

Summary

Overweight and obesity are some of the biggest food-related problems in the world and affect more than 2 billion people worldwide (Di Cesare, et al., 2021). One of the factors of this problem is the change in the Dutch food environment. Food is getting more processed, and the amount of fat and sugary food is growing while their prices are declining, which makes them more available (Djojosoeparto, Kamphuis, Vandevijvere, & Poelman, 2020). One factor that could influence this problem is eating rate. Previous studies showed that a higher eating rate can result in a higher overall energy intake (De Graaf & Kok, 2010), (Forde, Van Kuijk, Thaler, De Graaf, & Martin, 2013), (McCrickerd, Lim, Leong, Chia, & Forde, 2017), (Robinson, et al., 2014), where a change in eating rate of 20% can impact energy intake by between 10% and 13% (Forde, 2018).

It is not clear if the consumer is aware of this, and what their knowledge is on food processing and properties. To get a better picture, the following central question is: *'What is the current consumer knowledge, attitude and opinion on food properties (processing and texture), how does this relate to eating (eating rate) and health (satiation and calorie-intake), and what are the consumer wants and needs concerning communication on these subjects?'*

To answer the research question, both a focus group and online survey were performed. First, a focus group was held to get a specific overview of the consumer. 9 participants between the ages of 20 and 55 (average of 42 year) were recruited to participate in the focus group. They were recruited via social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp), and by sharing a recruitment text and flyer. Besides online recruitment the flyer was also physically distributed at the apartment complexes around the HAS University of Applied Sciences in Den Bosch. Based on the insights of the focus group, the survey was compiled. Through the survey, the knowledge, attitude, and opinion of the consumer were tested with a larger audience. Ultimately, 389 respondents between the ages of 19 and 83 completed the survey. They were recruited via social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp), by sharing a recruitment text, and the survey was shared with surrounding MBO institutions.

The most important results that emerged from the focus group and the survey were that food processing is something that the consumer know to be necessary for the society and food industry, but they seem to have a distrust towards 'unnatural' products and prefer food that comes straight from the land. This reserved attitude is caused by the food industry not being honest or transparent about their activities and products. The consumer knows about satiation and eating rate and take them into consideration while eating a meal. They also think the two are linked and influence each other. The vast majority of consumers know that when the eating rate is high, it takes longer for satiety to occur and therefore the body gets more calories in a short time. They also feel that there are many other factors that can contribute like food texture or the moment they eat. Calories are something largely associated with dieting and losing weight. They don't really see it as fuel for the body but more something you need to eat less of. As mentioned before the consumer has a distrust of the food industry, this includes sources that provide food information. They would like to be approached by renowned organizations or scientists with clear and understandable information, preferably by the government. At the moment there are initiatives in the field of healthy food, but there are no advertisements/campaigns yet when it comes to nutritional properties in relation to the way of eating and health. There are several effective ways of communicating, but there is no best way that stands out. Everyone has their own preference for receiving information and everyone processes the information in a different way.

The consumer seems to have a basic understanding of food processing, food texture, eating rate, satiation, and calorie intake. They are leaning towards a more negative opinion on it, because of distrust and misinformation from the food industry. Consumers should be given clear and understandable information from trusted sources. The most important subsequent recommendations are to repeat the focus group, so that the research results are more reliable and meet the requirements to publish, doing more research about the way the consumer wants to be addressed, and what kind of design/speaking style appeals to the consumer concerning communication about nutrition and health.