

# Title: The buzz or the brand? How consumer perceptions of brand authenticity is influenced by buzzword labels

by  
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## **Abstract**

In an industry where big brands used to be better, small companies have contributed two-thirds of food industry growth in 2014. Consumer preferences have shifted, especially among millennials, and trending health-related buzzwords such as gluten free, ancient grains, and 100% natural have contributed to this change. However, among large packaged goods companies the alignment of these labels with the brand's purpose differs from that of small, niche companies. Through an experimental design and ANOVA analyses, this study aims to determine the difference between millennial and non-millennial consumers in regards to their perceptions of brand authenticity and how it is affected by the presence of buzzword labels and brand type (with either a large multi-national or niche brand story). In addition, this thesis aims to connect consumers' perceptions of these brand and label conditions to their knowledge of buzzwords and their lifestyle habits.

**Keywords:** labeling, buzzwords, food industry, brand management

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## Introduction

Last year the world's largest supplier of kale ran out of all varieties of the vegetable (Staight, 2014). Sales of gluten free foods surged 63% in the past two years to \$8.8 billion ("Gluten", 2014). It's clear that food trends and fads are taking flight at unprecedented rates. With health and wellness trends becoming an increasing focus of America's food decisions, big companies must decide how to best compete. In an industry where big used to be better, small companies contributed two-thirds of food industry growth in 2014. According to Credit Suisse analysts, the top five food and beverage companies in the U.S. saw a sales increase of only 1.4% over the last five years, while total sales rose 11.4% in packaged food and beverage (Gasparro, 2015). Lagging in a rapidly changing market, these companies have to compete with perception as well as the reality that flagship brands are no longer habitual purchases for many Americans—so should these companies try to capitalize on these trends or does that further misconception around their brands and thus create distrust among their consumers?

This perfectly describes the health halo effect, or, according to Northrup's (2013) research, the tendency of a consumer to believe that food is healthier than it really is. The healthy halo trend has led several food companies to utilize health-related marketing buzzwords to grab consumers' attention. Anything from gluten-free to ancient grains, kale to antioxidants, and all-natural to organic, has been exploding in the grocery aisle. A recent Jimmy Kimmel episode that interviewed farmer's market consumers illustrated that some consumers take an extreme stance on some of the industry's buzzwords without knowing what they stand for. His 'Pedestrian Question', "Do you try to avoid GMOs? What does 'GMO' stand for?" elicited convincing responses of consumers actively avoiding them in their diets, but the majority of the interviewees couldn't say what the acronym even meant (Bradley, 2014). Even iconic brands, such as Nature Valley, have been taking this marketing tactic so far as to receive government intervention. After

using “100% Natural” on their granola bars that contained artificial ingredients, the company was forced to remove the label (Watson, 2014). The movement towards fresh food will continue and the health halo will become more prevalent through “choice of ingredients, label statements, minimal processing and new technologies” (Group, 2015).

The health halo effect is fueled by changing consumer habits, specifically in millennials (those born 1984-1998). Research by Cloud (2015) shows millennials like to support brands that align with their values. Sixty-two percent of millennials expect good intentions from brands. Brands can utilize co-creation, bringing people in, or create social meaning. The second thing they can do is use social responsibility to increase their authenticity. Attempting to strive for both is difficult and appears forced or less authentic. Unlike past generations, millennials are able to sense when someone is trying to market to them and are not being authentic. Big companies are left with few options to fight the consumer shift towards small natural brands: diversifying or divesting their portfolios, or adapting their current products to the trends.

My thesis question: “What is the impact brand authenticity on buzzword labeling? And how does this differ for millennials and non-millennials?” was tested by electronically surveying millennials and non-millennials through a 2x2 study design that determines consumer’s brand perceptions based on the presence of a health-related buzzword and the alignment of that buzzword with the type of brand, either a niche or large brand. This will focus in on two specific attributes that are of hot discussion in the food industry—brand authenticity and buzzword labels—and will determine the line marketers must be wary of when trying to capitalize on the latest trends, but still remain true to their brand’s purpose.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

Previous research has highlighted the relationships between labeling strategies and brand equity. The present study specifically focuses on one facet of brand equity: Brand authenticity. According to Anselmsson (2007) brand equity can be described as the intangible value of the brand that is driven by consumer perceptions. A brand that portrays authenticity lives up to its package claims, follows through on commitments, and shares openly with consumers (Beattie and Fernley, 2014). This aligns very closely with many aspects of brand equity, defined as the intangible value or integrity of the brand (Anselmsson, 2007).

The present study specifically focuses on how packaging claims impact authenticity perceptions among millennials and non-millennials. In terms of package labeling, consumer perceptions of products can be altered simply by the addition of a few words that can signal to consumers that the food is somehow healthier. Several aspects of a product impact how strongly a consumer perceives the connection between brand authenticity and buzzword marketing. This section will highlight research on millennials, brand equity and authenticity, and labeling strategies within the food industry. No single rule exists as to how businesses should approach this dilemma, and a wrong decision can be detrimental to a brand. This thesis contributes by addressing gaps in research specifically isolating the impacts of buzzword labels among different types of brands and between millennial and non-millennial consumers.

### Millennial Behaviors

With most of these food trends and debates arising during the generation of the Millennial, in this study, those born between 1984-1998 (ages 18 to 32), it would be interesting to compare their opinions against those of non-Millennials. This age range was chosen to include anyone 18+ to be inclusive of all Amazon mTurk participants, and capped at 32 years old based

on the definition by Pew Research Center (2015). Millennials are changing their purchasing habits. In comparison to non-millennials, millennials are more likely to feel excited about doing things when their friends agree and usually don't make decisions without consulting someone they trust. They are also very likely to have someone come to them for advice. (Fromm, 2011). Beattie and Fernley (2013) found millennials believe authenticity is more important than innovation. According to Larry Chiagouris, a marketing professor at Pace University, from a retail perspective this shows that millennials are brand aware but cynical, meaning they are not brand loyal. Millennials like to support brands that align with their values. Sixty-two percent of millennials expect good intentions from brands (Cloud, 2015). Millennials are able to sense when someone is trying to market to them and any effort to put on an identity that seems forced will be less authentic. At a time when millennials are becoming larger consumers, more age-focused research is needed for marketers making branding and labeling decisions.

### Consumers value authenticity

Brand authenticity, or the integrity of a brand, plays an important role in brand equity. Most research focuses on quality, taste, and price as determinants of brand competitiveness in the food industry. Food products have further diversified and differentiated over the years, which pushes a consumer to evaluate products on a multidimensional model of brand equity. Consumer perceptions of a brand's authenticity highly influence brand equity. Beverland described an authentic brand as being true to its heritage; it is connected to time place and culture. A study by Beattie and Fernley (2014) shows consumers are placing high value on transparency and authenticity of a brand than ever before. In 2014, 87% of global consumers said it was important for brands to 'act with integrity at all times', making it more essential than innovation (72%).

Sixty-eight percent of consumers would buy from an authentic brand over a competitor. An authentic brand also lives up to its espoused values and commitments. (Beverland, 2011; Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, & Farrelly, 2013). Supermarkets are rated the most authentic sector, followed by electronics and retailers. This may be due to the multitude of touch points a consumer has in these industries that require brands to validate their claims. The study found one of the key associations influencing brand equity for consumers' perceptions of grocery products was health-related associations (Anselmsson et. al, 2007). The level of *uniqueness*, or difference from competitors, was also found to be important, as determined by the choices consumers made. When consumers faced a choice they usually ignored attributes common to the alternative choices because these offered no assistance. Instead, the unique attribute becomes the focal point of the decision. Labels offer the advantage to draw consumers' attention through this factor. However, as trends continue to shift in the food industry more and more labeling strategies are being utilized to appeal to consumer trends, which may jeopardize brand authenticity. There is little evidence in how this shift has impacted millennials' perceptions of brands in packaged goods. In terms of legal regulation, the Food and Drug Administration is responsible for ensuring products are effectively labeled. Legislative action can be taken to require products to contain certain labels. This has recently occurred with the passing of the GMO labeling bill in Vermont, which requires companies to label products that contain GMOs (genetically modified ingredients).

