

How Salad Can Make Us Fat

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The New York Times:

WHEN marketing researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School rigged shopping carts at a major East Coast supermarket with motion-tracking radio-frequency tags, they unwittingly stumbled on a metaphor for our path through the aisles of life.

Route data from more than 1,000 shoppers, matched to their purchases at checkout, revealed a clear pattern: Drop a bunch of kale into your cart and you're more likely to head next to the ice cream or beer section. The more "virtuous" products you have in your basket, the stronger your temptation to succumb to vice.

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The key insight underlying the licensing effect, which was first described in 2006 by Uzma Khan, then a professor of marketing at Carnegie Mellon University, and Ravi Dhar of the Yale School of Management, is that our choices are contingent: Since we each have a fairly stable self-concept of how good/bad, healthy/unhealthy or selfish/altruistic we are, when one decision swings too far from this self-concept, we automatically take action to balance it out.

Read the whole story: [The New York Times](#)