The relationship between food choice and personal values

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Food choice involves both consumption and purchase actions, which are influenced by many factors, ranging from sensory to non-sensory factors. Despite the influence of product extrinsic factors, sensory properties of food are considered to be important determinants of food choice. The objective of this research is to determine the relative importance of sensory and non-sensory factors for consumers embracing different values in their choice of potato chips. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches like focus group and conjoint analysis were employed to explore food choice factors that involve in decision making process and to measure the relative importance of those factors. Focus groups revealed a mixture of sensory and non-sensory factors governing consumer’s choice and preference in which five were shown to be important, including price, calories and calories from fat, taste/flavor, processing style and packaging. Full-profile conjoint approach was used and product tasting was incorporated into the experiment. The products used in conjoint analysis differed in their sensory properties, mainly on flavor such as starchy, cooked potato and rancid and on texture such as crispiness, crunchiness and oiliness. Consumers were divided into three clusters according to their personal values. Cluster 1 (n=43) embraced Universalism and Benevolence values and revealed that sensory factors and product package were important to them. Cluster 2 (n=61) concerned more about price and valued security (financial, health and safety). Cluster 3 (n=16) was engaged with Hedonistic, Stimulation and Achievement values and considered sensory factors of the products to be most important to them than other non-sensory factors.