

The effect of pricing fruit and vegetable at 20p on their purchases in a social supermarket setting

An evaluation of pricing policy and healthy habit formation

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Community Shop

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The objective

The aim of the intervention was to increase purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables among low-income populations by pricing all fruit and vegetables at 20p per item in a social supermarket.



The intervention

Community Shop is a social supermarket providing heavily discounted food to its members, all of whom are on means-tested benefits.

In 2017 Community Shop introduced a new pricing policy reducing the price of all fresh fruit and vegetable items to just 20p.

Study setting & methodology

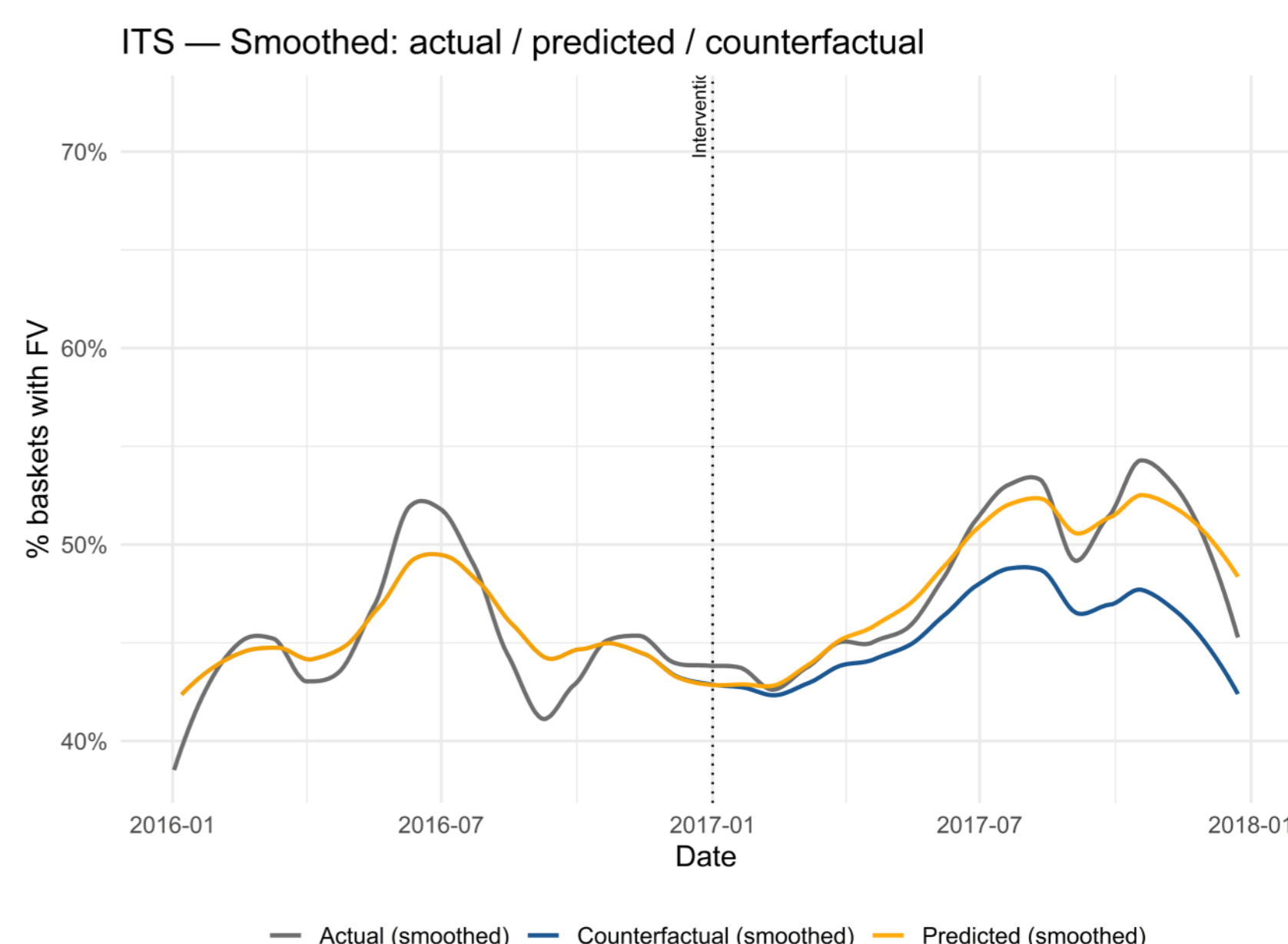
- **Location:** Two Community Shop stores.
- **Target population:** Members of Community Shop (membership is free to those on means-tested benefits).
- **Design:** Comparing the daily proportion of baskets containing any fruit and vegetables in 2017 (post-policy) against 2016 (pre-policy) using interrupted time series analysis.
- **Timeframe:** 1st January 2016 to 31st December 2017, covering one year before and one year after implementation.
- **Data sources:** Outcome measures were derived from sales data provided by Community Shop. This data was used to identify the proportion of daily shopping baskets containing any fruit or vegetable items.

Key findings

The findings indicate that while the policy did not cause an immediate shift, it was associated with a gradual and significant increase in healthy purchasing patterns over time.

Outcome measure	Result (Intervention effect)
Immediate effect of the intervention	-0.002 (No immediate change) p = 0.874
Post-intervention trend	0.00021 additional daily baskets containing any fruit or veg (p = 0.011)
Estimated annual increase	+6.2 percentage points in proportion of baskets containing fruit or vegetables

Daily Percentage of Baskets Containing Fruit or Vegetables: Observed, Modelled, and Counterfactual Trends before and after the Plenty for Twenty policy implementation



Scientific & policy implications

Gradual habit formation and longevity: The significant increase in the post-intervention trend suggests that price reductions led to a gradual rise in the proportion of baskets containing fruit or vegetables rather than an immediate change. However, future research is required to determine the long-term trajectory of this trend.

Impact in social retail and scalability: Even in an environment where food is already heavily discounted, strong price reductions on fresh produce were associated with a meaningful increase in purchasing prevalence.

Behavioural drivers and equity: While the increase in baskets containing produce indicates individual behaviour change, it is possible the trend was influenced by new members with existing habits. Future studies should use individual-level data to distinguish between habit formation in existing members and the attraction of new customer segments.

Policy potential and evidence base: This real-world evaluation adds critical evidence to the use of subsidies for low-income populations. It highlights that strong price reductions are a viable policy tool for shifting behaviours towards healthier diets in a sustainable way.

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