

## **HEALTH COACH NEIL: EVALUATING USER PREFERENCE FOR A SIMPLE HEALTH-FOCUSED RECIPE TOOL OVER A LARGER RECIPE DATABASE FOR FINDING HEALTHY RECIPES**

Neil Saboo

MyEdMaster, LLC, Chantilly, Virginia, United States of America

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Many people want to improve their health, fitness, and long-term wellness, and food is often one of the first places they begin. However, large recipe databases can feel overwhelming when users are trying to find healthy meals that are clear, practical, and easy to prepare. This study compared Health Coach Neil, a simple health-focused recipe database, with Food Network, a larger general recipe database. Thirty-three adult participants in the United States used both websites during a four-week experiment and completed a final feedback form. Results showed that 28 of 33 participants reported using Health Coach Neil more often, and 30 of 33 rated Health Coach Neil as the website that worked best overall. Participants most often preferred Health Coach Neil because it was simple, easier to navigate, less overwhelming, and more direct when finding and following healthy recipes. The findings suggest that users may prefer a smaller, health-focused recipe tool over a larger general recipe database when searching for healthy recipes, especially when the tool provides clear directions, nutritional information, international recipe variety, and customizable categories.*

**Keywords:** health recipes, recipe database, nutrition, user preference, website usability, Food Network, Typesense

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many people are interested in health, fitness, and longevity, but a healthier lifestyle often begins with daily food choices. Even when people want to eat better, they may not know where to start or how to choose meals that match their goals, preferences, and dietary needs. Online recipe websites provide access to thousands of possible meals, but a very large number of options can make the process feel overwhelming. Users may have to search through many pages, long

procedures, advertisements, or recipes that do not clearly explain nutritional value before finding a meal they actually want to cook.

Health Coach Neil was created to address this problem. It is a health-focused food database designed to help users discover nutritious recipes and make informed food choices without feeling overwhelmed. The website contains recipes with macronutrient and micronutrient information, ingredients, pictures, and brief descriptions. It also emphasizes simple recipe directions and fewer procedures so that users can more easily follow the steps needed to prepare the food. Recipes are organized by cuisine, allergens, and dietary preferences, giving the website both international variety and customization for different users.

Food Network was chosen as the comparison website because it is a large, well-known recipe source with a broad range of recipes. This study compared Health Coach Neil with the general Food Network website to investigate whether users preferred the variety of a large recipe database or the simplicity of a smaller health-focused tool.

The research question was: Do users prefer a simple, health-focused recipe tool over a larger general recipe database for finding healthy recipes? It was hypothesized that users would prefer Health Coach Neil because its simpler design, easier-to-follow preparation directions, health-focused information, and customizable categories would make it easier to find useful recipes, even though Food Network offered a larger number and variety of recipes.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

The study included 33 adult participants. All participants were at least 18 years old and lived in the United States. Participants were recruited through the researcher's community, friends, and acquaintances. Participation was voluntary, and no incentives or compensation were provided. Participants were informed that their responses could be used in a research paper. No personal health information or other sensitive information was collected. Participant names were removed from the reported results and replaced with anonymous participant labels.

### **Materials**

The two recipe websites evaluated were Health Coach Neil and Food Network. Health Coach Neil was personally designed and built by the researcher using Typesense. During the experiment, Health Coach Neil contained 59 total recipes. Each recipe included a picture, a brief description, ingredients, and macronutrient and micronutrient information. The website was divided into categories based on cuisine, allergens, and dietary preferences. These categories

were included to make the website more customizable and to provide international flair for users who wanted healthy recipes with variety. Recipes were adapted from online sources, and nutrient information was researched using Google Search and USDA FoodData Central. Because nutrient values may vary based on ingredient brands, serving sizes, substitutions, and preparation methods, all nutrient information should be interpreted as an estimate.

Food Network was used as the comparison website because it is a larger general recipe database. Participants used the general Food Network website and were allowed to search freely rather than being limited to a specific recipe page. This comparison allowed the study to examine whether participants preferred the larger variety of a broad recipe database or the simplicity, health focus, clearer recipe directions, and customization of Health Coach Neil.

### **Procedure**

The experiment lasted four weeks. The first check-in form was due on May 16, 2026, and the final survey was due on Saturday, June 13, 2026. Participants used both Health Coach Neil and Food Network independently from home. They were instructed to try recipes from both websites throughout the study. There was no required minimum number of recipes, and participants had complete freedom to decide which recipes to cook and which website to use more often.

The study used a within-participant design because the same 33 participants evaluated both websites. Website use was not directly tracked by the researcher. Instead, all usage and recipe counts were self-reported by participants.