### *Brand authenticity dimensions*

Across scientific disciplines brand authenticity is connected with terms such as *genuineness, realness, stability, endurance, consistency, individuality, trustfulness, and*

*credibility*. As a marketer determines packaging characteristics, how does an addition of a buzzword label impact the consumer's perceptions of these terms? Based on a study by Bruhn (2012) four dimensions of brand authenticity have been identified as important (1) Continuity (2) Originality (creative and/or innovation) (3) Reliability (ability to keep promises) and (4) Naturalness or Genuineness. There are several implications for brand managers around these dimensions. In terms of packaging and marketing communication, continuity and naturalness are the most relevant dimensions. This is specifically relevant to the food industry where natural ingredients have taken a dominant position. To achieve an integrated brand presence, companies need to ensure consistency (consistent statements), congruence (between communication and behavior) and continuity (in terms of the implementation of the different communication tactics) of a brand to create reliability (Bruhn, 2012). This study will fill the gap in research by addressing the interaction of continuity and naturalness (genuineness) with the brand story. It will also specifically investigate millennial and non-millennial consumers' perceptions of brands.

### *Brand extensions and sub-branding*

In order to maintain brand equity and thus consumer loyalty, many companies enter new markets through brand extensions or sub brands that focus efforts on a particular product attribute (Loken, Joiner, and Houston, 2010). A brand extension is a product or service introduced in the marketplace that includes an existing brand's name while a sub-brand extension is the parent brand name assigned to the brand extension along with another new name created by the company. Branding is important to perception; if the product doesn't align for a consumer, then the brand will suffer. A brand extension will be accepted if 1) consumers feel commitment or trust or liking for parent brand 2) the extension is consistent with core brand

image or product associations 3) the focus of the information about the brand extension includes favorable relevant information (Loken et al., 2010). If there is a consistency of fit, the parent brand and beliefs will be more likely to transfer to the new brand extension and protect it from dilution (Loken & John, 2010). Brand image consistency can sometimes be even more important than product category consistency in achieving brand extension success, which means marketers have more freedom to innovate within a category and still have product acceptance (Loken, et. al. 2010). This study aims to close the gap in research by examining how brand extensions are perceived when labels are introduced. In this study, products with large brand stories are intended to be perceived as brand extensions.

Consumers who are “experts” or highly familiar with a brand will transfer associations from parent to extensions when the fit is based on complex attributes, whereas novices transferred associations based on surface similarities (Loken et. al. 2010). This is an important aspect of how a consumer evaluates brand authenticity. Engagement in healthy lifestyle choices (wellness-focus) and knowledge of the term gluten-free should also increase the complexity of decision making. In particular, I expect that healthy lifestyle choices to increase consumers’ abilities to look beyond labels and use their prior knowledge.

### *Labels create a health halo effect*

Many studies have already investigated the impacts of organic and natural labels on consumer perceptions. It has been found that there is significant power in the organic label through the ‘health halo effect’ (Wan-chen, 2013). The health halo effect leads us to believe that food is healthier for us than it really is simply based on the packaging cues and communications about a product. Northrup (2013) tested the impact of the ‘health halo effect’ with an experiment



built off the priming theory to determine how food marketers influence consumers. Consumers were either shown products that included marketing buzzwords such as “organic” or no words. Overall, products with the buzzwords were rated as healthier even though many were not, in fact, healthier. In addition, to date, the FDA nutrition facts panels have done little to counteract the buzzword marketing. Further research on the connection between labeling, the brand’s story, and the consumer’s age will allow insights for food marketers in the changing industry.

### Significance of gluten-free labels

The label chosen for this study was “Gluten Free”. Gluten free, as defined by the FDA, means less than 20 parts per million of wheat in a food substance. As previously mentioned, Temple Northup (2013) has found that the "health halo effect" has significant influence on consumer choices. Chocolate labeled fair trade was perceived to have lower calorie content. Tostitos chips with the "all natural label", Annie's fruit snacks with "organic", and Cherry 7-Up with "antioxidants" were all perceived as more healthy than the product presented without the label. However little research has been done on the gluten free label. While Northrup's labels were not connected to food allergies, gluten is connected to celiac disease. Only 1% of Americans are estimated to have celiac, of which only 17% are actually diagnosed with the disease. (Medicine, U. of C., 2015) However, Mintel found that there was an increase of over 63% in sales of gluten free products from 2012 to 2014.

### Labels can influence consumers’ perceptions of taste

Labels have extended the health halo effect even to a consumer’s perception about taste. Consumers who received an organic-labeled product agreed it was healthier than a conventional

product (with the exception of cookies), even though the two products were the same (Wan-chen, 2013). It was found that those who regularly purchase organic food, read nutrition labels, and exhibit pro-environmental behaviors are more likely to avoid the impacts of the ‘health halo’ than consumers with less knowledge. How consumer knowledge translates to perception of additional ‘health halo’ buzzwords is unknown, especially in comparison among generations, which is what this study will focus on.

## Methodology

### 3.1 Hypotheses

My first hypothesis is that perceptions of brand authenticity and a brand’s uniqueness depend on whether the brand is large or niche, and that a gluten-free label will not be beneficial to the niche brand as consumers, especially millennials, already perceive the niche brand as more authentic than large brands. Previous research shows that uniqueness, which influences brand equity, is increasingly important to product differentiation (Anselmsson, et al. 2007) and niche brands are more likely than large brands to be viewed as unique. Since this study does not include brand name or price, it is proposed that the presence of a buzzword label, “gluten free” will also increase a brand’s uniqueness factor. This leads me to my first hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** *Niche brands will be perceived as more authentic, more unique, and more favorable overall, than large, corporate brands, Labeling a brand extension as “gluten free” will increase the perceived authenticity, uniqueness, and favorableness, especially for the larger brand.*

As Beverland (2012) argued, millennials are driven by authenticity. Therefore, I expect that millennial consumers will see the large brand with the label as more unique because it is

attempting to stand out from other brands. A label on the niche brand will have no effect on millennials because it is continuous with the brand story, and does not offer any further differentiation to the product. Therefore, the relationship between label and type of brand should be further strengthened for participants who are millennials, since for them authenticity is critical to brand equity. Perceptions of brand authenticity, brand uniqueness, and brand evaluation should all show this same pattern, thus leading to my second hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2a:** *When millennials evaluate a niche brand, adding a buzzword label (versus no label) will not increase the authenticity, uniqueness, and overall evaluation of the brand. For non-millennials, however, the label may create a positive impact (over no label).*

**Hypothesis 2b:** *When evaluating a large brand, having a label (versus no label) may increase the perception that the brand is authentic, unique, and favorable, and this effect should be greater for non-millennials than millennials.*

An alternative hypothesis to the ones above would be that millennials will not accept packaged goods regardless of the authenticity of the brand or buzzword labels. This would be supported by a significant decrease in perceived authenticity and more negative evaluations of both niche and larger brands.

I also suspect wellness values will impact consumer perception. Wan-chen's (2012) research on health halo effects shows those with more active lifestyles and orientation to health (defined as "high value of wellness" in this study) tend to be more skeptical of the health halo. These individuals are also more likely to be experts on health effects, and therefore resistant to effects of labeling of gluten-free. This leads to my third hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3a:** *When evaluating either a large or a niche brand, participants with high wellness values will not view the brand as more authentic, unique, and more favorable overall*

*when it has a label (versus no label). Participants with low wellness values, however, will view the brand as more authentic, unique, and more favorable overall when it has a label (versus no label).*

**Hypothesis 3b:** *Participants with high wellness values will view both brands (and particularly the large brand) as less authentic, unique, and less favorable, than respondents with low wellness values.*

Less accurate knowledge of gluten-related diseases should also affect consumer's perceptions of the authenticity, uniqueness and evaluation of the brand. In particular, those who are less knowledgeable should be more affected by the gluten free label than those that are more knowledgeable. Referring to Northrup's (2013) research on the health halo effect, I hypothesize that uneducated consumers will have strong positive perceptions of the brand with a label because they fall victim of the health halo effect. This leads to my 4<sup>th</sup> hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Participants with less knowledge about the meaning of gluten-free will evaluate both niche and large brands that have a gluten free label (versus no label) as more authentic, unique, and more favorable overall. More knowledgeable participants will be less influenced by the gluten free label.*

## **3.2 Data Collection and Variables**

### *Study Design*

To answer my question about the impact of buzzwords on brand authenticity and how this differs for large and niche brands, I conducted an experiment with a 2x2x2x2 design, with two levels of label (gluten free label or no label) and two levels of brand (large versus niche), and a repeated measure, two product categories (granola bar and cereal). I also collected individual difference data on ages of participants, to determine whether they are millennials and

non-millennials. I also collected data on wellness and knowledge levels. The brands used were fictitious and described through a short five-sentence description that was either of a niche company or "big" company, both of which focused on the core competencies of the brand's history. The niche brand story was adapted from similar products on the market, with the objective of portraying a connection from the brand story to the buzzword label, gluten free by highlighting the simplicity of the ingredients in the brand's products. The "big" brand story was adapted from products of large food corporations. The focus was on the scale and longevity of the company and its diverse product lines. The niche brand story, in contrast, focused on the fact that the company was relatively new (under ten years old), focused on fresh, simple ingredients, and were hand made. See appendix for product descriptions.

