

CLUSTERED ATTITUDES (DIMENSIONS) IN FOOD BELIEFS

A.C.BELL*, R.S.KALUCY* and A.M.STEWART*.

Take away food is a new fast growing phenomenon of our society that presents people with a choice of particular foods and ways of eating it. As an exploratory approach to the study of beliefs underlying the choice of this style of eating we decided to investigate the attitudes of students to statements about take away food. This paper reports the use of "Principal Components" Factor Technique (Kim 1975) in analysis of attitude data to determine the number and nature of important dimensions involved in response to the questionnaire.

Seventy students were surveyed for their response to 15 attitude items. Response was measured on a 7-point, strongly agree to strongly disagree, Likert Scale. From the 15 factors extracted by the components analysis 5 were selected (Eigenvalues > 1) which accounted for 64% of total variance. The simplest interpretable solution of the item - factor correlations was obtained by Varimax rotation of the five factors. Correlations > 0.4 were selected as significant. The clustering of items on factors, defining the dimensional space of that factor, was interpretable in the case of 4 factors. In order of importance, factor 1 (20.8% of total variance) was an "Experience" dimension, e.g. Item "Getting food from the takeaway shop is generally an enjoyable experience" correlates 0.82 with factor 1. Factor 2 (14.2% of total variance) was uninterpretable because too few items clustered in this factor. Factor 3 (11.8% of total variance) was a "Propriety" dimension, e.g. Item "There are such things as proper and improper meal" correlates 0.75 on factor 3. Factor 4 (9% of total variance) was a "Goodness" dimension e.g. Item "I am not sure that take away foods are good for me" correlates 0.89 on factor 4, conversely, item "Take away foods are okay and I will continue to buy them" correlates -0.6 on factor 4. Factor 5 (8.2% of total variance) was a health dimension, e.g. item "What I eat now affects my health in the future" correlates to 0.89 on factor 5, and conversely item "I rarely think about my health or the healthiness of my life style" correlates -0.55 on factor 5.

It is interesting to note that for this group of students several dimensions were important in the responses to the questionnaire, furthermore, the least important dimension is health, a concept, while the most important is the more concrete experience dimension.

KIM, J. (1975). "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences". (McGraw Hill; New York).

* School of Medicine, Flinders University, Adelaide.