

Marketing Colloquia

2020 Fall

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Thursday, October 22, 2020

Zoom
12:00 PM to 1:20 PM

INDUSTRY-FUNDED RESEARCH AND BIAS IN FOOD SCIENCE

ABSTRACT: Is industry-funded scientific research likely to be biased towards finding positive results? Using publication-level data consisting of abstracts, citation counts, and funding sources, I explore this question across various food groups. I evaluate each article's abstract using crowdsourcing tools. I also collect each article's media mentions. I first conduct a case study on oats, where I find industry-funded research is more positive compared to non-industry funded research. Extending analysis to all whole grains, I find industry-funded articles are 10% more positive. Moreover, industry-funded research is more likely to receive a mention in various industry newsletters. Coupled with firm incentives to use science to further their marketing efforts, such increased trade press coverage might play a non-trivial role in shaping consumers' opinions on what is healthy.