The respondents received two sets of stimuli, one of granola bars and one for cereal. The order of these two products was counterbalanced so that half received granola bar first and half received cereal stimuli first. The design is depicted in Table 1 and was given for granola bar and cereal stimuli.

**TABLE 1: STUDY DESIGN**

<b><i>Millennials (Ages 18-32)</i></b>	<b>Niche brand (Authentic)</b>	<b>Big brand (Inauthentic)</b>
<b>Buzzword label</b>	<p><b>Case 1</b></p> <p>Gluten free label with niche brand story</p>	<p><b>Case 2</b></p> <p>Gluten free label with big brand story</p>
<b>No label</b>	<p><b>Case 3</b></p> <p>No label with niche brand story</p>	<p><b>Case 4</b></p> <p>No label with big brand story</p>

**Non-Millennials (ages 33+)****Niche brand (Authentic)****Big brand (Inauthentic)****Buzzword label****Case 1**

Gluten free label with niche brand story

**Case 2**

Gluten free label with big brand story

**No label****Case 3**

No label with niche brand story

**Case 4**

No label with big brand story

Dependent Variables

Three dependent variables were tested in this study design; brand authenticity, brand uniqueness, and brand evaluation (attitude and perception towards the brand). Reliability analysis determined the responses to the related questions (Table 2) were averaged to develop the dependent variables.

**TABLE 2: SURVEY QUESTIONS**

<b>Brand Evaluation</b>	Do you intend to buy this product? How likely are you to purchase this brand? Overall, how much would you like to try this product? My overall attitude towards this product is
<b>Brand Uniqueness</b>	The brand is unique The brand stands out from other brands
<b>Brand Authenticity</b>	The brand makes a genuine impression This brand appears to be very authentic

Wellness Index

The wellness index factor consists of an average of the five responses in Table 3. The wellness index was classified as low 0-4.69 and high 5-7 by splitting down the median.

**TABLE 3: WELLNESS INDEX QUESTIONS**

<b>Wellness</b>	I am physically healthy
	I generally read nutrition fact labels when purchasing products
	I make a significant effort to choose healthier options at every meal
	Exercise is very important to me
	I exercise 30+ minutes every day

Knowledge Of Gluten

It was important to understand consumer's knowledge of gluten, the buzzword label selected for this study. To assess this respondents were asked to select which grains had gluten from a list (oats, wheat, rye barley, quinoa, rice, corn). Respondents were assigned one of three values to reflect their knowledge. Those that answered 100% correctly were considered fully proficient. Those that misinterpreted only one of the seven grains were considered partially proficient. More than one incorrect was considered non-proficient in understanding the term. In addition, consumers were asked if they had ever pursued a gluten free diet and if so, for what reasons. Finally, they were asked to self-report their familiarity with the term *gluten free* based on three generic sentences. The self-reported measure was not included in the data analyses. Instead I relied on the objective measure.

Lifestyle and demographics

Lifestyle questions comprised the remainder of the survey. The lifestyle variables assessed shopping and eating behaviors through questions about stores they shop at, whether they read nutrition labels and work out regularly, among others. Price was not mentioned at any

point during the study in order to prevent bias for the variable. Demographic data, including age and level of education, were collected. Age is of particular interest in order to identify whether millennials and non-millennials have different perceptions.

### **3.3 Statistical Analysis**

A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance was performed, with two fixed factors, brand type (either large or niche), and gluten-free label (either label or no label) and one repeated measure (product: either granola bar or cereal). Each of the three dependent variables (brand authenticity, brand uniqueness, and brand evaluation) was analyzed separately. Gender was analyzed as a covariate for the dependent variables but did not show any effects. For hypotheses regarding millennials, wellness and knowledge, each of these was added as single additional fixed factor in the Anova design (e.g. for tests involving millennials, a 2x2x2x2 analysis of variance was performed, the same two fixed factors (brand type, label) plus a third (millennial or not, gluten proficiency, and high/low wellness values) and the repeated measure were included.

### **3.4 Appropriateness of Methodology**

#### *Strengths*

The strength of this study is the use of experimental design, with random assignment to cells of the design for brand type and presence of the label. In addition, the study design allows me to focus on the interaction of the brand (niche versus big brand story), buzzword label (gluten free), and the assessment of a third factor (millennials versus non-millennials, wellness-focused or not, knowledgeable about gluten or not).



Due to lack of secondary data on this topic, it was necessary to develop a survey to gather individual preferences in regards to the four different cases. The experimental stimuli were developed by use of fictitious brands and stock images for this study. Utilizing existing brand names carries too many pre-existing feelings about a brand, including loyalty.

Granola bars and cereal were used in order to not limit to a single product in order to generalize the results. Barnes and Pressey (2008) found that the product's category can affect the consumer's perception of the brand. Similar to brand attitudes, attitudes towards a specific category can be driven by a consumer's beliefs and associations. If categorical attitudes have a unique effect on the attitudes towards individual brands, then attitudes toward the category changes, and the judgments of the brand may also change. A few main effects for product category were found in results, but only interactions with other experimental variables will be noted.

### Limitations

This methodology is not without limitations. Price is completely left out of this study in order to prevent bias for this variable. However, price has been found as one of the most prominent influencers of grocery decisions (Barnes and Pressey, 2008). Additionally, designing the survey to allow for analysis of one product at a time is not representative of a grocery shopping experience where consumers must compare and choose between multiple products.

By using fictitious brands the study was able to control for previous perceptions of a product, but also limited the ability for the respondents to connect their familiarity of a brand, or its authenticity, to the gluten free label. Finally, by using a median split for the wellness and

gluten knowledge factors, there is limited range in understanding the continuous impact of these variables on consumer decisions.

## Results

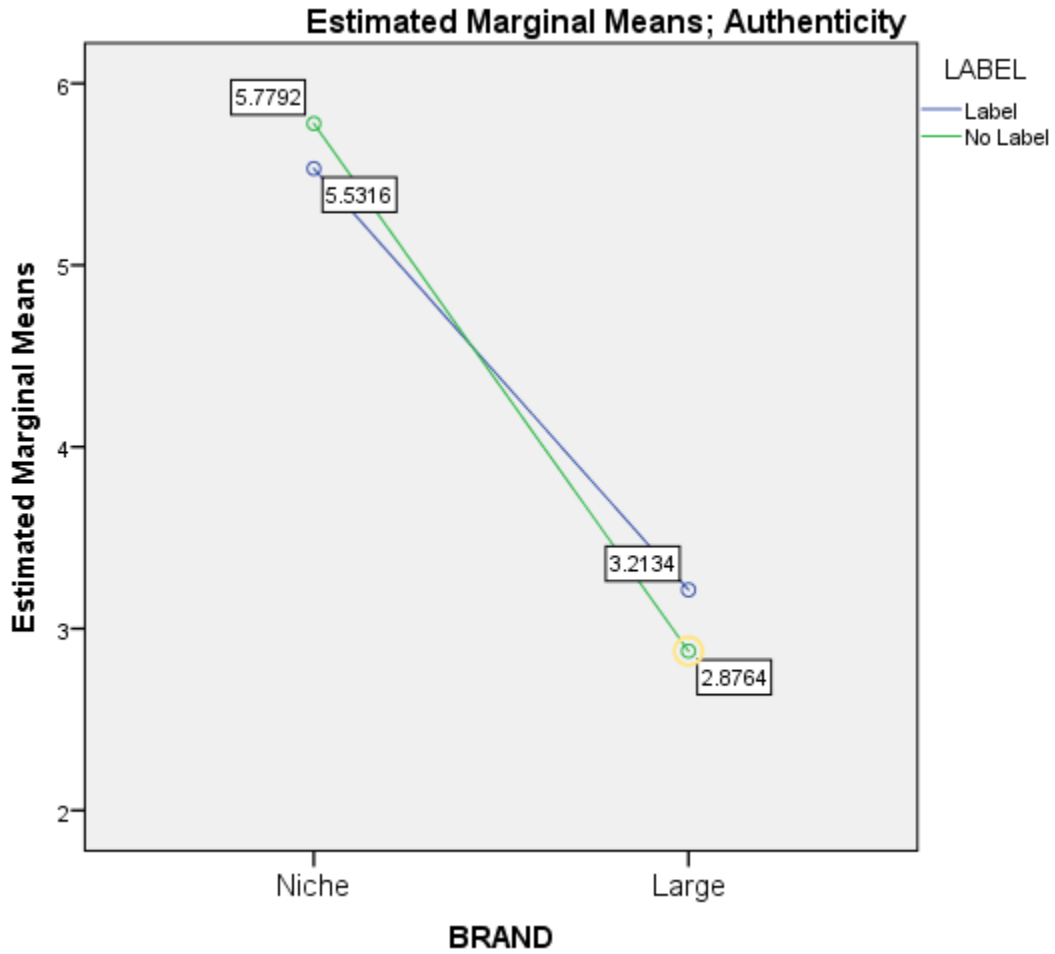
### 4.1 Overall Evaluation of Hypotheses

