EFFECT OF THE BRAND ON CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION ON PRODUCT QUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

The objective quality is not always, from the sensory point of view, reflected in the perception of consumers. A very good product, from a brand that is less valued, can be perceived as inferior and vice versa. To understand the relationship of the brand with the consumers' perception of quality, the sensory analysis is useful in understanding the sensorial profile of the products, and their respective characteristics. The profile can later be related to the affective performance - the quality impressions of the consumers - in relation to the different products tested.

The present study focused on the use of sensory analysis, relating a technical evaluation via Trained Panel with a product test with consumers, to verify empirical evidence regarding the effect of the brand on consumer perception of the quality of Strawberry biscuits.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of the brand on the perception the consumers have on the quality of five biscuits with strawberry filling, as opposed to the sensorial characteristics measured by a trained sensory panel.

METHODOLOGY

TESTED PRODUCTS

05 strawberry flavored biscuits were evaluated, with two more recognized brands being deliberately selected (Marca 2 and Marca 3), one intermediate brand (Marca 4) and two slightly recognized brands (Marca 1 and Marca 5).

This criterion was based on the knowledge and consumption of each of the brands, in a research available on the site (https://www.sm.com.br/resultado-de-busca-gps/mercearia-doce/biscoito-recheado#produtos) and referenced by the evaluation with the consumers participating in the study. To obtain the sensory profile of the strawberry biscuits, a Descriptive Sensory Analysis methodology was used, with 10 responses from a panel which was trained and validated for the evaluation of filled biscuits. A 15 cm unstructured scale was used, anchored at the extremes of lower intensity to the left, and greater intensity to the right.

In the technical evaluation, the biscuits were evaluated for the following attributes:

AROMA
- IMPACT OF AROMA
- SWEETNESS
- ACID
- ARTIFICIAL STRAWBERRY
- NATURAL STRAWBERRY
- YOGURT
- MEDICINE
- VANILLA
- DAIRY
- FLOUR

TXT HANDS
- SURFACE IRREGULARITY
- COLOR OF THE FILLING
- FILL ADHERENCE
- BRAN

TXT IN THE MOUTH
- COHESIVE MASS
- MELT
- FILL
- LIGHTNESS
- DRY

TASTE
- IMPACT OF FLAVOR
- SWEET
- ACID
- ARTIFICIAL STRAWBERRY
- NATURAL STRAWBERRY
- YOGURT
- MEDICINE
- VANILLA
- MILK
- FLOUR
- STARCH

AFTERTASTE
- IMPACT OF FLAVOR
- SWEET
- ACID
- ARTIFICIAL STRAWBERRY
- NATURAL STRAWBERRY
- YOGURT

The same 5 products were evaluated by 61 consumers through a branded sequential monadic test, in a central location. The biscuits were presented rotated and branded to the consumers and, therefore, the results of the evaluations were aimed at understanding the influence of the brand on the perception of quality of the products tested.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Trained Panel:
Among the 35 evaluated attributes, 22 were selected as key attributes for the comparative evaluation of the products' performance:
- Aroma Impact
- Dairy (aroma, flavor and aftertaste)
- Flavour Impact (taste and aftertaste)
- Natural strawberry (aroma, flavor and aftertaste)
- Artificial strawberry (aroma, flavor and aftertaste)
- Medicine (aroma, taste and aftertaste)
- Flour (aroma, taste and aftertaste)
- Surface Irregularity (texture hands)
- Bran (texture on hands)
- Cohesive mass (texture in the mouth)
- Dry (texture in the mouth)

Of the 5 products tested, Marca 1 was undoubtedly the BEST PERFORMER. It was positively highlighted in the evaluation of 17 (77.3%) of the key attributes and presented intermediate performance in the other 5 (22,7%).
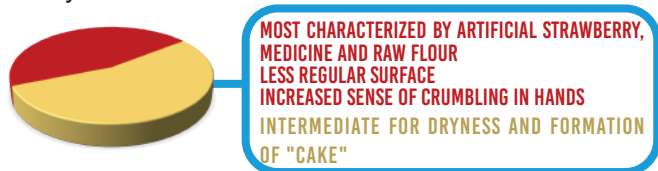
HIGHER IMPACT OF AROMA, TASTE AND FLAVOR MORE CHARACTERIZED BY NATURAL STRAWBERRY AND MILK
LESS TASTE OF MEDICINE AND LESS SENSATION OF DRY BISCUIT

Marca 2 ranged positively in the evaluation of 2 (9.1%) key attributes, presented intermediate performance in 14 (63.7%) and inferior in 6 (27.3%) of the 22 key attributes.