### **Measurements**

A new recipe was defined as a recipe that the participant had never eaten before and that the participant cooked and ate during the study. The reported recipe totals covered both websites combined over the four-week period. The final survey asked participants approximately how many new recipes they tried, which website they used more, which website they believed worked best and why, how the websites helped them achieve their goals, and whether they had additional feedback.

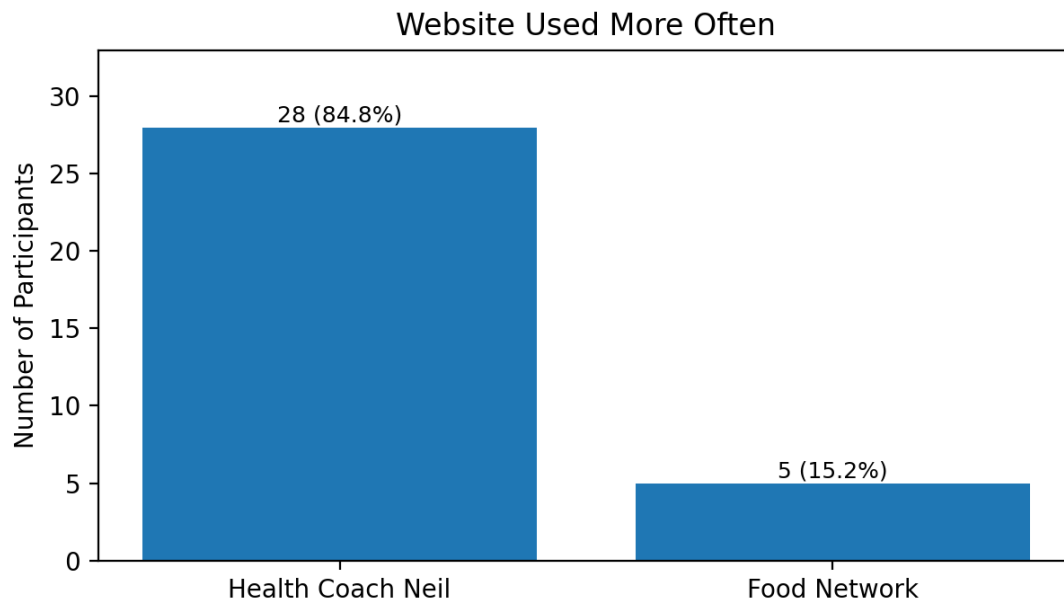
### **RESULTS**

All 33 participants completed the final form. The final survey results showed a strong preference for Health Coach Neil over Food Network.

**Table 1. Website participants reported using more often.**

Website	Participants	Percentage
Health Coach Neil	28	84.8%
Food Network	5	15.2%
Total	33	100.0%

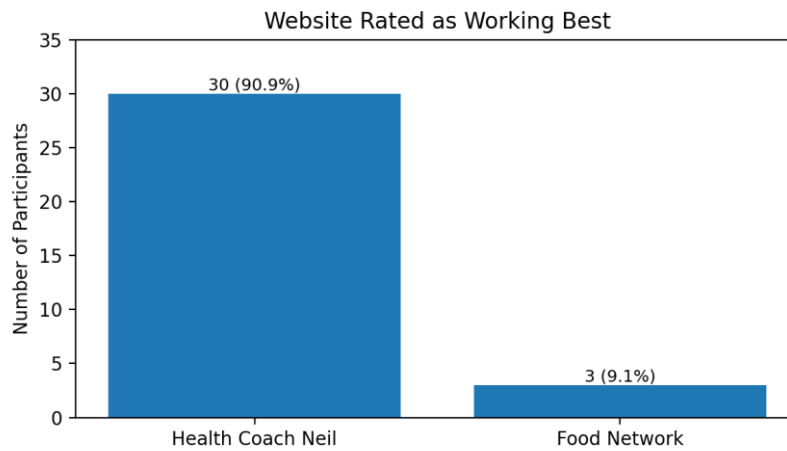
**Figure 1. Website used more often**



**Table 2. Website participants rated as working best overall.**

Website	Participants	Percentage
Health Coach Neil	30	90.9%
Food Network	3	9.1%
Total	33	100.0%

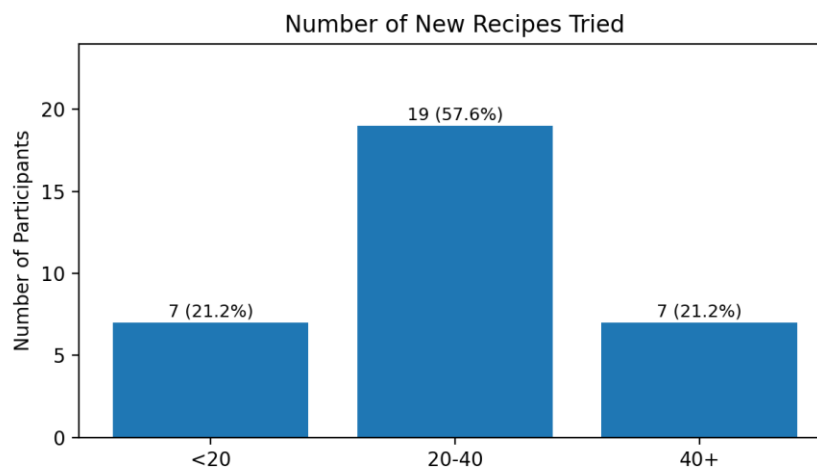
**Figure 2. Website rated as working best overall.**