As previously stated, an ANOVA and repeated measures test were used to evaluate the hypotheses. An alpha of 0.05 was used to test significance and 0.1 to test moderate significance.

***Hypothesis 1: Niche brands will be perceived as more authentic, more unique, and more favorable overall than large, corporate brands. Labeling a product as “gluten free” will increase the perceived authenticity, uniqueness, and favorableness, especially for the larger brand.***

Supporting the first hypothesis, the main effect of brand type was significant, and the brand\*label interaction effect was significant or marginally significant for authenticity. See Exhibit 4, Tables 5 and 6 and Table 16 appendix. Overall, respondents highly favored niche brands over big brands; they found them more authentic, more unique, and more favorable overall (see tables 4 and 5). Further, big brands with labels (cereal M=3.21, granola bar M=3.25) were preferred over big brands without labels (M=2.83 and 2.93, respectively), but respondents did NOT favor a labeled niche brand (for cereal and bars, Ms=5.53 and 5.54 for authenticity; M=5.13 and 4.68 for uniqueness; M= 6.09 and 5.80, for brand evaluation) over an unlabeled niche brand (m=5.86 and 5.70 for cereal and bar, respectively, for authenticity; M=5.25 and 4.94 for uniqueness; M= 6.67 and 6.28 for brand evaluation). In fact, in a follow-up comparison, the labeled niche brand was rated as significantly less favorable overall (F=3.842, p=.052) than the unlabeled niche brand.

**EXHIBIT 4: BRAND \* LABEL, AUTHENTICITY**



**TABLE 5: ANOVA univariate measure for Granola Bar**

		Authenticity	Uniqueness	Evaluation
Niche	Label (N=79)	5.54	4.68	6.09
	No Label (N=77)	5.86	4.94	6.67
Big	Label (N=83)	3.25	2.8	3.22
	No Label (N=87)	2.93	2.56	3.35

TABLE 6: ANOVA univariate measures for Cereal

		Authenticity	Uniqueness	Evaluation
Niche	Label (N=79)	5.53	5.13	5.8
	No Label (N=77)	5.7	5.25	6.28
Big	Label (N=82)	3.21	2.82	3.18
	No Label (N=87)	2.83	2.38	2.94

Millennials versus Non-millennials

Hypothesis 2 focused on differences between millennials and non-millennials.

**Hypothesis 2a:** *When millennials evaluate a niche brand, adding a buzzword label (versus no label) will not increase the authenticity, uniqueness, and overall evaluation of the brand. For non-millennials the label may create a positive impact (over no label).*

**Hypothesis 2b:** *When evaluating a large brand, having a label (versus no label) may increase the perception that the brand is authentic, unique, and favorable, and this effect should be greater for non-millennials than millennials.*

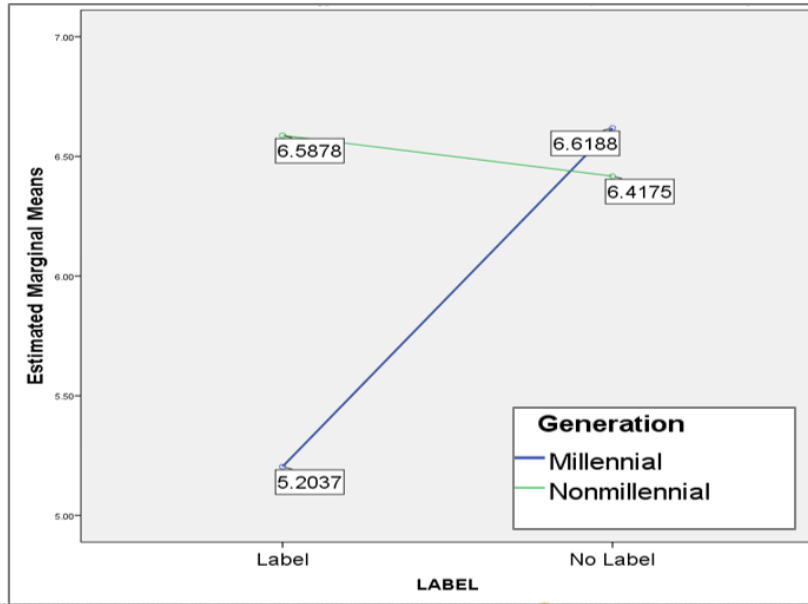
As noted earlier regarding Hypothesis 1, both millennials and non-millennials preferred the niche brand over the large brand, and the label improved ratings of the large (but not niche) brand. However, the ANOVAs indicate that the three-way interaction between brand type (niche or large), label, and Millennial was not significant ( $p > .10$ ). That is, the brand\*label interaction occurred regardless of whether the respondents were millennials or not. Millennials were not more likely than non-millennials to be nonreactive to the “gluten-free” label. So hypothesis 2 is not supported for millennials. Interestingly, among millennials, having a gluten-free label on the niche brand actually *decreased* perceptions of the brand (authenticity,  $M=5.24$ , evaluation  $M=5.26$ ) as compared to having no label

(authenticity  $M=5.73$ , evaluation  $M=6.68$ ), which suggests directional support, but the 3-way interaction was not significant.

To further test hypotheses 2, I performed separate analyses for the big brand and for the niche brand, in order to provide more ease in interpretation of findings, especially those of higher-order interaction effects (See Table 17, appendix). A single significant label x millennial interaction effect was found, for niche (but not large) brands, for the evaluation dependent variable of the brand ( $F=3.846$ ,  $p=0.052$ ). See Exhibit 7. In particular, it was found that among niche brands, millennials strongly favored unlabeled products ( $M=6.56$  and  $6.68$  for bar and cereal, respectively) over labeled products ( $M=4.82$  and  $5.26$ ). Non-millennials, in contrast, did not prefer labeled products ( $M=6.37$  and  $6.58$  for bar and cereal, respectively) over unlabeled products ( $M= 6.18$  and  $6.67$ ) on niche brands. For the large brand analyses, directional (but not significant) support shows that millennials again prefer unlabeled products ( $M=3.67$  and  $4.30$  for bar and cereal) to labeled products ( $M= 3.46$  and  $3.49$ ), whereas non-millennials less so (see Table 8 and 9). Overall, support for Hypothesis 2 was only directional and quite weak.

