

# **A STUDY INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONSUMERS' CULTURAL VALUES, THEIR FUNCTIONAL FOOD PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOUR**

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## **Abstract**

The study is designed to investigate the relationships between consumers' cultural values and their perceptions of functional foods. The Australian Dietary Guidelines have recommended the amount and kinds of foods that Australians need to eat to reduce the risk of chronic health problems. A reasonable number of foods in the guidelines fall under the functional foods category; for example, whole grain food products, legumes/lentils and non-starchy vegetables. Most Australian consumers are not eating foods as recommended by the dietary guidelines. One of the underlying reasons for such noncompliance could be the multicultural nature of the population in Australia. Consumers from different ethnic backgrounds have cultural values inherited from their tradition, family or parents, which can influence their decisions on how or whether they should choose foods recommended by the guidelines. There are very few studies specifically focusing on the relationship between consumers' cultural values and their perception of functional food products, and most of the studies are either exploratory in nature or have been carried out under different cultural contexts than Australia, or they did not specifically study cultural values that affect functional food perceptions. There is a need for a rigorous study to confirm whether and how culture affects functional food perception and the cultural values that specifically influence the perception of functional foods. This research will follow a sequential research design, "qual-QUAN". The study will include participants from Anglo-Australia, Indian and Chinese origin living in Australia. The research is aiming to recruit at least 20 consumers for a qualitative study and 600 participants for a quantitative study. The qualitative data will be collected through in-depth interviews and will be analysed using the Grounded Theory method. The quantitative data will be collected by questionnaire survey and will be analysed using the Exploratory Factor Analysis method.

**Keywords:** Functional food, Health food, Consumer perception, Cultural values, Preventive health measures

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