

# Department of Marketing



## Research Seminars Series

# Anirban Mukhopadhyay, City University of London (UK)

May 8, 2025 | 12:00 - 14:00 | TC.0.58 TC Hall

## Beliefs, Behaviours, and Body Mass

This talk will cover an ongoing program of research into effects of laypeople's beliefs about food. The first part of the talk will focus on beliefs about the causes of obesity. Medical research consensus is that a poor diet is a greater determinant of obesity than lack of exercise. However, we find that only about half of lay people believe that diet is the primary cause of obesity. People who mistakenly underestimate the role of a poor diet, and instead implicate insufficient exercise, have higher body mass indices ("BMI") and are more likely to be overweight. Across five papers, we study these misperceptions, trace them to "lean-washing" by marketers of processed food and beverages, specifically, their lobbying, public relations, and CSR campaigns, and analyse possible corrective actions. The second part of the talk addresses a different lay belief, that unhealthy foods are tasty (the "Unhealthy=Tasty Intuition" or "UTI"; Raghunathan et al., 2006). One paper demonstrates a positive effect of UTI on BMI across several countries, and a follow-up finds intergenerational effects of parents' beliefs on their children's BMI. Parents' UTI positively influences their children's BMI because extrinsic rewards are used to encourage healthy eating, ironically reducing children's healthy food consumption. Ongoing directions are highlighted.