**EXHIBIT 7: BRAND \* MILLENNIAL INTERACTION**

**Marginal Means for Evaluation of Niche Brands; Millennials vs. Non-Millennials**



**TABLE 8: ANOVA means for Cereal  
Millennial\*Brand\*Label**

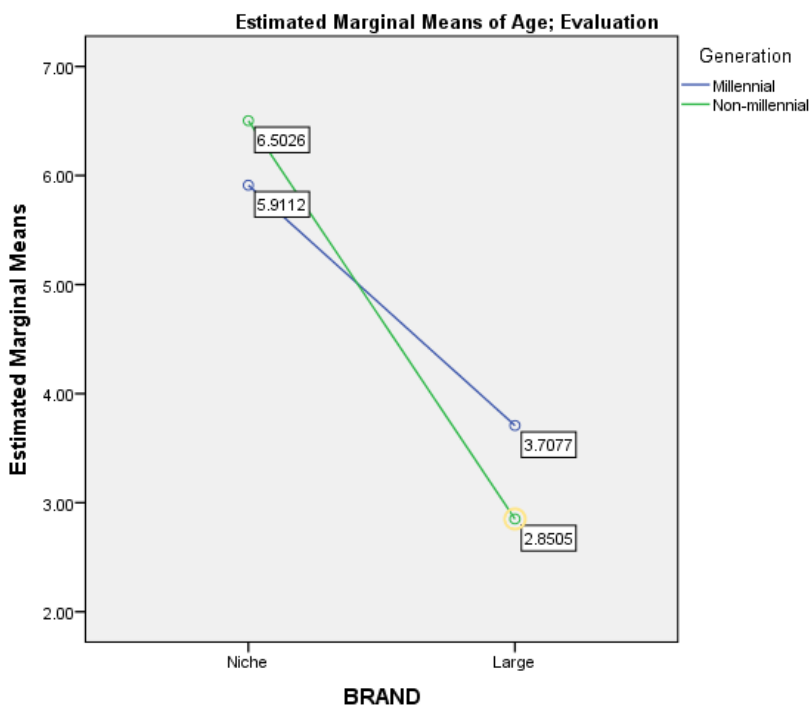
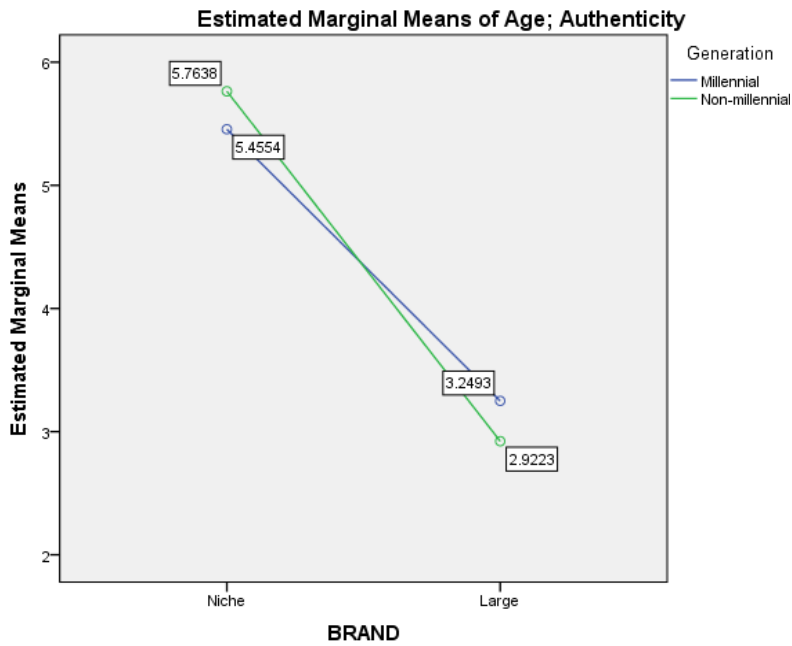
		Authenticity		Uniqueness		Evaluation	
Niche	Millennial	Label (N=29)	5.16	4.74	4.82		
		No Label (N=20)	5.7	4.98	6.56		
	Non-Millennial	Label (N=50)	5.74	5.35	6.37		
		No Label (N=57)	5.7	5.34	6.18		
Big	Millennial	Label (N=33)	3.23	2.85	3.46		
		No Label (N=32)	3.06	2.8	3.67		
	Non-Millennial	Label (N=50)	3.2	3.73	2.99		
		No Label (N=55)	2.69	4.09	2.5		

**TABLE 9: ANOVA means for Granola bar**  
**Millennial\*Brand\*Label**

		Authenticity		Uniqueness	Evaluation
Niche	Millennial	Label (N=29)	5.24	4.4	5.26
		No Label (N=20)	5.73	4.8	6.68
	Non-Millennial	Label (N=50)	5.71	4.85	6.58
		No Label (N=50)	5.9	4.98	6.67
Big	Millennial	Label (N=33)	3.36	2.94	3.49
		No Label (N=32)	3.34	3.17	4.3
	Non-Millennial	Label (N=50)	3.17	2.71	3.04
		No Label (N=32)	2.68	2.21	2.79

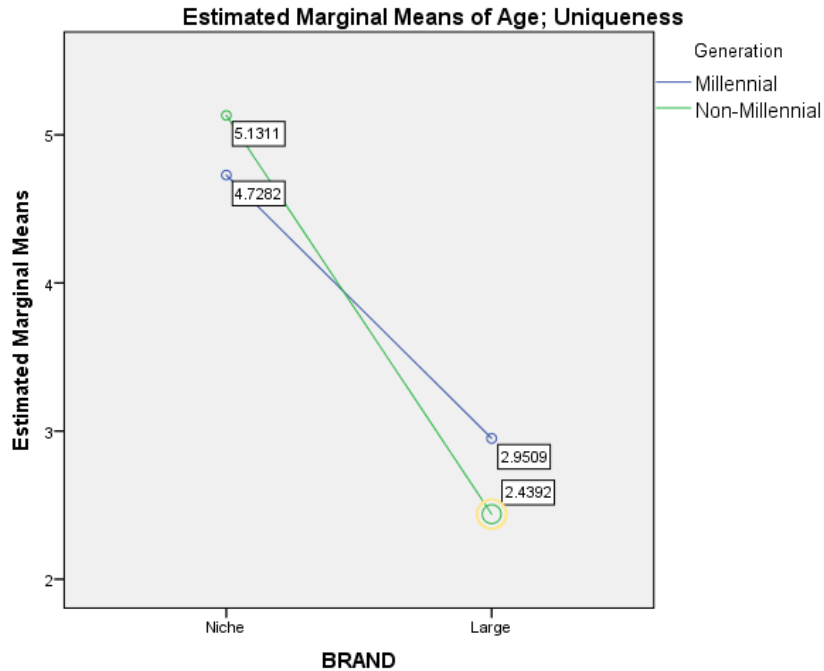
An additional effect of note was a significant brand\*millennial interaction effect. For authenticity, uniqueness, and overall favorableness ratings, the interaction was significant (all  $p < .05$ , see appendix Table 17). As seen in Exhibit 10, both millennials and non-millennials viewed big brands as more authentic, more unique, and more favorable overall than niche brands, but non-millennials were even more extreme in these differences than millennials. For example, with regard to the authenticity of the product, non-millennials rated the niche brand as more authentic ( $M=5.76$ ) than did millennials ( $M=5.46$ ), and rated the large brand as less authentic ( $M=2.92$ ) than did millennials ( $M=3.25$ ). The more extreme perceptions of niche over large brands also held true for the uniqueness variable (niche brand:  $M=5.13$  versus  $4.73$  for non-millennials and millennials, respectively; large brand:  $M=2.44$  versus  $2.95$ ). They also showed this effect for the overall favorableness rating of the brand. That is, again, while both millennials and non-millennials had more positive

intentions for the niche brand compared to the big brand (Niche brand: M=6.50 versus 5.91 for non-millennials and millennials, respectively; Large brand: M=3.71 versus 2.85), the non-millennials (versus millennials) more strongly preferred the niche brand over the large brand. This result seems to be counter to predictions that millennials should prefer niche brands.



**EXHIBIT 10:  
BRAND\*MILLENNIAL  
INTERACTION**





I also tested the analysis of variance by using age as a continuous variable. However, results showed that age as a continuous variable did not interact significantly for label presence for large or niche brands. The results did find significance for a product\*age interaction for uniqueness, authenticity, and evaluation for the large brand. This effect indicated that older individuals preferred cereal and younger people preferred granola bars. For niche brands, only age had a main effect for evaluation. Older individuals preferred niche brands to younger people.

