

Nutrient Profiling of Products Marketed for Gut Health

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Background

As more products market themselves toward shoppers looking to improve and maintain a healthy gut microbiome, it is important to review the nutrient profile of such products and ensure alignment with a healthy lifestyle. The goal of this study is to understand the nutrients of these products and how they compare to products that are not marketed as gut healthy.

There are many ways to establish and measure a food's nutrient profile, but for the purpose of this study we'll think about nutrient profiling in the context of FDA nutrient content claims, focusing mostly on macronutrients.

Image 1.



- Microbiome
- Gut Health
- Probiotic
- Prebiotic

The study is done using the Label Insight database, which includes over 80% of the top-selling UPC containing food and beverage products in the US.



Methods

Gut Health Data Set

Label Insight receives images of food and beverage products from many sources, including brands and retailers. All the text on the package is captured and stored in tables. Registered Dietitians and subject matter experts grouped the marketing claims into 4 buckets (Image 1) or marked them not applicable. In Image 1, the product is deemed to have a probiotic claim. These 4 types of claims are grouped together to create a data set of products that are making claims related to gut health. With the marketing claim data set established, we can see what percent of Label Insight's 457,535 food and beverage products target gut health shoppers (Table 1).

FDA Nutrient Content Data Set

We can analyze the nutrients on these products to gain a better understand of what is being promoted to the public as gut healthy. Similar to marketing claim data, nutrients are captured and stored. In order to talk about the nutrients in FDA terminology, the nutrients must be adjusted as if the product serving size was consistent with the Reference Amount Customarily Consumed (RACC), then the nutrients are measured, and data sets are created for cross reference.

Cross Referencing

The gut health data set is merged with the nutrient content data sets to give an overview of nutrient profiles.



Results

The results of this study are presented in 2 tables. Table 1 shows the percentage of products making a gut health marketing claims by category. Table 2 shows what percentage of these products also meet the requirements of an FDA established nutrient content claim and how this compares to products that are not marketed for gut health.

Table 1.
Categories where gut health is being marketed
Percent of category with a claim about gut health, microbiome, prebiotics, or probiotics

CATEGORY	PERCENT
DAIRY	4.30%
DIET & NUTRITION	4.26%
DRINKS	2.50%
DELI	0.80%
CEREAL & BREAKFAST FOODS	0.51%
FROZEN FOOD	0.28%
SNACKS, COOKIES & CANDY	0.27%
SOUPS & CANNED GOODS	0.22%
BAKING GOODS	0.19%
SAUCES, SPICES, SEASONINGS, CONDIMENTS, OILS & DRESSINGS	0.16%
GRAINS, PASTA & SIDE DISHES	0.13%
BAKERY	0.03%
FRESH FRUIT & VEGETABLES	0.02%
MEAT & SEAFOOD	0.01%



Conclusion

FDA Nutrient Content Claims

Products marketed toward gut health were found to contain a greater percentage of products with each respective nutrient across all FDA nutrient content claims considered in this study when compared to the rest of the UPC containing products. Since each of these nutrient content claims generally reflects positively on the product's nutrient profile, it is commendable to see that these products are aligning to the concepts set forth by the FDA. Nutrients like fiber are essential for maintaining a healthy gut and were found 13.56% more often on gut health marketed products than those that weren't marketed for gut health.

Added Sugars

Though it is not considered to be one of the FDA's nutrient content claims, it is important to look at the added sugar content of a product when assessing their nutrient profile. Like the nutrient content claims, added sugars were found more often on gut health marketed products.

Recommendation for Consumers

When considering products that are marketed for gut health, it is most important for consumers to review the added sugar levels, as these can add up quickly, despite the other positive aspects of the product.

Table 2.

Let's take a look at the nutrient profile of products with gut health marketing claims

