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The Measurement of Food Neophobia with the Food Neophobia for Africa Scale and Related Responses to Familiar and Unfamiliar Foods

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Abstract

Food neophobia, described as the reluctance to eat or avoidance of novel foods, is measured through a food neophobia scale (FNS) (Pliner, & Hobden, 1992). Unwillingness to consume novel foods can lead to a decrease in diversity and quality of the diet of individuals, with healthier individuals tending to have a more diverse diet (Jaeger, Roigard, Hunter, & Worch, 2021). A considerable proportion of the African population currently live in food-insecure environments, with limited access to nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods (Rakotosamimanana & De Kock, 2020). Considerable amount of effort is placed in addressing the sustainability, safety, cost, and nutritional quality of food for the disadvantaged, however research that focuses on the willingness to try these food solutions is seriously lacking (Rakotosamimanana & De Kock, 2020). Innofood Africa is one of these efforts trying to make a difference through focusing on combating malnutrition on the African continent through the exploration of climate-smart African crops. The FNS and sensory studies has scarcely been used in Africa, with majority of research focused on affluent countries (Damsbo-Svendsen, Frøst, & Olsen, 2017). The FNS required some adaptation for different populations and cultures, this is why a new FNS was developed namely the Food Neophobia Scale for Africa (FNS-A) (De Kock, Nkhabutlane, Kobue-Lekalake, Kriek, Taljaards-Swart, & Tuorila 2021). The first aim is to describe the South-African population in terms of the new FNS-A by different demographic subgroups, by making use of questionnaires. Second, to further enhance the credibility of the scale by allowing subjects to rate their willingness to try familiar and unfamiliar foods as seen on coloured pictures of the food items. Third, to do a sensory evaluation of familiar and unfamiliar food items on participants to see how food neophobia plays a role in the sensory perception of these products. More research on the perception of these products and the consumer traits that determine rejection and acceptance of the food items can help in the better formulation of food products and nutrition intervention strategies (Tuorila & Hartmann, 2020).

Biography: Annelize Steyn

Annelize Steyn is currently doing her MSc in food science at the University of Pretoria. Annelize previously worked in the Flavor and Fragrance industry where she was involved in product development for various beverage, confectionery, and snack, and their flavors that are applied in these products.