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Do we all perceive food-related wellbeing in the same way? Results from a cross-cultural study using a new wellbeing scale

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Interest in measuring consumers' perceived wellbeing in a food-related context has been growing. Understanding how foods influence consumers' perceived wellbeing can contribute to better understand eating patterns. Culture is expected to largely influence how consumers perceive food-related wellbeing. People in different cultures have different values and are exposed to different socio-economic contexts, which make them likely to consider different criteria when evaluating food-related wellbeing. In this context, the present work aimed at investigating cross-cultural differences in perceived wellbeing of food products using a new scale.

A web-based study was carried with 1332 participants in seven countries: Brazil, China, France, Portugal, Spain, Uruguay and USA. A new scale to measure wellbeing in a food-related context was constructed considering results from previous studies and other wellbeing scales. The scale contained 31 statements related to six main dimensions (general, emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual). Six out of nine food concepts (apple, beef, beer, broccoli, chocolate cake, coffee, fish, French fries and milk) were presented to participants following an incomplete balanced design. For each of the concepts participants rated their degree of agreement with the 31 statements using a 7-point scale.

The scores of the 31 items of the scale were significantly affected by country and food concept, as well as their interaction. Using factor analysis, the items were grouped into four main factors related to physical, intellectual and emotional aspects of food consumption. The items related to physical aspects showed the greatest differences among products, followed by those related to the intellectual aspects. Average scores of the food concepts in the four factors differed among countries. The largest differences were found for the two emotional related factors. These results provide insight on how consumers perceive different dimensions of wellbeing and stress the influence of cultural differences on the conceptualization of this construct.

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