



Influence of Product Description Detail and Branding when Testing with Children

J. Grady*, S. Hadlich

Product and Consumer Science, Kellogg Company, Battle Creek, Michigan, United States

INTRODUCTION

- Amount of information describing a product has been shown to affect results of consumer studies differently for teens and adults
 - Studies with adults indicate that branding affects hedonic attributes
 - Studies with teens indicate that overall liking is not affected, but diagnostic attributes are affected by the detail of the description and/or branding
- The influence of more information or branding on children ages 8-12 has not been researched

METHODOLOGY

- Two commercially available snack products shown in sequential monadic presentation
- Study repeated using three different levels of product descriptions in three central location tests
 - Blind** – Flavor and category descriptor only
 - Same description for each product
 - Context** – Detailed flavor descriptor, emotional descriptor, and category descriptor
 - Flavor descriptor slightly different between products
 - Emotional descriptor different between products
 - Concept** – Branded flavor descriptor, emotional descriptor, and category descriptor
 - Different description for each Brand
 - Image of package front also shown
- Recruiting
 - Children ages 8-12
 - Pre-recruited via phone from a database of respondents
 - Users of the product category and acceptors of the variety
 - Sample size of 100 recruited for each study (300 total)



OBJECTIVE

Understand the effect of graduated increases in information on the results of consumer testing with children ages 8-12, specifically

- Overall Liking
- Liking of specific attributes
- Diagnostic scores

RESULTS

Hedonic Attributes

- The wording of the description did affect the expected liking of the product prior to tasting the product
 - The Context description of Brand B called out a subtle change in flavor description which negatively affected the children's expected liking of the product
 - Negative impact of the same descriptor seen in the Concept data set

Product Description	Context		Concept	
	Brand A	Brand B	Brand A	Brand B
Expected Liking	8.2 A	7.7 B	7.9 A	7.6 B

- The level of information given about the product did not influence the hedonic ratings once they tasted the product
 - Brand B was more acceptable than Brand A, the opposite of the expected liking results

Product Description	Blind		Context		Concept	
	Brand A	Brand B	Brand A	Brand B	Brand A	Brand B
Overall Liking	7.3 B	8.1 A	7.4 B	8.0 A	7.0 B	7.8 A
Appearance	7.7 A	7.8 A	7.9 A	7.8 A	7.6 A	7.7 A
Flavor Liking	7.3 B	8.1 A	7.5 B	7.9 A	6.9 B	7.8 A
Sweetness Liking	6.7 B	7.8 A	7.1 B	7.8 A	6.9 B	7.6 A
Sourness Liking	6.7 B	7.4 A	6.7 B	7.3 A	6.4 B	7.1 A
Texture Liking	7.2 B	7.9 A	7.2 B	8.1 A	7.2 B	7.7 A

* Liking questions use the 9 point fully anchored scale 1 = Super Bad, 9 = Super Good
 * Columns within a row with different letters are significantly different at alpha=0.10. Each level of description was analyzed as a separate pair

Just-About-Right Attributes

- The increasing level of information about the products did affect the Just-About-Right attributes, and, therefore, resulted in different product direction
- The most notable difference was in flavor intensity
 - Blind, the children indicated that Brand A did not have enough flavor, while Brand B was just-about-right.
 - Increasing the information to Context or Concept resulted in the response changing to "too much" for Brand A and B

		Blind		Context		Concept	
		Brand A	Brand B	Brand A	Brand B	Brand A	Brand B
Flavor	Not Enough	24	2	20*	9	14	9
	JAR	60	82	60	75	60	74
	Too Much	16	16	20*	16	26	16
Sweetness	Not Enough	21*	3	18*	7	23*	8*
	JAR	59	74	61	75	57	72
	Too Much	20*	23	21*	18	19*	19*
Sourness	Not Enough	31	17	38	20	37	24
	JAR	56	72	52	67	54	64
	Too Much	13	11	10	13	9	11

■ = Significant penalty
 * Indicates a bipolar penalty

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall, giving children more detail in the product description can provide more targeted food prototype direction without affecting overall liking, and may in fact narrow the concept-food-fit gap
 - Presenting samples with only the basic flavor and category descriptor may result in misleading prototype direction
- Branding the concept descriptor did not change the learning for the overall liking or attribute liking as compared to the blind and context descriptors, similar to the results with teens

REFERENCES

- Allison, A.-M.A.; Gualtieri, T.; Craig-Petsinger, D. (2004) 'Are young teens influenced by increased product description detail and branding during consumer testing?' in Food Qual Pref.15(7), 819-829.
- Guinard, J.-X. (2001) 'Sensory and Consumer Testing with Children' in Trends in Food Science & Technology, 11, 273-283
- Kimmel, S., Sigman-Grant, M.J. and Guinard, J.-X. (1994) 'Sensory Testing with Young Children' in Food Technol. 48, 92-99