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Introduction

Entomophagy is a traditional practice from time immemorial in many areas where eating insects is part of people's cultures and dietary patterns. However, in other regions, consumers are not used to eating insects. The aim of this pilot study was to investigate the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge of a small group of individuals regarding edible insects via a longitudinal approach, i.e., before and after listening to an educational talk about edible insects.

Methods

Two short surveys were prepared and applied to a case study sample of adults, one to be applied before the talk and the other to be applied after. The participants were mainly female (76%), and aged between 20 and 30 years, with a few aged above 20 years (12%). The talk lasted 60 minutes and addressed various topics related to edible insects, including tradition, neophobia, sustainability, nutrition, and health effects.

Results

Participants expressed a very positive view of the talk, finding it informative, interesting, and useful. Additionally, they considered that the talk contributed to improving their knowledge about insect-based foods. When asked if they recognized the term entomophagy, most responded that they had not heard of it, and only 24% responded positively. Some of the participants had consumed insects before, but most of the participants stated that they would not previously have considered consuming edible insects on a regular basis, although none demonstrated neophobia towards eating insects, considering them disgusting. In fact, the respondents demonstrated an open attitude to consuming products containing insects, as long as they were disguised as ingredients in foods, such as, for example, in the form of flour or cookies.

Conclusions

This pilot study showed the usefulness of targeted interventions as a way to increase knowledge and diminish misconceptions or prejudices related to edible insects, contributing to the shift to more sustainable diets.



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