

The Impact of Covid-19 Hygienic Measures on Food Choice and Eating Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic led to several lifestyle changes including on eating behavior. Therefore, we sought to evaluate if depicting pandemic-related sanitary measures in a food video would impact food appraisal, decreasing food attractiveness and the desire to eat. In two different days, participants performed an online protocol in which a food video and food pictures should be evaluated regarding visual aspect, expected smell and taste and desire to eat. The videos presented each day differed regarding the presence/absence of sanitary elements adopted during the pandemics, composing the Covid/Non-Covid conditions. Sweet and high calorie foods received significantly higher evaluations compared to salty and low calorie foods, being the sweet food evaluation higher in the Non-Covid condition. The Non-Covid video increased the desire to eat, and in both days it was higher at the end of the task when compared to baseline. Further, our data suggests that depression and anxiety may reduce smell appreciation of foods presented in the pandemics scenario. In sum, food perception seems affected by the presence of the pandemic-related sanitary cues, reducing the desire to eat and food hedonic appreciation with such effects being further potentiated by depression and anxiety symptoms that arise from the pandemics.

METHODOLOGY

Men and woman from 18 to 59 years recruited online (N=85);
Experimental protocol applied online;

Day 1

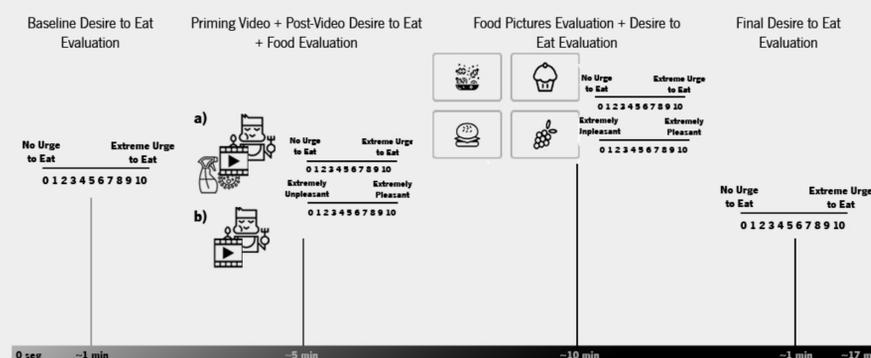
Day 2

Informed consent
Demographic data
Psychological scales
Behavioral scales
Covid-19 informations

Task (target video + desire to eat
evaluation + food pictures +
food evaluation)

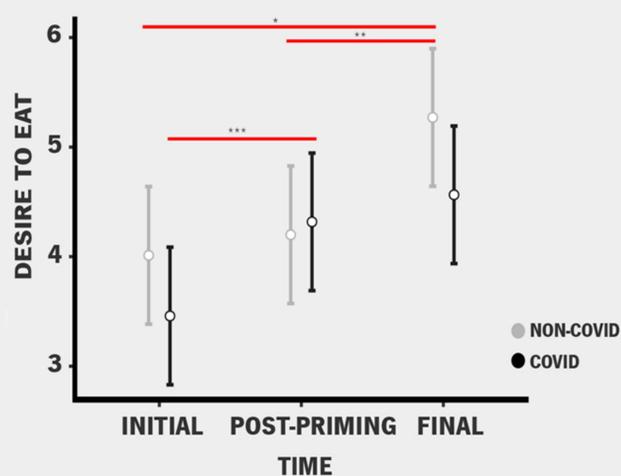
Task (target video + desire to eat
evaluation + food pictures)

Figura 1.
Task design



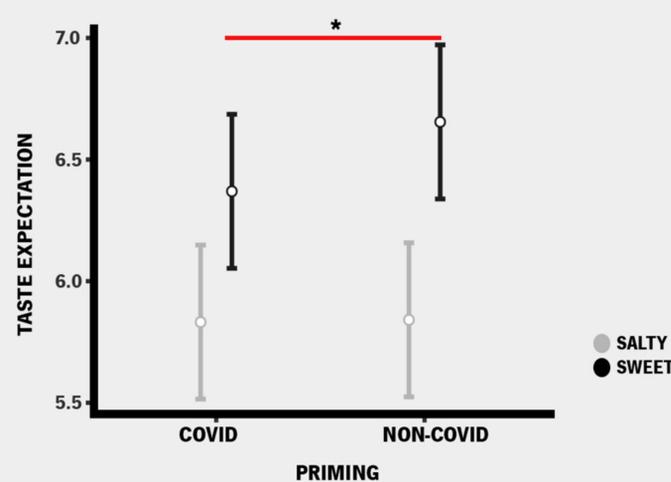
MAIN RESULTS

Figura 2.
Desire to eat in the different time-points of evaluation



Note. (*) Final assessment, after the end of the task showed higher desire to eat when compared to the assessment before the procedures on both Covid and Non Covid conditions and (**) to Post priming evaluation at Covid condition. Bars indicate confidence interval (95%).

Figura 3.
Priming effect observed in taste expectation ratings on pictures



Note. (*) SwF received higher evaluations at Non Covid condition when compared to SwF at Covid condition. Bars indicate confidence interval (95%).

CONCLUSION

Our study provided new insights

Hygienic measures of Covid-19 may elicit lower smell assessment and desire to eat;

Priming effect was observed for sweet food pictures evaluation, but not other food categories.

And supported previous findings

Sweet and high-calorie foods having greater attractiveness and better ratings when compared to salty and low-calorie foods, respectively;

Food exposure increases the desire to eat.