The perceptive-hedonic experience of products, routinely, measured with liking scores, can be investigated deeper by collecting emotional responses that can color and even influence the experience. Flavor perception and emotional association can be a barrier to product success. For example, a flavor that is well liked may not be believably “nutritious”; while a flavor that is less liked may negatively impact compliance. Additionally, negative associations may be attributed to a flavor based on the emotions in which it is experienced (e.g. unpleasant hospital experiences).

For the current study, we were challenged to determine consumer acceptance of optimal flavor of a nutritional drink, maintaining compliance and consumer reason to believe for intended benefits (supplemental nutrition).

Research has shown that certain flavor perceptions can be a barrier to usage of these products:
A flavor that scores high on hedonics may be considered to have a flavor that is too “good” to be nutritious
Similarly, a flavor that is considered less appetizing may impact compliance.
Additionally, a negative “halo” effect in this regard could arise from the fact that many users are introduced to these products while recovering from (or while in) a hospital visit/procedure.

Using a 2-phase approach we (SENSANALYSIS & HCD Research) explored both the explicit and implicit consumer product experience to determine which of four fruit flavors were a best fit-to-concept.
-Phase 1 utilized implicit reaction testing for association of test flavors and key concepts (ex: “healthy”, “wholesome”) and how the product made participants feel (ex: “comforted”, “strong”).
-Phase 2 used Sensorial Sessions for in depth qualitative feedback on the participants’ thoughts/emotions from individual written exercises.

Results revealed a clear winner among the test samples for both perceptive and hedonic fit to concept as well as provided an in depth look at the consumer emotional and non-conscious drivers which can ultimately influence both the product experience and consumer compliance.