

Go Big or Go Home: Can Large Portion Sizes be a Result of Restaurant Competition?

Bruno Wichmann* Valentina Kozlova† Sven Anders* Natalia Gritsko‡

Abstract

The American obesity epidemic is a serious public health problem that has been associated, among other factors, with increasing restaurant portion sizes. This paper presents a model in which large restaurant portion sizes are a result of an arms race, i.e. restaurants choose to “arm” by offering larger portions to protect themselves against rivals who do the same. The paper discusses the implications of several portion-size related policies through the lenses of the arms race model.

*Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology, University of Alberta

†Department of Economics, University of Alberta

‡Department of Economics, University of Georgia