#### Wellness-focused versus Non-wellness-focused Respondents

**Hypothesis 3:** *When evaluating either a large or a niche brand, respondents with high wellness values will not view the brand as more authentic, unique, and more favorable overall when it has a label (versus no label). Those with low wellness values, however, will view the brand as more authentic, unique, and more favorable overall when it has a label (versus no label). In addition, respondents with high wellness values will view both brands (and*

*particularly the large brand) as less authentic, unique, and less favorable, than respondents with low wellness values.*

For large brands, a wellness main effect occurred for the authenticity dependent variable, such that those with high wellness values tended to find brands more authentic than those with low wellness values. However, wellness did not interact with whether a label was present or not (Table 18, appendix). For niche brands, the wellness main effect was significant for the uniqueness ( $F=6.054$ ,  $p=0.015$ ) and evaluation ( $F=6.768$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) variables. That is, those with high wellness values viewed niche brands as more unique and overall more favorable than those with low wellness values. Perhaps this result occurred due the nature of the product categories, granola bars and cereal, which tend to be regarded as healthy products. Again, like the large brand analyses, wellness values did not interact with the label variable. So Hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Although means do not show significant effects, it is also interesting to look at the directional differences in groups. Respondents with high (versus low) wellness values were not *less* reactive to labeling. If anything, they responded more negatively to niche brands with labels than non-labels ( $M=5.57$ ,  $6.25$  for authenticity and evaluation) than no labels ( $M=5.90$ , and  $7.24$  respectively), and more positively to large brands with labels ( $M=3.51$  and  $3.464$  for authenticity and evaluation) than no labels ( $M=2.76$ , and  $3.41$ , respectively). See Tables 11 and 12. Again, however, the appropriate interaction effects were non-significant, so these results cannot be said to show support for Hypothesis 3.

**TABLE 11: ANOVA means for Cereal**  
Wellness Value\*Brand\*Label

			Authenticity	Uniqueness	Evaluation
Niche	Hi Wellness Value	Label (N=40)	5.58	5.42	5.72
		No Label (N=45)	5.84	5.44	6.92
	Lo Wellness Value	Label (N=34)	5.46	4.74	5.93
		No Label (N=37)	5.55	5.04	5.6
Big	Hi Wellness Value	Label (N=38)	3.55	3.14	3.45
		No Label (N=44)	2.98	2.51	3.22
	Lo Wellness Value	Label (N=44)	2.92	2.53	2.94
		No Label (N=43)	2.67	2.24	2.67

**TABLE 12: ANOVA means for granola bar**  
Wellness Value\*Brand\*Label

			Authenticity	Uniqueness	Evaluation
Niche	Hi Wellness Value	Label (N=45)	5.56	4.91	6.55
		No Label (N=40)	5.96	5.16	7.47
	Lo Wellness Value	Label (N=34)	5.51	4.38	5.5
		No Label (N=37)	5.74	4.69	5.83
Big	Hi Wellness Value	Label (N=38)	3.64	3.19	3.41
		No Label (N=44)	3.07	2.7	3.71
	Lo Wellness Value	Label (N=44)	2.9	2.45	3.03
		No Label (N=43)	2.78	2.42	3

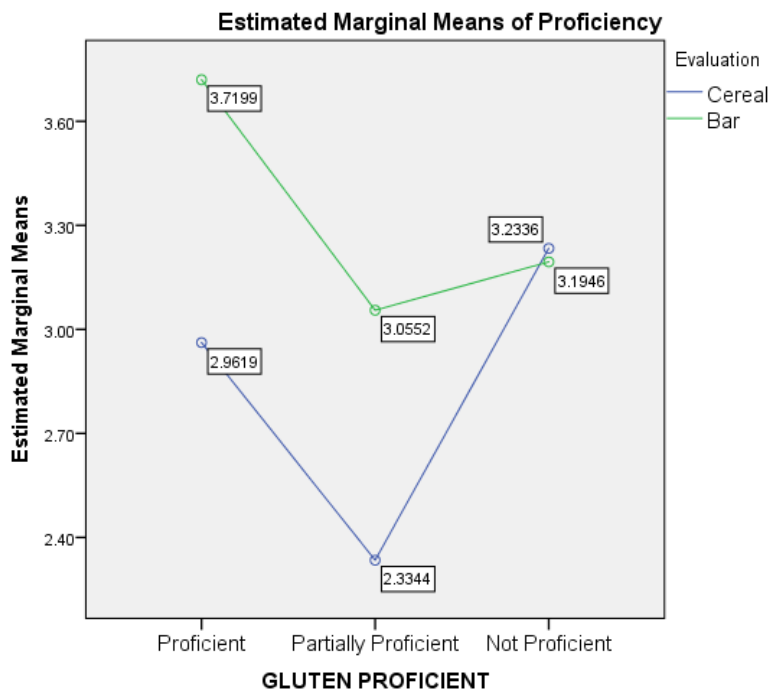
Gluten-free knowledge: Comparing those with less and more knowledge of the term

*Hypothesis 4: Participants with less knowledge about the meaning of gluten-free will evaluate both niche and large brands that have a gluten-free label (versus no label) as more*

*authentic, more unique, and more favorable overall. More knowledgeable participants will be less influenced by the gluten-free label.*

Results did not indicate significant main effect for gluten-free knowledge, but showed significance for the product for uniqueness ( $F=2.98$ ,  $p=0.086$ ) and evaluation ( $F=4.919$ ,  $p=0.028$ ). See Table 19 appendix. Those with *at least some* proficiency rated the brands *less* favorably than those who were *not at all* proficient, but only for the cereal category. Exhibit 13 shows significance for the interaction of evaluation for gluten proficiency\*product for large brands. Those that were proficient highly favored cereal over bars, while there was little difference for those that were not proficient. However, the interaction effects between gluten-free proficiency and labeling were all non-significant, showing lack of support for Hypothesis 4. See Tables 14 and 15 for the means.

**EXHIBIT 13: GLUTEN PROFICIENCY\*PRODUCT, LARGE BRAND EVALUATION**



**TABLE 14: ANOVA means for Granola bar  
Gluten Proficiency\*Brand\*Label**

			<b>Authenticity</b>	<b>Uniqueness</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Niche</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Label (N=42)</b>	5.4	4.51	6.06
		<b>No Label (N=35)</b>	5.79	4.97	6.09
	<b>Partially Proficient</b>	<b>Label (N=35)</b>	5.69	4.89	6.17
		<b>No Label (N=36)</b>	5.93	4.83	7.48
	<b>Not Proficient</b>	<b>Label (N=2)</b>	5.75	4.75	6.34
		<b>No Label (N=6)</b>	5.83	5.33	6.64
<b>Big</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Label (N=35)</b>	3.26	2.81	3.86
		<b>No Label (N=42)</b>	2.67	2.42	3.57
	<b>Partially Proficient</b>	<b>Label (N=36)</b>	3.08	2.58	3.18
		<b>No Label (N=43)</b>	3.19	2.67	2.93
	<b>Not Proficient</b>	<b>Label (N=4)</b>	4.25	4.25	3.05
		<b>No Label (N=2)</b>	2.75	3.25	3.34

**TABLE 15: ANOVA means for Cereal  
Gluten Proficiency\*Brand\*Label**

		Authenticity		Uniqueness	Evaluation
Niche	Proficient	Label (N=42)	5.5	4.96	5.8
		No Label (N=35)	5.67	5.21	6.46
	Partially Proficient	Label (N=35)	5.57	5.39	5.69
		No Label (N=36)	5.65	5.21	7.18
	Not Proficient	Label (N=2)	5.25	4	6.08
		No Label (N=6)	6.17	5.67	6.08
Big	Proficient	Label (N=35)	3.21	2.67	3.01
		No Label (N=42)	2.56	2.08	2.91
	Partially Proficient	Label (N=43)	3.15	2.83	2.96
		No Label (N=43)	3.12	2.67	1.7
	Not Proficient	Label (N=4)	3.88	4	3.28
		No Label (N=2)	2.25	2.25	3.18

#### 4.2 Survey Characteristics

There were 326 respondents to this survey. 53% of respondents were Millennials, or born between 1984 and 1996. Respondents were equally split between males and females. Forty-four percent had an undergraduate or master’s degree, while the remaining 56% had high school or some college education.

All respondents shopped at mass merchants (Target, Walmart, etc), natural food stores (Whole Foods, etc) or at local stores and co-ops. The average respondent did 46% of their shopping at a supermarket, followed by 31% at a mass merchant. On average all respondents rated taste as the most important factor in their shopping decision followed by price.

Respondents rated the presence of packaging labels as the least important factor in their shopping choices, followed by the type of brand.

In terms of gluten-free knowledge, consumer's self-reported knowledge showed only 4% were unaware of what a gluten free diet was, while the remaining respondents were evenly split between being very familiar and having heard of the diet. Of the 37 respondents who were pursuing a gluten free diet, 21 were doing so in order to be healthy and 3 were in a household with a diagnosed celiac.

