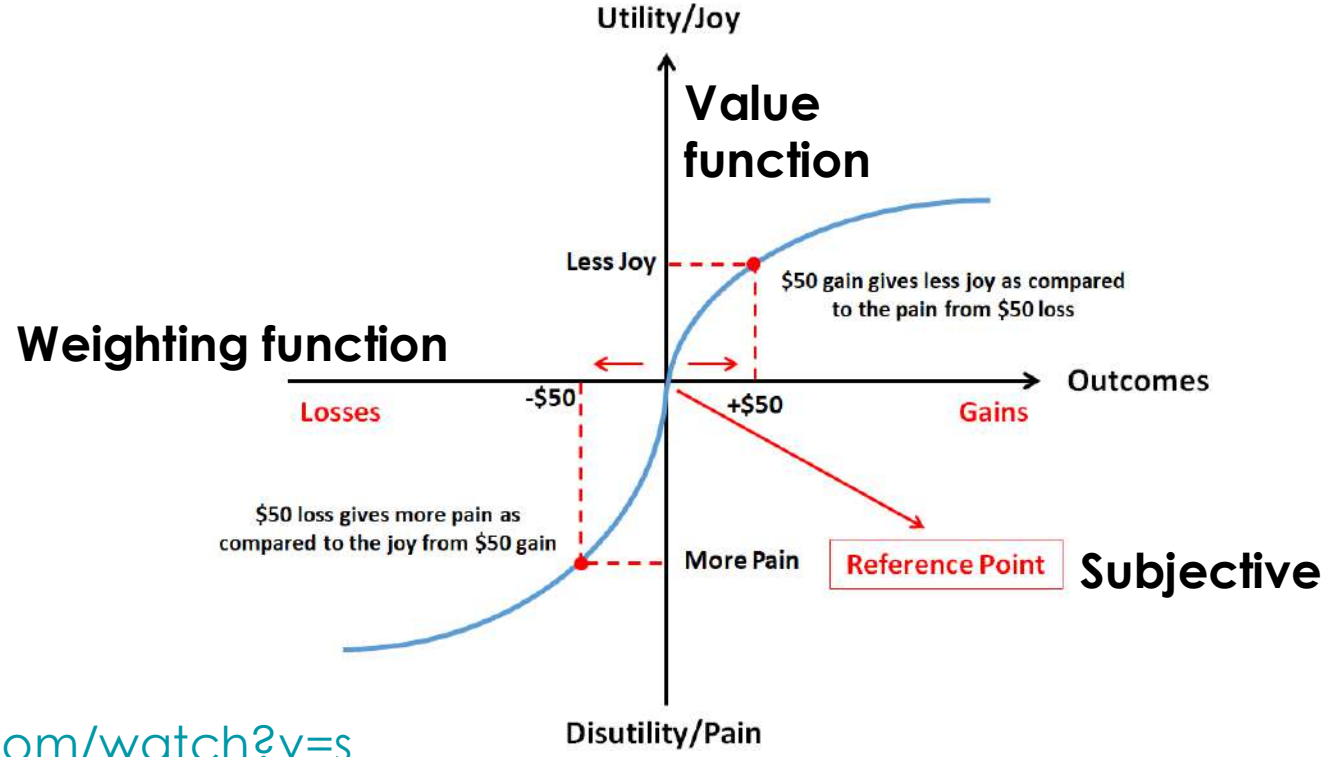
Prospect Theory



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM91d5l36Po

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyOA2nbjVVQ

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Loss Aversion

Limited edition and the
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)



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Bandwagon Effect

It refers to the natural tendency for a consumer to take action because one's peers are doing the same thing. No one likes to feel left out.



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Halo Effect

Is the tendency for positive impressions of a person, company, brand or product in one area to positively influence one's opinion or feelings in other areas.



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Ancoraggio comportamentale: 'Offerta limitata a 12 pezzi per famiglia' agiscono da ancora numerica: i clienti tendono a comprarne il doppio rispetto a un'offerta libera perché usano il 12 come riferimento di 'quantità giusta'.



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Choice Architecture



We are not autonomous island of decision making, acting on the basis of careful scanning and sound judgment. Our nature is intimately entangled with our environment (A. Noe).

Food & Psychology

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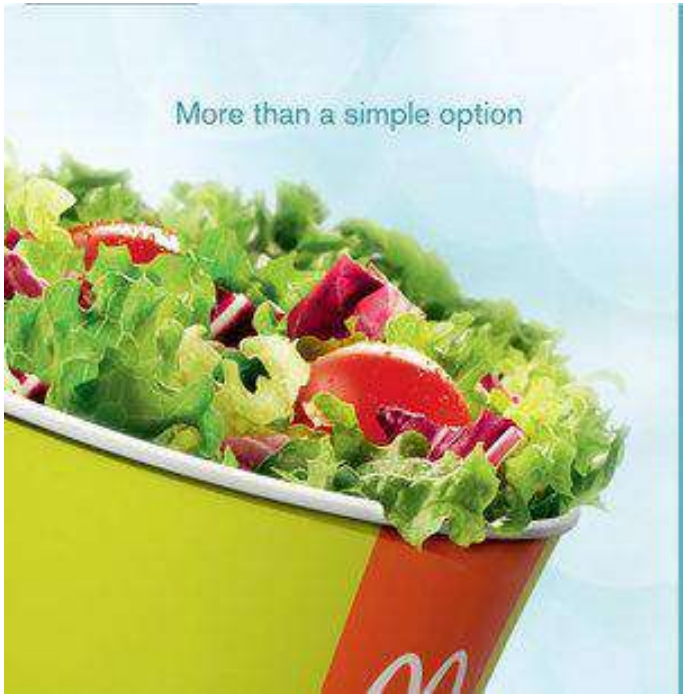



From Decision Making to Consumer Psychology

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https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-14370-8



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