**Table 3. Number of new recipes tried during the four-week study.**

Recipes Tried	Participants	Percentage
Fewer than 20	7	21.2%
20-40	19	57.6%
More than 40	7	21.2%
Total	33	100.0%

**Figure 3. Number of new recipes tried.**



**Table 4. Main reasons participants gave for website preference.**

Main Reason	Participants	Percentage
Simplicity or easier navigation	20	60.6%
Organization, cuisine categories, or clear sections	5	15.2%
Nutrient information or healthier recipe focus	3	9.1%
Recipe variety	3	9.1%
Familiarity with Food Network	1	3.0%
Other or unclear	1	3.0%

A majority of participants reported that Health Coach Neil was easier to use, simpler, more direct, or better organized. Several participants also mentioned that the nutrient information helped them track or understand what they were eating. These responses suggest that participants valued not only the simple layout, but also the reduced feeling of being overwhelmed when choosing and preparing recipes. Because Health Coach Neil was organized by cuisine, allergens, and dietary preferences, it also provided variety and customization while still remaining smaller and easier to navigate than Food Network.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results supported the hypothesis that participants would prefer a simple, health-focused recipe tool over a larger general recipe database for finding healthy recipes. Although Food Network provides a much larger collection of recipes, participants more often chose Health Coach Neil because it was easier to use, more concise, and more focused on health. This suggests that a larger database is not always better for users who want to make healthy choices quickly and confidently.

The strongest theme in the responses was simplicity. Participants repeatedly described Health Coach Neil as easier, quicker, clearer, and less confusing. This finding is important because users who want to become healthier may already feel uncertain about where to start. A website with fewer distractions, clearer categories, and easier-to-follow recipe procedures can make healthy eating feel more approachable. In this study, simplicity did not only mean fewer recipes; it also meant that the process of finding, understanding, and preparing a recipe felt less overwhelming.

A second theme was nutritional usefulness. Some participants specifically mentioned that the nutrient information helped them understand what they were eating. Because Health Coach Neil included both macronutrient and micronutrient information, users could compare recipes based on more than taste or appearance. This feature connects to the larger purpose of the product: helping people begin healthier habits through food choices that are informed, practical, and easy to follow.

Food Network still had advantages. Participants who preferred Food Network tended to value its larger recipe collection and greater variety. This suggests that the best future version of Health Coach Neil should preserve its simplicity while gradually expanding its international variety and customization options. Adding more cuisines, dietary categories, allergen filters, and user-personalized recipe suggestions could help Health Coach Neil serve users who enjoy variety without making the website feel overwhelming.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This study had several limitations. First, all website use and recipe counts were self-reported. The researcher did not track website analytics, time spent on each site, or whether each recipe was completed. Second, participants had complete freedom to choose which website to use more often, so exposure to the two websites may not have been equal. Third, participants may have already been familiar with Food Network before the study, which could have influenced their choices. Fourth, the sample size was limited to 33 adult participants recruited through community connections, friends, and acquaintances, so the results may not represent all possible users. Finally, the study measured user preference and self-reported behavior rather than objective health outcomes.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research could use a larger and more diverse sample of participants and include website analytics to measure actual visits, time spent on each website, searches completed, and recipes opened. A future study could also ask participants to rate the difficulty of following recipe directions, the number of procedures in each recipe, and how overwhelming each website felt while selecting and preparing meals. Another extension would be to test whether adding more international cuisines and more customizable filters increases user satisfaction without reducing the simplicity that made Health Coach Neil successful in this study.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this four-week study showed that participants strongly preferred Health Coach Neil over Food Network when searching for healthy recipes. Of the 33 participants, 28 reported

using Health Coach Neil more often, and 30 rated Health Coach Neil as the website that worked best overall. Participants preferred Health Coach Neil because it was simple, easy to navigate, health-focused, and less overwhelming when finding and following recipes. The study suggests that users may prefer a smaller, clearer, and more customizable health-focused recipe tool over a larger general recipe database when their goal is to find healthy meals. For people interested in health, fitness, and long-term wellness, a practical starting point is often food, and tools like Health Coach Neil may help make that starting point easier.

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