**Added value of culinary concepts: measuring the affective experience of elderly people**

Organisations are more and more aware of the need to really understand the motives, needs and desires of their guests in order to be hospitable. Offering food in a physical environment is a service which influences how people feel. Independent Foodservice Consultants (IFC) and Saxion Research Centre Hospitality together are developing a quantitative instrument for measuring people’s experience in order to measure the effects of a culinary concept on the perceived experience of elderly living in a home for the elderly. The instrument combines experience of service (staff, menu choice), environment (ambience and design), as well as emotions and products (food). Research that has been carried out thus far shows that it remains a challenge to measure emotions of elderly people.

**Study objective**

The present exploratory study aims at measuring the affective experience of elderly living in a home for the elderly. The study was focussed on the affective experience of having diner, incorporating the food, the ambiance (restaurant) and the contact with others.

**Study design**

The PrEmo tool developed by the SusaGroup was used to measure the emotions associated with the food, the ambiance of the restaurant in the home for the elderly and the contact with others during having diner. 25 elderly living in a home for the elderly participated in the study. The participants were asked to associate for 12 emotions to what extend they experience the emotion when they think of the meals, the restaurant where the meals are served, and the people who join them when having diner. A five-point scale was used. Photos of the meal, the restaurant and a group of elderly having diner were presented in order to help to retrieve their experiences from memory.
Results

Figure 1 shows the main results of the study. The coloured dots represent the degree to which the participants experienced the 12 emotions associated with the restaurant, the food and the contact with others during having dinner. The colours represent the mean scores. The more positive their feelings, the greener the dots. The results show, that the participants mainly experience positive emotions during having dinner. Negative emotions were hardly experienced. Since the scores are almost the same for every negative emotion, possibly participants were not able to discriminate between the different emotions.

Figure 1. mean scores on the PrEmo emotions.

PrEmo appraisal

Because of the clear images and the expression of the emotion in the animation the researchers had the impression that the elderly people did understand the meaning of the different emotions. This is exceptional; thus far we did not succeed to measure emotions of elderly people. The understanding of the emotions was especially true for the positive emotions, since there was variation in the scores on the six positive emotions. There was less variation in the scores on the negative emotions, which might indicate that the participants were less able to distinguish between the six negative emotions. A second positive finding was that the elderly people really enjoyed participation. They liked the PrEmo tool very much, which turns participation into a pleasant activity.

Personal and Background information

This study was conducted by the Saxion Research Centre Hospitality together with Independent Foodservice Consultants (IFC).

IFC

SAXION Hogescholen