

SMOOTHIES



Contract Testing Inc.



INTRODUCTION

Powered by the escalating demand for healthy, on-the-go meal solutions, the smoothie category is a very active one. For some, it is the perfect way to get a daily dose of the latest and greatest 'superfood', while to others it's a fast and easy breakfast or lunch solution.

This research aims to explore the differences in taste and textural profiles of smoothies and to determine which attributes drive overall liking.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

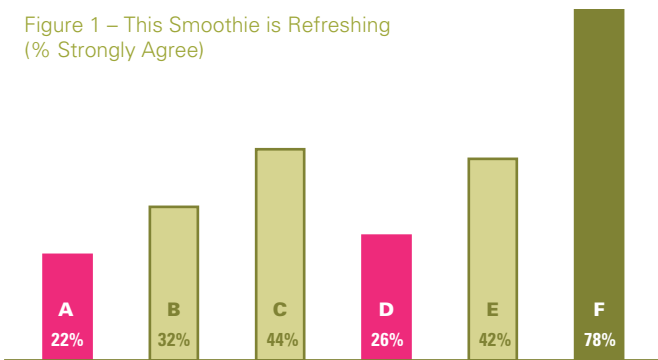
The research recruited 50 women to our Central Location Testing facility in the Greater Toronto Area. All were regular users of smoothies.

Respondents evaluated six different strawberry banana flavoured samples. Five were grocery store brands and one was from a quick serve restaurant chain. The samples were served chilled in a 5 oz. plastic cup one at a time in varied order with the first sample removed before the next sample was presented. The quick serve product was always tested in last rotation because of its more distinctive profile.

Respondents answered a series of questions relating to the aroma, appearance, taste, and texture. The questions were a combination of 9-point hedonic scales and 9-point intensity scales.

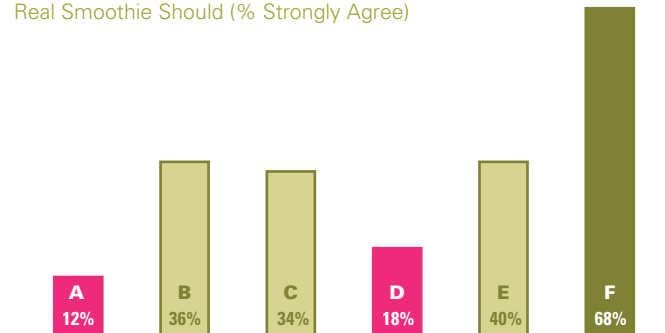
RESULTS

Figure 1 – This Smoothie is Refreshing (% Strongly Agree)



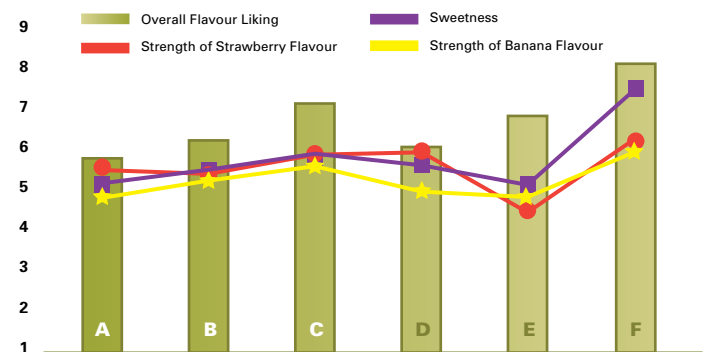
The quick serve brand smoothie was the clear winner. It had the highest scores for overall liking and purchase intent and also had the best taste and texture. The quick serve smoothie, Product F, was also overwhelmingly perceived as the most refreshing (Fig 1) and the closest in taste to what respondents think 'a real smoothie should taste like'. (Fig 2)

Figure 2 – This Smoothie Tastes Like A Real Smoothie Should (% Strongly Agree)



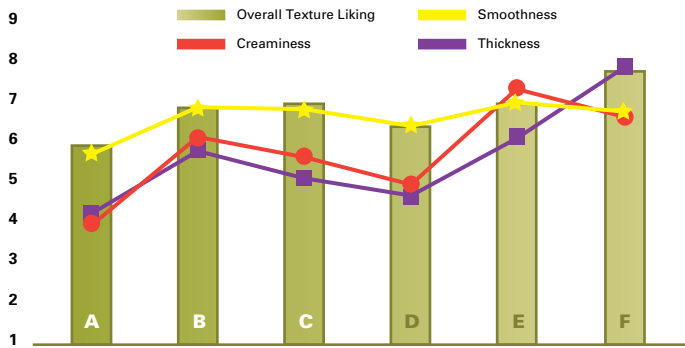
Although none of the five off-the-shelf smoothies performed as well as the quick serve-style smoothie, there were winners among them. One brand outperformed the others in overall appeal – particularly driven by liking of the flavour. It had a greater presence of both strawberry and banana flavours, and was also sweeter than the others. (Fig 3)

Figure 3– Flavour Attributes



In contrast, the number two product in overall ranking was weak in strawberry flavour and not very sweet – but, it had the creamiest, smoothest, and thickest texture. (Fig 4) The product with the lowest appeal, which by the way had a dismal purchase intent of 36% top two box (65% is considered a good benchmark in this category), did not meet the mark for either flavour or texture.

Figure 4 – Textural Attributes



In summary, although overall flavour emerged as the most important driver of liking (driven by the strength of the strawberry and banana flavours as well as sweetness), the textural attributes of creaminess, smoothness, and thickness were also important.

Attitudes towards Smoothies

Prior to tasting the samples, we asked respondents about some of their current views on this category. When asked to rank their reasons for buying smoothies, half say the fact that smoothies are a nutritious and healthy choice is the number one reason. However, although they claim nutrition is important, the main reason respondents give for choosing one brand over another is because it is a brand they like.

They are looking for a variety of nutritional benefits from smoothies, with no added sugar being the most important. (Fig 5)



Figure 5 – Most Important Perceived Nutritional Benefits of Smoothies



CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this research was to investigate the taste and textural profiles of smoothies and to determine which attributes drive overall liking. Within this framework we see that there are, in fact, differences in the sensory profiles and likeability of the different products, driven mainly by the strength of flavour and thickness and creaminess of texture. And particularly among grocery store brands, not all products are delivering on these expectations.

For questions about this research, or how you can leverage consumer taste buds in your business, contact Andrew Scholes at andrew.scholes@contracttesting.com.

Contract Testing Inc. is an industry leader in sensory evaluation and consumer product testing. We are the only sensory evaluation and consumer product research company with corporately managed test sites in both Canada and the United States. With over 25 years of experience, we are innovators in testing with consumers across all major food, beverage and household and personal care categories.



CONTACT:

119 West Drive
Brampton, ON L6T 2J6
6760 Jimmy Carter Blvd. Suite 110
Atlanta, GA 30071
Phone: 905 456 0783
Fax: 905 456 1172
Email: info@contracttesting.com
www.contracttesting.com

TEST SITE LOCATIONS:

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