

Perception of a Portuguese population regarding the acquisition and consumption of functional foods

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Background

Foods are no longer only recognized for their role in providing essential nutrients for normal body activity and function. Since from the late 1980s, emphasis has been credited to their content in substances capable to promote health and wellbeing. Those functional foods (FF) can benefit body functions beyond nutritional effects, in a way that improves the state of health and wellbeing. To improve interventions, it is advantageous to understand the consumer's perception, namely at regional level, towards FF. Objectives: To assess consumers' attitudes regarding FF, as well as to characterise social, demographic and economic aspects associated with the consumption of FF, in a Portuguese population.

Methods

A survey was carried out, among a Portuguese population (N = 120), in order to collect information on their socio-economic profile and on the constructs knowledge, motivation and attitude related to FF. The constructs were modelled as latent variables, divided in its factors, with the statistical assessment done by factorial analysis (FA).

Results

The FA validated two different constructs, the attitudinal and the motivational. Those constructs were factorized as follows: one focused in foods, a second with the degree of knowledge in health benefits and the third concerning the fortification and supplementation of food.

Conclusions

These results can be used as a basis to improve communication efforts regarding consumption of FF as a means to improve health and wellbeing.

Keywords

Functional food, consumer knowledge, wellbeing, factorial analysis