## Discussion

### *Key Takeaways*

Based on partial support for all hypotheses, it can be concluded that both brand stories and the presence or absence of a buzzword label impact consumers' perceptions of the product and brand. In general, uniqueness, authenticity, and behavioral evaluation showed similar trends. The findings are important to marketers as they determine which direction to take their products for both niche and large brands.

### **Millennials and non-millennials strongly favor niche brands.**

Overall, there was a trend of all consumers favoring the niche brand over the big brand. They viewed the niche brand as more authentic, more unique, and more favorable overall. For marketers this is an important finding. It implies the need to create a brand story that aligns with the product type in order to appeal to consumers. It is not just the type of product, but the brand that influences the consumer's perceptions, including their intention to purchase (behavioral evaluation). For large companies, this finding would suggest that when faced with a decision to

acquire a brand or develop brand extensions, in a health food category, consumers may significantly favor an acquisition. It also implies that, in today's marketplace, simply extending a large food brand to a new health category, using the same brand umbrella, may not be as well-received by consumers as a new niche brand introduction.

### **Millennials and non-millennial behavioral evaluations are driven by authenticity.**

A Pearson correlation showed that authenticity and favorableness (behavioral evaluation) are very highly correlated for both millennials ( $r=0.713$  for cereal,  $r=0.767$  for bar) and non-millennials ( $r=0.790$  for cereal and  $r=0.776$  for bar). The fact that authenticity drives evaluation (or is strongly associated with it) for both age groups is inconsistent with hypothesis 2, but supports the overall differences between niche and large brands of non-millennials specifically.

### **Millennials do not trust labels, but labels can improve perceptions of large brands.**

Among millennials, having a label on the niche brand did *not* increase authenticity as compared to having no label. In fact, the label reduced its effectiveness. This supports that millennials value continuity and authenticity, which supports the findings of Bruhn's (2012) authenticity dimension research. The unexpected finding that occurred in this research is that the type of brand and whether it has a label were important for both millennials and non-millennials. Therefore, even for non-millennials, niche brands were perceived as more authentic, more unique, and more favorable than larger brands. In addition, putting a gluten-free label on a niche brand reduced its effectiveness, but putting a gluten-free label on a large brand increased its effectiveness. If anything, non-millennials were even more extreme in their perceptions of niche brands as compared to big brands, than millennials.



With this information, marketers should carefully consider how the label connects to their brand's story and how millennials and non-millennials will react before using health-related buzzwords. Niche companies should emphasize their brand purpose, while large companies may be able to attract more consumers by focusing on specific buzzword labels. While this survey did not specifically address large parent brands, the results imply that they should consider differentiating their "mainstream" large brands with labels, or acquire small companies. An example of this would be General Mills acquiring Annie's, while also adding labeling claims to their large brands, such as Nature Valley.

### **Wellness and gluten-proficiency characteristics differed**

Results of wellness-focus and gluten-proficiency did not support hypotheses. That is, those with higher wellness values did not tend to be less reactive to labels. It is interesting, however, that some directional evidence was found. Like millennials, those with high wellness values tended to favor niche brands without labels, and large brands with labels. A possible explanation for lack of effect could be that a larger sample size is needed to test the effect, so future research could examine this idea.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate consumer's brand perceptions based on the presence of a health-related buzzword and the alignment of that buzzword with the type of brand, either a niche or large brand. There was an overlying goal of examining the differences between millennials and non-millennials. The results were also compared against consumers with high and low wellness values, and consumers' knowledge of the term "gluten". Overall my hypotheses were partially supported. In this study, consumers preferred niche brands over large

brands; they found them more authentic, more unique, and evaluated them more favorable overall.

I expected that millennials would be less reactive to labeling (in a positive sense) than non-millennials, that is, that they would be somewhat oblivious to labels. However, a key take-away is that millennials in particular were more negative when the niche brand was labeled, signaling that they do not necessarily trust labels on niche products. This reactivity showed up in terms of their overall favorableness of the brand. Therefore, their reactivity was a negative bias toward labeling a niche brand rather than no reaction at all. Putting a label on a niche brand decreased evaluation of it. This study has implications for marketing and brand managers as they decide how to market products to their consumers, particularly whether or not to utilize buzzword labels. Caution is needed in putting the word “gluten free” on a label if the brand tends to be viewed as otherwise small and authentic. The results of this study suggest millennials, and to a lesser extent non-millennials, do not trust labels on these smaller boutique brands.

### *Limitations*

There are a few limitations that may have impacted the results of this study. First, not using a real branded product in the packaging as a survey stimulant does not replicate the real shopping experience of a consumer. Secondly, the small sample size of roughly 150 respondents per condition in the brand\*label\*product conditions, within smaller samples when considering differences as a function of millennial age, wellness-focus, and gluten proficiency. The cell sizes may have decreased the significance values for the statistical tests that did not show interaction effects. It was also assumed that the self-reported answers from the survey were accurate, although in general with opinion surveys such as this there is not cause for assuming respondents report inaccurately. A further limitation is that an Amazon MTurk respondents may have bias in

some way as compared to a general population sample that is more representative. Finally, the survey questions did not capture the entirety of a consumers' motivation for liking or disliking a product.

Because of these limitations there are a few ways to expand on this study. Increasing the sample size would allow for more clear interactions to occur. Further research could be done to see if these results hold true in other purchase situations, especially by varying the type of buzzword used. Given the recent legislation prompting food companies to label all products as "contains GMOs", GMO would be an interesting label to investigate. Evaluating consumers' perceptions of a large holding company (ex: General Mills) acquiring small, niche brands (ex: Annie's), would be an interesting perspective. Segmenting responses based on additional or different characteristics, such as age ranges, urban versus rural residence, or education level, could reveal additional insights. Finally, researchers could examine the effects of other dimensions of authenticity, or additional consumer characteristics to understand other factors that impact the ability of a brand to appear authentic.

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## Appendix

**Table 16: Overall Results for Millennials versus Non-millennials**

	Authenticity		Uniqueness		Brand Evaluation	
	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
<b>Between-Subjects effects</b>						
Brand	917.453	<b>260.285***</b>	719.244	<b>190.223***</b>	1181.674	<b>112.125***</b>
Label	0.007	0.002	0.039	0.01	13.888	1.318
Millennial	0.012	0.004	0.426	0.113	2.435	0.231
Brand x label	12.03	3.413*	6.16	1.629	12.82	1.216
Brand x millennial	14.54	<b>4.125**</b>	30.117	<b>7.965***</b>	72.312	<b>6.861***</b>
Label x millennial	5.995	1.701	7.793	2.061	48.596	<b>4.611**</b>
Brand x label x millennial	0.029	0.008	1.572	0.416	5.455	0.518
<b>Within-subjects effects</b>						
Product (bar/cereal)	0.809	1.221	2.312	<b>2.955*</b>	10.187	<b>4.801**</b>
Product x brand	0.003	0.004	6.856	<b>8.766***</b>	0.016	0.008
Product x label	0.357	0.539	1.442	1.844	0.957	0.451
Product x millennial	0.472	0.712	1.484	1.897	0.459	0.216
Prod x brand x label	0.007	0.011	0.073	0.093	1.943	0.916
Prod x brand x millennial	0.755	1.139	0.039	0.05	0.892	0.42
Prod x label x millennial	0.12	0.181	0	0.001	0.128	0.06
Prod x brand x label x mil	0.284	0.428	0.005	0.006	2.799	1.319

\*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, and \*\*\*p<.01

**Table 17: Anova Results for Millennials versus Nonmillennials**

	Authenticity		Uniqueness		Brand Evaluation	
	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
<b>Large Brands</b>						
<b>Between-Subjects effects</b>						
Label	6.356	1.451	3.98	0.991	0.012	0.001
Millennial	8.543	1.951	20.912	<b>5.207**</b>	56.003	<b>5.196**</b>
Label X millennial	2.876	0.657	9.077	2.26	11.881	1.102
<b>Within-subjects effects</b>						
Product (bar/cereal)	0.669	0.728	0.669	0.728	5.193	2.385
Product x millennial	1.113	1.211	1.113	1.211	1.455	0.668
Product x label	1.2	1.306	1.2	1.306	3.112	1.429
Prod x Label x millennial	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	2.28	1.047