INTERMEDIATE FOR DRYNESS AND IMPACTS OF AROMA, FLAVOR AND AFTERTASTE
MOST CHARACTERIZED BY ARTIFICIAL STRAWBERRY AND MEDICINE-LIKE TASTE
MORE REGULAR SURFACE
LESS SENSATION OF CRUMBLING IN HANDS

Marca 3 presented intermediate performance in 10 (45.5%) and inferior performance in 12 (54.5%) of the 22 key attributes.

MOST CHARACTERIZED BY ARTIFICIAL STRAWBERRY, MEDICINE AND RAW FLOUR
LESS REGULAR SURFACE
INCREASED SENSE OF CRUMBLING IN HANDS
INTERMEDIATE FOR DRYNESS AND FORMATION OF "CAKE"

Evaluation With Consumers:

Marca 1, Marca 3 and Marca 2 have equivalent results on the overall liking and purchase intention and in the most important attributes, especially acceptance of aroma, flavor and appearance. The three brands, in most of the indicators, show parity among themselves. And the three also perform better than the two other brands tested, including intention to purchase and general acceptance.

TOP TWO BOXES%	P1 = Marca 3 Strawberry Flavor (A)	P2 = Marca 4 Strawberry Flavor (B)	P3 = Marca 1 Mousse Strawberry Flavor (C)	P4 = Marca 2 Strawberry Flavor (D)	P5 = Marca 5 Strawberry Flavor (E)
Q5. GENERAL LIKING 1- I did not like at all 7- I liked it very much	61% BE	31%	56% BE	59% BE	16%
Q13. PURCHASE INTENT 1- would certainly not buy 5- I would certainly buy	77% BE	44% AND	62% BE	74% BE	28%
Q1. ACCEPTANCE OF APPEARANCE 1- I did not like it 7- I enjoyed it	66% BE	48% E	66% BE	77% BE	23%
Q2 ACCEPTING THE AROMA 1- I did not like at all 7- I liked it very much	66% BE	34%	49% E	59% BE	28%
Q8 - ACCEPTANCE OF FLAVOR 1- I did not like at all 7- I liked it very much	62% BE	34% AND	49% BE	54% BE	16%

In some sensory attributes, Marca 1 is even considered inferior to Marca 3 or Marca 2, such as in crispness, artificial smell and intensity of the strawberry flavor.

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Q6 CRUNCHY 1- Not crunchy 5- Extremely	51% E	36%	48%	66% ECB	31%
Q4. ARTIFICIAL SMELL 1- Strongly Disagree 5- Strongly Agree	62%	64%	84% AB	72%	77%

JAR SCALE -% JUST ABOUT RIGHT	P1 = Marca 3 Strawberry Flavor (A)	P2 = Marca 4 Strawberry Flavor (B)	P3 = Marca 1 Mousse Strawberry Flavor (C)	P4 = Marca 2 Strawberry Flavor (D)	P5 = Marca 5 Strawberry Flavor (E)
Q9. STRAWBERRY FLAVOR 1- Not crunchy 5- Extremely	64% ECB	31%	46%	56% BE	26%

Although Marca 1 objectively has better sensory performance than Marca 3 and Marca 2, it is perceived in a similar way or even inferior to these two brands in the consumers assessment. In an evaluation with brands (not blind, therefore), the fact that they carry best known brands and higher reputation in relation to Marca 1, ended up favoring the reviews of Marca 3 and Marca 2 and helped overcome the sensory gap that Marca 1 has in relation to them.

This is confirmed by the evaluation that the consumers themselves who tested them out make of the brands: both brands Marca 3 and Marca 2 have overall ratings that are superior to Marca 1 on that matter.

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Q15. OVERALL PERCEPTION OF THE BRAND 1- Not satisfied at all 10- totally satisfied	46% EC	34% E	26% E	44% BE	5%

In this type of evaluation, the brand influences the perception of product quality. It is believed that in a blind test, the Marca 1 product would have presented results superior to the other two, following what was observed in the sensory panel.

CONCLUSIONS

MAJOR LEARNING:
● Not always is a technically superior product preferred by consumers;
● Although Marca 1, the product with a less recognized brand, is technically superior, consumers perceive it as similar (or even inferior) to the most renowned brands, even the ones presenting inferior products attested in the technical panel;
● In the present study, the effect of the brand on consumers' perception of quality was sufficient to compensate for technically inferior products in sensory terms.

NEXT DEVELOPMENTS:
● As a complementary point to the study, a blind evaluation of the products may be interesting, in order to verify their performance without the influence of the brand.
● In the blind evaluation, a discussion about the de-characterization of the samples is also worth looking at - since the product itself can carry identifying and distinctive elements of the brand. In this case, the benefits of de-characterization (notably the non-identification of the brand) should be weighed against the negative effects, since over-handling of a product can impact the perception and general acceptance of the product when presented to consumers.

perception