

What are Brazilian youngsters eating?

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Abstract

Two hundred students (15–20 YO) from the technical college of the University of Campinas, Brazil, participated in a research about food habits using two different qualitative research techniques: free listing and word association.

Key words: food habits, word association, free listing.

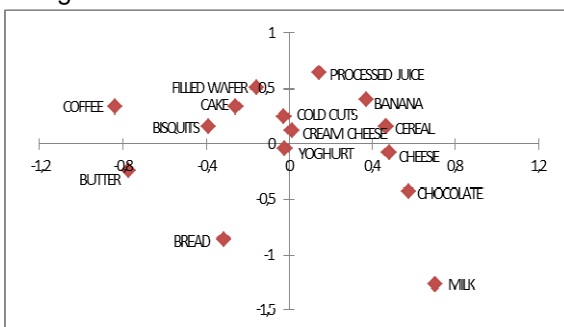
Introduction

Free listing and word association are two qualitative research techniques that have gained interest of sensory scientists in order to study consumer's preferences and views on food-related issues^{1,2}. The presented research aimed to use free listing and word association to investigate youngsters' perceptions and preferences regarding foods and meals. In the free listing task ($N_1=100$), respondents were asked to "list what you normally eat at breakfast/lunch/snack/dinner", separated by meal, while in the word association another group of respondent ($N_2=100$) were asked to "write down the first five words that come to your mind when you think about breakfast/lunch/snack/dinner", also separately.

Results and Discussion

To illustrate the use of Multidimensional Scaling to treat data from free-listening, Fig. 1 presents the top listed breakfast foods. Foods plotted close together were ranked in a similar order, which provides a natural measure of the distance between them in the respondents' minds.

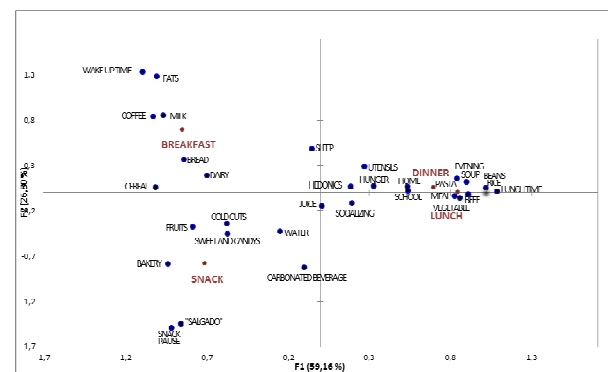
Fig. 1. Perceptual map of the foods listed by more than 10% of respondents at breakfast in free listing.



In the word association task, about 350 words were obtained and after categorization,

correspondence analysis was used to create another perceptual map, now considering the four meals together (Fig.2).

Fig 2. Correspondence analysis plot of categories associated with the four meals in word association.



Conclusions

In short, both techniques showed similar results regarding the respondents' recall of foods, which may be considered the most salient in their food habits. Whereas free-listening was focused solely on foods, word association yielded perceptions, sensations, places involved in different consumption contexts. Therefore, free-listening and word association are promising tools to investigate food habits.

Acknowledgement

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¹ Ares, G.; Deliza, R. (2010). Identifying important package features of milk desserts using free listing and word association. *Food Quality and Preference*, 21, 621-628.

² Hough, G.; Ferraris, D. (2010). Free listing: A method gain initial insight of a food category. *Food Quality and Preference*, Buenos Aires, v.21, p. 295-301.