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Investigating the relationships of consumers' cultural values and their functional food perception

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The study is designed to investigate the relationships between consumers' cultural values, 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 cultural backgrounds/ancestry have 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 of consumers' cultural values and their perception of functional food products and most of the studies are either exploratory in nature or have been studied 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 follows a sequential research design, "qual-QUAN". The study included participants belonging to three major ethnic groups living in Australia, namely those of English ancestry, Indian ancestry and Chinese ancestry.

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