<b>Niche Brands</b>						
<b>Between-subjects effects</b>						
Label	5.741	2.211	2.377	0.674	24.365	2.371
Millennial	6.237	2.402	10.643	3.018*	21.999	2.141
Label x millennial	3.124	1.203	1.076	0.305	39.524	<b>3.846**</b>
<b>Within-subjects effects</b>						
Product (bar/cereal)	0.328	0.786	7.797	<b>12.30***</b>	5.026	2.439
Product x label	0.119	0.285	0.394	0.622	0.079	0.038
Product x millennial	0.015	0.036	0.473	0.747	0.032	0.016
Prod x label x millennial	0.352	0.842	0.004	0.006	0.79	0.383

\*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, and \*\*\*p<.01

<b>Table 18: Anova Results for High vs Low Wellness</b>						
	Authenticity		Uniqueness		Brand Evaluation	
	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
<b>Large Brands</b>						
<b>Between-Subjects effects</b>						
Label	11.075	2.564	9.92	2.432	0.691	0.062
Wellness	19.102	<b>4.421**</b>	20.264	1.828	20.264	1.828
Label X wellness	2.739	0.634	2.738	0.671	0.118	0.011
<b>Within-subjects effects</b>						
Product (bar/cereal)	0.209	0.233	0.36	0.389	4.171	1.898
Product x label	0.194	0.216	1.179	1.274	2.124	0.967
Product x wellness	0.007	0.007	0.027	0.029	0.186	0.084
Prod x label x wellness	0.021	0.023	0.006	0.007	0.519	0.236
<b>Niche Brands</b>						
<b>Between-subjects effects</b>						
Label	4.76	1.798	3.725	1.074	12.251	1.214
Wellness	2.136	0.807	20.988	<b>6.054**</b>	68.319	<b>6.768***</b>
Label x wellness	0.557	0.211	0.575	0.166	24.258	2.403
<b>Within-subjects effects</b>						
Product (bar/cereal)	0.594	1.416	10.714	16.884	5.266	2.6*
Product x label	0.372	0.887	0.273	0.429	0.098	0.049
Product x wellness	0.102	0.243	0.032	0.051	4.854	2.397
Prod x label x wellness	0.001	0.003	0.265	0.418	1.028	0.508

\*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, and \*\*\*p<.01

<b>Table 19: Anova Results for gluten proficiency</b>						
	Authenticity		Uniqueness		Brand Evaluation	
	MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
<b>Large Brands</b>						
<i>Between-Subjects effects</i>						
Label	4.341	0.991	10.463	2.519	3.708	0.33
Gluten proficiency	8.506	1.943	4.692	1.13	4.989	0.444
Label x proficiency	1.471	0.336	1.913	0.461	2.898	0.258
<i>Within-subjects effects</i>						
Product (bar/cereal)	2.169	2.455	2.708	<b>2.98*</b>	10.516	<b>4.919**</b>
Product x label	0.523	0.592	1.876	2.064	1.864	0.872
Product x proficiency	1.665	1.885	1.748	1.924	5.238	<b>2.45*</b>
Prod x label x proficiency	0.262	0.296	0.442	0.486	1.08	0.505
<b>Niche Brands</b>						
<i>Between-subjects effects</i>						
Label	2.834	1.05	3.886	1.073	21.392	1.989
Gluten proficiency	0.157	0.058	1.534	0.424	3.818	0.355
Label x proficiency	0.056	0.021	1.05	0.29	6.768	0.629
<i>Within-subjects effects</i>						
Product (bar/cereal)	0.368	0.867	6.64	<b>10.374***</b>	3.302	1.606
Product x label	0.497	1.171	0.282	0.44	0.38	0.185
Product x proficiency	0.004	0.009	0.301	0.471	0.146	0.71
Prod x label x prof	0.061	0.143	0.057	0.09	1.474	0.717

\*p<.10, \*\*p<.05, and \*\*\*p<.01



## Survey Questions

**\*\*This Survey will take approximately 5 minutes \*\*\*\*** You are invited to be in a research study. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a registered user of this research website and you completed a survey within the last six weeks. We ask that you read this form before agreeing to be in the study. If you are under the age of 18, we ask that you do not complete this study. The purpose of this study is to better understand consumer's perceptions and opinions about product labels that they might see in a grocery store. If you agree to be in this study we will ask you to complete a survey. You will receive a reward upon completion of this survey through your MTurk account. Participation in this study is voluntary. Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. The researchers to contact for this study are Olivia Grev (University of Minnesota Student) and Barbara Loken (University of Minnesota Professor). If you have questions later you are encouraged to contact them at grevx010@umn.edu or bloken@umn.edu



### **Sasha's Bar**

Sasha's Bar is a small family-owned company that was founded in 2006. The company specializes in healthy granola bars. Sasha's Bars are handmade and all ingredients are carefully selected. Their philosophy is to focus on providing a wholesome and nutritious bars. Only organic nuts and fruits untouched by harmful chemicals are used in their bars.



### **Brooklyn Bar**

Brooklyn Bar is owned by the third largest food company in the world, which was founded in 1920. The company has a diverse set of products ranging from granola bars to pizza to soups that are sold globally. The corporate philosophy is to increase quarterly earnings and quickly grow the brand. Brooklyn Bars are made in a large factory using large batches of preservatives and other ingredients.



### **Cara's Cereal**

Cara's Cereal is a small family-owned company that was founded in 2008 to help people eat better, feel better and live better. It specializes in producing and selling cereal. Their philosophy is to focus on only the 12 ingredients are needed to create an innovative, nutrient-rich cereal. The brand is dedicated to helping people live a simple lifestyle. Each batch of cereal is made by hand by Cara.



### **Honey Squares Cereal**

The brand Honey Squares cereal was founded in 1986 and is now owned by the largest breakfast manufacturer in the United States. The corporate philosophy is to maximize quarterly earnings and to quickly grow the brand. Honey Squares cereal is manufactured in a large facility and contain numerous preservatives and other ingredients.

**Please answer the following questions for this product.**

- \_\_\_ The brand does NOT seem artificial
- \_\_\_ The brand makes a genuine impression
- \_\_\_ The brand is unique
- \_\_\_ The brand stands out from other brands
- \_\_\_ This brand appears to be very authentic
- \_\_\_ How likely are you to purchase this brand?
- \_\_\_ Do you intend to buy this product?
- \_\_\_ My overall attitude towards this product is:
- \_\_\_ Overall, how much would you like to try this product?

**At which stores do you shop most often? Please distribute 100 points among the options.**

- \_\_\_\_ Supermarkets (Cub Foods, HyVee, City Market, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_ Mass merchandiser (Target, Walmart, Costco)
- \_\_\_\_ Natural foods chains (Whole Foods)
- \_\_\_\_ Local Co-op or store
- \_\_\_\_ Other

**Select the phrase that resonates with your understanding of a gluten-free diet**

- I am very familiar with the implications of the diet
- I have heard of it, but am unfamiliar with the benefits and disadvantages
- I am not familiar with what a gluten-free diet is

**Have you pursued, or are you currently pursuing, a gluten-free diet?**

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Please rate your opinions on the foll...

**Please select the reason(s) for pursuing a gluten-free diet**

- I or a household member was diagnosed with celiac
- I or a household member is gluten intolerant
- I or a household member want to manage weight
- I or a household member want to eat healthier
- Other

**Please rate your opinions on the following statements**

\_\_\_ A gluten free diet would improve my physical health

\_\_\_ A gluten-free diet would improve my mental health

**Please select the grain(s) that contain gluten**

- Wheat
- Barley
- Rye
- Quinoa
- Rice
- Oats
- Corn

**In general, when you shop for groceries how important is each of the following to your purchase decision?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Purchase price
- \_\_\_\_\_ Brand name
- \_\_\_\_\_ Healthiness of the product
- \_\_\_\_\_ Simplicity of Ingredients
- \_\_\_\_\_ Label certifications
- \_\_\_\_\_ Taste of the product

**In general, I purchase these products (Check all that apply).**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Granola bars
- \_\_\_\_\_ Cereal

**Please respond to the questions on wellness below.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am physically healthy
- \_\_\_\_\_ I generally read nutrition fact labels when purchasing products
- \_\_\_\_\_ I eat processed foods (such as frozen entrees, pre-packaged snacks, or bread) at most meals
- \_\_\_\_\_ I make a significant effort to choose healthier options at every meal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Exercise is very important to me
- \_\_\_\_\_ I exercise 30+ minutes every day

**Select the gender you identify with**

- Male
- Female

**Select your highest level of education**

- High school or less
- Some college
- BA or BS degree
- Professional or graduate degree

**What is your age?**

**Please write additional comments**