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Qualitative insights from a free-listing task for revisiting the Food Choice Questionnaire

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Abstract: (Your abstract must use **Normal style** and must fit in this box. Your abstract should be no longer than 300 words. The box will 'expand' over 2 pages as you add text/diagrams into it.)

Understanding motives underlying food choices and the obstacles there might be to changing dietary patterns has been identified as one of the first steps for the development of interventions and communication campaigns for promoting healthier diets. A useful instrument for evaluating the relative importance of motives underlying food choice is the Food Choice Questionnaire (FCQ). The FCQ contains 36 items representing both health-related and non-health-related food attributes. Although the Food Choice Questionnaire has been adapted as a standard tool for studying motives underlying food choice, several authors have raised concerns about its conceptual completeness. In this context, the aim of the present work was to identify motives underlying food choice in different contexts using a qualitative approach.

One hundred and ninety-five consumers from Montevideo (Uruguay) participated in an online survey. They were asked to complete a free listing task about all the things they take into account when selecting foods in four contexts: purchase, lunch, snacking and dinner. Consumer responses were qualitatively analyzed and grouped into categories and their cognitive salience was determined using the cognitive salience index. Results were analyzed for the whole consumer sample and separately by gender and age.

The terms elicited by consumers were grouped into 27 categories, which were merged into 10 dimensions: Price, Health/Nutrition, Perceived Quality, Freshness, Sensory characteristics, Hedonics, Convenience, Context, Variety and Satiety. Several of the most salient categories for consumers were related to variables that are not included in the FCQ, suggesting the need to revisit this instrument to include factors that have been overlooked, such as brand, satiety, and variety. Besides, context had a strong influence on the frequency in which the categories were elicited by consumers as well as on their cognitive salience, which indicates the need to consider specific contexts when studying motives underlying food choices.