Abstract

Introduction: Food craving consists of a strong motivational state whereby a person is driven to seek and ingest a specifically desired food. Objectives: To explore the influence of mental imagery on the food craving experience as well as to analyse the role of different psychological variables. Methods: Participants consisted of 65 normal weight undergraduate students. An experimental induction of food craving was analysed considering the actual previous craving and the induced one as a state food craving. Measures of trait food craving, imaging ability, dietary restraint, anxiety, depression, and coping strategies were considered. Results: Sweet foods in general and chocolate in particular were the most craved foods. During the induction thoughts and images were the most highly rated triggers, and all the different sensory modalities were involved. Anxiety, depression, and negative coping strategies influenced the results with regards to the food craving. Discussion: This study confirms the role of mental imagery, the correlation between state and trait food craving, and the influence of different psychological variables on the food craving.

Keywords
Food craving, Mental imagery, Dietary restraint. Mood, Coping strategies.