IDENTIFYING IMPORTANT FACTORS RELATED TO CONSUMER’S PERCEPTION OF HEALTHIER FROZEN HAMBURGERS: A WORD ASSOCIATION TASK

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Food industries have been interested in developing healthier foods to deliver products according to consumers needs. This study aims to identify, through the projective technique of word association, factors that most influence consumers’ perception of healthier hamburgers. Four types of hamburgers were considered: traditional (stimulus A), with sodium reduction (B), with fat reduction (C) and with antioxidants (D). Fifty-six potential consumers participated in this study. Images of frozen hamburgers with information on the mentioned specifications were presented following a balanced order. Consumers were asked to write down the first images, associations, thoughts or feelings that came to mind after looking at each stimulus. It was obtained 547 words/terms, and those with similar meanings were grouped. Fifteen valid categories were observed, and finally, by analysis of frequency, it was obtained the most cited categories in total and for each type of hamburger. The main results were: (1) for all types of hamburgers, the most frequent categories were “Healthy” and “Fat/Caloric”; (2) the traditional was considered tasty, but fat/caloric; (3) the hamburger with sodium reduction, different from the former, was indicated as healthy, but possibly less tasty; (4) the hamburger with fat reduction was seen as favorable to diet, but consumers were apprehensive regarding its taste; (5) consumers perceived the hamburger with antioxidants as healthy, but some distrusted its content. As concluding remarks, categories “Healthy” and “Fat/Caloric” may require attention for new product development and marketing. Besides, additional information on nutritional advantages of hamburgers should be provided to contribute to consumer trustiness/acceptation.